



NEWS *from* FRIENDS

Fall 2011

UPPER EAST SIDE MAY GAIN 127TH INDIVIDUAL LANDMARK!

On July 26th, a public hearing was held on the potential designation of the Barbizon Hotel for Women. Situated just outside the recently-designated Upper East Side Historic District Extension, the Barbizon represents one of the earliest residential alternatives for women looking to take advantage of the new professional opportunities in New York City during the 1920s. Constructed in 1927 by architects Murgatroyd & Ogden, the building displays an eclectic blend of Italian Renaissance, Gothic and Islamic architecture.

This twenty-three story hotel is similar to many buildings constructed during the 1920s, combining the latest in steel-cage construction with a number of setbacks required by the 1916 Zoning Resolution. The second floor features tall arched windows connected by decorative columns. Each window has a handsome railing of twisted iron, accented with a large, cursive "B" in its center. At the corners of the eighteenth floor, open arched windows are supported by classical columns, while the building's numerous setbacks display a distinct corbelled brick pattern. Three gigantic



The Barbizon Hotel for Women. (Courtesy of the Landmarks Preservation Commission)

"127th Individual Landmark" continued on page 2

arched windows are located below one massive arched window at the hotel's penultimate setback. Finally, the building is crowned by a broad pyramidal roof.

The residents of the Barbizon Hotel for Women were largely made up of aspiring models and actresses, who paid as little as \$12 a week for nine-foot by twelve-foot cubicles. As referenced in a *Vanity Fair* article from April 2010, this "elite dollhouse" harbored the greatest concentration of beauty east of Hollywood, including Grace Kelly, Joan Crawford, Lauren Bacall, Liza Minnelli, Candice Bergen and Cloris Leachman. Eileen Ford also stabled her young models at the Barbizon. In addition, the hotel accommodated future writers such as Joan Didion, Ann Beattie and Sylvia Plath, who described a fictionalized version of the Barbizon in her book "The Bell Jar."

Despite its meager lodging, the hotel served as a sheltered entry point into New York City society for proper young women. For most of its existence, men were not allowed above the ground floor of the hotel and strict dress and conduct rules were enforced. The establishment loosened these restrictions when it began admitting men as guests in 1981. Twenty years later, a \$40 million renovation was completed and the name was changed to the Melrose Hotel. Finally, in 2006, the building was converted for condominium use, at which point it reclaimed the Barbizon name.

The Barbizon Hotel for Women is significant for its social and cultural contributions, as well as its distinctive architectural presence. FRIENDS believes this remarkable building not only meets, but exceeds, the Landmark Preservation Commission's requirements for an individual New York City landmark. On a more personal note, it was at the Barbizon, in Room #803, that FRIENDS had our very first office! In sum, we look forward to its potential induction as the Upper East Side's 127th landmark! ■

FALL 2011 EVENTS

Great Houses of Havana: A Century of Cuban Style

Hermes Mallea - architect, author, and expert in residential design - will discuss his new book, which takes readers inside the finest residences of Havana. Celebrating 100 years of creativity, design, and style, *Great Houses of Havana: A Century of Cuban Style* traces the evolution of the Cuban home from its traditional Spanish colonial roots to the "Tropical Modernist" villas of the 1950s, illustrating how Cuban residential design responded to international trends in architecture while remaining true to an inimitable local style. In his illustrated lecture, Mr. Mallea will take us on a journey through some of Havana's most fantastic homes to analyze their design and decoration, introducing the architects and their patrons who made Havana "the Paris of the Caribbean." ■

Thursday, December 8th

6:30 pm

Americas Society

680 Park Avenue

Co-presented with the Americas Society.



Spiral handrail in Rafael de Cardenas' house for Hilda Sarra. (Courtesy of photographer Nestor Marti)

Free of charge. Members of FRIENDS and the Americas Society may register at any time. Non-members may register beginning on December 1st. "Members only" reception to follow.



The Duke of Windsor in the house of the Countess of Revilla de Camargo. (Courtesy of the Museum of Decorative Arts)

First Avenue Estate Hardship Application Finalized!

As you know, the owners of the individually-designated City and Suburban Homes First Avenue Estate have submitted an application for the demolition of 429 East 64th Street and 430 East 65th Street on the grounds that they do not generate a sufficient economic return. Most recently, in support of the application for demolition, the owner finalized reports by Cushman and Wakefield that claim they cannot make the 6% return on investment that is the threshold for a hardship determination.

It is our responsibility to refute the specifics of the owner's hardship application. To prepare this rebuttal, FRIENDS has commissioned HR&A Advisors, a specialist in economic development, real estate and public policy consulting since 1976. In addition, we have conferred with our colleagues at the Municipal Art Society, the New York Landmarks Conservancy, the Historic Districts Council, CIVITAS, Landmark West! and the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation. We have also met regularly with a group of tenants, as well as with Jane Swanson, chief of staff for New York City Council Member Jessica Lappin.

As stewards of the architectural legacy of the Upper East Side, we must do everything in our power to fight this hardship application. We hope that you will continue to support our efforts to protect the First Avenue Estate, and the future of every New York City landmark, by speaking at the Public Hearing (date TBD) or sending a letter of opposition to:

Chairman Robert Tierney
Landmarks Preservation Commission
Municipal Building
1 Centre Street, 9th Floor
New York, NY 10007 ■

AN EVENING TO REMEMBER!

On Thursday, September 15th, friends from around the city gathered to honor Richard Ravitch at our *Eighth Annual Ambassador to the Upper East Side Award Dinner*.

Richard Ravitch is a lawyer, public official and businessman with a long and distinguished career in both the public and private sector. In addition to serving as the Chairman and CEO of HRH Construction Corporation and Chairman and CEO of the Bowery Savings Bank, he has devoted over 40 years to public service, shaping a diverse range of urban policy from affordable housing to transportation infrastructure. He has served as Chairman of the New York State Urban Development Corporation, Chairman of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, Chairman of the Charter Revision Commission of the City of New York, and Co-Chair of the Millennial Housing Commission. Most recently, he served as Lieutenant Governor of the State of New York. Mr. Ravitch is a long-time resident of the Upper East Side.

An admired colleague, Council Member Daniel Garodnick, gave a thoughtful and engaging introduction to our honoree.

Special thanks to the Benefit Committee and all those who helped to make the evening such a success! With funds raised at our benefit, FRIENDS can

continue our mission as steward of the Upper East Side's six historic districts and 126 (soon to be 127, we hope!) individual landmarks. ■



Gretchen Siebel, FRIENDS' Vice President; Hon. Robert Tierney, Landmarks Preservation Commission Chair; Anne Millard, FRIENDS' President; and Michael Armstrong



Honoree Richard Ravitch and New York State Senator Liz Krueger

Notes from the Research Desk

Every so often, FRIENDS receives a research inquiry. Whether it is from a local property owner interested in his building's history or a distant relative charting a family tree, we are always happy to help if time allows. On a sleepy summer afternoon, a representative of Florentine Films called FRIENDS with such a request. It seems that they were unable to track down a contextual photograph of the Sara Delano Roosevelt house on East 65th Street for Ken Burns' latest documentary project! With a little bit of sleuthing, we were able to uncover several street views of the surrounding neighborhood, matching the period in question. Keep an eye out for these Upper East Side streetscapes in "The Roosevelts," airing in 2014! ■



New York City Council Member Daniel Garodnick

Young Friends

Last June we completed our most successful year of educational programming in the history of FRIENDS, with a 23% increase in participation! Our two programs inspired 1,073 young architects in 50 classrooms, including 6 new schools.

These numbers represent a wider trend: the growing interest in built environment education for young students. In the past year, FRIENDS has been contacted by educators from far and wide to hear more about our programs. From our lesson plans and walking tours to the broader concept of making preservation and architecture come alive for young students, these educators are interested in learning from our experience.

Last fall, we met with an educator from the Preservation of Monuments Board in Singapore, who shadowed our classes and studied our lesson plans. Her research, funded through a grant from the National Heritage Board of Singapore, sought to uncover how monuments and buildings can be used as tools to teach history and social studies. We have also consulted with members of the New Canaan Preservation Alliance as they plan to introduce similar programs in their elementary schools. Most recently, we were contacted by a teacher in Alberta, Canada seeking our expertise in educating her elementary students about the buildings in their small prairie town.

FRIENDS is proud to serve as a resource for all teachers and communities, pushing the boundaries of architecture and built environment education on the Upper East Side and beyond! ■

For more information, contact Sarah O'Keefe at education@friends-ues.org

Walking & Talking with FRIENDS

This past spring's calendar was filled with many exciting programs. From walks to talks (and a river cruise), we learn more about our historic neighborhood with each event! In March, we celebrated the one year anniversary of the Upper East Side Historic District Extension with a free walking tour of Lexington Avenue led by Franny Eberhart, chair of the Preservation Committee at FRIENDS. In April, Thomas Jayne, a preeminent scholar and practitioner of interior design, discussed his book, *The Finest Rooms in America: 50 Influential Interiors from the 18th Century to the Present*. In May, we enjoyed a unique journey through two of the most spectacular houses of worship in New York City: the Eldridge Street Synagogue and Temple Emanu-El. It was a truly extraordinary opportunity to explore these beautiful buildings, and together we unearthed



Enjoying spectacular East River views aboard "The Lexington."

the surprising details that tie their histories together. In June, FRIENDS offered an exclusive tour of the Upper East Side from a new vantage point – the East River. Francis Morrone, voted one of the best tour guides in the world by *Travel + Leisure* magazine, led this exceptional tour of the landmarks that line the river's shore. Despite the poor weather, a great time was had by all! ■

LETTER from the PRESIDENT

With the designation of the Upper East Side Historic District Extension successfully achieved, and our 30th anniversary upon us, it is time to turn our attention toward the "other" Upper East Side. This area may be perceived as less glamorous and prestigious than the lavish mansions and apartment houses of Fifth Avenue, but it is certainly no less interesting or deserving of study.

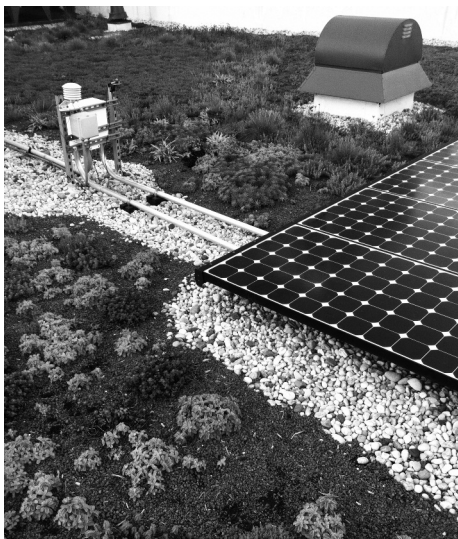
And so, with your help, we have launched a historic resource survey of Yorkville. Amid these blocks, our volunteer surveyors have found many reminders of the German, Czech, Hungarian, and Irish immigrant families who once called this neighborhood home. These remnants, in the form of tenement, factory, school and church buildings, are equally worthy of preservation.

Stay tuned as we continue to uncover the rich cultural heritage found literally at your doorstep!

Sincerely,

It's Easy Being Green

By definition, a green roof is one that is partially or completely covered with vegetation and a growing medium, planted over a waterproofing membrane. In general, green roofs absorb 50-100% of rain water, delaying and often preventing its flow into overloaded sewer systems. When flooding is reduced, erosive conditions and



Sustainable technologies: solar panels and sedum.

street or subway closures can be averted. What is more, green roofs improve the quality of storm water, filtering 95% of cadmium, copper and lead and 30% of nitrogen and phosphorous from runoff. In addition to the environmental benefits of storm water management, air purification and improved insulation, this rooftop assembly can provide a welcome oasis for those inhabiting the building below, as well as a beautiful view for neighbors.

On Tuesday, October 4th, FRIENDS and neighbors visited the green roof at Regis High School, installed by Greensulate in 2010. During our visit with Amy Norquist and Father Philip G. Judge, we learned firsthand about the advantages of installing this 25,000 square-foot system which encompasses three different plant types. This mini-ecosystem includes native grasses, solar panels, an astronomical observatory, an apiary and a garden that supplies the

school's cafeteria with fresh herbs. The roof acts as an outdoor classroom for students of Regis High School, while also collecting data for Columbia University's Earth Institute. Similarly, Amy Norquist continues to use the roof as a laboratory for experimentation with sustainable technologies, testing the efficacy of her installation. This information will be used to maintain and improve the design of this roof, along with Greensulate's many other projects across the nation.

At our Annual Awards last spring, we proudly honored Greensulate and Regis High School with our first-ever Sustainability Award for successfully installing their green roof atop this individually-designated landmark building. We hope this project is an inspiration to others, and that many more sensitive and sustainable projects come forth in the future! ■



Friends and neighbors learn about the Regis High School green roof.

Kean Site Update

Since the egregious demolition of the Kean Residence, the corner of Lexington Avenue and East 65th Street has languished. Facing foreclosure, Trevor Davis sold the stalled construction site - along with his development plans for a new 15-story building - to Toll Brothers in October 2010. We were disheartened to learn that although the corner had been included within the boundaries of the Upper East Side Historic District Extension by the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC), these plans had been approved by the Department of Buildings prior to designation. As such, the permits remained valid and did not require approval from the LPC. Thus FRIENDS and concerned neighbors have had no opportunity to review or comment on the design of this tower

Rendering of the Touraine at the corner of Lexington Avenue and East 65th Street.



that is being imposed upon our recently-expanded historic district. The final design (*shown as a computer rendering here*) is currently under construction, and is expected to be complete next fall. ■

IN GRATITUDE

FRIENDS of the Upper East Side Historic District wishes to acknowledge the generous support of: The J. M. Kaplan Fund, The New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, Manhattan Chamber of Commerce, Council Member Daniel Garodnick and Council Member Jessica Lappin through the Department of Cultural Affairs. ■

CALL FOR ENTRIES

Each year, Friends of the Upper East Side Historic Districts awards outstanding achievements in the fields of preservation, architecture and advocacy on the Upper East Side. Nominations are sought for our 2012 Annual Awards. If you know of a restoration or renovation project, or even a new building that is sensitive to its historic neighbors, please let us know! Projects must be completed between December 1st, 2010 and December 1st, 2011.

For more information please call 212-535-2526 or visit our website at www.friends-ues.org.

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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, acting 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.

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