



THE ANTHEMION

Spring 1982

The Quarterly Newsletter of The Greenwich Village Trust for Historic Preservation Volume 2/1



Chris Den Blaker

William S. Passannante, speaker pro tem of the State Assembly, Jack Meserole, Trust president, and Regina Kellerman, executive director.

State Approves Funds for Trust

The New York State Legislature has approved \$27,500 in Natural Heritage Trust appropriations toward the operating expenses of the Greenwich Village Trust. The amount was included in the state supplementary-deficiency budget passed by both houses in February for the fiscal year 1981-82, and will be administered through the state's Department of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation.

Speaker Pro Tem of the Assembly William F. Passannante submitted the request on behalf of the Greenwich Village Trust to the Assembly's Committee on Ways and Means in June 1981 and shepherded it through the Legislature.

In acknowledging the appreciation for his support expressed by the Board of Trustees, Assemblyman Passannante, who grew up in a house of the Federal period on Van Dam Street, said, "I can think of no community in New York City with a richer historical heritage than Greenwich Village, and I know of no area anywhere with so many residents who are anxious to work to preserve that heritage. As a lifelong Villager, I am delighted to have been able to help the Greenwich Village Trust for Historic Preservation carry on its valuable work."

Carter Winter

The U.S. Appraiser's Warehouse

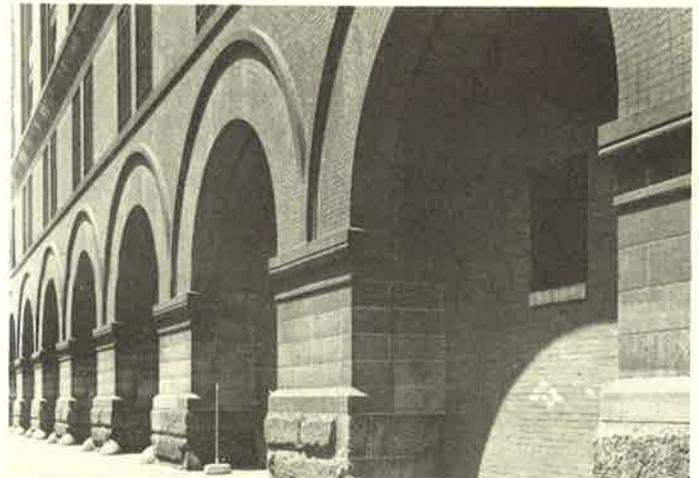
Today the building is known as the Federal "Archives" Building in Greenwich Village, and is a subject of continuing interest to real-estate developers and preservationists alike. After six years of hearings and negotiations concerning its fate, the massive 19th-century NYC Landmark will be converted by a private developer from government-surplus property into an income-producing, mixed-use complex consisting mostly of cooperative apartments. For the privilege, the developer will ultimately contribute an estimated \$3.5 million of the building's profits to a revolving fund for preservation projects in the city, and he will also contribute, in lieu of sales taxes on construction materials, an estimated \$1 million to projects of local community groups.

The excitement of the windfall has engendered considerable interest in the building itself, yet few are aware of the lively role it once played in the affairs of New York as a port.

Controversy over Site

This block-square red-brick structure with great rounded arches in its base was erected in the 1890s as the United States Appraiser's Warehouse for the Customs Service of the Treasury Department. Years of controversy had preceded the selection of its site. State Republican "Boss" Thomas C. Platt wanted it located in the Bowling Green area, where several of his close associates held options on land, but the shipping industry and the import merchants wanted it farther to the north and convenient to the Hudson River piers. When their concerns finally prevailed, the block bounded by Christopher, Washington, Barrow and Greenwich Streets, on the western edge of the Village, was totally cleared, and in 1892 the ten-story structure, which would contain more than a half-million square feet of space, got under way.

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THE ANTHEMION

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Officers Ruth Wittenberg, honorary president; Jack Meserole, president; Hilda Hollyer and Rachele Wall, vice presidents; Vera Schneider, secretary; Stephen F. Temmer, treasurer.

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The Greenwich Village Trust for Historic Preservation was established in 1980 by The Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation, Inc., a nonprofit corporation chartered to safeguard Greenwich Village's unrivaled cultural and architectural heritage against exploitation and decline.

Executive Director Regina M. Kellerman

Editorial Consultants Miriam Lee, William Welling

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Design and Use

The Appraiser's Warehouse was designed by Willoughby J. Edbrooke, supervising architect of the Treasury, in the style then considered particularly appropriate for large utilitarian buildings — the Romanesque. The structure took six years to complete, but when it was occupied in April of 1898, and for a quarter of a century thereafter, it served as the focal point of a thriving international shipping trade along the waterfront.

All imported goods coming into New York that were required to be examined by Customs appraisers passed through this building. Separate appraisal divisions for almost every conceivable category of merchandise took up the first eight floors. The ninth floor was reserved for the Board of U.S. General Appraisers, and the tenth housed a fully-equipped laboratory supervised by a government chemist.

To keep haulers from clogging the surrounding streets with crates of merchandise, loading and unloading facilities were contained within the warehouse. Entrances from Barrow and Greenwich Streets led into a broad driveway extending along two inner sides of the building. Here were located the loading platforms. Close at hand, at the center of the structure and rising the full height of its ten stories, was a fireproof shaft containing ten freight elevators to facilitate the receiving and dispensing of goods.

While no contemporary accounts have been found, one can imagine how this bustling, well-organized operation stepped up the tempo of the immediate neighborhood.

The post-World War I years saw the gradual decline of the waterfront as a shipping center, and by the 1930s the Appraiser's Warehouse was sadly underutilized. In 1932 it began to house other government offices, and its name was officially changed to the U.S. Federal Building. In 1938 it was altered to accommodate the Village Station Post Office, and the remaining space was taken over by the newly established National Archives as a records storage depot for the Eastern section of the nation.

Judging from the inscription above an entrance on Christopher Street, the building continued to be called the Federal Building until 1976, when the government vacated the premises.

Then and now

In December 1890, *The New York Times* reported that the construction of the building was expected to reverse the trend of a "depressed" real-estate market in Greenwich Village. Now, according to a February 1982 *Times* article, its renovation is expected to complete the "revitalization of the West Village." History, it would seem, has come full cycle.

Note: The NYC Municipal Archives recently held an exhibition (March 15-April 6) at the City gallery which included the original plans for the U.S. Appraiser's Warehouse. These were on loan from the General Services Administration, but will henceforth be preserved by and may be seen at the Municipal Archives, Old "Tweed" Courthouse — also a landmark 52 Chambers Street, New York, NY 10007, Tel. 566-5292.

Share Your Memories, Memoirs, Ideas

The Anthemion welcomes contributions from readers: letters, stories, prints and photographs (black and white, if possible). Please send to:

The Greenwich Village Trust for Historic Preservation
47 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10003

If you wish material to be returned, please enclose a stamped, addressed envelope. We look forward to hearing from you.

Editorial

A happy thank you to the 200 new members who answered our last membership call, some from as far away as Alabama and California; illustrating so well that Greenwich Village is of nationwide importance. We also appreciate the many voluntary contributions above and beyond our membership dues, and the flood of letters and expressions of support, not all of which we have yet been able to answer in person. A warm welcome to all. We hope you will introduce us and our program to your friends.

As perhaps would be expected, we have attracted many people in the arts, as well as in business and the professions. Very early Bil Baird, Agnes de Mille, Dr. Armand Hammer, Arthur Laurents, Lucille Lortel, Whitney North Seymour, among many others, lent their names and interest to our cause. They agree with what we believe: that an important task, and one that cannot be postponed, is to safeguard Greenwich Village's unrivaled cultural and architectural heritage against exploitation and decline.

There is a tremendous educational, historical and practical job to be done in the Village. Some of the things we are working on, and some of those we intend to do, are described elsewhere in this bulletin.

While information is available about post-Civil War American architecture, most of Greenwich Village was built before 1860, and there is a definite need for technical and historical studies on interior as well as exterior details, paints, material and construction methods of the first half of the 19th century. These studies the Trust plans to provide.

Although Greenwich Village is New York City's oldest surviving community and its largest historic district, there is surprisingly no comprehensive contextual history documenting its transition from farm estates to blocks and lots and the evolution in character of its streets and markets. Practical educational projects we are preparing are preservation workshops; consultation services for those seeking advice on renovations or repairs; a local repository for books, maps, art and artifacts relating to our past in the Village; and a permanent multimedia exhibit to imbue natives and visitors alike with an appreciation of this heritage.

First Trust-Sponsored Lecture on Village History Set for May 12

Trust members and their friends who couldn't get enough of *Upstairs, Downstairs* can soon enter a comparably rich cityscape of dramatic class distinction, social change and domestic elegance and drudgery in their own front yard.

Noted urban historian Bayrd Still will open the first of a series of lectures sponsored by the Trust about Village historic sites with a slide lecture to be held at the Salmagundi Club, 47 Fifth Avenue, Wednesday, May 12, at 6 P.M. The lecture is entitled "Greenwich Village and the Washington Square Neighborhood: The Place and the People, 1830-1850." Admission is free.

From 1830 to 1850 Washington Square was undergoing a startling transformation. Formerly a potters' field, it became a parade ground bordered with elegant houses built by downtown merchants on land leasing for as much as \$150 a year. Parking space was not a problem: these substantial families could quarter their horses and carriages around the corner in the stables of Washington Mews.

Astonishing new devices like the icebox were propelling servant and family alike into a future of unheard-of domestic snugness. In the 1840s an English traveler could complain:

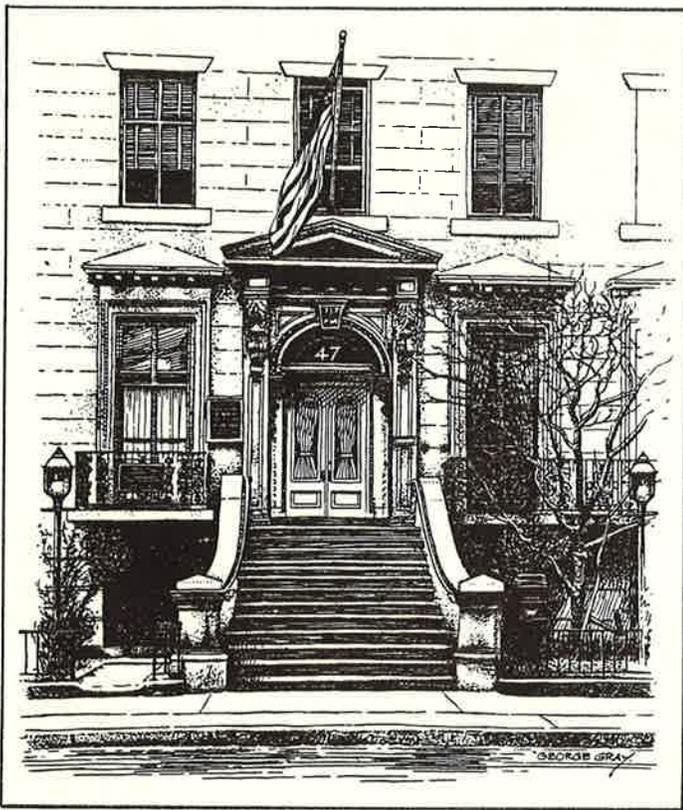
"The method of heating . . . is a terrible grievance. . . . Casual visitors are nearly suffocated. . . . An enormous furnace in the cellar sends up, day and night, streams of hot air through apertures and pipes. . . . It meets you the moment the street door is opened . . . and it rushes after you when you emerge again, half-stewed and parboiled, into the wholesome air."

Even the water was in literal revolution, for the great Croton Reservoir and Aqueduct were built at this time, bringing clean water to a city sorely lacking it. The State Commissioner of the Croton Water Works, Stephen Allen, lived at No. 1 Washington Square North.

But the new water pipes did not reach the fourth-floor servant quarters, where pitcher, basin and chamber pot had to suffice for three or four live-in servants, most of them Irish-born and white, some American-born and black.

Bayrd Still, emeritus professor of history at New York University, is a founding adviser of the Greenwich Village Trust. He is the author of *Mirror for Gotham*, *Urban America* and *Architectural and Historical Guide to Greenwich Village*.

Painting of the Seventh Regiment drilling in Washington Square in 1851. To the east, at left background, is the original 1837 building of New York University, demolished in 1894.



Courtesy, Salmagundi Club

TRUST MOVES TO SALMAGUNDI CLUB On April 1, the Greenwich Village Trust changed its address to 47 Fifth Avenue, where it now occupies an office in the Salmagundi Club. The new telephone number of the Trust is 212/924-3895. The 47 Fifth Avenue building, a designated NYC Landmark, is the last brownstone mansion on lower Fifth Avenue whose facade and interiors have survived with few modifications. It was built in 1852-53 for Irad Hawley, president of the Pennsylvania Coal Company. The Salmagundi Club — America's oldest club dedicated to the fine arts — purchased the mansion in 1917.

Trust receives \$1,000 Grant

The Greenwich Village Trust has received a \$1,000 grant from the Eva Gebhard-Gourgaud Foundation, which specializes in grants for historic preservation. In a description of its goals, the foundation says "it seeks as much as possible to stimulate community initiative, pride and interest, and encourage adaptive uses of old structures as the best means of their preservation."

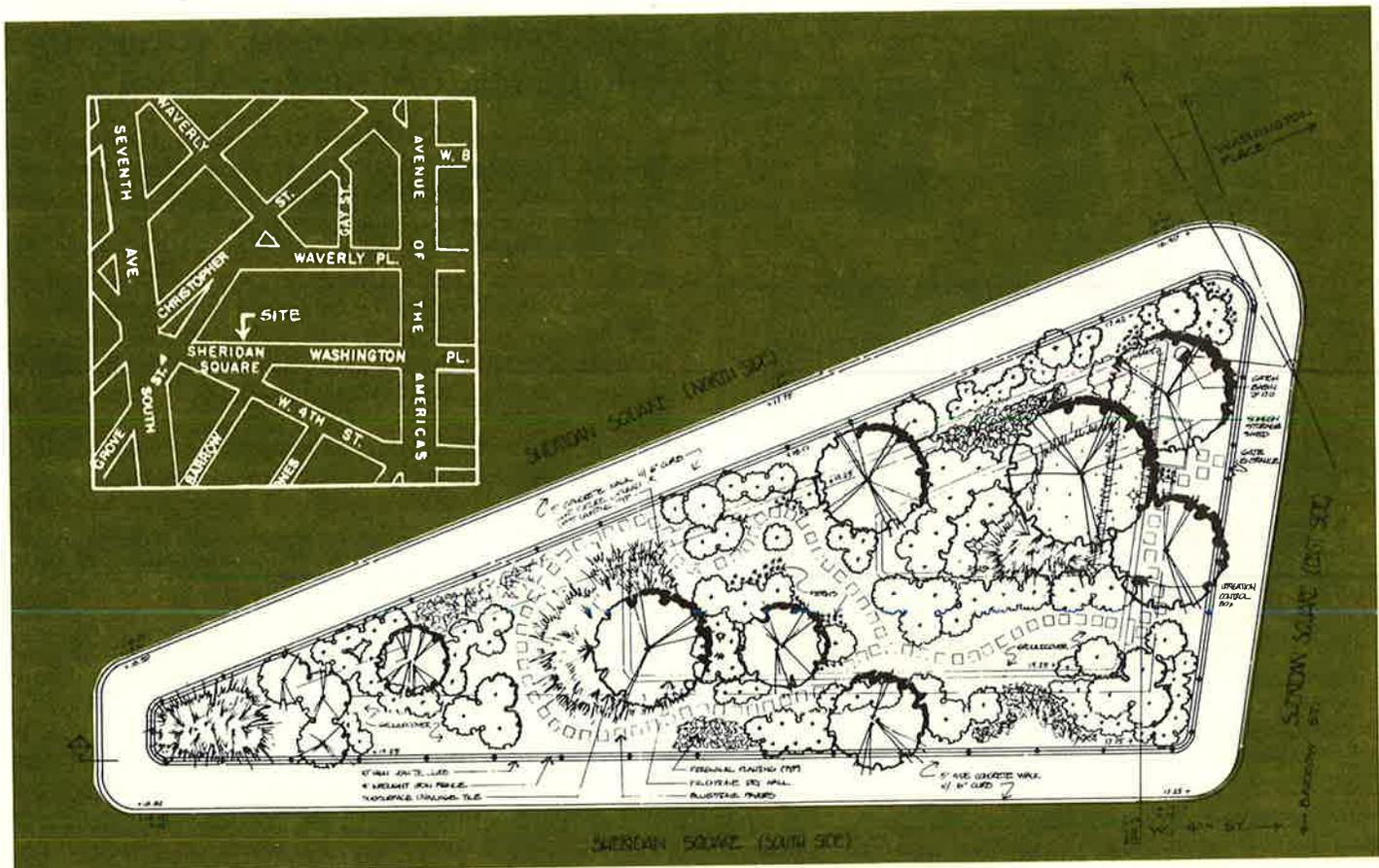
The foundation has an interesting history: it was established by Baroness Gourgaud, daughter of American banker William H. Gebhard and widow of Baron Napoléon Gourgaud, the great-grandson of Napoleon's General of Artillery.

The Gourgauds' initial involvement with preservation came in the 1920s, when they learned that the house in which Napoleon had spent his last three days in France (on the Isle d'Aix, near La Rochelle) was disintegrating and near collapse. They purchased the property, restored the building and developed a museum centering on Napoleon and the First Empire.

Additional old structures on the island were restored with their help, and their work continues today through the Society of Friends of the Island of Aix.

The Baroness lived in France from 1892 until 1947, when she returned to New York and lived at 14 Fifth Avenue. She died in France in 1959.

After her death, when larger funds became available to the trustees, they decided to expand the activities of the foundation in the field of historic preservation in America. Grants have since been made to help preserve scenic back roads and the appearance of townscapes, including the elimination of visual blight in historic districts.



MINIMUM MAINTENANCE, MAXIMUM VISIBILITY The Sheridan Square Triangle Garden will be filled with shrubbery, seasonal flowers and foliage, and enclosed by a decorative five-foot-high cast-iron fence. Although the space

is too small for benches or strolling, the garden will be on three levels to permit maximum viewing by the public. Maintenance provisions will consist of bluestone paths for garden workers, a sunken toolshed, and water service.

“Lost” Square to be Regained

For almost half a century, Christopher Park, at Christopher, Grove and West 4th Streets, has been mistaken for Sheridan Square, while the real Sheridan Square — actually a paved triangle formed by the intersecting of Washington Place with Barrow, West 4th and Grove Streets — has languished in obscurity. So much so that its identity is known to few besides the local mailman and the 500 or so people who live there in apartment buildings bearing the address Sheridan Square.

The *AIA Guide to New York* describes it as “the most unused public space in the Village, marked out with an asphalt triangle stanchioned with ‘no parking’ signs . . .”

All of this is about to change. If the Sheridan Square Triangle Association, a nonprofit group formed by residents of the neighborhood, is successful in its fund-raising efforts, a center viewing garden will soon replace the asphalt, and Sheridan Square will regain its identity. An archaeological dig is also being considered prior to the establishment of the permanent garden.

How mix-up began

The mix-up between Sheridan Square and Christopher Park goes back to 1936, when a bronze statue of Civil War hero Philip Henry Sheridan, commissioned by the General Sheridan Memorial Association, was erected in Christopher Park. The records are silent on why Christopher Park was chosen, but one logical explanation is that there were no facilities for a statue in Sheridan Square, and Christopher Park was conveniently close at hand.

4 A newspaper reporter covering the unveiling of the monument mistakenly wrote that the statue of the “valiant hero [was

placed] in the Square that bears his name.” As often happens, later writers perpetuated the error as fact. In time, the real Sheridan Square was no longer identified on most commercial maps and became totally confused with Christopher Park. As the *AIA Guide* (one of the few guidebooks to get it right) points out, “It causes havoc when fire engines respond to the wrong place.”

Sheridan Square was created in the early 1800s in the same form and size as it exists today. It remained unnamed, however, until 1896, at which time it was being used by “public school boys for drilling and marching.” Pleased by this show of patriotic spirit, local residents petitioned the Board of Aldermen to name the square after either Sheridan or Admiral David Farragut “in honor of the memory and services rendered to our country by such heroic characters.” The decision in favor of Sheridan was reached after a public hearing on the matter.

Archaeological Dig

Both the Trust and the Sheridan Square Triangle Association have recommended to the Landmarks Preservation Commission that its urban archaeologist, Dr. Sharene Baugher-Perlin, consider the Sheridan Square site for a city-sponsored archaeological dig prior to installation of the garden. Archival research by the Trust indicates that the ground has been relatively undisturbed for at least 86 years, when the area was first paved with asphalt. Since preliminary work on the garden calls for demolition of the asphalt, a test dig to determine actual archaeological value of the site could be done with comparative ease.

The proposed greening of Sheridan Square will consist of a

4,210-foot triangular viewing garden shown in the accompanying illustration. The basic plan is the concept of Village horticulturist and landscape designer Pamela Berdan, and has already met with the approval of the NYC Department of Transportation (DOT), which has jurisdiction over the square; Manhattan Community Board 2; the Landmarks Preservation Commission; and the City Art Commission.

The total amount required for the creation and long-term maintenance of the garden is \$255,000. Of this, the DOT will provide \$130,000 worth of preliminary work, including pavement demolition, grading, drainage, and construction of a sidewalk surrounding the garden. Another \$50,000 has been approved by Community Board 2 from the community-projects payments to be derived from the conversion of the Federal Building at Christopher and Washington Streets into cooperative apartments.

The remaining \$75,000 must be raised by the Sheridan Square Triangle Association, which will be responsible for the installation and future maintenance of the garden and the cast-iron fence enclosing it.

"Fair in the Square"

As part of its fund-raising drive, the association will hold a "Fair in the Square" on Saturday, May 22 (rain date May 23). It is also seeking individual, corporate and foundation gifts to help enable work on the garden to start this year.

Officers of the organization are Duane Wilder, president; Malcolm Klein, vice-president and treasurer; Vera Schneider, secretary. It has 150 members to date, paying annual dues of \$10, \$25 and (for businesses) \$100. The association's address is 121 Washington Place, New York, N.Y. 10014, tel. 243-4829 or 691-8140.



The New York Historical Society

NEW LEASE ON LIFE The oldest dwelling in the Village, the 1799 Issacs-Hendricks House — shown here as it looked in 1922 — will soon undergo much-needed rehabilitation. New owners plan to restore the doorway and replace the stoop (now missing) at the Bedford Street entrance, and to uncover and repair the original clapboard siding on Commerce Street. The Trust will arrange for an analysis of existing paint layers on the building's exterior to determine the paint colors used in 1799.

Trust Names Executive Director

Regina M. Kellerman, architectural historian and a founding adviser of the Greenwich Village Trust, was named its Executive Director in September 1981.

Chris Den Blaker



Mrs. Kellerman brings to her post firsthand knowledge of the architecture of New York. As director of research in the 1960s for the Landmarks Preservation Commission, she supervised its first architectural survey of the five boroughs.

She is especially familiar with the architecture of Greenwich Village, having personally documented the history and design of many of its buildings. She is the author of the chapters on the historical development and architectural importance of the Village in the Commission's designation report.

After leaving the Commission, Mrs. Kellerman was instrumental in the saving of SoHo. In the 1970s, while a doctoral candidate at Pennsylvania State University, she was field director of an architectural and environmental study of SoHo underwritten by the National Science Foundation. The subsequent report, of which she was co-author, was submitted to the Landmarks Commission and served as the basis for the designation of the SoHo Cast-Iron Historic District.

As a research consultant and writer, Mrs. Kellerman has numbered among her clients Wave Hill Center for Environmental Studies in the Bronx, the Museum of the City of New York, the New York State Museum at Albany and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. She has served on preservation and landmarks committees of the Municipal Art Society, the City Planning Commission and Manhattan Community Board 2, and is currently a member of the Planning Committee for the New York Buildings Records Collection of the Municipal Archives. She is also a member of the board of trustees of the Washington Headquarters Association, Morris-Jumel Mansion.

Mrs. Kellerman attended the Yale University School of Art and Architecture and is a graduate of Columbia University. While in the doctoral program in art history at Pennsylvania State University, she studied in England, France and Italy, and completed her dissertation research in the Netherlands in 1981. She expects to be awarded a Ph.D. degree this year. Her most recent published work is *The Publications and Reproductions Program of the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, issued by the museum in 1981.

Represents Mayor on Fund

Verna Small, member of Manhattan Community Board 2 and a Board member of the Greenwich Village Trust, has been named by Mayor Edward I. Koch to represent him on the board of trustees of the newly established New York City Historic Properties Fund, Inc.

The fund will administer the anticipated \$3.5 million earmarked for landmark preservation in the city that is to be generated from the conversion of the Federal Building in Greenwich Village into cooperative apartments. The monies will be used citywide.

In addition to Mrs. Small, trustees of the Historic Properties Fund include three directors of the Landmarks Conservancy, and three city officials — the Comptroller, the Chairman of the City Planning Commission, and the Chairman of the Landmarks Preservation Commission — who serve in an ex-officio capacity. **5**

News from Landmarks Preservation Commission

Project SAVE to open warehouse

Project SAVE (Salvage of Architecturally Viable Elements) is a new program of the city's Landmarks Preservation Commission designed to rescue and recycle architectural fragments, structural components and functional hardware from city-owned sites slated for demolition. These materials will soon be made available at low cost to city residents who are rehabilitating older homes (which need not be in historic districts).

The Landmarks salvage crew, working with the demolition division of the city's Department of Housing Preservation and Development, has been recovering and storing elements since June of 1980, when the project was originally funded. The SAVE warehouse is scheduled to open in September 1982 in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, easily accessible from the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway and the Williamsburg Bridge.

Charles Savage, director of Project SAVE, requests Trust members to alert the Landmarks Commission when good, recyclable elements are being thrown out. If you see the interior (mantels, banisters, balustrades, trim) of an old building (church, house) in your neighborhood being gutted, act quickly: Call 566-2895 and leave your number with Project SAVE. The crew is small and often in the field, but they'll return your call.

Should you be renovating and removing historical elements from your own house (heaven forbid!), don't throw them away; SAVE will give you a tax-deductible-donation receipt.

Project SAVE is modeled after the highly successful Baltimore project now in its sixth year. SAVE's original funding was through a Community Development Block Grant, and it is one of the programs expected to sustain itself as the "great cuts" in preservation funding continue.

Area Landmarks Director

Frank Sanchis has been appointed area director for Manhattan Community Districts 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 8 in a recent structural reorganization of the city's Landmarks Preservation Commission staff. Under the new system, individual groups have been assigned to service specific geographical areas of the city. Each group has its own researchers and preservationists, and is headed by an area director.

Mr. Sanchis has been administrative architect for the Commission since 1978, advising the Chairman on matters of architectural policy, review, and compliance. He has also acted as consultant on numerous restoration projects in New York State, and teaches a course in historic preservation at Columbia's Graduate School of Architecture and Planning.

In announcing the plans for reorganization at Landmarks, Commission Chairman Kent L. Barwick said, "We anticipate that by assigning coordinated groups to service specific portions of the city, we will be able to make ourselves more accessible to, and work closely with, other city agencies and neighborhood organizations working in these areas."



Armen Kachaturian



Sandra Brett

NOW AN URBAN DELIGHT The 1801 Second Spanish-Portuguese Synagogue Cemetery on the south side of West 11th Street near Sixth Avenue, once a mass of weeds and a repository for empty bottles and pizza rinds, has become a serendipitous find for Village passersby. Its restoration was undertaken by members of the Trust. Landscape designer Pamela Berdan (right) made the plan; Walter Brett (left) and his wife, Sandra (who took this photo), carried it out. The Bretts, volunteers from 11th Street, used old brick procured by Trust Board member Eva Ettish from a Gansevoort Market demolition and recycled it into a garden path. They straightened the headstones, repaired a vault, cleaned out the garbage and set plantings and ferns.

Publications— Useful and Available

New publications will be listed in *The Anthemion* as they become available. However, here are some "oldies but goodies" that landmark buffs, residents of the area and preservationists should have on the shelves:

Landmarks Preservation Commission Reports Those for the Greenwich Village and SoHo Historic Districts are still available and are filled with fascinating house-by-house, block-by-block information about our historic buildings. Order from: Citibooks, 2213 Municipal Building, 1 Centre Street, New York, N.Y. 10007, tel. 566-2616.

The Greenwich Village Historic District Designation Report, 2 vols., 1969. \$16 by mail, \$15 if picked up.

The SoHo Cast Iron District Designation Report, 1973. \$8 by mail, \$7 if picked up.

Preservation Briefs The Department of the Interior's Technical Preservation Services Division has been eliminated in Federal budget cutting, but several of its informative pamphlets can still be obtained. Order from: Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402.

The Cleaning and Waterproof Coating of Masonary Buildings, Preservation Briefs No. 1. 75¢.

Repointing Mortar Joints in Historic Brick Buildings, Preservation Briefs No. 2. \$1.50.

Conserving Energy in Historic Buildings, Preservation Briefs No. 3. 75¢.

Roofing for Historic Buildings, Preservation Briefs No. 4. 75¢.

The Preservation of Historic Glazed Architectural Terra-Cotta, Preservation Briefs No. 6. \$1.50.

The Repair of Historic Wooden Windows, Preservation Briefs No. 9. \$1.50.



Update on St. Luke's Church

Plans for the rebuilding of St. Luke's in the Fields, at 487 Hudson Street, severely damaged by fire a year ago, now call for treating the western extension, of which little survived, in a Romanesque manner. Included will be a polygonal chapel behind the church, and a solarium and new facilities to accommodate expanded church and community-relations activities. Completion of the estimated \$5-million project is scheduled for mid-1983.

Hugh Hardy, architect in charge of the rebuilding, has stated that the sides and front of the original 1822 church structure, which is in the Federal style, will be restored so that "the view of the church from Hudson Street will give the impression that St. Luke's has not changed at all, that it has survived in time."

The Greenwich Village Trust obtained a \$1,000 grant for St. Luke's from the National Trust for Historic Preservation to match other local funds for the rebuilding.

New Trustee

Christine Boyer, specialist in urban studies and preservation planning, was elected to the Board of Trustees of the Greenwich Village Trust at its December 1981 meeting.

Professor Boyer, a resident of West 4th Street, is a member of the faculty in the Historic Preservation Program of the School of Architecture and Planning, Columbia University.

In 1980, in cooperation with Manhattan Community Board 2, Professor Boyer conducted a student research project in the Village, documenting the evolution of Christopher Street from colonial times to the present. A film on this subject, which she will narrate, will be shown later this year in the Trust's series of programs open to the public.

Professor Boyer is also the author of a forthcoming book, *The Order of the American City*, to be published this year by MIT Press. A graduate of Goucher College, she holds master's degrees from the University of Pennsylvania and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and was awarded a Ph.D. degree from MIT in Urban Studies and Planning.

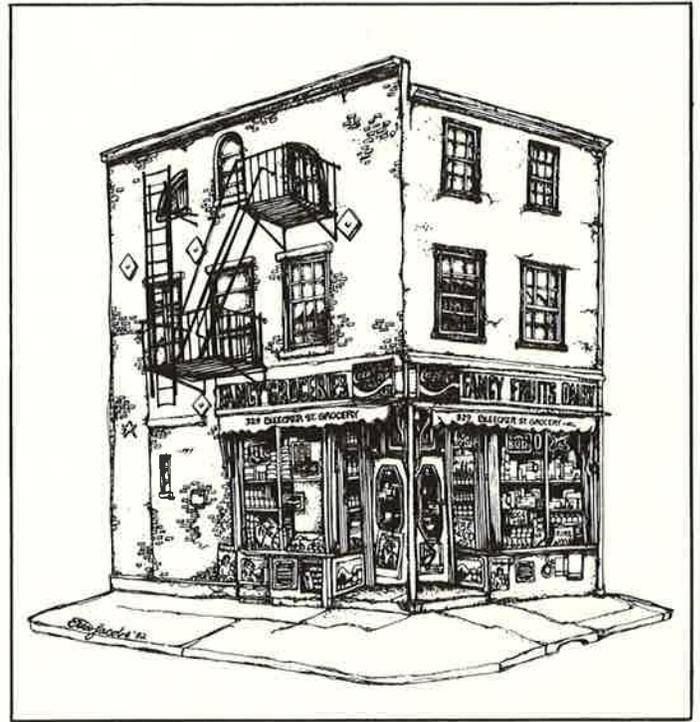


Preservation Crisis

The theme for Preservation Week, May 9 to 15, was to have been "Reinvesting in America's Past," focusing on the economic benefits of preservation. At presstime came the news that the federal budget proposed for 1983 eliminates all matching grants for the state preservation programs and, for the first time, even the National Trust for Historic Preservation has been "zeroed out." The new theme for May 9 to 15 is to "Raise the Roof for Preservation" on Capitol Hill.

For those new to the preservation field, the National Trust was chartered by Congress in 1949 as a private-sector organization to help government reverse the tide of landmarks destruction. Its future is seriously threatened, and with it the whole national preservation partnership, including the National Register of Historic Places and State Preservation Offices.

Critical budget decisions are in the making now. To prevent the needless destruction of America's heritage, write or telephone your United States representative and senators immediately, asking them to express their support for preservation funding.



TRACES OF THE PAST Although altered many times, this small house-and-shop at the northeast corner of Christopher and Bleecker Streets — portrayed here by Village artist Etta Jacobs — has survived since 1802 and has always been a grocery. It is among the 20 historical buildings and sites soon to be marked with identifying plaques by the Committee for the Rehabilitation of Christopher Street (ROC) as part of a \$31,000 street-improvement project. The Trust selected the historical buildings and sites and prepared text for the plaques. The ROC project will be funded from the community-projects payments to be derived from the conversion to residential use of the 1890s Federal Building, which borders on Christopher between Greenwich and Washington Streets.

Ruth Wittenberg Honored

Manhattan Community Board 2 has named a square in the Village for Ruth Wittenberg, honorary president and a founding member of the Greenwich Village Trust, in recognition of her unselfish service to the community. It is located at Sixth and Greenwich Avenues, near the southern end of the Jefferson Market Library Garden, and was formerly known as the Village Square triangle.

In a separate action, in recognition of her service to the city, Mrs. Wittenberg will be awarded the President's Medal of the Graduate School and University Center of the City University of New York at its 18th annual doctoral commencement on June 3.

The resolution which the Community Board adopted unanimously at its December 18, 1981, meeting highlights Ruth Wittenberg's guidance in the campaign which established a Landmarks Preservation Law for this city and led to the designation of the Greenwich Village Historic District and the SoHo Cast-Iron Historic District; her efforts in the saving and reworking of Washington Square Park; and especially her work in helping to transform a deserted courthouse into the Jefferson Market Library, and the site of the former Women's House of Detention into a garden.

In a letter to Mrs. Wittenberg informing her of the forthcoming City University of New York award, Harold M. Proshansky, president of the Graduate School and University Center, said one of the criteria by which recipients of their medal is selected is "outstanding service to the City of New York."

The Trust congratulates Mrs. Wittenberg for honors well deserved.

Close to Its Goal

Thanks largely to interested neighbors who formed a loosely knit organization to solicit restoration funds, the Village's venerable Northern Dispensary, which has been servicing the public as a nonprofit health clinic for more than 150 years, is now within \$20,000 of its stated goal of \$100,000 for rehabilitation of the Dispensary building. The triangular red-brick and brownstone structure, erected in 1831, is located in the center of the intersection of Waverly Place, Christopher and Grove Streets.

A recent grant of \$22,550 from the Vincent Astor Foundation to match state preservation funds, combined with previously announced contributions and pledges, brings the amount raised thus far to approximately \$80,000, assuring that the rehabilitation work can begin shortly. Attention will be given first to the exterior of the Dispensary, which is in a critical state of deterioration, followed by restoration of surviving historic interiors and upgrading of the clinical facilities. The Astor Foundation funds, for example, will be used for the restoration of the once-handsome board room on the second floor, where the directors of the Dispensary, all of whom serve in a voluntary capacity, have held their meetings for the past century and a half.

The Northern Dispensary was founded in 1827 by a group of private citizens "for the purpose of relieving such sick, poor and indigent persons as are unable to procure medicinal aid," residing in what was then "the northern district of the city." Treatment was first offered in rented quarters at 64 Herring (now Bleeker) Street, corner of Commerce Street, before the present Dispensary was built. From that time to this, the clinic has provided low-cost health services at virtually no cost to the taxpayer. In recent years, it has specialized exclusively in complete dental care.

The Dispensary's records are as much a source for the social history of Greenwich Village and its evolution as an urban community as they are for the development of the Dispensary itself. One can trace the outbreaks of cholera, smallpox, scarlet fever, measles and typhoid, or establish the periods of mass immigration, or simply search and find with little difficulty the names of the eminent and famous who were associated with the institution. Among those who served it, for example, were Valentine Mott, the most celebrated surgeon of the first half of the nineteenth century, and Willard Parker, Mott's successor as surgical consultant, who brought with him to the Dispensary for clinical experience his students from the College of Physicians and Surgeons.

The chief income of the Dispensary in its early years was from annual subscriptions of five dollars, which entitled the donors to send their servants for free medical treatment. Monies were also obtained from sponsors, who could contribute \$10 a year or \$50 for a life membership. Among these were Peter Cooper, the founder of Cooper Union; Clement C. Moore, author of *A Visit from St. Nicholas*; Jenny Lind, the "Swedish Nightingale"; Samuel F. B. Morse, inventor of the telegraph and Morse code; and P. T. Barnum of circus fame.



Museum of the City of NY

The Northern Dispensary in 1885, viewed from its two sides on Waverly Place. The Gothic battlement crowning the building, added with the third story in 1854, was subsequently removed.

Perhaps the Dispensary's best known patient was Edgar Allan Poe, who stopped in during the winter of 1837 to get medicine for a head cold, and became a long-time friend of the Dispensary's staff.

An opportunity to help open the field of medicine to women was missed by the Dispensary in 1851. According to the records, "Miss Blackwell, M.D." applied for appointment as attending physician, but was turned down. This was undoubtedly Elizabeth Blackwell, the first woman in the United States to earn a medical degree, which was granted to her in 1849. Undaunted, Dr. Blackwell went on to found the New York Infirmary and College for Women, and later opened the first school for nurses in this country.

Today, Irwin Faber, D.D.S., director of the Dispensary since 1960, heads a staff of 35 full-time and part-time dentists, nurses, technicians and assistants who treat 3,000 patients making a total of 18,000 visits annually. In addition to patients who seek out the Dispensary on their own, many others are referred by hospitals and private and municipal agencies.

Readers who wish to assist the Dispensary in meeting the last \$20,000 needed for its building rehabilitation project may write to or call the Northern Dispensary, 165 Waverly Place, New York, NY 10014, tel. 242-5511.

Can You Help Us?

The Trust is in need of a set of I. N. Phelps Stokes's six-volume *The Iconography of Manhattan Island*, either the original 1915-28 editions or the 1967 reprint, for its office library. Anyone willing to part with a set will receive a tax-deduction-contribution receipt. Call or write Regina M. Kellerman, Executive Director, The Greenwich Village Trust for Historic Preservation, 47 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10003, tel. 924-3895.



an-the-mi-on / an-'the-me-ən / n, pl **an-the-mia** /-me ə/ [Gk, fr. dim. of *anthemon* flower, fr. *antbos* — more at ANTHOLOGY]: an ornament of floral or foliated forms arranged in a radiating cluster but always flat (as in relief sculpture or in painting)

—*Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary*

The anthemion was a standard architectural ornament of the 1830-1850 Greek Revival period in the United States. It abounds in the Greenwich Village Historic District, especially as a cast-iron cresting atop fences and basement window grilles, and in modified wooden form over doorways.

