

Greetings, Neighbor . . .



Even though modesty is not one of my strong suits, I must confess to a twinge of doubt as we selected Stephen Jay Gould's quotation for this issue's cover. "...one of the most noble callings..." Moi? Seriously, historic preservation is more than a nostalgic movement or a land-use tool—it is an ethic, a value. In my view, it is an essential component of any society that values something more than short-term maximization of wealth.

If the current marketplace rewards nothing but multi-plexes, retail theme-parks, and towering, multi-use monoliths, who are we to get in the way? What difference does a restored entrance, or a renewed small retail center, make? They make all the difference in the world if the Upper West Side is to be more than a "superfluous bauble," in Gould's terms.

This issue deals with these questions and the finger pointing, wound licking, and small victories that accompany their resolution. Often I try to steer our readers to specific articles in order to highlight a current concern. In this issue, strike at random. You can't miss.

Re the cover: Stephen Jay Gould, noted essayist and evolutionist, Harvard Professor and Museum of Natural History curator, was lamenting the disappearance of the Dodo bird and other extinct species, more than he was applauding historic preservationists, but the message is universal. Preserve, or lose precious things. Dodo birds and Penn Station are gone. Preservation of anything doomed requires vision, action, and determination. Gould speculated that nearly anyone in his line of work "would take a bullet for the last impregnated Dodo." Can we say the same about landmark preservationists?

Sincerely,

Arlene Simon, President

Update: Squeezes Revisited

Our Spring 1996 Newsletter article, "So Much for the Squeezes - Now Enforce the Landmarks Law," provoked a serious and detailed response from Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) Chairman Jennifer Raab.

The Squeeze article argued that despite the Giuliani administration's emphasis on the need for consistent enforcement of "quality of life" laws, enforcement of the New York City landmarks law is virtually non-existent. The charge was supported with specific examples of weak enforcement.

Raab, in response, argued that enforcement problems pre-date the current administration by over two decades; that she has made enforcement a top priority and created the position of Director of Enforcement who has been engaged in a number of initiatives, including the drafting of an amendment to the law to allow for civil penalties. Raab also emphasized the education effort undertaken by the LPC to prevent violations from occurring.

Front cover illustration by Knickerbocker, featuring the San Remo Apts, 145-146 CPW

LANDMARK WEST! 45 W. 67 ST, NYC 10023 TEL (212) 496-8110 FAX (212) 875-0209

Mourning the Eclair

by Kristen Prachar

- A canopy hawks "Panties 47 cents."
- A tawdry check-cashing walk-in.
- Eclair, bankrupt and closed.
- Herman's, bankrupt and closed.
- Fast food joints come and go.



Such is the sorry state of West 72 Street between Columbus and Broadway, a once-proud retail street, and part of the Upper West Side/Central Park West Historic District. Extraordinary commercial growth on Columbus, Amsterdam and Broadway has left long-time W. 72 St. merchants in the dust. At the same time, city government has made no significant capital investments in this street in decades. The "sense of place" W. 72 St. created, as an attractive place to shop or simply stroll, has been subjected to a series of assaults: garish, and ultimately self-defeating, signage and architecturally inappropriate alterations; a bewildering array of illegal canopies and sidewalk intrusions; streetside garbage piles; broken sidewalks and pitted roadway; and a forest of parking meters, signs, and unnecessary receptacles of various sorts.

LWI's Retail Assistance Program (RAP) has selected W. 72 St. as its pilot project. Our team of local residents and professionals, business people, architects, planners, preservationists and real estate experts, is consulting with W. 72 St. owners and merchants to improve the quality of this critical commercial corridor, increase retail traffic, and improve gross sales for individual businesses. In effect, to restore its status as a special "destination point" on the Upper West Side.

The rebuilding of Columbus and the projected reconstruction of the Broadway IRT station at W. 72 St. represent a major investment in the commercial vitality of the neighborhood. RAP now wants to focus attention on this neglected but vital shopping street – the missing link between Columbus and Broadway. To make W. 72 St. more inviting we are proposing improvements similar to those provided on Columbus, including doubling the number of lampposts and replacing existing ones with historic cast-iron lampposts, increasing the number of trees, replacing existing parking meters with double-headed models and reorganizing the large number of mail/storage boxes and public telephones cluttering the block.

Key retail constituents are working actively with RAP and CB7, and already we are making a difference.

- The new owner of Eclair worked with RAP's architects to produce a sensitive new storefront and received a speedy LPC approval.
- The new owner of 175 W. 72 St. worked with LWI's Certificate of Appropriateness Committee and RAP to produce a wonderful restored entrance and storefront to this important building. Again, prompt LPC approval was secured.

There's a long way to go and plenty of obstacles to overcome, but part of protecting the Best of the West is improving the rest. Central to the success of this effort is a public/private partnership where public funding (secured by Councilmember Ronnie Eldridge) can be used to benefit local businesses. That's what RAP is all about. Can you help? Call us.

Kristen Prachar is a graduate of Columbia University's Historic Preservation master's program.

Normandy: Court Protects Its Border

by David Rosenberg, Esq.

The landmark Normandy Apartments, a distinctive art moderne building designed by Emery Roth in 1938-1939, has successfully blocked an effort by the new owners of its five-story neighbor to construct a thirteen-story, 190', "sliver" building.

On April 24, 1997 after a four day hearing the Normandy (a co-op, on Riverside Drive, between 86 and 87 Streets), obtained a preliminary injunction preventing erection of the sliver from State Supreme Court Judge Louise Gruner Gans. The ruling received front page coverage by the New York Law Journal on April 29, indicating its significance. Judge Gans relied primarily upon a "restrictive covenant" dating to 1900, but emphasized the significance of the landmark status of the Normandy and the surrounding historic district. Judge Gans referred to the history of the Riverside-West End Historic District in the Designation Report of the Landmarks Preservation Commission describing "... an area of great architectural diversity, demonstrating the persistence of town houses, row houses and brownstones in the streets surrounding the Normandy."

Judge Gans noted that: "The Normandy is not just an apartment house. It is an extraordinary landmark whose architectural distinction [protects it] There is a significant risk that construction of the planned sliver building ... will compromise the architectural character of the Normandy ... as much as a physical alteration would." The statement is an important judicial recognition of the need to shield landmark property from the impact of inappropriate developments in nearby - and unprotected - districts. This concept of buffer protection has been the subject of some hand-wringing commentary, but little action. Stay tuned.

LW! had more than a passing interest in this proceeding, having proposed and worked hard for the designation of the Normandy as an individual landmark in 1985, and having proposed and played an instrumental role in the designation of the Riverside-West End Historic District. Indeed, LW! funded the research for the designation report cited by Judge Gans, which was prepared by Steven Ruttenbaum, author of *Mansions in the Clouds*, a definitive work about Emery Roth. (See books in brief, pg. 5) LW! provided substantive support to the Normandy in its litigation effort.

Based on Judge Gans' decision, the Normandy has asked the LPC to include the original building in the historic district or to designate it individually.

David Rosenberg, Esq. of Marcus Borg Rosenberg & Diamond, represents the Normandy.



Automobile Row: Garage to Go?

by Christopher W. London

The future of another cherished building on Broadway familiar to many as the home of the Saloon and the World Gym is now threatened. The structure, opposite Lincoln Center, is the former Goelet Garage Building at 1926 Broadway. The Goelet Garage (pronounced guh-LET), is a distinguished Chicago Loft-style building, with many admirable architectural characteristics. Similar in style to buildings by the architect Daniel Burnham, it is a rare turn-of-the-century survivor on the Upper West Side. Its six-story height, fine white matte terra-cotta detailing and highly visible presence from Lincoln Center make it a 'landmark' in the area.

1926 Broadway anchors a corner site on this park block composed of many interesting buildings. The Liberty Warehouse next door, and several other buildings on this 'finger' extended from CPW, reinforce the ambience of the Upper West Side/Central Park West Historic District they abut.

The Goelet Garage was built as part of what was a newly developing 'Automobile Row'. In its heyday 'Automobile Row' stretched from the high 40s up to the low 70s between Broadway and Twelfth Avenue. The garage functioned originally as a construction, maintenance and sales point for cars rather than for their storage. Very little remains today of this historic pattern of growth. However, at one time the GM Building was at 58 St. and Broadway, and the Packard, Hudson, Peerless, Marmon, Cadillac, Chevrolet and other showrooms filled Broadway with business activity and transport options.

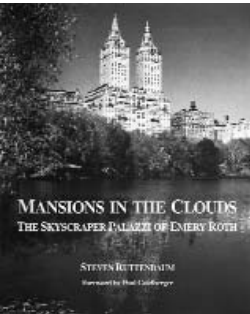
1926 Broadway was built between 1906 and 1908. Robert Goelet (1880-1966), an automobile enthusiast, chose as his architects Frank M. Andrews with the assistance of Maynicke & Franke. Andrews' most celebrated building in New York is his Hotel McAlpin at 34 St. & Broadway, the first skyscraper hotel, and one originally provided with extremely lavish and luxurious interiors. Outside New York, Andrews' most important commissions are the State Capitols of Kentucky and Montana, and his extensive work in Cincinnati. Robert D. Maynicke & Julius Franke designed numerous buildings in and adjacent to the Ladies Mile Historic District.

LW! and HDC have proposed an expansion of the Upper West Side/Central Park West Historic District, to include the W. 64 & W. 65 St. 'finger' including 1926 Broadway. LW! has commissioned an historic report for the LPC to expand the district. It contains photographs and a more detailed history and description of the proposed area. We will keep you posted.

Christopher W. London, art historian and author, holds a doctorate in architectural history.

Books in Brief

Manhole Covers by Mimi and Robert A. Melnick, MIT Press, 1994, 252 Pages, \$39.95. Compiled over 25 years of travel across America, *Manhole Covers* presents a rich history of these overlooked, “mundane” objects, which dot our streets and sidewalks. The book features 200 black and white photographs, which zoom in on the hefty disks, revealing elaborate decorative designs, whimsy, and beauty. The book also documents the foundries that manufactured manhole covers, and explains why they are patterned, and what the patterns mean. After reading this book, you’ll have a whole new world to explore, right under your feet.



Mansions in the Clouds: The Skyscraper Palazzi of Emery Roth by Steven Ruttenbaum, foreword by Paul Goldberger, Balsam Press, 1986, 223 pages, \$45. Architect Emery Roth was the gifted designer of some 250 buildings in New York City, including Upper West Side landmarks the Beresford, San Remo, Normandy, and Oliver Cromwell. This richly illustrated book celebrates Roth’s life and career, “from penniless Hungarian immigrant to consummate designer of flamboyant buildings in New York between 1898 and 1948.”

New York 1900: Metropolitan Architecture and Urbanism 1890 - 1915 by Robert A.M. Stern, Gregory Gilmartin and John Massengale, Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., 1984, 502 pages, \$50.00. Based on extensive research and a vast collection of period photographs, “*New York 1900* is an invaluable tool, a fruitful reference work which provides a freeze-frame of the many architectural styles and theories which were revolving around Manhattan” at the turn of the century. The book highlights certain aspects of city life as New York came into its own, and describes, in rich detail, the architectural expressions of the time. Well designed, well organized and beautifully printed, *New York 1900* offers a valuable historical perspective for those of us interested in the best of the west!



See our book offer, pg. 6

Spring Event: Walking Tour

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. **Tuesday, June 17, 1997, 6-8 pm. Meet on the south-west corner of 86 St. and West End Ave. The cost is \$10.00. For reservations call LW! at 496-8110.**

LANDMARK WEST!

Support LANDMARK WEST! – we need your help. Make your tax-deductible contribution below, and return this form.

★ **A special offer:** Contribute \$150 or more, and receive a gift of either *Manhole Covers*, by Mimi and Robert A. Melnick; *Mansion in the Clouds*, by Steven Ruttenbaum; *New York 1900*, by Robert A.M. Stern, Gregory Gilmartin and John Massengale; *Over the Door* by John Yang; *AIA Guide to NY*, by Elliot Willensky and Norval White or another book from our collection.

1 \$25 1 \$50 1 \$100 1 \$150 ★ 1 \$500 1 \$1000

1 *Manhole Covers* 1 *Mansions in the Clouds* 1 *New York 1900* 1 *Over the Door*

1 Whatever you give will help \$ _____

1 Thanks, you can keep the book...but here’s my gift of \$150

1 I would like to make a gift in honor of _____

1 I would like to be a LANDMARK WEST! Block Monitor ★★

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

1 My employer offers a Matching Grants Program – the form is enclosed

1 Send me a copy of the LANDMARK WEST! map newsletter

1 I would like to be notified of walking tours

1 To save costs, I do not need acknowledgement of my gift

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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.**

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About LANDMARK WEST!

LANDMARK WEST! is a non-profit award-winning community group working to preserve the best of the Upper West Side’s architectural heritage from 59 to 110 St. 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 2,604 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.

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145-147 W. 72 BETWEEN COLUMBUS & BROADWAY, 1936

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Preservation Profile: Meredith Kane

by Anthony Barzilay Freund



Meredith Kane, a partner in the law firm of Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton and Garrison who specializes in real estate, was appointed to the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) in 1996. After receiving her B.A. in philosophy from Yale in 1976 she was hired as a planner for the city of New Haven, work she says ultimately “led to Harvard Law School and really launched my career in real estate and preservation.”

Kane has sustained those twin interests to this day. Discussing her favorite NYC landmark—Grand Central Station—she admits she spent months studying it when she negotiated its 1994 purchase by the MTA, a Paul, Weiss client. While Paul, Weiss is also the professional home of LPC Chair, Jennifer Raab, Kane believes they bring different strengths and skills to the LPC. “Jennifer has a litigation background. I work with building owners, developers, and tenants and understand the economics and constraints of putting a deal together.” Kane says her primary focus is “to help insure the LPC applies its precedents consistently and that our rules are clear so when property owners come to us they know what to expect and how to factor in the cost of the work we’ll require of them.” Despite an often contentious relationship between landlords and preservationists in the booming 1980s, Kane believes today “the real estate community understands, respects, and even welcomes landmarking because it confers a sense of prestige onto a property. And, of course, prestige translates into profit.”

Kane contends landmarking makes good economic sense in other ways. “There’s just no question that when neighborhoods are designated historic districts people feel freer to invest their money and upgrade their properties,” she says. “Sitting on the LPC I’m privileged to see what an enormous amount of investment is going on in the city - and that includes its landmarked neighborhoods.” When old buildings have grown obsolete or impractical for today’s needs, she advocates, “creative, workable reuses, like what the LPC is seeing in Wall Street—where spectacular early skyscrapers are being successfully transformed for smaller entrepreneurial businesses and residences.”

In a dynamic city, buildings and neighborhoods are constantly evolving, says Kane, citing the recent redesign of the interior courtyard of W. 86 Street’s Belnord Apartments. “When the proposal came up before the LPC there were long discussions about what had been the historic design of the garden versus the current use patterns. The building’s owners, tenants, and the LPC struggled to arrive at a compromise that restores some of the classical, Italian style of the garden but nevertheless reflects the fact that it’s a green oasis with beautiful flowering trees and shrubs from a later date. But what touched and impressed me most about the Belnord experience, was how many residents came down to testify about the importance of their landmark building and the beauty and usefulness of its garden. This city’s really full of thoughtful, articulate people who care passionately about their built environment.”

Anthony Barzilay Freund is an Associate Editor at Town & Country.

Schinasi: A Manor from Turkish Tobacco

by Christopher Gray

In the 1880s, the predictions for the future of Riverside Drive were bright. All the rich people with mansions on congested Fifth Avenue would surely soon move over to the picturesque Hudson River, where they could build graceful, free-standing houses surrounded by light, air and grass. But by the early 1900s most of the rich folks had decided that they liked Fifth Avenue, even if it was crowded with sightseers and its mansions had less breathing space than tenements.



But not everyone agreed with the prevailing wisdom. The Pennsylvania steel millionaire Charles Schwab finished his full-block house from 73 to 74 St. in 1906, and in 1907 Morris Schinasi began what is now the most impressive house in private ownership on Riverside Drive. Schinasi had emigrated from Turkey in the 1890s with his brother Solomon. They brought Turkish cigarettes with them and popularized the much stronger tobacco here, building and cornering the market within a few years.

For his new house, Morris Schinasi retained William Tuthill, the architect for Carnegie Hall. The French Renaissance-style, Vermont white marble mansion that Tuthill designed for Schinasi was called by the Real Estate Record & Guide “a four-sided house, and exquisite from any side.” The white marble blocks - placed in construction in accordance with their veining - are set off by a bright green tile roof with fanciful copper cresting. To mitigate against what the journal called the “incorrigible vandal” of New York’s polluted air, Schinasi had water taps distributed around the outside of the house to permit frequent washing. Surrounded by plantings and set back from the property line on all sides, the design of the three-story house reproached the tall, densely built mansions going up on the East Side.

Although a few private houses went up on Riverside Drive after 1909, none approached the Schinasi house in scale or design. The building (at 107 St.) was designated a landmark in 1974. The house was sold in 1930 and was first a school and later a day-care center. In 1979, Hans Smit, a law professor at Columbia University, bought the building, and has been working on the restoration for almost two decades. In an interview last month, he said he was now “just a couple of inside doors” short of a complete interior restoration. The new exterior iron doors are among the final touches on the exterior restoration. The outside is presentable, but not pristine. “If I really fix up the outside, the undesirable elements will pay attention” Smit says. “When I bought it, most people said, ‘You’re a raving maniac.’ But it’s the best investment I ever made.”

Based on material in Christopher Gray’s New York Times May 4, 1997 article.

Central Park: Signs of the Times

by Moisha K. Blechman

This past winter, LANDMARK WEST! was busy safeguarding the greensward of America’s premier outdoor work of art and designated NYC scenic landmark: Central Park. The most recent threat to the historic park landscape came from the Central Park Conservancy, which planned a blockbuster park sign system consisting of 146 kiosk-like, enameled-metal signs that were over 7 feet tall and 3½ feet wide—roughly the size of an average NYC telephone booth. Each sign featured directional information, park rules, and information about the Conservancy.

The sign project had been germinating at the Conservancy for over 7 years, without the knowledge or consultation of any preservation organizations or neighborhood associations, and the mammoth signs had been presented to the NYC Landmarks and Art Commission last November. LW! quickly organized a coalition of concerned neighbors and civic groups, including the Municipal Art Society, Historic Districts Council, Friends of the Upper East Side, Carnegie Hill Neighbors, Women’s City Club, Sierra Club, and Audubon Society. Through the efforts of the coalition, the proposal was dramatically downsized, reducing both the size of the signs and their number, from 146 to 23. However, the signs do still advertise the names of park donors. The revised sign project has been approved by the Art Commission, and installation in the Park is expected to begin this summer.

Under the aegis of LW!, another coalition of concerned neighbors and preservationists campaigned for the restoration and historic integrity of the award-winning Adventure Playground in Central Park, located (on the west side of the park) just north of Tavern on the Green. Based on the post-war “adventure” playgrounds of Scandinavia and Britain, the Adventure Playground heralded a virtual revolution in playground design when it opened in 1966. By 1995, the playground required repairs to enable it to continue as a safe and creative place to play. However, the original proposal greatly compromised the core concept of imaginative play and natural materials, and would have demolished significant and integral features of the playground.

In conjunction with Friends of the Adventure Playground, LW! organized a series of meetings between parents, neighbors, preservationists, playground safety experts, and Richard Dattner, the original playground architect. A proposal was developed which would replace deteriorated and dangerous features of the playground with new elements that were historically compatible as well as safe, fun, and wheelchair accessible.

This proposal was presented to the Central Park Conservancy, which largely adopted it and worked directly with Mr. Dattner on the revised design. Renovations to the playground began in March, and are expected to be completed by May 1997.

Central Park is very large, serving diverse neighborhoods and constituencies. The park-wide “signage” issue, and the more localized Adventure Playground fracas, demonstrate the need for watchdogs, like LW!, to protect the historic integrity of our treasured park against often well-meaning, but misguided “improvers.”

Moisha K. Blechman is on the Executive Committee of the New York City Sierra Club

Trinity School: An A+ Solution

by Barbara L. Michaels



In a textbook example of cooperation with LANDMARK WEST!, the Trinity School's original plan to erect a new classroom building alarmingly unsympathetic to its own landmarked St. Agnes Parish House has been replaced by a smart new design that lets history live.

The Parish House at 121 W. 91 St. is all that remains of the St. Agnes parish complex designed by the noted architect, William Appleton Potter, for Trinity Church between 1890 and 1892. Unlike most New York buildings, which are essentially facades, the Romanesque Revival structure was always meant to be viewed from all sides. Potter left space between the church and the parish house to create the impression that the church was surrounded by a large yard, a valued dimension.

The Trinity School's original plan would have replaced its lowrise, unlandmarked 1960s gym with a taller building that altered and nearly obliterated the beautiful stonework, decorative banding, and arched window of the parish house's east facade. LW! urged Trinity to rethink their plan in a manner which would leave the east facade visible and make the design more sympathetic to the parish house.

Agreeing with our concerns, the Landmarks Preservation Commission postponed their decision until they had made a site visit. Meanwhile, Trinity and LW! worked out a modified plan. Members of the Trinity School building committee (Board President Gus Oliver and developer Daniel Brodsky) and their architects (Harry Buttrick and Andrew Wolfram of Buttrick, White and Burtis) held five fruitful meetings with LW! members (Page Ayres Cowley, Andrew Dolkart, Barbara L. Michaels, Arlene Simon, and Caroline Zaleski), to review and revise the design.

You can judge our success by taking this multiple choice quiz: In how many of the following ways did our meetings help to improve Trinity's design?

- A.** The east wall of the parish house, which is being renovated for specialized classrooms and school functions, will remain visible and a sense of the building's three-dimensionality will be preserved.
- B.** A tower that recalls the profile of Potter's church has been added to enhance the new building's roofline.
- C.** The parish house entrance and doors have been thoroughly researched and will be restored.
- D.** Sensitive detailing has been added to the east wall of the new building.

Clue: The answer explains why LANDMARK WEST! is delighted to have taken part in this A+ solution to Trinity's expansion.

Answer: All of the above.

Barbara L. Michaels is the author of Gertrude Käsebier: The Photographer and Her Photographs.

LANDMARK WEST!

THE COMMITTEE TO PRESERVE THE UPPER WEST SIDE



"If we regard the details of vibrant diversity as precious and glorious - and not as superfluous baubles upon Platonic essences - then the profession of preservation becomes one of the most noble callings that a person can undertake for a life's work."

Stephen Jay Gould -
The Dodo in the Caucus Race,
Natural History, November 1996

NEWSLETTER SPRING 1997