

# FRIENDS



OF THE UPPER EAST SIDE HISTORIC DISTRICTS

Volume 10, No. 3

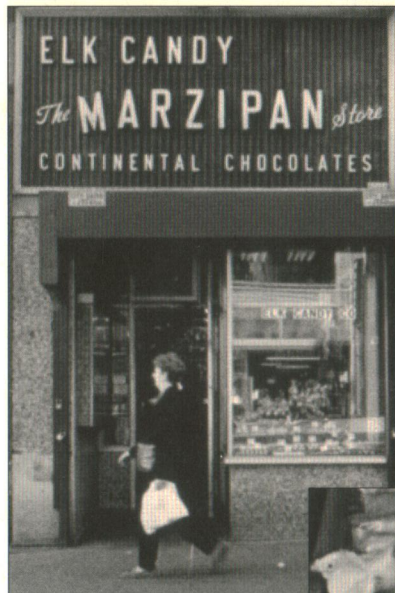
Winter 1998

## New York's Cultural Landmarks: Why They Matter

by Laura Hansen

When the trustees of the Martha Graham Dance Company—faced with staggering financial hardship and the potential shuttering of the school-voted in June to sell its studio building on East 63rd Street, a coalition of dancers and preservationists came together to address a serious threat to a place they cherish as a "cultural landmark." Last year, loyal neighborhood patrons of the Elk Candy Company rallied around the shop they treasured as a "cultural landmark" when a real-estate development

forced the closure of its East 86th Street shop, its home for 64 years. Elk Candy was able to relocate in the neighborhood several months later, but like so many historical and cultural sites throughout the city, the fate of the Martha Graham studio is uncertain – and problematic.



*The Elk Candy's original store front on East 86th Street in 1990. Photo courtesy of Elaine Norman.*

Despite the preservation difficulties they pose, these kinds of places—and others, like the Dvorak House or the Central Park Children's Zoo—have the power to galvanize unusual coalitions of "preservationists." And these coalitions are a testament to the need for new ways of thinking about historic preservation: ways that preserve sites and buildings not solely for their architectural merit, but also for their historical and cultural importance.

What are historical or cultural "landmarks" and why do they matter? They are places where

history happened; places where history and culture can be remembered and understood; and places where vital events are still happening. The Martha Graham studio can convey the story of Graham's achievements with an immediacy that goes beyond verbal or written description: it is where she worked



*Photo courtesy of Elaine Norman.*



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*Martha Graham dance studio, 316 East 63rd Street.*

during her most creative and influential period, and where she drew inspiration from the studio and garden outside its walls. The Elk Candy Company contributes to the neighborhood's sense of identity, provides continuity and character, and is seen as an integral part of the community by their patrons. Association with historical events, tradition, communal identity, the fondness that comes with long familiarity and use – all can make a building or a place significant in people's lives. These meanings are part of our collective cultural inheritance, and enrich our lives as urban citizens.

In June of 1998, the Municipal Art Society (MAS) and City Lore launched Place Matters, an advocate for New York's places of history, story, and tradition. Place Matters is the legacy of an MAS-led task force convened in 1992 to ask the question: "What are we doing to protect our historical and cultural sites, and is it enough?" The group's findings, published as *History Happened Here, A Plan for Saving New York City's Historically and Culturally Significant Sites*, are not just about landmarking. This plan encourages those who love the city to recognize traces of history in all its many wonderful (and often unexpected) guises, and to care for them with the same regard that they extend to the beautiful cornice or the rare fanlight.

Place Matters intends to create a new climate of awareness in which communities can act to protect historical and cultural places before they are threatened by increasing public awareness of cherished places, by making the case for their value to communities and public policy makers, by supporting the efforts of concerned citizens across the city, and by working toward supportive planning and preservation policies, especially

the designation of more historical and cultural landmarks. Our plan of action begins with the creation of the Census of Places that Matter, a city-wide inventory of historically and culturally significant sites. The census will emerge from a process of grassroots coalition-building and collaborative programming – to tell a more inclusive history of the city and create an infrastructure for protecting these places.

*Laura Hansen is the Director of Place Matters. To make a nomination to the citywide Census of Places that Matter or to receive a copy of History Happened Here, a Plan for Saving New York City's Historically and Culturally Significant Sites, call 212-935-3960, ext. 259.*



*Elk Candy Company in their new home at 1628 Second Avenue.*

# Mapping the Upper East Side

by Julie Morgan

They say that time flies when you're having fun, and no doubt time flew for me in New York City this past summer. Of course, it's flying even more quickly as I work on completing my masters thesis; is that supposed to be fun?!

As a native of Texas and a current resident of Georgia, I felt that I should work in a different region of the country for the summer. The Halina Rosenthal Fellowship and New York City were my first choices, respectively, for an internship, and I was very pleased to be chosen as the fellow by FRIENDS.

My project for the summer was a continuation of the Upper East Side Historic Districts map begun by FRIENDS' fellow Jimmy White in 1996. Jimmy's extensive research laid the foundation for my job—pulling everything together to create a final product. The map committee, consisting of FRIENDS' President, Anne Millard; Vice President, Rita Chu; board member, Alice McGown; and executive director, Jane Cowan; and myself, discussed various ways to best organize the large

amount of information at hand, and after our first meeting, we had a vision.

Instead of creating one large map of the area, we decided to group the information into district blocks. Each block would have a historic picture of the neighborhood, a blown-up map of the district, the landmark listings, fun "insider" information relevant to that area, and a small color photo of a distinct architectural feature that typifies the district. The only snag was dealing with the individual landmarks, but we readily solved this dilemma by giving these buildings their own section.

Once we had this plan in place, the rest of the work went along fairly smoothly. Compiling the "tidbit" insider information was the best part of my job, and after a few weeks of research, I think even the "natives" on the committee were surprised by some of the information I uncovered.

I believe the Map & Guide (as we decided to call it) serves several purposes. Its detailed maps and building listings are excellent reference tools for use in locating the individual

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## President's Message

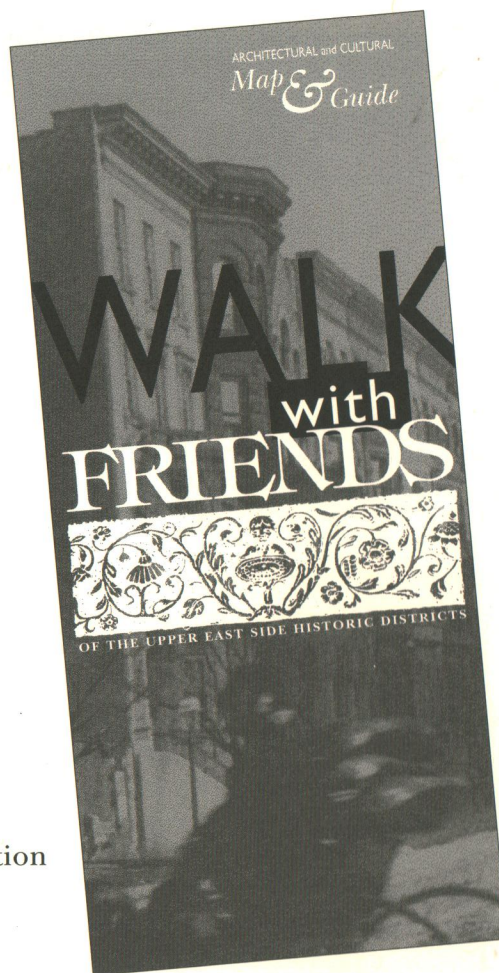
What a difference four days can make! Looking north from our kitchen window I have watched the building on 76th and Lexington going up. Fortunately it's not very tall. The housing for the water tower looks arched and graceful in the sky. The American flag waves majestically in the breeze – put there at the "topping-off" ceremony. It has become a wonderful new friend – undulating, telling me the weather and being my friend. I hope they never take it down.

We have just returned from Havana. A beautiful city, with friendly people and some wonderfully restored buildings but also with many grand buildings in disarray with perhaps 23 families living in one house. Electricity and water are scarce. We stayed at the Hotel Nacional, a glorious McKim Mead & White hotel. Life seems to go on. On December 2, Castro declared Christmas could be celebrated again after 39 years. On the drive in from the airport on December 3, it was dark outside – but I could see some small Christmas trees with very few lights and perhaps one ornament brought out after all these years. How much we take for granted. It was a wonderful trip, but how glad I was to return home and see that welcoming flag say "land of the free and the home of the brave." God bless America.

*Anne Millard*

landmarks and historic districts of the Upper East Side. The tidbits of information are a fun counter-balance to the listings. Historic photographs of each district serve as the background for the sections, reminders of what once was, and current photos of architectural features characteristic of that particular district graphically complement these photos. The map also has a one-panel listing of cultural organizations located on the Upper East Side. Thus, it can serve as a quick reference tool for visitors and residents alike.

The design is fantastic, and everyone at Mongrel Creative should be applauded for their patience in dealing with our many edits. They successfully organized a great deal of information in a very small amount of space. Furthermore, the colors selected by Mongrel and



approved by the map committee are excellent. They are muted, sophisticated, and eye catching. Now all we have to do is get the map printed in time for the 1999 tourist season!

I enjoyed meeting many of the board members and local preservationists. I love your city and its architecture, not to mention the food! Thank you for the opportunity to witness Big Apple preservation in action, and I am sure our preservation paths will cross again.

*Julie Morgan is currently in the historic preservation graduate program at the University of Georgia. She plans to attend the University of Texas law school in the fall of 1999.*

*Cover panel of "Walk with Friends: Architectural and Cultural Map & Guide."*

## Cottages' End a Grim Reality

The long battle to save the Cottages on Third Avenue between East 77th and East 78th Streets ended this summer when demolition of the two-story structure began. For FRIENDS, it was a sad day indeed; the site was featured in our 1993 exhibit, "The Eleven Most Endangered Places on the Upper East Side." (It was one of the eleven.) We supported having the site designated as a landmark, and we watched in awe as the Coalition to Save the Cottages and Gardens labored tirelessly for nearly two years toward one (ultimately) unattainable goal—preservation of the Cottages. FRIENDS honored this group with an Advocacy Award at our 15th Annual Meeting and Awards Ceremony in early 1998, because of their singular commitment to a significant architectural complex.

Soon, a high-rise luxury condominium will be constructed on the site. Preserved only in photographs, now it will be the role of history to judge the meaning of the Cottages' destruction.



*A building dies an unnatural death. What's left of the Cottages, as of October, 1998.*

# Buying Time for the Yorkville Clock



*The clock's head is lifted right off its cast-iron stanchion.*

Rescue efforts for the historic Yorkville clock are swinging into high gear. First, the move was made to reveal the clock, which had been hidden between two commercial canopies. (See the fall, 1998 newsletter for a related article.) Now, a community committee, organized by Margot Gayle and facilitated by FRIENDS, has declared that the clock's time for restoration has come.

The committee, called Neighbors Restoring the Yorkville Clock, is chaired by FRIENDS' Board Member Franny Eberhart. Margot Gayle



*That's a big head!*

is the Vice Chair, and FRIENDS is a member. The committee's role is twofold. First, funds will be raised to pay for the restoration. Second, and perhaps more important, the committee will serve as the clock's guardian for the future. Chair Franny Eberhart noted that this will entail "monitoring the clock's needs, getting professional care for it as required, resetting its hands for daylight savings time, and keeping it safe from graffiti and other vandals."

Phase one of the committee's work began on November 20, 1998, when Robert Baird, of the firm Historical Arts and Castings came all the way from Utah to remove the clock and ship it to his foundry. To date, the committee raised enough money to give Mr. Baird a downpayment for the restoration. The rest is on good faith, and the committee is confident that it can raise the \$18,000 necessary. If you would like to see the Yorkville clock marking time for the next century and beyond, please consider a contribution for the restoration. You may call FRIENDS' office at 535-2526 to arrange for a gift.



*Next to be hoisted away is the stanchion.*



*Time flew. ... The clock's empty site.*

# FRIENDS' Annual Benefit

## An Evening of Suave Sophistication

Benefit attendees gathered at the Colony Club on October 8 to socialize, sup, and swing to the delicate piano playing of jazz legend Joe Bushkin. A feeling of warmth and ease characterized the evening, which was attended by scores of FRIENDS' loyal supporters.

After cocktails, guests were shown to the newly-refurbished dining/ballroom of the Colony Club for dinner. Later, FRIENDS' President Anne L. Millard, welcomed the crowd and introduced Mr. Bushkin. With much elan, she relayed how FRIENDS came to be acquainted with Mr. Bushkin – it was a "Six Degrees of Separation," New York is really a small town, everybody knows everybody else chain of events that brought Mr. Bushkin to us.

Sounding as fresh at 82 as he did as a teen-age jazz prodigy, Joe Bushkin delighted the audience with a selection of American popular standards. The repertoire included original compositions, such as Bushkin's first song, "Oh, Look at Me Now" (which, incidentally, was one of the first hits of another youngster named Frank Sinatra). To those who might be more familiar with American pop music circa 1998, Joe Bushkin was (and is) a major figure in jazz history. The musicians Mr. Bushkin has played with reads like a who's who roster of jazz greats: Tommy Dorsey, Benny Goodman, Bunny Berigan, Frank Sinatra, Louis Armstrong, Billie Holiday, and Bing Crosby.

After Mr. Bushkin's set, the crowd drifted dreamily away, as if transported on a cloud of evanescent champagne bubbles. Another year, another benefit, and FRIENDS is grateful to all of our many friends who believe in and share our mission.



FRIENDS' Board Member Bill Judson (left), Vice President Robert K. Lindgren, and President Anne L. Millard share a laugh.



Benefit-goers Julia and Nigel Widdowson.



Board Members David Karabell and Teri Slater meet and greet.



Pianist Joe Bushkin, the evening's star.

Photos: Steven Tucker

## FRIENDS Sponsors Exhibit of Architectural Drawings

The exuberant architectural drawings of Robert Miles Parker have been familiar to New Yorkers for some time. His volume entitled *The Upper West Side*, which contains drawings of another part of town, is a joyous celebration of architecture. Mr. Parker's distinctive style combines a free expression of buildings' visual forms with a deeply felt love of architecture. All of his drawings are imbued with the implicit message that the built environment plays an important and vital part in all of our lives. Therefore, his body of work can be seen as a plea for preservation.

This past fall, FRIENDS teamed up with Mr. Parker to sponsor an exhibition of his drawings of east side buildings. The exhibit presented an ideal opportunity to showcase the marriage of east side preservation efforts with Mr. Parker's work. With our six historic districts and 125 individual landmarks, our neighborhood, the Upper East Side, inspired Mr. Parker. Drawings included well-known landmarks like the Church of the Holy Trinity; intimate streetscapes of Madison and Lexington Avenues; and an impressive panoramic bird's-eye view from a friend's kitchen window in Carnegie Hill.

On view at the 70th Street Art Gallery from September 17 through October 17, the exhibit proved productive both for Mr. Parker and for greater awareness of the architectural riches of the Upper East Side. If you missed the exhibit, but are interested in Mr. Parker's work, you may call FRIENDS' office at 535-2526 for information.



FRIENDS' office building seen through the artistic eyes of Robert Miles Parker.

# Preservation Committee News

Jitters on Wall Street do not appear to have dissuaded residents of buildings within historic districts from moving ahead with alteration plans. FRIENDS' Preservation Committee (composed of our board members) reviews applications on a monthly basis for all work being done within the six Upper East Side historic districts. We discuss any concerns and sing the praises of the various applications with architects, owners, and attorneys. Eventually, the applications end up at the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC), the body that decides whether the proposed alterations will be allowed. FRIENDS testifies at the LPC's public hearings for each Upper East Side application. Following, in geographic order, is a listing of the Certificate of Appropriateness applications for August - October, 1998, followed by the LPC's decision.

## East 60s

**134 East 62nd Street:** An Italianate-style residence built in 1869 designed by John Sexton. Application to construct a rear addition: **APPROVED (Zoned R10)**

**18 East 63rd Street:** A neo-Grec-style row house built in 1876 designed by Gage Inslee. Application to install new windows: **NO ACTION**

**26 East 64th Street:** A Queen Anne-style row house built in 1881-82 designed by Theodore Weston. Application to legalize the installation of a flagpole without Landmarks Preservation Commission permits: **NO ACTION**

**40 East 66th Street:** A neo-Renaissance-style apartment building built in 1929 designed by Rosario Candela. Application to modify a door and install a new transom, awning, plaque, and to replace windows: **WITHDRAWN**

**32 East 67th Street:** A town house built in 1877-78 and altered in the neo-French Classic style in 1908-09 by W.W. Knowles. Application to install a flagpole and flag: **WITHDRAWN**

**44 East 67th Street:** An Art Deco-style apartment building built in 1940-41 designed by Rosario Candela. Application to legalize the installation of two through-the-wall HVAC units without Landmarks Preservation Commission permits: **WITHDRAWN**

**19 East 69th Street, aka 828 Madison Avenue:** A Queen Anne-style residence built in 1885-86 designed by Charles Buek and Company. Application to install signs, awnings, and flagpoles and banners at the second story: **WITHDRAWN**

## East 70s

**4 East 70th Street:** A stylized neo-Classical/Art Deco-style apartment house built in 1938 designed by Sylvan Bien. Application to enlarge three window openings: **APPROVED**

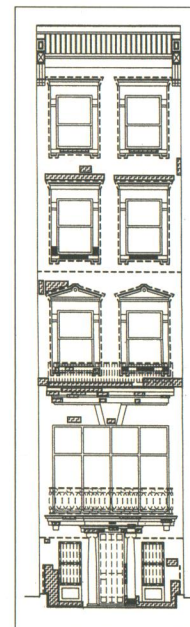
**159 East 70th Street:** A row house built before 1879 and altered in the Arts and Crafts style in 1908-09 by William Emerson. Application to demolish a two-story rear addition and construct a new two-story rear addition: **APPROVED (Zoned R8B)**

**21 East 73rd Street:** A neo-Grec-style row house built in 1871 designed by J.W. Marshall and altered in 1903 and 1906. Application to restore the facade and construct a rooftop addition: **APPROVED (Zoned R8B-LH1A, C5-1)**

**21 East 73rd Street:** Application to request a report to the City Planning Commission pursuant to Section 74-711 of the Zoning Resolution for a special permit for a modification of bulk to permit a construction of a rooftop addition: **APPROVED (Zoned R8B-LH1A, C5-1)**



Upper floors and street level of 21 East 73rd Street.



Schematic drawing of 21 East 73rd Street, showing plans for some of the restoration work to be carried out. Drawing courtesy Building Conservation Associates.



**35 East 76th Street:** An Art Deco-style hotel built in 1929-30 designed by Sylvan Bien. Application to replace a window on the 24th floor:

**WITHDRAWN**

**7 East 78th Street:** A Beaux Arts-style town house built in 1899-1900 designed by Hoppin and Koen. Application to alter window openings on the front facade and to create a new window opening on the west facade:

**APPROVED WITH MODIFICATIONS**

**22 East 78th Street:** An Italianate-style row house built in 1871 designed by Silas M. Styles. Application to alter window openings on the rear facade:

**APPROVED**

## East 80s

**18 East 81st Street:** A row house built in 1883 and altered circa 1900 in the Beaux Arts style by Cleverdon and Putzel. Application to construct a rear bay: **WITHDRAWN**

## East 90s

**48 East 91st Street:** A row house built in 1885-86 and altered in 1951-52 by Hudson Jackson. Application to alter the front and rear facades: **NO ACTION**

**12 East 96th Street:** A Beaux Arts-style town house built in 1916 designed by Ogden Codman. Application to install a canopy at the entrance: **DENIED**

**50 East 96th Street:** A neo-Renaissance-style apartment building built in 1905-06 designed by George F. Pelham. Application to legalize the installation of an awning without Landmarks Preservation Commission permits: **NO ACTION**

## Fifth Avenue

**828 Fifth Avenue, aka 2 East 64th Street:** A neo-Venetian Renaissance-style residence built in 1896 designed by N.G. Mellen. Application to construct a masonry wall at the sideyard: **APPROVED (Zoned R10)**

**900 Fifth Avenue:** A Modern-style apartment building built in 1958 designed by Sylvan and Robert Bien. Application to amend the previously approved window master plan to address windows installed in non-compliance with the master plan: **NO ACTION**

**910 Fifth Avenue:** An apartment building built in 1919 and altered in 1958-59 by Sylvan Bien. Application to alter the penthouse windows and greenhouses: **APPROVED**

**910 Fifth Avenue:** Application to install a through-wall HVAC unit: **WITHDRAWN**

**923 Fifth Avenue:** An apartment building built in 1949-51 designed by Sylvan Bien. Application to replace windows in apartment 3F: **WITHDRAWN**

**953 Fifth Avenue:** A neo-Renaissance-style apartment building built in 1924-25 designed by I.N. Phelps Stokes. Application to construct a greenhouse on top of a rear extension: **APPROVED (Zoned R10)**

**1010 Fifth Avenue:** A neo-Italian Renaissance-style building built in 1925 designed by Frederick F. French. Application to install through-wall HVAC units: **LAI D OVER**

**1165 Fifth Avenue:** A neo-Renaissance-style apartment building built in 1926 designed by J.E.R. Carpenter. Application to legalize enlarging a window opening without Landmarks Preservation Commission permits: **APPROVED**

## Madison Avenue

**770 Madison Avenue:** An Italianate/neo-Grec-style row house built c. 1876. Application to install a new storefront at the first and second floors to replace awnings installed without Landmarks Preservation Commission permits: **LAI D OVER**

**958 Madison Avenue:** A row house built in 1877-78 and altered in 1920. Application to legalize the installation of HVAC equipment on the roof of the front extension without Landmarks Preservation Commission permits: **DENIED**

## Park Avenue

**575 Park Avenue:** A neo-Renaissance-style apartment building built in 1926-27 designed by George Fred Pelham. Application to install new windows at the second and fourteenth floors: **LAI D OVER**

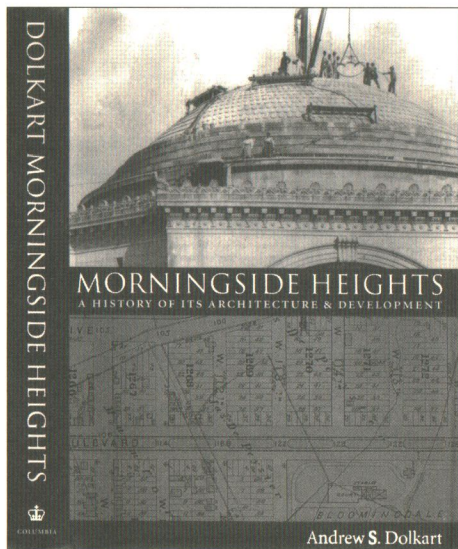
**725 Park Avenue:** A contemporary institutional building built in 1979 designed by Edward Larabee Barnes. Application to construct a glass-enclosed atrium, relocate the main building entrance, relocate banners, and to construct an addition at the rear of the building: **NO ACTION (Zoned R10)**

**800 Park Avenue:** An apartment building built in 1925 designed by Electus D. Litchfield and Pliny Rogers. Application to alter a window opening: **APPROVED**

**850 Park Avenue:** A neo-Renaissance-style apartment building built in 1913-14 designed by Rouse and Goldstone. Application to install window grilles on the first floor: **NO ACTION**

**1155 Park Avenue:** A neo-Renaissance-style apartment house built in 1914 designed by Robert T. Lyons. Application to install a through-wall HVAC unit: **WITHDRAWN**

## Preservation Bookshelf



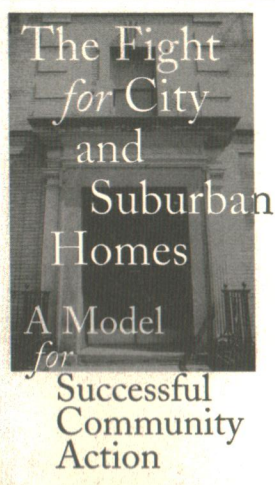
*Morningside Heights: A History of Its Architecture and Development*  
by Andrew S. Dolkart

These days, the Morningside Heights area of New York City is known for its distinguished institutions and their fabulous architecture: Columbia University, the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, Riverside Church, Jewish Theological Seminary, and Teachers College, to name a few. How did such a spectacular mix of beauty and intellectual function develop on this high plateau in upper Manhattan? In his lavishly illustrated book, *Morningside Heights: A History of Its Architecture and Development* (Columbia University Press; October, 1998; \$50.00), renowned architectural historian Andrew S. Dolkart explores the history of these complexes and of the surrounding residential neighborhood that later became a blueprint for much of the city's middle-class housing. By tracing the successes and failures of each building project that transformed a rural, outlying area into "the Acropolis of New York," *Morningside Heights* reveals a fascinating—and until now, untold—chapter in the life of New York City.

Dolkart traces the history of the neighborhood in lively detail. In addition to his compelling account of the development of Charles McKim's inspired designs for Columbia's new campus, he discusses the spectacular building complex erected by Teachers College; the difficult construction of St. Luke's Hospital and the Cathedral of St. John the Divine; Barnard College's efforts to build a campus that would closely relate to that of Columbia; John D. Rockefeller, Jr.'s successful efforts to build a non-denominational cathedral – Riverside Church – as a rival to the nearby Episcopal St. John the Divine; and the construction of distinguished buildings by the Union and Jewish Theological seminaries and the Institute of Musical Art (which became the Juilliard School of Music). Dolkart's engaging account retells the bitter, sometimes futile and often wonderfully successful struggles of trustees, clergy, and supporters to construct the great campuses and buildings that now comprise Morningside Heights.

*Morningside Heights* also traces the history of the surrounding residential neighborhood, providing the first comprehensive analysis of the design and construction of the early-twentieth-century speculative apartment houses that typify so many New York neighborhoods. According to Dolkart, the style of apartments first popularized in the area became the blueprint for much of the housing throughout New York City. "After becoming the prevailing residential type for middle-class apartment buildings on Morningside Heights," writes Dolkart, "the six-story, semi-fireproof elevator building also became the dominant form for middle-class apartment houses in other neighborhoods throughout New York City, with thousands erected in northern Manhattan, the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Queens."

*Andrew S. Dolkart teaches at the Columbia University School of Architecture and has written and lectured extensively about New York's architecture and development. He is the author of Guide to New York City Landmarks, has curated numerous exhibitions, and is well-known for his walking tours of New York City neighborhoods. He is a FRIENDS' Board Member.*



*The Fight for City and Suburban Homes: A Model for Successful Community Action* by Anne Ashby Gilbert

*The following synopsis is from the book's introduction.*

This book tells the story of the fourteen buildings on the Upper East Side that became the focus of one of the longest civic wars New Yorkers have ever waged over a piece of property. Collectively called the City and Suburban Homes York Avenue Estate, the buildings form a six-story apartment complex that occupies an entire city block, bounded on the east by the FDR Drive, on the west by York Avenue, on the north by East 79th Street, and on the south by East 78th Street. The buildings don't look distinguished enough—their facades are made of beige brick with little ornamentation—to have caused such a bitter battle, one that would last from 1984 to 1994 and would involve a huge cast of tenants, developers, historians, architects, lawyers, urban scholars, preservationists, social workers, housing experts, publicists, legislators, mayors, civic groups, government officials, judges, and impassioned citizens.

But the apartments had a social and historical significance that their plain appearance belied. Built between 1901 and 1913 as a model tenement, they were an early example of enlightened housing for the urban working class, and they were still serving as low-rental homes for 1,336 families during the massive building boom of the 1980s, when a wave of developers began to alter the fabric of residential neighborhoods on New York's Upper East Side, tearing down affordable brownstones and tenements to erect luxury high-rises. Thus when the developer Peter Kalikow bought City and Suburban and announced that he would demolish the complex and erect four forty-six-story apartment towers on the site, it was more than the usual David and Goliath story. It raised a broad range of urban issues—such matters as historic preservation, the protection of low-cost housing, appropriate zoning, and the quality of life. How that drama tortuously played itself out is the subject of this book.

*Note: To order a copy of The Fight for City and Suburban, send a check for \$11.00 (\$10.00 for book, \$1.00 for shipping) payable to the Coalition to Save City and Suburban Houses Inc. (or "Coalition") to: Coalition to Save City & Suburban Houses, Inc., Box 20456, Cherokee Station, New York, NY 10021*

*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. In addition to safeguarding the future of the Upper East Side's six historic districts and 125 individual landmarks, and being an advocate for sound preservation policies for the city, FRIENDS has also been a leader in successful efforts to dramatically improve zoning laws governing the area's avenues and residential side streets.*

**PREMIUM GIFTS**

**For a donation of \$50:**  
FRIENDS T-shirt.

**For a donation of \$100 or more:**  
The 3rd Edition of the *AIA Guide to NYC* by Elliot Willensky and Norval White.

**For a donation of \$250 or more:**  
*Stanford White's New York* by David Garrard Lowe.

**Membership Form**

- \$25/Individual      Name \_\_\_\_\_
- \$50/Family          Address \_\_\_\_\_
- \$100/Supporting      City/ST/Zip \_\_\_\_\_
- \$250/Patron          Home Ph. (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_
- \$500/Best Friend      Work Ph. (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_
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Please return this form with your check to:  
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or call (212) 535-2526

FRIENDS


## Mark Your Calendar! Upcoming FRIENDS' Events

### **FRIENDS' 16th Annual Meeting and Awards Ceremony:**

January 14, 1999. Watch your mail for your invitation.

### **Historic Districts Council's Fifth Annual Preservation Conference:**

March 6, 1999. Call FRIENDS (535-2526) or the Historic Districts Council (799-5837) for further information.



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# Young FRIENDS

OF THE UPPER EAST SIDE HISTORIC DISTRICTS

Welcome to Young FRIENDS. If you like buildings, you're sure to enjoy this magazine. In it, you'll find articles, craft ideas, and all sorts of interesting information about the terrific buildings you see every day right on your own block.

## A Country House for the City

**E**ver feel stressed? Do mean teachers, too much homework, strict parents, and sibling problems sound familiar? Do you ever wish you could just pack up (for a little while) and get away from it all? Leave life's problems and the city sounds and smells behind and go somewhere quiet, peaceful, where you could just be?



*"York Island with a View of the seats of Mr. A. Gracie..." This engraving was done by William Birch in 1808. Gracie Mansion is the third house from the left. Credit: Collection of The New-York Historical Society*

If you answered yes to any of these questions, you're not alone. Sooner or later, everyone feels the need to escape. It's nothing new – people have been "getting away from it all" for thousands of years. That's what vacations and country houses are for!

Archibald Gracie yearned for a country house. Who could blame him? With eight children, a wife, 21 cargo-carrying ships, involvement in a variety of civic and business organizations, a home and a busy office, you'd want some peace and quiet now and then too!

So, like thousands of other New Yorkers, Mr. Gracie began shopping around for some land where he could build a country house. The location would be important – it couldn't be too far away from the city, or else the trip would be difficult. It had to have a nice view, and preferably be located near the water. It had to be cool and airy, so his family could escape the summer heat and the diseases that were rampant throughout the city.

He ended up liking a plot near Horn's Hook. It met all of his specifications—relatively close to New York City, water access, pretty and countrified. What? You've never heard of Horn's Hook? Well, Young FRIENDS is pretty sure you've been there! Horn's Hook is located in the East 80s near the East River.

If that area is familiar to you, it probably doesn't seem a very likely place for a country house. Traffic from the FDR highway roars by around the clock. The park that's there – Carl Schurz Park – is pretty nice, but there are lots of tall apartment buildings around and plenty of cars and people. Puzzled?

When Mr. Gracie snapped up his purchase at Horn's Hook, the calendar said December 29, 1798. 200 years ago!

As you can well imagine, Horn's Hook looked mighty different back then. There was no FDR Drive. There were no bridges spanning the East River. The streets weren't paved. There were no big apartment houses or tall towers anywhere. The river did have traffic, but it was all sailboats – relatively soundless craft.

The main point is, in 1798, Horn's Hook was the *country*! Mr. Gracie's office was located downtown, in the Wall Street area, and his house was there too. New York City took up a very small portion of the southern tip of the island. The rest of the land was wilderness – a natural place for country estates.

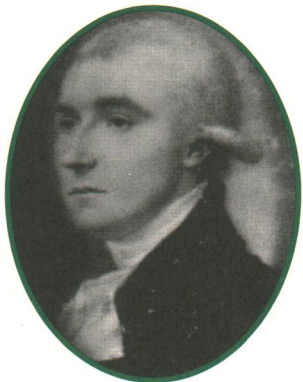
What happened? New York City grew and changed. People moved uptown. With the people came buildings and with time, technological developments. Trains, cars, elevated trains, streets, highways, tall apartment buildings. All these things changed the character of Horn's Hook.

Miraculously, a sizable chunk of Horn's Hook, circa 1798, survives today. It's Mr. Gracie's house itself—Gracie Mansion. Today, the Mayor of New York lives there with his family, and parts of the house are open to the public with a tour. Call Young FRIENDS (535-2526) to find out how to arrange a trip for your family or class to Gracie Mansion.

So the next time life gets tough, and your teacher piles on the assignments, or your parents won't let you do or buy a certain thing, or your brother or sister is driving you crazy, take a breath and escape to the country. No need to pack your bags—just hop on over to East End Avenue and East 88th Street to visit Gracie Mansion—the country house in the city.

# Gracie Mansion Family Tree

**G**racie Mansion is 200 years old. That's a long time! A lot can happen in 200 years, and a lot did happen to Gracie Mansion. Since it was "born," it has been home to different families, it was a museum, it was a snack bar and public bathroom, and it was home to New York's mayors. Look at the Mansion's history on its family tree. Then answer the questions below.



Credit: Collection of The New-York Historical Society.

1798 – Archibald Gracie buys the land at Horn's Hook to construct a country seat for himself and his family. The house was constructed between 1799 and 1804. Mr. Gracie was a prominent and successful shipping merchant, but towards the end of his life, his business went sour and he lost his money. (illustrations: Archibald Gracie and Mrs. Archibald Gracie as they looked about 1795.)

Another shipping merchant, Joseph Foulke, buys Gracie Mansion for his family. First they use the house as the Gracies did—as a country house. Later, they moved in year-round. (1823 - 1857)

Noah Wheaton buys Gracie Mansion and lives in it with his family from 1857 - 1896. He was a cabinet maker and builder who also sold blinds and builders' materials. Like Mr. Gracie, Mr. Wheaton's business fortunes were not always good, and he ended up in bankruptcy. (illustration: Members of the Wheaton family on their front lawn in 1890.)



Credit: Collection of The New-York Historical Society

After the Wheaton family left, the New York Parks Department took over. The Mansion fell into disrepair because for the first time in its life, a family was not living there. During this time it had a variety of uses. In 1915, sewing classes for girls and carpentry classes for boys were held at the Mansion. By 1916, the Mansion was being used to sell ices and soda water, with bathrooms in the basement. It was opened as the first home of the Museum of the City of New York in 1924.

Museum of the City of New York moves out to its current site on Fifth Avenue and 103rd Street. (1932)



Gracie Mansion today.

Even though he didn't want to, Mayor La Guardia becomes the first mayor to make Gracie Mansion the official residence of New York's mayors in 1943. (La Guardia thought that the Mansion was too fancy for him.)

## Questions

- 1 Which residents of Gracie Mansion suffered financial difficulties?
- 2 If you wanted to get some refreshments at Gracie Mansion, what year would it be?
- 3 Why didn't Mayor La Guardia want to move in to Gracie Mansion?
- 4 Where was the Museum of the City of New York first located?
- 5 Who lived at Gracie Mansion year-round in the 1880s?

# Make A Clapboard Siding Picture Frame

Gracie Mansion is clad with clapboard (pronounced clabboard) siding. These long planks of wood are laid across the building's wood frame, forming the walls. Archibald Gracie (wherever he is today) must be clapping for his clapboard – it's lasted 200 years. That's some mean feat when you consider all the potential threats to wood buildings: fires, termites, dry rot, dampness, and general decay. Here are instructions for cladding a picture frame in clapboard siding. With any luck, it will last 200 years too!



## HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED:

3 – 6½" x 8½"  
pieces of cardboard

popsicle sticks

paint

ruler

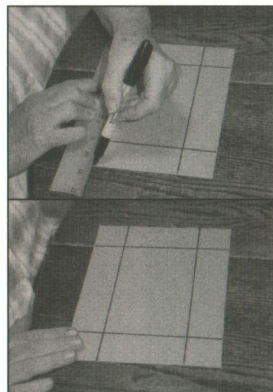
scissors

pencil

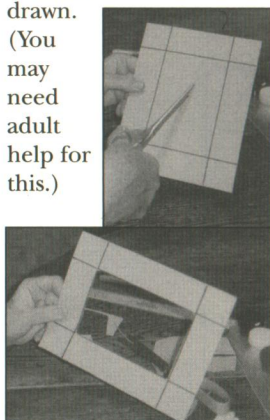
glue

your favorite  
picture

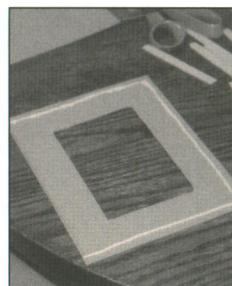
**1** Draw a line 1-1/2" in from each edge of one piece of cardboard.



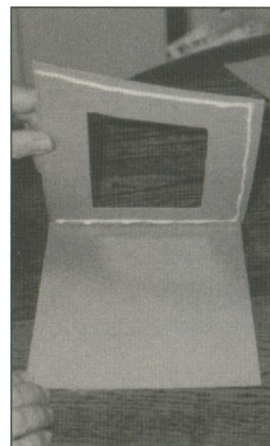
**2** Cut out the rectangle you have drawn. (You may need adult help for this.)



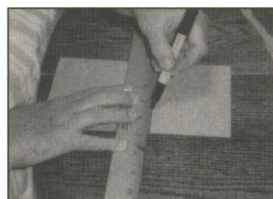
**3** Choose the opening for either a horizontal or vertical picture. Put glue around three sides of your cut-out leaving an opening. (Our example is for a horizontal picture)



**4** Glue the cut out to the other piece of cardboard



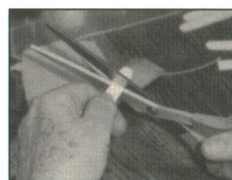
**5** With the extra piece of cardboard, cut out a rectangle and draw a line approximately 1/3 of the way down.



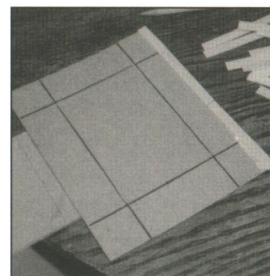
**6** Put glue all over the smaller section and glue to the back and bottom of your frame. Set aside.



**7** With adult help, use the sharp scissors to snip off the rounded ends of about 50 popsicle sticks.



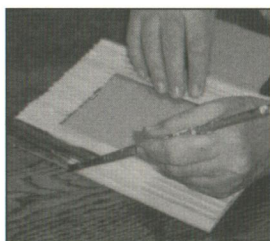
**8** Lay the sticks horizontally across the frame. (You may have to trim the ends to fit.)



**9** For the rest of the rows, you want the sticks to overlap slightly.



**10** When the glue is dry, paint the frame.



**11** Slide your photo into the frame.



**12** The finished product!

