



NEWS *from* FRIENDS

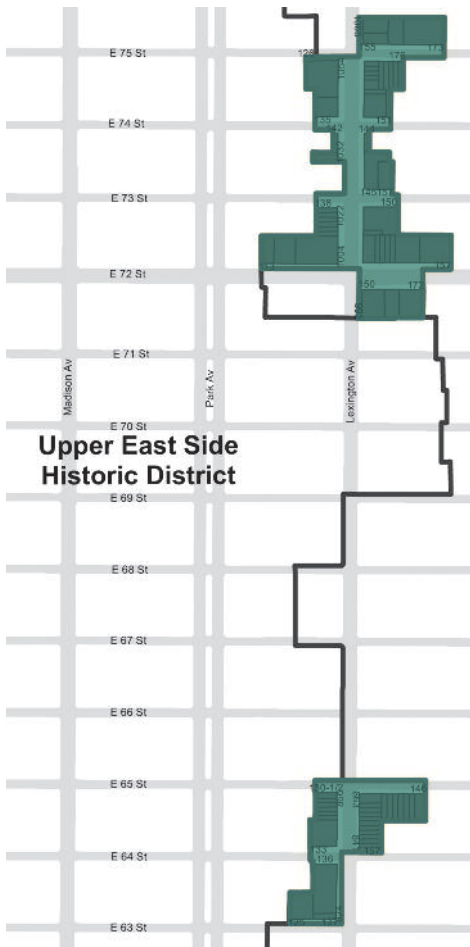
Fall 2010

UPPER EAST SIDE HISTORIC DISTRICT EXTENSION DESIGNATED!

We did it! The LPC votes to protect parts of Lexington Ave.

Our ten-year effort to protect Lexington Avenue, one of New York City's "last great main streets," culminated on March 23, 2010 with official designation by the Landmarks Preservation Commission. Included in the new and improved Upper East Side Historic District is a delightful mix of elegant pre-war apartment buildings and clusters of 19th century row houses, totaling 74 buildings along Lexington Avenue and the adjacent residential side streets between East 63rd and East 75th Streets. There are wonderful and unusual examples of architecture in this newly protected part of New York City, such as the remarkable Parge House at 65th Street and a rare row of surviving stables on East 75th Street, not to mention the historic Lexington Avenue storefronts and so much more!

FRIENDS applauds the community, our elected officials and everyone who has lent their support on this long road to designation. Together we have saved one more corner of New York City from demolition and inappropriate development. A special thank you goes out to Council Member Daniel Garodnick, an avid and enthusiastic supporter of this overdue district extension. ■



Map of the Upper East Side Historic District Extension, Courtesy of the Landmarks Preservation Commission.

A TANGIBLE TRIBUTE

Donations Needed to Install District Signs

FRIENDS would like to recognize the conclusion of our work on the Upper East Side Historic District Expansion with a tangible tribute - street signs and historic district markers!

We propose that twenty brown historic district street signs replace the conventional green street signs along Lexington Avenue. We would also like to update the maps on our historic district markers to reflect the expanded boundaries. Unfortunately, this commemoration does not come cheap, as the replacement of these signs will cost us nearly \$15,000!

Please join us in celebrating this monumental accomplishment by making a donation for the installation and maintenance of these well-deserved historic district signs! Contact our office for more information. ■



Historic district street signs currently in place at Park Avenue & East 70th Street

RESTORED: OLDEST SURVIVING BUILDING IN THE UPPER EAST SIDE HISTORIC DISTRICT

No. 129 East 70th Street's Façade Restored to its 1862 Appearance

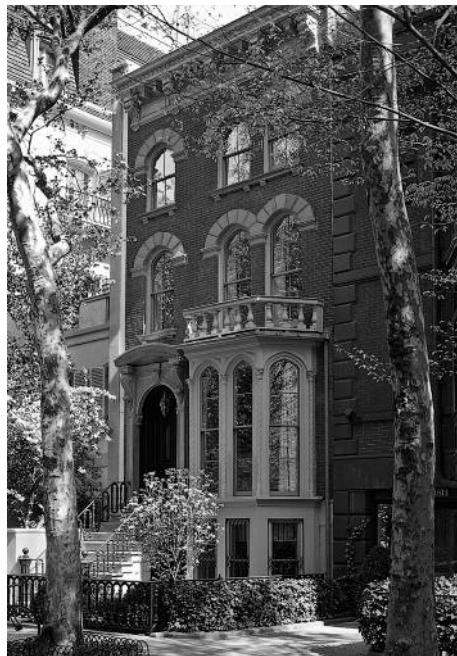
No. 129 East 70th Street is the oldest surviving building within the Upper East Side Historic District, and owner Christian K. Keesee has recently completed a top-to-bottom façade restoration which has returned this townhouse to its original appearance, including the construction of a new stoop and front doorway in the original Italianate style. Peter Brotherton was the architect for the façade restoration and interior improvements. Charles Lockwood, author of *Bricks and Brownstone*, the definitive history of the New York townhouse, provided the restoration services.

Standing just west of Lexington Avenue, the three-story red brick townhouse was completed in 1862 in a row of five identical residences. At that time, the northward-moving edge of row house development had not extended much past 59th Street on the East Side. These five brick houses stood alone amidst open fields and earlier wooden suburban houses. The location was so remote that both Lexington and Madison Avenues had not been extended that far north.

The original buyers were middle-class New Yorkers, who traded a longer trip to work downtown in return for a reasonably priced single-family house. After 1900, the block was largely rebuilt in handsome Neo-Federal and Beaux-Arts townhouses and mansions.

No. 129 has an additional claim to architectural distinction: it is the only remaining Manhattan townhouse to combine both the Italianate style and the short-lived Ruskinian Gothic influence. The Ruskinian Gothic is expressed in the unusual pointed-arch window lintels and the Gothic features of the bay window.

Mr. Keesee carried out the façade restoration to return the townhouse to



No. 129 East 70th Street with its restored façade

its original appearance, gaining a front door at the top of the stoop and a service entrance underneath. Initial projects included a gentle cleaning of the brick façade and re-pointing with a tinted mortar so that the bricks created one visual expanse in keeping with 1860s architectural fashions. All exterior woodwork was repaired and painted in muted shades in keeping with the Italianate era.

The most challenging—and the most important—task was rebuilding the stoop, front doorway, and front fence. The four other townhouses in this original five-house row had been



Restored railings at No. 129 East 70th Street

demolished, so their entrances could not be copied at No. 129. The 1940 tax photograph was little use, because a car sat in front of No. 129's entrance. Even historical photographs provided little conclusive evidence.

As the first step in preparing an accurate design, Brotherton and Lockwood found traces of the original doorway opening, which had become a second-floor in the 1940 de-stooping. Having those dimensions, they found intact doorways—which could be copied—in similar-size brownstones constructed at the same time. That left the intriguing question of the original stoop railings and front fence. One day, Lockwood saw that the “looped” vertical portions of the ca. 1940 front fence were actually taken from the original stoop. Thus, both the stoop railings and front fence could be recast in identical original patterns. The looped ironwork, which had been part of the original stoop railings, were used in the new stoop railings.

Completed late last year, the restoration of No. 129 has not only provided its owner with a more handsome home with two entrances, it has made an important improvement on one of the Upper East Side's most-loved blocks. ■

IN GRATITUDE

Friends of the Upper East Side Historic Districts wishes to acknowledge the generous support of: The J. M. Kaplan Fund, The Gilbert & Ildiko Butler Conservation Fund, The National Trust for Historic Preservation's Elizabeth and Robert Jaffe Preservation Fund for New York City, The New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, Manhattan Chamber of Commerce, State Senator Liz Krueger, Council Member Daniel Garodnick and Council Member Jessica Lappin through the Department of Youth and Community Development. ■

AN EVENING TO REMEMBER!

On Monday, September 20th, friends from all over the city gathered to honor David W. Levinson at our *Seventh Annual Ambassador to the Upper East Side Award Dinner*.



Honoree David W. Levinson

Mr. Levinson serves as Chairman & CEO of L&L Holding Company, LLC, a privately owned real estate investment and development company. Approximately three million square feet of the L&L portfolio is either a designated landmark or located within a historic district. Named one of the 100 Most Powerful People in New York Real Estate by the *New York Observer*, Mr. Levinson served 12 years on the Board of Trustees of the Allen Stevenson

School, is a current Board Member of FRIENDS, and a long-time resident of the Upper East Side. An admired friend and colleague, William Higgins, Principal at Higgins Quasebarth & Partners, 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 the benefit, FRIENDS can continue our mission as steward of the Upper East Side's six historic districts and 126 individual landmarks. ■



Council Member Daniel Garodnick, Simone Levinson, Honoree David W. Levinson, and FRIENDS' President Anne Millard



Lauren Peters, Delaney Harris-Finch, Melissa Baldock, Megan Kelly and Executive Director Tara Kelly



Seventh Annual Ambassador to the Upper East Side Award Dinner

Walking and Talking with FRIENDS

Last Spring's Events Were a Huge Success!

Our calendar has been filled with many exciting events over the last several months. From lectures to walking tours, we are learning more about our neighborhood and city with each event!

In March, Ms. Phifer, author of the recently published book *Public Art New York* - discussed what makes New York one of the most sustainable cities in the country and the challenges we face as we move towards a greener future. Ms. Parker is an architect specializing in planning, renovation and sustainable design and was president of the Art Commission of the City of New York from 1998 to 2003. She is therefore an expert on the benefits of urban infrastructure, historic buildings and recent LEED-certified projects, as

well as the integration of greenery and art into sustainable public space.

We have also explored our neighborhood on foot. In May, FRIENDS hosted a walking tour in Yorkville that explored the give-and-take relationship between public and private space and how it has shaped our city. Armed with historic photographs and floorplans, architect and designer Katherine Schiavone led the way as the group uncovered the history of John Jay and Carl Shurz Parks, and gazed at the beautiful facades of the Cherokee Apartments, City and Suburban Homes, and Gracie Mansion.

If you missed either of these events, make sure to join us this fall! ■

Young Friends

FRIENDS is geared up for another busy year of educating first through fifth graders about architecture and New York City history. During our educational programs on the Upper East Side and in East Harlem, we take to the streets to discover lintels, arches, limestone, brick, historic street signs, old tenement buildings and more, in order to discover clues of the past while creating a new vision of the students' current surroundings. We hope to continue our success of the 2009-2010 school year, in which we taught 797 students in 38 classrooms at 14 different schools.

This fall, we're pleased to expand our collaboration with the Museum of the City of the New York, offering a new bonus program at the museum designed around the concepts of our Building Fun and Yorkville Immigration programs.

If you would like more information on our youth education programs, please visit www.friends-ues.org/education or contact Sarah O'Keefe at s.okeefe@friends-ues.org ■

LPC RE-DESIGNATES 1ST AVE ESTS.

Court Upholds Landmark Status for City & Suburban Homes

As reported in past newsletters, this case began in 2006 when the Landmarks Preservation Commission initiated proceedings to re-designate 429 East 64th and 430 East 65th Street. These two buildings were constructed between 1898 and 1915 as part of the City and Suburban Company's First Avenue Estate, a model tenement complex.

Significant for their design, as well as their pioneering role in social housing reform, the City and Suburban Homes at the First Avenue and York Avenue Estates were designated in their entirety as individual New York City landmarks in 1990. However, on the eve of its demise, the Board of Estimate de-designated two of the 15 buildings in the First Avenue Estate.

Sixteen years later, the Landmarks Preservation Commission corrected the omission and re-designated the buildings. In defiance of the pending designation, the owners began to deface the buildings by stripping them of their architectural details and resurfacing the exterior with unsightly red stucco. Despite these alterations, the LPC persevered with the designation, restoring the original boundaries of this individual landmark to its full city block.

The owners then sued the City opposing the conferral of landmark status, but the court soon denied the owner's petition. In spite of their loss, the owners continued the fight and filed an appeal of the decision. Concerned that the arguments against landmark designation would undermine the LPC's ability to safeguard New York City's historic and cultural heritage, including the First Avenue Estate, FRIENDS jointly filed an amicus brief with the Municipal Art Society. We are thrilled to report that on June 25th of this year, the New York

FRIENDS Honored with Grassroots Preservation Award!

On May 20th, 2010, FRIENDS was honored at the Historic District Council's Grassroots Preservation Awards for our exhaustive effort to expand the Upper East Side Historic District to include portions of Lexington Avenue and its side streets. Fellow awardees included: Two Bridges Neighborhood Council; The Alice and Agate Courts Historic District; The Coalition to Save West-Park Presbyterian Church; Council Member Rosie Mendez; Nicholas Hirshon, a reporter with the *New York Daily News*; John Antonides, the proud owner and restorer of one the few remaining Dutch farmhouses in Brooklyn; and Joyce Mendelsohn, a preservation leader in youth education.

Friends of the Upper East Side Historic Districts is proud to join the ranks of such inspiring preservationists and we must give our highest congratulations to all the awardees. A big thanks to the Historic Districts Council for the honor and for putting on such a lovely evening in the gardens of St. Mark's Church in-the-Bowery! ■

Supreme Court Appellate Division decided in favor of the City, rejecting the appeal. At last, with two decisions in favor of the City, the entire landmark site is once again whole!

Throughout this fight, FRIENDS has been a leading voice for the integrity of this landmark. Special thanks to Council Member Jessica Lappin, who has been forceful and unyielding in her support of this ongoing issue. ■



The First Ave Estates after facade alteration



Clockwise from left: Anne Millard, Erin Gray, Matthew Coody, Sarah O'Keefe, and Seri Worden accepting the Historic District Council's Grassroots Preservation Award

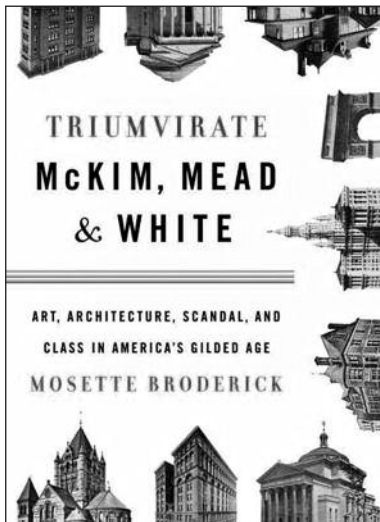
Volunteers Needed!

Following our great success in expanding the Upper East Side Historic District, FRIENDS is launching a historic resource survey of Yorkville. We are beginning broadly, studying a wide swath of the Upper East Side from 59th to 96th Streets, Lexington Avenue to the East River. This massive undertaking requires a major group effort, so we are enlisting volunteers to help with the campaign. Surveyors will first come to the office for a quick introduction and then hit the streets equipped with clipboards, cameras and a discerning eye. You can join us for just one block or twenty!

Volunteers will record basic building information, such as address, block and lot, number of stories, window type, building material and style. Surveyors will also take digital photos of each building. An interest or experience in historic preservation, architectural history or related field is desirable.

As we have quickly discovered in our survey, Yorkville abounds with architectural and cultural gems - yet they are too quickly being replaced with contemporary architecture that is often lackluster and insensitive to the historic fabric. Please help us to create an inventory of what is left of our neighborhood so that we can move forward in our fight to protect it! To volunteer your help please contact our office. ■

McKim, Mead & White *A Lecture & Discussion*



Mosette Broderick, Director of the Urban Design and Architecture Studies Program and the Historical and Sustainable Architecture M.A. Program at New York University, will discuss her new book, *Triumvirate: McKim, Mead & White: Art, Architecture, Scandal, and Class in America's Gilded Age*. Known for their distinguished Beaux-Arts designs and an allegiance to the City Beautiful movement, the firm was responsible for many of New York City's greatest landmarks: the Columbia University campus, the Manhattan Municipal Building, the Brooklyn Museum, and the much-loved Pennsylvania Station. In addition to their public commissions, the firm's client list included America's greatest financiers and magnates. "Triumvirate is a book about America in its industrial transition; about money and class, about the education of an unsophisticated young country, and about the coming of artists as an accepted class in American society." ■

Wednesday, November 17th
6:30 p.m., Reception to follow
St. James' Church, Sunderland Hall
865 Madison Avenue
\$15 members, \$20 non-members

LETTER *from the* PRESIDENT

Much has changed over the last six months at FRIENDS. We are sad to announce that long-time Executive Director Seri Worden has moved on from FRIENDS. Over the last six years, Seri increased funding through government and private grants, resurrected this newsletter, redesigned the website and, along with the help of Sarah O'Keefe, revived our thriving elementary education program. Most recently, Seri spearheaded the first expansion of the Upper East Side Historic District since its designation in 1982, simultaneously producing a printed guidebook and an online exhibit. We will miss her and wish her the best of luck!

At the same time, we are pleased to welcome Tara Kelly as our new Executive Director. Tara received her MS in Historic Preservation from Pratt Institute in 2009, and holds a BS in Linguistics from Georgetown University. Most recently, she was Project Manager of the Preservation & Climate Change initiative at the Municipal Art Society. In addition, this past year she oversaw a team of graduate students as they worked together to develop a new architectural tour of the Eldridge Street Synagogue, a National Historic Landmark on the Lower East Side. We look forward to the new and exciting projects that Tara will initiate at FRIENDS.

Sincerely,

TENNIS BUBBLE DEFEATED!

Central Park Proposal Withdrawn

FRIENDS is pleased to announce that our voice was heard and the proposal to cover 26 tennis courts in Central Park with inflatable bubbles has been withdrawn! FRIENDS took this proposal to task at the April 15th Community Board 8 meeting, where we spoke out against the bubbles and urged the committee to reverse an earlier decision in support of the proposal. Thankfully, the Community Board listened and revoked their initial vote in favor of the plan. We also enlisted your help to sign an online petition and write to our city officials. These efforts joined the growing voice of several preservation groups who opposed the plan.

Thanks to our passionate supporters, Central Park will be saved from air,

noise, and light pollution, the "privatizing" of the courts through increased playing fees, and the visual destruction of the urban oasis that Frederick Law Olmsted designed the park to be. It goes to show that a few little groups can make a big difference for the future of our city!

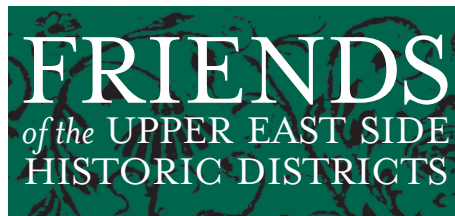
If you see anything around your neighborhood that you think should be brought to our attention, please do not hesitate to contact the FRIENDS office. ■



Site of proposed tennis bubble in Central Park near 97th St

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 2011 Annual Awards. If you know of a project, person or publication that deserves acclaim, please let us know! Projects must have been completed between December 1st, 2009 and December 1st, 2010. To submit an entry for award consideration, please contact our office.



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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