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FALL 2009

Welcome to the eleventh edition of the newsletter of the New York Preservation Archive Project. The mission of the New York Preservation Archive Project is to protect and raise awareness of the narratives of historic preservation in New York. Through public programs, outreach, celebration, and the creation of public access to information, the Archive Project hopes to bring these stories to light.

# Chairman’s Column: Making the 45th Truly Memorable

by Anthony C. Wood

It was 45 years ago, on September 17, 1964, that New Yorkers awoke to the shocking news that the Brokaw Mansions at East 79th and Fifth Avenue would be demolished. The announcement coincided with Mayor Wagner’s proclamation of “American Landmarks Preservation Week in New York City.” This embarrassing juxtaposition of events helped propel the draft landmarks law from the Mayor’s desk into the City Council where on December 3rd, a seven-hour public hearing moved the law a major step closer to reality.



The now-famous photograph of Mayor Wagner signing the Landmarks law with Seymour Boyers on the left and Geoffrey Platt on the right. Image courtesy of Margot Gayle.

It was also 45 years ago this holiday season that the fate of the Pyne-Davison block on Park Avenue between 68th and 69th hung in the balance while the proposed law was studied. This extraordinary block was saved at the 11th hour by the Marquesa de Cuevas, but shortly thereafter,

on Friday, February 5, 1965, in “weekend stealth,” demolition commenced on the Brokaw Mansions.

If all this was happening 45 years ago, it can mean only one thing: 2010 is the 45th anniversary of our landmarks law, passed by the City Council on April 6, 1965 and signed by Mayor Wagner on April 19, 1965. With the stroke of his pen, the Mayor brought down the final curtain on the dramatic battle for a landmarks law and began the first act of a new drama: the implementation and application of the law!

Thirty years ago as a preservation neophyte, one of my first assignments as the Confidential Assistant to the Chair of the Landmarks Preservation Commission (the formal

job title for the very junior staff person who opened the Chair’s mail and handled miscellaneous assignments) was helping organize the 15th Anniversary Celebration of the Landmarks Law. I vaguely remember it involved a reception in City Hall, special awards, potted plants and red napkins—and of course no budget. *Continued on page 3...*

**The 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Bard Birthday Breakfast Benefit**  
*One small step for man, one giant leap for preservation:*  
**How the architectural walking tour built the preservation movement**  
**Francis Morrone**

**Wednesday, December 9, 2009**  
**8:30 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.**  
**The Manhattan Penthouse**  
**80 Fifth Avenue**

This year, NYPAP will celebrate the birthday of Albert S. Bard, the keystone in the creation of the New York City Landmarks Law, with a talk by Francis Morrone, historian, teacher, and author of *An Architectural Guidebook to New York City*. Drawing from his experience leading some of New York’s most popular and enlightening walking tours, Mr. Morrone will discuss the evolution of the walking tour and its impact on the preservation movement. Francis Morrone is a renowned architectural historian and author of eight books. His most recent book is *Ten Architectural Walks in Manhattan*, published by W.W. Norton in conjunction with the Municipal Art Society. His other books include *An Architectural Guidebook to Brooklyn* and *An Architectural Guidebook to Philadelphia*. He has written more than a thousand articles, essays, and reviews on art and architecture, and his column “Abroad in New York” was published weekly from 2002-2008 in the New York Sun. He has also led approximately 1,500 walking tours in the five boroughs of New York City. For ticket information, contact Laura Pedersen at [lpedersen@nypap.org](mailto:lpedersen@nypap.org) or 212-988-8379.



Clay Lancaster, one of the originators of the NYC walking tour, in Prospect Park. Image courtesy of the Warwick Foundation.

## Luchow's Papers Preserved: Jack Taylor Donates Collection

NYPAP is pleased to announce our receipt of Jack Taylor's papers detailing the struggle to save Luchow's restaurant, the first step in the process of making documents related to this preservation story freely available to the public. This generous and thoughtful donation is valuable both for current activists and for those interested in New York City's recent history, and we are honored to be charged with finding a permanent home for the collection.

A former copy editor, Jack Taylor became involved in preservation after transitioning to freelance work and noticing the myriad changes then occurring in his Gramercy-Union Square neighborhood. Beginning in the 1980s, he became one of New York's most ardent preservation activists, working primarily with the Union Square Community Coalition and eventually leading the fight to save Luchow's from demolition.

Built in 1882 by immigrant August Guido Luchow, the restaurant featured authentic German cuisine and an impressive German Baroque interior. The restaurant regularly played host to gatherings of the city's musical community – composers Victor Herbert, Antonin Dvorak, and actress Lillian Russell were just some of its famous guests – and was the traditional lunch spot for the workers of the nearby Steinway Piano Company. Luchow's was also quite popular with neighborhood families, including that of a young Jack Taylor. When new owners moved the restaurant uptown in 1982, the building was abandoned and neglected. A series of ownership changes contributed to the deterioration of the structure, while new zoning regulations made it possible to replace the small restaurant with a larger, more profitable new building.

Mr. Taylor led the effort to landmark the three-story brownstone, citing the restaurant's architectural significance and its place in the hearts of many New Yorkers. He recruited famous New Yorkers like Woody Allen and headed a successful letter-writing campaign. Though the Landmarks Preservation Commission held three hearings



*Luchow's, the famous 14th Street German eatery, was demolished in 1995 after a protracted preservation battle. Image courtesy the New York Community Trust.*

on the potential designation of the building, they failed to act before it was too late. Unfortunately, in 1994, a mysterious fire destroyed most of what remained of Luchow's. The site is now home to a New York University dormitory.

Though Luchow's is gone, contemporary preservationists can hope to learn from Mr. Taylor's gift, which comprises letters, news stories, and restaurant memorabilia. Dozens of newspaper clippings, from feature articles to small blurbs, chronicle the battle over the fate of the building. Numerous photographs of the interior depict the restaurant at the height of its glamour, while postcards and menus provide a glimpse of how it must have felt to visit Luchow's. The collection also contains enlightening correspondence between Mr. Taylor and a variety of preservation advocates, revealing the strategies and politics behind the campaign. All of these items are essential viewing for anyone interested in NYC's recent preservation movement. NYPAP intern Melissa Umberger has created a detailed finding aid to assist researchers and archivists interested in the Luchow's papers, available upon request.

The demise of Luchow's is one of the greater tragedies in preservation's recent history, yet its story is instructive for contemporary preservationists. Part of the mission of the New York Preservation Archive Project is to celebrate preservation's past so that we might learn from it in planning for the future, and Mr. Taylor's gift perfectly demonstrates this idea. Though NYPAP is unable to permanently house these papers, we look forward to working with an appropriate institution to preserve the collection for posterity. If you know of an organization interested in permanently obtaining and protecting the Luchow's papers, please contact NYPAP Administrator Laura Pedersen at [lpedersen@nypap.org](mailto:lpedersen@nypap.org).

### Preservation in Print: New Books

In his new book, *The Once and Future New York: Historic Preservation and the Modern City*. (University of Minnesota Press, 2009) historian and former NYPAP board member Randall Mason explores the NYC historic preservation movement's beginnings in the late 19th century and its development through the next hundred years. Anthony Flint's *Wrestling With Moses: How Jane Jacobs Took On New York's Master Builder and Transformed the American City* (Random House, 2009) describes the oppositional relationship between the two dominant figures in 20th-century New York's urban affairs, Robert Moses and Jane Jacobs. *Place, Race, and Story: Essays on the Past and Future of Historic Preservation* by Ned Kaufman (Routledge, 2009) explores how issues of race and social justice feature in the preservation movement.

## NYPAP Launches Online Preservation History Database

At the end of May, NYPAP launched its online database of information on the history of preservation in New York. It is intended as an encyclopedia of the city's preservation history, a gateway for academic researchers and a resource for contemporary preservationists wishing to learn from their predecessors. The database covers people, places, organizations, agencies, events, campaigns, and court cases that played key roles in the history of preservation in New York City from the 19th Century to the early 21st Century.

Each entry provides a concise yet thorough narrative history of its subject, including a brief background on its respective topic, a list of key dates, and links to other relevant entries within the database that illustrate the interconnectedness of preservation. The online database's main mission, however, is to direct the visitor to in-depth primary and secondary source material on these entries.

The Archive Project aims to identify archival collections, oral histories, and digital resources that are relevant to each entry in the database and make their locations and accessibility available to the public and easy to find.

Over the summer, NYPAP's interns have been hard at work researching, writing, and editing entries. A perpetual work in progress, the database will grow as new resources are uncovered and as NYPAP continues its research into the history of historic preservation in order to provide a holistic view of the field. By cataloguing the history of historic preservation and making it accessible to the public, the New York Preservation Archive Project's online database will become a valuable tool for future preservationists, historians, and students. NYPAP continues to seek funding for the database and welcomes your comments, questions, suggestions and support. To use the database, go to [NYPAP.org](http://NYPAP.org) and click "Archive."

### Chairman's Column (continued from page 1)

Now we find ourselves on the eve of the 45th anniversary of the landmarks law and have even more reason to pay attention to it. As of this writing, NYC has 96 historic districts, 1,235 individual landmarks, 110 interior landmarks, and 10 scenic landmarks. Behind each designation is a preservation story. Some of these stories are now almost 50 years old. Have they all been captured? Also instructive are the stories of what we've failed to save. In addition, these years have seen important changes in preservation policy and practice that should be documented for the record.

Like the 15th Anniversary Celebration of the Law, there is no dedicated budget to underwrite a grand celebration of this hallmark year. No fear! Let's tweak some of what we would regularly do in 2010 and focus it on celebrating, capturing, and preserving the last 45 years of preservation history. If every organization devoted a program, a tour, an article, an exhibit, an awards program, a case history, or an interpretive dance on the topic, what an anniversary it could be!

For our part, NYPAP is planning to design a special website to highlight the 45th anniversary. It will be a place to post all the special anniversary events, and with some luck, it will also be a place where the historic information, stories, and photographs documenting the last 45 years of preservation history in NYC can be collected and shared.

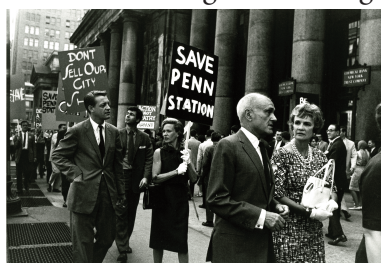
**In Memoriam: Carolyn Cassady Kent**, preservation activist and founding member of the Morningside Heights Historic District Committee, passed at away age 74 on August 22, 2009. Kent worked to save the buildings of Upper Manhattan and was particularly involved in battles against the expansion efforts of Columbia University, her alma mater. A full obituary is published in the August 24, 2009 issue of the New York Daily News.

If you want to help us build such a site, your assistance is more than welcome! Please contact Laura Pedersen, our Administrator, at [lpedersen@nypap.org](mailto:lpedersen@nypap.org).

As preservationists, this is a landmark anniversary we all share. If we all contribute an ingredient into this anniversary "stone soup," we can have a delectable and memorable celebration, as well as collaboratively document and preserve the last 45 years of preservation memories. Informed, empowered, and energized by that history, imagine what preservation accomplishments can be achieved in the next 45 years?

### Media Mentions: Penn Station on *Mad Men*

The demolition of Pennsylvania Station figures prominently in the August 23th, 2009 episode of AMC's *Mad Men*. The hit show, which depicts life at the fictional New York advertising firm Sterling-Cooper in the early 1960s, is



Pickers outside of Penn Station in 1961. Image courtesy of David Hirsch.

known for its dedication to historical accuracy and realistic recreation of the time period. During a meeting with client Madison Square Garden Corporation, agency executives discuss mounting public opposition to the redevelopment plan and

mention an article by Ada Louise Huxtable, whose columns in the New York Times alerted New Yorkers to the station's impending destruction. Although his job is to quell opposition to the plan, one of the ad executives laments the loss of the beautiful old station, in an interesting vocalization of the tension between developers and preservationists. *Mad Men* airs Sundays at 10 PM on AMC.

# News at the Archive Project

In March 2009, NYPAP received a matching grant of \$1,500 from the National Trust for Historic Preservation, in support of our Online Preservation Memory Collection Project. This grant was made possible by the Trust's John E. Streb Preservation Fund for New York and provides the necessary funding to build an online "guestbook" where the public may share comments and memories of recently deceased preservationists. The guestbook will be formally unveiled in our next newsletter.

In August 2009, NYPAP received an \$8,000 grant from the New York State Council on the Arts Architecture, Planning, and Design Program for the 2009-2010 fiscal year. NYSCA's grant provides support for general operations and increasing capacity of developing organizations such as NYPAP. The Archive Project Board and staff sincerely appreciate NYSCA's continued support and recognition of NYPAP's mission and programs.

NYPAP also received a \$1,000 grant from the J.M. Kaplan fund, authorized by Joan K. Davidson. We are very grateful to the Fund and to Ms. Davidson for their generous support for our work.

In September, Carol Gayle and Gretchen Gayle Ellsworth jointly contributed \$1,000 to the Archive Project in memory of their mother, Margot Gayle. We deeply appreciate the support of the Gayle family.

This spring, an anonymous NYPAP Board member generously donated \$1000, and challenged each Board mem-

ber to make an additional contribution to NYPAP this year. We are pleased to announce the success of this initiative in raising over \$3000 for the Archive Project's activities. We thank all our Board members for their generous gifts.

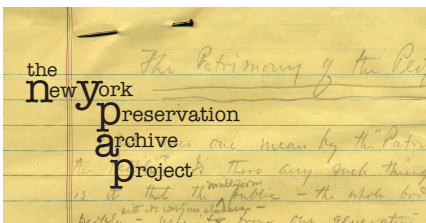
After a successful year as NYPAP's Administrator, Sarah Sher left the Archive Project in August to enter Columbia University's graduate program in Historic Preservation. The Directors are pleased to welcome Laura Pedersen as the organization's new Administrator. Ms. Pedersen is a graduate of Barnard College, where she studied European History.

NYPAP's internship program continues to be a great success. Students perform in-depth research on select preservation history topics while engaging with the nonprofit and preservation communities. This summer, we hosted four interns: Marlee Busching, a senior at New York University; Matthew Leib, a junior at Northwestern University; Courtney Macaranas, a junior at Barnard College; and Melissa Umberger, a graduate student enrolled in Pratt's historic preservation program.

Ms. Umberger, who began interning at NYPAP in the fall of 2008, has been an invaluable resource over the past year. We wish her the best in her final year at Pratt. Ms. Busching, a history major, will be continuing her internship into the fall and contributing to NYPAP's newly launched online database.

## Supporting the Archive Project

The New York Preservation Archive Project is a not-for-profit organization and we depend upon contributions to continue our work. Please give generously to support the documentation and celebration of the history of preservation in New York! NYPAP welcomes your comments and suggestions. Please contact Laura Pedersen at [lpedersen@nypap.org](mailto:lpedersen@nypap.org) or 212-988-8379.



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