



NEWS *from* FRIENDS

FALL 2008

Special Lexington Avenue Edition

STANDING ROOM ONLY

AS RESIDENTS, BUSINESS OWNERS AND PRESERVATIONISTS ACROSS THE CITY VOICE THEIR SUPPORT FOR THE PROTECTION OF LEXINGTON AVENUE'S PRICELESS AND ENDANGERED ARCHITECTURE

On July 21st, over 120 loyal supporters braved the heat and packed into a room at the Hunter College School of Social Work for the Community Board 8 Landmarks Committee Meeting. Neighbors and business owners gathered to learn more about the expansion of the Upper East Side Historic District and to offer public testimony in favor of the expansion. The room was filled with a sea of supporters wearing bright orange "Save Lexington Avenue" stickers.

After a slide presentation by FRIENDS' Executive Director, Seri Worden, public testimony in favor of the proposed expansion included Council Member Dan Garodnick and a representative from Congresswoman Carolyn B. Maloney's office. Also in support were the Municipal Art Society, Historic Districts Council, Carnegie Hill Neighbors and Civitas. Most importantly, residents and businesses in the expansion area stood up to speak in support of saving their neighborhood. President of The Beaux Arts Alliance David Garrard Lowe said of the endangered historic buildings

on Lexington Avenue, "Walking north from 60th Street, one is treated to a veritable box of architectural bonbons." Kitty Hawks, speaking on behalf of the Municipal Art Society artfully stated, "One Third Avenue is enough." After such resounding community support, the Community Board 8 Landmarks Committee voted unanimously in favor of the proposed expansion for the neighborhood's architectural and historical significance, urging the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) to act quickly on this designation due to immediate demolition threats.

Thank you to all of our attendees for an outstanding display of support but it's not over yet! The full Community Board 8 will be meeting and voting on the proposal Wednesday, September 17th 6:30 p.m. (Memorial Sloan Kettering, 430 E. 67th Street, Auditorium). Mark your calendars to attend the September meeting and voice your support. And please spread the word to your friends and neighbors. It is imperative to demonstrate to the LPC community enthusiasm for the protection of the neighborhood!



Supporters at the Community Board 8 Landmarks Committee Meeting

73rd and Lex—Eyesore Avoided

NORMAN MARCUS

This summer, Friends of the Upper East Side Historic Districts lost a dedicated and loyal board member, Norman Marcus.

For 20 years, Norman Marcus was general counsel to the New York City Planning Commission, drafting much of the intricate legal language intended to preserve the historic character of many of the city's neighborhoods. Working with the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, Mr. Marcus and his legal team developed the plan for transferring the air rights above Grand Central, an individual landmark, to nearby locations. He also led the legal team that established the Midtown Manhattan district, in which air rights above Broadway theaters could be transferred to nearby development sites. In 2006, the Municipal Art Society cited Mr. Marcus for his "illustrious career using the art and craft of land-use law to shape a better New York."

Norman Marcus was a dedicated board member to Friends of the Upper East Side Historic Districts for 22 years. He was always full of good humor while being an invaluable resource of knowledge. He will be dearly missed.

**Join FRIENDS to
Honor Liz Smith**
Monday, September 22, 2008

Join FRIENDS for an exciting evening as we proudly honor Liz Smith at our Fifth Annual Ambassador to the Upper East Side Award Dinner. For inquiries: 212-535-2526 or info@friends-ues.org. Tickets can be purchased online at www.friends-ues.org/events.

We hope to see you there!



133-137 East 73rd Street in middle ground showing proposed rooftop addition

On August 5, 2008, the Landmarks Preservation Commission reviewed an application to construct a rooftop addition, alter the rear facade, alter the stoop, and establish a storefront master plan to 133 and 135-137 East 73rd Street. These are two remarkable buildings - as a matter of fact, 137 is so distinct that it is the only building on Lexington Avenue north of 72nd Street included in the current Upper East Side Historic District. Clearly this building was considered at the time of the district's designation in 1981 to be of great and special significance to be singled out for landmarks protection.

FRIENDS testified against the multi-faceted proposal which would homogenize the storefronts on Lexington Avenue and also add an enormous and highly visible rooftop addition to 137 East 73rd Street. Aspects of the storefront master plan are beneficial, but the proposal also included the removal of the cartouche on the 73rd Street façade as well as other architectural flourishes that have been added over the years. FRIENDS spoke against the removal of these artifacts, stating that "the potential homogeneity of these storefronts and the removal of this building's urban archaeology would be a real loss. It is

the liveliness and variety of just such a stretch of Lexington Avenue that should be protected and preserved."

FRIENDS also spoke out strongly against the size and scale of the rooftop addition, saying "It is simply far too large and visible from an enormous radius surrounding this building." The LPC commissioners undoubtedly listened to our comments and rejected the large out of scale rooftop addition. The commissioners responded to the applicant stating that a small rooftop addition, a maximum of one-story, set further back from the building's edge, would be considered. In addition, the LPC is requiring the cartouche and other architectural features of the storefront to be retained. These revisions will go before the commission in a public meeting. Public testimony will not be taken at that time but a representative of FRIENDS will attend and keep our readers up to date on any changes. We were able to fight this inappropriate change to a beloved historic building because it is already included in the Upper East Side Historic District, all the more reason to expand the district and save other equally beautiful buildings on Lexington Avenue.



133-137 East 73rd Street showing saved cartouche

SCAFFOLDING ERECTED

FOR DISFIGURING DEMO ON RARE LEXINGTON AVENUE
RESIDENCE IN THE HEART OF THE PROPOSED EXPANSION
OF THE UPPER EAST SIDE HISTORIC DISTRICT

In July, scaffolding was erected to allow for disfiguring alterations to 859 Lexington Avenue and 861-863 Lexington Avenue, also known as the Kean Residence or Crocodile Hall. Located on the southeast corner of East 65th Street and Lexington Avenue, these historic buildings anchor a distinctive and architecturally rich corner on the Upper East Side and lie within the proposed expansion of the Upper East Side Historic District. In an increasingly common tactic, permits have been filed for disfiguring work to these structures presumably to avoid landmark designation. Current permits from the DOB are to demolish the upper floors of the Kean House and to



Kean House, East 65th Street facade

install a glass curtain wall at 859 Lexington Avenue—all on a busy New York City street.

Bordering this site is an exquisite gingerbread cottage residence on East 65th Street and a full block of intact 1880's brownstones along Lexington Avenue. Sharing this intersection is the Church of Saint Vincent Ferrer Complex, an individual NYC landmark and the Parge House, a remarkable residence with lavish plasterwork and English medieval details (currently unprotected but included in our proposed expansion).

Prior to the issuing of the demo permits, representatives of Friends of the Upper East Side Historic Districts met with Councilman Daniel Garodnick to alert him to this potential loss. As a result, Councilman Garodnick reached out to the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC). Shortly thereafter, FRIENDS submitted a Request for Evaluation (RFE) to the LPC appealing for individual landmark status of the Kean House. The LPC did not take action to



Workers erecting scaffolding outside the Kean Residence, July 2008

protect these individual buildings or designate the expansion area.

If the expansion of the Upper East Side Historic District is not pursued by the Landmarks Preservation Commission, the architectural character, pedestrian scale and charm of Lexington Avenue will be lost forever and replaced with inappropriate and out-of-scale development.

Back to School

After a busy summer of revamping and adding to our education program offerings, *Young Friends* Architectural Education program is gearing up for another busy school year. We will be offering our classic program that introduces 1st through 5th graders to architecture, the built environment, and the history of the Upper East Side. In addition, we are excited to announce a new program that explores the rich history of immigration on the Upper

East Side. The program will focus on the German and Hungarian areas in Yorkville and how the built environment can provide clues to this rich heritage. The program includes a walking tour of significant homes, tenement buildings, churches, and stores that reflect immigration trends in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

FRIENDS is also pleased to have joined the Design Education Roundtable of New York State. In its pilot year and funded by the New York State

Council on the Arts, the group brings together architecture and design educators to share resources. Thanks to this collaboration, we will be hosting an activity booth for families and children at the Center for Architecture on October 4th and 5th, as part of Open House New York.

If you are interested in participating in or teaching our education programs, please contact Sarah O'Keefe at 212-535-2526 or at s.okeefe@friends-ues.org for more information.

A Snapshot History of the Kean House

The Kean House on the southwest corner of Lexington Avenue and East 65th Street is an elegant Mediterranean inspired residence with some modernist leanings. Originally painted a salmon pink, the house still retains its leaded glass windows, handsome rusticated detailing and a remarkable double height music studio facing East 65th Street. Built as two brownstones in 1880 by Robert Coburn, the buildings were transformed in 1922 by architect Francis L. V. Hoppin into a residence and design atelier for J. Stewart Barney. Barney, an artist, writer and society figure, was also a partner in the renowned architectural firm Barney & Chapman. The firm designed many buildings, including the Church of the Holy Trinity complex on East 88th Street, the Broadway Tabernacle, the Hotel Navarre and the Hart Memorial Library in Troy, New York.

Hoppin's redesign for Barney's home and studio is a particularly inventive example of the reimagining of 19th c. rowhouses occurring around the city during the early decades of the twentieth century. Neighboring Hoppin's striking redesign are other numerous historical reinventions of brownstones, including the Parge House by architect Frederick Sterner. Sterner left a rich residential legacy in Gramercy Park as well as the blocks of the East 60s near Lexington Avenue. Indeed, the Kean residence, along with Sterner's Parge House, will be featured in architectural historian Andrew Dolkart's forthcoming book *The Row House Reborn: Architecture and neighborhoods in New York City 1908-1929*, to be published by Johns Hopkins University Press in 2009.

In June 2003, Christopher Gray wrote about the Kean House in the New York Times Streetscapes column, *65th Street and Lexington Avenue; A City Sonata in 4*



Mrs. John Kean residence at 863 Lexington Ave., New York City. (1944 May 8. Gottscho-Schleisner Collection (Library of Congress))

Corners of Architectural Music, referring to the intersection as "an urban sonata, one whose distinctive architectural notes rise even above the neighborhood's dense traffic."

The Kean Residence is distinctive for its architectural features, and also as the Kean family home. Descendents of J. Stewart Barney continued to live in the home, until the death of his daughter Alice Barney Kean in 1995. Influential Kean family members include, Former New Jersey Governor Thomas

H. Kean Sr., later appointed in 2002 as Chairman of the 9/11 Commission. Early prominent family members include U.S. Senators Hamilton Fish Kean and John Kean. Hamilton Fish, a U.S. Senator in the 1840s, was later elected Governor of New York and became U.S. Secretary of State. In addition, Kean University in Union Township, New Jersey, is named in memory

of Robert Kean, who served New Jersey in the United States House of Representatives from 1939 to 1959. The land the university currently sits on was once owned by the Kean Family.

Although proposed for landmark designation as part of the expanded Upper East Side Historic District, the Kean House is under immediate threat of demolition (see article *Scaffolding Erected*).

LETTER from the PRESIDENT

What an exciting summer it's been for FRIENDS! We were thrilled to see a packed house of supporters for our proposal to expand the historic district at the Community Board 8 Landmarks Committee meeting on July 21st. Our readers know we have been working diligently to try and save the priceless architecture of the Lexington Avenue neighborhood. If you haven't done so already, please send in the enclosed letter of support to LPC Chair Robert Tierney and to Mayor Bloomberg. And please don't forget to join us on Wednesday September 17th at 6:30 p.m. as the Full Community Board votes on our proposal.

In other news, I am pleased to announce that we are expanding our elementary education program to include a new immigration-focused course (see article *Back to School*) created by our Education Coordinator Sarah O'Keefe. I am looking forward to our Benefit on Monday September 22nd as we honor the fabulous Liz Smith. I hope to see you there for this exciting evening!

Guille T. Ward

HOW YOU CAN HELP SAVE LEXINGTON AVENUE!

Despite overwhelming support from hundreds of individuals and businesses in the neighborhood, as well as from our elected officials and preservation organizations, **the LPC has not yet designated this endangered neighborhood!** PLEASE urge the Landmarks Preservation Commission to protect our architectural heritage.



East 63rd Street between Lexington and Third Avenues

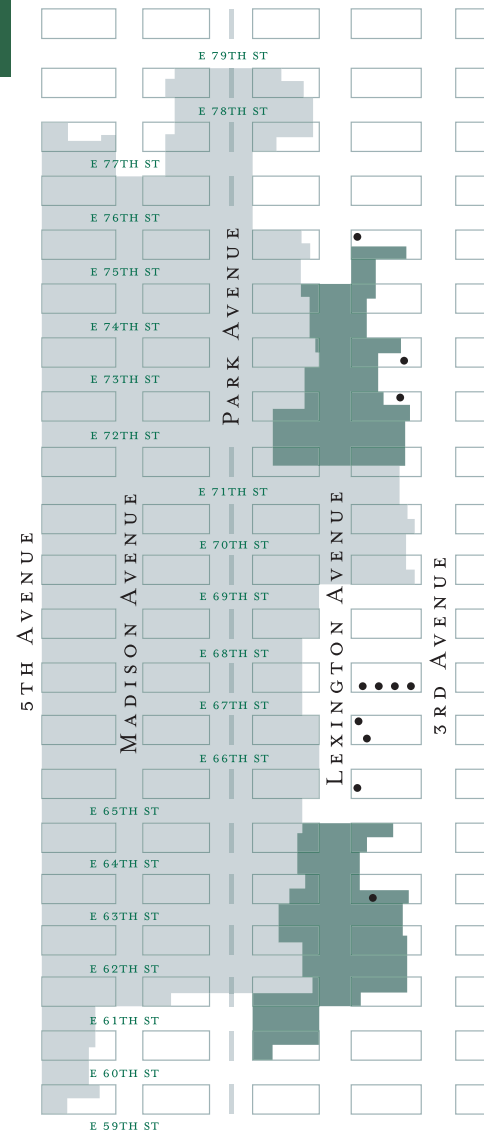


Former Barbizon Hotel for Women, 813-817 Lexington Avenue (Murgatroyd & Ogden, 1926-27)



The Parge House, 866 Lexington Avenue (Frederick J. Sterner, 1922)

- **SIGN** our ONLINE PETITION and send it to your friends. Visit www.friends-ues.org
- **WRITE** a letter of support to LPC Chair Tierney and Mayor Michael Bloomberg. Send in the enclosed form letter or write your own comments.
- **SPEAK** at the upcoming **FULL Community Board 8 Meeting** on Wednesday, September 17th, 6:30 p.m. (Memorial Sloan Kettering, 430 E. 67th Street, Auditorium). Please attend and show your support for the protection of this neighborhood!
- **TELL** your friends and neighbors how they can help. Ask us for brochures, postcards and maps to distribute.
- **JOIN** our email alert list to stay up to date on changes in the neighborhood at www.friends-ues.org



UPPER EAST SIDE HISTORIC DISTRICT

- Current Boundary
- Proposed Expansion
- Individual Landmarks

Landmarks Preservation Commission Budget Restored

On May 28, 2008, Friends of the Upper East Side Historic Districts, together with a coalition of over 50 preservation groups gathered on the steps of City Hall seeking a restoration of \$300,000 to the Landmarks Preservation Commission budget. Because of recent city-wide budget cuts, this much-needed funding was in jeopardy. However, thanks to the Mayor and the City Council, particularly

Upper East Side Council Members Jessica Lappin and Dan Garodnick, the LPC's funding was leveled for Fiscal Year 2009. This essential funding allows for additional LPC staff to survey NYC's neighborhoods for potential landmarks and historic districts—such as FRIENDS proposal for the much needed expansion of the Upper East Side Historic District.

IN GRATITUDE

Friends of the Upper East Side Historic Districts wishes to acknowledge the generous support of: The J. M. Kaplan Fund, The Samuel H. Kress Foundation, The Gilbert & Ildiko Butler Conservation Fund, The New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, State Senator Liz Krueger, Council Member Daniel Garodnick and Council Member Jessica Lappin through the Department of Youth and Community Development.

FRIENDS

of the UPPER EAST SIDE
HISTORIC DISTRICTS

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. We safeguard the future of the Upper East Side's six historic districts and 126 individual landmarks and act 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 more information please call 212-535-2526 or visit our website at www.friends-ues.org.

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Voice Your Opinion!

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HISTORIC DISTRICTS

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