



THE ANTHEMION

Winter/Spring 2002 The Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation

Andrew Berman Joins the Society as New Executive Director

A familiar face to many of us joined the Society on January 2 when Andrew Berman took over as GVSHP's new Executive Director. Many of us at the Society knew Andrew from his years as Chief-of-Staff to State Senator and City Council Member Tom Duane and, prior to that, as Duane's Greenwich Village community liaison.



Andrew has worked closely with the Society and other Village and citywide advocates on a host of preservation issues, as landmark and neighborhood protection was a centerpiece of his work in public service, and clearly a labor of love on his part. Some of the notable neighborhood advocacy efforts in and around the Village that he helped lead included the campaigns to secure state funding for the restoration of Washington Square Arch, to preserve the landmarked artwork "The Wall" at

Broadway and Houston Street, to help implement community rezoning plans in the Far West Village and Chelsea, to remove illegal billboards throughout Lower Manhattan and change city signage regulations, and to revoke the license for New York Apple Tour Bus Company.

The Society felt that Andrew's years of experience in city and state government would be invaluable in moving forward with GVSHP's agenda of securing landmark district designation for Gansevoort and in the Far West and South Village. Also, dramatic changes in city government this year will make a firm understanding of the players and the process particularly critical to our success. Outside of his government and public policy experience, Andrew is a life-long New Yorker who studied architecture at Wesleyan University and has written about the history and architecture of New York City neighborhoods as a freelance writer.

FROM THE DIRECTOR

My brief tenure here at GVSHP (which began January 2) certainly has been a busy one, as 2002 promises to be an extremely critical year for the Society and for Village preservation efforts in general. We continue to feel the reverberations of the September 11th attacks; in addition to the shock and sorrow, GVSHP, like so many other non-profits, took it on the chin, as membership appeals had to be postponed and sources of charitable support suddenly ran dry. The forecast on the city level is somewhat foreboding as well, as massive cuts have been proposed for agencies like the Landmarks Preservation Commission and the Department of Buildings, which monitor and regulate new construction and building changes in our neighborhood. Government and foundation funding for non-profits such as ours will also be very difficult to secure this year. Vast changes in city government this year also means that vigorous new efforts will be needed to ensure that Village preservation concerns are recognized and taken up by our leaders in government.

However, in spite of these challenges, I believe that there is great reason for hope. We have made quantum leaps in our efforts to secure historic district designation for the Gansevoort Market and to move forward on landmarking in the rest of the Far West Village. Some of the top new officials in city government, including Mayor Bloomberg, have previously given supportive signs regarding our efforts. At the same time, our Gansevoort campaign has been called "precedent-setting" in its scope and goals, and preservationists throughout the city have joined in our cause. We will also be moving forward on seeking protection for some of the scores of federal houses in Lower Manhattan that were documented in our ground-breaking federal house study, and will continue to pursue designation for this entire class of buildings. And I strongly believe that last fall's tragic events have made many people, in the Village and throughout New York, cognizant of how precious and precarious our history, our built environment, and our sense of place can be, and how absolutely critical it is that we work to preserve it.

For the coming year, I have four main goals for myself, and the Society: first, undertaking the coalition building necessary to enhance the effectiveness of our preservation advocacy agenda; second, membership expansion to both assure the Society remains truly representative of the commu-

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Winter 2001-2002: A Busy Season for Advocacy

The September 11 attacks put all of our lives, as well as many activities of the Society, on hold for a while last fall. Villagers were touched by these terrible events in many different ways, including for many of us finding a re-invigorated love for our city and our neighborhoods, and an increased resolve to preserve them as the special places they are.

Proposals for inappropriate development in the Village also continued to move forward after a brief respite. Two very similar proposals came to the fore late last year involving designs by notable architects for tall towers to rise over distinctly low-rise sections of the Far West Village. At 848 Washington Street (at 13th Street), architect Jean Nouvel designed a 32-story residential high-rise to tower over the modestly

scaled, mixed-use Gansevoort Market area. At 328 Spring Street (at Washington Street), architect Philip Johnson designed a 28-story, largely residential tower that would loom over the mixed-use Hudson Square neighborhood. Both were unusual and intriguing designs, both would require special permission from the city to build in these areas, and both would radically change the scale and feel of their respective neighborhoods. While some might praise the stature and ambition of the projects' designs, both were clearly a case of the wrong building in the wrong place, and the Society came out strongly against each of them at the hearings before the city's Board of Standards and Appeals (BSA). In each case the BSA asked tough questions of the

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Gansevoort Market on the Citywide Preservation Agenda

The Greenwich Village Society's Save Gansevoort Market Task Force, led by co-chairs Jo Hamilton and Florent Morellet, presented its proposal for a historic district to Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) Chairperson Sherida Paulsen in October, and met again with Chairperson Paulsen and her staff in December. Between those two meetings, the Task Force was proud to be able to secure resolutions in support of the historic district from both Community Boards #2 and #4. Furthermore, Community Board #2 emphasized that Gansevoort was its preservation priority in a December letter to Chairperson Paulsen. In a January meeting with LPC, the Chair made it clear that all of our efforts had brought the Gansevoort proposal far along the path to formal consideration, and committed to returning a proposal for action by the Commission within 6-12 months.

The Task Force also distributed its rationale for district designation, *The Proposed Gansevoort Market Historic District: An Overview*, written by architectural historian Thomas H. Mellins, to

key preservationists and elected officials across the city. The Task Force is grateful for expressions of support from the Municipal Art Society, the Historic Districts Council, the New York Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, and the New York Landmarks Conservancy. The Task Force also notes the support of local elected officials, including Manhattan Borough President C. Virginia Fields, State Senator Thomas K. Duane, Council Member Christine Quinn, and prominent members of the new City government.

The general boundaries of the proposed district are Horatio or Gansevoort streets to the south; 16th Street to the north; Hudson Street or Ninth Avenue to the east; and west to the Hudson River. The LPC has encouraged the Task Force to conduct research on buildings between 14th and 16th Streets, and to propose design guidelines for future development in the event of district designation. We will complete a building-by-building survey, and conduct more historical research, to link the present-day buildings to the area's commercial past. Task Force member Linda Yowell is organizing the design guidelines effort; James Stewart Polshek will chair the committee. Carefully considered design guidelines will shape future development in keeping with the area's distinct sense of place.

With the Gansevoort proposal on the LPC's radar screen, the Task Force will focus its energies on outreach to area building owners and long-term leaseholders. It will continue to seek the support of local and citywide elected officials, and to make presentations to community and preservation groups. A self-guided walking tour brochure will be ready in time for springtime meanderings through the Gansevoort Market. The Historic Districts Council will feature the area in a tour offered during its March Preservation Conference. The Task Force soon will announce public programs to draw attention to this special, but fragile, many-layered slice of New York life.



Proposed boundaries of the Gansevoort Market Historic District.

FROM THE DIRECTOR

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ity it serves and to build a firm base of financial support; third, continuation of the Society's programs that celebrate and document the unique cultural history of the Village; and last, but certainly not least, to vigorously pursue grant and benefactor opportunities needed to enhance the Society's capacity for advocacy.

I believe all of these goals are critical if the Society is to successfully meet the challenges we face in the coming year - and remain the representative voice of the community in preserving the architectural and cultural history and vibrancy of our community.

Our recent membership survey (see page below), will give us some insight into what our members would most like to see the Society doing. I would also welcome your thoughts and feedback, so please don't hesitate to contact me at the Society's offices, at (212) 475-9585, or at aberman@gvshp.org. In light of the tremendous challenges the Society and Village preservation efforts will be facing this year, I would also urge you to consider making this the year when you renew your commitment to the Society with additional support of whatever kind you can afford - volunteering some time, helping to recruit new members, or making an additional financial contribution to the Society. After all, preserving the Village's past and ensuring its future will depend upon the work we are able to do today.

Andrew Berma

MEMBERSHIP SURVEY RESULTS

GVSHP learned about its members' many interests and concerns in a survey conducted in 2001. With a 27% percent response rate, members told us they overwhelmingly believed that preservation advocacy should be the number one priority of the Society. Neighborhood improvements, education programs and the archive and oral history project followed as activities our members considered the most important work done by the Society.

The majority of respondents admitted that they attend Society programs "sometimes" rather than regularly. In an attempt to lure more attendees, we have changed our most recent events to begin at 6:30 p.m. rather than earlier, in response to survey results. Members also told us that they felt that the most worthwhile programs are lectures and walking tours.

Most respondents (over 70%) replied that they initially heard about GVSHP through a mailing or from a friend. 70% of respondents are members of more than one historic preservation/conservancy/museum organization in New York City, and half said they were also members of their local block association.

SPRING HOUSE TOUR

The East Village will be explored during this year's House Tour on Sunday, May 5th, with visits planned to the homes of artists, architects, designers, photographers, and collectors.

This diverse neighborhood encompasses a fascinating range of architecture, including Greek Revival residences, a Gothic Revival church, Romanesque Revival industrial structures, and a number of unique buildings that have been excellently preserved. The architecture reflects the rapid changes in the area, from the days when St. Mark's Place and Lafayette Street were the most fashionable places to live in the city, to its evolution into a commercial center for publishing and printing, and later, to the time when it became known for its bohemian counterculture.

Part of the pleasure of ambling through the East Village is the element of surprise. Turn a corner and you may find a Moorish theater, a row of handsome houses known as Renwick Triangle, tenements built when Second Avenue was called Kleindeutschland, off-off Broadway productions, an English park of 16 acres, many tiny pocket parks lovingly cared for by neighbors (specifically opened for the tour), and not least, an astonishing number of restaurants.

The Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation is well aware of the many interesting aspects of this neighborhood, since we moved our home here two years ago, to 232 East 11th Street. This year our House Tour will offer a rare opportunity to visit a number of remarkable homes throughout the East Village.



25 Stuyvesant Street, one of the homes featured on the Spring House Tour.

Changes in City Government

The Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) has moved, and many of our city representatives have changed since January 1, so reaching out to government for assistance may be a little more difficult.

If you see what you believe is a violation of landmarks regulations and want to file a complaint with the LPC, please call violations officer Bernadette Artus at her new number, (212) 669-7951. You can also download a complaint form at the LPC's website, at nyc.gov/landmarks; click on 'publications,' then 'violations complaint form' (please note, however, that the LPC's new address -- to which the form should be mailed -- is now One Centre Street, 9th floor north, New York, NY 10007, and the main phone number is now 212-669-7700; at press time their website did not yet reflect this change). You should also feel free to report Village landmarks violations to the Greenwich Village Society's office for assistance and support.

You may also want to contact your elected officials with a landmarks complaint, or to urge them to support more funding for the LPC and related city, state, and federal agencies and programs. Here's how:

Mayor

Michael Bloomberg (212) 788-3000

Borough President

C. Virginia Fields (212) 669-8300

Congress Member

Jerrold Nadler (212) 367-7350

Congress Member

Carolyn Maloney (East Village)
(212) 860-0606

State Senator

Tom Duane (212) 268-1049

Assembly Member

Deborah Glick (212) 674-5153

City Council Member

Christine Quinn (212) 768-4344

City Council Member

Margarita Lopez (212) 614-8751

City Council Member

Alan Gerson (212) 788-7722

(Note: Decennial state and federal redistricting scheduled for later this year may affect district lines, and therefore contact information, for state and federal elected officials.)

GVSHP Programs

Members and friends will receive notices of upcoming spring programs, but there are several being planned that you may want to put on your calendar now.

Walking Tour

Gansevoort Market

Sunday, March 10th, 2:00 p.m. \$12.

The Save Gansevoort Market Task Force leads a tour of the northwest corner of Greenwich Village, an active market that displays many layers of its commercial past. Belgian block streets, market canopies and waterfront vistas are the background to a distinctive mix of low scale buildings and commercial uses.

Walking Tour

The Greenwich Village of Henry James and Edith Wharton

Saturday, April 6th, 1:00 p.m.

Greenwich Village, particularly the area around Washington Square, is very strongly associated with New York's two greatest novelists. We will explore the neighborhood of Henry James's birth in 1843 as well as the setting of his novel (set in the same year) *Washington Square*. Friends and colleagues of the two writers will also receive some attention, including Stanford White, Richard Morris Hunt, John LaFarge, and Mary

Cadwalader Jones. Tour led by Francis Morrone, architectural historian and author of *An Architectural Guidebook to Brooklyn*.

GVSHP's Fourth Annual Tour of Village Homes

Sunday, May 5th, 1:00 p.m.

Past tours have featured the studios and homes of Roy Lichtenstein, Jennifer Bartlett, Diane von Furstenberg, Nancy Dine, Genevieve Faure, Joost Elfers and Pat Steir, Cary Tamarkin and Mindy Goldberg, Roy Liebenthal and Fabienne Terwinghe, and Jan Staller. This year's tour will focus on the East Village, promising a one-of-a-kind opportunity to experience the sophisticated eclecticism that lies east of Broadway. Watch your mailbox for your invitation!

Walking Tour

Lost & Found Monuments by White, Hunt, Renwick, and Upjohn, with David Garrard Lowe.

Saturday, May 25th at 1:00 p.m.

Join Beaux Arts Alliance President David Garrard Lowe as we discover Greenwich Village's significant contributions by major architects.

For reservations and meeting places for any of these events, please call 212/475-9585.

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Don't forget to look up GVSHP on the web
at www.gvshp.org

Editor: Judith Stonehill

Contributors: Andrew Berman, Sue Radmer,
and Heather Skilton

Layout: Susan De Vries

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applicants, often echoing the concerns raised by the Society and other community representatives. At press time both await further scrutiny by the BSA, and the Greenwich Village Society will be there to continue to make the case against this type of out-of-scale development. 328 Spring Street, which would cantilever slightly over the landmarked 1817 James Brown House (popularly known as the "Ear Inn"), would, if approved by the BSA, also require Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) approval.

The Society also came out strongly against a proposal to demolish the one-story building at 18-20 Greenwich Avenue (at West 10th Street), directly overlooking the Jefferson Market Library Garden and in the heart of the Greenwich Village Historic District, and replace it with a six-story structure. Aside from the inappropriateness of a sheer six-story building abutting the beautiful three-story historic houses of Patchin and Milligan Places and West 10th Street, the design was poorly detailed with a jarring, irregular window pattern, and bore little or no resemblance to anything in the historic district, much less its immediate surroundings. As this development would be located at an extremely prominent site in the historic district, it must be held to the highest standards of design and contextual appropriateness. LPC shelved the proposal, pending revisions by the applicant, and we will be vigilant in monitoring for the possibility of its return.

This winter the Society also weighed in with some very serious concerns about the proposed Cooper Union multi-building

development on Cooper Square. While we appreciate Cooper Union's willingness to reach out to the Society in the early stages of the proposal for feedback, the plan in its current configuration, with three new buildings and a host of street, sidewalk, and public space re-configurations, would impact heavily on the surrounding low-rise neighborhood. We would like Cooper Union to rethink the proposal, and at press time they were considering some revisions.

The Society is taking a leading role this year in a new Community Board #2 effort to formulate a "preservation agenda" for the Village, to pursue with the LPC and other city agencies. In this 'Landmarks Task Force,' the Society has been a staunch advocate for landmarking Gansevoort Market, which we believe to be farthest along on the road to historic district designation. We also want to ensure that the rest of the Far West Village, along with the South Village and undesignated areas of the 14th Street and Broadway corridors, are examined and presented to the Commission as candidates for landmarking. Similarly, the Society has taken an active role in efforts by Community Board #2 to formulate ways to improve conditions in Washington Square Park. There have been discussions about forming a Conservancy to help fund the upkeep of the Park, as well as to pursue capital funding to renovate the Park. There is agreement that Washington Square Park, the centerpiece of the Village, has not gotten the support it needs, and the Society would like to see it restored to its historic splendor.



GVSHP
GREENWICH VILLAGE SOCIETY
FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION

232 East 11th Street New York, NY 10003

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