

# News in Brief

## Legislative Update

Friends has endorsed two important pieces of legislation sponsored by the Historic Districts Council. Passed in February, the Demolition by Neglect Bill allows the City to apply civil penalties to owners of landmarked properties who allow them to deteriorate to the point of destruction. The Demolition Delay Bill, heard in February and still awaiting action, would require the LPC to review any building more than 50 years old to see if it qualifies for landmark designation before a demolition permit may be issued.

## The Plaza Hotel

As many of our readers our likely aware, the Plaza Hotel was bought last Fall by Elad Properties with plans to convert it into condominiums, a department store and small boutique hotel. Although an



individual landmark, surprisingly none of the hotel's legendary interiors were protected. That is until now. Thanks to the efforts of city preservation groups, along with extensive public outcry and the finesse of the hotel workers union, the Landmarks Preservation Commission has calendared these magnificent interiors for potential landmark designation. The interior spaces to be heard by the LPC are the Grand Ballroom, the Terrace Room, the Edwardian Room, the Palm Court, the Oak Room, the Oak Bar, and the lobbies at both the 59th Street and Central Park South entrances. While not yet fully protected, calendaring a building assures no work can occur in these spaces until the public hearing has taken place and a full decision regarding designation has been made.

## The Whitney Expansion



On Tuesday, May 24th, 2005, the Landmarks Preservation Commission unanimously approved a revised design for the Whitney Museum expansion plan. The reworked plan by architect Renzo Piano provides for the demolition of the "no style" brownstone and the rear of the adjacent "contributing" brownstone. This surviving brownstone, which will continue to house a commercial tenant, will be truncated in the rear from 31 to 17 feet to allow for more room in the entranceway behind it. Saving the designated brownstone decreases the glass canopy covered entrance from 32 feet to 16 feet, thereby compressing the visitor's initial experience of space before entering into an airy double height public piazza. Commenting on the new entry in a New York Times article from May 24, 2005, Renzo Piano states, "In some ways it will be even more surprising, what you see after the compression – to have a kind of expansion."

Above this public meeting space and abutting the brownstones, a nine-story metal clad tower will rise. This "little tower" will connect to Breuer's building via a series of glass walkways and will have a large window cut out on its 74th Street façade to allow for light to flow into the piazza space below. Friends finds this to be a winning compromise for all; the Breuer building is happily preserved in full, as are the suite of protected brownstones. The museum is able to expand into a lofty and elegant structure, sure to be a landmark in the future. This layering and overlapping of buildings reflects the hybrid nature of the Upper East Side Historic Districts. Friends salutes the

museum, the architect and the commission for its thoughtful solution to a twenty-year old problem. Although Renzo Piano quipped recently at a commission hearing that he would jump in the river if he had to keep the brownstone, we are pleased he will be staying on dry land.

## The Summitt Hotel Designated

The former Summitt Hotel on Lexington Avenue and 51st Street was designated a New York City landmark on May 17, 2005. Completed in 1961, the Summitt Hotel is an exceptional Modern landmark distinguished by its seductive curving shape in an otherwise boxy city. It was designed by Morris Lapidus, known for his glitzy designs of Miami Beach hotels. The Summitt, bought recently from its original owners, was undergoing major renovations thought to be destructive. The LPC held a hearing on March 29th where Friends, along with many other preservation groups and advocates of modern architecture, spoke out on behalf of this important and eye-catching building. Because Friends has been conspicuous as a leader in the effort to preserve New York City's modern architecture, we spoke on behalf of the Summitt although it is somewhat outside of our district. This is after all a city wide issue, not simply a neighborhood one. We hope the commission will consider other endangered modern buildings farther up the Avenue, and that they will do so before owners, like the Summitt's, undertake inappropriate alterations.



Friends held its Twenty-Second Annual Meeting and Awards Ceremony on January 19, 2005, at The New York School of Interior Design. Friends' president, Anne Millard, greeted the audience and thanked Inge Heckel, president of the New York School of Interior Design for allowing us use of their marvelous school. The first order of business was to nominate two new members of the board; Andrew P. Steffan and Huyler C. Held. Next were the awards. Each year Friends recognizes fine restoration, renovation, and advocacy work on the Upper East Side, both in and out of the districts. This year Friends presented six awards in diverse categories.

**A RESTORING MODERNISM AWARD** was presented to 10 East 87th Street (Felix Augenfeld and Jan Hird



City Councilwoman Eva Moskowitz with Bill Judson, Matt Bauer and Steve Cozzolino

# FRIENDS ANNUAL MEETING & AWARDS CEREMONY



Pokorny, 1955-58) for the impeccable work restoring this superb modern house. Jan Hird Pokorny, the original architect of the house, presented the award to the current owners and Lichten Craig Architects.

**A CLEAN SWEEP AWARD** was presented by Hon. Eva Moskowitz to designer Karim Rashid and the Madison Avenue Business Improvement District for the sleek new design of the Madison Avenue newspaper boxes.

Mimi Levitt presented a **RESTORATION AWARD** to 998 Fifth Avenue (McKim, Mead & White, 1912) for the restoration of this building's magnificent marquee.

Rev. John A. Kamas presented a **RESTORATION AWARD** to the



Board Member Margot Wellington with LPC Chairman Robert Tierney and Jan Hird Pokorny

Church of St. Ignatius Loyola (Schickel & Ditmars, 1895) for their outstanding restoration of the church's exterior and beautiful interior.

A new award for Friends, the **TECHNOLOGY AWARD**, was presented by Margot Wellington to the Landmarks Preservation Commission and The Center for New York City Law for the availability of online Landmarks Preservation Commission permit decisions.

Andrew Alpern presented the **EXTRA MILE AWARD** to 1111 Park Avenue (Schwartz & Gross, 1925) for work restoring and replacing terra cotta on this grand apartment building, which is located outside the historic district.



Board Members Mimi Levitt and Franny Eberhart with Andrew Alpern

## Call for ENTRIES

Each year, Friends of the Upper East Side Historic Districts awards outstanding achievements in preservation, architecture and advocacy on the Upper East Side. Nominations are sought for our 2006 Annual Awards.

If you know of a restoration or renovation project, or even a new building that fits with its historic neighbors, let us know! Projects must be completed between October 1, 2004 and October 1st, 2005.

# Sentinel on Park

(Continued from Page 1)



The Seventh Regiment Armory Conservancy, a not-for-profit organization formed to prevent further deterioration of this magnificent building, will be raising over \$100 million for the restoration and renovation needed to save this landmark for future generations. Within the Armory, the Conservancy is proposing to create a new cultural institution, featuring performances, exhibitions and events which would bring extraordinary arts programming to one of the City's most beautiful historic buildings. One of the Armory's hallmarks will be its ability to easily adapt its massive Drill Hall to a wide variety of major arts and cultural offerings. In addition, the new Armory will host private and community events, becoming a resource for the community as well as the cultural world.

While New Yorkers have long appreciated Charles W. Clinton's bold exterior and have browsed exhibitions of arts and antiques, many of the treasures that lie within the Armory have been largely inaccessible to the public. These regimental rooms, most notably the Veteran's Room and the Library, are among the most stunning spaces anywhere in the City, designed by greats like Louis Comfort Tiffany, Stanford White, Candace Thurber Wheeler, Samuel Colman and the Herter Brothers. The Conservancy promises to open these landmarked rooms to all New Yorkers and visitors.

Today, the Armory is suffering from decades of neglect and minimal maintenance to its delicate, museum-quality interiors. The need for the physical repair and restoration proposed by the Conservancy is pressing and urgent. All work will be done in an appropriate manner with materials and details that are sympathetic to the historic fabric. The restoration plans advanced by the Seventh Armory Conservancy provide an unprecedented opportunity to fully reveal the treasure of the Armory's magnificent rooms and halls and to demonstrate the rich and rewarding manner in which architecture and the decorative arts enrich our contemporary lives.

While operated by the Conservancy, the Armory itself will remain a New York State facility. It will continue to house offices of the New York National Guard and will be fully available in times of emergency use, such as it was during the post 9/11 period. In addition, the Armory will continue to provide a shelter for homeless women operated by the City of New York and the Lenox Hill Neighborhood House.

The Seventh Regiment Armory will be a restored treasure and a world-class cultural institution that will become a grand new addition to the City of New York. Completion is expected in 2010.

## Theaters

(Continued from Page 1)

designate these worthy buildings. Despite our outreach efforts and requests for intervention, it appears that we may lose both theaters.

The Beekman Theater, one of the last post-World War II art film houses in New York City and an eligible National and State landmark, faces eviction this summer due to plans by landlord Memorial Sloan Kettering to demolish the building to make way for a 16-18 story cancer treatment center. While we are sympathetic to the needs of hospitals and their mission, we hope to preserve this theater while allowing for the hospital to grow. Both Friends and the LPC have been in contact with Memorial Sloan Kettering in an effort to persuade them to retain the historic theater, incorporating it into the new design of their proposed cancer facility. However, we were turned down flat due to alleged spatial requirements. So far, only alterations to the façade have been filed according to a current Department of Building's permit. But MSK has stated publicly that the movie theater lease ends in June and that construction would begin soon thereafter. No permits have been filed for demolition as of yet. Landmark status would prevent demolition of the building and still allow for a potential expansion of the hospital around the theater.

As reported in our last newsletter, Cinema I II was heavily altered last Fall, including the removal of many important pieces of artwork. According to current reports, the present owners will not be converting the space to retail (although Department of Building's permits suggest otherwise) and the artwork will be donated to an undisclosed museum.

These insensitive and destructive actions highlight the urgent need to protect the modern architecture on the Upper East Side and across the City. The Landmarks Preservation Commission 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 architectural patrimony.



# The Gates Walking Tour

On a crisp sunny February afternoon, our Best Friend members were treated to a special tour of Christo and Jeanne-Claude's *The Gates* in Central Park. Art Historian and tour guide, Matt Postal, took the group on an informative walk through the saffron colored gates. Mr. Postal commented on the history of Central Park, the construction and development of *The Gates* project and the park's ongoing relationship with art and sculpture. Keep on the lookout for other exciting and unique tours sponsored by Friends.



Matt Postal with  
Best Friends members

## FRIENDS' TO HONOR LOUIS AUCHINCLOSS

Tuesday, September 27, 2005  
6:30 p.m., The Colony Club

JOIN FRIENDS for an exciting evening honoring Louis Auchincloss at our Second Annual "Ambassador" to the UPPER EAST SIDE AWARD DINNER. The quintessential Upper East Sider, Louis Auchincloss is a retired partner in Hawkins Delafield & Wood and a prolific novelist of manners.

His 60th novel, *East Side Story*, was published last year. He has served as Chairman of the Board of the Museum of the City of New York and President of the Academy of Arts and Letters. With such outstanding company, this is sure to be an evening to remember!



### PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

Each month FRIENDS' Preservation Committee reviews all Certificates of Appropriateness applications for both individual landmarks and buildings within the six Historic Districts on the Upper East Side. A representative of FRIENDS attends the Landmarks Committee of Community Board 8 and testifies at the public hearings. The monthly agenda is posted on our web site ([friends-ues.org/currentLPC.htm](http://friends-ues.org/currentLPC.htm)) along with photos and FRIENDS' Testimony and most importantly, the Commission's decision.



## LETTER from the PRESIDENT

New York City is always exciting! The variety is unique, and New Yorkers' passion unequaled!

It started in February with the saffron Gates of Cristo. Whether pro or con it brought the best out of New Yorkers. It was new and different and everyone had his or her own opinion. I loved it and will remember those wonderful blowing gates on a cold February Day.

Then along came the Whitney and its addition. It was new and controversial but somehow in the end it all worked out and with a little bit of good will and give and take it will be built. (See our report on page 2)

Then came the Plaza! Our New York bastion was under attack. The forces rallied and while all was not saved we are confident many interiors will be designated. (An update is on page 2). And there was Pale Male and Lola, the red tailed hawks, whose nest on a cornice at 973 Fifth Avenue was removed by the coop board. The Audubon Society swung into action to save the nest. There were pickets and harassers. Around the Sailboat Pond New Yorkers set up telescopes to monitor the hawks' every move. They returned to the nest while one and all awaited chicks. It must have been too large an ordeal for them as no chicks arrived this year. But in true New York fashion the telescopes are still trained on their every move and Pale Male goes soaring, making lazy circles in the sky. They gave the winter and spring a real New York story that has "to be continued" for next year. We all wish them well!

Anne Millard

President

## FRIENDS of the UPPER EAST SIDE HISTORIC DISTRICTS

Founded in 1982, FRIENDS 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.

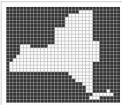
For further information please telephone 212.535.2526 or visit [www.friends-ues.org](http://www.friends-ues.org).

### 2005 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

(1982-1991) Halina Rosenthal, *First President*  
Anne L. Millard, *President*  
Tony Rosenthal, *Honorary Chairman*  
Rita C. Chu, David I. Karabell  
Gretchen Siebel, *Vice Presidents*  
O. Kelley Anderson, Jr., *Treasurer*  
Franny Eberhart, *Secretary*  
Kent L. Barwick, Judith Churchill,  
Christina R. Davis, Andrew S. Dolkart,  
Lionel Goldfrank III, Erin Gray,  
Huyler C. Held, Adam Holender,  
Thomas Jayne, E. William Judson,  
Rev. John A. Kamas, Arie L. Kopelman,  
Henry Lambert, Mimi Levitt,  
Robert K. Lindgren, Hermes Mallea,  
Norman Marcus, Joyce Matz,  
Alice McGown, Bannon McHenry,  
Frederic S. Papert, Li Chung Pei,  
Judith Price, Robert C. Quinlan,  
Genie Rice, Alexandra Schlesinger,  
Annie Schulhof, Patricia B. Selch,  
Elizabeth Shields, Andrew P. Steffan,  
Jeanne Sloane, Patricia F. Sullivan,  
Roger W. Tuckerman, Margot Wellington,  
Julia Widdowson, Caroline Zaleski  
Seri Worden, *Executive Director*

## FRIENDS of the UPPER EAST SIDE HISTORIC DISTRICTS

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



NYSCA  
New York State Council on the Arts

This publication is made possible with public funds from the New York State Council on the Arts, a State agency.

## Voice Your Opinion

### LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Robert Tierney, Chair  
Municipal Building  
One Centre Street, 9th Floor,  
New York, NY 10007  
[comments@lpc.nyc.gov](mailto:comments@lpc.nyc.gov)

### UPPER EAST SIDE CITY COUNCIL MEMBERS

Hon. Gifford Miller, Speaker  
The City Council  
336 East 73rd Street, Suite C  
New York, NY 10021  
P: 212.788.7210 F: 212.788.7207

Hon. Eva S. Moskowitz  
420 Lexington Avenue, Suite 1710  
New York, NY 10017  
[moskowitz@council.nyc.ny.us](mailto:moskowitz@council.nyc.ny.us)  
P: 212.818.0580 F: 212.818.0706

Hon. Michael R. Bloomberg  
Mayor  
City Hall, New York, NY 10007  
P: 212.788.3000

### DESIGN: REVOLUCION

22 W 23 ST 3FL NYC 10010 [WWW.REVOLUCIONNYC.COM](http://WWW.REVOLUCIONNYC.COM)  
For information, please contact Amy Gomez at 212 229 0700

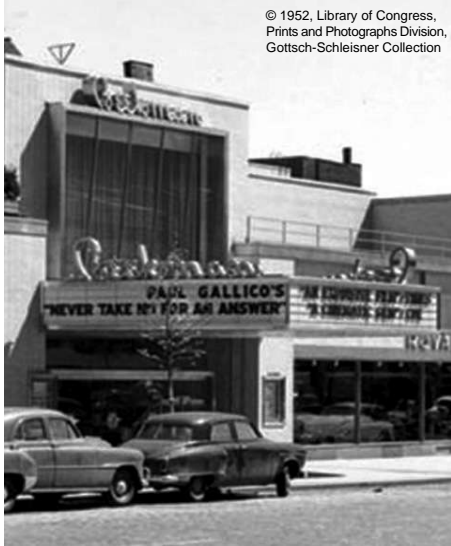
## FRIENDS of the UPPER EAST SIDE HISTORIC DISTRICTS



## NEWS from FRIENDS SUMMER 2005

### Standing Sentinel for over a Century...

ON PARK AVENUE BETWEEN EAST 66TH AND 67TH STREETS, THE SEVENTH REGIMENT ARMORY, AN EXTERIOR AND INTERIOR NEW YORK City landmark, is to be fully restored and preserved by the Seventh Regiment Armory Conservancy. Designed by Charles W. Clinton, there is little doubt of the might and force this crenellated fortress has conveyed since its completion in 1880. But despite this monumental building's apparent strength, it has been subjected to years of neglect and deterioration resulting in structural cracks, water damage and general deterioration of its exterior and sumptuous interiors. The threat to the building became so pronounced that the World Monument's Fund included the Armory on its list of the world's 100 most endangered sites in 1999. The Armory, a city, state and national landmark, is perhaps the finest American armory of the nineteenth century, considered by the Landmarks Commission in their designation report of 1994 to contain the "single most important collection of Nineteenth Century interiors to survive intact in one building." Friends is pleased to report on the promising new plans for this remarkable building on the Upper East Side.



© 1952, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Gottsch-Schlesinger Collection

### The Fight for our Modern Theaters Continues

The struggle for our Modern movie theaters on the Upper East Side continues, but with discouraging news. Friends has been fighting for the designation of Cinema I II at 1001 3rd Avenue (Abraham W. Geller & Associates with Ben Schlanger, consulting theater architect, 1962) and The Beekman Theater and Blockfront at 1242-1258 Second Avenue (Architects: Fellheimer & Wagne, John J. McNamara and J. M. Berlinger, 1952) for many years; hosting an exhibition in 2001 entitled "Landmarks of the Future," which highlighted twenty-two unprotected landmark-quality buildings in the neighborhood, as well as reaching out to owners and the LPC to evaluate and