



Mid-Manhattan Branch

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February 14, 2020

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Hon. Sarah Carroll, Chair
NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission
One Centre Street, 9th Floor
New York, NY 10007

Hon. Bill de Blasio, Mayor
City of New York
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Hon. Corey Johnson, Speaker and Councilmember, 3rd District
224 West 30th St, Suite 1206
New York, NY 10001

RE: Support for landmark designation of 70 Fifth Avenue, former headquarters of the NAACP and The Crisis Magazine

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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- Hon. J. Mabelle Sweeting
- Jean Dixon West
- Sylvia White
- Rev. Reginald Williams

Dear Chair Carroll, Mayor de Blasio, and Speaker Johnson,

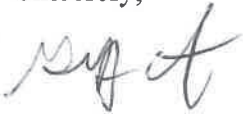
As the 1st Vice President of the New York State NAACP and the President of the NAACP Mid-Manhattan Branch, I am writing to express my strong support for the effort by Village Preservation to secure landmark status for 70 Fifth Avenue as part of a historic district designation for the area. This 1912 Beaux Arts style office building is significant as the former headquarters of the NAACP and The Crisis magazine. These organizations were based here from 1914 until the mid-1920s, a critical, seminal period in their history when their agendas were highly controversial and faced widespread opposition. While here, the NAACP undertook groundbreaking, successful campaigns which affected the lives of millions and altered the course of history in our country.

From its 70 Fifth Avenue headquarters, the NAACP opposed President Wilson's imposition of segregation upon the federal workforce, protested the demeaning portrayals of African Americans and the glorification of the Ku Klux Klan in the film The Birth of a Nation, and called for federal anti-lynching legislation to stem the rising tide of race-based violence in the country. The organization worked to propose new legislation prohibiting race-based discrimination in housing and employment, and demanded fair and equal treatment for black soldiers in World War I, securing the right of African Americans to become commissioned officers and to join the American Bar Association. The NAACP successfully advocated for Supreme Court rulings striking down "grandfather" clauses that disenfranchised black voters and "white only" primaries which prevented black candidates from running for office. Documentation indicates that it was here the organization began its iconic campaign of hanging a flag printed with the words "A MAN WAS LYNCHED YESTERDAY" outside its office window to call attention to these acts of racist terror.

At the same time, 70 Fifth Avenue housed The Crisis Magazine, the oldest black magazine in the world which became a vital voice in the Civil Rights movement and showcased noteworthy writing and art for over a century. W.E.B. DuBois and Augustus Granville Dill's publishing house, which printed The Brownies' Book, the very first magazine published for African American children, operated out of 70 Fifth Avenue as well. The Brownie's Book, along with The Crisis, featured the writings of now-revered authors including Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, and Countee Cullen, among many others. Several of these authors' works were published for the first time in the pages of these publications.

Without a doubt, the rich history of the NAACP and The Crisis is inextricably linked to this area, which throughout the mid-to-late 20th century fostered the growth of many civil rights and social justice organizations, notable among them the National LGBTQ Task Force and the New York Woman's Suffrage League. I therefore strongly urge you to move ahead with the proposed historic district including 70 Fifth Avenue and its surroundings.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Geoffrey E. Eaton', written in a cursive style.

Geoffrey E. Eaton
President
NAACP Mid-Manhattan Branch
500 7th Avenue, 8th Floor
New York, NY 10018



1325 Massachusetts Ave. NW
Suite 600
Washington, DC 20005
P: 202.393.5177
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February 18, 2020

Hon. Sarah Carroll, Chair
NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission
One Centre Street, 9th Floor
New York, NY 10007

Hon. Bill de Blasio, Mayor
City of New York
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Hon. Corey Johnson, Speaker and Councilmember, 3rd District
224 West 30th St, Suite 1206
New York, NY 10001

RE: Support for landmark designation of 80 Fifth Avenue, former headquarters of the National LGBTQ Task Force

Dear Chair Carroll, Mayor de Blasio, and Speaker Johnson,

As the Executive Director of the National LGBTQ Task Force, I am writing to express my strong support for the effort by Village Preservation to secure landmark status for 80 Fifth Avenue as part of a historic district designation for the area. This 1908 Renaissance Revival style office building served as the original headquarters of the National LGBTQ Task Force, then known as the National Gay Task Force. As the first national LGBTQ rights organization in the United States, the Task Force accomplished a number of groundbreaking changes in the dozen or so years it was located here, initiating battles for civil rights that are still being fought today.

The National Gay Task Force was founded by Dr. Howard Brown, Martin Duberman, Barbara Gittings, Ron Gold, Frank Kameny, Natalie Rockhill, and Bruce Voeller in 1973. Among its early accomplishments, the Task Force helped get the federal government to drop its ban on employing gay people, and pushed the American Psychiatric Association to remove homosexuality from its Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. It also advocated for the

ultimately successful ruling by the U.S. Civil Service Commission eliminating the longtime ban upon gay people serving in federal government, ending decades of witch hunts against government workers suspected of being gay. In 1977, the Task Force arranged the first meeting between the White House and a gay advocacy group.

Also, during its time at 80 Fifth Avenue, in the late 1970s the Task Force staff conducted the first national survey of corporate hiring policies (called Project Open Employment) to determine whether U.S. employers explicitly barred discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. This was followed by another survey of municipal police departments, laying the groundwork for ongoing campaigns to secure protections by government and private employers against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation (and eventually gender identity as well). The Task Force was further instrumental in drafting and securing the introduction of the very first federal gay rights bill in Congress in 1975 by local Congressmembers Bella Abzug and Ed Koch, as well as several other representatives. While the bill did not pass then and still has not passed the entire Congress, it has been consistently reintroduced in various forms – most recently as the Equality Act - in the forty-five years since, gaining increasing support. It has become the basis for non-discrimination laws passed by 22 states and the District of Columbia, as well as hundreds of cities, counties, and localities throughout the United States. While headquartered here the Task Force also secured the first federal funding for AIDS education, approval of the first HIV test, and a change of the name “Gay Related Immune Deficiency Syndrome” to “Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome.”

The National LGBTQ Task Force remains a social justice advocacy non-profit organizing the grassroots power of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer community and advancing a progressive vision of liberation. Without a doubt, the history of the organization is inextricably linked to this area, which throughout the mid-to-late 20th century fostered the growth of many civil rights and social justice organizations, notable among them the NAACP and the New York Woman’s Suffrage League. I therefore strongly urge you to move ahead with the proposed historic district including 80 Fifth Avenue and its surroundings.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rea Carey', with a stylized, cursive flourish at the end.

Rea Carey
Executive Director

MEGAN FOX KELLY

ART ADVISORY

March 20, 2020

Hon. Sarah Carroll, Chair
NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission
One Centre Street, 9th Floor
New York, NY 10007

Hon. Bill de Blasio, Mayor
City of New York
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Hon. Carlina Rivera, City Councilmember, 2nd District
254 East 4th Street
New York, NY 10009

RE: Support for landmark designation of 30 East 14th Street, former home of Robert De Niro, Sr. and Virginia Admiral, and surrounding area south of Union Square

Dear Chair Carroll, Mayor de Blasio, and Councilmember Rivera,

As the Advisor to the Estate of Robert De Niro, Sr., I am writing to express my strong support for the effort by Village Preservation to secure landmark status for 30 East 14th Street as part of a historic district for the area south of Union Square. From 1941 until about 1943, No. 30 was the home of the figurative expressionist painter Robert De Niro, Sr. and artist Virginia Admiral (and perhaps for a short time their infant child, who would become the great movie actor Robert De Niro, Jr.). De Niro and Admiral were two among an almost-unrivaled list of artists who called 30 East 14th Street home in the 20th century. The individuals who lived and worked in this building were part of a trailblazing community who drew the center of the American art world, and ultimately the global art world, below 14th Street.

Virginia Admiral moved into the loft at 30 East 14th Street around 1940, originally living here with her friends Janet Thurman and Marjorie McKee. Admiral was visited often by poet Robert Duncan and writer Anaïs Nin, both of whom documented her apartment in their respective journals. Around this time, Admiral received a scholarship to the Hans Hofmann School of Fine Arts, a Greenwich Village-based institution which played a pivotal role in the development of abstract expressionism. Here she met the emerging painter Robert De Niro. He was considered one of Hofmann's most promising students, and Hofmann's teachings would have an enduring influence on the development of De Niro's style for the rest of his career.

Admiral and De Niro began sharing the loft on 14th Street in 1941, were married by January of 1942, and gave birth to Robert De Niro Jr. on August 17, 1943. This was a formative period for both artists, when they developed friendships with now-esteemed literary and artistic figures including writer Henry Miller and playwright Tennessee Williams, along with Duncan and Nin. Within a few years, both Admiral and De Niro had exhibited at Peggy Guggenheim's "Art of This Century" gallery,

where many great artists of the era launched their careers. In 1946, the twenty-four-year-old De Niro received an even more prestigious honor when Guggenheim awarded him his first solo show. By the mid-1950s, De Niro was deeply involved in the New York art scene, and his work was included in venerable group exhibitions including the Whitney Annual, the Stable Annual, and the Jewish Museum. Today, The Estate of Robert De Niro, Sr. honors the life and work of this distinguished artist and art professor through ongoing research and exhibits.

Admiral also continues to be known for her art, which was heavily influenced by her activism - particularly in the anti-war movement - and is part of the permanent collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Museum of Modern Art in New York, and the Peggy Guggenheim Collection in Venice.

Other notable artist residents of 30 East 14th Street include "Fourteenth Street School" painter and Art Students League teacher Kenneth Hayes Miller, who was known for his depictions of the sales girls and shoppers that filled the 14th Street and Union Square neighborhood. By 1940, social realist painter Yasuo Kuniyoshi also had a studio at 30 East 14th Street, and in 1945 modernist Howard Daum moved into Studio K on the second floor, living and working here for the rest of his life and frequently painting from the rooftop. While Daum was here, painter Carl Ashby and painter, activist, and poet Helen DeMott had studios in the building. Painter, printmaker, and cartoonist Charles Keller had a studio at 30 East 14th Street from 1945 to 1953, formerly occupied by sculptor Arnold Blanch, which he shared with muralist and printmaker Harry Sternberg, who stayed here from 1945 to 1967. Realist and surrealist painter Andrée Ruellan and representational painter Edwin Dickinson had studios here as well.

Without a doubt, Robert De Niro, Sr. and Virginia Admiral's very important place in American art history is inextricably linked to the area south of Union Square, and particularly to the artists' haven at 30 East 14th Street. I therefore strongly urge you to move ahead with the proposed historic district including 30 East 14th Street and its surroundings.

Sincerely,

Megan Fox Kelly Art Advisory

Advisor to the Estate of Robert De Niro, Sr.



Hon. Sarah Carroll, Chair
NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission
One Centre Street, 9th Floor
New York, NY 10007

Hon. Bill de Blasio, Mayor
City of New York
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Hon. Carlina Rivera, City Councilmember, 2nd District
254 East 4th Street
New York, NY 10009

Date 15 January 2020

Betrefte Support for landmark designation of 88 East 10th Street and surrounding area south of Union Square

Consulate General of the
Kingdom of the Netherlands

666 Third Avenue, 18th floor
New York, NY 10017
www.nederlandwereldwijd.nl/en

Contact

Joost Taverne
Cultural Attache
Joost.taverne@mlnbnza.nl

Sophie van Doornmalen
Senior Cultural Officer,
Shared Cultural Heritage and
Dutch Old Masters
T +1 646 557 2209
E sophie-van.doornmalen@mlnbnza.nl

Dear Chair Carroll, Mayor de Blasio, and Councilmember Rivera,

I am writing to express my strong support for the effort by Village Preservation to secure landmark status for 88 East 10th Street and its surroundings as part of a historic district designation for the area. From 1952 to 1959, 88 East 10th Street was the home and studio of Dutch-American painter Willem de Kooning, one of the most significant abstract expressionists who redefined the international art world. While de Kooning's history here warrants designation on its own, the blocks around his former home boast an even deeper Dutch-American history, as the land was long owned by the Brevoorts and Stuyvesants. Both families played a major role in the early development of New York City, including the area south of Union Square.

De Kooning lived and worked at 88 East 10th Street during some of his most important years as an artist. He and his contemporaries formed an artists' enclave on East 10th Street, which drew a larger movement of artists from Greenwich Village to the more affordable East Village. 88 East 10th Street was the first place where de Kooning combined his working studio with his residence – a trend for artists in the mid-20th century which transformed nearby neighborhoods like SoHo and NoHo, of which this was an early example.

In his studio at East 10th street, de Kooning completed many of his major works, such as the *Women* series (1950-53). *Women I* was bought by The Museum of Modern Art, and *Women II* by John D. Rockefeller III and Blanchette Rockefeller. One of De Kooning's most famous abstract urban landscapes, *Backyard on 10th Street* (1956), depicts the backyard of 88 East 10th Street.

After World War II, New York supplanted Paris as the center of the art world, and following the death of Jackson Pollock in 1956, de Kooning was considered the master of abstract expressionism. In the 1950s artist-run galleries began to flourish, particularly on de Kooning's block. Examples are Tanager in 1952, at 90 East 10th Street, and Camino, Brata, March, and Area Galleries. These galleries stood in contrast to the conservative uptown galleries and functioned within a collaborative spirit among the artists. They not only served the 'old guard' of



artists such as de Kooning, Jackson Pollock and Franz Kline, but also new artists coming to New York City. Though de Kooning found a new, larger studio space by 1958 or early 1959 at 831 Broadway, he continued to work in his East 10th Street studio while a renovation of the new space occurred, and rented out No. 88 until 1963.

Date
15 January 2020

Today, it is undeniable that de Kooning and the artists' enclave on East 10th Street transformed New York City and the broader art world. However, very few of the structures housing the former galleries and artists' studios central to this abstract expressionist school of the 1940s and 1950s remain from this period. 88 East 10th Street, by contrast, is nearly intact to its appearance during de Kooning's time. It is nothing short of remarkable that this most significant structure is still extant, and landmark protections would not only recognize this significance, but ensure its preservation.

The highly-significant Dutch-American history of the area goes back even further. The Stuyvesant family, descendants of Director-General of New Amsterdam Petrus Stuyvesant (1610-1672), continued to own the land of the family's original farm into the first half of the 19th century. Petrus Stuyvesant (1727-1805) was credited with the original layout of the streets of the area, which led to the urban development of this neighborhood and remains visible in the still extant Stuyvesant Street. Peter G. Stuyvesant (1777-1847) owned land sold for the development of a number of extant buildings that give the area south of Union Square its distinctive architectural and cultural character.

The Brevoort family also owned land south of Union Square. Henry Brevoort Sr. (1747-1841) was so influential that he is the reason why Broadway swerves to the northwest at 10th Street – to avoid demolishing his orchard located where Grace Church stands today. The younger Henry Brevoort Jr. (1782-1848), a patron of the arts and literature known for his close association with writers Washington Irving and Sir Walter Scott, exerted no less of an influence upon New York's development. Like his father, the younger Brevoort had designs upon shaping New York real estate, and did so extensively.

Without a doubt, Willem de Kooning's very important place in American and Dutch-American art history is inextricably linked to the area south of Union Square. The deep Dutch-American roots of the neighborhood and its development connect to some of the most important facets of New York's development. I therefore strongly urge you to move ahead with the proposed historic district including 88 East 10th Street and its surroundings.

Sincerely,

Joost Taverne
The Netherlands Cultural Attaché to the United States

Hon. Sarah Carroll, Chair
NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission
One Centre Street, 9th Floor
New York, NY 10007

Hon. Bill de Blasio, Mayor
City of New York
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Hon. Carlina Rivera, City Councilmember, 2nd District
254 East 4th Street
New York, NY 10009

RE: Support for landmark designation of sites associated with the history of Reginald Marsh

Dear Chair Carroll, Mayor de Blasio, Councilmember Rivera,

I am writing to express my strong support for the effort by Village Preservation to secure landmark status 11 East 12th Street, 11 West 12th Street, and 4 East 12th Street as part of a historic district designation for the area.

All of these sites are significant due to their association with Reginald Marsh, and a host of other urban artists who lived and worked in nearby studios and residences attached to the vibrant Union Square and Fourteenth Street neighborhood of the 1920s and 1930s. In the history of Urban development coming from the presence of artists and their documentation of neighborhood social and cultural histories, Marsh and his peers continued a vital precedent for today that drew its own past from nineteenth-century New York.

As I wrote in my 1993 book, *The 'New Woman' Revised: Painting and Gender Politics on Fourteenth Street*, Urban Realist painter Reginald Marsh (1898–1954) lived at 11 East 12th Street and 4 East 12th Street in the 1930s. Marsh was of the key figures of the 'Fourteenth Street School' of painters, an influential group of artists in the 1920s and 30s all of whom lived and worked in the area Village Preservation is seeking to landmark.

The Fourteenth Street School painters came to redefine urban realist painting, often focusing on their immediate and workaday surroundings on or near their namesake street -- sometimes called "The Poor Man's Fifth Avenue" -- a center for bargain shopping and entertainment for average and working-class New Yorkers. Building on the work of the Ashcan School painters (Marsh was taught by John Sloan at the Art Students League, along with his mentor Kenneth Hayes Miller who lived and worked on

Fourteenth Street), they combined an interest in modern urban subjects with a knowledge of Renaissance art. The working and shopping women who were become their subjects continued an attention to the body informed by their experience of drawing from the nude at the Art Students League. In addition to Marsh and Miller, the group included Isabel Bishop (and her young clerical working girl subjects from area businesses like Con Edison), and Raphael Soyer (and his milleners and Shop girls from Kleins). All the artists focused on Union Square park and its unemployed men from the Depression, even supporting one who was a regular model.

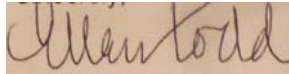
Marsh was born in Paris to expatriate artist parents who returned to the United States around 1900. In 1916, he entered Yale University, where he majored in art and drew illustrations for the Yale Record. Following graduation, he arrived in New York and soon established himself as a successful freelance illustrator, working for popular publications including the *New York Daily News*, the *New Yorker*, *Vanity Fair*, and *Esquire*. In 1921, Marsh began attending classes at the Art Students League, where he studied with other members of what would become the Fourteenth Street School, with whom he developed a lifelong relationship. After visiting Europe early in 1926, Marsh's interest in the Old Masters increased, as did his commitment to becoming a painter rather than an illustrator.

In 1928, he began working at a studio at 21 East Fourteenth Street (since demolished), where many of his fellow painters also worked. A careful though detached observer, Marsh excelled at representing crowds of New Yorkers, showing lively scenes of both the unemployed and the working class going about their daily activities. Burlesque shows, movie houses, elevated trains, Depression homeless encampments, and places of work all figured prominently in Marsh's paintings, often of scenes not far from his perch just off Union Square.

It was during the 1930s, when Marsh was on East 12th Street, that he gained his greatest prominence and his most celebrated works were produced. Marsh, who made linocuts, lithographs, drawings, engravings and etchings as well as paintings, also lived across the street at 4 East 12th Street. Marsh's etching 'Box at the Metropolitan' was printed on his press at 4 East 12th Street. In his later years Marsh would teach at the Art Students League, where a young Roy Lichtenstein, who would cite him as one of his most prominent influences, was one of his students. Marsh's murals grace the rotunda of the landmarked U.S. Customs House at 1 Bowling Green, and his work can be found in the collections of the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Smithsonian American Art Museum, the Art Institute of Chicago, and the Brooklyn Museum.

The area south of Union Square in the mid-to-late 20th century was one which attracted painters, writers, publishers and radical social organizations many of whom were challenging social and cultural American mores. Reginald Marsh's very important place in American art history is inextricably linked to the area south of Union Square. I therefore strongly urge you to move ahead with the proposed historic district for the sites associated with him and his work.

Sincerely,

A rectangular image showing a handwritten signature in brown ink on a light-colored background. The signature reads "Ellen Todd" in a cursive script.

Ellen Wiley Todd, Associate Professor Emerita
Department of History and Art History
George Mason University
Fairfax, VA. 22030-4444
etodd@gmu.edu
ellenwileytodd@gmail.com

December 6, 2019

Hon. Sarah Carroll, Chair
NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission
One Centre Street, 9th Floor
New York, NY 10007

Hon. Bill de Blasio, Mayor
City of New York
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Hon. Carlina Rivera, City Councilmember, 2nd District
254 East 4th Street
New York, NY 10009

RE: Support for landmark designation of 204 East 13th Street, former home of
NEA Jazz Master Dr. Randy Weston, and environs

Dear Chair Carroll, Mayor de Blasio, Councilmember Rivera,

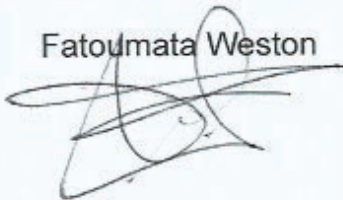
I am the widow of NEA Jazz Master Dr. Randy Weston and I am writing to express my strong support for the effort by Village Preservation to secure landmark status for 204 East 13th Street, which was his home during the 1960s, as part of a historic district designation for the area.

NEA Jazz Master Dr. Randy Weston was not only a gifted jazz pianist compared with the likes of Duke Ellington and Thelonious Monk, but he was also an innovator and visionary in his compositions exploring the connections between African and American music. His contributions to the American history of jazz music constitute a significant chapter in that history and he has profoundly influenced generations of musicians to follow.

The area south of Union Square of New York City has a number of sites that are part of the American Jazz story, as many prominent blues and jazz musicians lived and worked in this area during the mid-20th century. I therefore strongly urge you to move ahead with the proposed historic district including 204 East 13th Street and its surroundings.

Sincerely,

Fatoumata Weston

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Fatoumata Weston', written over a printed name. The signature is stylized with loops and flourishes.

Hon. Sarah Carroll, Chair
NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission
One Centre Street, 9th Floor
New York, NY 10007

Hon. Bill de Blasio, Mayor
City of New York
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Hon. Carlina Rivera, City Councilmember, 2nd District
254 East 4th Street
New York, NY 10009

RE: Support for landmark designation of sites associated with the history of Hammacher & Schlemmer

Dear Chair Carroll, Mayor de Blasio, Councilmember Rivera,

I am writing to express my strong support for the effort by Village Preservation to secure landmark status for 133 Fourth Avenue as part of a historic district designation for the area.

From 1904-1926 this 1897 building on the corner of 13th Street and 4th Avenue was home to our trailblazing hardware store, Hammacher & Schlemmer.

Hammacher & Schlemmer was the city's first hardware store, opened in 1848, and is the country's longest running catalog, first published in 1881.

The store originally opened in 1848 at 221 Bowery at a time when high-quality hardware was hard to find. Then just 12 years old, William Schlemmer would sell tools in front of his uncle's store. By 1867, he, along with newly acquired partner Alfred Hammacher (a fellow German immigrant), bought the business and renamed it Hammacher & Schlemmer. The two men turned this local shop into a national company, introducing American consumers to such items as the pop-up-toaster (1931), electric dry razor (1934), automatic steam iron (1948), microwave oven (1968), cordless telephone (1973), among many others.

In 1904, having outgrown its quaint Bowery location, Hammacher & Schlemmer moved to 133 Fourth Avenue (also known as 127-135 Fourth Avenue and 102-104 East 13th Street). Built in 1897 by Marsh, Israel & Harder, this building occupies a unique plot of land- picture a square corner lot with a little square cut out of the very corner.

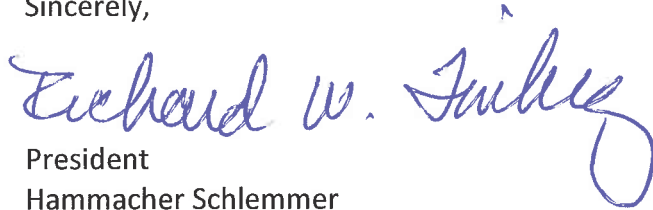
The Fourth Avenue facade is more elaborate than its 13th Street counterpart, as it was the entrance to the store. This eclectic mash-up of styles makes this building extremely unique,

not dissimilar from our hardware store that earned the motto, "*if you can't find it, try Hammacher & Schlemmer,*" for its wide array of hard-to-find products.

By 1926, our company had once again grown too large for this home and moved to 147 East 57th Street, where we are today. 133 Fourth Avenue, however, remained in the family until 1936 under the ownership of William Schlemmer's daughter Ida S. Bruch, who owned several other properties in the area. The 57th Street location is still our company's flagship store today and the catalog continues to thrive.

The area south of Union Square in the mid-to-late 20th century was one which attracted painters, writers, publishers and bookstores and us, Hammacher & Schlemmer, New York City's first hardware store. We strongly urge you to move ahead with the proposed historic district for the sites associated with us and the other notable figures of history and examples of architecture.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Richard W. Fink". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping "F" and "k".

President
Hammacher Schlemmer

April 24, 2020

Hon. Sarah Carroll, Chair
NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission
One Centre Street, 9th Floor
New York, NY 10007

Hon. Bill de Blasio, Mayor
City of New York
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Hon. Carlina Rivera, City Councilmember, 2nd District
254 East 4th Street
New York, NY 10009

RE: Support for landmark designation of 55 Fifth Avenue, former home of Columbia Records, recording studio of Billie Holiday

Dear Chair Carroll, Mayor de Blasio, and Councilmember Rivera,

As the author of *With Billie: A New Look at the Unforgettable Lady Day*, I am writing to express my strong support for the effort by Village Preservation to secure landmark status for 55 Fifth Avenue as part of a historic district designation for the area. This 1912, 18-story neo-Renaissance style office building played a pivotal role in the development of twentieth century American arts and culture as the home of the Columbia Phonograph Company, now known as Columbia Records. Columbia launched the careers of enormously important jazz and blues musicians, including the legendary vocalist Billie Holiday. Here, Holiday cut her first records and participated in the first integrated musical recording session.

Founded in 1887, Columbia was the second major company to produce records and has become the oldest surviving brand name in the recorded sound business. The renowned record-producer, civil rights activist, and Rock and Roll Hall of Fame-inductee John Hammond made his very first recordings here, and would go on to play a substantial role in launching the careers of Bob Dylan, Bruce Springsteen, Harry James, Count Basie, Big Joe Turner, Pete Seeger, Babatunde Olatunji, Aretha Franklin, Leonard Cohen, and Stevie Ray Vaughan. Perhaps even more significantly, Hammond is credited with discovering Billie Holiday singing at a Harlem speakeasy, and inviting her to the recording studios at 55 Fifth Avenue in 1933. Holiday's recordings here were her first, and marked the beginning of her long musical recording career. By the time of her death, Holiday had completed over a dozen albums.

Also upon Hammond's invitation, Holiday participated in a recording session with jazz clarinetist and bandleader Benny Goodman and swing pianist Teddy Wilson at 55 Fifth Avenue.

While black and white musicians were known to play together at clubs, this would come to be understood as the very first integrated recording session, and but one of Holiday's civil rights efforts. Not long after her Columbia recording sessions, Holiday rose to even greater prominence by introducing the song with which she is most closely associated, "Strange Fruit," at Café Society in Greenwich Village. The song, originally written as a poem by Abel Meeropol in 1937, is a searing protest of American racism, state-sanctioned violence, and systemic indifference.

Today, Billie Holiday is considered one of the preeminent jazz vocalists of all time. She sold out concerts at Carnegie Hall, starred in hit movies, and gave voice to the civil rights movement at a critical time in its development. Without a doubt, Holiday's history is inextricably linked to 55 Fifth Avenue and the neighborhood south of Union Square. The studios in this building reshaped the music market of the twentieth century, brought new genres of music into mainstream consciousness, transformed the opportunities available to black artists, and promoted the growth of some of our most beloved musicians and bands. I therefore strongly urge you to move ahead with the proposed historic district including 55 Fifth Avenue and its surroundings.

Sincerely,

Julia Blackburn
juliablackburnbooks@gmail.com

April 24, 2020

Hon. Sarah Carroll, Chair
NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission
One Centre Street, 9th Floor
New York, NY 10007

Hon. Bill de Blasio, Mayor
City of New York
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

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254 East 4th Street
New York, NY 10009

RE: Support for landmark designation of 55 Fifth Avenue, former home of Columbia Records, recording studio of Billie Holiday

Dear Chair Carroll, Mayor de Blasio, and Councilmember Rivera,

As the author of *Billie Holiday: The Musician and the Myth*, I am writing to express my strong support for the effort by Village Preservation to secure landmark status for 55 Fifth Avenue as part of a historic district designation for the area. This 1912, 18-story neo-Renaissance style office building played a pivotal role in the development of twentieth century American arts and culture as the home of the Columbia Phonograph Company, now known as Columbia Records. Columbia launched the careers of enormously important jazz and blues musicians, including the legendary vocalist Billie Holiday. Here, Holiday cut her first records and participated in the first integrated musical recording session.

Founded in 1887, Columbia was the second major company to produce records and has become the oldest surviving brand name in the recorded sound business. The renowned record-producer, civil rights activist, and Rock and Roll Hall of Fame-inductee John Hammond made his very first recordings here, and would go on to play a substantial role in launching the careers of Bob Dylan, Bruce Springsteen, Harry James, Count Basie, Big Joe Turner, Pete Seeger, Babatunde Olatunji, Aretha Franklin, Leonard Cohen, and Stevie Ray Vaughan. Perhaps even more significantly, Hammond is credited with discovering Billie Holiday singing at a Harlem speakeasy, and inviting her to the recording studios at 55 Fifth Avenue in 1933. Holiday's recordings here were her first, and marked the beginning of her long musical recording career. By the time of her death, Holiday had completed over a dozen albums.

Also upon Hammond's invitation, Holiday participated in a recording session with jazz clarinetist and bandleader Benny Goodman and swing pianist Teddy Wilson at 55 Fifth Avenue.

While black and white musicians were known to play together at clubs, this would come to be understood as the very first integrated recording session, and but one of Holiday's civil rights efforts. Not long after her Columbia recording sessions, Holiday rose to even greater prominence by introducing the song with which she is most closely associated, "Strange Fruit," at Café Society in Greenwich Village. The song, originally written as a poem by Abel Meeropol in 1937, is a searing protest of American racism, state-sanctioned violence, and systemic indifference.

Today, Billie Holiday is considered one of the preeminent jazz vocalists of all time. She sold out concerts at Carnegie Hall, starred in hit movies, and gave voice to the civil rights movement at a critical time in its development. Without a doubt, Holiday's history is inextricably linked to 55 Fifth Avenue and the neighborhood south of Union Square. The studios in this building reshaped the music market of the twentieth century, brought new genres of music into mainstream consciousness, transformed the opportunities available to black artists, and promoted the growth of some of our most beloved musicians and bands. I therefore strongly urge you to move ahead with the proposed historic district including 55 Fifth Avenue and its surroundings.

Sincerely,

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

John Szwed
Center for Jazz Studies, Prentis Hall
Columbia University
632 West 125th Street
New York, NY 10027
jfs54@columbia.edu



School of Music

College of Fine and Applied Arts
Music Building, M/C 056
1114 West Nevada Street
Urbana, Illinois 61801

May 1, 2020

Hon. Sarah Carroll, Chair
NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission
One Centre Street, 9th Floor
New York, NY 10007

Hon. Bill de Blasio, Mayor
City of New York
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Hon. Carlina Rivera, City Councilmember, 2nd
District 254 East 4th Street
New York, NY 10009

RE: Support for landmark designation of 55 Fifth Avenue, former home of Columbia Records, recording studio of Fletcher Henderson and his band

Dear Chair Carroll, Mayor de Blasio, and Councilmember Rivera,

As the author of *The Uncrowned King of Swing: Fletcher Henderson and Big Band Jazz*, I am writing to express my strong support for the effort by Village Preservation to secure landmark status for 55 Fifth Avenue as part of a historic district designation for the area. This 1912, 18-story neo-Renaissance style office building played a pivotal role in the development of twentieth century American arts and culture as the home of the Columbia Phonograph Company, now known as Columbia Records. This recording studio launched the careers of enormously important jazz and blues musicians, including Fletcher Henderson, and fostered the first integrated musical recordings. Henderson is considered along with Duke Ellington one of the most influential arrangers and bandleaders in jazz history, and one of the progenitors of what would come to be called “swing.”

Founded in 1887, Columbia Records was the second major company to produce records and has become the oldest surviving brand name in the recorded sound business. In 1923 and 1924, Henderson’s band recorded at Columbia, a prestigious opportunity that marked the group’s rising success. In fact, Henderson’s band was at the cutting edge of the music industry for a number of reasons. At a time when black bands commonly relied on performing, composing, and publishing to make a living, Henderson’s band was the first black orchestra to make recording the central focus of its work. It was also one of the first black bands to market its arrangements not as “race records,” the period’s term for music for and by African Americans, but as mainstream or “general” music. Columbia encouraged the diversity of the Henderson band’s style and

repertory, recording its blues and jazz material in addition to its Tin Pan Alley songs. These recordings were then determined to be commercially viable in a white market, a highly unprecedented decision that resulted in the band's increasing appeal across a broad audience. Significantly, Henderson recorded one of his best-known works, "New King Porter Stomp," while at 55 Fifth Avenue. Today, that recording stands among the monuments of the swing era.

It should also be noted that renowned record-producer, civil rights activist, and Rock and Roll Hall of Fame-inductee John Hammond made some of his first recordings at 55 Fifth Avenue with Henderson. In his autobiography, Hammond called Henderson "one of my earliest enthusiasms," stating that his band was "the greatest band in the country." Hammond would go on to have a major influence on the careers of Billie Holiday, Benny Goodman, Bob Dylan, Bruce Springsteen, Harry James, Count Basie, Big Joe Turner, Pete Seeger, Babatunde Olatunji, Aretha Franklin, Leonard Cohen, and Stevie Ray Vaughan. Hammond also gathered Benny Goodman, Billie Holiday, and swing pianist Teddy Wilson to record together at 55 Fifth Avenue, in what was the very first integrated musical recording session.

The history of blues, jazz, and swing is inextricably linked to 55 Fifth Avenue and to the surrounding neighborhood. The studios in this building played a pivotal role in reshaping the music market of the twentieth century, bringing new genres of music into mainstream consciousness, transforming the opportunities available to black artists, and promoting the growth of some of our most legendary musicians and bands. I therefore strongly urge you to move ahead with the proposed historic district including 55 Fifth Avenue and its surroundings.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeffrey Magee". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal line extending from the end.

Jeffrey Magee
Professor, School of Music
Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, College of Media
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
jmag@illinois.edu
217-333-3148

December 5, 2019

Hon. Sarah Carroll, Chair
NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission
One Centre Street, 9th Floor
New York, NY 10007

Hon. Bill de Blasio, Mayor
City of New York
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Hon. Carlina Rivera, City Councilmember, 2nd District
254 East 4th Street
New York, NY 10009

RE: Support for landmark designation of 80 University Place, former home and office of Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell

Dear Chair Carroll, Mayor de Blasio, Councilmember Rivera,

As the great, great niece of Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell, the first woman trained as a medical doctor in the United States, I am writing to express my strong support for the effort by Village Preservation to secure landmark status for 80 University Place as part of a historic district designation for the area. This former row house, originally No 44 University Place, served as the home and medical office at the beginning of Dr. Blackwell's groundbreaking medical career in New York City starting in 1851.

Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell's initial efforts to serve within the medical community in the United States was met with resistance and her first patients were primarily local Quaker women. Seeing a need among the women and children within the poorer communities in the Lower East Side, she set up a series of dispensaries there to service those populations. These efforts were furthered in 1857 when she established The New York Infirmary for Women and Children at the former James Roosevelt house on Bleecker Street. This was the first hospital for women, staffed by women, and run by women in the United States and patients were cared for free of charge. The hospital was responsible for innovations in hygiene critical in preventing disease and in educating the public on those benefits, such as bathing ailing patients and encouraging them to keep clean. Blackwell also launched a "Sanitary Visitor" program to visit the needy in their homes in the slums and improve hygiene.

In 1868, she along with two other female physicians, Dr. Marie Zakrzewska and Dr. Emily Blackwell (Elizabeth's sister), opened and operated the Women's Medical College of the New York Infirmary to provide both training to aspiring female doctors and medical care for poor women and children. This institution was the first to offer women medical training, to prioritize female medical care and, like its precursor of the New York Infirmary, it was also staffed entirely by women. The Women's Medical College of the New York Infirmary was also ahead of its time in that it offered four year educational programs during a time in which medical schools, catering almost exclusively to men, only offered two year programs. In its thirty-one years of successful operation, the Women's Medical College educated more than 350 female physicians.

The significance of the pioneering work of Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell cannot be overstated. She changed the face of medicine promoting hygiene and preventative medicine among both lay persons and professionals and the promotion of medical education and opportunities for women physicians. It is fitting that such work began in an area of New York City which over the years has born witness to other innovations in the areas of civil rights – particularly women's rights - , the labor movement, the arts, and publishing. I therefore strongly urge you to move ahead with the proposed historic district for 80 University Place and its surroundings.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jane Carey Blackwell Bloomfield". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Jane Carey Blackwell Bloomfield

JANICE P. NIMURA

December 9, 2019

Hon. Sarah Carroll, Chair
NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission
One Centre Street, 9th Floor
New York, NY 10007

Hon. Bill de Blasio, Mayor
City of New York
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Hon. Carolina Rivera, City Councilmember, 2nd District
254 East 4th Street
New York, NY 10009

RE: Support for landmark designation of 80 University Place, former home and office of Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell

Dear Chair Carroll, Mayor de Blasio, Councilmember Rivera,

I am a fourth-generation New Yorker and the author of a forthcoming biography of the groundbreaking sister doctors Elizabeth and Emily Blackwell. Elizabeth Blackwell was the first woman in America to receive a medical degree, in 1849. Emily Blackwell, eternally eclipsed, was the third, in 1854. Together, they founded the New York Infirmary for Indigent Women & Children, the first hospital staffed entirely by women. The book will be published by W.W. Norton in early 2021, to coincide with the bicentennial of Elizabeth Blackwell's birth.

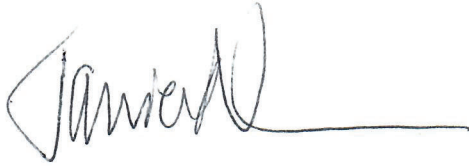
I am writing to add my strong support for the effort by Village Preservation to secure landmark status for 80 University Place as part of a historic district designation for the area. This former row house, originally 44 University Place, served as the home and medical office at the beginning of Dr. Blackwell's medical career in New York City, in 1851.

Elizabeth Blackwell's initial efforts to serve within the medical community in the United States were met with resistance. Seeing a need among the women and children within the poorer communities of the Lower East Side, she set up a dispensary to serve that population. This effort was furthered in 1857 when along with two other female physicians, her sister Dr. Emily Blackwell and Dr. Marie Zakrzewska, she established the New York Infirmary for Indigent Women and Children at the former James Roosevelt house on Bleecker Street. This was the first hospital for, staffed by, and run by women in the United States. The Blackwells promoted innovations in hygiene critical in preventing disease, and also launched a "Sanitary Visitor" program to visit the needy in their homes.

In 1868, Elizabeth and Emily Blackwell founded the Woman's Medical College of the New York Infirmary to educate aspiring female doctors. Ahead of its time, it offered a more rigorous program than any existing medical college for men. In its thirty-one years of successful operation, the Women's Medical College educated more than 350 female physicians.

The significance of the pioneering work of Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell—both in promoting hygiene and in opening the medical field to women—cannot be overstated. It is fitting that such work began in an area of New York City which over the years has born witness to other innovations in the areas of civil rights—particularly women’s rights—the labor movement, the arts, and publishing. I strongly urge you to move ahead with the proposed historic district for 80 University Place and its surroundings.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "James", followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

May 7, 2020

Hon. Sarah Carroll, Chair
NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission
One Centre Street, 9th Floor
New York, NY 10007

Hon. Bill de Blasio, Mayor
City of New York
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Hon. Carlina Rivera, City Councilmember, 2nd District
254 East 4th Street
New York, NY 10009

RE: Support for landmark designation of 86 University Place, former home of the Bagatelle

Dear Chair Carroll, Mayor de Blasio, and Councilmember Rivera,

From 1951 until 1959, the c. 1842 row house at 86 University Place was home to the lesbian bar the Bagatelle. The Bagatelle played a significant role in Greenwich Village's LGBTQ life, especially for women, throughout its years of operation. As a frequent visitor to the Bagatelle, and the author of a number of books concerning this neighborhood's history, I am writing to express my strong support for the effort by Village Preservation to secure landmark status for 86 University Place as part of a historic district designation for the area.

"Danny's Bagatelle," as it was originally called, moved into 86 University Place in 1951. Initially the establishment had a floor show, much like the previous business at this site – Barney Gallant's restaurant "The Royalist." Quickly, however, it became a lesbian hangout, and the name "Danny" was dropped. The first floor of the building was closed, and the raised basement level was transformed to accommodate a club, with a bar at the front and a small dance floor at the rear. The Bagatelle soon became known as "the Bag," and emerged into one of the most popular lesbian bars in Greenwich Village, with a clientele of mostly white working-class women. Saturday night was the main attraction at the Bag, but it is also remembered for its Sunday afternoon gatherings.

Like many other gay and lesbian bars in Greenwich Village at the time, the Bag was run by the Mafia, since such establishments were considered illegal, and frequently raided by the police. Employees at the Bag would switch on a red light when the police were entering for a raid, so patrons knew to scatter or try to hide any activity for which they could be arrested: dancing with someone of the same sex, wearing clothing considered inappropriate for one's gender, or any other subjectively determined "disorderly conduct."

The lesbian writer and activist Audre Lorde wrote extensively about the Bagatelle, memorializing its complex history. In her book *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name*, Lorde describes being consistently carded at the door even though her white companions never were, and encountering a bouncer who would not let black women into the club. Lorde's writings illuminate the business' hostility toward black patrons, despite the fact that it was one of the few spaces where lesbians could congregate in this neighborhood at this time. Her words recall the era of the Bag in all its intricacy.

I was also a frequent visitor to the Bagatelle, and made many trips to Greenwich Village and the area south of Union Square while writing my pulp novel series *The Beebo Brinker Chronicles*. The pre-Stonewall neighborhood, a vibrant, invaluable hub for members of the LGBTQ community, serves as a backdrop for the stories depicted in these pages.

Ironically, the name "Bagatelle" means "a thing of little value." But the name meant just the opposite to us. The value of a place to gather, to be with friends, to share a little happiness, rare as it was, was precious in those days. We treasured this modest little island of warmth and friendship, and it has become a storied part of our history.

Without a doubt, the history of the Bagatelle and the many who found community at 86 University Place during the 1950s is inextricably linked to the neighborhood south of Union Square. I therefore strongly urge you to move ahead with the proposed historic district including 86 University Place and its surroundings.

Sincerely,

Ann Bannon
annbannon@annbannon.com

May 4, 2020

Hon. Sarah Carroll, Chair
NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission
One Centre Street, 9th Floor
New York, NY 10007

Hon. Bill de Blasio, Mayor
City of New York
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Hon. Carlina Rivera, City Councilmember, 2nd District
254 East 4th Street
New York, NY 10009

RE: Support for landmark designation of 86 University Place, former home of the Bagatelle

Dear Chair Carroll, Mayor de Blasio, and Councilmember Rivera,

As a longtime Greenwich Villager, and the author of two books concerning this neighborhood's history, I am writing to express my strong support for the effort by Village Preservation to secure landmark status for 86 University Place as part of a historic district designation for the area. From 1951 until 1959, this c. 1842 row house was home to the lesbian bar the Bagatelle. The Bagatelle was frequented by several venerated literary figures, and played a significant role in Greenwich Village's LGBTQ life, especially for women, throughout its years of operation.

"Danny's Bagatelle," as it was originally called, moved into 86 University Place in 1951. Initially, it had a floor show, much like the previous establishment at this site – Barney Gallant's restaurant "The Royalist." Quickly, however, it became a lesbian hangout, and the name "Danny" was dropped. The first floor of the building was closed, and the raised basement level was transformed to accommodate a club, with a bar at the front and a small dance floor at the rear. The Bagatelle soon became known as "the Bag," and throughout the 1950s emerged into one of the most popular lesbian bars in Greenwich Village, with a clientele of mostly white working-class women. Saturday night was the main attraction at the Bag, but the business is also remembered for its Sunday afternoon gatherings.

Like many other gay and lesbian bars in Greenwich Village at the time, the Bag was run by the Mafia, since such establishments were considered illegal, and frequently raided by the police. Employees at the Bag would switch on a red light when the police were entering for a raid, so patrons knew to scatter or try to hide any activity for which they could be arrested: dancing with someone of the same sex, wearing clothing considered inappropriate for one's gender, or any other subjectively determined "disorderly conduct."

Notably, the Bag was frequented by “The Queen of Lesbian Pulp Fiction” Ann Bannon and the lesbian writer and activist Audre Lorde. Both of these remarkable individuals have memorialized the complex history of the Bagatelle in their literature and speaking. Lorde’s writings in particular illuminate the establishment’s hostility toward black patrons, despite the fact that it was one of the few spaces where lesbians could congregate in this neighborhood at this time. In her book *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name*, Lorde describes being consistently carded at the door even though her white companions never were, and encountering a bouncer who would not let black women into the club. It is thanks to Lorde and Bannon, whose voices continue to be absolutely vital for the LGBTQ community, that we recall the era of the Bag in all its intricacy.

Without a doubt, the history of the Bagatelle, Ann Bannon, Audre Lorde, and the many others who found community at 86 University Place throughout the 1950s, is inextricably linked to the neighborhood south of Union Square. I therefore strongly urge you to move ahead with the proposed historic district including 86 University Place and its surroundings.

Sincerely,

Lisa E. Davis, PhD
davislisae12@gmail.com

April 28, 2020

Hon. Sarah Carroll, Chair
NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission
One Centre Street, 9th Floor
New York, NY 10007

Hon. Bill de Blasio, Mayor
City of New York
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Hon. Corey Johnson, Speaker and Councilmember, 3rd District
224 West 30th St, Suite 1206
New York, NY 10001

RE: Support for landmark designation of 70 Fifth Avenue, former home of the National Board of Review of Motion Pictures

Dear Chair Carroll, Mayor de Blasio, and Speaker Johnson,

As the author of *Monitoring the Movies: The Fight over Film Censorship in Early Twentieth-Century Urban America*, I am writing to express my strong support for the effort by Village Preservation to secure landmark status for 70 Fifth Avenue as part of a historic district designation for the area. This 1912, 12-story Beaux Arts-style office building housed the National Board of Review of Motion Pictures from the 1910s until at least 1949. Over the course of its 111-year existence, the Board played a profound role in shaping the motion picture industry in America, single-handedly deciding what content would or would not appear in film by either granting or denying their stamp of approval for movies: “passed by the National Board of Review.”

The New York Board of Censorship of Motion Pictures, as it was originally named, was founded in 1909 by a coalition of Progressive social activists to fight government intervention in the rapidly developing film industry. The self-described “trained, volunteer, disinterested citizen organization” became the National Board of Censorship shortly thereafter, when it absorbed the responsibilities of local boards across multiple cities. Then, in 1916, following a 1915 Supreme Court decision upholding the constitutionality of state censorship of motion pictures, it became

the National Board of Review of Motion Pictures. This name change represented a major shift in the Board's policy. Rather than regulating the standards of morality in motion pictures as it previously had, it would work to enhance the education of public viewers and represent the public opinion. The Board went on to recommend movies, release reviews, and publish the *National Board of Review Magazine* - in 1950 replaced by *Films in Review*. Today the organization is known simply as the National Board of Review.

Significantly, the Board shared its office building at 70 Fifth Avenue with the NAACP, and the two organizations had several executive board members in common. When the NAACP launched its 1915 campaign to ban D.W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation*, it contacted the Board to register a formal objection to the film. In response, the Board overturned its Review Committee's original decision regarding the motion picture and requested that the General Committee conduct a rescreening. The General Committee proceeded to "pass the first half of the picture subject to minor changes," and condemn parts of the second half that "might create race hatred and prejudice." The wildly successful but acutely racist film, credited with the rebirth of the Ku Klux Klan and an increase in violence against African Americans, was a major part of the individual and shared history of the NAACP and the Board. In all likelihood, the organizations' negotiation in its confrontation of this and other matters took place largely in person, further emphasizing the importance of 70 Fifth Avenue as a historically and culturally significant site.

Without a doubt, the National Board of Review's history is inextricably linked to 70 Fifth Avenue and the neighborhood south of Union Square. Throughout the 20th century, this area fostered the growth of arts, culture, and civil rights organizations, as well as the connections between them. I therefore strongly urge you to move ahead with the proposed historic district including 70 Fifth Avenue and its surroundings.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Fronc
Herter Hall 721
Department of History
161 Presidents Drive
Amherst, MA 01003
jfronc@history.umass.edu

June 3, 2020

Hon. Sarah Carroll, Chair
NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission
One Centre Street, 9th Floor
New York, NY 10007

Hon. Bill de Blasio, Mayor
City of New York
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Hon. Corey Johnson, Speaker and Councilmember, 3rd District
224 West 30th St, Suite 1206
New York, NY 10001

RE: Support for landmark designation of 70 Fifth Avenue, former home of the Woman's Peace Party of New York

Dear Chair Carroll, Mayor de Blasio, and Speaker Johnson,

As the author of *The Women's Peace Union and the Outlawry of War, 1921-1942* and *Peace as a Women's Issue: A History of the U.S. Movement for World Peace and Women's Rights*, I am writing to express my strong support for the effort by Village Preservation to secure landmark status for 70 Fifth Avenue as part of a historic district designation for the area. This 1912, 12-story Beaux Arts-style office building holds extraordinary significance as the site of a staggering array of political organizing and social activism. Notably, the Woman's Peace Party of New York, founded by Crystal Eastman in 1914, was located here. This was the first formal feminist peace organization in the United States, which launched a new peace movement across the world.

The Woman's Peace Party had its roots in the August 1914 Woman's Peace Parade which followed the beginning of World War I and intended to call attention to the horrors of the European conflagration. Following the parade, the Woman's Peace Party of New York was established in November of 1914. This was followed by a January 1915 convention of feminists and peace activists from across the country held in Washington D.C., which resulted in the formation of the Woman's Peace Party (WPP) by Jane Addams, Carrie Chapman Catt, and Fanny Garrison Villard (daughter of the great abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison). The Woman's Peace Party of New York (WPP-NYC) became a regional chapter of the national body. From its 70 Fifth Avenue offices, the WPP-NYC operated a nationwide press service; organized demonstrations, meetings, and congressional hearings; and published its periodical *Four Lights*. Under Eastman's leadership, the WPP-NYC's membership grew to fifty thousand by 1916.

For Eastman, the woman's peace movement was a convergence of the many efforts in which she was already involved as a feminist, socialist, and reformer. Through this organization, Eastman and her circle hoped not only to rally against the war, but to develop an altogether new kind of peace movement. The WPP departed from prior peace organizations that limited themselves to more genteel behind-the-scenes lobbying and attempts to influence public opinion in print and oratory; it also abandoned contemporary capitalist peace groups that argued against war because of its high costs and economic disruptions. Instead, the WPP intended to establish a left-leaning coalition that harnessed the energy and insight of Progressive reform, labor unionism, suffrage, and antiwar struggles. Utilizing direct action tactics and modern publicity strategies, the WPP hoped to achieve the dual objectives of peace and justice both locally and globally. In doing so, Eastman believed, it could introduce a new world order.

The WPP eventually became the American chapter of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, which has chapters in 37 countries, and is the oldest women's peace organization in the United States. Without a doubt, the history of the Woman's Peace Party is inextricably linked to 70 Fifth Avenue and the surrounding neighborhood, which throughout the twentieth century fostered the growth of many civil rights and social justice organizations. I therefore strongly urge you to move ahead with the proposed historic district including 70 Fifth Avenue and its surroundings.

Sincerely,

Harriet Alonso
Professor Emerita of History
City College of New York
<http://harrietalonso.com>
alonsoharriet@gmail.com

April 26, 2020

Hon. Sarah Carroll, Chair

New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission

One Centre Street, 9th Floor

New York, N.Y. 10007

Re: Information regarding historic significance of 80 Fifth Avenue, within proposed historic district south of Union Square

Dear Chair Carroll,

I am writing to support designation of the **Union Square** area as an historic district. As an historian of immigration and the U.S. labor movement, I have long regarded Union Square as one of the bedrocks of progressive labor activism in the U.S., the soapbox of the left. In this letter I wish to call your attention to the historical, cultural and political significance of **80 Fifth Avenue**, which for twenty-four years was the headquarters of the **International Workers Order**, one of the most progressive mutual-benefit, fraternal organizations the U.S. has ever seen. The IWO provided quality health coverage for members, but also was a forward-thinking advocate of racial equality and progressive social programs for all Americans. In addition, the IWO offered a broad array of theater, music and other recreational programs to its members, the full “Bread and Roses” its leaders believed all Americans deserved.

The International Workers Order (IWO) was a consortium of left-wing ethnic self-insurance societies born in 1930 in the “languages division” of the Communist Party USA. The IWO offered low-cost accident and life insurance to its interracial membership, at a time when New Deal reforms such as Social Security were not yet enacted. The IWO was born out of a split in the Jewish **Workmen’s Circle**, and grew to encompass 188,000 members from many political and ethnic and racial groups. It offered a broad array of low-cost medical, dental and optical clinics, opening medical clinics in underserved working-class neighborhoods such as East Harlem and Brownsville, Brooklyn; it even offered a Birth Control Clinic “in the interests of the membership of the IWO and all of its friends.” This New York clinic was under the direction of a woman doctor who had worked with **Margaret Sanger** and stayed open evenings to accommodate working-class New Yorkers. The IWO offered affordable, quality medical care to its members at a time when the safety net still had many holes, and dissemination of birth-control information was still criminalized.

The IWO's leaders were determined there would be "No Jim Crow in the IWO," and as early as the 1930s it was an interracial organization. Fifteen language federations such as the Jewish Peoples Fraternal Order, the Italian Garibaldi Society and the Slovak Workers Society sheltered under the IWO umbrella, and its magazine, *Fraternal Outlook*, featured text in English, Spanish, Polish, Italian and other languages. The IWO also supported foreign-language newspapers such as Polish *Głos Ludowy* (People's Voice.) But the IWO, unique for the 1930s-40s, embraced far more than white-ethnic workers. Puerto Rican and other Spanish-speaking members also organized the IWO's **Cervantes Fraternal Society** (headed by Brooklyn's **Jesús Colón**) and African Americans founded the **Lincoln-Douglass Society**, which in addition to offering African Americans quality health insurance at a time when many private insurance companies refused to cover them, remained a forceful lobbying organization on behalf of black civil rights. English-language IWO lodges enrolled black and white members side by side, at a time when Jim Crow ruled the land. Activists such as Harlem's **Louise Thompson Patterson** (an IWO vice president) worked to champion racial equality through the Order. There were even Arabic-speaking lodges in Detroit and other locales.

The Order envisioned its mission as more capacious than writing accident and death policies, and at its height enlisted 188,000 black, white, Hispanic and Arabic members for whom it forcefully advocated in every way possible. The IWO was a militant champion of interracial solidarity, civil rights, strong industrial unions and rigorous social security programs for working-class Americans. In 1940, an IWO publication, "Our Plan for Plenty," called for federally funded health insurance, a guaranteed income and generous provision of health clinics as key to securing **President Franklin Roosevelt's** Four Freedoms. Well-placed IWO allies worked with the Order to improve working people's lives. **Congressman Vito Marcantonio** of East Harlem, protégé of **Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia**, was an IWO vice president and leader of its Garibaldi Society. He introduced IWO-drafted legislation calling for federal workplace-safety laws, universal health care and other progressive social measures.

When the IWO was founded in 1930, there was no Social Security or other government programs to aid the unemployed, aged or destitute, so there was a real need for the IWO even on the most instrumental level, to provide members a modicum of security. Indeed, early Depression lobbying by the IWO was an important component of the political pressure that resulted in enactment of the Social Security Act, National Labor Relations (Wagner) Act and other New Deal reforms. Until its demise, however, the IWO pushed to expand the safety net to protect all Americans. The Order's General Secretary Max Bedacht shortly after World War II told his members, "In the field of social legislation and social insurance some first steps have already been made," but added, "Health insurance is still merely a dream. We must make it an imperative demand."

International Workers Order members were forceful organizers in the struggle for collective-bargaining rights. **Philip Murray**, president of the **Steel Workers Organizing Committee** and later the **Congress of Industrial Organizations**, wrote Bedacht congratulating the “patriotic” work the IWO was doing in recruiting members into industrial unions. The IWO’s efforts were “helping the entire nation,” Murray added, as the increased purchasing power and comfort union members enjoyed would spread prosperity throughout Depression-plagued America. The IWO republished Murray’s missals as “Two Letters About One Cause,” and IWO leaders such as Thompson Patterson worked to organize workers black and white in the packinghouses, steel mills and other places throughout the country. Marcantonio spoke at Order-sponsored rallies on behalf of striking steel and auto workers, praising the IWO as “the advance guard of democracy,” a label with which thousands of Depression-era sit-down strikers agreed. Interracial IWO meetings in Chicago heard speeches in Polish and English on the need for solidarity across the color line if decent wages and working conditions were to be won. The IWO was instrumental in building a broad-based middle-class lifestyle for America’s workers, and 80 Fifth Avenue was where it all was coordinated.

The IWO and its headquarters building are of historical significance, too, because the Order was one of America’s earliest and most forceful advocates of interracial solidarity. Beyond advocating interracial socializing – itself anathema to many conservative Americans – the IWO also campaigned for civil-rights measures such as a federal anti-lynching bill, permanent Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC), integration of the armed forces, end to Jim Crow segregation of public facilities, and protection of black voting rights. Before it was a year old, the International Workers Order was organizing rallies to defend the “**Scottsboro Boys**,” the nine black teenagers falsely accused of rape and facing the electric chair in 1931 Alabama. During World War II the IWO organized to defeat hate strikes by white workers seeking to bar blacks from war work, and in 1946 the Order participated in the American Crusade Against Lynching, demanding enactment of a federal anti-lynching bill. The Order shortly thereafter led the campaign to integrate New York’s **Stuyvesant Town** co-ops.

In all of these campaigns, the IWO had a vocal ally in its vice president, Congressman Marcantonio. The *Baltimore Afro-American* applauded an IWO anti-discrimination rally and Marcantonio’s introduction of a bill barring discrimination against blacks, Jews and Italians in war work. The IWO’s Jewish section similarly demanded that Army base recreational facilities be integrated.

Marcantonio also decried the wartime internment of Japanese Americans, for which he received letters of thanks from Nissei – including a letter from a War Relocation Camp internee. His advocacy mirrored denunciation of the camps by grassroots IWO members, who defended Japanese Americans enrolled in the Order and condemned “the persecution the Japanese Americans had been subjected to.” IWO officer Marcantonio proposed a bill to remove the bar

on Asian naturalization, earning congratulations from the Japanese American Committee for Democracy. The Order's notable, atypical defense of Japanese Americans surely renders the IWO headquarters of historical significance.

The IWO significantly was one of the first organizations to push for the integration of Major League Baseball. The Order's own sports leagues were integrated, with black, white and Hispanic baseball players competing in IWO leagues as early as the 1930s. During these games, petitions demanding integration of the Major Leagues passed through the stands. The African American *Chicago Defender* publicized these tournaments, in one of which an interracial New York team, the **Lincoln Brigadiers**, publicized members' service to Republican Spain. In passing, it should be mentioned the IWO is of historical significance because its members organized some of America's earliest anti-fascist demonstrations, with members donating money, blood, medical equipment and even their lives to the defense of the Spanish Republic besieged by Franco, Hitler and Mussolini in the 1930s.

The IWO persistently agitated for baseball's integration, distributing leaflets making these demands. **Paul Robeson** and IWO officials in 1943 presented a petition to baseball Commissioner **Kenesaw Mountain Landis** "urging abandonment of Jim Crow in the big leagues;" Thompson Patterson met with **William Wrigley**, owner of the Chicago Cubs, to lobby for the same cause. In 1945, Eastern Pennsylvania lodges demanded an investigation into "Jim Crow Baseball," while in New York, Jewish lodges were represented on the Metropolitan Interfaith & Interracial Coordinating Council, which orchestrated an End Jim Crow in Baseball campaign. This campaign planned interracial demonstrations outside the **Polo Grounds** and **Ebbets Field** on game days. In a similar vein, the IWO held interracial swim-ins to challenge segregated beaches on Chicago's Lake Michigan. In ways large and small, the International Workers Order was an historic champion of racial equality.

With its commitment to union and civil-rights activism, the International Workers Order offered more to its members than life insurance. But when they put down their picket signs, members also could spend almost all their leisure time at their local IWO lodge. The IWO sponsored workers' schools, summer camps such as **Camp Kinderland**, and various other recreational activities for its members, such as painting classes, sports teams, theater troupes and choirs and mandolin orchestras, so it's perhaps not surprising to discover a prominent artist such as painter **Rockwell Kent** as the national IWO president. Congressman Marcantonio supported the IWO in its development of ethnic festivals and dance troupes, singing groups, orchestras and theaters for its members. In his East Harlem congressional district he often attended IWO musical galas for Italian and "Spanish" (primarily Puerto Rican) IWO members. **Pete Seeger** sang his celebrated "Banks of Marble" as part of an IWO play, "Let's Get Together," and Order member **Paul Robeson** often performed at the organization's rallies and concerts. Working-class ethnic Americans, too, won local glory in groups such as the Russian Radischev Dancers, or the

Cervantes Society’s annual crowning of a young “Reina de la Victoria de la Sociedad Fraternal Cervantes” (“Queen of Victory of the Cervantes Fraternal Society”) at a gala ball in the Bronx. The IWO celebrated often denigrated ethnic cultures throughout its existence.

The Order supported its own workers’ schools, where courses in painting, sculpture and music supplemented classes in working-class history, Marxism and union organizing. The IWO likewise financially supported other leftist schools, such as the **Jefferson School for Social Science**, located in a historically significant building at 575 Sixth Avenue (at Sixteenth Street, just north of Union Square.) At the Jefferson School, members of the IWO could take courses in writing the detective story with **Dashiell Hammett** of “Maltese Falcon” fame or painting classes with **Philip Evergood** or **Anton Refregier**. As even the government’s wartime Office of Strategic Services noted, the IWO “pursued a diversified program of social-cultural activities.” These cultural offerings were a historically important program of adult education for “workers of hand and brain.”

Of particular note was the IWO’s **Harlem Suitcase Theater**, which Thompson Patterson organized to bring socially relevant theater to African Americans during the Depression. The Suitcase Theater’s 1938 debut production was “Don’t You Want to be Free?” by **Langston Hughes**. The IWO had already published chapbooks of Hughes’ “Revolutionary Verses” and included his poems in its publications such as *The New Order*; now Thompson Patterson recruited her friend to lend his talents to the Order’s people’s theater. “Don’t You Want to be Free?” gave the first acting experience to **Butterfly McQueen** and **Robert Earl Jones** (father of James Earl Jones), who were both members of the IWO’s Solidarity Lodge in Harlem. The Suitcase Theater took plays to Atlanta, Nashville and other cities, and also presented an opera by **James P. Johnson**. Many of its plays dealt with lynching, racism and industrial workers’ poverty. The Suitcase Theater and other troupes such as the IWO Freedom Theater were some of the earliest proponents of experimental community theater. “When you give people a chance at self-expression,” the IWO concluded in a *Daily Worker* article, “you are doing a valuable thing for them, a thing they appreciate.”

Sadly, the International Workers Order proved a little too progressive in Red Scare America. The Order in 1947 was placed on the Attorney General’s List of Subversive Organizations, at least in part for its forceful advocacy of union rights and racial equality. Foreign-born IWO members were deported, while those who worked for government agencies – even the post office – were required to sign loyalty oaths and interrogated on their suspect affiliations. In 1951, the New York State Insurance Department used the IWO’s placement on the Attorney General’s List as a pretext to revoke its insurance license, declaring it a “hazard.” When IWO officers pointed out that in insurance law “hazard” referred to a financially unsound or fraudulent company, and that New York’s own insurance auditors had for twenty-one years consistently declared the IWO’s solvency to be impeccable, Albany devised a new – and in 2020 still unique –

interpretation of “hazard,” suggesting the IWO was a “moral and political hazard.” The Order’s very solvency was held against it, since the department speculated its funds *might* be used to support the Kremlin. No evidence this was ever done or even contemplated was presented. In Red Scare America, speculation was as good as conviction when it came to progressives.

The IWO vigorously combated the campaign to strip the Order’s insurance license and liquidate it, noting, “Very few fraternal organizations ... can match the 146 percent solvency of the IWO and the A-plus excellent condition of its insurance funds.” Such arguments, though, were mocked by the conservative *New York World-Telegram and Sun*, which scoffed, “Their Books Balanced, But Politics Were in Red.” In 1954, New York State’s Supreme Court affirmed the liquidation order, and the International Workers Order was disbanded. The IWO, with its bands, choirs, and militant advocacy of workers’ rights and racial justice, was done.

The IWO’s Polish paper, *Glos Ludowy*, defiantly celebrated the Order’s accomplishments in an article headlined “IWO Helped Blaze Trail in Fight for Democracy.” Perhaps this is the final verdict on the historical importance of the International Workers Order, a pioneering champion of racial equality, social justice and interracial entertainment. I urge the New York Landmarks Preservation Commission to honor this historically significant organization by designating 80 Fifth Avenue and other buildings on lower Fifth Avenue near Union Square a historic district.

Yours, sincerely,

Dr. Robert M. Zecker

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cc: Hon. Bill de Blasio, Mayor, New York

Hon. Corey Johnson, Speaker and Councilmember

Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation

The Anais Nin Trust



November 5, 2019

Hon. Sarah Carroll, Chair
NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission
One Centre Street, 9th Floor
New York, NY 10007

Hon. Bill de Blasio, Mayor
City of New York
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Hon Carlina Rivera, City Councilmember, 2nd District
254 East 4th Street
New York, NY 10009

Re: Support for landmark designation of 17 East 13th Street, former home of Anais Nin's Gemor Press

Dear Chair Carroll, Mayor de Blasio, and Councilmember Rivera,

The Anais Nin Trust was created in 1975 to manage the literary estate of Anais Nin. The Trust is dedicated to preserving Anais Nin's legacy through the promotion of Nin scholarship, productions, and publications. We maintain copyrights over text, images, and recordings of or by Anais Nin, as well as Henry Miller's letters to Anais Nin and Ian Hugo's engravings.

I am writing today to express our strong support for the effort by Village Preservation to secure landmark status for 17 East 13th Street, the former home of Anais Nin's Gemor Press, via historic district designation for the area.

Nin was a singularly important figure in 20th century literature and in the development of the female voice in western culture. Her work, which emanated from this building, had a profound effect upon the direction of her career and her success as a writer. Works produced here such as *This Hunger* were key to her recognition as a writer and her development of an audience for her work. The design and printing of these works of literature – which were actually works of art as well – was directly overseen by Nin, and reflected her unique and revolutionary approach to literature. As noted in the submission by Village Preservation, Nin was drawn to this area because it was a center of publishing as well as radical thought, which she combined in her work.

P.O. Box 26053, Los Angeles, CA 90026

The Anais Nin Trust

That this building is virtually entirely intact to the time period when Nin's press was located here is extraordinary. This tiny building housed many printers, though none as significant as Nin's, but it speaks to the intimacy of the process involved and the personal involvement of Nin in this aspect of the production of her work. To lose this building almost eighty years after Nin's remarkable time here would be a tragic loss, and preventable.

Given Nin's significance, the role this building played in her work and life, and the connection which her location here bore to the related activities going on around her, I strongly urge you to move ahead with the proposed historic district designation for this and surrounding buildings.

Sincerely,



Tree L. Wright
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