Finishing the Job:
The Unprotected Architecture and History of Greenwich Village & the East Village below Union Square

A report by Anthony W. Robins for

GREENWICH VILLAGE SOCIETY FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION
VILLAGE PRESERVATION

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Village Preservation (*the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation)* was founded in 1980 to preserve the architectural heritage and cultural history of Greenwich Village, the East Village, and NoHo.

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Foreword

Several neighborhoods, and several important veins of New York and American history, converge below Union Square. Greenwich Village, with its charming townhouses and prewar apartment buildings, Union Square and Ladies' Mile, with their grand commercial emporia and robust industrial lofts, and the East Village with its pleasingly modest rowhouses, tenements, and factories, mix and mingle in these nearly twenty blocks where neighborhood boundaries are blurred, and building eras, styles, and types sit in sometimes-dramatic juxtaposition.

But this area stands out for more than just its unusual amalgamation of features. It retains many early 19th century houses which were the first and only buildings to occupy their lots. Its mid-19th century commercial buildings were among the grandest and most important in New York at the time. Its late-19th and early-20th century factory, loft and storage buildings, while serving more pedestrian functions, nevertheless include some of the most intricately and innovatively-detailed commercial buildings of their era. And in the mid-20th century, the entire area played a central role as home to the New York School of artists and writers, who not only changed the way art and literature was made, but who were responsible for shifting the center of the art world from Paris to New York.

For many generations, these resilient and adaptable buildings had new lives breathed into them. Lofts became artists' studios and residences, houses became restaurants, hotels became antique dealerships, printing presses became schools, and warehouses became book sellers.

But unfortunately in the last few years, that benign and virtuous cycle has come to a screeching halt. Older buildings in the area are being torn down at an alarming rate. The 165 year old former St. Denis Hotel at 11th Street and Broadway, where Lincoln stayed, Bell demonstrated the telephone, Twain wrote, and Duchamp made art, is just the latest casualty; others include a 175 year old house on 13th Street, a hundred year old garage on University Place, a 140 year old cast-iron building on Broadway, and five ca. 1890 Beaux Arts tenements on 11th Street between 3rd and 4th Avenues.

As the Tech Boom thunders through this area, more demolitions can be expected. Tony Robins' insightfully-written, carefully-researched report offers just a taste of some of the precious historic resources which can be found in these blocks, but which could soon be lost without swift action by the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission.

Andrew Berman
Executive Director, **Village Preservation**
the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation
March, 2019

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Introduction

Just over half a century ago, the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission held a series of public hearings – in 1965, 1966 and again in 1967 – that led to the 1969 designation of the Greenwich Village historic district. In explaining its decision in the official designation report, the Commission noted:

> …of the Historic Districts in New York City which have been designated or will be designated, Greenwich Village outranks all others. This supremacy comes from the quality of its architecture, the nature of artistic life within its boundaries, and the feeling of history that permeates its streets.[1]

The report then noted that Greenwich Village's

> …traditional boundaries extend from the Hudson River on the west to Fourth Avenue and the Bowery on the east and from Houston Street on the south to Fourteenth Street on the north. These boundaries were officially recognized when the rapidly expanding City, moving northward from lower Manhattan, made Greenwich Village the Ninth and Fifteenth Wards of New York. The Greenwich Village Historic District covers a lesser area as defined by its official boundary map included in this report.[2]

Since its designation, the original historic district has been joined by various extensions and small new historic districts in areas to the south and west within those traditional boundaries. The only area not to have seen such new districts is bounded by University Place and Fourth Avenue. The southern half of that area is occupied by New York University. The northern half is the subject of this report.

[1] Greenwich Village Historic District Designation Report, Vol. 1 p. 7.
[2] *Ibid*., p. 11.

Within this study area – bounded by East 14th Street on the north, the University Place and Fifth Avenue corridors on the west, Fourth Avenue (extending in some instances to Third Avenue, where the old Third Avenue El created a more physical boundary to the neighborhood) on the east, and East 9th Street on the south – the Commission has designated a handful of individual landmarks. Grace Church and Rectory, a Gothic Revival jewel (James Renwick, Jr., 1846), was designated in 1966. In more recent years, half-a-dozen additional landmarks have also been recognized: the Italianate brownstone former Grammar School 47 (better known as the Police Athletic League Building; Thomas R. Jackson, 1855) in 1998; the cast-iron-fronted home of the Baumann Brothers Furniture and Carpets store (D.&J. Jardine, 1881) in 2008; the Queen-Anne-style Webster Hall (Charles Rentz, 1886-92) also in 2008; the Van Tassell & Kearney horse auction house (Jardine, Kent & Jardine, 1904) in 2012; and, most recently, the Italianate "marble palace" twins at 827 and 831 Broadway (Griffith Thomas, 1867) in 2017. In addition, seven commercial buildings on Broadway have recently had hearings, and their designations are pending. But the study area contains many more buildings and areas worthy of landmark or historic district protection, and they are threatened by growing real-estate pressure.

The study area.

Overall Character

This section of Greenwich Village shares some of the architectural character of the rest of the neighborhood – early-19th century row houses, mid-19th century commercial buildings, later-19th century institutional buildings. Like areas to the west, it also played an important role in the city's arts world. But its overall character is distinctive – in particular, its buildings are for the most part later and heavily weighted to commercial use, and its connection to the arts relates especially to the emergence of the New York School of painting in the years following World War II.

Geographically and chronologically, the area's building stock falls roughly into three groupings: early- to mid-19th-century row houses and related buildings scattered throughout but located more thickly between Fourth and Third Avenues; late-19th-century commercial buildings along University Place, Broadway and Fourth Avenue and connecting side streets; and early -20th-century apartment buildings and hotels along University Place, Broadway, and Fifth Avenue.

The area from the air, 2019.

Pre-Civil War Residential District

Some 50 buildings in the study area date, in whole or in part, to the 25 years stretching from the mid-1830s to the late 1850s. The vast majority of these are residential – either single houses or, more commonly, row houses. Generally later in date than comparable houses in the West Village, they range in style from Greek Revival to Italianate, mostly the latter. They were built for various clients, including several with names well-known in New York history: Brevoort, Goelet and Stuyvesant.

Over time, the shifting economics of the area led to commercial conversions for these buildings; consequently, a sizable majority of them have been altered, enlarged, or rebuilt. Half a dozen of these former row houses also figure in the history of the post-World War II art world. They can be found throughout the study area; the largest and most intact surviving cluster occupies the northwest corner of Third Avenue and East 12th Street.

88-98 Third Avenue (1835-39)

Among the least altered of the remaining houses:

Nos. 138-140 East 13th Street: two Greek Revival houses built 1837-39:

No. 58 Third Avenue, 1837-39
(top story added later)

No. 88 East 10th Street, 1844-45

Nos. 4 and 6 East 12th Street, 1846-47

No. 11 East 12th Street, 1839-41

The few commercial buildings surviving from this period include a “pianoforte factory” at 102-104 Third Avenue dating in part to 1839; a stable of 1852 at 90 University Place, which was also the home of poet Frank O’Hara from 1957 to 1959; and the venerable St. Denis hotel at Broadway and East 11th Street (James Renwick, Jr. 1853), stripped of detail and currently under demolition. This period also saw the construction of the already designated landmarks of Grace Church and Rectory and Grammar School 47, noted above.

Post-Civil War to 1890: Retail Emporia

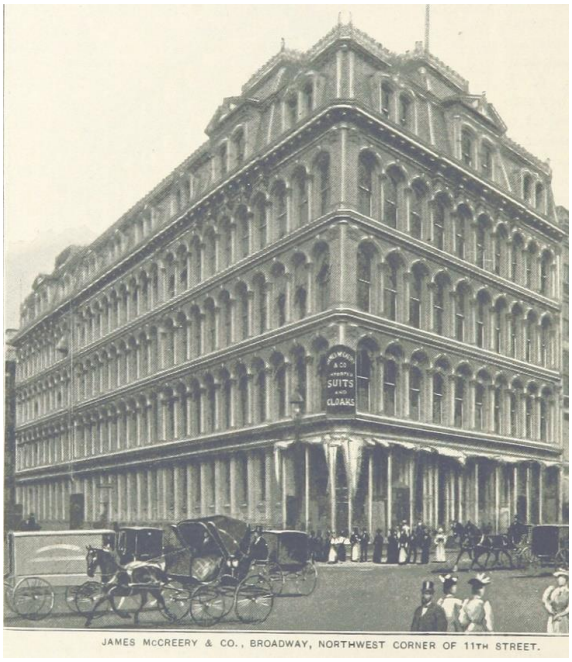
In the years following the Civil War, the commercial hub of Broadway, formerly located below Canal Street, began to migrate uptown.[3] The commercial transformation of Broadway between Canal and Chambers Streets had begun even before 1850; over the next decade it continued further north. As described in an 1862 editorial in *Harper's Monthly Magazine*: "Twenty years ago [Broadway] was a street of three-story red brick houses. Now it is a highway of stone, and iron, and marble buildings… Some of the new stores in Broadway are almost as imposing as some of the palaces in Italian cities."[4] That same year, A.T. Stewart, creator in 1846 of the country's first department store on Broadway at Chambers Street, built an enormous emporium on Broadway between East 9th and 10th Streets; after expanding by 1870 to occupy the entire block east to Fourth Avenue, it earned praise as "the largest retail dry goods store in the world."[5] Stewart's cast-iron facades, designed by John Kellum, enclosed an iron cage structure, antecedent to the steel-cage skyscraper. The building's endless rows of Italianate arches made it one of the great sights of Manhattan, until it burned down in 1958.

[3] For a history of the northward trend of Manhattan's commercial and residential districts see Charles Lockwood, *Manhattan Moves Uptown* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1976).
[4] George William Curtis, "Editor's Easy Chair," *Harper's Magazine*, February 1862, p. 409.
[5] *Packard's Monthly*, Vol. 1, No. 1, May 1868, p. 4.

(Stewart's store, from Library of Congress)

The use of cast iron as a material for building facades and in some cases entire buildings dates back, in New York City, to the mid 1840s, but it was only after the Civil War that such buildings proliferated. Though Stewart's store – probably the largest example of the type ever seen in New York or the country – is gone, a similar, if smaller, cast-iron emporium, designed by Kellum in 1870 for yet another retailer relocating northward, echoes its design directly across the intersection. No. 801 Broadway, built for Messrs. James McCreery & Co., in its day was considered an "immense establishment … [that] could not be more centrally or eligibly located, and…an architectural ornament to Broadway."[6] McCreery's was considered for landmark status in 1966, but was not designated.

[6] *New York's Great Industries*, *Exchange and Commercial Review,* New York, 1884, p. 89.



(James McCreery & Co., Moses King's Handbook of New York City 1893, pp. 852-853)

(McCreery Building with the two-story addition that replaced the mansard roof)

Across the street, at 836 Broadway, another cast-iron fronted building retains its mansard roof – the Roosevelt Building of 1876, designed by Stephen D. Hatch for the James J. Roosevelt estate; as a replacement for Roosevelt's former home, the building illustrates Broadway's commercial evolution.[7] This is one of the seven buildings recently proposed for landmark designation.

[7] No. 836 Broadway is one of the half-dozen Broadway structures considered for landmark designation at a hearing earlier in 2018.

(Photo: New York Public Library) (Photo: NYC LPC)

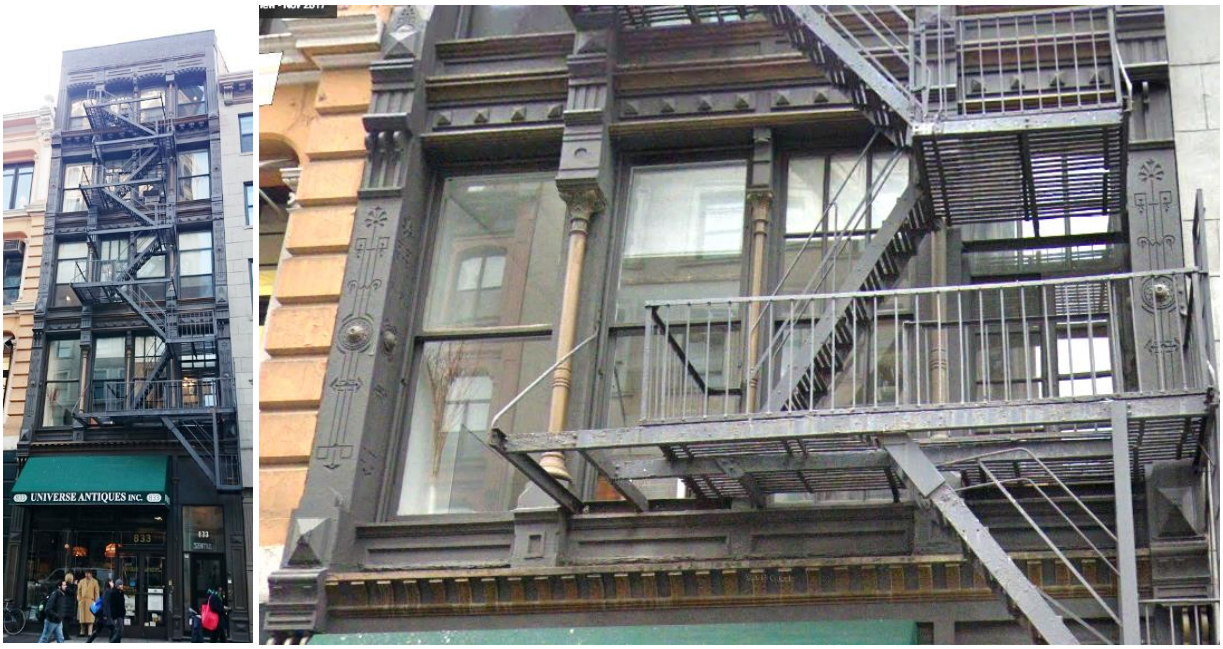
836 Broadway

812 (r.) and 814 Broadway

112 Fourth Avenue

A few doors down at 812 Broadway stands another cast-iron fronted commercial structure, designed in 1870 by Griffith Thomas, a prolific architect of such buildings; the adjacent No. 814 is a similar looking but earlier masonry structure of 1854. Two other cast-iron-fronted buildings by Thomas, across the street at 827-831 Broadway, became city landmarks in 2017; two additional cast-iron buildings designed by Thomas stand nearby, at 47 East 12th Street (1866) and 112 Fourth Avenue (1872).

Several other cast-iron-fronted buildings from this period survive nearby. Directly next door to 827-831 Broadway stands 833 Broadway (architect unknown, 1879), an unusually decorative cast-iron façade with elaborate, geometrically patterned neo-Grec ornament; the building unfortunately has lost its cornice.



(833 Broadway and detail)

Another cast-iron façade at 39 East 13th Street (architect unknown, 1873) retains its original ground floor, but has had a three-story glass addition added, while 10 East 14th Street (1879-80, M.C. Merritt) retains all of its original detail above the ground floor, with a discreet setback rooftop addition.

39 East 13th Street

10 East 14th Street, with details

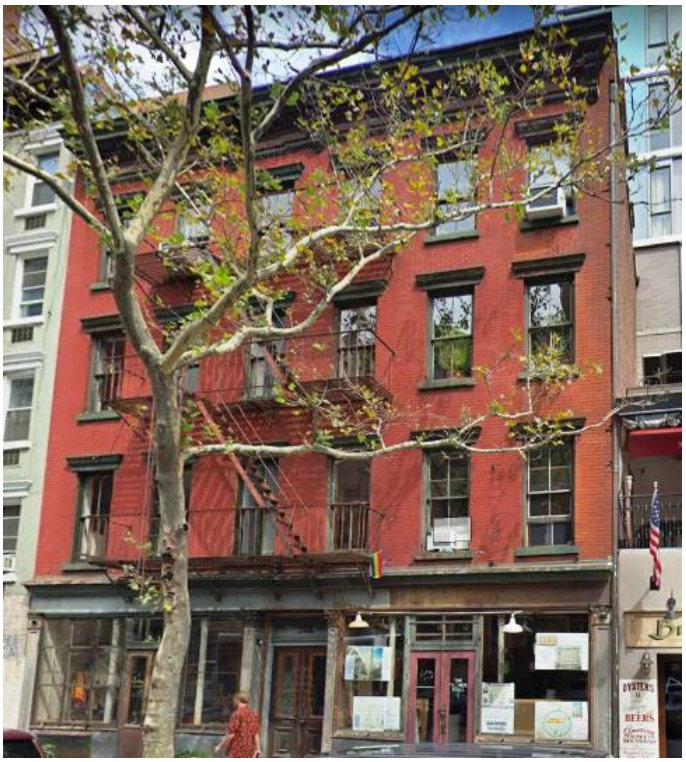
Griffith Thomas, Steven D. Hatch and John Kellum – all major architects designing commercial structures during this period – are joined in the study area by two additional prominent names: Napoleon LeBrun and Henry Hardenbergh. In 1870, LeBrun – best known for the Metropolitan Life Tower of 1910 on Madison Square – designed a parochial school at 113 East 11th Street serving the now-demolished church of St. Ann.

(St. Ann's Parochial School; NYPL and present)

A wide brick-faced building in the Italianate style, it abuts the landmark Webster Hall, with which building it defines the character of the block. In 1882 Hardenbergh – best known for the Dakota Apartments of 1884 and the Plaza Hotel of 1907 – designed the first section of the romantically eclectic Hotel Albert on University Place at East 11th Street.


The Albert Hotel

Other notable buildings in the study area from this period include No. 143 East 13th Street (architect unknown, 1863), an Italianate style brick building with intact window details and cast--iron storefront:



143 East 13th Street

and No. 204 East 13th Street (architect unknown, c. 1875), a neo-Grec brick residence with intact cornice, elaborate window surrounds and cast-iron storefront:

204 East 13th Street

1880 to 1920: Loft Buildings

The northward march of fashion and commerce continued to redefine Manhattan generally. As department stores like Stewart's or McCreery's relocated to the Ladies Mile area between 14th and 23rd Streets, blocks to the south became dominated by loft buildings.

One of New York's most characteristic building types, the loft building was the city's architectural response to its growing commercial prosperity, especially in the dry goods industry. Beginning with the three-story Federal-style brick counting houses of Schermerhorn row (1811-1812) on Fulton Street at the South Street seaport, followed by four-story Greek-Revival-style counting houses with granite store fronts (1840s) on Stone Street in the financial district, the commercial loft building evolved into a four-, five- or six-story stone- or cast-iron-faced structure with a store at the ground floor and storage lofts above. Such buildings still line the streets of TriBeCa and SoHo, and examples can be found in the study area, as, for instance, the cast-iron-fronted buildings by Griffith Thomas.

By the last two decades of the 19th century, eight-story loft buildings were being built in the blocks just south of Union Square; in the first decade of the 20th century, ten- to sixteen-story loft buildings sprang up here and in the blocks to the north. Only after World War I, with the City's new zoning resolution mandating setbacks on taller structures, did the classic loft type change into ziggurat-type buildings like those lining the blocks of the Garment District.

All of the late-19th century loft buildings in the study area occupy most of their lots, and rise straight up from the sidewalk. The eight-story buildings, generally found on the side streets, tend to be narrow, with a variety of materials adorning the façade. The taller buildings, generally found on the avenues, tend to be wider, later in date, faced in stone or brick, with designs neo-Classical in inspiration.

The loft buildings along East 11th, 12th and 13th Streets include some of the most imaginatively ornamental examples of the type – the *AIA Guide* characterizes the block of East 12th Street between University Place and Broadway as:

> A big and bold "Beaux Arts meets 1890s High-Tech" row, each multistory loft competitively outdoing the other. Look up at rich stone and brickwork… an effort by conservative Beaux Arts architects to enter the new mainstream.[8]

Half a dozen such buildings on East 12th Street were designed by the firm of Cleverdon & Putzel, architects of commercial and residential buildings with unusually inventive ornament. Though they are not as well-known as some other architects of the period, their work is well represented in New York historic districts (Mount Morris Park, Carnegie Hill, Ladies' Mile, SoHo-Cast Iron, Upper West Side/Central Park West, South Village, NoHo, Central Harlem), and often appeared in Christopher Gray's "Streetscapes" column in the *New York Times Real Estate Section*.

The notice of construction for No. 39 East 12th in the *Real Estate Record and Guide* spells out the great variety of materials the firm used:

> East 12th street, No. 39, eight-story buff brick, stone and terra cotta, modern and fire-proof store and loft building…. This building is to be erected on the site of the old Merritt's Hotel, which will be demolished. Specifications will call for all modern improvements, including structural, architectural and galvanized iron-work, buff face brick, stone-work, terra cotta, iron cornice….[9]

Cleverdon & Putzel's buildings on East 12th Street – Nos. 37 and 39-45 (several buildings now consolidated as one) on the north side and Nos. 36 and 42 on the south side – all date to the

[8] Norval White and Elliot Willensky, *AIA Guide to New York City* (fourth edition; New York: Crown Publishers, 2000), p. 136.
[9] "News of the Building Trade," *Real Estate Record and Guide*, March 16, 1895, p. 416.

mid-1890s; they combine intricately detailed cast-iron ornament at the first and second stories with inventive stone, brick and terra-cotta in the upper stories, and make this block architecturally one of the most unusual – and arguably most beautiful – in the study area. The firm did similarly inventive work at No. 830 Broadway (one of the seven buildings in the study area recently considered at a public hearing by LPC) between East 12th and 13th Streets, and No. 72 Fifth Avenue at the corner of West 13th Street, built to be the headquarters of Appleton & Co., a major publisher.

37 and 39 East 12th Street

39 East 12th Street, detail

42 East 12th Street and detail

36 East 12th Street base and details

72 Fifth Avenue

Other architects represented in loft buildings on these streets include Albert Wagner (No. 35 East 12th Street) and DeLemos & Cordes (No. 24 East 13th Street), both well-known firms and each the designer of an inventively ornamental loft building here.


35 East 12th Street (l.) and 24 East 13th Street

Later buildings of note on the avenues include the half-dozen buildings newly considered by LPC, designed by prominent architects including George B. Post (No. 817 Broadway), Ralph Townsend (No. 832-834 Broadway), Steven D. Hatch (No. 836 Broadway) and Robert Maynicke (No. 840 Broadway) as well as Cleverdon & Putzel (No. 830 Broadway). But there are a number of others elsewhere in the study area also produced by well-known architects of the day. No. 806-808 Broadway, directly next door to James Renwick, Jr.'s Grace Church, was designed in 1887 by Renwick's successor firm, Renwick, Aspinwall and Russell, in a neo-Gothic style that relates to the earlier building. (That firm also designed the French Flats at 39 East 10th Street). The Broadway building is bordered on the north by another Gothic Revival structure at 810 Broadway (1907, Rouse and Sloan) which the AIA Guide to New York describes as "a showcase for the turn-of-the-century effort to combine metal and glass wall and a masonry carapace."

(l. to r.) 808 Broadway and 39 East 10th Street, both 1887 by Renwick, Aspinwall, and Russell, and 810 Broadway.

Buchman & Fox designed the 16-story-tall, neo-Renaissance style No. 80 Fifth Avenue, at the corner of West 14th Street, in 1907 with tripartite bay windows at the second story and a double-story arcade beneath a projecting cornice at the top.

80 Fifth Avenue, 14th Street façade, detail

80 Fifth Avenue

821 Broadway

Less well-known architects also produced striking commercial buildings: at No. 821 Broadway, Samuel Sass designed a 10-story building mixing neo-Renaissance and neo-Romanesque elements with stone, brick and iron detail, and an unusual curving corner connecting to its 13th Street front. Louis Korn's 1897 design for No. 64-66 East 11th Street combines neo-Renaissance and neo-Romanesque styles with lacy arabesques and spiral columns. Korn's many other buildings in the area include the similarly eclectic loft buildings at 84 University Place (1894) and 60 East 11th Street (1895).

(l. to r.) 64-66 East 11th Street , 84 University Place, 60 East 11th Street – Julius Korn

The area includes a number of other striking loft and commercial buildings. David & John Jardine designed a handsome red brick structure with cast-iron ground floor at 123-125 East 12th Street/128 East 13th Street in 1889 for the Van Tassel & Kearny Horse Auction Mart – the elaborate ornamental ceramic panels above the third story include representations of horseshoes and riding crops. Richard Berger designed No. 43 East 10th Street (1891), described by the *AIA Guide to New York* as a "Grand terra-cotta, brick and cast iron complex, straddling aspects of the Classical Revival, a bit of Richardsonian Romanesque."[10] The neo-classical 127-135 Fourth Avenue/100-104 East 13th Street was designed in 1897 by Marsh, Israels, & Harder for the venerable hardware store, Hammacher & Schlemmer.

Other handsome neo-classical commercial buildings include 10-story loft building at 97 University Place (W. Hazlett, 1899); the 11-story former American Felt Co. Building at 114-118 East 13th Street (Knight & Collins, 1906); the Ginn & Co. publishing house building at 2 West

[10] Norval White and Elliot Willensky, *AIA Guide to New York City* (fourth edition; New York: Crown Publishers, 2000), p. 129.

13th Street (Charles A. Rich, 1912); and the terra cotta-clad former International Tailoring Co. Building at 111 Fourth Avenue (Starett & Van Vleck, 1919-20).

(l. to r.) 128 East 13th Street/123-125 East 12th Street; 43 East 10th Street

127-135 Fourth Avenue/100-104 East 13th Street (l.) and 97 University Place.

(l. to r.) 114-118 East 13th Street; 2 West 13th Street; 111 Fourth Avenue

One of the latest commercial buildings in the study area is No. 60 Fifth Avenue, a neo-classical design by Carrere & Hastings of 1923 for the Macmillan publishing company. More recently it housed the offices of Forbes, but today is owned by New York University. Because of its historic and architectural significance, it is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

60 Fifth Avenue.

1900-1930: Apartment buildings and Hotels

A smaller category, early 20th-century apartment buildings and hotels, includes not quite a dozen examples, most, though not all, on or near University Place. Well-known architects of such buildings in the study area include Helmle & Corbett, Sugarman & Berger, Thomas W. Lamb, and Emery Roth.

Sugarman & Berger's 40 University Place (25 East 9th Street/26 East 10th Street) of 1926 is twelve stories tall, and occupies the full blockfront between East 9th and 10th Streets; its brick-faced neo-Romanesque/Byzantine façade includes double-height ogee arches supported on spirally twisting columns.

40 University Place/25 East 9th Street/26 East 10th Street

40 University Place/25 East 9th Street/26 East 10th Street

Emery Roth's twelve-story tall Devonshire House of 1928, at No. 47 University Place (below) , is sedate by comparison, but its Beaux-Arts-Classic brick facades include fanciful stone surrounds at the corner windows, randomly sized stone-faced storefronts, and Churriguerresque-inspired columns and arches at the top stories.

Thomas Lamb's 16-story apartment building at 51 Fifth Avenue, also of 1928, is, typically for Lamb, a more sober neo-Georgian design, with decorous stone columns and pediments at the second and sixteenth stories. Former New York Governor Alfred E. Smith – the 1928 Democratic presidential nominee, and the first Roman Catholic major party presidential candidate – moved here shortly after his defeat by Herbert Hoover.

51 Fifth Avenue (l.) and the former Brittany Apartment Hotel.

Another notable building in this category is the 1929 Brittany Apartment Hotel (now NYU dormitory) at 787 Broadway/55 East 10th Street, designed by Victor C. Farrar with Gothic detailing to complement Grace Church across the street.

Perhaps the most prominent example of residential architecture in the area is the cluster of four structures that form the former Hotel Albert, today a cooperative apartment complex. Henry Hardenbergh's original 1882 hotel at the corner of University Place and 11th Street expanded in 1903-04 with a twelve-story neo-Georgian addition on University Place designed by Buchman & Fox, followed in 1922-24 by a six-story neo-Georgian addition, at the corner of East 10th Street, by William Bottomley.

The Albert Hotel

Literary and Art Connections

Hotel Albert

The Hotel Albert may be one of the most important literary landmarks in Greenwich Village – and certainly in the same league as the Chelsea Hotel – one of the reasons it was listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Among the dozens of celebrated writers, artists and musicians who have lived or stayed here:

Writers: Robert Louis Stevenson, Hart Crane, Thomas Wolfe, Chester Himes, Richard Wright, William Dean Howells, Alfred Kazin, Aram Saroyan.

Painters and sculptors: Albert Pinkham Ryder (whose most famous painting, "The Race Track," was inspired by an event at the Albert), Philip Guston, Bradley Walker Tomlin.

Musicians: The Mamas & The Papas (who wrote "California Dreamin'" here), Lovin' Spoonful (who wrote "Do you believe in Magic" here), Mothers of Invention, Jim Morrison, Carly Simon, Joni Mitchell, James Taylor.

The only other building in the area that could compete with the Albert was the Hotel Denis, whose roster of visitors included Abraham and Mary Todd Lincoln, General Ulysses S. Grant, P.T. Barnum, Mark Twain, and Sarah Bernhardt. But the St. Denis is being demolished.

The New York School

The years following World War II saw little new construction in the study area, but did see a major change in its character, as these streets south of Union Square played host to many of the artists and galleries associated with the "New York School" and the Abstract Expressionism or Action Painting movements. Many artists and galleries in the 1950s found their way to the area on or near East 10th Street between Fourth Avenue and the Bowery. As described in 1959:

> Is there an American Left Bank today? If so, where, and how does it differ from Montparnasse, from artist's haunts in Venice, Amsterdam? There has been, of course, Greenwich Village but – we therefore asked Harold Rosenberg what he thought of a certain new candidate, which at once he agreed to call, simply, Tenth Street. Mr. Rosenberg's qualifications for assessing this geographic concentration are enhanced by the fact that he lives on East Tenth Street and knows personally many of the artists of whom he speaks, here, frankly and familiarly.[11]

Among the artists who lived in the vicinity at one time or another: Willem de Kooning, Hans Hoffman, Robert Indiana, Reginal Marsh (in the 1930s), Kenneth Hayes Miller, Frank Stella and Esteban Vicente. In an oral history interview, Robert Indiana recalled what it was like living in such close proximity to other artists:

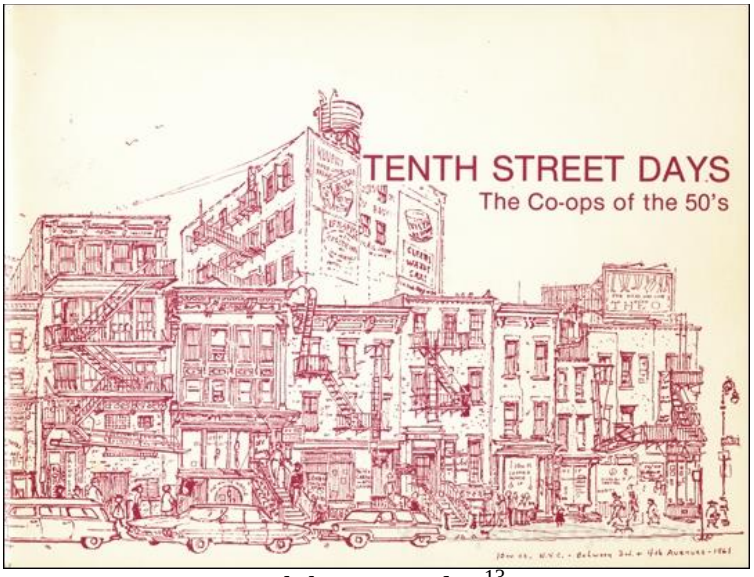
> …the first loft that I had for myself… was on Fourth Avenue immediately contingent to de Kooning's studio…. And I could look out my back window and look right into de Kooning's studio and watch him paint, you know. [What did it look like - seeing him paint?] De Kooning painting? Well, sometimes in the summer it was in the nude actually. But this made no impression on me. I never felt drawn to this expression at all… I'm just half a block from Tenth Street. [Was he then working on his women pictures, or on his abstracts?] The women paintings, I think, had been painted because I saw that exhibit at Martha Jackson's in her earlier gallery, and I think by that time he was working on American abstractions.[12]

[11] *Art News Annual* (vol. 28), 1959.

[12] Oral history interview with Robert Indiana, September 12-November 7, 1963.

Abstract Artists in Group Discussion in the East 10th St Studio of Milton Resnick

Close by was a row of co-op art galleries on Tenth Street between Fourth Avenue and the Bowery.



Exhibition catalog[13]

As described by Dore Ashton, art critic for the *New York Times*, in 1959:

[13] *Tenth Street Days: The Co-ops of the 50's / The Galleries: Tanager, Hansa, James, Camino, March, Brata, Phoenix, Area: An Artist-initiated Exhibition, Works from 1952 - 1962*

> Where only five years ago Tenth Street was a shambling artists' quarter, with many private studios and two or three agreeably unprofessional galleries, today it is a mecca for bargain hunters. It is hard to give an exact figure (they really do mushroom overnight) but roughly there are some fifteen galleries now in that downtown area. More than half of them are cooperatives.[14]

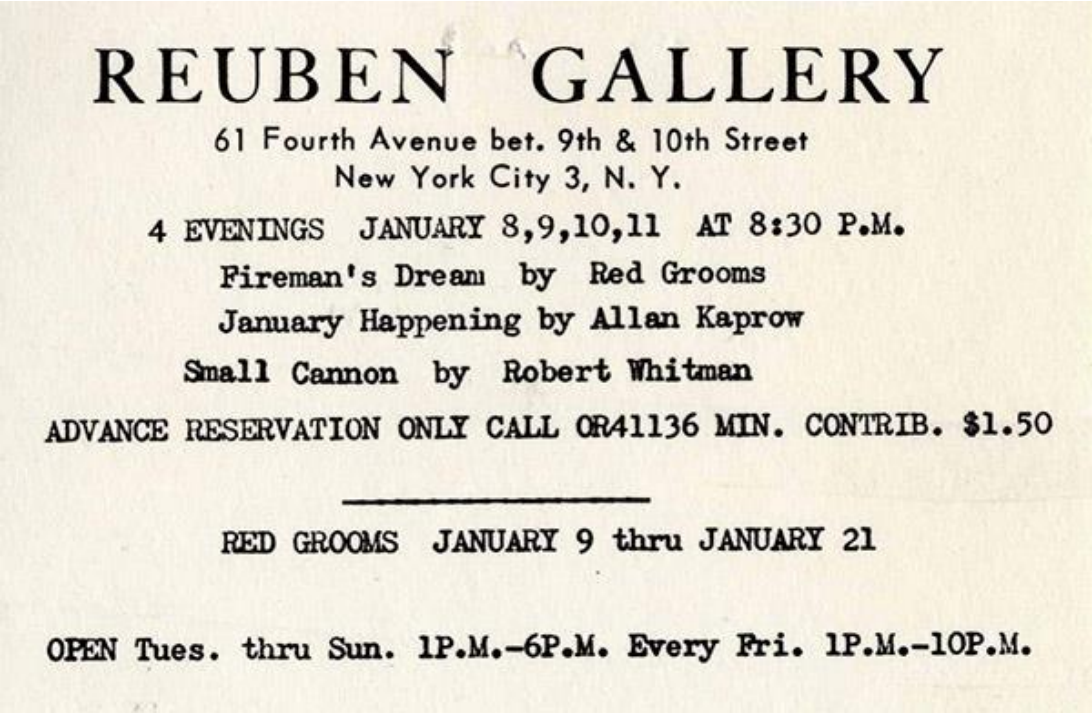
Galleries on East Tenth Street included, from west to east: Area Gallery, 80 East 10th Street; Hilda Carmel Gallery, 82 East 10th Street; Tribal Arts Gallery, 84 East 10th Street; Brata Gallery, 89 East 10th Street; Tanager Gallery, 90 East 10th Street. Ashton described the Tanager in 1958:

> Still the aristocrat among the artists' cooperative galleries…the Tanager has achieved its status by showing consistent professional taste. The artists, who work together on installations, have never choked their gallery with more entries than can decently be shown at one time. They have carefully planned lighting and wall-space with excellent results. And they have, with very few exceptions, given exhibitions only to artists who have reached some measure of maturity, regardless of their idiom.[15]

Willem de Kooning (with white hair at top of stairs) standing next door to the Tanager Gallery (above the "Bar" sign). (Photo: © Estate of Fred W. McDarrah)[16]

[14] Dore Ashton, "Art: Tenth Street Views," *New York Times*, October 23, 1959, p. 58.
[15] Dore Ashton, "Art: Tanager Gallery Opens Season: Cooperative Exhibits Work of Members," *New York Times*, October 24, 1958, p. 65.
[16] Photo and caption taken from warholstars.org - http://www.warholstars.org/andy_warhol_1928-1959.html.

Not all the galleries were on Tenth Street proper. The Hansa Gallery, one of the first to open, was at 70 East 12th Street; and the Reuben Gallery, one of the more important, was around the corner at 61 Fourth Avenue between East 10th and East 9th Streets, in an 1889 loft building designed by Benjamin E. Loww.



REUBEN GALLERY

61 Fourth Avenue bet. 9th & 10th Street
New York City 3, N. Y.

4 EVENINGS JANUARY 8,9,10,11 AT 8:30 P.M.

Fireman's Dream by Red Grooms

January Happening by Allan Kaprow

Small Cannon by Robert Whitman

ADVANCE RESERVATION ONLY CALL OR41136 MIN. CONTRIB. $1.50

RED GROOMS JANUARY 9 thru JANUARY 21

OPEN Tues. thru Sun. 1P.M.-6P.M. Every Fri. 1P.M.-10P.M.

The *Art Bulletin* in 2004 recalled its makeshift character:

> The Reuben Gallery…was a third-floor walk-up in a small, aging building. Not only the ceilings but even the walls on which the art was hung were made of stamped metal, a hallmark of New York prewar construction. With an awkwardly exposed utility meter plainly visible in the room and even an old heating stove, the space would have registered as an antiquated antonym to the development of the neighborhood.[17]

[17] Joshua A. Shannon, "Claes Oldenburg's "The Street" and Urban Renewal in Greenwich Village, 1960," *Art Bulletin*, Vol. 86 No. 1 (March 2004), p. 153.

61 Fourth Avenue

Among many other artists, Claes Oldenburg exhibited there, including his installation, *The Street* in 1960:

Claes Oldenburg, *The Street*, installation at the Reuben Gallery, 1960[18]

[18] Shannon, p. 149. Photo by Charles Rappaport.

The artists' colony around Tenth Street also attracted its share of poets. Frank O'Hara lived at 90-92 University Place. He explained the neighborhood's attraction in a 1966 interview:

> John (Ashberry) and Kenneth (Koch) and I, and a number of other people later found out that the only people interested in our work were painters and sculptors. You know that they were enthusiastic about different ideas and more inquisitive. Being non-literary they had no party program about academic standards and attitudes and so on, so that you could say "I don't like Yeats" and they would say "I know just how you feel; I hate Picasso too." They created a much pleasanter atmosphere than the literary community…and apart from that fact, of course, the young people doing anything interesting were the painters.[19]

Artists need to socialize, and a number of bars or taverns became favorite haunts, perhaps the best-known being the Cedar Tavern at 24 University Place until 1963, when it relocated to 82 University Place, finally closing its doors in 2006:

[19] Frank O'Hara in a television interview, citied in Harold Snedcot, *The Achievement of Frank O'Hara*, Ph.D. dissertation at Brown University, 1970, p. 27.

Closing of the Cedar Bar, March 30, 1963
(Fred W. McDarrah)
Among those visible are American poets Jack Micheline (1929 – 1998) (born Harold Silver) (left, smiling towards camera), Frank O'Hara (1926 – 1966) (center, looking towards Micheline), and Barbara Guest (1920 – 2006) (looking at camera, in light colored jacket, and American sculptor Abram Schlemowitz (right fore, with glass in hand).

A more formal gathering place was provided by The Artists Club, which once stood at 73 Fourth Avenue. As described in retrospect by one member:

> The Artists Club was founded…by Philip Pavia, Milton Resnick, Landes Lewitin, Conrad Marca-Relli, and the de Koonings (their stated reason was to get away from the garrulous bums of Washington Square and the hard-eyed, ketchup-hoarding waiters of the Waldorf cafeteria). By fall the Club was going full blast, with nightly rap sessions ("voting members only"), Friday talks, and parties after exhibition openings. The first session I attended starred the philosopher Heinrich Bluecher (husband of Hannah Arendt). He spoke about Expressionist aesthetics, which was about as far away from everybody's interests as anybody could get (Kandinsky's sensation that a certain red color talked back to him was invoked). Then came the question period. A pale…young man got up and, in a stylish stutter, began: "Your ontological premise…" and he went on to "teleology," "eschatology"…. I was startled and looked around the room to see how my new-found, hard-boiled, hard-drinking, poetry-loving artist-friends would take this vocabulary. To my surprise, they were beaming with delight. The artists doted on talk, the more intellectual the better…. The Club attracted most of the new artists at one time or another.[20]

[20] Thomas B. Hess, "When Art Talk Was a Fine Art," *New York Magazine*, December 30, 1974-January 6, 1975, pp. 82-83.

RUDOLPH BURCKHARDT

Members of the Club: *Two of the founders of the Artists Club were Willem and Elaine de Kooning, shown in his studio on Fourth Avenue at 10th Street. Against the wall is de Kooning's painting "Attic"; on the floor is Elaine's self-portrait which was about to be exhibited in the 1949 Janis Gallery show, "Artist: Man and Wife."*

The Future

As development pressures mount on the blocks south of Union Square, many of the buildings in this report will likely be threatened with demolition. Some of the sites associated with the New York School have already disappeared. Development is unavoidable, but there is much here which merits protection by the Landmarks Preservation Commission.

The study area includes, among other sites worthy of further consideration, an unusually handsome cluster of late 1890s loft buildings on East 11th, 12th and 13th Streets between University Place and Broadway. Along with the recently-heard Broadway buildings and other buildings north of Grace Church along Broadway and Fourth Avenue, as well as on and off the northern end of University Place and Lower Fifth Avenue, they collectively form a strikingly intact and impressive streetscape of late-19th and early-20th century commercial New York, including works by significant architects. On and just off the lower end of University Place east of the existing Greenwich Village Historic District, and on and just off Fifth Avenue north of the existing Greenwich Village Historic District, are a noteworthy collection of handsome pre-war apartment buildings and surviving mid-19th century row houses virtually indistinguishable from the buildings located within the historic district they abut. Additionally, buildings such as those comprising the former Hotel Albert; the McCreery's building; the former St. Ann Parochial School; the former home of Macmillan and Forbes at 60 Fifth Avenue; some of the more intact early-19th century houses; and those intact buildings with connections to the post-World War II art scene, are especially worthy of consideration by the Commission. It would be a shame to lose these to demolition or insensitive alteration.

The Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation urges the Landmarks Commission to continue its review of the buildings in this area – the work is not yet complete.

(top to bottom) The St. Denis Hotel (1854, James Renwick) when built, in 2017, and in March, 2019 being demolished. Its planned replacement is at the lower right.

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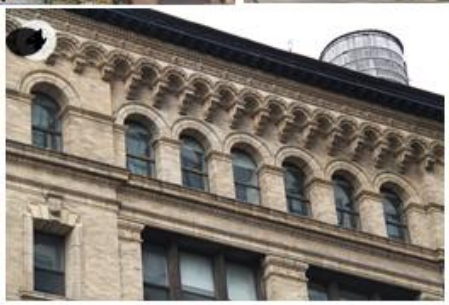


GREENWICH VILLAGE SOCIETY FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION

VILLAGE PRESERVATION