

Greetings, Neighbors...

Historic Preservation? Sure, but isn't a dinosaur on the cover stretching it a bit?

Not if the object is to dramatize the incredible variety of West Side experiences. The Cafe des Artistes' naked nymph Fall 1992 issue was probably the quintessential expression of this rationale, but old Tyrannosaurus Rex on this cover is a clear second.

So, from the gloriously restored exhibition halls of the American Museum of Natural History ("Old Bones–New Life"); to the monumental and elegant interior of the Apple Bank for Savings ("Big City: Big Apple"); to the reconstruction of "Columbus Avenue: Spine of the West Side" – balanced by another of our Preservation Profiles (Landmarks Commissioner Stephen M. Raphael) – and our tribute to the little-known Blum Brothers, important WWI era West Side architects with a flair for terra cotta ornamentation – we bring another West Side Landmark potpourri.

Read on.



Arlene Simon / President
LANDMARK WEST!

Update: The Coming of the Millennium

We lost!

No sugar-coating. No claiming "partial victory," or "moral victory," or a "real start towards a long term solution."

We tried hard to protect the Upper West Side/Central Park West Historic District from the devastating intrusion of a 55-story mixed-use behemoth. We tried hard to sparkplug a rational City Planning Commission review of the delicate Special Lincoln Square District. We failed.

On December 29, two days before his resignation as a federal judge became effective, United States District Court Judge Kenneth Conboy in a detailed, 41 page opinion, denied the request of LANDMARK WEST! for an injunction against the Millennium I tower (67-68 Sts., B'way-Columbus) and dismissed our National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) lawsuit on the merits. The *New York Law Journal* headlined its page one story, "Novel Environmental Challenge Fails to Halt Building with Post Office."

On December 20, ten days before the expiration of Mayor Dinkins's administration, his City Planning Commission Chair, Richard Schaffer, rammed a cosmetic, do-nothing revision of the Zoning Resolution through the lame-duck Commission.

This feeble end-result to LANDMARK WEST's 22-month effort to promote rational zoning reflects the inherent weakness of the City Planning process and structure – but also highlights the inadequacy of the failed Dinkins administration, and the powerlessness of our local elected officials.

LANDMARK WEST! poured a lot of time, energy and money into this effort. It was a fight that had to be fought, and we fought it well and truly.

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Old Bones–New Life: Mammals and Their Extinct Relatives

by Carlo Lamagna

Mammoth mastodons, savage saber-tooths and giant sloths trample, hunt, climb and rear-up to the awe and amazement of spectators. The ferocious carnivore Amphicyon chases down its prey, the antelope-like Ramoceros, in full view of hundreds of bystanders. These primal scenes will be played out daily, not in an urban version of *Jurassic Park*, but in the newly reopened and restructured fossil halls at the American Museum of Natural History. On May 14, to launch its 125th anniversary celebration, the Museum will reveal the first two of six new exhibition halls planned to open in phases through 1996. Within these soaring spaces, the most extensive and unparalleled array of fossils ever assembled will be dramatically re-installed to retell the continuously evolving history of vertebrate evolution.

As part of this ambitious project begun in 1991, the fourth floor of the Museum is being restored to its original architectural character. This includes removing dropped ceilings and old partitions to open up large exhibition spaces and restoring high, vaulted and beamed ceilings with cast iron columns, capitals and period detailing. Glorious views of Central Park lost since remodelling in the 1950s will be regained. The skillful redesign of the exhibits by Ralph Appelbaum Associates, designers of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., will allow modern halls to function within these newly restored spaces.

According to Bill Moynihan, Vice President and Director of the Museum, restoration of the halls was not part of the original plan. Review of archival photographs sparked interest on the part of the Museum administration and the design team to investigate the hidden past that might remain. Moynihan recalls standing on ladders to look above dropped ceilings with a flashlight to confirm the existence of these architectural treasures. He began to relish the thought of bringing back interior spaces, some conceived by Calvert Vaux, co-designer of Central Park, that hadn't been seen by generations of Museum visitors.

The American Museum of Natural History began its original building program in the rural expanse of the Upper West Side in 1878, with a Gothic Revival structure that was later subsumed in Calvert Vaux's ambitious building program of 1891. The structures we see today are only one-third of a grandiose plan for a Romanesque Revival pile that was to have occupied the entire property from Central Park West to Columbus Avenue, and from 77th



TOP: DINOSAUR HALL WITH BRONTOSAURUS
BOTTOM: FOSSIL MAMMAL HALL, 1900.



AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY LIBRARY



AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY LIBRARY

US, 1921.

to 81st Streets. Vaux originally included an enormous central tower to preside over a complex arrangement of structures that formed four enormous inner courtyards. Construction continued in phases into the 1930s with the later additions executed in variations of the classical revival style.

This period of construction coincided with what is often called the great age of exploration. Between 1880 and 1930 the American Museum of Natural History sent over a thousand expeditions into the field, many of them to gather fossils from disparate locales, ranging from East 59th Street to Outer Mongolia. The high-ceilinged fossil halls were filled by great dinosaur hunters who began shipping tons of fossil remains back to the Museum at the turn of the century.

But while the early explorers excavated individual fossils such as the magnificent brontosaurus specimen discovered in 1898, scientists today collect the entire fossil ecology of a site, interrelating various life forms found in different strata to form a more complete impression of the distant past. Likewise, the new displays created for the exhibition halls will replace the fabulous jumble of specimens, cases and illustrations with remounted specimens in interactive, life-like poses reflecting the newest findings

in scientific research.

Different theories about the origins and history of life will also be explored in a variety of other formats utilizing new developments in text and graphics and the latest in exhibit technology. The educational components will contain state-of-the-art interactive computer systems, created especially for the Museum, featured in fifteen stations throughout the airy grandeur of the refurbished exhibition halls.

The two halls opening this May (officially the Lila Acheson Wallace Wing of Mammals and their Extinct Relatives) will set the tone for exhibitions to come, continuing to tell an endlessly fascinating story anew. In addition to creating the most scientifically accurate educational exhibits, the Museum, as Bill Moynihan points out, also has the responsibility to provide the public with important social spaces. When the first fossil hall opened in 1895, it was greeted with enthusiastic public response. The two new halls will no doubt prove to be great gathering places where visitors will mingle to study and enjoy the mysterious fossil past in the settings originally experienced by their turn-of-the century predecessors.

The American Museum of Natural History is an individual landmark designated in 1967 that is part of the Upper West Side/Central Park West Historic District designated in 1990.

Preservation Profile: Stephen M. Raphael, Esquire

by Ken Lustbader



Stephen M. Raphael, the first attorney to be appointed to the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC), has served as a commissioner since 1991. A resident of Brooklyn, Mr. Raphael has played an active role in New York's civic matters for over two decades, lecturing at the New School of Social Research and sitting on numerous boards including the Brooklyn College Performing Art Center. As a member of the Municipal Art Society's Special Committee on Streets, Sidewalks and Public Usage, he has a special interest in New York's street furniture which includes newsstands, telephone booths and bus shelters.

During a recent conversation, Commissioner Raphael discussed the public's perception of the LPC. The process, says Raphael, "needs to be made more accessible to the average person who lives and works in an historic district." He outlined a number of ideas to demystify and streamline the application process, including "holding seminars in the five boroughs to address important topics that people who work with the Commission need to know about."

Regarding the LPC's current workload, Raphael noted that at the same time that there has been a constant annual increase in the number of designated individual landmarks and historic districts and a corresponding increase in the regulatory caseload, the LPC's staff has been dramatically reduced. To expedite applications, he proposes examining alternatives to the current procedures such as "hearing matters by committee rather than the whole Commission." This recommendation, currently under consideration, will be tried after consulting with local preservation organizations and community groups to ensure that the process works. While this would increase efficiency, Raphael is "opposed to any system that would compromise the public's ability to fully testify before the Commission."

For Raphael, preservation plays a valuable role in improving the future social and economic health of New York City. He envisions an educational component of the LPC that can provide individuals with a connection to their communities through the history of neighborhoods and their buildings. He believes that "for the city to function, all New Yorkers, whether old residents or new inhabitants, must find a pride of place and a commonality of interest here." The economic benefits of preservation must also be articulated, Raphael says, citing the successful local development within the Stuyvesant Heights Historic District in Brooklyn and other historic districts.

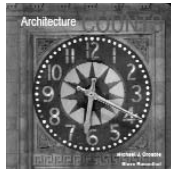
Raphael thoughtfully summarized the LPC's mission by asking: "Why do people from all over the world come to New York City? Part of it is the unique and extraordinary, densely textured, dramatic and historically resonant architecture of New York. It should be understood that we are preserving New York for ourselves, our families and our children, but we are also preserving New York for the rest of the world that comes here and appreciates our architecture."

Ken Lustbader is Technical Program Assistant at the New York Landmarks Conservancy.

Publications of Interest

Architecture: Shapes; Architecture: Colors; Architecture: Counts

by Michael J. Crosbie
and Steve Rosenthal.
The Preservation
Press, 1993,
\$6.95 each.



As a first introduction to the complexities of the buildings we live, work, and play in, these books can't be beat. And their sturdy hardboard construction will stand up to spills and scribbles. Written for children ages 2 to 5, these three delightful volumes use color photographs to review the qualities that give buildings their character – eleven colors and eight shapes – and use buildings as a tool for counting from 1 to 10. Let these books be an inspiration to your child for looking more closely at his or her neighborhood. For more information call the Preservation Press at (800) 766 6847.

Louis Comfort Tiffany and Associated Artists: Design and Photography: Paul A. Baumgarten. Text: Paul B. Haydon. The Dolomite Press, 1993, \$16.50. Dolomite Press has introduced a series of twelve notecards highlighting the work of Louis Comfort Tiffany and associated artists at Manhattan's Seventh Regiment Armory. This handsomely packaged set designed and photographed by LANDMARK WEST! boardmember Baumgarten, includes a twelve-page booklet written by Haydon on the history of the landmark building and its spectacular interiors. A portion of the proceeds benefit the Friends of the Seventh Regiment by supporting efforts to preserve the building and collections. To order, send a check for \$16.50 plus \$2 Shipping (NYS residents must add 8.25% tax) to Dolomite Press, P.O. Box 347, Dept. LW, Cold Spring, NY 10516 or call (914) 265-3217.

Summer Events: Slide Lecture & Walking Tour with Andrew Dolkart and Susan Tunick

Dolkart & Tunick (LANDMARK WEST! veteran tour guides) will hold a slide lecture and walking tour in celebration of the publication of their book *George & Edward Blum: Texture and Design in New York Apartment House Architecture*. The Blums designed some of the city's most striking and unusual apartment buildings from 1910 to 1930 using art tile mosaics and terra cotta detail in new and innovative ways. The slide lecture will focus on Blum buildings throughout New York City and the development of apartment house architecture, while the walking tour will center around the great Blum buildings on the Upper West Side. Slide Lecture: **Thursday, June 2, 1994, 7PM** at Christ & St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, 122 W. 69 St. The cost is \$15. Walking Tour: **Saturday, June 11, 1994, 11AM - 1:30PM**. Meet at 112 St. & B'way. The cost is \$10. Come to both for \$20. All contributions are tax-deductible. Space is limited. For reservations call 496-8110.

LANDMARK WEST!

Join LANDMARK WEST's continuing effort to preserve the architectural heritage of the Upper West Side. Make your tax-deductible contribution below, and return this form. **Please check to see if your employer offers matching grants for your charitable contributions.**

* **A special offer:** Contribute \$125 or more, and receive a gift of the *AIA Guide to New York City*.

\$25 \$50 \$125* \$500 \$1000

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LANDMARK WEST!

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- Design: Lisa Anselmo
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About LANDMARK WEST!

LANDMARK WEST! is a non-profit community group working to preserve the best of the Upper West Side's architectural heritage from 59th to 110th Streets between Central Park West and Riverside Drive. Since 1985 it has worked to achieve landmark status for individual buildings and historic districts. Today, LANDMARK WEST! is the proud curator of the area's 2,603 designated landmarks (up from only 337 in 1985), and continues to promote awareness of these architectural treasures and the urgent need to protect them against insensitive change and demolition.

* The *AIA Guide to New York City* is available from LANDMARK WEST! as part of a special offer. Make a tax-deductible contribution of \$125.00 or more to LANDMARK WEST! and you will receive the book as a gift. (See special offer, page 6.)

Columbus Avenue: Spine of the West Side

by John C. H. Lee

Colorful Columbus Avenue, once the site of the noisy Ninth Avenue El (1879-1940), is preparing for the largest reconstruction project to be undertaken to date by New York City's Department of Transportation (DOT). Beginning late this summer, the \$75 million project will consist of the total reconstruction of the roadway and sidewalks of Columbus between 59th and 110th Streets (2.4 miles). It is anticipated that the project will take approximately two years to complete. When the reconstruction begins in earnest (either September or October), traffic flow will be diverted to Broadway.

The project will also include work on the sewers and most of the three water mains located beneath the avenue. No major work has been done on Columbus Avenue since the 1950s, though the avenue has one of the oldest water lines in New York (some sections dating back to 1830).

The question on the minds of most Upper West Side residents already bracing themselves for the worst is: How long is it really going to take? Will Columbus Avenue experience the delays of the DOT's Avenue of the Americas job which lagged more than two years behind schedule?

Fortunately, one of the most positive, enduring results of the project will be the replacement of the street lights and street signs lining Columbus Avenue. Where appropriate, the street signs will indicate the Upper West Side/Central Park West Historic District, and will be colored a distinctive terra cotta, black, and white. 375 new trees will also be planted along

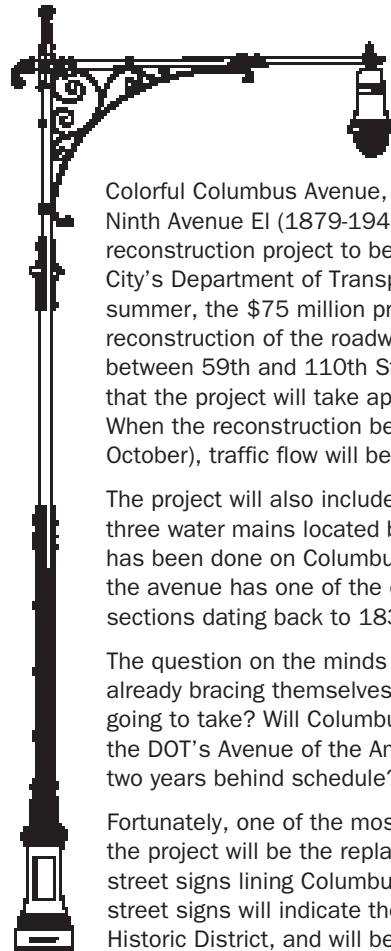
Columbus. When the project nears completion, the avenue will see the arrival of granite curbing, tinted concrete sidewalks in a "cool gray" color in landmarked areas, and the reintroduction of historic, early twentieth-century cast iron lampposts (see illustration).

John C. H. Lee is attending Columbia University's Historic Preservation program and is a member of the LANDMARK WEST! Certificate of Appropriateness Committee.

Christopher on Columbus:

"Despite the burp of flashy stores that swept over Columbus Avenue in the 1980s, it is still an afterthought avenue, without the weight of Central Park West, West End, Riverside or even funky Broadway. This is all backwards because, historically, Columbus is the West Side's most important street. The completion of Central Park in 1871 sparked very little construction on the west side – it was the completion of the clanking Elevated line up Columbus in the late 1870s that sparked the first serious development, from the Dakota on up. Today the towers on Central Park West have all but obscured Columbus' position as the essential spine of the west side – how much more fitting if the great landmark area which encompasses it could have been titled the Columbus Avenue Historic District."

Christopher Gray was once a West Sider.



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DEMOLISHED BUILDING REVEALS 1920S PAINTED BILLBOARDS
ON WEST 66TH ST (B'WAY & COLUMBUS)...IMPENDING CONSTRUCTION
ON SKYSCRAPER WILL AGAIN OBSOURE THEM FOREVER.

OR CURRENT RESIDENT

The Big City: The Big Apple

by Laura Hansen

The monumental Apple Bank for Savings — built in 1926-28 for the Central Savings Bank — is a landmark in the true sense of the word. Sitting majestically opposite Verdi Square, it anchors and orients us. And it connects us with a time past, recalling the grandeur of a young and burgeoning Upper West Side.

This elegant Italian Renaissance-inspired building with its soaring, palatial interior has always been a neighborhood treasure, and a designated N.Y.C. Landmark since 1975. In



INTERIOR OF APPLE BANK FOR SAVINGS

December, 1993 the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission voted to designate the main banking hall as an Interior Landmark. And with the unanimous City Council vote in April, 1994 this extraordinarily rich interior will be protected as a treasure for generations to come.

Apple Bank for Savings (Broadway & 73rd Street), at home in the building since 1983, has been its conscientious steward as well as an active contributor to public awareness of land use issues facing the West Side. In 1986, the bank hosted LANDMARK WEST's "Best of the West" exhibit of murals and photographs. Currently on view in the main banking hall is a scale model of the Special Lincoln Square District (60-68 Streets, Central Park West-Amsterdam Avenue).

Laura Hansen is attending Columbia University's Historic Preservation program and is a member of the LANDMARK WEST! Certificate of Appropriateness Committee.

Out of Control: West Side Story, 1994

The model of the Special Lincoln Square District, (at Apple Bank), gives a side-by-side comparison of the impacts of the Department of City Planning's re-zoning — and the more aggressive LANDMARK WEST! down-zoning alternative for the district. The City adopted new zoning regulations for this district on February 9, 1994, and rejected LANDMARK WEST's proposal.

The model was developed to enable policy makers and the general public to test and evaluate proposed zoning changes in a realistic context, not just in abstract, academic drawings. LANDMARK WEST! contracted with the Environmental Simulation Center at the New School for Social Research to create a 10' x 12' physical model, of the entire district using sophisticated computer techniques.

The scale model is truly extraordinary (each structure has the actual photographed facade; the streets are complete with trees, traffic and pedestrians). LANDMARK WEST! invites you to stop by during banking hours and "walk-through" the model while visiting the Upper West Side's newest interior landmark. Due to popular demand, this exhibition has been extended. For more information call (212) 496-8110.

George & Edward Blum: Masterpieces on West End Avenue

by Andrew S. Dolkart and Susan Tunick



DETAIL: THE DALLIEU, 838 W.E.A., 1912-1913

The architectural firm of George & Edward Blum is not exactly a household name, yet these brothers designed some of New York City's most unusual apartment houses, especially in the years just prior to World War I. Many of their finest apartment buildings are located on the Upper West Side. Although several are located within historic districts, not one is an individual landmark. Two of the Blums' masterpieces stand unprotected by landmarks designation at 780 and 838 West End Avenue.

The Blums were of Alsatian-Jewish background. They were American citizens who spent portions of their youth in New York and France. Both studied architecture in Paris where they were exposed to progressive trends in the use of materials, especially clay materials such as brick, terra cotta, and tile. In New York the Blums created a unique group of buildings notable for their novel use of materials.

In 1912, the Blums were commissioned to design two apartment houses on West End Avenue. No. 780, on the southeast corner of 98th Street is a glowing white brick and terra-cotta structure. The building is massed in a strongly vertical manner that is quite unusual on an early 20th-century apartment building, and contains spectacular terra-cotta detail. All of the terra-cotta features are embellished with a complex network of abstract ornament created by the juxtaposition of geometric grids and curving interlacing tendrils, scrolls, and waves. A recent cleaning has renewed the bright facades, but, sadly, the owner removed the terra-cotta cornice just prior to the building's co-op conversion.

Three blocks north, on the southeast corner of 101st Street is the Dallieu, 838 West End Avenue, one of the Blums' most extraordinary works. The building has a complex massing that freely plays with the tripartite form of a column capital. The most extraordinary feature of the building is the intricate geometric and organic terra-cotta detail, including vines twining on trellises and a variety of tiny grids inspired by the work of Austrian architect Joseph Hoffman. The facades are further enlivened by the use of recessed bricks and deeply recessed mortar joints that create dynamic patterns.

These two great buildings stand outside the Upper West Side's historic districts. LANDMARK WEST! is seeking their designation as individual landmarks, both to protect their magnificent facades and to increase awareness of George and Edward Blum and their architectural legacy.

Andrew S. Dolkart is an architectural historian. Susan Tunick is an artist and a preservationist.

To learn more about the Blum brothers, read *George & Edward Blum: Texture & Design in New York Apartment House Architecture* by Andrew Dolkart & Susan Tunick, available from Friends of Terra Cotta for \$15 plus \$3 for shipping. Write c/o Susan Tunick, 771 West End Avenue, New York City, 10025, or call (212) 932-1750. Please join LANDMARK WEST! for our Blum slide lecture and Blum walking tour. See page 5.

Breakfast Series



DON POLLARD

Governor Mario M. Cuomo, Mayor Rudolph Giuliani and former Mayor David Dinkins were guest speakers at individual breakfasts hosted by LANDMARK WEST! last fall at Tavern on the Green. These three sold out events, each attended by more than two hundred guests, were part of an ongoing effort to focus on preservation, overdevelopment and other quality of life issues. From left, West Sider Charles Simon, Governor Cuomo and Community Board 7 Chair, Elizabeth Starkey.

In-Kind Donations

Since 1985, LANDMARK WEST! has been working to protect the architectural heritage of the Upper West Side. We'd like to thank the many people and organizations that have helped us achieve our goals by making "In-Kind Donations". These donations of goods and services greatly extend our ability to successfully fulfill our mission.

Apple Bank for Savings, our invaluable community asset, currently hosts the model of the Special Lincoln Square District. **Carswell Rush Berlin** created our **Tony Randall**-narrated slide show and **John Rogers** is working on its transference onto videotape; **R.O. Blechman** lends his artistic skills to our newsletters and other publications; and **The Chase Bank** branch at Broadway and 64th Street exhibits our splendid murals of local architectural treasures. **Milton Glaser** created our wonderful logo; the firm of **Goldstein, Golub, Kessler, and Company, P.C.** contributes their accounting services; and **Linda Jones** of Winter Hill Associates gives us priceless assistance with our computer system.

LANDMARK WEST! also wishes to thank our many dedicated volunteers who, over the past 9 1/2 years, have reinforced LANDMARK WEST's mission by offering their time, talent and support.

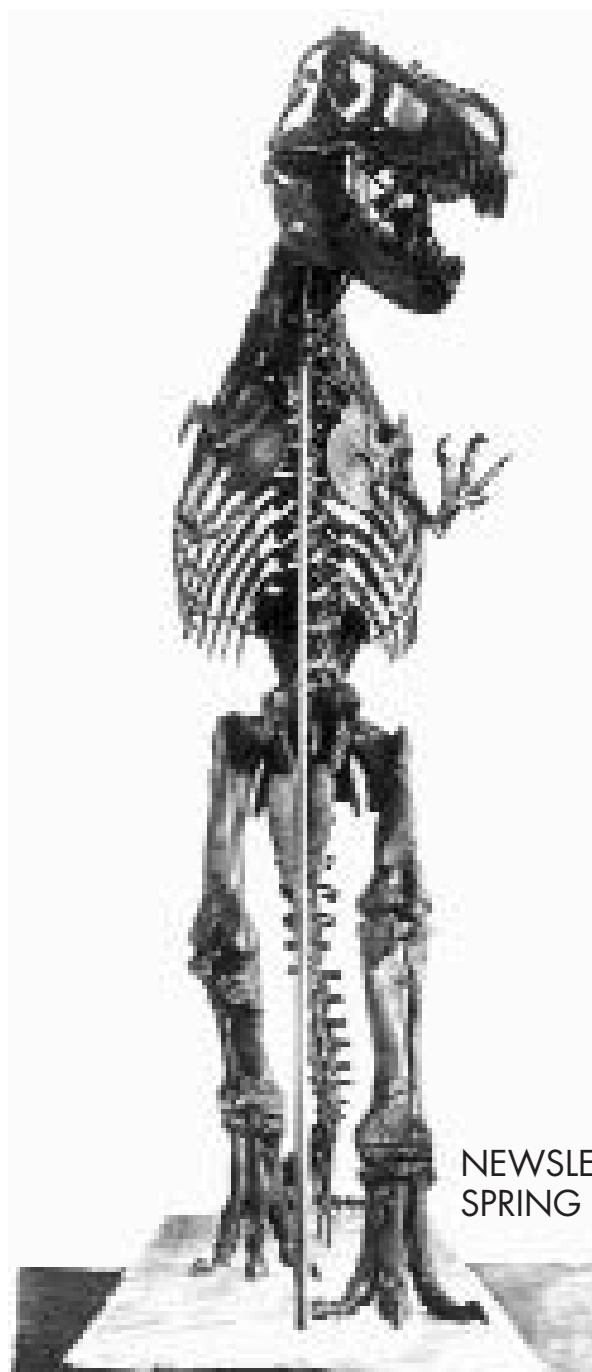
Landmark Angel...

By raising over \$45,000, LANDMARK WEST! was awarded a generous one-for-three matching grant of \$15,000 from the Ledler Foundation. This money has been allocated to the struggle against overdevelopment in the Special Lincoln Square District. LANDMARK WEST! thanks all of our generous Landmark Angels.

On our cover: Tyrannosaurus Rex Skeleton, 1915. Courtesy of the American Museum of Natural History Library.

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THE COMMITTEE TO PRESERVE THE UPPER WEST SIDE



NEWSLETTER
SPRING 1994