

New York Landmarks Conservancy



newsletter

Spring 2003



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New York Landmarks Conservancy Newsletter

The newsletter is a publication of the New York Landmarks Conservancy. Questions and comments can be directed to Kalyani Glass, Manager of Communications, New York Landmarks Conservancy, 141 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY, 10010, 212-995-5260, kalyaniglass@nylandmarks.org.

Writers include Erin Tobin Bearden, Carol Braun, Ann-Isabel Friedman, Alex Herrera, Roger Lang, and Daniel Vincent.

The cover and page 5 show the restored MetLife tower, as shot by Whitney Cox Photography for Building Conservation Associates, Inc.

Additional photography was provided by Joe Vericker (p. 1), Cesar Pelli & Associates (p. 5), Whitney Cox Photography for Kostow Greenwood Architects (p. 6), and Maura Moynihan (Inside Back Cover). Conservancy staff members Erin Tobin Bearden (p. 8, 9, 10), Ann-Isabel Friedman (p. 7), Alex Herrera (p. 3), and James Mahoney (p. 5, 6, 10) provided photography.

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Dear Friends,

The Conservancy is celebrating a landmark birthday this year — our 30th. As visionary as our founders were, I doubt even they could have imagined the roughly one thousand buildings we've helped save, the experienced technical staff we've built, and certainly not the \$22 million in loans and grants we've given to building owners.

As preservation organizations go, we are one of the largest in the country. Very few others can match our range of programs and resources. From saving a building at a time in Lower Manhattan when we began, to currently overseeing some 100 projects a year across the City and State, the Conservancy has adapted to changing needs and demands.

Most recently, we are focusing on Lower Manhattan again. Our work with other groups in the Lower Manhattan Emergency Preservation Fund has evolved from making grants to buildings damaged on 9/11, to trying to ensure that redevelopment plans beyond Ground Zero respect the area's historic architecture and character. For all the strides preservation has made, and for all the public support it has gathered, there has been little public discussion of preservation in Lower Manhattan planning. We hope to change that. We are not trying to landmark everything in that area. Nor do we expect to save every threatened building. But this is the oldest downtown in the country with a rich mix of worthy buildings. They should be incorporated into planning wherever possible.

The Conservancy was very fortunate, and very honored, to have had Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan on our board for 25 years. The late Brendan Gill — then President of the Conservancy — recruited the Senator in 1978, shortly after the Conservancy was formed. The Senator was instrumental in saving the Conservancy's first project — the former U.S. Customs house, designed by Cass Gilbert. In 1979, he won \$29 million in federal funds to restore and renovate that Lower Manhattan landmark. The Senator also made possible the adaptive reuse of the former Federal Archives Building in Greenwich Village. Our revolving loan fund grew out the Conservancy's role in that project, and it has been one of our most effective preservation tools. Of course, Senator Moynihan has also left us the legacy of the new Penn Station, which will be named for him, Governors Island, and important buildings across the State and in our nation's Capital. We're so glad we honored him as a Living Landmark five years ago. We shall truly never see his likes again.

As I envision the future of the organization, I can only imagine what a successor will write in a 60th anniversary letter. I hope it will be a sentiment similar to mine:

Here's to another amazing thirty years of preserving and protecting New York.



A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Peg Breen". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a light-colored background.

Peg Breen
President

New Landmarks Commissioner *Visits NYLC Board*

Robert B. Tierney, the new Chair of the Landmarks Preservation Commission, visited the Landmarks Conservancy's Board meeting shortly after his swearing in to discuss his priorities in his new office. "This City's unique historic, aesthetic and cultural heritage has never been more vital, and I am honored to safeguard it," Tierney said. "I hope to lead the Landmarks Preservation Commission in a way that connects the City's rich heritage to an ever brighter and developing future."



*Robert B. Tierney,
Chair of the
Landmarks
Preservation
Commission*

Tierney holds a B.A. from Yale University in English and a J.D. from Vanderbilt University. Previously, he served as Counsel to Mayor Edward I. Koch and Assistant Counsel to Governor Hugh L. Carey. Prior to his appointment, Tierney was a visiting scholar at New York University Taub Urban Research Center, where he focused on issues of state and local governance.

Advocating for Preservation *in Lower Manhattan*

The Conservancy continues to work to ensure that historic resources are included in plans to revitalize Lower Manhattan. Working with other preservation groups in the Lower Manhattan Preservation Fund, the Conservancy helped produce a comprehensive map of historic structures below Chamber Street. Some 75 percent of the 300 historic buildings in the area do not have landmark protection. The Conservancy is meeting with elected, appointed, and civic officials, asking them to recognize that the area's historic buildings can be used to promote tourism and economic redevelopment.

The Conservancy has also urged officials of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority to incorporate the Corbin Building at the northeast corner of Broadway and John (pictured below) into plans for a new Fulton Transit Center. A report commissioned from Robert Silman Associates determined that the MTA could complete necessary underground work without demolishing the Corbin. The groups in the Fund also commissioned a report detailing Fulton Street's buildings and history, in light of plans to upgrade the street.



The Fund is made up of the Conservancy, the Municipal Arts Society, Preservation League of New York State, National Trust for Historic Preservation, and World Monuments Fund.

Preservation Losses

As the City and State look to Lower Manhattan and portions of the West Side for redevelopment sites, it is important that historic buildings not be automatically considered expendable. Developers using Liberty Bonds, which were created to spur redevelopment in Lower Manhattan, must have projects reviewed by the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO).

211 Pearl Street

Despite widespread concern and protest from preservationists, civic groups, and elected officials, the 1832 commercial building at 211 Pearl Street in Lower Manhattan was demolished. Now, the 171-year-old façade will be an entrance to underground parking for a 50-plus story residential building by Rockrose Development Corporation using Liberty Bonds funding.

The five-story Greek Revival structure, a survivor of the Great Fire of 1835, once housed the fledgling business of William Colgate, whose company grew into Colgate Palmolive. After weeks of negotiation, Rockrose eventually agreed to a request from the SHPO to save the facade and some setback. They also agreed to consult with the SHPO if future construction endangers the two adjacent Greek Revival buildings, which also are not landmark-protected.



The façade is all that remains of 211 Pearl Street.

543-547 West 23rd Street

Two commercial buildings on West 23rd Street designed by renowned names in New York architectural history were recently destroyed to make way for another high-rise residence. The masterful designs of Henry J. Hardenburgh, at 543 West 23rd, and Ernest Flagg, at 547, represented important reminders of West Chelsea's industrial past. After disputing the SHPO's findings that the buildings were eligible for listing on the State and National Registers of Historic Places, 23rd Street Venture, LLC decided not to use Liberty Bonds funding. They were then free to demolish these unlandmarked buildings.



These historic 23rd Street buildings were lost, after developers declined to incorporate the structures into the design of a new high-rise residential complex.

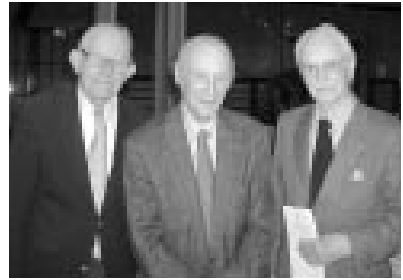
Conservancy Recognizes *Excellence in Preservation*

The Conservancy kicked off its thirtieth anniversary by bestowing its twelfth annual Lucy G. Moses Awards. The festive evening ceremony was held in the Bartos Forum at the New York Public Library on March 27. Of 45 nominations submitted, eleven projects were awarded Lucys for excellence in preservation during 2002.

A Leader in Preservation

The Preservation Leadership Award went to **Simon Breines**, architect, preservationist, and co-founder of the Landmarks Conservancy. “Si” Breines, 97, of Scarsdale, New York practiced architecture in New York City in partnership with Ralph Pomerance for 60 years. They designed over 400 buildings, including many hospitals, schools, and libraries. He has been honored as a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects and has served on the NYC Art Commission, the Fine Arts Federation, the Citizens Union, and the Parks Council.

For over three decades, Breines has been devoted to the Landmarks Conservancy and its mission. He helped create and name the organization,



2002 Preservation Leadership Award Recipient Simon Breines (center) was congratulated by Minor Bishop (left) of the Fine Arts Federation and Giorgio Cavaglieri (right) who was honored with the Award last year.



A special restoration award went to the Winter Garden in the World Financial Center of Lower Manhattan, which is too young to be a landmark but is beloved nonetheless; it was badly damaged on September 11, 2001 and fully and swiftly restored within the following year.

seeking to model its charter and mission after the Nature Conservancy. With the goal of economic self-sufficiency in mind, he championed the acquisition and redevelopment of historic properties, such as the Fraunces Tavern Block and the Federal Archive Building.

Conservancy president Peg Breen said of Mr. Breines, “The duration of Si’s service to the Conservancy is as unprecedented as it is appreciated. He has helped us save scores of historic buildings. He is our roots and we are proud to honor one of our founders in this year, our thirtieth anniversary.”

Making a Difference

The Organizational Award went to the [Citywide Monuments Conservation Program](#), which was established in 1997 as a public-private partnership under the direction of Parks & Recreation's Division of Art & Antiquities. The program has been a model of success in preserving the outdoor collection of art and monuments throughout the City’s parks.

Outstanding Preservation Projects

The nine Project Awards represent a wide range of innovative and high-quality preservation work. Dating from the mid 1800s, [175 Belden Street](#) a Gothic Revival home in City Island, Bronx is a splendid restoration of a private residence. The comprehensive restoration of [Emmanuel Baptist Church](#), located at 279 Lafayette Avenue, has helped revitalize the Clinton Hill Historic District in Brooklyn.

The restoration and renovation of St. Walburga’s Academy at 140th Street and Riverside Drive in Manhattan converted a picturesque but derelict building to apartments; kudos to the [Fortune Society](#). The exterior restoration of the Fifth Avenue garden stonework, wrought-iron fences and bluestone sidewalk by [The Frick Collection](#), at One East 70th Street in Manhattan, was honored. The interior restoration and adaptive reuse of a townhouse on East 82nd Street in Manhattan by the [Marymount School](#) into a Middle School is a gem. The creation of an elegant new structure within a landmark, South Court in the [New York Public Library](#) in Manhattan also won a Lucy.

Preservation Works

The 2002 Moses Award winners illustrate the value of preservation. Not only can it care for the city’s architectural treasures, but preservation can also serve neighborhood revitalization and economic development.

The Brooklyn Tabernacle, at Smith Street in Brooklyn, is a novel adaptive reuse of the Loew’s Metropolitan Theater built in 1918 and designed by Thomas Lamb.



The restoration of the tower and clock faces at MetLife’s Home Office Building in Manhattan is a stunning achievement.



Historic Properties Fund Helps Restore *Italianate Villa on Staten Island*

Robert and Vida-Anastasia Troiano have spent a decade carefully stabilizing and restoring their landmark home, an Italianate villa on Staten Island where Gustave Mayer, the inventor of the Nabisco sugar wafer, once lived and worked. However, the house still needed major repairs, and the Troianos' resources could only stretch so far. So they turned to the Conservancy's Historic Properties Fund.

A City Landmark, the 1885, two-and-a-half-story home features a one-story porch, arched windows, bracketed cornice, hipped roof, and crowning cupola. When the Troianos bought the property from the estate of Mr. Mayer's daughters in 1990, it needed extensive work. A carpenter by trade, Mr. Troiano began restoring the house with his own hands and sometimes help from contractors. After ten years, he had restored the house sills and front exterior stairway, demolished the deteriorating interior plaster, installed new electrical and plumbing systems, and copper gutters and roofing on the porch.

The next priority was to seal the building from the elements, but the Troianos were concerned about the costs. That's when they applied to the Historic Properties Fund. With a low-interest loan for \$28,000 and a \$5,000 grant from the Fund, they were able to restore the drainage system, roofing, and flashing on the third floor and cupola.



With a low-interest loan and grant from the Historic Properties Fund, Robert and Vida-Anastasia Troiano were able to restore the cupola of their Landmark home in Staten Island.

Completed with City Ventures Funds

The Conservancy's City Ventures Fund provided a grant of \$50,000 for the fabrication and installation of a 225-linear-foot fiberglass cornice and \$10,000 for restoration of the entrance portico of Dorothy Day Apartments, a stately apartment building overlooking the Hudson River. Vacant for several years, it has been re-developed as low-income housing by Broadway Housing Communities.



Encouraging National Register Listing of Sacred Sites

While many congregations are interested in pursuing landmark status for their church, synagogue, meetinghouse, or mosque, there is still distrust of landmarking among many adjudicatory bodies. In recent months, the Conservancy has encouraged leadership of several denominations to consider National Register listing.

Last winter, Conservancy President Peg Breen sent letters to His Eminence Edward Cardinal Egan, Archdiocese of New York, and The Most Reverend Howard J. Hubbard, D.D., Diocese of Albany, advocating for National Register listing as a viable option for Roman Catholic churches. In a meeting with representatives of Cardinal Egan's office, Breen and Sacred Sites Director Ann-Isabel Friedman stressed that, unlike local landmark ordinances, the National Register is primarily honorific rather than regulatory in nature. National Register listing enables religious properties to apply for State grant funding for restoration work.

In recent months, the Conservancy also met with Board members from the Presbytery of New York and discussed National Register listing as a part of an overall strategy to care for aging churches. The meeting centered on West Park Presbyterian Church, a handsome, Romanesque Revival church at 86th and Amsterdam. After investigating the extent and costs of needed repairs to the crumbling brownstone facades and slate roofs, the congregation is negotiating with a developer to demolish the church and construct a condominium tower with space for the congregation on the lower floors.

While redevelopment can seem like salvation to a struggling congregation, similar developer-driven projects have subsumed the identity of the religious institution and have not always provided the promised financial salvation. The Conservancy is working with the church, community residents, Landmarks West, and City Council member Gale Brewer to organize efforts to generate new sources of income for the National-Register eligible building.

To further address this issue, the Conservancy is planning a symposium on real estate management for mainline denominations' adjudicatory leadership in New York State. The symposium will encourage new or shared occupancy of worship buildings, plus highlight the value of adjudicatory attention and resources to places of worship before congregations consider demolition and redevelopment. Through information sharing and cooperation, denominations, along with private and nonprofit partners, can provide the attention and resources to landmark-quality churches before needed repairs become cost-prohibitive.



(From left to right) Conservancy President Peg Breen talks with the Reverend William H. Pape, Rector, and M. Jeffrey Baker, Principal of Mesick Cohen Wilson Baker Architects, at the Cathedral of Immaculate Conception in Albany, which received a \$25,000 Robert W. Wilson Challenge grant.

Decorative Finishes

Shine Like New

The newly restored interior of Congregation Shearith Israel, at 70th Street and Central Park West, provided the perfect setting for the Technical Services Center's forum on "Color and Pattern: Uncovering Decorative Legacies." The forum featured lectures on the interior decorative finish restoration at two important New York City synagogues, Central Synagogue and Congregation Shearith Israel.

After a devastating fire in 1998, the Central Synagogue's Moorish Revival style Synagogue, at East 55th Street and Park Avenue, was rebuilt and the interiors restored to original glory. For this aspect of the enormous job, the congregation hired DPK&A Architects, LLP. Carl Doebley, Partner in Charge of Preservation, described the iconography of the 20,000 stars in the interior of Central Synagogue. James Dossett, Lead Architectural Conservator at DPK&A, discussed the investigation processes used to unearth the original paint scheme.

Architect Arnold Brunner was inspired by newly-discovered Greco-Roman synagogues when he designed the Neo-classical Congregation Shearith Israel in 1897. When the congregation planned exterior and interior restoration, they had no idea that they would discover that the interior finishes of their beautiful sanctuary was, in fact, designed by Tiffany Studios. Architect Stephen Tilly provided background on the restoration project, then Jeff Greene, President of EverGreene Painting Studios, Inc., discussed the process of investigating and restoring the interior decorative finishes.



After informative talks about decorative finish restoration, the evening forum culminated with a tour of the sanctuary at Congregation Shearith Israel and a reception.

Available Now! The Brownstone Guide

The Technical Services Center has just published a completely revised guide to the preservation and repair of historic brownstone. *The Brownstone Guide* is a consumer's handbook, designed to help owners of historic properties understand the character of this ubiquitous sandstone and the basic causes of its decay. In addition, it provides an introduction to the various methods and materials for sandstone repair and restoration. The eight-page, illustrated brochure is available for a \$3 postage and handling fee by calling 212-995-5260.

Innovative Solutions at *St. Bartholomew's*

St. Bartholomew's Church, at Park Avenue and 50th Street, has a magnificent, Romanesque-Revival wheel window on its southern façade. The window's tracery and stained-glass panels are supported by 16 radial spokes, each composed of an interior limestone column and an exterior marble column. When a recent investigation found cracks in three of the external marble columns, the church called on the Conservancy's Technical Services Center to help solve the sticky repair problem.

The traditional solutions — stabilization or removal of the damaged elements — wouldn't work because the vibrations from drilling could detach fragile stone fragments. Conservancy staff worked with engineer Timothy Lynch, of Robert Silman's office, and Kent Diebolt of Vertical Access to develop an innovative solution: fastening the exterior marble column to the interior limestone column with stainless steel straps.

In March, two specialists from Vertical Access used rock climbing ropes and gear to reach the window and install the strap system. With one person on the exterior and another on the interior, they passed the straps through small slits cut into the glass and fastened them tightly. A dedicated church and expert consultants developed an innovative remedy to a small defect that could have turned into a huge problem if left unaddressed.

Rock-climbing gear provided an unconventional approach to preserve the rose window at St. Bartholomew's Church.



The Conservancy's Voice

The New York Landmarks Conservancy strives to influence decisions on major preservation issues at the City, State, and federal level. Recent testimony and correspondence can be found in the Public Policy section of the Conservancy's website, including positions on Congregation Shearith Israel's development proposal, landmarking Charles B. J. Snyder: Erasmus Hall High School in Brooklyn and Newtown High School in Queens, and appealing to Teachers College regarding plans for new dormitory buildings.

Honoring an Illustrious Public Servant

Charles A. Gargano, Chairman of the Empire State Development Corporation, was presented the 2003 Chairman's Award. From left, Conservancy Board member Michael Di Chiara, Gargano, Chairman Jack Kerr, and Board member Frank Sciamè Jr. at the Award Luncheon.



Keys to the City: Tibetan Art

Above Fifth Avenue is a little-known treasure trove of ancient Tibetan art. It's the collection of Donald and Shelley Rubin on display in their corporate offices, and Conservancy Circle members were given an exclusive opportunity to view it at a "Keys to the City" event. In the future, the public will be able to view these and many more masterworks at the Rubin Museum of Art. Slated to open in 2004, the museum and cultural center will be housed in part the former Barney's department store building in Chelsea. Keep your eyes out for future invitations: the Rubins have graciously offered Conservancy friends a tour of the new museum before it opens.

An Italian Evening In Greenwich Village

Over 300 people packed the house to hear David Garrard Lowe deliver a slide-illustrated lecture entitled "A Door Thrown Open: The Influence of Italy on McKim, Mead & White." Co-sponsored by the Conservancy, the Beaux Arts Alliance, and New York University's Casa Italiana Zerilli-Marimò, the event took place at Judson Memorial Church on Washington Square. After the lecture, guests enjoyed a lovely reception at the magnificent brownstone Casa Italiana, located on West 12th Street.

The President of the Beaux Arts Alliance and author of *Stanford White's New York*, Lowe discussed the buildings that brought the grandeur and beauty of Italian architecture to New York City, such as Madison Square Garden, the Metropolitan Club, The Morgan Library, the Joseph Pulitzer House, and Judson Memorial Church.

Real Estate Circle

The Real Estate circle is an active group of industry leaders who share the Landmarks Conservancy's commitment to New York's classic buildings and diverse neighborhoods. Members enjoy a variety of benefits, including invitations to hard-hat tours of restoration projects and private receptions in exclusive landmark locations. Membership is open to all companies paying an annual subscription fee and does not constitute an endorsement. For further information, please contact Emily Roberts at 212-995-5260 or emilyroberts@nylandmarks.org.

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The New York Landmarks Conservancy is proud to announce that 2003 marks our 30th anniversary. Since 1973, the Conservancy has advocated for preservation of New York's unique architectural heritage in Washington,

Albany, and at City Hall. In addition, we are the only preservation organization in New York City — and one of the few in the country — with the financial and technical resources to back up advocacy with assistance.

In thirty years, we have awarded nearly \$22 million in loans and grants, accompanied by countless hours of pro-bono technical advice, to owners of historic homes, businesses, schools, houses of worship, theaters, cultural institutions, and community centers. In turn, we help revitalize neighborhoods and shape the future of our great City. We invite you to celebrate this landmark year with us.

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 1978–2003

*“What we conserve is a statement
 of what we value.”*



Frankie M. Cadwell
 Conservancy Board Member
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New York Landmarks Conservancy

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