



NEWS *from* FRIENDS

SPRING 2009

LPC TAKES ACTION ON LEXINGTON AVENUE EXPANSION

COMMUNITY MEETING JUNE 3RD

FRIENDS is pleased to report that the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) is taking action on our proposed Upper East Side Historic District Expansion. We have been working with the LPC and Council Member Daniel Garodnick over the last few months to finalize boundaries, which include the majority of the proposed northern expansion and a portion of the proposed southern expansion.

The LPC will host a meeting for property owners within the proposed district on **Wednesday, June 3rd at Hunter College School of Social Work, 129 East 79th Street, 10th floor, at 6:30 p.m.** The meeting will be co-sponsored by Council Member Daniel Garodnick. We urge owners to attend as it will be critical to show the continued and strong support for the expansion.

Following this meeting, the LPC will then allow for a comment period of a few months for property owners. It is likely that the LPC will then "calendar" the expansion in the fall, at which point buildings cannot be demolished or altered. A public hearing will follow the calendaring.

This is a great accomplishment for FRIENDS and all of our supporters. The LPC has thanked us for demonstrating such outstanding community support. Thank you for helping to save one of New York City's last great "Main Streets"!

We will be in touch with more details regarding the June 3rd meeting. Please feel free to contact our office at 212-535-2526 with any questions or concerns.

Save the Date!

FRIENDS to Honor
Amanda M. Burden, FAICP
Tuesday, September 22, 2009

Join FRIENDS for an exciting evening as we proudly honor Amanda M. Burden, FAICP, at our Sixth Annual Ambassador to the Upper East Side Award Dinner on Tuesday, September 22nd. Ms. Burden is Chair of the New York City Planning Commission and Director of the Department of City Planning. Since her appointment by Mayor Bloomberg in 2002, she has spearheaded the largest planning effort in the city since 1961, setting the stage for sustainable development, reclaiming New York's waterfront, designing new parkland and public spaces such as the High Line and promoting great architecture and urban design in all five boroughs. With such an outstanding honoree, this is sure to be an evening to remember! For inquiries: 212-535-2526 or info@friends-ues.org.



Photo by David Eustace, Courtesy of DCP

FRIENDS' TWENTY-SIXTH ANNUAL MEETING AND AWARDS CEREMONY

FRIENDS held its Twenty-Sixth Annual Meeting and Awards Ceremony on March 16, 2009 at The New York School of Interior Design. Each year FRIENDS recognizes fine restoration, renovation, and advocacy work on the Upper East Side, both in and out of the historic districts. Hermes Mallea, a FRIENDS' Board Member and architect, gave a lively presentation of this year's awards covering diverse categories from neighborhood cultural centers to apartment buildings and brownstones. After the ceremony, honorees and guests headed to the school's art gallery for a reception.



*Back row: P.S. 290 parent Reiko Takada, Awardee Paula Rogovin, Council Member Daniel Garodnick, P.S. 290 parent Kayoko Misu, Assistant Principal Doreen Esposito
Front Row: Ayano Takada and Paula's students Kosuke Takada and Takuma Misu.*

The ARCHI-TEACHER AWARD

was presented by Council Member Daniel Garodnick to Paula Rogovin, a first-grade teacher at Public School 290. Ms. Rogovin was honored as an early supporter of our *YOUNG FRIENDS* education program and for her passion and dedication to teaching children about architecture and the built environment.

The CRAFTSMAN AWARD

was presented to Elaine Weitzen, longtime owner and curator of the Parge House at 866 Lexington Avenue. Ms. Weitzen received the award along with the craftsman who is working to restore this treasured New York City home located within the proposed expansion of the Upper East Side Historic District.

The RENAISSANCE AWARD

was presented to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic and the architecture team behind the interior renovations of Bohemian National Hall at 321 East 73rd Street. This international group was recognized for the impressive contemporary renovation of this storied building's interiors and its rebirth as a neighborhood cultural center.



Awardee Elaine Weitzen, Susan Henshaw Jones, Board Member David Karabell, Paula Moss

The EXTRA-MILE AWARD

was presented to the owners and craftsmen behind the terra-cotta restoration and replacement of balconies and details at 525 Park Avenue, an undesignated neo-Renaissance style apartment house.

The RESTORATION AWARD

was presented to the architecture team and owners of 162 East 70th Street for their vision in restoring a badly altered Italianate rowhouse into a meticulously restored 19th century brownstone, with no detail left unfinished.

Young Friends

Back to the Future in Yorkville

"Do famous people still live here?" a second grader recently asked in front of the Clapboard House on 412 East 85th Street. On a walking tour as part of our new *Yorkville Immigration* education program, we discussed how John Herbst, a German immigrant and marble mason, lived in the house with his family during the late 19th century and sold tombstones from the front yard. It occurred to me when we discuss history with elementary school

students, the children have a mythical vision of "long ago", and the stories of the people who inhabited these buildings become like celebrities. Another character the students learn about on our Yorkville tour is Jacob Ruppert. In 1887, at the age of 20, Ruppert took over the family brewery, which was opened in 1862 by his father on land between 90th and 94th Streets between 2nd and 3rd Avenues. The students love to hear that Ruppert also owned the New York Yankees from 1915-1939. The brewery complex contained over 35 fortress-like buildings that spanned 22 acres and employed over 1,000 European immigrants. Though demolished in 1965 and replaced in 1975 by the aptly named Ruppert Towers, the students can still see evidence that these four blocks are

unique to the area and different than the surrounding rows of 19th century storefronts and tenement buildings. Finally, students learn about Ferdinand Schaller and Anton Weber, who emigrated from Stuttgart, Germany, and opened their award-winning shop specializing in German food products in 1937. Their store, Schaller and Weber, is still in business today on 1684 2nd Avenue between 85th and 86th Streets. As with all of our education programs, it is the buildings and the historical characters that occupied them that bring history to life for our 1st through 5th graders. If you would like to learn more about our youth education programs, please contact Sarah O'Keefe at s.okeefe@friends-ues.org or 212-535-2526.

Walking and Talking with FRIENDS

Our calendar has been filled with many exciting events this winter and spring. From talks to walks, we are learning more about our neighborhood and city with each event! In February, we hosted a book talk by lifelong New Yorker Chester Burger, author of *Unexpected New York—87 Discoveries in Familiar Places*. Mr. Burger's book focuses on the hidden tales that lie all around us on New York City streets and buildings. The packed audience learned that President Chester Arthur was inaugurated at 123 Lexington Avenue, in the middle of the night on September 20, 1881, after President James A. Garfield was assassinated. We also discovered how to decipher the code on New York City's 600,000 manhole covers to determine what's underneath. The event included many more fun facts and concluded with a reception and book signing by Mr. Burger.

In early March, architectural conservator Mary Kay Judy presented her recent research on historic districts and their effects on international tourism. During her fascinating talk to a standing-room-only crowd at the

Neighborhood Preservation Center, the audience journeyed from historic districts in the Republic of Georgia to Florence, Italy and finally to New York City as we learned more about how historic districts are beneficially shaping communities all around the world.

In addition to our Annual Awards in March, we also hosted our "Best Friend" members for an exclusive evening tour of the Seventh Regiment Armory on Park Avenue. Constructed from 1877-1881, this magnificent building hails as "the finest example of the American Aesthetic Movement in the country." Samuel White, whose architecture firm, Platt Byard Dovell White, is currently performing an extensive restoration of this historic building, and the Armory's Senior Project Director, Kirsten Reoch, led the behind-the-scenes tour. We began with an investigation of the current restoration efforts in the remarkable first floor rooms and continued up the grand staircase to the richly detailed company rooms. Mr. White discussed Stanford White's contributions to the Armory interiors as we ended the

evening with a reception in the exquisite glow of the Veterans Room and the Silver Room, both designed by Louis Comfort Tiffany and Stanford White.

We have also explored our neighborhood on foot. FRIENDS was a proud participant in Immigrant Heritage Week, sponsored by Mayor Bloomberg and consisting of 180 events in all five boroughs. During a walking tour in Yorkville, Board Member Franny Eberhart shared her extensive research on the Rhinelanders, an early immigrant family from Europe, who prospered in their new country, eventually creating a rich architectural legacy in this immigrant neighborhood. Immigrant Heritage Week was such a success that Mayor Bloomberg signed an Executive Order to establish its permanency as an annual New York City historic and cultural event. In addition, we offered walking tours of Lexington Avenue to examine our proposed expansion of the Upper East Side Historic District, as well as a family tour to teach basic architectural vocabulary to all ages. Be on the lookout for more exciting events and tours this fall!

Lexington Corner

THE PARGE HOUSE

In each newsletter, we will profile one of the many endangered buildings within the proposed expansion area of the Upper East Side Historic District. If you have any favorites, let us know and we will profile your pick. In this



The Parge House, 866 Lexington Avenue

issue, we explore the Parge House, an outstanding example of residential architecture on Lexington Avenue.

The Parge House, located at the southwest corner of 65th Street and Lexington Avenue, was originally built as a typical brownstone in 1870. In 1921, it was bought and remodeled by an innovative architect, Frederick Sterner, for use as his residence and studio, becoming one of the most distinctive and picturesque homes on the Upper East Side.

After Sterner acquired this building, he transformed the exterior into a stucco masterpiece modeled on English medieval "paring," popular in England during the reign of Henry VIII. Decorative shields, swirling vines, winged cherubs, and pastoral scenes envelop the building's south and west elevations. A wonderfully carved entrance door on 65th Street further complements the whimsical and medieval character of the building. In admiration of the paring details on this house, FRIENDS' logo is based on Sterner's elaborate and distinctive design.

The interior of the home was also renovated and designed to resemble an English Tudor townhouse. The home's wall panels, doors, ceiling and floor beams were all constructed with carved Old English oak. Multi-paned casement windows were also installed, and the home was filled with antique furniture to pay further tribute to the distinctive Tudor style.

The Parge House is a unique and remarkable building on Lexington Avenue; however, it is yet to be recognized as an individual landmark. Hopefully with an expansion of the Upper East Side Historic District, this building will be preserved for future generations.



The incredible paring details located on the south elevation of the building

Neighborhood Watch: Lenox Hill Brownstones

The brownstones at 110-120 East 76th Street were recently tagged with particularly ominous symbols. The city has spray painted many bright squares on the facades of these buildings, meant to alert emergency workers to use great caution when entering dangerously deteriorated structures.

How can this happen to designated structures in a historic district, you ask? Since 1976 the row was owned by Lenox Hill Hospital, which never implemented a Landmarks Preservation Commission approved plan to turn these buildings into a sports medicine center. Instead, the buildings became vacant and increasingly neglected, even though neighbors complained about their worsening condition, including

refuse and rat infested backyards. Now the hospital has sold the buildings to a developer, and neighbors have noted what appear to be windows left wide open and holes in the roofs, permitting the elements to pour in, hastening the internal deterioration.

Both the Department of Buildings and the Landmarks Preservation Commission regulations require that owners keep their properties in good repair. In several successful cases, the LPC has prosecuted owners guilty of long term neglect to buildings in historic districts. FRIENDS urges the LPC to use their powers now and protect these threatened buildings on 76th Street before it's too late.



An ominous yellow x covers the deteriorating façade of 114 East 76th Street

Regulating Storefronts on Madison Avenue

Madison Avenue, originally part of a quiet residential neighborhood lined with brownstones, has developed over the decades into one of America's premier shopping districts. By the 1920s, the majority of brownstones adapted their first floors for commercial purposes. Since then, Madison Avenue has become a coveted and sought after destination for luxury retailers. The demand for storefronts along Madison Avenue has attracted an endless influx of new shop owners, each adapting their display window and customizing the storefront signage. In 2001, the Landmarks Preservation Commission published the Madison Avenue Guidelines to assist new shop owners with preparing and implementing appropriate storefront designs for this historic avenue.

FRIENDS supports the Madison Avenue Guidelines, as they are a successful tool for carefully processing storefront alterations while also protecting the character and integrity of the Avenue. However, as with all master plans, after several years of implementation, it is wise to reevaluate the process to ensure that all intentions for the plan are being executed as expected. Therefore, FRIENDS is in the midst of a detailed study that is examining the changes along Madison Avenue in hopes to recognize any potential trends which may threaten the integrity of the original storefronts. We hope our analysis will reveal that the Madison Avenue Guidelines are operating well and there is no need for revision. We feel this vigilant study is representative of our commitment to guarding and protecting the special character of Madison Avenue. We will keep you up to date on the results when the study is completed.

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, Councilmember Daniel Garodnick and Councilmember Jessica Lappin through the Department of Youth and Community Development.

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 an email alert list of important preservation issues on the Upper

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 2010 Annual Awards. If you know of a restoration or renovation project, or even a new building that fits with its historic neighbors, please let us know! Projects must be completed between December 1st, 2008 and December 1st, 2009.

East Side. Members can subscribe by visiting our website at www.friends-ues.org. And don't forget, you can also check our website for a list of all LPC Upper East Side items and the LPC's decision.

LETTER *from the* PRESIDENT

New York City is a kaleidoscope of events, and our corner of the Upper East Side is experiencing its fair share of newsworthy items. As I walk by Lexington Avenue and 65th Street and see the empty lot where the Kean Mansion once stood, I feel a mix of emotions. I am sad for the loss of this great example of New York City architecture, but hopeful for success in our ongoing efforts to protect many other historic buildings.

After years of hard work, we are pleased to announce that the Landmarks Preservation Commission is formally considering our proposed extension to the Upper East Side Historic District. The LPC has called for an informational meeting on June 3rd to discuss the extension with property owners (see article Lexington Avenue on the front page). We will be sure to keep you informed as the process continues. It is our goal to preserve the distinctive character and historic architecture of Lexington Avenue. We are confident that we will save several outstanding buildings on the Upper East Side for future generations.

In other news, please save the date of September 22nd as we celebrate our Sixth Annual Ambassador Award dinner. We are very pleased to be honoring Amanda M. Burden and we hope to see you there.

I wish you a wonderful summer. If you haven't yet signed up for our email newsletter, visit our website at www.friends-ues.org to stay up to date on the latest developments.



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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