

The Far West Village and Greenwich Village Waterfront:

A Proposal for Preservation to the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission



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**Submitted by the Greenwich Village Society for
Historic Preservation
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Introduction

The Far West Village, located along the Hudson River waterfront between Horatio and Barrow Streets, is where Greenwich Village began, home to its earliest European settlements. Within its dozen or so blocks can be found a treasure trove of historic buildings and resources spanning about a hundred years and a broad range of styles and building types.

However, the district's character is united by several overarching commonalities and punctuated by several distinctive features that define its unique significance, including: its role as a unique intact record of the only mixed maritime/industrial and residential neighborhood along the Hudson River waterfront; its unusually large collection of several maritime, industrial, and residential building types not found elsewhere; its collection of several buildings which were pioneering instances of adaptive re-use of industrial buildings for residential purposes; its numerous key industrial complexes which shaped New York City's development; the particular buildings and streets within its boundaries which served as a record of several important moments in the history of industry, shipping, and New York City; and several exceptional buildings which are noteworthy due to their age, unique composition, early manifestation of a subsequently common building type, or historical and architectural significance.

A considerable amount of recent construction has taken place in the area, and some of the Far West Village's historic buildings have been lost or unsympathetically altered due to a lack of landmark protections. More historic resources are threatened. The Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation submits the following proposal to protect, honor, and maintain these valuable historic resources before they are further compromised or lost altogether.

Overview of Proposal Area. The area of the Far West Village/Greenwich Village Waterfront identified by GVSHP for action by the Landmarks Preservation Commission contains approximately 108 buildings and the patterns of two historically significant streets (see attached map). In its dynamic and diverse architecture there is an intact record of the development of historic New York's premier working waterfront neighborhood with its many facets: houses, tenements, stables, warehouses, factories, mills, bakeries, sailors' hotels, wagon shops, churches, schools, and police stations. It contains an unusually high concentration of certain building types that cannot be found in such abundance and in such striking form anywhere else in New York, particularly sailor's hotels, stables, and monumental Romanesque warehouses. Its buildings and its streets also mark and memorialize extremely important historic events, including the return of the surviving passengers from the Titanic disaster (113 Jane Street); the inventions of the transistor, chain broadcasting, the vacuum tube, and the transatlantic telephone and the production of the first "talkie" (the former Bell Telephone Laboratories, now Westbeth); and the erection of the nation's first reform-oriented prison (Charles Lane). It is also home to the remnants of several large early industrial complexes that were key to the development of this area and, more broadly, the city as a capitol of commerce.

This long history of an evolving maritime-industrial and residential neighborhood manifests itself in more than twenty early 19th century and more than thirty-five late 19th century buildings, with the remaining predominantly comprised of early 20th century structures. The built forms, which tell this special history, range from tiny, modest structures to monumental edifices; from pristinely preserved to highly altered; from clear architectural gems by some of the 19th and 20th century's most prominent architects, to relatively anonymous structures designed by obscure or unknown figures. Within the area remains a handful of building types that reflect the area's dual commercial/residential nature, including several combination stable/residences and houses with stores or workshops below. There are more than twenty early 19th century houses, including two wooden houses, four federal-era houses, and eight Greek Revival houses; ten stables; four grand turn-of-the-century hotels (all but one of which is nearly perfectly intact), which served the area's large transient seamen population; a dozen multiple dwellings, including an unusually early apartment building; more than fifteen factories, eight storehouses, and six warehouses, which include some of New York's most striking and architecturally and historically significant industrial buildings; and an extremely handsome church, school, and former police station, civic and ecclesiastical monuments standing as emblems of the area's residential development which stood side by side with its industrial development

Due to the ever-increasing danger of demolition of the historic buildings in the Far West Village, swift action by the Landmarks Preservation Commission to designate this area is of the utmost importance.

Location and Identity. Spread between the wholesale food market buildings of Gansevoort Market to the north and the printing house/warehouse district to the south, sandwiched between the Hudson River waterfront and the residential precincts of Greenwich Village, this area has a discernible character distinct from its surroundings. Industrial and residential development were both dependent upon and directly related to the waterfront and the network of businesses, ferries, and markets that sprung up around it. Though bearing some similarities to the rest of Greenwich Village to its east, the architecture and the history of the Far West Village was always more industrial and more modest. The strong influence of the nearby waterfront, combined with the barrier provided by the old Ninth Avenue el on Greenwich Street (New York's first elevated rail line, erected in 1867) and the High Line east of Washington Street (New York's first elevated freight rail line, erected in 1934) – each technological miracles of their time – meant that this area developed differently than the more residential precincts directly to the east. In fact, the area is the only one of Manhattan's Hudson River waterfront neighborhoods that developed and maintained both a residential and an industrial/maritime presence throughout its history, side by side (communities like Tribeca and the Gansevoort Market became almost exclusively industrial/commercial). In the latter half of the 20th century, after the area's importance as a maritime neighborhood waned, the Far West Village pioneered the trend of adaptive re-use of industrial buildings for residential purposes, a record of which is etched in many of its most impressive buildings. The adaptive re-use movement that began here literally transformed this and so many other older industrial neighborhoods in New York and in cities throughout the world.

Era of Significance

The area has a clear era of significance for new development firmly grounded in neighborhood, city, state, and maritime industry history. The era of significance begins in 1820, with the construction of the first house that survives to this day at 132 Charles Street. This was followed in the later 1820's and 1830's by the construction of several other extant Federal and Greek Revival houses. The initial wave of development around this time comes as no coincidence; while scattered farmhouses and other semi-rural construction were found throughout the area prior to this time, this more urbanized wave of development was spurred and made possible by several critical factors. In 1820, much of the present-day Far West Village's land was created from landfill. In 1822, a yellow fever epidemic downtown drove New Yorkers to seek refuge in the Village of Greenwich,

a key factor in the city's northern expansion and the joining of Greenwich Village to New York City. In 1825, the Erie Canal opened, leading the way to the Hudson's rise as the nation's pre-eminent commercial waterway. And by the end of the 1820's, the mammoth Newgate State Prison, stretching from present day Christopher Street to Charles Lane, from Washington Street to west of the present bulkhead line, was closed and then dismantled, facilitating further development of the Far West Village.

In the wake of these developments, several houses built in the area over approximately the next twenty years were only slight departures from their Federal and Greek Revival neighbors to the east in the Greenwich Village Historic District. However, given the much more commercial nature of this area, a much higher percentage of these houses served as both residences and stores, with commercial spaces in their ground floors (such as 651-655 Washington Street), while a significant number were also further transformed for commercial purposes in the late 19th century.

From the late 1820's, the Far West Village transformed from a largely rural outpost north of a small city to a thriving commercial, industrial, maritime, and residential neighborhood at the center of the busiest working waterfront in the world; its buildings reflect this tremendous arc of growth and diversity of uses. This engine of development continued fairly unabated with the construction of numerous maritime hotels, factories, warehouses, machine shops, stables, foundries, and wagon shops until the Great Depression.

During the 1930's, development here, as in much of the country, stalled. In addition to the economic downturn, however, development patterns here also changed due to a seismic shift taking place in the shipping industry. The emergence of significantly larger boats carrying heavier loads requiring bigger piers and deeper waters meant that Manhattan's Hudson River waterfront was no longer an ideal location for such trade; Brooklyn, and eventually New Jersey and cities elsewhere supplanted the Hudson River waterfront's commercial supremacy. The opening of the Holland and Lincoln Tunnels, and the George Washington Bridge (1927-1937), and the emergence of car and truck transportation in the interwar years also meant that transportation between Manhattan and New Jersey and lands east could, for the first time, be easily accomplished by land, accelerating the decline in importance of the Greenwich Village waterfront at this time. However, in a last-ditch attempt to accommodate the shifting patterns of the maritime industry, the High Line elevated rail line was built in 1934 to try to accommodate the needs of waterfront industry by allowing goods and materials to be transported directly, above the crowded streets, to and from industrial buildings. This wrought a final wave of development related to the industrial/maritime history of the area,

with major alterations to the Bell Telephone Laboratories Buildings (now Westbeth) along Washington Street, and other large and distinctive buildings built adjacent to the High Line, such as the warehouse at 303 West 10th Street.

Little new construction of significance took place in the area outlined in this proposal after the 1930's. However, the final and secondary era of significance for the Far West Village extends from the mid-1960's to the 1980's, and reflects changes in urban development patterns that this area presaged and pioneered. Rather than new construction, we see ground-breaking conversions of industrial/warehouse buildings for residential purposes. The harbinger of all of these was the conversion of the Bell Telephone Laboratories complex to Westbeth, the nation's first subsidized housing complex for artists, and one of the first large-scale conversions of an industrial building for residential use anywhere. In the twenty or so years that followed, more than a dozen industrial buildings (and the police precinct building at 135 Charles Street) followed with residential conversions, some of which impeccably maintained and preserved the facades of the buildings more or less as they were, while others altered their appearances as part of the conversion process (in the most extreme case, a former freight depot for a brewery was unrecognizably converted into two rows of eight duplex-style townhouse apartments, setback behind small suburban style front yards, at 8A-8F Charles Lane and 151-157 Charles Street).

Building History and Types

The building types of the Far West Village reflect the diversity of uses that called this multi-faceted district home and illustrate the evolution of conditions in the industries and in the residential life of the area throughout its era of significance.

Pre-Civil War

The House/House and Store. The earliest extant building type in the Far West Village is the house, which for the most part were developed in the area from 1820 to 1850. Many were in the typical Federal or Greek Revival styles of the day, which can also be found elsewhere in Greenwich Village and New York, though 132 Charles Street (1834—designated New York City landmark, 1966) and 354 West 11th Street (1844) are particularly impeccably preserved examples of these styles. More typical, however are houses which contained commercial uses on their ground floors, reflecting the mixed commercial/residential nature of the area. These include 651, 653, and 655 Washington Street (1829), 398 West Street (1832), 161 and 163 Charles Street (1832), and 370 and 372 West 11th Street (1839), though ground floor commercial uses for the

Charles Street houses were added later in the 19th century, as were the fire escapes on the West 11th Street buildings.

More unusual, however, is 6 Weehawken Street (1849), a wood frame house with a peaked roof and exterior stair that, while once a common building type along the Hudson River waterfront, is the only such remaining house anywhere in Manhattan. Built by a boat builder, the ground floor operated for many years as an oyster bar, a type of establishment that was once a staple of the waterfront social world. Oyster bars were also of particular significance to African-Americans, as the oyster trade was one of the few trades in 19th century New York in which African-Americans predominated. With minor changes, this house appears to look much as it did in the 19th century. Due to the passage of restrictive fire laws in March of 1849 prohibiting wood frame construction in Lower Manhattan, this was probably the last such building built anywhere south of 32nd Street and certainly it is the last such extant building. Unusual for its shape is the trapezoidal Levi Springsteen House at 130 Charles Street (1853). Its atypical configuration and double-width front conforms to the dimensions of its lot, which reflects the rhomboid shape of blocks in the Far West Village resulting from the unusual street grid.

Several more highly altered houses of the 1830's and 40's survive on the south side of Perry Street and the north side of Christopher Street, between West and Washington Streets, and Charles Street between Washington and Greenwich Streets. Many of these alterations reflect the ebb and flow of industry in the area, with successive adaptations of the buildings for industrial uses and often back again to residential uses.

The Stable. Stables, more than a dozen of which survive in some form today, closely follow the development of houses in the area. Reflective of the area's unique commercial/residential mix, the stables often had residences above, and were as likely to serve a commercial purpose as a private one. 7 Weehawken Street (1836) had a dwelling above its stables, and is one of the oldest surviving streetfront stables anywhere in Manhattan. Several of Charles Lane's one and two-story brick structures were originally built as stables, while later stables such as the Arts and Crafts style building at 356-360 West 11th Street (1915, James S. Maher) and the Romanesque/Neo-Classical style building at 9-11 Weehawken Street (1909, George M. McCabe) were grander edifices which readily adapted to later industrial uses. Other later large stables, such as 140-144 Perry Street (1909, Arthur M. Duncan), and 166-172 Perry Street (1906, Hill and Stout) were commodious structures that easily became garages and storage facilities. Other stables, such as those at 387-91 West 12th Street (1856) were first built as factories and later converted to use as stables, though it is this stage of this building's development which

appears to have shaped its current form, apparent to this day even after multiple conversions.

Civil War to the Depression

There is little extant construction in the area from the 1850's until after the Civil War. Starting in the late 1860's through the late 19th century, we see the large-scale development of key building types typical of the post-Civil War Industrial Revolution in New York – factories, warehouses, and tenements. This wave of development was spurred partly by the construction of the Ninth Avenue El which ran down Greenwich Street (and under which several trolley lines ran); the earlier part of this wave includes more modestly scaled and proportioned utilitarian structures, while the latter part, in the late 19th century, takes on a grander scale and design, befitting the City's increasing prosperity and importance.

Tenements/Multiple Dwellings. Earlier tenements in the area are best exemplified by 304 West 10th Street/1 Weehawken Street (1873, William E. Warring) a simple but lyrical design with semi-circular cornice and prominent lintels (all details above the ground floor are virtually intact). The most striking of the later tenements in the area is 128 Charles Street/716 Greenwich Street (1881, William Jose), with its rich red Ruskinian brick, terra cotta lintels and street sign, acute corner, gracefully rounded cornice, elaborately detailed fire-escape balconies, and cast-iron storefronts (the latter two surviving in their original form on the Charles Street side of the building). Probably the only multiple dwelling built during this time that is not a tenement is the noteworthy 159-163 Christopher Street/649 Washington Street (1880, John B. Snook). Snook is the architect of several other designated properties in New York City and several other properties in the Far West Village (433-435 West Street, 162-168 Bank Street), and here created one of New York's earliest extant apartment buildings. The unusually elegant building has a beveled corner at Washington Street and handsome early Victorian details. It also has projecting balconies along Christopher Street (providing views of the nearby Hudson River), which is highly unusual for a building of this era. The last tenement erected in the area, 391 West Street/8 Weehawken Street (1902, Richard Rohl), has a particularly handsome and intact red brick and terra cotta façade.

Factories/Warehouses/Industrial Complexes. Large industrial complexes once occupied much of the Far West Village, and leave some of the most dramatic visual imprints upon the area. These include Bell Telephone/Western Electric, Nabisco, Devoe Paint, Enoch Morgan Soaps, Beadleston & Woertz, and the Tower and Shepherd Warehouses.

In 1861 a wood-planning mill was constructed at 445-453 West Street/169 Bank Street. It was later converted to a box factory (by 1879), a paint and oil works (1881), and stores and lofts (1895), before becoming part of the Western Electric complex which would eventually fill the remainder of this superblock (1897). This evolution is typical of the adaptations of many buildings in this area to the continual waves of industrial change that swept over the area. 445-453 West Street is the earliest extant purely industrial building in the area, and is characterized by simple rounded brick arches and cornice which make for a very utilitarian but handsome design (387-391 West 12th Street was built as a factory in 1856, but was later significantly remodeled to serve as a stable; it does, however, share the same simple rounded arch motif as 445-453 West Street). Variations on this theme – broad, simple structures of brick and stone utilizing arched windows as elemental decorations – would become the hallmark of industrial designs in this area. At the northern end of the district, two remnants of the Devoe Paint complex (which once occupied the entire block bounded by Jane, West, Horatio, and Washington Streets) stand at 111 Jane Street (1875, Samuel A. Warner) and 110-112 Horatio Street (1883, Kimball & Wisedall). While 111 Jane resembled a typical loft building of the era and has been altered significantly, 110-112 Horatio displays the bold Romanesque detailing which would become common among industrial buildings in the area.

Later 19th century factories and warehouses had a larger scale and generally bolder and more striking forms. These include the dramatic Shepherd Warehouse at 277 West 10th Street/667-675 Washington Street (1896, Martin V.B. Ferdon); the former U.S. Appraiser's Warehouse at 150 Christopher/660 Greenwich/112-116 Barrow/641 Washington Streets (1898, Willoughby J. Edbrooket; designated New York City landmark, 1966); the Tower Warehouses at 726-736 Greenwich Street/122-130 Perry Street (1898 Gilbert A. Schellenger) and 720 Greenwich Street /127 Charles Street (1902, James B. Baker), and the Bell Telephone Laboratories at 455-465 West Street/59-77 Bethune Street (1898, Cyrus L.W. Eidlitz; listed on the State and National Register of Historic Places and as a National Historic Landmark, 1975), and at 141-149 Bank/734-744 Washington Streets (1900, Cyrus L.W. Eidlitz). With the exception of the Bell Telephone Complex, each of these structures, erected at nearly the same time, exhibited the raw, elemental, Romanesque design typical of Far West Village industrial buildings in the late 19th century.

Enoch Morgan's Sons Co.'s Soap factory and workshop at 162-168 Bank/439-441 West Streets (1888, John B. Snook & Sons) and 433-435 West Street (1889, altered to 7-story building by John B. Snook & Sons) have a more simplified visual style due to their gradual expansion to the current 7-story height. However, the original clean, simple white brick motif for the structure may have been intended to remind the observer of

the company's soap and candle products which were produced within. Factory and warehouse construction continued in the area into the early 20th century. 155-159 Perry Street (1913), a handsome Neo-classical structure with all details currently intact, is a product of this era.

Maritime Hotels. The late 19th century and early 20th century also saw the erection of the Far West Village's great seamen's' hotels, a building type typical of this area and reflective of its working waterfront, maritime and residential mix. These include the former Great Eastern Hotel at 180 Christopher/386 West Streets (altered to combine 3 prior buildings 1888, John B. Franklin), the handsome Neo-classical Keller Hotel at 150 Barrow/384-385 West Streets (1898, Julius Munckwitz), the former Holland Hotel at 396-397 West/305 West 10th Streets (1904, Charles Stegmayer), and the former American Seamen's Friend Society Hotel at 113-115 Jane/503-507 West Streets (1909, Boring and Tilton, designated New York City landmark, 2000). Except the former Great Eastern, all are virtually entirely intact. Moreover, both the Holland and the Seamen's Friends visually reflect their maritime role and settings – the Holland with its undulating arches and rounded corner entrance reflecting the lapping waters of the nearby Hudson, and the Seamen's Friend's with its corner beacon tower. While of different forms and styles, all four buildings embody and convey an important piece of the area's history.

Civic and Ecclesiastical Buildings. The late 19th century also saw the construction of several particularly striking buildings of a civic/ecclesiastical nature in the Far West Village, reflecting the growing wealth and prominence of the city and its institutions at the time. That such lavish structures as these were erected in a gritty working neighborhood such as the Far West Village might seem surprising, but quite pleasantly so. The civic buildings include the Victorian former Public School 107 at 270-274 West 10th Street (1886, D. J. Stagg) and the Neo-classical former Ninth Precinct Station House at 135 Charles Street (1897, John DuFais), both erected by the City of New York. The highly unusual Czech-styled St. Veronica's Roman Catholic Church at 149-155 Christopher Street (1890, John J. Deery) is the only church in the area. All three function as prominent markers of the residential life that carried on around the area's industry and commerce.

Interwar Years

Building activity declined considerably in the interwar years as shipping activity in the area also diminished. With a few notable exceptions, most new construction in the interwar and immediate post-war years was related to the newly prominent automobile and trucking field, and included several small garage and auto repair structures. However, the construction of the High Line in 1934 also spawned a substantial and significant

alteration to the Bell Telephone complex. While the High Line has been dismantled in this area, its mark upon the built environment is very visible in this regard.

Factories/Warehouses/Industrial Complexes. The National Biscuit Co. (better known as Nabisco) Cracker Factory at 70 Bethune/469-485 West/396 West 12th Streets (1921, A.G. Zimmerman) was a southern addendum to a larger Nabisco complex between 14th and 17th Streets, and was designed in the same simple, handsome, utilitarian style as several other Nabisco complexes erected across the country at the time. The building was emblematic of the trend towards projecting a uniform corporate identity through architecture for the emerging class of large corporate conglomerations, which included Nabisco. Also, with its simple geometric piers, regular bays and expansive industrial windows, the building was a strong step in the direction of Bauhaus modernism, which both the architect Zimmerman and Adolphus Greene, the Nabisco President, appeared to be aware of in these and other designs. The factory's 100-ft. tall brick chimney has served as a local landmark for generations. In the 1920s, Bell Telephone expanded their facilities at 51-55 Bethune/746-754 Washington Streets (1923, McKenzie, Voorhees and Gemlin), and 151 Bank Street (1928, Bell Telephone Laboratories Inc.). These new structures continued the simple yellow-brick Neo-renaissance forms of the original complex, but in a more stripped-down, geometric style. The most fully modernist structure from this era in the Far West Village is the boxy warehouse at 150-168 Charles/287-303 West 10th Streets (1938, David Levy). Its concrete piers and brick bays with casement windows have a machine-made regularity, bespeaking the influence of the emerging modern movement. The building's enormous bays reflect the new need to accommodate large vehicles for deliveries, a trend that would utterly transform the area as land transportation supplanted water's primacy and the area's industrial base waned.

Garages and Auto-Related Industrial Buildings. A handful of garage and auto industry-related structures were built in the Far West Village during the interwar and immediate post-war years. In addition, several older structures were altered to accommodate new garage or storage related purposes, such as 162 and 164 Perry Street, houses from the 1830's altered in 1946. The most substantial new construction was at 164-174 Christopher Street (1931, Nathan Rotholz), a garage structure that has since been renovated for residential use. 132-136 Perry Street (1923, Robert D. Cohn and Frank E. Viola) is a smaller garage structure with typical, but handsome 1920's geometric brick detailing. The building has since had a slender setback residential tower erected atop it.

The remainder of the garage and auto-industry related structures erected at this time largely consist of 1 to 2 story utilitarian structures erected on Christopher, Charles, Perry, West 12th, and West Streets.

Introduction of the High Line. Although the High Line has been dismantled in this area, a vestige of it remains imbedded in 51-55 Bethune/746-754 Washington Streets (1923, McKenzie, Voorhees and Gemlin) in the Bell Telephone Lab complex. Most dramatically, a tall, two-story cavern was carved out of the structure above the second floor to accommodate the elevated rail line's passage through the structure.

The Post-War Years and Adaptive Re-Use

While there has been a great deal of new construction in the Far West Village during the post-war years, almost all of it has been excluded from the area in this proposal (one prominent exception is the Village Community School Addition at 278-280 West 10th Street/665 Washington Street, 2003, Leo J. Blackmun Architects, a superbly designed building with a contemporary take on the neighboring school's Victorian detailing). Most of the new construction in the area sadly bears little relationship to the historic fabric of the neighborhood. One arguable exception is the West Village Houses (Perkins and Will, 1974), a complex embodying a social history and site planning which is clearly interwoven with the history of the neighborhood and its built environment, and is of considerable significance unto itself. However, due to its relatively young age, among other factors, it is not requested for consideration as part of this proposal.

The single most important contribution of the post-war era to the historic fabric of the Far West Village is, undoubtedly, the advent of adaptive reuse for residential purposes. This movement, which really began in earnest in Greenwich Village and Soho, transformed this neighborhood, and soon thereafter changed the face of cities of the industrialized world forever.

Westbeth. The conversion of the former Bell Telephone Complex into housing for artists and studio and theater space was the first of this wave. From 1965 to 1970, the complex was transformed to the designs of Richard Meier. The exterior of the complex was kept largely intact, with the exception of the demolition of 155-163 Bank Street to make way for the Westbeth Courtyard (necessary to allow easy access to the complex and to permit sufficient light and air into the new residential spaces). On the interior, the now iconic rounded balconies were added, updating the industrial aesthetic of the building for late 20th century eyes and residential occupants. As the site of the invention of so many technological innovations in the field of sound transmission, and as the first large-scale

conversion of an industrial building to residential purposes (and first subsidized housing for artists), the complex stands to this day as a monument to some of the most significant developments in the industrial and post-industrial life of cities.

Industrial to Residential Conversions Follow. After Westbeth paved the way, a wave of conversions followed, mostly from industrial to residential uses. In 1974, the Shepherd Warehouse at 277 West 10th Street was converted to residences, with its bold Romanesque façade similarly preserved except for the loss of a segment of its cornice. In the same year, the Tower Warehouse at 720 and 726-736 Greenwich Street was also converted to residential use, keeping its Romanesque façade scrupulously intact. A stable and warehouse at 704-706 and 708-712 Greenwich Street were converted to housing in 1978; a former paper mill at 124-132 Jane Street in 1978; the Neo-classical warehouse at 155-159 Perry Street in 1984; the Romanesque former paint factory at 110-112 Horatio Street in 1984; and the Federal Archives Building at 150 Christopher Street in 1987. All accomplished these conversions while carefully maintaining and restoring most or all of the historic features of the facades of these buildings. An interesting twist on this largely industrial to residential conversion wave is 686-690 Greenwich Street. Built as three tenements in 1868, by 1917 they had been joined as a single warehouse, and were then restored to residential use in 1977. In the process, much of the original face detail was lost, though the ground-floor cast-iron columns remain intact.

Several other converted buildings suffered the loss of some or all original historic details, a reminder of the need for landmarking protections. 380 West 12th Street, a former storehouse converted to residences in 1979, had much of its original detailing replaced by a stuccoed surface, and industrial style metal balconies added, though remnants of the original cast-iron ground floor loading bays remain. The former garage at 166-174 Christopher Street, converted in 1980, also had a stucco coat applied to its surface and penthouses added, but likewise retain some elements of its original metal details at the ground floor.

Other Types of Conversions. Though most adaptive re-uses in the Far West Village were for industrial buildings adapted to residential uses, other types of conversions did take place here. The former P.S. 107 (later St. Veronica's School) at 270-274 West 10th Street was converted to use as an independent, not-for-profit elementary school in 1970, with its bold brick Victorian details perfectly preserved. The former 9th Police Precinct Headquarters at 135 Charles was converted to the Gendarme Apartments in 1977, also with impeccable preservation of its façade. The former Keller Hotel at 150 Barrow Street is currently being converted to residences. While the work is not yet complete, building permits and work

thus far seem to indicate that the façade will be kept intact and restored. Less fortunate from a historic preservation point of view was the conversion of the former Great Eastern Hotel at 180 Christopher Street, which underwent a dramatic simplification of its façade during a 1982 renovation and conversion.

Historic Streetbeds and Patterns

While it could be argued that all remnants of Greenwich Village's original streetplan bear historic significance, clearly Weehawken Street and Charles Lane, included in this proposal for designation of their entire roadbed and pattern, bear special and unique significance.

Charles Lane. This 1-block long street marks the northern boundary of the former Newgate State Prison. The prison, a massive edifice built in 1796-7 to the designs of Joseph Mangin (one of the architects of City Hall), was the first reform-oriented prison in the U. S., the first large-scale development in New York City north of Lower Manhattan's tip, and the catalyst for much of Greenwich Village's initial development. The complex and its scenic grounds came to be a tourist designation almost immediately after its erection. At the same time, Charles Lane was laid out as a passageway at the north end of the complex, and even after the prison's destruction in the 1820's, the street remained. Alternately called "Pig Alley", Charles Street, and eventually Charles Lane, it is an irregular departure from the Far West Village's already somewhat irregular street pattern, and is one of the few such alleys anywhere in New York. With no sidewalks and a width of about 15 feet, it is probably one of New York's narrowest mapped streets. Official mapping did not take place until 1893, when the street was finally declared city property after existing in an official limbo for approximately 70 years following the prison's demolition. Around this time the street was laid with the surviving paving stones, an unusual and much older type of paving block purportedly not seen elsewhere in New York City. Due to the historic paving stones and the lane's status as the sole physical remnant of the Newgate State Prison complex, the street bed and pattern are proposed for inclusion/designation.

Weehawken Street. This street is just two blocks to the south of Charles Street, and is another seemingly idiosyncratic deviation from the already peculiar street pattern of the area. The 1-block long street is also known as the "shortest street in Manhattan." The street was laid out on a corner of the old Newgate Prison complex after the prison's demolition in 1834 to house the Weehawken Market. The market was one of many which dotted much of the Lower Hudson River waterfront in the 19th century, but this is one of the few remaining physical vestiges of them. As Christopher Street became a major ferry terminal and transportation nexus, the Weehawken Market was established at this location to supply produce and goods

ferried in from New Jersey. The market itself was short-lived, closing by the late 1840's, but the street in which the market was located remained, even as houses/stores (such as 6 Weehawken Street) were developed alongside the street.

"An entire century, the century that transformed New York, is represented in the area just west of Greenwich Village and east of the Hudson River. The story of that transformation is told in its warehouses, its market sheds, its factory buildings, its small houses, its tenements, its seamen's hotels, the bricks, the masonry, the odd streetscapes, and the narrow alleys.

This is not history as an orderly time line – a Federal street here, a Greek revival street there – but history as it was, with all the manic energy, hurlyburly growth, ebb and flow that marked the district, the city, and the century.

The Greenwich Village waterfront, encompassing scores of historic buildings and streets, can absorb some depredation, but there is a tipping point in all historic neighborhoods when the sheer volume of placeless architecture overwhelms any sense of place. Looking at the rate of growth of inappropriate structures, it is clear that time is not on history's side.

The little island that Henry Hudson barely noticed rose to prominence because of its waterfront. All that followed in other neighborhoods – the brownstones, the row houses, the mansions, the cast-iron buildings, the mercantile palaces edge. No Manhattan waterfront district of this size or importance has survived our "century of destruction." The historic Greenwich Village waterfront still stands as a daily reminder of who we were. The question remains: for how long?"

From Maritime Mile,

Stu Waldman, 2002.

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