

Greetings, Neighbors...


Whew! It's been a hectic ten years. LANDMARK WEST! was formed in 1985 when a small group of Westsiders got together to lament the fact that our extraordinary neighborhood was being passed over by the official landmarking process. At the time, there were only 337 designated landmarks between 59th and 110th Streets, from Central Park West to the Hudson River (in contrast to the 1,510 protected buildings in the comparable Upper East Side area).

Well, ten years and **a lot** of work later, there are 2,603 protected buildings. LANDMARK WEST! has made a difference (immodestly, I believe **the** difference). LANDMARK WEST! is a significant participant in the continuing struggle to maintain an effective landmark preservation process. One of our first advocacy efforts, the Tony Randall-narrated "Best of the West" slide show, stated: "Landmark districts are not frozen in time." Neither is LANDMARK WEST!

We welcome Elise Rosenblatt as our new, full-time, hands-on, Executive Director (see below). After showing her the ropes, I will take a few months' sabbatical to recharge my batteries. But I will be back for LW!'s 11th Birthday.

This issue features a host of West Side stories—Hearst's castle in the sky (p. 2); the return of the Bishop's crook (p. 4); Columbia Prep goes to landmark school (p. 10); an interview with Jennifer Raab, the new Chair of the Landmarks Preservation Commission (p. 8); the stunning Ruth Orkin cover photo—and more.

On to the next decade...



Arlene Simon, President
LANDMARK WEST!

Elise Rosenblatt Joins Landmark West!



LANDMARK WEST! welcomes its new Executive Director, Elise Rosenblatt. Two years ago, while practicing corporate law in Massachusetts, Elise volunteered to help in the fight to save Worcester's Beaux-Arts-style Union Station. "That's when my life changed," says Elise. "I knew from then on that working to preserve architecture was what I wanted to do."

Elise was most recently Assistant to the Director of Preservation Worcester, where she gained experience in non-profit administration and community activism. She begins her work in New York during a year of celebration for the preservation community: 1995 marks both the 10th anniversary of LANDMARK WEST! and the 30th anniversary of the Landmarks Preservation Commission. "It certainly is an auspicious beginning," says Elise. "Though I see hard work ahead, I'm delighted to join forces with New York's dedicated preservationists."

Front cover photograph: Ruth Orkin's "White Stoops," 1952

Back cover illustration: Knickerbocker

San Simeon on the Hudson

by Kathleen Randall

If you think William Randolph Hearst's only castle was in California, think again. For years Hearst reigned over the top five floors of the Clarendon at 86th and Riverside Drive. Square footage alone does not a castle make, but Hearst being Hearst, his mammoth "quintuplex" boasted a North Museum, a South Museum, a Greek Room, an English Room, a Spanish Gallery, and a Julius Caesar Room. In 1913 Hearst added a vaulted Tapestry Gallery by cutting through the roof and constructing the tall copper mansard on the Clarendon's western edge. While the Hearst apartment was parceled out in 1940, a penthouse apartment now under construction in and around the mansard roof promises to be as spectacular—in a modest, late twentieth century sort of way—as the Tapestry Gallery.



CONSTRUCTION OF THE TWO-STORY PENTHOUSE IS

The Clarendon, a fairly conventional 12-story apartment house, was built in 1908 by developer Ranald Macdonald to the designs of architect Charles E. Birge. Hearst moved in the same year, giving up his four-story brownstone at Lexington Avenue and 28th Street and giving New York's upper class yet another sign that the days of reign for the private dwelling were numbered. For the Hearsts—William, his wife Millicent and their three sons—life in the Clarendon was far from apartment living as we know it, and not a significant sacrifice from townhouse living. They brought along six domestic employees (a number not unusual for the time or the Hearsts' social class) and William's burgeoning collection of art and artifacts, an ensemble that could be comfortably accommodated in the three top floors—about three-quarters of an acre of living space not counting the roof garden. In 1913 Hearst bought the building from Macdonald so he could add the mansard roof and commandeer two more floors. The Tapestry Gallery created by the mansard addition was easily the grandest of Hearst's alterations. The 100-foot long, 30-foot high gallery was detailed to suggest a gothic chapel, for Hearst intended to display his tapestries, suits of armor and stained glass properly.

By the early 1920s Hearst had become an extraordinarily ambitious and eclectic collector, yet he still found time to guide his publishing and real estate empires, as well as his political campaigns, from his office suite at the Clarendon. In 1927, about the time his dealings got a bit messy, he moved to California. Adamantly opposed to U.S. entry into WWI, Hearst was accused of entertaining German spies at the apartment. Building employees testified that he had a rooftop walkway built between the Clarendon and the building next door so he could elude process servers waiting at his own door. Hearst's habit of collecting and building to suit continued out west with his "castle" in San Simeon, California. In 1939, Mutual Life Insurance Company took the Clarendon from Hearst in foreclosure and proceeded to gut it, turning the existing 24 apartments into 60 more standard models.

High above Riverside Drive, the former Hearst residence is taking on new life

PETER COOMBS



CURRENTLY IN PROGRESS.

When the twelfth floor was reclaimed for apartments, the upper two-thirds of the tapestry gallery was left as an

under-the-roof-anomaly. The Clarendon's conversion to co-ops in 1985 opened the door to a reconfiguration and expansion of the space. The present owner, working with Siris/Coombs Architects, is creating a multi-level penthouse apartment within and around the narrow mansard fronting Riverside Drive.

The Clarendon is part of the Riverside-West End Historic District, designated in December 1989. Siris/Coombs Architects, a husband and wife team experienced in penthouse design, consulted with the Landmarks Preservation Commission while developing the design and subsequently presented it to the co-op board, LANDMARK WEST!, and before a public hearing of the Commission. To accommodate the penthouse conversion, several modifications to the mansard were necessary. Two new windows were added, the sill level of the original windows was lowered, and the height of the mansard was increased five feet—a change that actually improves the proportions of the building. The fact that the interior of the Hearst apartment was destroyed years ago eased the way for approval of the design, which the Commissioners praised as a successful integration of contemporary architecture with a building in a historic district.

The mansard covers about 2,500 square feet; three-quarters of the space will retain a 16-foot ceiling height to preserve the expansive quality of the original hall. A mezzanine level will be inserted in the remaining quarter and another 3,700 square feet will be added in a new, three-story structure behind and on top of the mansard. The new construction incorporates colored stucco with brownstone and antique brass trim, copper roofing, and a copper and brass frieze to temper the divide between new and old. A copper-roofed, cupola-topped solarium will extend over the mansard and be surrounded on three sides by roof decks.

Hearst's dark hideaway for tapestries will emerge from this renovation light-filled and loaded with Hudson River views. Reclaimed roof spaces lend themselves to such transformations. They require creativity and flexibility to convert, but the end result can be an extraordinary hideaway.

Historical material adapted from Christopher Gray's May 1, 1994 NY Times article. Kathleen Randall studied architectural history and historic preservation at Columbia.

Let There Be Lights!

We can't resurrect Pennsylvania Station, but we can bring back the wonderful, curved Victorian-style lampposts—known as “Bishop's crooks”—which disappeared from the city's streets at about the same time the station met its sorry end in the early 1960s. Take a walk along West 67th Street, between Columbus Avenue and Central Park West, and you'll see five Bishop's crooks standing proudly near the offices of LANDMARK WEST! Installed in March with the approval of the Landmarks Preservation Commission, the Art Commission and the Department of Transportation, the lampposts (technically a “gift” to the city) are faithful reproductions of the cast-iron fixtures that were once ubiquitous in New York.

But at \$3,000 a lamppost, bringing back the Bishop's crook is an expensive proposition. LANDMARK WEST!, which launched the project, succeeded in raising the funds from friends of West 67th Street. The success of the 67th Street project has inspired The Our Block Community Group on West 90th Street, between Riverside Drive and West End Avenue, to begin its own lamppost replacement program. If everything goes as planned, the block will be graced with three Bishop's crooks by Labor Day.

The West 67th Street block is in the Upper West Side/Central Park West Historic District; West 90th is in the Riverside-West End Historic District. If you would like information on how to bring back the Bishop's crook to your street, please call LANDMARK WEST! at 496 8110.



A SENSUOUSLY CURVED BISHOP'S CROOK LAMPOST SITS PROUDLY ON WEST 67TH STREET.

ROBERT LULO



RUTH ORKIN'S VISION OF W 88TH ST., 1952

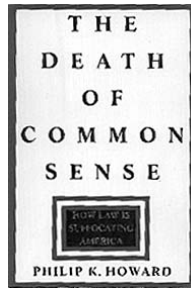
Photographer's Diary: Ruth Orkin

Ruth Orkin's photograph “White Stoops,” 1952 (featured on our cover) was taken from her window at 53 West 88th Street, which is included in the Upper West Side/Central Park West Historic District. Orkin moved to 65 Central Park West in 1955, and lived there until her death in 1985. She also photographed extensively from these windows overlooking Central Park. A major exhibition, **Ruth Orkin A Retrospective** is currently being held at the International Center of Photography, 5th Avenue and 94th Street, from May 5 – July 16, 1995.

Publications of Interest

* *The Death of Common Sense: How Law Is*

***Suffocating America*, by Philip K. Howard, Random House, 1995, 202 pages, \$18.00.** The land of freedom has become enmeshed in pointless regulations, bureaucratic paralysis, and conflicting demands for equality. So writes LANDMARK WEST! supporter and occasional spokesman, Philip K. Howard, who offers dozens of vivid stories—some humorous, some tragic—as he examines the basic assumptions of a system “that is driving Americans crazy.” This New York Times bestseller is sure to both enrage and engage you.



* *Architecture Transformed: A History of Photography of Buildings from 1839 to the Present*, by Cervin Robinson and Joel Herschman, M.I.T. Press and The Architectural League, 1990, 203 pages, \$29.95.

Nearly 200 black and white photographs grace this exquisite book, co-authored by the renowned architectural photographer and Upper West Sider, Cervin Robinson. The photographs range from 19th century views of Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris to contemporary shots of New York's skyscrapers with works by J.L.M. Daguerre, Eugene Atget, Walker Evans, and the above gem by Robinson. Writing in the *New Yorker*, Brendan Gill praised the book for giving “aesthetic delight on almost every page.”



THE TRIBUNE BUILDING, 1966 (SINCE DEMOLISHED)

CERVIN ROBINSON

See our book offer, pg. 6

Spring Events: Walking Tours

The West Side of America Join urban historian Warren Shaw for a walking tour of the architectural, literary and social history of the Upper West Side. Explore the rowhouses of the West Side—the “swan song” of Manhattan's single-family dwellings. See the revolutionary, extravagant apartment buildings that made multiple dwellings fashionable for the first time. Hear the stories of the many personalities that lived and worked here, and learn about the dozens of books and films that have made the West Side a staple of the American imagination. **Saturday, May 20, 1995, 1pm-4pm. Meet at the north-west corner of 72nd Street and Central Park West, the Dakota.**

The “Home Section” of the Upper West Side Join architectural historian Andrew Scott Dolkart for a walking tour past the elegant town houses and imposing apartment residences in the Riverside-West End Historic District. Mr. Dolkart will describe the transformation of the Upper West Side from an area of farms and market gardens to one of New York's choicest residential neighborhoods, with special emphasis on the advent of the apartment house on West End Avenue and Riverside Drive. **Saturday, June 10, 1995, 11am-1:30pm. Meet on the south-west corner of 86th Street and West End Avenue.**

The cost of each tour is \$10. All contributions are tax-deductible. Space is limited. For reservations call **LW!: 496-8110**. Don't forget your binoculars!

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 either *The Death of Common Sense* or *Architecture Transformed* (see Publications of Interest).

I'm giving a special 10th Anniversary gift:

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

The Death of Common Sense *Architecture Transformed*

Whatever you give will help \$ _____

I would like to be a LANDMARK WEST! Block Monitor. **

I will do volunteer work for LANDMARK WEST! – send me a form.

To help save costs, check here if you do not need acknowledgement of your gift.

Name (please print) You may not print my name as a contributor

Address _____ Apt. _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone: Home _____ Office _____ Fax _____

** Illegal alterations threaten individual landmarks and historic districts. If you spot questionable activities, call us. We'll investigate, and if necessary, involve the Landmarks Preservation Commission.

Thank you for your support.

LW! 45 W. 67th Street, NYC 10023 TEL (212) 496-8110 FAX (212) 875-0209

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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.



Preservation Profile: Jennifer J. Raab, Chair, Landmarks Preservation Commission

Interviewed by Douglas Cogen

LANDMARK WEST! recently asked Ms. Raab a series of questions about issues facing the cause of preservation in New York City:

Cogen: What do you see as the implications for preservation, both nationally and in New York, of recent efforts to require compensation for property owners for any governmental regulations which diminish the value of private property?

Raab: I am concerned about the so called “property rights” movement. But I am encouraged by the fact that historic preservation is generally accepted as constructive regulation that improves property values and gives stability to neighborhoods. The courts have supported this view. We need to continue to educate the public and elected officials about the beneficial effects of preservation. We must also continue to explore ways to show our appreciation to owners of designated buildings through programs of grants, loans, and tax incentives. By maintaining their landmark buildings, owners are making a contribution to our city and the quality of life for all of us.

DC: Would you like to see the rules governing the transfer of development rights (TDRs) changed and, if so, how?

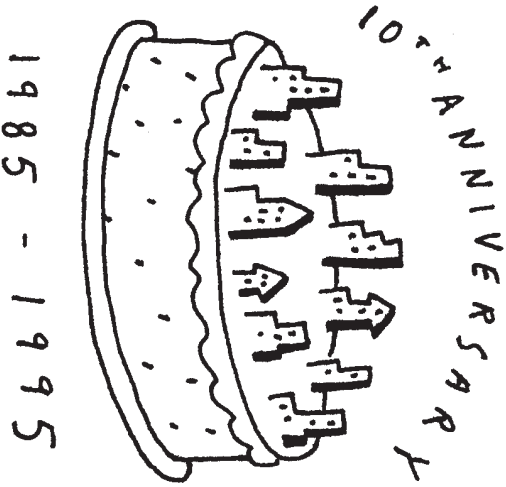
JR: The TDR is a useful mechanism. 55 Wall Street, India House and Amster Yard are examples of landmarks that have benefited from this provision. However, we believe there should be more flexibility in the way development rights can be transferred from landmarks in order to help preservation. City Planning agrees with this goal, and we are currently discussing with City Planning whether there are ways to expand the use of TDRs that are consistent with sound planning policy.

DC: Do you think the “hardship exception” process is properly structured and what changes do you think might improve it?

JR: On the whole, the process works. However, the process can be complicated, especially for not-for-profit owners. We want applicants to better understand the process and to know what types of information they are expected to provide to enable the LPC to make its decision.

DC: How can the LPC better enforce violations of the Landmarks Law?

JR: This is one of the most important issues we face. Violators cause great harm to the historic fabric of buildings and to the sense of place our historic districts create. It is also frustrating and unfair to the majority of owners who DO comply. I am committed to trying to expand the Commission’s enforcement powers to allow us — like the Department of Buildings and the Department of Environmental Protection — to impose administrative fines for violations. I have hired a Director of Enforcement to work on this issue. We are also improving our computer system through which we record and monitor violations. In addition, I believe that



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better education of owners, contractors, real estate brokers and architects will greatly facilitate compliance with the Landmarks Law.

DC: What buildings, historic districts or extensions of historic districts on the Upper West Side would you like to see designated during your tenure?

JR: The Upper West Side is a very special area of this city. Thanks in large part to the efforts of LANDMARK WEST! and other concerned citizens, much of the Upper West Side is now protected. I realize there is more to be done, but we also need to focus on other areas of the city that have very few designated properties. We are, of course, interested in suggestions from community members as to what they think should be given priority on the Upper West Side.

DC: Are you, as the City's chief preservationist, concerned with plans to build a residential building either atop or adjacent to the Historical Society?

JR: The New-York Historical Society is a wonderful Upper West Side landmark. My job, and that of the other Commissioners, is to ensure that any changes made to this property, and any designated properties, are appropriate ones. Of course, we will look with great care at any proposal to add to or otherwise alter the Historical Society, and will listen carefully to the applicant's and the community's views. I must add that the Historical Society has presented no plans for such a building to the LPC, so I cannot comment on any specific proposal.

Doug Cogen, Esq. LW! board member, former Menapace Fellow, Municipal Art Society.

Update: Tomorrow's Developments

LANDMARK WEST! makes a special effort to stay on top of tomorrow's developments (often enough, yesterday's problems redux), bringing to bear our unique blend of community activism and informed professional expertise to help shape responsible solutions - or fight irresponsible ones.

1. Fight the Fees! A City-imposed fee for permits issued by the L.P.C.? Bad ideas seem never to die. Often rejected in past financial crises, this would penalize those who comply with regulation in the public interest, while violators laugh all the way to the bank.

2. St. Paul and St. Andrew (86 & WEA). Reemergence of the threat to demolish this gloriously ornate church. Deliberate neglect + an insatiable taste for litigation = yet another peril for this glorious Paul-ine.

3. Towers Nursing Home (CPW & 106). Ever since the disastrous roof-gutting fire broke out within hours after landmark designation 20 years ago, this multi-turreted castle-like structure has struggled to survive. After a series of troubled (some, troubling) owners, the bank searches for a solution. Opportunity? Or threat?

4. New-York Historical Society (CPW & 77). From the financial pages, to the arts and leisure section - and now, to the real estate section. The Society's last development scheme, unveiled in the 1980s, proposed constructing a luxury tower on top of its classic 1908 landmarked building. Word has it that a new development is afoot.

5. Museum of Natural History (CPW & 77). Planned new construction. We'll keep a close eye on it.

Let That Be a Lesson

by Barbara L. Michaels

Last fall, Columbia Grammar and Prep learned a hard lesson: always investigate the status of your site or building to determine if it is landmarked or located in a landmarked district **before** beginning to design or renovate. Last-minute design changes and much anxiety could have been avoided had Columbia Prep and its architect realized that the lot for its new building, between 92nd and 93rd Streets off Central Park West, lay within the Upper West Side/Central Park West Historic District.

That fact came to light in October 1994, just as construction was about to begin. The project had to be put "on hold" until it complied with the approval process required by the Landmarks Law. Testifying at the hearing in October, LANDMARK WEST!, the West 92 Street Block Association, and other concerned organizations expressed dissatisfaction with the building's design which they argued related neither to nearby apartment buildings, nor to Columbia Prep's existing buildings.

At the hearing, LPC Chair Jennifer Raab reproached the school for having overlooked the Commission's approval process, and stressed the importance of complying with the landmarks law. She then appointed a special subcommittee of three commissioners—Sarah Bradford Landau, William E. Davis, Jr., and Vicki Match Suna—to work with the architect to expedite design revisions so construction could begin as soon as possible. Landau, who is also Commission Vice Chair, commented: "Chair Raab has wisely reinstated the sub-committee process for difficult cases like



this one, and the procedure worked well here. However, there is no excuse for this sort of last-minute, frantic situation which adds an unnecessary burden to an already overburdened, understaffed Commission."

The revised design for the school building was approved by LPC in late

1994 and satisfied most of the critics' concerns. Revisions to the design included enlarged windows, the addition of cast-stone banding, and the relocation of a rooftop cooling tower to make it invisible from the street. The 92nd Street facade was redesigned to give it more visual interest.

Commenting on the final design, Columbia Prep's headmaster, Richard Soghoian, expressed approval. "It's been a long process," but a "very productive and healthy process," he said, noting that the school had "ended up with something more pleasing to us." Construction of the new building is scheduled for completion in late 1995.

The lesson Columbia Prep learned is a lesson for us all: do your homework before building or renovating. If you are unsure of the status of your property, call LANDMARK WEST! We'll be happy to help.

Barbara L. Michaels, LW! board member, art historian and author.

Arlene Simon: A Lion in our Midst



ARLENE SIMON WITH PRESENTER BILL MOYERS AND PRESERVATIONIST ANTHONY C. WOOD.

On November 29, 1994, Arlene Simon, founder of LANDMARK WEST!, received the Landmarks Lion Award from the Historic Districts Council, the city-wide voice for New York's 66 designated historic districts. The ceremony, which took place at the landmarked Universalist Church on Central Park West and 76th Street (Minister: Darrell Berger), honored Arlene for her "devotion and

aggressiveness in protecting landmarks and historic districts." The evening was a reunion of sorts, as well as a celebration, for the event brought out over 300 preservationists. LANDMARK WEST! supporter Bill Moyers, who presented the award, spoke for many in the audience when he praised Arlene as "a true hero." "She is the spirit of people who without praise, who without tribute, who without laurels and who without recognition, daily battle for the quality of the civilization that we call this City," said Moyers. Arlene isn't one to bask in praise for long. A week after being named a Landmarks Lion, she said: "Award nights come and go—the glow fades—but our hard work of preserving the Best of the West—and the Rest, goes on. See you in the trenches."

Anthony C. Wood: A Medal for His Mettle

It was standing room only at City Hall on April 19, 1995, as Anthony C. Wood (see photo above) stepped forward to accept the Fine Arts Federation Bronze Medal for "outstanding public service to the arts." Tony, a founding LANDMARK WEST! board member, has been a leading preservation activist for nearly twenty years, "fighting the good fight," as he puts it. Over the years, he has helped establish a number of preservation organizations, including the Historic Districts Council; battled for the landmarks law and the city's endangered treasures; and testified at countless public hearings. He is currently an advisor to the National Trust for Historic Preservation and a board member of the Preservation League of New York State. In accepting the bronze medal, Tony reminded the audience that "there is truly an army of New Yorkers who share our beliefs. We owe it to the giants on whose shoulders we stand, to future generations, and to ourselves to go forth with renewed energy and vigor to fight...for a livable New York."

Postscript...St. Urban

The article on the St. Urban's recent transformations in the Fall 1994 newsletter omitted mention of the firm of Walter B. Melvin, Architect, which has served as the building's restoration architects for six years. The firm designed the new copper roof and replaced the elaborate copper lantern on top of the turret. They also designed a metal cornice with integral gutters to replace the original cornice removed in the 1960s, wrote the specs for cleaning and pointing the limestone base, restored the porte-cochere's coffered plaster ceiling, and guided the window repair and painting project. With a building as large and detailed as the St. Urban, this is no task to be left to the non-professional—or to be left unrecognized.

LANDMARK WEST!

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NEWSLETTER SPRING 1995

Our 10th
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1985-1995