

# NEWS *from* FRIENDS

WINTER 2009/2010

## UPPER EAST SIDE HISTORIC DISTRICT EXTENSION

*Finish Line in Sight to Protect Portions of Lex Ave*

On October 27th, 2009, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finally held a designation hearing for the Extension to the Upper East Side Historic District. At the crowded hearing, residents, business owners and elected officials all spoke passionately on behalf of our cause to save the endangered historic architecture of the neighborhood and praised FRIENDS' tireless efforts and community outreach. The dedication and loyalty of our supporters have made such success possible.

Due to FRIENDS' efforts, the expanded district was listed in 2006 on the State and National Registers of Historic Places. This was a significant milestone in the recognition of the architecture and history of the neighborhood, but it does not protect buildings from demolition or damaging alterations. It is only through designation at the city level by the LPC that the architecture and



Lexington Avenue supporters at the LPC hearing, October 27, 2009

scale of the neighborhood will be protected and preserved.

In 2007, FRIENDS submitted a formal request to the LPC to add 198 buildings along Lexington Avenue and the adjoining sidestreets between East 61st and East 75th Streets. The LPC's expansion is somewhat smaller, proposing to include 75 buildings between East 63rd and East 75th Streets.

All public hearings have taken place and were very successful (with only one dissenter at the LPC hearing). An official vote has not been taken, but the LPC has informed us that a vote is to be held this spring. It has been a long road and we urge the LPC to act immediately before any further losses

occur. ■

## Save the Date!

TWENTY-SEVENTH  
ANNUAL MEETING AND  
AWARDS CEREMONY

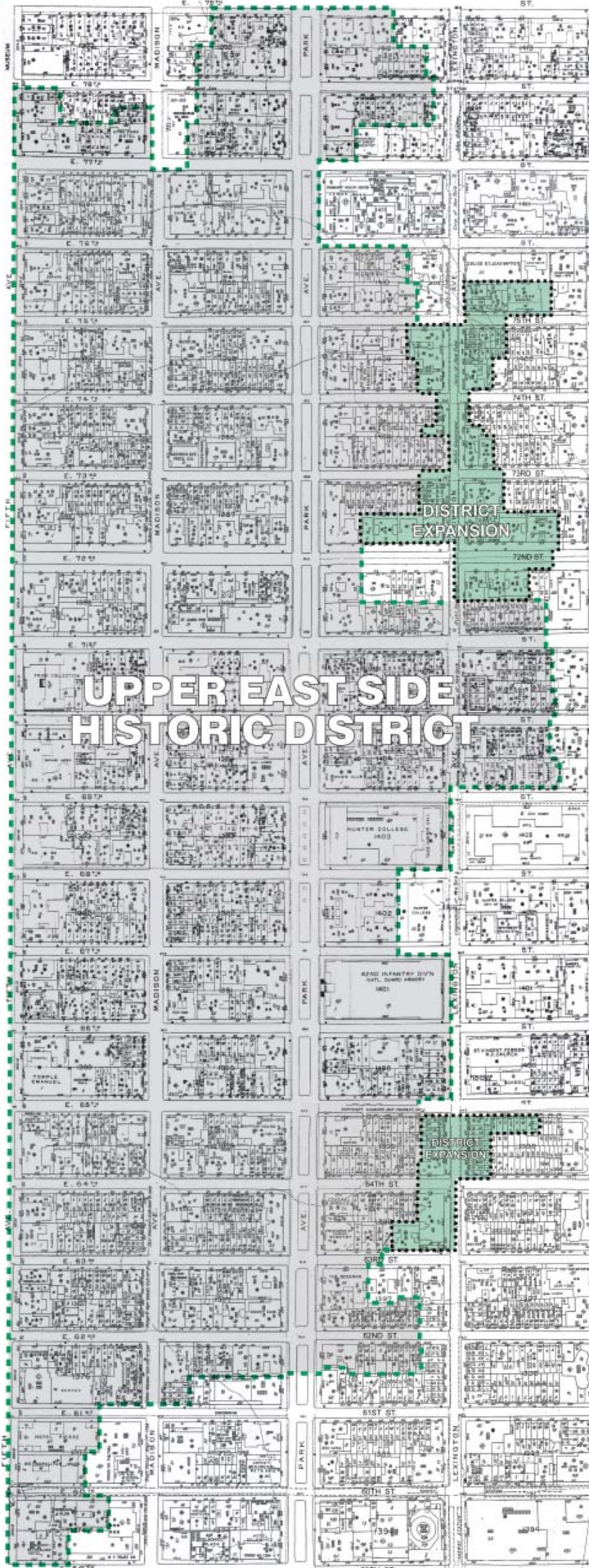
WEDNESDAY  
March 3rd, 2010

Join FRIENDS for our Twenty-seventh Annual Meeting and Awards Ceremony on Wednesday March 3, 2010 from 6:00-8:00 p.m. in the ballroom of Bohemian National Hall, 321 East 73rd Street. The public is welcome to attend but reservations are required. Please call (212) 535-2526 or email [info@friends-ues.org](mailto:info@friends-ues.org).



Bohemian National Hall, courtesy of BNH





Buildings to be included in expansion:



Detail: 160 East 72nd Street



Detail: Parge House, 866 Lexington Avenue



Detail: 154-156 East 65th Street



# KEAN HOUSE UPDATE

## *Plans Proposed for 15-story Building on Kean Site*

FRIENDS has unearthed the approved plans from the Department of Building for a new 15-story building at 866 Lexington Avenue on the corner of East 65th Street and Lexington Avenue, the former site of the Kean House. Prior to any LPC action, the Kean House was demolished in Fall 2008 and was a horrific loss to one of the most distinct corners in all of New York City.

The proposed massively out-of-scale tower would be at the heart of the newly expanded Upper East Side Historic District, dwarfing the surrounding low scale rowhouses. Because these permits were issued prior to the Landmarks Preservation Commission taking action on the Upper East Side Historic District expansion, the permits are legally valid. However, in November, *The Real Deal* reported that the tower's developer Trevor Davis is facing a \$17 million foreclosure lawsuit on the site after defaulting payment on this now vacant lot. Despite this foreclosure suit, Davis told *The Real Deal* that he plans to move forward with the project.

As our readers know, this site has a sordid history. While FRIENDS was vociferously advocating to save Lexington Avenue's fragile architecture and blocks of brownstones, the owners of 866 Lexington Avenue took out a cornucopia of bizarre building permits that included installing a glass facade on the front of the Kean House to removing just two stories of the mansion—all presumably done

to thwart landmarks designation. Sadly, their underhanded tactics succeeded and the 1920's Kean house was eventually torn down despite FRIENDS' ongoing efforts since 2006 for a historic district extension and for the house's individual designation. However, the LPC has heard our call and this October held a designation hearing for the expansion, which will include this now vacant lot (see expansion map on page 2). As always, this issue remains a high priority for FRIENDS. We will be doing everything in our power to ensure an appropriate building is built, keeping you up to date as the situation unfolds. ■



Rendering of proposed building on Kean site on file at the New York City Department of Buildings

## LETTER *from the* PRESIDENT

2009 has been a banner year at Friends of the Upper East Side Historic Districts. We are about to achieve one of the biggest victories in FRIENDS' history with the Extension of the Upper East Side Historic District and we have just published a new education curriculum and workbook. We have joined two lawsuits and as always we are keeping a watchful eye on the Upper East Side's remarkable architecture from Central Park to the East River.

I am delighted to be sending you our just launched electronic newsletter, full of the same information you can only get from FRIENDS - only greener and full of color. I wish everyone a wonderful new year.

Happy 2010!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Anne Millard". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Anne" being more prominent than the last name "Millard".

Anne Millard

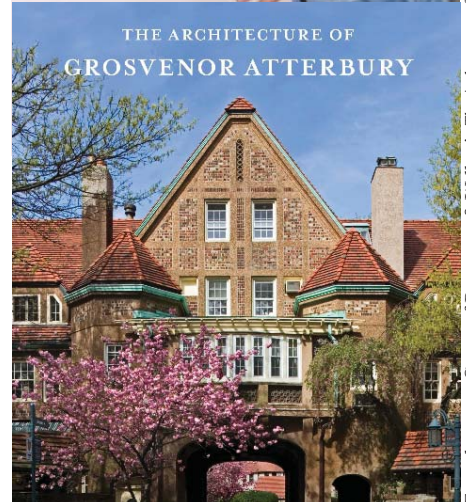
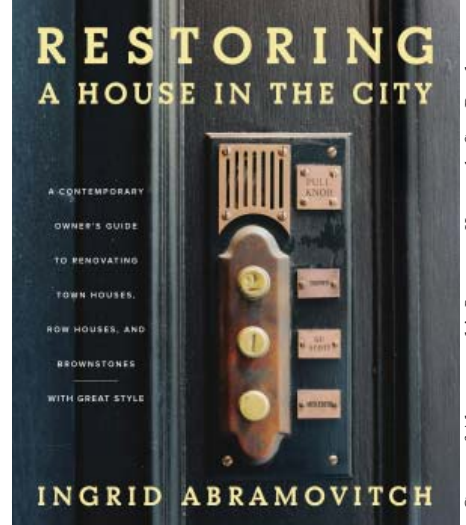
# WALKING AND TALKING WITH FRIENDS

FRIENDS has been busy again this fall with a diverse variety of events and community programs. We kicked off the fall on September 22, 2009, when over 120 “friends” from across the city gathered for our *Sixth Annual Ambassador to the Upper East Side Award Dinner* honoring Amanda M. Burden, FAICP. It was a lively and wonderful evening as Ms. Burden took us on a tour of the incredible projects she has spearheaded throughout New York City as Chair of the New York City Planning Commission and Director of the Department of City Planning. It was a wonderful evening and we thank the Benefit Committee for all of their hard work.

Also in September, Board Member Franny Eberhart shared her extensive knowledge about the Rhinelanders Family on an in-depth walking tour of Yorkville. The *Rhinelanders Riches* walk began in the Hardenbergh/Rhinelanders Historic District where the group examined historic photographs and property maps, and concluded at the Church of the Holy Trinity. In October, Andrew Dolkart delivered the inaugural talk for his new book, *The Row House Reborn: Architecture and Neighborhoods in New York City 1908-1929*. The book is a pioneering investigation of the redesign of obsolete and deteriorated row houses in the early years of the twentieth century. The lecture focused the redesign of old houses located on the Upper East Side, east of Lexington Avenue, where architects and wealthy clients completely transformed a deteriorated neighborhood into

one acceptable to the city’s social elite. Some of these unique houses will be protected in the soon-to-be-expanded Upper East Side Historic District.

This October, FRIENDS also co-hosted an exciting lecture with the Cooper Hewitt-National Design Museum. Ingrid Abramovitch, a former editor at *House & Garden* who writes widely on design and architecture for magazines including *Elle Décor*, shared her new book, *Restoring a House in the City*. The lecture focused on renovating and decorating townhouses and brownstones. The audience traveled via a stunning slide presentation from houses in San Francisco to Charleston and New York City. Finally, in December we welcomed Peter Pennoyer and Anne Walker as they discussed their new book, *The Architecture of Grosvenor Atterbury*. Although not well known, Atterbury was one of the most successful and prolific architects in America in the final decade of the nineteenth century and first three decades of the twentieth century. The lecture highlighted some of his 100 diverse projects and included stories of his early days of Beaux Arts training in Paris, an account of the mansions he designed in affluent summer colonies as well as his work in New York City, which included the celebrated Forest Hills Gardens in Queens as well as model tenements reflecting his concern with architecture’s social aspects. If you missed this fall’s events, stay tuned for our roster of Spring 2010 tours and talks. ■



From bottom: Cover of Pennoyer & Walker's *The Architecture of Grosvenor Atterbury*; Dolkart lecturing on his new book; Cover of Abramovitch's *Restoring a House in the City*; Burden accepting her award as Ambassador to the Upper East Side



# LENOX HILL BROWNSTONES UPDATE

## *Residences Planned for Historic Row of Brownstones*

FRIENDS has long been reaching out to the Landmarks Preservation Commission concerning the steadily deteriorating state of the Lenox Hill Brownstones, located at 110-120 East 76th Street. The six neo-Grec buildings, built in 1885, have been vacant and neglected for many years, however, through the insistence of FRIENDS, neighbors and community members, the LPC took action and contacted the owner to ensure that these historic buildings are being treated properly.

In 2007, Lenox Hill Hospital sold the six brownstones to a developer. Since this time the buildings have experienced escalated internal deterioration, as neighbors have noted windows left open and holes present in the roofs. As a result, this summer the city painted yellow squares on the facades, meant to alert emergency workers to use caution when entering dangerously dilapidated structures. Due to their deteriorated state and the appearance of these ominous symbols, FRIENDS again alerted the Landmarks Preservation

Commission, urging them to take action.

Soon after, the LPC contacted the owner and prompted a series of site visits and consultations with the architects and engineers, reviewing their future plans for this set of brownstones. The architect, Gavin Macrae-Gibson, is planning to combine the six brownstones into three single family homes. Extensive restoration of the façades will occur but the historic fabric behind the brownstone façades will be demolished and new infill, including two-story penthouse additions, are proposed. FRIENDS' Preservation Committee thoroughly reviewed the proposed plans and attended the LPC's Public Hearing on January 5, 2010 to present public testimony and observe the Commission's thoughts. Although the Commission approved the rear demolition and façade stabilization of Numbers 112 and 114, they took a "no action" stance on the proposed design. We expect the architect to resubmit a modified design to the Commission in the near future. We will be following this proposal and will continue to send updates on this developing issue.

For more information feel free to contact our office. ■



Lenox Hill Brownstones, 110-120 East 76th Street

# FRIENDS AMICI ON TWO LAWSUITS

*City and Suburban First Avenue Estates  
&*

*St. Vincent's Hospital*

FRIENDS has jointly filed a lawsuit with the Municipal Art Society regarding the ongoing saga of the City and Suburban Homes Company First Avenue Estate landmark, located on First Avenue between East 64th and 65th Streets. Since the building's full block designation in 2006, the owners have done everything in their power to overturn the designation—from stripping the buildings' architectural detail to suing the city to revoke the tenement's hard fought landmark status. As reported in past newsletters, the court denied the owner's petition to nullify the designation in October of 2008. But the owner's have fought on and shortly thereafter filed an appeal of the court's decision. FRIENDS remains deeply dedicated to preserving this remarkable full block model tenement's landmark status and has jointly filed an Amicus brief with the Municipal Art Society. We are concerned that the owner's arguments against landmark designation undermines the LPC's ability to safeguard the Upper East Side's historic and cultural heritage, including the First Avenue Estate landmark site.

FRIENDS has joined a second lawsuit with the Municipal Art Society that challenges the LPC's decision on the St. Vincent's Hospital hardship application. While beyond our usual boundaries, FRIENDS determined this case to be significant to the Upper East Side as it pertains to the development and expansion of institutions, many of which are located in our backyard. ■



## Young Friends

We are pleased that our Young Friends Education Program is continuing to grow by leaps and bounds; it includes two programs—*Building Fun* and a newly developed program *Immigration in Yorkville*. In 2009, we taught 93 sessions and reached over 850 students at 13 schools, both private and public, in the Upper East Side and East Harlem. We are also excited to announce that we have revamped and reprinted our *Building Fun* activity booklets. Originally designed in 1995 by Jane Cowan, the booklets are distributed to our students at the end of our three-part program to help reinforce the concepts of architecture and preservation through poems, craft projects, a scavenger hunt, a crossword puzzle and many other activities. The booklet now sports a beautiful new cover, based on the former stables at 168-175 East 75th Street. It also includes historic photographs, updated architectural vocabulary and a new page for children to discover how a building can be “green.” We are very excited to share these new booklets with our students in the coming months!

In addition, FRIENDS has partnered with the Museum of the City of New York for the 2009-2010 school year to bring our education programs to East Harlem schools. FRIENDS’ educators first visit the classroom for an introduction to architecture and preservation, then the students travel to the museum for a walking tour in the Carnegie Hill Historic District followed by an art project that explores both zoning and the grid street pattern. So far we have shared this exciting pilot program with several wonderful public school classrooms in East Harlem. ■



Existing Street facade: 12-14 East 67th Street

## ALTERATIONS TO THE GUCCIONE RESIDENCE

On Tuesday December 8, 2009 the Landmarks Preservation Commission approved some significant alterations to 14-16 East 67th Street, a 48-foot-wide mansion with twenty-seven rooms. The home was previously owned by *Penthouse* publisher Bob Guccione, who lived in the mansion since 1976. During his occupancy, Guccione

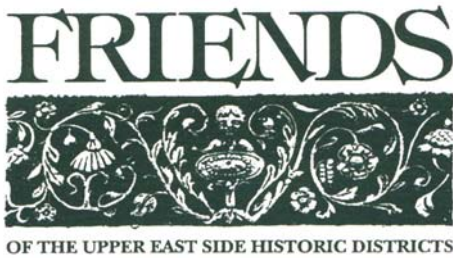
made many exterior alterations to suit his taste. On the 67th Street facade, a third story solarium was constructed, and at the rear façade, the original brick exterior was parged over with thick white stucco, arched windows were installed and an elaborate Italianate-style enclave was added, supported by columns and crowned with an open terracotta tile roof.

The project architect, Brian O’Keefe, is proposing a full restoration of the building’s front and rear facades, as well as the removal and relocation of the home’s interior pool. FRIENDS was in full agreement that the alterations at the front façade properly recall the building’s historic vocabulary. As for the rear façade, we agreed that the existing European-style rear design is evocative and unique to Guccione’s occupancy and begged the essential preservation question: does one restore a building to its original date of construction or preserve its change over time? As with many of the changes proposed throughout the Upper East Side, FRIENDS strives to consider the entire history of the building as well as apply important preservation theories during the evaluation of Certificate of Appropriateness items. ■

## INFORMING OUR FRIENDS

FRIENDS continues to be a good neighbor. Via our new electronic newsletter and e-mail list, we inform the community about items under review at the LPC and of important preservation issues on the Upper East Side. Members can subscribe by visiting our website at [www.friends-ues.org](http://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.





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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](http://www.friends-ues.org).

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## 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.

## Voice Your Opinion!

### LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION

**Robert Tierney**, Chair  
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