



the ANTHEMION, newsletter of the

Winter 2011

GREENWICH VILLAGE SOCIETY FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION

South Village Landmarking Still in Limbo

Despite new threats, promised follow up from City yet to materialize

In early 2008, when the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) met with GVSHP and other South Village leaders to present draft plans for the first phase of our proposed South Village Historic District, we were told in no uncertain terms that action on the first phase would soon be followed by consideration of the remainder of the proposed district. Again in October 2009, when the LPC held its public hearing on the first phase of the proposed South Village Historic District, the LPC Chair repeated his pledge that consideration of the remainder of the district would soon follow.

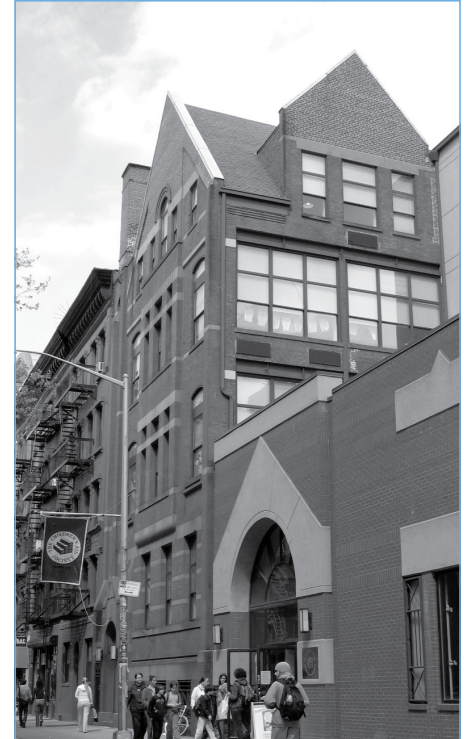
Two years later, the LPC has yet to consider the remainder of the district. Instead, they say they are looking at potential designations in all five boroughs, and cannot make a commitment regarding the South Village. Meanwhile, however, the LPC has calendared or designated districts as large as or larger than the entire South Village across the city, showing they are not only capable of taking such action but are doing so in many places.

In the meantime, however, the South Village has lost numerous historically significant

buildings, and more are threatened. In just the past few years, the Provincetown Playhouse and Apartments, the Circle in the Square Theater, the Sullivan Street Playhouse, the Tunnel Garage, and the 1861 rowhouse at 178 Bleecker Street were all lost due to inaction by the LPC.

This past fall, the Children's Aid Society (CAS), which has been located on Sullivan Street for more than 100 years, announced they will sell their buildings and leave the neighborhood. Their properties include a 130-year old building designed by noted Central Park architect Calvert Vaux which could easily be lost without landmark designation (the LPC has actually landmarked several other similar Vaux-designed CAS buildings across the city, but has refused to do so here). Perhaps even more disturbingly, the parcel of CAS properties could easily be replaced by a large condo or dormitory tower.

GVSHP reached out to the LPC to urge them to follow through on their promise to consider the remainder of the South Village in light of this latest threat; the agency declined to commit. Earlier in the year GVSHP and the leaders of several local community groups had also written to the LPC regarding the need for follow up on the remainder of the South Village; the LPC refused to act then as well.



The Calvert Vaux-designed Children's Aid Society Building is one of many in the South Village threatened if the City does not act on swiftly on the remainder of our proposed South Village Historic District.

GVSHP is reaching out to elected officials, community leaders, and preservationists to increase the pressure on the LPC to keep its word and protect the remainder of the South Village. See gvshp.org/sv.

More inside ▶

NYU Expansion Plan Faces Stiff Resistance

Proposal for Village's tallest tower is dropped, but rest of plan nears start of public review

As NYU's massive proposed 20-year expansion plan moves closer to the public review and approval process, opposition has mounted. GVSHP helped found a coalition of more than thirty neighborhood groups to spearhead the response to the plan. NYU faculty, staff, and student groups have come out against the plan. And even renowned architect I.M. Pei has voiced opposition to a key element of the plan.

This fall, NYU began the first official phase of the public review and approval process for its plan when it submitted an application to the Landmarks Preservation Commission for approval of a 400 ft. tall tower—the tallest ever erected in the Village—on open space on Bleeker Street within the Silver Towers complex, which GVSHP got landmarked in 2008. GVSHP led the opposition, sponsoring a well-attended rally on the site, helping to turn out hundreds of people in opposition at a community board public hearing, and urging local elected officials to oppose the plan. I.M. Pei, who designed the landmarked complex in the 1960's, then also came out in opposition to the landmarks application. A few days later, NYU withdrew the plan.

But the overall plan remains, and NYU has replaced the proposed 400 ft. tall tower on the landmarked site with an equally large but squatter one on the site of a supermarket a few yards to the west. Additionally, NYU is seeking to change the zoning on nine blocks south and east of Washington Square Park from residential to commercial, lift long-standing neighborhood open space protections, eliminate urban renewal deed restrictions, and acquire seven pieces of

city-owned land which are currently used for park and playground space. All of this would be done to allow NYU to add over 2 million sq. ft. of space in this area—the equivalent of the Empire State Building.

In a positive development, however, following a request by GVSHP and allied community groups, in December local elected officials and the Community Board came out against NYU's plan to acquire the publicly-owned land for development. This is critical because NYU cannot take control of this property without the approval of the City Council.

GVSHP and allied community groups have also urged the Community Board and elected officials to oppose the many other troubling aspects of NYU's plan about which they have not yet taken positions. Once NYU files its application (expected some time this year), a series of public hearings will take place culminating in votes by the Community Board and elected officials on whether or not to approve these plans. Among elected officials, Councilmember Margaret Chin and Council Speaker Christine Quinn will be key (because nearly all of the approvals NYU is seeking require the approval of the City Council),

along with Borough President Stringer, who also gets to vote on the plan, and appoints a member of the City Planning Commission which must also approve NYU's proposed changes.

GVSHP continues to educate the public about the NYU expansion plan and how the review and approval process will work. We held a very well-attended Town Hall meeting/teach-in about the plan in December. GVSHP and other community and preservation groups also held an informational picket outside NYU's new Law School Building which replaced the Provincetown Playhouse and Apartments. We highlighted that the university demolished 94% of the original building, which was eligible for the State and National Register of Historic Places, and failed to keep commitments to preserve the small remaining theater's walls and historic furnishings. GVSHP has also called upon elected officials who supported the NYU project to secure a commitment from the university that the theater would remain a theater in perpetuity, and that NYU would not eventually build even higher on the Law School site than they already have. So far, there has been no such agreement.

See gvshp.org/nyu.



(l.) GVSHP Executive Director Andrew Berman addresses the crowd and media regarding NYU's massive expansion plan; (r.) demonstrators in front of the partially demolished Provincetown Playhouse.

Spotlight on: The West Village

Far West Village Rezoning Passes! This fall the City enacted a zoning change in the Far West Village which GVSHP and community groups fought for since 2008. The outdated zoning district encouraged oversized commercial development, whereas the new zoning for the first time imposes height limits and eliminates zoning bonuses for commercial (i.e. hotel) or community facility (i.e. dorm) development. The zoning change faced strong initial resistance, but after GVSHP and community groups staged letter-writing campaigns and Town Hall meetings, the community board, elected officials, and eventually the City Planning Commission supported the change.

GVSHP led the effort to get the change enacted as quickly as possible, ahead of two planned projects—a hotel at Perry and Washington Streets and a mixed-use development at Charles and Washington Streets. Though City Planning dragged its feet several times, we did get the new zoning enacted in time, and neither project can move forward as planned under the new zoning. GVSHP also identified a dozen potential development sites in the rezoning area, which will now be governed by this stricter and more community-friendly zoning. See gvshp.org/fwvrz.

Westbeth and Far West Village

Landmarking: In response to the GVSHP-led *Campaign to Save the Far West Village*, in 2004 the City promised to landmark eight sites in the area, extend the Greenwich Village Historic District, and create the Weehawken Street Historic District. The districts were designated in 2006, and four of the eight sites were later landmarked, but Westbeth, two 1840's houses on West 11th Street, and Charles Lane have still not been. The City finally held a hearing



(l.) Map of the area of the Far West Village now rezoned, along with potential development sites to be governed by stricter zoning rules, as identified by GVSHP; (r.) Rendering of the development planned for the Whitehall Storage site.

on landmarking Westbeth in early 2009, after GVSHP got the complex listed on the State and National Register of Historic Places and published an in-depth history of it, which the City used for its proposal. But in spite of statements by the City that designation would take place in 2010, as we go to press no vote has yet taken place. GVSHP continues to push for all promised Far West Village landmark designations.

GVSHP also continued its celebration of the history of Westbeth by joining their Artists Residents Council to hold a first-ever artists loft tour of the complex this fall, opening 22 private spaces and their artworks, as well as several communal spaces, to the public. Tours of the history of the vast complex, which began as the home of the Bell Telephone Labs and was later converted to artists housing by Richard Meier, were also conducted. Hundreds participated as we marked Westbeth's 40th and GVSHP's 30th anniversary. See gvshp.org/wb.

Whitehall Storage Development, 303 West 10th/160 Charles Street: Work has begun on a 15-story residential development on this site, which will maintain the exterior of the existing 4-story

warehouse and add 11 setback stories above. This is one of the only remaining large-scale development sites in the Far West Village. Over GVSHP's protests, the site was "carved out" of the Far West Village rezoning we pushed for, enacted by the City Planning Commission and City Council in 2005 (imposing stricter height limits for development for most of the area), and carved out of the landmark protections we fought for which were ultimately extended to much of the area. Development is expected to be completed in late 2012.

St. Vincent's Update: As we go to press, the fate of the hospital and its buildings remain in limbo. Bankruptcy court proceedings to determine the new owner of the site are just beginning. While prior Landmarks Preservation Commission rulings on the buildings east of 7th Avenue (allowing some to be demolished and requiring some to be preserved) should still stand, the hardship ruling allowing the demolition of the O'Toole Building is no longer valid, since it was granted only to St. Vincent's. Additionally, no new construction can occur on any of these sites without a lengthy and public rezoning approval process, which has not yet occurred. GVSHP will continue to closely monitor developments here. See gvshp.org/stv.

Spotlight on: The East Village

City Refuses to Landmark 326 & 328

East 4th Street: This past summer, when GVSHP discovered plans to severely alter these two historic houses, we and the East Village Community Coalition (EVCC) immediately asked the Landmarks Preservation Commission to save the buildings through landmark designation. Though the 170 year old structures maintained rare incredible Greek Revival architectural detail, the City demurred. Digging deeper into the buildings' histories, we found they were the first and only structures erected on this site; one was built by the company responsible for the first steamship to cross the Atlantic; both were converted from merchants' homes to multi-family tenements when the neighborhood became the largest American immigrant community in the late 19th century; one was used as a synagogue significant to the history of Hasidic Judaism when the neighborhood became the largest Jewish community in the world in the early 20th century; and for nearly fifty years, both housed an anarchist utopian arts collective, as the East Village became ground zero for New York's art world. Based upon our documentation, the houses were ruled eligible for the State and National Registers of Historic Places.



In spite of incredible preserved architectural detail (l. and m. photos by Bob Estremera), the City refused to save 326 and 328 East 4th Street. Permits were issued to allow the houses' destruction as we gathered with State Senator Squadron, Assemblymember Kavanagh, and Councilmember Rosie Mendez (r.).

Sadly, none of this convinced the City. This fall, while we gathered with Councilmember Rosie Mendez, State Senator Daniel Squadron, Assemblymember Brian Kavanagh and other preservation groups for one final plea to save the buildings, the City issued permits to the developer allowing their destruction. GVSHP is working with other preservation groups to try to save the buildings' incredible architectural details and vast archives of historic material. See gvshp.org/326.

3rd/4th Avenue Corridor Rezoning

Passes: GVSHP worked for five years with Councilmember Mendez, Community Board 3, and neighbors to achieve a rezoning of the 3rd and 4th Avenue corridors. This area had some of the worst zoning anywhere in the Village, encouraging monstrous developments like NYU's 26-story mega-dorm at 120 East 12th Street.

After the City refused to consider the rezoning for several years, they finally relented, and it was enacted in late 2010. Though the rezoning to which the City agreed did not go as far as we would have liked, it did for the first time ever impose height limits, eliminate zoning incentives for dorm and hotel development and for dead, useless plazas in front of buildings, and provides some incentives for affordable housing retention

and creation. Borough President Stringer and State Senator Duane also supported the rezoning. See gvshp.org/3&4.

Seeking Landmark Protections for the East Village: In recent months the City has landmarked the Eleventh Street Methodist Episcopal Church, but they have also declined to landmark a half dozen historic sites throughout the neighborhood we brought to their attention, several of which are in immediate danger. Thus the East Village, so rich in cultural and architectural history, is still woefully underrepresented by landmark designations, putting its character in jeopardy.

GVSHP is seeking to change that. For the last four years, we have researched and documented the history of every building in the neighborhood. This information will be made available to the public for the first time, and will be used as the basis for proposals for landmark and historic district designations we will be formulating with other stakeholders in the coming months. For a sneak peak at the results of the research, view the video at gvshp.org/evlv, or go to gvshp.org/evl to find out more.

Mezritch Synagogue Update: Late last year GVSHP got the East Village's last operating tenement synagogue at 415 East 6th Street ruled eligible for the State and National Registers of Historic Places, offering possible loans and grants for its preservation. We also held a well-attended panel discussion on the building's history and significance. Recently the synagogue's leader has discussed building condos on top of the building, rather than tearing it down as previously proposed, but no details have been provided and no plans filed. GVSHP and EVCC continue to closely monitor the situation, work with congregants and Jewish groups who want to see the building preserved, and push for landmark designation. See gvshp.org/mez.

WHAT'S GOING ON AT GVSHP?

GVSHP celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2010, with many first-time events and the launch of several new programs.

In September GVSHP staged its **Snapshots in Storefronts** exhibit, showcasing in storefronts throughout the neighborhood more than a dozen images from our archives of historic photos of the Village, East Village, and NoHo. Images ranging from early elevated trains cutting through the neighborhood in the late 19th century to Washington Square Park in the 1950's to urban renewal developments in the 1960's, as well as historic photos of some of our neighborhood's most beloved landmarks, were posted in public for all to see for the first time. With the cooperation of many small, independent businesses, we were able to not only give the public a new layer of appreciation of our neighborhoods' history, but a greater familiarity with the resources available through the GVSHP archives. To find out more, see gvshp.org/arch.

Also in September, GVSHP was honored to host a **30th anniversary celebration and fundraiser with writer Malcolm Gladwell**. New friends and old came to hear Mr. Gladwell's sparkling wit and insightful observations in one of the most spectacular penthouse apartments in Greenwich Village. The event raised money for GVSHP's educational, advocacy, and research work. Special thanks go to our hosts for the evening, Willard and Virginia Taylor.

Also in honor of GVSHP's 30th anniversary, **Councilmember Rosie Mendez issued a City Council proclamation declaring December 2nd "Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation" day in New York City**. We were deeply honored to receive this tribute from



Malcolm Gladwell with event co-chairs Cynthia Penney (l.) and Kate Bostock Shefferman.

Councilmember Mendez, who cited our educational work with both children and adults, our success in securing landmark and zoning protections for our neighborhoods, and our efforts to tap the public into the landmarking and land use public approval processes which so profoundly affect the character of our neighborhoods. Councilmember Mendez said GVSHP's work "makes our communities and New York City as a whole a more livable, culturally rich, and humane

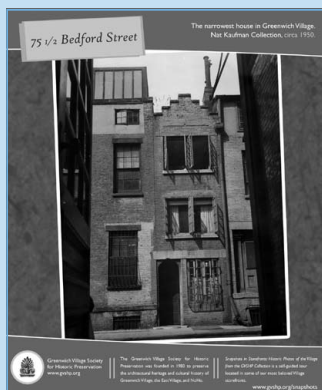
place." Thank you to Councilmember Mendez, who has long been a friend not only of GVSHP, but of preservation and thoughtful planning as well!

In early 2011, GVSHP relaunched its **landmarks application webpage**, with a new, more accessible format and a "keep me informed" feature. Since its initial launch in 2010, the website has had more than 15,000 visits. The first of its kind in New York City, it provides all relevant materials and information about every public hearing application for changes to

landmarked properties in the Village, East Village, NoHo, and the Meatpacking District. These range from new doorways or stoops to large rooftop additions, demolition of existing buildings, and new construction. Currently the only way to get this information

is to attend the twice-monthly community board hearings or go to the Landmarks Preservation Commission near City Hall during certain hours. GVSHP now not only provides all the information on-line in advance of the hearings, but lets you know how you can send or personally give testimony to the Community Board or Landmarks Preservation Commission before they vote. We also post information about all decisions made on each application, and allow you to sign up to be informed by e-mail of any decisions or changes in the application's status. See gvshp.org/lpc.

Finally, 2011 marks the **20th anniversary of our Children's Education Program, History and Historic Preservation**. The first such program in New York City to teach children how history can be found—and preserved—in their surroundings, *History and Historic Preservation* uses our neighborhoods as a living classroom, and now serves up to 1,500 young people a year from all five boroughs, including many at-risk students from Lower East Side schools who receive the program for free. The coming year will see further expansion of the program to cover new curricula and provide new materials to engage students and teachers. See gvshp.org/kidsed.



Snapshots in Storefronts image, from the GVSHP archives.

23 Cornelia Street

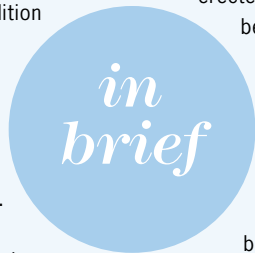
GVSHP has been working with neighbors to stop allegedly illegal work and try to preserve the character of one of the Village's most idiosyncratic surviving stables. A new owner began work as the area was being considered for landmark designation (part of our proposed South Village Historic District), eliminating charming architectural features from the façade before the City took action. After designation, they proposed a large, setback rooftop addition which GVSHP opposed; unfortunately, the City approved a scaled-back version. Several stop-work orders have been issued for the site in response to building code violations, but neighbors report dangerous work continues. GVSHP has called upon City agencies to inspect the site and take decisive action against all violations.



The former stable at 23 Cornelia Street, before work commenced and the iconic horse hooves around the entrance were removed.

837 Washington Street

GVSHP opposed a proposal for a 6 ½ story addition to this 1 ½ story historic meatpacking building in the Gansevoort Market Historic District. We believed that the addition would overwhelm the modest original structure and would set a terrible precedent allowing similar oversized additions to other low-rise structures in the landmarked Meatpacking District. At a hearing in November the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) seemed to agree, urging the applicant to reduce the size of the proposed addition, but no final decision has yet been made.



47 West 8th Street

GVSHP adamantly opposed an application to the LPC to legalize a two-story fake stone, fake ivy, pseudo-Mediterranean storefront added to this building without permits. Not only had the applicant apparently knowingly and flagrantly violated the law, but the addition was absurdly out-of-character for the Greenwich Village Historic District. When the LPC indicated they would accept the new storefront with minor changes, GVSHP strongly objected, reminding the Commission that this would not only reward illegal work but make permanent a wholly inappropriate incursion into the historic district. No final decision has yet been made.

43 MacDougal Street

This landmarked 1846 house unfortunately remains in a dilapidated state and in danger of further deterioration. GVSHP and neighbors have been pushing for years to get the owner or City to make repairs. After significant progress in 2008 and 2009, with basic repairs made to the roof and the City agreeing to our request to

pursue legal action against the owner to force repairs, further work and progress on the legal case have halted. Signs of deterioration have appeared on the façade, and a sidewalk shed erected around the building by the City has become a shelter for the homeless.

While the City has been in contact with the owners about financing repairs, the current situation is unacceptable. We are calling upon the City to finally make repairs to the building and bill the owner, before the building suffers even more damage and neighbors (including a school) suffer more from the vermin, mold, and garbage emanating from the building. See gvshp.org/43macd.

Trump SoHo and Hudson Square Rezoning

In 2007 the City ruled that the Trump SoHo was legal, in spite of the contention by GVSHP and many others that it violated zoning rules. At the time, they promised that the City and the City Council would consider zoning changes for Hudson Square to prevent similar future development, as well as to close the supposed “loophole” in the zoning laws which allowed a ‘condo-hotel’ to be built (GVSHP contended there was no loophole, and the City should not have allowed Trump’s construction). Four years later, however, no changes have taken place—the “loophole” remains untouched, and the only indication of change to the Hudson Square zoning are reports that Trinity Realty, the largest landlord in the area, may seek a zoning change. No details of their proposal have been made public, however, and a major developer’s proposed rezoning seems unlikely to address community concerns about overdevelopment. GVSHP is working with neighbors to ensure the City finally keeps its word on needed zoning changes for the area. See gvshp.org/trump.

From the Director

GVSHIP's just-finished 30th anniversary was a time for us to not only look back, but look ahead as well. GVSHIP has accomplished so many firsts—the first downzoning in Manhattan in a generation, the first expansion of the Greenwich Village Historic District, the first historic preservation program for children, the first new historic districts in Greenwich Village in more than three decades, and the first on-line resource to review all public hearing landmarks applications, just to name a few.



But our work is quite far from finished. NYU is about to seek public approvals for the largest set of developments in and around the Village since Robert Moses' day. The fate of the former St. Vincent's Hospital remains unresolved. The City is hedging on promised follow through on the remaining two-thirds of our proposed South Village Historic District and a rezoning of Hudson Square. Developers continue to eye every possible square foot of developable land in the Far West Village and Meatpacking District. And the East Village, while better protected by recent rezonings, is still woefully lacking in landmark protections, leaving much of its historic character in danger of being eroded away.

Addressing these issues, among many others, must be our goal for 2011. On a personal note, as I enter my tenth year as GVSHIP's Executive Director, I continue to be amazed by what a small but dedicated staff, a talented and tenacious board, and a whole lot of feisty members can accomplish! As always, I'm honored to be a part of it.

Acknowledgements

GVSHIP gratefully acknowledges the following for grants supporting our work: The Kaplen Foundation; the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs; the New York State Council on the Arts, and the Norcross Wildlife Foundation.

We also wish to acknowledge the generous support of Councilmember Rosie Mendez, City Council Speaker Christine Quinn, and the Manhattan Delegation of the New York City Council through the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs.

GVSHIP Bulletin Board

Save The Date: Sunday, May 1 is GVSHIP's 13th Annual Benefit House Tour. Would you like to offer your home for this or future tours? Would you like to volunteer, helping to make this annual fundraiser possible and gaining free admission to the tour? See gvshp.org/benefit or contact tour@gvshp.org.

Host a 'friendraiser' for GVSHIP! Invite friends and neighbors to a casual event in your home to hear from the Society about the work we do, and to answer questions and listen to concerns. See gvshp.org/fr or contact gvshp@gvshp.org

Look for exciting programs from GVSHIP in 2011 marking the 100th anniversary of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire and the 50th anniversary of Jane Jacobs' *Death and Life of Great American Cities*, among many others. You can also access photos, video, audio, or transcripts of programs you missed—see gvshp.org/events for both.

Planned Giving: Make a Legacy Gift to GVSHIP. By investing in GVSHIP's future, you ensure that our education and preservation work will thrive for decades to come. Give through your will, a gift of stock, or retirement funds. We welcome the opportunity to work with you and your advisors to develop a planned gift best suited to your needs. Contact 212/475-9585 x39.

Board of Trustees

<i>President</i> Arbie Thalacker	<i>Vice Presidents</i> Arthur Levin Linda Yowell Leslie Mason	<i>Secretary/Treasurer</i> Katherine Schoonover
Mary Ann Arisman John Bacon Penelope Bareau Kate Bostock Shefferman Elizabeth Ely	Cassie Glover Ruth McCoy Florent Morellet Vals Osborne Andrew Paul Cynthia Penney	Robert Rogers Jonathan Russo Judith Stonehill Fred Wistow F. Anthony Zunino, III

Staff

<i>Executive Director</i> Andrew Berman	<i>Director of Preservation and Research</i> Elizabeth Finkelstein	<i>Program and Administrative Associate</i> Dana Schulz
<i>Senior Director of Operations</i> Sheryl Woodruff	<i>Director of Administration</i> Drew Durniak	

Support Preservation: Join GVSHP

Your support makes GVSHP a more effective preservation leader. Contribute \$500 or more, and receive an invitation to a special thank you event at a unique Village location.

Yes! I support the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation and its preservation work.

- \$5,000 Founder
- \$2,500 Benefactor
- \$1,000 Patron
- \$500 Sponsor
- \$250 Sustainer
- \$100 Contributor
- \$75 Family/Dual
- \$50 Individual
- Other \$
- \$25 Gift Membership:
Special offer for members!
Please put recipient's name at right.
- I am already a member
and want to
contribute \$
- Please send information about
how I may include GVSHP in my will
or estate planning.

For credit cards go to: www.gvshp.org/membership

GREENWICH VILLAGE SOCIETY FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION

232 East 11th Street, New York, NY 10003

(212) 475-9585

www.gvshp.org

Name

Street

City State ZIP

Phone

Email

Member Name

(FOR GIFT MEMBERSHIPS ONLY.)

GVSHP is a 501(c)(3) non profit. All donations are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law.

Return this form with your check to: Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation, 232 East 11th Street, New York, NY 10003.

NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE

PAID

NEW YORK, NY
PERMIT NO. 3509