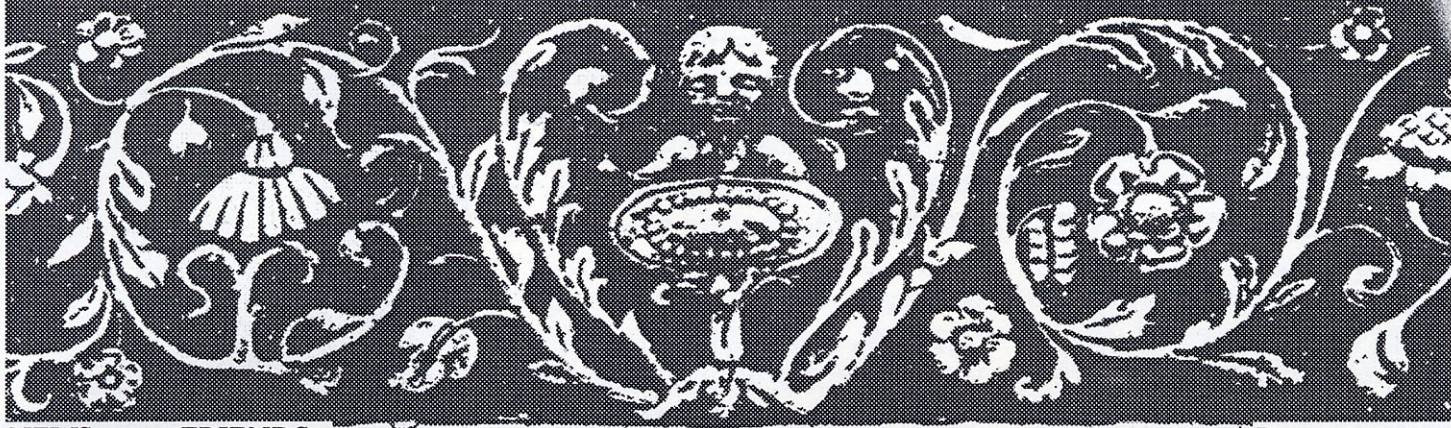


# FRIENDS of the UPPER EAST SIDE HISTORIC DISTRICTS



NEWS FROM FRIENDS

JULY 13, 2003

*FRIENDS often calls on you to help us preserve the special character of the Upper East Side. In this update we discuss a number of issues for which we need your help more than ever. What can you do? Write a letter to the Landmarks Preservation Commission asking them NOT to institute fees for permits. While you're at it, also call your City Council member and tell them you are opposed to these fees. Write letters of support for the designation of the Upper East Side's modern architecture (see article below) and City and Suburban Homes Company's First Avenue Estate. You'll find all the names and addresses you need inside.*

*We also rely on you to keep our organization healthy. If you haven't already done so, join us as member. Volunteer to be a docent in our elementary education program or be a community surveyor. Finally, come celebrate preservation with us at our Annual Fall Benefit on Thursday, October 23, 2003. August W. Boehm, the celebrated cabaret and musical artist, will perform his wonderful "A Tribute to New York" that evening. Have a lovely rest of the summer and I hope to see you at our benefit.*

*Gil Amiag*

## Modern Building Slated for Demolition

A significant example of modern architecture on the Upper East Side, The Group Residence for Young Adults at 217 East 87th Street (Horace Ginsbern & Assoc., Architects: 1968), is slated for demolition. It will be replaced by a meeting house for the Church of Latter Day Saints, which will cover the entire lot on the mid-block between Second and Third Avenues. FRIENDS has requested that the Church reconsider the demolition and reuse the building, but the Church has declined to consider preservation.

Ginsbern's building is one of 22 included in FRIENDS' September 2001 exhibit, *Modern Architecture on the Upper East Side: Landmarks of the Future* (catalogue available upon request). Its demolition highlights the urgent need to protect the modern architecture on the Upper East Side and across the City. The Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) has designated some important modern buildings, but most remain at risk. Because they are challenging buildings, there is not always wide public support for their preservation. Nonetheless, they are an important part of our collective architectural patrimony.

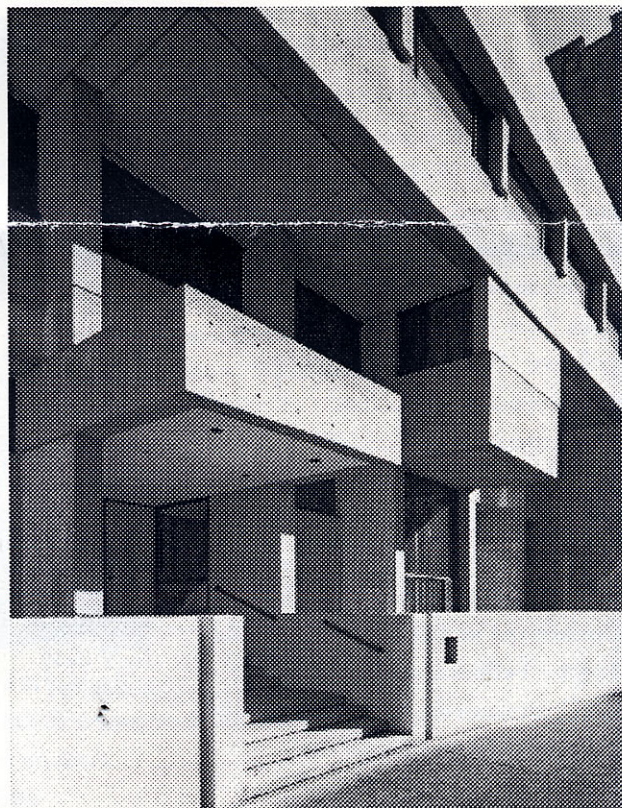


photo: Gil Amiag



## Modern Building Demolition (cont)

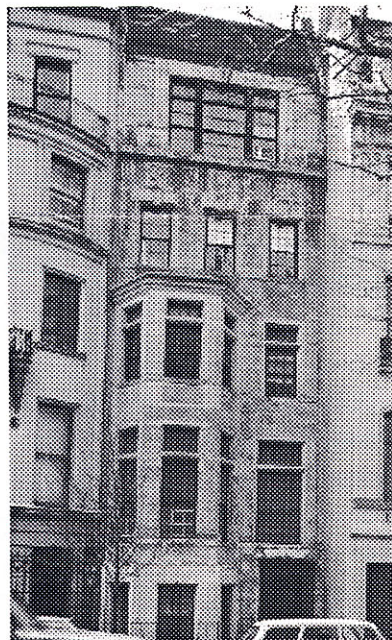
The Jewish Board of Guardians built the Group Residence as a nondenominational home and school for troubled teens. It is a rare example of New Brutalist architecture in Manhattan. It echoes Le Corbusier's pioneering treatment of raw concrete, or "béton brut," in the 1950s as such works as the Convent of La Tourette near Lyon, France. Brutalist design incorporated a new philosophy toward materials, rejecting the International Style's "veneer-like" treatment of facades in favor of celebrating the textured quality and dynamic massing that can be achieved through the plasticity of concrete.

Horace Ginsbern (1900-1969) designed a number of buildings across the city, from Art Deco apartment buildings on the Bronx's Grand Concourse to public housing projects in Harlem. Although his name is not widely recognized, he was included in the LPC's 1992 exhibit entitled, "New York City's Great Unheralded Architects."

FRIENDS is working hard to protect this important period in architecture. We have requested that the LPC consider the designation of three of the most significant and endangered examples of modern architecture on the Upper East Side; Cinema I II at 1001 3rd Ave. (1962: Abraham W. Geller & Associates with Ben Schlanger, consulting theater architect), Manhattan House at 200 East 66th St. (1950: Skidmore, Owings & Merrill and Mayer & Whittlesey), and the Beekman Theater and Blockfront at 1242-1258 Second Ave. (1952: Fellheimer & Wagner et al). The Commission has not yet acted on our request to designate the buildings.

FRIENDS has requested that the Landmarks Preservation Commission restore the original boundaries of the individual landmark, City and Suburban Homes Company, First Avenue Estate (E. 64th Street to East 65th Street between First and York Avenues). Built between 1898 and 1915, City and Suburban Homes Company's First Avenue Estate is the oldest extant project of the most successful of the privately financed, limited-dividend companies that attempted to address the housing problems of the nation's working poor at the turn of the century. The 15-building complex is one of only two full city block developments of light-court tenements in the country.

Most of FRIENDS' members remember the triumphal battle to save City and Suburban's York Avenue Estate (E. 78th St. to 79th St. between York Ave. and the FDR Drive).



*Classified as a "no style" building, this view of 8 East 67th Street from 1982 shows the rowhouse stripped of its decorative details.*

## Making a Landmark Whole Again



*The two buildings that were inappropriately removed from the First Avenue Estate designation.*

It was a long, arduous battle won by determined supporters led by the Coalition to Save City and Suburban Homes. The LPC had voted to designate the First Avenue Estate in its entirety on April 24, 1990. On August 16, 1990 the Board of Estimate, with a politically charged agenda the size of a phone book, held its final executive session. At the meeting the Board voted to delete from the designation two of the buildings that the LPC had included;

## No Style? No Way!

Part of FRIENDS' work to expand the boundaries of the Upper East Side Historic District involves documenting the changes to "no style" buildings within the district. "No style" buildings are those that have been demolished, altered or are not considered historic. Under current regulations, these buildings can be demolished if the LPC approves a replacement building. Since the district was designated more than 20 years ago, it is time for a fresh look at these buildings, determine what changes have taken place and whether they should have protection.

Generous volunteers from the Arts and Landmarks Committee of the Women's City Club surveyed the "no style" buildings. While we are still in the process of analyzing the survey, we are happy to find that many of "no style" rowhouses that had been stripped of their features prior to designation were restored by preservation-minded owners and the buildings are very stylish indeed. We will be sharing our survey with the community and the LPC and working to ensure these buildings receive adequate protection.



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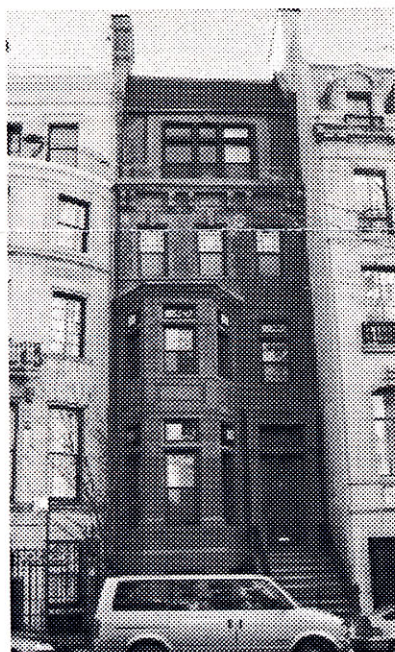
429 East 64th and 430 East 65th Street. They made a similar decision for four of the buildings at the York Avenue Estate, which were later reinstated. The decision was widely recognized as a political concession to a powerful developer and in no way based on the architectural or historical merits of the buildings.

Unlike the York Avenue Estate, however, the First Avenue Estate never had its original designation reinstated. It is time for the Commission to fix what was a political and anti-preservation decision made by a now defunct agency. We urge the Landmarks Preservation Commission to act quickly to restore the original boundaries of the landmark. Please help us by writing letters of support to the Chair of the LPC, Robert Tierney.

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*The very stylish 8 East 67th Street after its extensive restoration. The owners received a Restoration Award from FRIENDS in 2003.*

## Our Opposition to LPC Fees

At the July 8, 2003 LPC Hearing, FRIENDS, along with numerous preservation groups across the City, spoke in opposition to the Commission instituting permit fees for work on designated properties. The LPC will be expected to raise a revenue of \$1.05 million by through the fees, which will increase the cost of almost all existing building permits on New York City's 22,100 landmark properties by an additional 50%.

The proposed fees are philosophically wrong. The responsibility of caring for landmarks falls entirely upon private owners. We depend upon their cooperation and investment to sustain the city's most important buildings. Because owners assume this responsibility for the benefit of the entire city, we have never charged them for the permits they must obtain before they do any work on their buildings. Anthony Tung, a former member of the Landmarks Preservation Commission, spoke in opposition to the plan "Because it punishes the good citizen for shouldering on our behalf the maintenance of a communal patrimony."

Please help prevent these fees from being instituted. Send a letter voicing your opposition to Chair Robert Tierney, Landmarks Preservation Commission, Municipal Building, One Centre Street, 9th Floor, NY 10007) and Mayor Bloomberg, Gifford Miller and Eva Moskowitz. If you have any questions, please call the office or visit our web site.

## Voice Your Opinion

HON. MICHAEL R. BLOOMBERG

Mayor  
City Hall  
New York, NY 10007  
phone: (212) 788-3000

HON. GIFFORD MILLER, SPEAKER

The City Council  
336 East 73rd Street, Suite C  
New York, NY 10021  
miller@council.nyc.ny.us  
phone: 212 788-7210/fax: 212 788-7207

HON. EVA S. MOSKOWITZ

420 Lexington Avenue, Suite 1710  
New York, NY 10017  
moskowitz@council.nyc.ny.us  
phone: (212) 818-0580/fax: (212) 818-0706

ROBERT TIERNEY, CHAIR

Landmarks Preservation Commission  
Municipal Building  
One Centre Street, 9th Floor,  
New York, NY 10007  
rtierney@lpc.nyc.gov  
phone: (212) 669-7700/fax: 212-669-7955



# FRIENDS of the UPPER EAST SIDE HISTORIC DISTRICTS

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Jeanne Sloane  
Patricia F. Sullivan  
Roger W. Tuckerman  
Julia Widdowson  
Caroline Rob Zaleski

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

## Save the Date!

### National Academy of Design Tour

Discover one of the oldest American art institutions in the United States, located in a historic Beaux-Arts townhouse. The free tour will be led by the museum's Chief Curator, Dr. David Dearing. RSVP: (212) 369-4880.

Wednesday, July 30, 2003, 6:00-8:00 p.m.  
1083 Fifth Avenue (between 89th and 90th Streets)

### Museum Mile and More, an architectural walking and drawing tour for children.

Jane Cowan will lead a tour and hunt during which the secrets behind New York's most famous museums will be revealed. Children will learn about the architecture of the museums by sharing in her fun and creative drawing project. For children aged 7 through 10 years, accompanied by an adult.

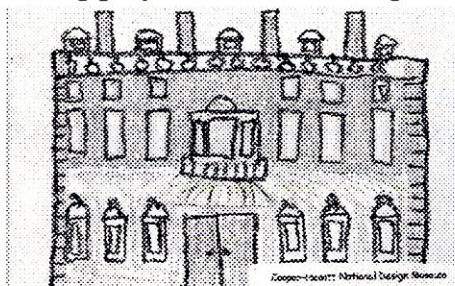
Saturday, September 20, 2003

10:00 a.m.-12:00 noon.

Meet at the Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum, 2 East 91st Street.

\$5/child and \$15/adult (\$13/member)

Reservations required, call (212) 535-2526.



### A Tribute to New York

We are excited to announce the plans for our Annual Fall Benefit, which will take place on Thursday, October 23, 2003 at 6:30 PM at the Colony Club. We are honored to have August W. Boehm, the celebrated cabaret and musical artist, perform his wonderful "A Tribute to New York" that evening. Call the office for details!

### Join our Preservation e-mail List

Each month we'll send you an e-mail with a list of all of the Upper East Side items on the LPC's agenda. The agenda is also posted on our web site ([friends-ues.org/currentLPC.htm](http://friends-ues.org/currentLPC.htm)) along with photos, FRIENDS' testimony and the Commission's decision. To join, send an e-mail to [info@friends-ues.org](mailto:info@friends-ues.org) with "LPC List" in the subject line.



Friends of the Upper East Side Historic Districts, founded in 1982, is an independent, not-for-profit membership organization dedicated to preserving the architectural legacy, livability, and sense of place of the Upper East Side. In addition to safeguarding the future of the Upper East Side's six historic districts and 125 individual landmarks, and as an advocate for sound preservation policies for the city, Friends has also been a leader in successful efforts to improve dramatically the zoning laws governing the area's avenues and residential side streets. For further information please telephone (212) 535-2526 or visit [www.friends-ues.org](http://www.friends-ues.org).

20 East 69th Street, 4B, New York, NY 10021