



NEWS from FRIENDS

WINTER 2006

ITS OFFICIAL!

Lexington Avenue included in the State and National Upper East Side Historic District



FRIENDS is proud to announce the expansion of the Upper East Side Historic District on the New York State and National Registers of Historic Places. For over five years, FRIENDS' volunteers, staff and interns surveyed and researched buildings along Lexington Avenue from East 59th to East 79th Streets, as well as undesignated side streets from Park Avenue to Third Avenue. The extension includes portions of 17 blocks along Lexington Avenue in two separate areas contiguous to the original district, totaling 198 buildings.



Left: View of Lexington Avenue looking northeast between E. 64 and E. 65th Streets. Above: Lexington Avenue, North from E. 73rd St., showing surface car track removal project. October 23, 1936. W.P.A. photo federal art project.

Lexington Exhibit, Launched.

FRIENDS
of the UPPER EAST SIDE
HISTORIC DISTRICTS

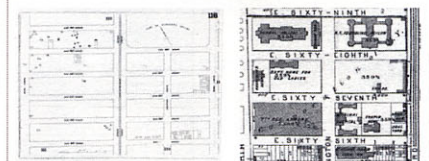
Upper East Side Historic District Expansion
About | Building Database | History | Nomination



Lexington Avenue, 1912

The Upper East Side landscape in the Civil War years was largely undeveloped and desolate. Although streets had been cut, graded, and paved, building was limited to small commercial structures and a few institutions. In the years following the war that would change, as scores of rowhouses were constructed for the growing population of a newly prosperous middle class. As New York City began to take its place as one of the world's first cities, the Upper East Side along Lexington Avenue became one of the city's first postwar neighborhoods. Most of those early rowhouses remain today, wearing the changes of time, in one of the city's still premier neighborhoods.

Insurance maps of the area illustrate these changes. These interesting and useful documents were published to identify the characteristics of buildings for insurance purposes. Colors and other codes tell us about a building's materials, size, and use.



Peritts Map, 1862

Peritts and Browne map, 1872

In conjunction with the official listing of the district, FRIENDS developed a web exhibit to share our research and findings with as wide an audience as possible.

Visitors can view historic maps, vintage photographs, a historical narrative of the Upper East Side, the full National Register nomination, and most importantly, a catalog of individual buildings within the extension, searchable by block, address, and year built. If you live in the study area, visit the website for information on your building.

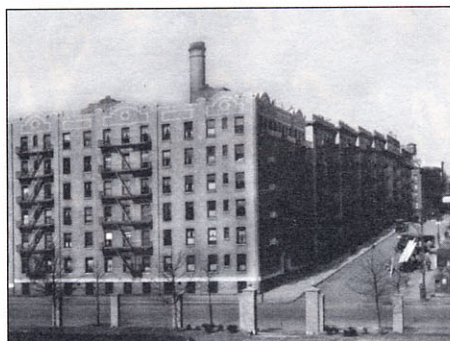
We are very grateful to The Samuel H. Kress Foundation; Preserve New York, a grant program of the Preservation League of New York State and the New York State Council on the Arts; and The New York City Department of Cultural Affairs for supporting this important work.

First Avenue Estate Designated!

On November 21, 2006, the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) voted unanimously to designate 429 East 64th and 430 East 65th Street, restoring the original boundaries of the City and Suburban Homes Company, First Avenue Estate landmark. These two buildings are part of a 15 building complex built between 1898 and 1915 to address the housing problems of the nation's working poor at the turn of the 20th century and is one of only two full city block developments of light-court tenements in the country. The other development is City and Suburban Homes Company York Avenue Estate, just north of this site at East 79th Street, which has been designated since 1990.

This is the second go around for First Avenue Estate. In 1990, all 15 buildings were designated by the LPC. But shortly thereafter, the now defunct Board of Estimate voted to delete 429 East 64th and 430 East 65th Street from the designation. This action was widely recognized as a political concession to a powerful developer and was in no way based on the architectural or historical merits of the buildings.

Leading up to the November LPC hearing, there was a great outpouring of public support; Councilwoman Jessica Lappin sponsored a popular town hall meeting and FRIENDS gathered hundreds of signed postcards in support of designation. Sadly, days before the hearing, the owners of the buildings began to fulfill existing building permits to remove the decorative parapets and to block up windows. This was an unconscionable attempt by unsympathetic owners to thwart the reinstatement of the rightful designation of these very worthy buildings. Although, these tenements were carefully designed and the details are important, the case for the historical and social significance supersedes any brickwork or detailing. Thankfully, despite such appalling tactics, the buildings were designated. In 1990,



Top: York Avenue façade of First Avenue Estate, (photo 1913-1923). Bottom: Destruction of the parapet at 430 E. 65th Street one day before the LPC hearing, Arlene Prince.



Halina Rosenthal, FRIENDS' first president and an ardent supporter of the initial designation of these buildings said "compromise is unthinkable, for these fifteen buildings are whole as they stand today and have an unmistakable presence and architectural style, furthermore they are culturally and historically important to the city for they are a constant reminder of the shelter that can and must be provided at affordable prices to our fellow men and women."

FRIENDS would like to express our gratitude to the Commission for restoring the rightful designation of City and Suburban Homes Company First Avenue Estate in its entirety. Second, we would like to thank Councilwoman Jessica Lappin for enthusiastically taking up this important cause.

Tower at 980 Madison Avenue

980 Madison Avenue: Proposed addition by Sir Norman Foster

Many of our readers are aware of developer Aby Rosen and architect Sir Norman Foster's proposal for a 30-story double cylindrical tower to rise over the former Parke-Bernet Galleries at 980 Madison Avenue. Designed by Walker and Poor in 1948, The Parke-Bernet Galleries is a restrained and elegant post-war building on the Upper East Side, representing the significance of the artistic past on Madison Avenue. Because this building is within the Upper East Side Historic District and the Madison Avenue Preservation Special District, the developers are requesting approval from the LPC and a special permit from the City Planning Commission to allow the tower to be built.

FRIENDS accepts, and when appropriate, encourages a contemporary approach within a historic district.

However, this proposal for a reflective glass and metal building, taller and skinnier than allowed by the existing zoning specifically tailored to Madison Avenue, is unacceptable. The proposed building is 355', a significant 145' higher than permitted by The Madison Avenue Special Preservation District, which was put in place to maintain the special quality and character of the avenue. The very purpose of designating a historic district and putting in place special zoning is to encourage the stabilization of a particular place, to maintain its character and also to guide future development. Few can argue with the success and vitality of Madison Avenue. The LPC will discuss this proposal at a public meeting on January 16, 2007. FRIENDS will be sure to inform our members via an email alert once the location and time are announced. If you are a member, sign up at www.friends-ues.org.



Fall Benefit Honoring Emily K. Rafferty, President of The Metropolitan Museum of Art

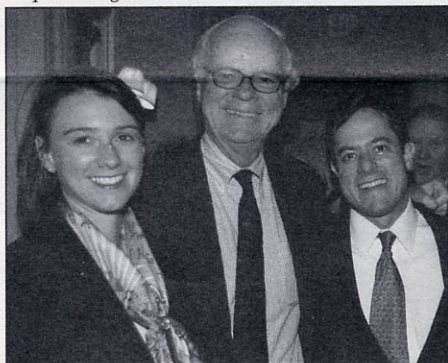


On September 26, 2006, over 150 "friends" from across the city gathered for our Third Annual "Ambassador" to the Upper East Side award dinner honoring Emily K. Rafferty, President of The Metropolitan Museum of Art. A native New Yorker, Emily Rafferty began her long and distinguished career at The Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1976. She assumed the presidency of the Museum in January 2005.

We were very fortunate that Mr. Morrison H. Heckscher, the Lawrence A. Fleischman Chairman of the American Wing at The Metropolitan Museum of Art was there to co-host this special evening. Ms. Rafferty gave a fascinating "behind the scenes" talk on the Met and the history of the buildings that everyone thoroughly enjoyed. With such outstanding company, it was an evening to remember!

Special thanks to the Benefit Committee and all those who helped to make the event so successful. With the money raised, FRIENDS can continue to be the vigilant curator of the Upper East Side's architectural heritage.

Top: Harold Holzer, Emily Rafferty, Tom Schuler, Friends President Anne Millard and Peter Millard. Below: Councilwoman Jessica Lappin, LPC Chair Robert Tierney and Councilman Daniel Garodnick. Bottom: Emily Rafferty, Daniel Shapiro and Agnes Gund.



LETTER from the PRESIDENT

New York seems to be exploding with new ideas and plans that stretch the imagination of a hardened New Yorker. It seems to be coming from North, South, East and West!

We are working diligently on the newly approved extension of the Upper East Side Historic District. We have been approved by the State Office of Historic Preservation and our expanded district is on the National Register in Washington DC. Our next (and last) stop is the Landmarks Preservation Commission in New York City. This is so important because the Commission has the ability to enable us to finally realize the importance of maintaining the historic character and low scale of Lexington Avenue!!

Lexington is the key to hold onto the neighborhood feeling of small stores, low brownstones and a human scale that allows the sun and it's shadows to play magical games on the buildings. We will be calling on you to help us — be it at the Community Board, signing a petition or merely talking to your friends about the importance of maintaining this great neighborhood!!!

Anne Millard

INFORMING OUR FRIENDS

FRIENDS continues to be a good neighbor.

Via an e-mail list, we inform the community about items under review at the LPC and we have recently implemented an email alert list of important preservation issues on the Upper East Side. Members can subscribe by visiting our website at FRIENDS-UES.ORG

Save the Date

Join FRIENDS for our Twenty-Fourth Annual Meeting and Awards Ceremony Wednesday, January 17, 2007 from 6:00-8:00 pm at The New York School of Interior Design, 170 East 70th Street. The public is welcome to attend but reservations are required. Please call (212) 535-2526.

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 dramatically improve the zoning laws governing the area's avenues and residential side streets.

For information please call 212.535.2526 or visit www.friends-ues.org.

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Voice Your Opinion!

Landmarks Preservation Commission

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HISTORIC DISTRICTS

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