

the  
New York  
Preservation  
Archive  
Project **Newsletter**

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FALL 2008

*Welcome to the ninth 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 Comments: Time and Place

by Anthony C. Wood

Preservation happens both in time and place. We are very good at the place part of our work, saving special places from individual landmarks and historic districts to cultural landscapes and commemorating special events tied to specific places. We are less good at the time dimension of preservation. Preservationists live and work in an historic context. This year the loss of a number of extraordinary preservation colleagues underscores the fact that our work happens in time—and as the saying goes: time stands still for no one. Their combined contributions to preservation could fill volumes.

Experiencing these losses raises many questions. Among them should be: Have we captured enough material on the work of our departed colleagues that someone someday could write one or more of those volumes? As individuals, have we made plans to secure the future of our preservation records? As organizations, are we adequately documenting our accomplishments and preserving our records? As a movement, are we capturing our own intellectual capital so those who follow can build on what we have experienced?

Time is precious and we concentrate on the work at hand. It is a natural instinct and in preservation we often feel we are in a constant race against time. Until recently, preservationists have had almost no awareness that their work was part of a longer and proud history. Additionally, we have been too busy making preservation happen to document it.

The New York Preservation Archive Project is dedicated to documenting, preserving, and celebrating the history of preservation. That task is too large for any one organization, even when well funded and fully staffed—which you can imagine, we are not. Although we are aggressively working to expand our own efforts to document the history of preservation—and welcome and thank you for your financial help to do so—equally important is our effort to change the culture of preservation so that everyone and every organization involved in preservation, documents and values their own contributions to preservation's history.

Together, we can save the memos and correspondence that tell the story of a battle to save a special place. Together, through oral histories we can capture the memories, insights, and observations of our preservation sages. Together, we can begin to better document our daily preservation work through photography, video, and the new media.

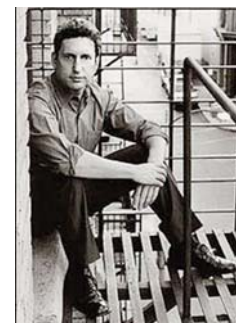
Preservation is a civic passion with a rich history. Every day you are making more of that history, and unfortunately, more of it is being lost. With your help, both financially and in advancing an archival ethic within the preservation community, together we can become as good at saving preservation's history as we are at making it.

### Save the Date!

**NYPAP's 5th Annual Bard Birthday Breakfast Benefit:**  
***New York Preserved on Film: Visual Archives of the City* by James Sanders**

Friday, December 12, 2008, 8:30 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.  
Harvard Club of New York City  
35 West 44th Street

This year, the New York Preservation Archive Project will be celebrating the birthday of Albert S. Bard, the keystone in the creation of the New York City Landmarks Law, with an illustrated talk by James Sanders, architect and author of *Celluloid Skyline: New York and the Movies*. Mr. Sanders will discuss the rich film archival collections he has explored in his extensive research on the history and architecture of NYC.



Photograph from  
[www.celluloidskyline.com](http://www.celluloidskyline.com)

James Sanders is a noted author, architect, and Emmy Award-winning filmmaker. In addition to his book *Celluloid Skyline: New York and the Movies*, and the recent multimedia exhibit based on the book in Grand Central Terminal, Mr. Sanders co-authored *New York: An Illustrated History* and co-wrote the award-winning eight-part PBS series

*New York: A Documentary Film* in collaboration with Ric Burns. He recently wrote, co-designed, and co-directed *Timescapes*, the permanent orientation installation at the Museum of the City of New York. Mr. Sanders is a recipient of a 2006 John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship, is a member of the Advisory Council of the AIA's Center for Architecture, and is the director of the Center for Urban Experience, a research and design institute dedicated to exploring innovative ways of understanding and experiencing the urban environment. For ticket information contact Sarah Sher at [ssher@nypap.org](mailto:ssher@nypap.org) or 212-988-8379

**Making the Best Better: 35th Anniversary Celebration of the 1973 Amendments to NYC's Landmarks Law**

On June 10th, the Archive Project hosted Making the Best Better: 35th Anniversary Celebration of the 1973 Amendments to New York City's Landmarks Law. The 1973 amendments to New York City's landmarks law dramatically transformed the workings of the Landmarks Preservation Commission by, among other measures, establishing interior and scenic landmarks and instituting continuous hearings and designations, ending the mandated moratorium limiting designation determinations to a 6-month period every three years. These amendments fundamentally strengthened the ability of the Landmarks Preservation Commission to protect New York City's valuable historic resources.

The 35th anniversary event began with a panel discussion at Fraunces Tavern® Museum examining the origins of the 1973 amendments and the contributions the legislation made to preservation in New York City. Despite the heat the panel drew a large crowd, eager to witness the historic conversation between three individuals who played key roles in the story of the amendments. After a brief historical introduction by Dorothy Miner, the panelists, Kent Barwick, who as President of the Municipal Art Society, led the advocacy efforts for the amendments; Roberta Gratz, whose series of articles in the *New York Post* helped raise public awareness; and Jeff Friedlander, of the Corporation Counsel's office who helped draft the amendments, presented their historical perspectives on the events that led to the 1973 amendments. Following the presentations, Dorothy Miner facilitated discussion among the panelists. Audience members, such as Barbaralee Diamonstein-Spielvogel, a long-time Landmarks Commissioner who was serving on the commission in 1973, also participated in the discussion.



Following the panel discussion, guests moved to Battery Gardens Restaurant for a cocktail party celebrating the 35th Anniversary of the amendments and honoring those who played a role in their passage. Involved in amending the law were advocacy groups such as the Municipal Art Society, the media that helped create a climate for amending the law and; the Landmarks Preservation

Commission; the Corporation Counsel of the City Law Department; and the City Council. Anthony C. Wood welcomed guests and NYPAP Board Member Otis Pratt Pearsall read the role of honored guests: Kent Barwick, Bronson Binger, Jeffery Friedlander, Roberta Brandes Gratz, Garol Greitzer, Michael Gruen, and Hon. Barry Salzman. Through research on the 1973 amendments, NYPAP also identified a number of individuals who played important roles in amending the law, but who could



Panelists Jeffrey Friedlander, Kent Barwick, and Roberta Brandes Gratz and Moderator Dorothy Miner

not join us this evening are Margot Gayle, Frank Gilbert, Mimi Levitt, Hon. Victor Marrero, Tim Prentice, Frederick William Richmond, Norman Redlich, Edward Sadovsky, and Barbaralee Diamonstein-Spielvogel.

Making the Best Better was attended by veteran and emerging preservationists alike. For some, the event was an educational experience about a previously unknown piece of preservation's history; for others, the event was a reminder of the importance of the amendments to the Landmarks Law. This program helped to foster dialogue about a key moment in the history of the preservation movement. In addition, NYPAP captured first-hand stories from key figures who helped make this history and strengthened New York City's Landmarks legislation. NYPAP wishes to thank all of the supporters of the event and the New York Preservation Archive Project's mission—to document, preserve, and celebrate preservation's history—including such seminal events as the successful 1973 Amendments to the law.

*The panel discussion was recorded and transcribed and is available, along with more photographs of the evening, on [www.nypap.org](http://www.nypap.org).*

**2008 Oral History Project with the Pratt Institute Focuses on Preservation in the 1970s**

For the second consecutive year, the New York Preservation Archive Project will partner with Pratt Institute's graduate program in Historic Preservation to gather oral histories from key players in the preservation movement. This ongoing project will aid in documenting important narratives that have shaped advocacy efforts over the years. Thus far, NYPAP has six interviewees who have already committed to this year's project, which will focus on preservation in the 1970s. Those individuals and their roles in that period are: Laurie Beckelman, former deputy director of the Municipal Art Society; Thom Bess, an integral advocate in getting the Longwood Historic District in



the Bronx designated; Bronson Binger, former Assistant Commissioner for Capital Projects at the NYC Parks Department; Michael Gruen, former counsel for the NYC Landmarks Conservancy and an important figure in the early days of the Historic Districts Council; Susan Jones, former executive director of the New York Landmarks Conservancy; and Lenore Norman, former executive director of the NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission.

### Chronology of the Campaign to Preserve 2 Columbus Circle Now on NYPAP's Website

The New York Preservation Archive Project's documentation project creating an archive of material related to the battle over 2 Columbus Circle is now available at [www.nypap.org](http://www.nypap.org). No matter one's opinion of the merits of preserving Edward Durell Stone's controversial building, the campaign to preserve it was one of the most aggressive, high-profile, broad-based preservation advocacy efforts since the passage of the Landmarks Law in 1965. There is no doubt this preservation struggle—the issues it raised, the advocacy strategies and tools that it generated, and the extent of the public debate it engendered—will be of interest to future historians of preservation in New York City.

Thanks to a publication grant from the New York State Council on the Arts, the Archive Project was able to work with Kate Wood of Landmark West! on this model and rare effort to gather primary documents related to a contemporary preservation issue for use by future historians. This resource consists



of a 50-year chronological narrative and a “Dramatic Personae” providing an inventory of the parties involved, with hyperlinks that serve as “portals” to hundreds of relevant documents.

Understanding the volume and diversity of materials generated through the campaign to preserve 2 Columbus Circle, the Archive Project views this resource as a perpetual “work in progress” that, we hope, will continue to evolve as

users share their own knowledge and insights, helping to fill in and flesh out the story from a variety of viewpoints. Please visit [www.nypap.org/2cc](http://www.nypap.org/2cc) and email us with your thoughts and comments.

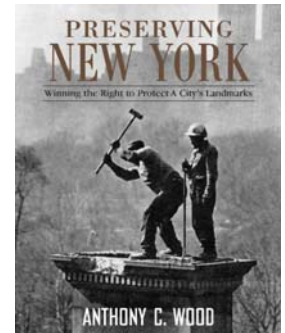
It is hoped that this effort to seriously, and as comprehensively as possible, gather primary materials related to a current preservation episode while such documents and records are still intact, will encourage similar efforts in the future. Though such contemporary events are too fresh to allow the writing of any definitive history, their freshness makes the timing propitious to assemble a record for future analysis.

### Preserving New York Receives Preservation Excellence Award

On May 15, 2008 at the Preservation League of New York State's annual meeting and Excellence in Preservation Awards ceremony, PLNYS Trustee Arete Warren presented Anthony C. Wood and Vanessa Norton (accepting on behalf of the

Archive Project) with a special citation for *Preserving New York: Winning the Right to Protect a City's Landmarks*. “This publication makes an important contribution to our understanding of preservation history in New York City... it is easy to imagine this book becoming required reading for preservation degree programs across the country,” said Jay DiLorenzo, President of the Preservation League. “Despite presenting a chronicle of losses, *Preserving New York* makes the reader proud of the city's achievements and hopeful for preservation's future.”

The Excellence in Preservation Awards are held annually to honor the statewide preservation community and educate the public about the important contribution that historic preservation projects make to our quality of life throughout New York State. The Archive Project is honored to be recognized among a distinguished role of preservation projects around New York State.



### In Memorium

This year saw the loss of many who have played important roles in the unfolding history of preservation in New York City. NYPAP mourns the loss of these great individuals, and hopes to keep their stories alive by continuing its mission to protect and celebrate the narratives of historic preservation in New York City.

**Roger Lang**, former director of community programs and services at the New York Landmarks Conservancy, died of lung cancer at age 64 on March 31, 2008. Lang played a crucial role in preserving the abandoned buildings on the south side of Ellis Island. An obituary is available in the April 11, 2008 issue of *The New York Times*.

**David Todd**, former chair of the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, passed away on March 31, 2008 at age 93. Todd focused on architectural excellence during his time as chairman of the Commission. A full obituary is published in the April 2, 2008 issue of *The New York Times*.

**Jan Pokorny**, architect, passed away at age 93 on May 20, 2008. Pokorny was known for his restorations and adaptations of historic structures in New York City, and also served on both the Art Commission of NYC and the NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission. An obituary is available in the June 25, 2008 issue of the *Architect's Newspaper*, as well as in the May 23, 2008 issue of *The New York Times*.

**Norman Marcus** died of cancer on June 30, 2008 at the age of 75. During his time as general counsel to the NYC Planning Commission, Marcus was a key player in the creation of special districts to preserve the character of many neighborhoods throughout NYC and was a central figure in creating the Midtown Manhattan district, which allowed for air rights above historic theaters to be transferred to nearby areas. An obituary is available in the July 7, 2008 issue of *The New York Times* and the July 30, 2008 issue of the *Architect's Newspaper*.

**Paul Byard** died of cancer on July 15, 2008 at age 68. Partner at the firm Platt Byard Dovell White Architects, over his career Byard made a triple contribution to preservation, initially as a lawyer, then as an architect, and as an educator at Columbia. A full obituary is available in the July 18, 2008 issue of *The New York Times*.

**Stanley Michels**, former city councilmember from upper Manhattan, passed away on August 1, 2008 at age 75. During his time in public office, Michels secured tens of millions of dollars for the restoration of parks in northern Manhattan, including the landmarked Highbridge Pool. A full obituary is available on Henry J. Stern's website [www.nycivic.org](http://www.nycivic.org), as well as in the August 2, 2008 issue of *The New York Times*.

**Verna Small** passed away on August 10, 2008 at the age of 92. For over forty years, Small fought to maintain Greenwich Village's historical character by helping create such organizations as the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation, the Washington Square Association, and the Federation to Preserve the Greenwich Village Waterfront and Great Port. A full obituary is available in the August 20-26, 2008 issue of *The Villager* (Volume 78/Number 12).

#### NYPAP News

In April 2008, NYPAP received a \$20,000 grant from the Windie Knowe fund of the New York Community Trust. The Archive Project Board and staff sincerely appreciate this support and recognition from the directors of the New York Community Trust of NYPAP's mission and programs.

After two years as the NYPAP's Administrator, Vanessa Norton left the Archive Project in August to return to her

home state of Arkansas where she will serve as the Executive Director of the Historic Preservation Alliance of Arkansas, a state-wide non-profit dedicated to educating the public about of preservation issues throughout the state. The board of the Archive Project is indebted to Vanessa for her constant willingness to go the extra mile for the cause and wishes her great success in making preservation history in Arkansas.

The Directors are pleased to welcome Sarah Sher as the organization's new Administrator. Ms. Sher is a graduate of Columbia University where she earned a degree in Architectural History and the Jewish Theological Seminary where she studied Jewish Music. Ms. Sher comes to NYPAP as a long-time intern at Landmark West!

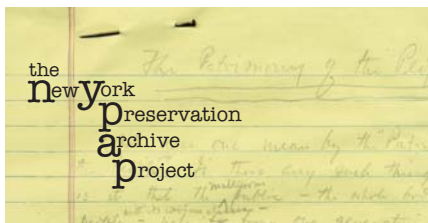
Gabby Goldberg, a graduate student in the Archives and Public History program at NYU continued her Spring Semester internship with the Archive Project into the summer.

The NYPAP Board of Directors welcomes new members Michele H. Bogart, Joseph Ciccone, and Susan De Vries. Ms. Bogart, a scholar and author is a former commissioner of the Art Commission of the City of New York and serves on the Fine Arts Federation Board; Mr. Ciccone is an archival consultant and founder of Ciccone Archival Consulting; and Ms. De Vries is the Director of the Dyckman Farmhouse Museum and formerly of the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation where she worked with their archives.

NYPAP wishes to thank departing board members Randall Mason and Vicki Weiner for their years of dedicated service to the Archive project

#### 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 Sarah Sher at [ssher@nypap.org](mailto:ssher@nypap.org) or 212-988-8379.



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