

West 104th Street

BLOCK ASSOCIATION

March 3, 2000

NEWSLETTER

Editor: Nancy Lian

Layout and Design: John Johnston

Metropolitan Museum Tour a Success

Block resident Nancy Thompson toured a group of ten from our block through the new Greek wing at the Museum on February 18. Tour members were introduced to Nancy's in depth knowledge of ancient art, its historical and social context. Everyone in the group came away from the tour feeling (they had experienced a rich treat indeed) very lucky to have had her as personal guide.

Afterwards, most of the group dined together at the Met's cafeteria where the ideas for other block association-sponsored events flowed freely (see next story).

The second private tour is scheduled for Friday, March 3, from 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. Call Marsha at 932-9592 for reservations. If you're reading this too late to sign up, not to worry: we'll do it again!

Video film festival

One of the ideas to come out of the Met tour is a video film festival, hosted by neighbors and held in apartments on the block. We would pick a theme (for instance, Angelica Houston films), rent the video, pop the popcorn (who wants butter?), pull up a chair (or a piece of the rug), and watch. So, who would like to host the first one? Call Teresa at 866-4260.

How You Can Help

Launch Our Website

The block association will launch its website later this month; look for posters in your building announcing the address. Before we open the site, however, we'd like to add your reminiscences and photos to it.

Do you have stories to share about your life on the block in the 50s, 60s, and 70s, or earlier? Do you have black and white or color photographs of the block, the park, or the neighborhood from any period? Judy Williams lent us a photo of the 104th St. subway exit in 1912; it looks great over the web! We can scan any photo, even if it's framed. A photo of Mr. Kay cutting your hair in the Broadway Barber Shop, for instance, would be wonderful. What neighborhood links would you like included in the site? We have the Bloomingdale School of Music - what else?

Call Teresa Elwert (866 4260) to talk about items you'd like to share. You can e-mail material to her at telwert@hotmail.com.

You Count, So Be Counted: Participate in Census 2000

You'll receive your Census 2000 form sometime this month. Here are five reasons to fill it out:

1. Help our community thrive: Census numbers can help our community work out public improvement strategies.
2. Get help in times of need: Many 911 emergency systems are based on maps developed for the last census. Census information helps health providers predict the spread of disease through communities with children or elderly people. When floods, earthquakes, or tornadoes hit, the census tells rescuers how many people will need their help.
3. Make government work for us: It's a good way to tell our leaders who we are and what we need. The numbers are used to help determine the distribution of hundreds of billions of dollars in federal and state funds. We're talking hospitals, highways, stadiums, and school lunch programs.
4. Reduce risk for American business: Because census numbers help industry reduce financial risk and locate potential markets, businesses are able to produce the products we want.
5. Help yourself and your family: Individual records are held confidential for 72 years, but you can request a certificate from past censuses that can be used as proof to establish your age, residence, or relationship; information that could help you qualify for a pension, establish citizenship, or obtain an inheritance. In 2072, your great-grandchildren may want to use census information to research family history. Right now, your children may be using census information to do their homework.

Lieder Duets


Carol Goodfriend, soprano, and block resident, and Beth Samuels, mezzo-soprano have created and issued a CD entitled "Famous Lieder Duets". They are accompanied by Natasha Ulyanovsky, pianist. These art songs by master composers Cesar Franck, Franz Abt, Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, Robert Schumann, Johannes Brahms, Antonin Dvorak and Jacques Offenbach are presented in this unique collection. You may order a CD from Carol at 309 W. 104 and call her at 663-7095 for more information. Checks for \$16 per copy should be made out to Carol Goodfriend. Proceeds from sales of the CD, recorded at the concert given on May 29, 1999 in Cornwall, CT, benefit the Cornwall EXTRAS for kids. This organization provides funds, anonymously, to benefit local children and their families to insure that children who could benefit from extra-curricular activities are not denied access owing to financial pressures. Carol, an educator, considers extra-curricular cultural activities a major benefit, and



recalls how important this was in her childhood. Carol and Beth are planning a new repertoire of songs including Russian, and more French songs and will present a selection of Lieder of the World in performances this spring in Bristol, Connecticut in May and in New Rochelle in June. There may even be a program of classic popular songs down the road.


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West 104th Street Block Association Board

The Tree of the Book

Ned Barnard

The beautiful blue-grey bark of the beech tree seems to arouse an atavistic compulsion in people to carve their initials and record their romantic attachments. If you don't believe me, try to find a large beech tree without its complement of letters, dates, and hearts. The word beech is derived from an Indo-European root *bhagos* from which the word book also descends. This association suggests to me that the connection between the beech tree and writing extends very far back into the history of the peoples who inhabited the temperate lands of the Eurasian land mass where beech trees grew—back, perhaps, to a time long before alphabets, a time when people made marks on tree trunks to record their passing, keep track of the days, and assuage their gods. Curiously enough the beech is also associated with the first modern book, the Gutenberg Bible, which was composed with moveable type carved on beech blocks.

When the Europeans came to North America, they encountered a beech species very similar to the one they knew at home. They also brought their own beech with them and planted it around their great homes and in their parks and cemeteries. Splendid examples of both species are easy to find throughout the city.

The European Beech, *Fagus sylvatica* L.

One of the most beautiful of all deciduous trees, the European beech is distinguished by its glossy, dark green foliage and by its wonderfully smooth, light grey bark. Capable of reaching 140 feet in height, it commonly grows 80 to 100 feet high and 3 to 4 feet in diameter.

The European beech has always been favored by blue bloods. Magnificent old specimens shade the lawns of Long Island's Gold Coast and line the drives of Hudson Valley mansions. In its native Europe, too, this handsome tree and its numerous cultivars are grown as ornamentals both in public parks and on the manicured grounds of baronial estates. The tree also serves more prosaic purposes in its natural range, where its wood is cut for lumber and its fruit is fed to hogs and made into vegetable oil.

The European beech and its cultivars are planted in many of the City's parks including Central Park, but among the best places to see them are Wave Hill and Woodlawn Cemetery in the Bronx and Planting Fields Arboretum State Historic Park on Long Island.

The American Beech, *Fagus grandifolia* Ehrh.

Like its European cousin, *Fagus sylvatica*, the American Beech is a strikingly handsome tree favored as an ornamental on the lawns of public parks and of

large estates. Its smooth blue-grey bark makes it easy to recognize even at a distance. Mature trees average seventy to eighty feet in height, but giants towering over 120 feet with trunks over four feet in diameter have been reported.

Vast beech forests once covered portions of the Midwest. In his 1833 account of a trip to the American West with artist Karl Bodmer, Prince Maximilian zu Wied encountered beech forests in southern Indiana stretching "without intermission." They were, wrote the Prince, "the most splendid forests I had yet seen in America."

Immense flocks of the now-extinct passenger pigeon fed on the beech nut mast of these primeval forests. According to John James Audubon their flapping wings produced "a noise like the roar of distant thunder" and when they alighted, they were "seen industriously throwing up the withered leaves in quest of the fallen mast..."

Estimates of the early passenger pigeon population ranged as high as 5 billion birds, or up to 40% of the total bird population of North America. The extinction of the passenger pigeon has been attributed to overhunting, but undoubtedly the destruction of the Midwest's great beech forests was a major cause.

Natural stands of the American beech and individual ornamental specimens are scattered throughout the parks and preserves of the metropolitan region. There aren't many American beeches in Riverside Park, though, but you will find them growing in the wild northwestern corner of Central Park near the Pool and along the Loch.



European beech leaf

Alternate elliptical leaf up to 4 inches long; wavy untoothed margins or smallteeth; 9 or fewer parallel veins on each side; glossy dark green above, lighter green beneath.



American beech leaf

Alternate oval leaf 1 to 3 inches long with wedge-shaped base and long, sharp tip; 9 to 16 parallel veins on each side ending with a tooth; glossy, dark bluish-green above, lighter green beneath.


Calendar of Selected Events

- 3/7 **A Celebration of Irish Music and Dance**, featuring Ann Marie Acosta and special guests. Sponsored by the Coordinated Outreach Services Grant at Bloomingdale Branch, NYPL, 150 W. 100 St., 6:30 pm.
- 3/10 **Magic and Variety Show**, with John Carison. Ventriloquism, comedy, balloons, animals, and more. NYPL, Bloomingdale Branch, for children 5 and up. 4 pm.
- 3/11 **Internet Workshop**, special program at NYPL, Bloomingdale Branch, for ages 6 to 12. Space is limited and preregistration is required. 10:30 am. Call 222-8030.
- 3/15 **Theater Workshop**, special program at NYPL Bloomingdale Branch. Lois Kagan and Joanie Zosike of "Mighty Action Racket" will lead children ages 6 and older in voice and movement exercises, and acting and theater games. Space is limited and preregistration is required. 4 pm. Call 222-8030.
- 3/17 **Turkish Gypsy Music**, Barbaros Erkose Ensemble at Symphony Space, 8 pm. Call 545-7536 for more information. Tickets are \$26 and \$21.
- 3/22 **Desert Island Book Party**, special program for children ages 6 and up. NYPL, Bloomingdale Branch. Preregistration is required. 4 pm. Call 222-8030.
- 3/24 **Saint-Saens' Symphony No. 3, (Organ Symphony)** New Amsterdam Orchestra, Eckart Prew, conductor, Timothy Smith, organist, Riverside Church, 8 pm. Tickets \$12, \$6 for seniors and students. Call 870-6784 for more information.
- 3/29 **Joke Writing**, special program with Maureen Kushner. Recommended for children 6 and up. Preregistration is required. 4 pm. Call 222-8030.
- 3/29 **Selected Shorts with Amy Tan**, reading selections from *The Best American Short Stories 1999*. Symphony Space, 6:30 pm. Call 864-5400 for more information.
- 4/2 **Jennifer Hault, Harpist**, Solo Concert in Christ Chapel, Riverside Church, 3 pm. An offering will be taken at the door. Call 870-6784 for more information.
- 4/8 **Celebrate the Earth with Tom Chapin**. Songs in celebration of nature in the Just Kidding series. Symphony Space, 11 am and 2 pm. Tickets \$8. Call 864-5400 for more information.
- 4/8 **Classical Arab Music**, Aicha Redouane. Symphony Space, 8 pm. Tickets are \$26 and \$21. Call 545-7536 for more information.
- 4/13-15 **H.M.S. Pinafore**, The New York Gilbert & Sullivan Players, Symphony Space, 8 pm. Tickets \$3-1-\$46. Call 864-5400 for more information.
- 4/15 **Spring Concert to Benefit Straus Park**. Straus Park, 7:30 to 9 pm. Call 865-4948 for more information.
- 4/16 **Riverside Choir and Festival Orchestra in an All-Mozart Program**. Mozart's Violin Concerto No. 5, "Turkish", and Great Mass in C Minor. Helen Cih-Pyo, conductor, Pierre Constant, violin. Riverside Church Nave, 3 pm. Tickets \$10, \$5 for seniors and students. Call 870-6784 for more information.
- 4/16 **The Passion According to St. John**, St. Michael's Choir, soloists and Orchestra, St. Michael's Church, 225 W. 99 St., 5 pm. Tickets \$20. Call 222-2700 for more information.
- 4/27-29 **Face the Music and Dance**. World Premiere collaborations between contemporary choreographers and composers including Mark Dendy Dance with Don Byron and Shapiro & Smith Dance with Scott Killian. Symphony Space, 8 pm. Tickets \$17, members \$12. Call 864-5400 for more information.

Caution: Deliveries Go Awry

A neighbor recently told us of an unfortunate incident involving the apparent non-delivery of a favorite garment by a dry cleaner. Botched deliveries from any source – restaurant, pharmacy, supermarket, or dry cleaner – are distressing. Unfortunately, however, they will happen. A suggestion for avoiding the heartache:


Don't use delivery service for items you can't stand to lose.


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News From Steve Finch—Former Board Member

by Barbara Bryan, Past President

Steve Finch was a very active contributor to the Board and the Block Association. Whether he was tending our tree gardens, handling advertising for the Newsletter—or joining Sheila Garden and 6-year old David Bauer to sell raffle tickets, he did it with charm and persuasion. He endeared himself to members of the board because of his enthusiasm, his upbeat personality, and his willingness to learn. It seems that some of that Florida sunshine from his home state penetrated his personality to create a truly sunny disposition. Steve keeps in touch with us as one of our off block newsletter subscribers. He recently wrote to us about what the block association meant to him and how he took what he learned from his board activities to become a very potent force in his home community of St. Petersburg, Florida. Steve and the playground he fought for received much media coverage—print and television. I have inserted a few comments from the local media.



Steve working on the Raffle at the Yarsale, 1993

Hello West 104:

It was in 1982 that I was transplanted from my home in St. Petersburg, Florida to New York City's Upper Westside and began a great journey - experiencing new people in a new environment. My partner, Bob Nemecek, and I lived at 320 Riverside Drive - #13C. When I became acquainted with the block association in 1987 I felt I had met my new family and really enjoyed selling advertising and caring for the block tree gardens, and the camaraderie of our board. While my partner Bob was sadly passing away, the support of my West 104 family meant a great deal to me! I owe you infinite thanks.

I left the block in 1993 to eventually return to St. Pete. And yes, we do have neighborhood associations. It was my much enjoyed experience with West 104 that opened me to a "sense of community" in downtown St. Pete. As I restored my 1918 bungalow I realized there was an immediate need for a neighborhood playground. My grass roots idea for a playground was met with much community enthusiasm and considerable city council opposition. Now, after 2 years of planning, and a city grant, this playground for 300 toddlers to early teenagers, is almost complete including modular equipment, landscaping, and lighting on five city lots.

From the St. Petersburg Times, 10/27/99:

"Steve Finch has been the spark plug behind the project. He grew up in the Banyan Tree Motel a few blocks east. Steve said, 'There was a need for a playground then. I didn't have a playground and I got to play in the two banyan trees that gave the motel its name.'

'Finch worked hard to make the playground a reality,' said Uptown president Ingrid Comberg. 'He had an idea. Then he had a plan. Then he had his legs and his elbows and he didn't take no for an answer.'"

From the Northeast Neighborhood News, 10/29/99:

"Finch and Comberg argued for the playground before City Council and before the city's Housing Subcommittee. When it seemed the Council was favorably inclined, Finch initiated the drive for a neighborhood partnership grant to build the playground."

I am so grateful for you'all being there! An unexpected life experience that rooted my life's "sense of community" deeper, it changed my life and now the life of St. Pete's youth forever.

Thank you, and if you're not involved with the block association— think about it. It could change your life too!

Sincerely,

Steve Finch

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And Now For Something Completely Different...Tired of Metisse, Meridiana, Alouette, and Fish? Try these Amsterdam Ave. restaurants, some of which are in the Zagat guide.

Hungarian Pastry Shop
111th St., west side of avenue
An institution

Sophia's
110th St., west side of avenue
Italian
Very reasonably priced

Dalia's
109th St., west side of avenue
Tapas restaurant
New!

Pampa
98th St., west side of avenue
Argentinean
Zagat; very popular

Cafe Con Leche
95th St., west side of avenue
Cuban, Dominican (same owner as Fish and Indian Cafe)
Zagat; very reasonably priced

Indian Cafe
95th St., between Broadway and Amsterdam
Indian
A branch of the restaurant at Broadway and 108th St.

Ayurveda Cafe
94th St., west side of avenue
Indian vegetarian

Gabriela's
93rd St., east side of avenue
Mexican
Zagat

Gennaro
93rd St., east side of avenue
Italian, Mediterranean
Zagat; be prepared to wait

Ghion
93rd St., west side of avenue
Ethiopian

Awash
106th St., east side of avenue
Ethiopian

Mimi's Macaroni
95th St., west side of avenue
Italian
Kids eat free Monday and Tuesday nights

Sweet Music to Our Ears

By Sid Herzfeld

When we married in 1960 we were very fortunate in getting an apartment in the "C" line at 895 West End Avenue. Apartments were so hard to come by, that we did not mind that we could not see anything but a melancholic brick wall and some brownstone rooftops from any of our windows. We could not catch sight of any city street nor hear any street noises. Any mausoleum would have appeared noisy in comparison. The burial chamber deep inside the Great Pyramid in Giza seemed like a discotheque.

Ten years later an apartment facing 104th Street became vacant. We rented it sight unseen. When, on the first morning, metal garbage can lids came crashing to the ground, it seemed like sweet music to our ears. Then, as now, we were allergic to the din or urban living, but we could never again survive without being able to hear garbage trucks, fire engines, ambulances, street fairs and other manifestations of a vibrant city. Now, after a lapse of another thirty years, when sanitation men come early in the morning and softly deposit plastic lids onto the sidewalk, we become somewhat nostalgic for the good old days. We heartily recommend our experience to anybody who did not yet become enamored with our city's wonderful garbage collection operations.

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Increase in Security Guard Rate

Starr Security, our guard service provider, has raised the hourly rate we pay for service to \$11.55, from \$10.50, effective February 6. The guard is paid \$6.80 an hour. Feel free to confirm this with the guard. If he tells you he's getting less, let any board member know and we'll ask Starr for an explanation. Starr explained the increase was necessary in order to attract and retain guards in these good economic times. Apparently, guards will switch employers if they can get as little as .25 an hour more.

At its February meeting, the board met with a co-owner of Starr Security and its director of operations to learn more about the legally mandated qualifications of a security guard, and to communicate our requirements for improved service. We are also concerned that the guards sometimes do not follow instructions or do not understand their duties. We have asked Starr to ensure that each guard has a thorough and complete understanding of his responsibilities.

The hourly increase means it's especially important that you make your first quarter dues payment today. The increase may require a cutback in service to six days (we've had seven-day service since June 1999). If you can, please pay the suggested annual dues (\$100) now. That will help the board determine how long we can continue to provide seven-day service.

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