



NEWSLETTER

SPRING/SUMMER 2021

Welcome to the 34th 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.

Saving 227 Duffield Street A Symbol of Freedom

By Pamela Wong

The years-long fight to save 277 Duffield Street, a 19th-century row house that embodies Brooklyn's anti-slavery movement, has finally reached a happy conclusion thanks to the unwavering efforts of community activists determined to save this relic of African-American history.

In a unanimous vote on February 2, 2021, The New York Landmarks Preservation Committee (LPC) designated 277 Abolitionist Place, as it is now known, as an individual City landmark. The landmark status prohibits developers from demolishing or altering the building without LPC approval. And a month later, the City of New York purchased the building for \$3.2 million, further protecting the structure and securing its legacy.

The long effort to designate 227 Duffield Street gained significant momentum during the Black Lives Matter activism of June 2020, and landmark designation stands as a product of that movement. "During this time of national reckoning over the legacy

Continued on page 2



Community members, including Raul Rothblatt, speaking at microphone, rally to oppose the destruction of 227 Duffield Street, an abolitionist site located in Brooklyn. The historic home was once owned by abolitionists Thomas and Harriet Truesdell. | Courtesy of Brad Vogel

This issue sponsored by



CTA ARCHITECTS P.C.

Continued from page 1

of slavery and continued injustice faced by Black communities, maintaining that piece of history is critical in remembering how far we've come and how far we still must go," New York Attorney General Letitia James said in a statement following the designation, which is the most recent chapter in the long saga of 227 Duffield Street.

The History of 227 Duffield Street

A three-story brick Greek Revival row house on a block between Fulton and Willoughby Streets in Downtown Brooklyn, 227 Duffield Street was built between 1848 and 1851. That year, a married abolitionist couple from Rhode Island purchased the home. Thomas Truesdell was a founding member of the Rhode Island Anti-Slavery Society. His wife, Harriet, was a member of the Providence Ladies Anti-Slavery Society and helped organize the 1838 Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women in Philadelphia. The Truesdells were hardly an anomaly in their new neighborhood—Brooklyn was a hub of abolitionist activity in the years preceding the Civil War. The downtown area was home to several anti-slavery activists as well as multiple Underground Railroad stops that took in fugitive slaves headed to upstate New York, New England, and Canada. Locals involved in the efforts to save 227 Duffield Street believe that tunnels beneath the Truesdells' house and neighboring properties provided a temporary haven for slaves fleeing the South. However, the LPC designation report acknowledges that it is "difficult to document or verify" an Underground Railroad connection.

227 Duffield Street remained in the Truesdell family until 1921. While the building has undergone various alterations, including a commercial extension and the removal of front and rear porches, preservationists contend that the building retains its 19th-century form and maintains a pivotal place in Brooklyn's anti-slavery past.

The Battle Against New York City

Early in the first decade of this century, Downtown Brooklyn was populated by a multitude of African-American and



Community leaders gather in defense of 227 Duffield Street (227 Abolitionist Place) in 2019. From l. to r.: Betty Lester, with sign, Aleah Bacquie Vaughn of CJI, Michael Higgins, Jr., with FUREE at the time, Deedra Cheatham with Council Member Stephen Levin's office, and community activist Karen Blondel. | Courtesy of Brad Vogel
Inset: 1940 Brooklyn Tax Photo of 227 Duffield Street. | Courtesy of the Municipal Archives

immigrant-owned businesses. "It was not at all gentrified, but it was packed," recalls Raul Rothblatt, who has campaigned for nearly twenty years to save 227 Duffield Street. The City, meanwhile, was planning to acquire properties on Duffield Street via eminent domain as part of Downtown Brooklyn Rezoning, the plan by the Bloomberg Administration and the NYC Economic Development Corporation to revitalize the area with commercial towers and hotels. In January 2004, several Duffield Street residents found notices posted to their doors stating that their homes would be acquired to make way for Willoughby Square Park and

an underground parking garage, according to Rothblatt. Duffield Street homeowners objected, stating that abolitionists once lived in these houses and slaves fleeing the South were temporarily sheltered here.

One of the protesting homeowners was Joy Chatel, who moved to 227 Duffield Street in 1987 after marrying Albert Chatel, whose family had owned the building since 1948. "Mama Joy," as she was affectionately known, (see her profile on the Archive Project website), insisted that there were sealed tunnels in her basement that once connected

Continued on page 5

Preservation as "The Magical Intersection"

By Lisa Ackerman, Chair

This is the first newsletter to be issued since the Archive Project's chairmanship transitioned from Anthony C. Wood to me. I can take no credit for anything in the newsletter, as Elizabeth Jeffe and Brad Vogel have once again produced it with great enthusiasm and talent. The newsletter does offer me an opportunity to reflect on why I accepted the role as chair, and indeed why I joined the board in the early years of the organization. I mean, aside from having no ability to deny a request from Tony!

Preservation, for me, has always been the magical intersection of history, architecture, culture, and traditions. Places are important and are the springboards that allow us to tell deep stories about who we are, what we value, and why we care so passionately about the environments in which we live and those we visit.

It is easy for preservation to seem irrelevant if the field and those in it are described as caring only about old buildings, obsolete structures, and maintaining the status quo. Effective preservation is not static. We want places to thrive, people to flourish, and our streetscape to be dynamic.

The New York Preservation Archive Project began with the idea of making sure the stories behind the scenes would not be forgotten. The goal was to ensure that those engaged in advancing New York City's preservation agenda would be remembered. Most importantly, we wanted future preservation leaders to have the chance to know about past struggles, strategies, wins, and losses.

One of our early programs was called "Sages and Stages." It paired a neighborhood preservation veteran with an emerging talent in the field. The program was long ago, but I have never forgotten the excitement of hearing first-hand about preservation efforts across

the boroughs of the City. Some were stories I knew. Some were not. There was an intimacy to the discussions that stood out to me, as I think that has been NYPAP's greatest strength. Our discussions always seem personal and welcoming.

This past December's Bard Breakfast via Zoom and our recent talk with Stephen Facey and Anne van Ingen had that same aura of feeling you were catching up with friends, having a conversation, and leaving the program with some new food for thought.

It is not easy to follow in Tony's footsteps as chair. What is in my mind as we continue this Archive Project together is that the mandate is as important today as it was in the 1990s when NYPAP began. Knowing the people who are protecting the legacy of the City, understanding the reasons why places are important, and hearing about the strategies employed in this work is an important aspect of the field. Buildings may come and go; streetscapes evolve. The heart of preservation is people and the places they cherish. ■



Lisa Ackerman, Chair, New York Preservation Archive Project | Courtesy of the Archive Project

IT'S A HELLUVA FUND

Archives Help Reveal The J.M. Kaplan Fund, a Force in Preservation

By Elizabeth Rohn Jeffe,
Vice-Chair

The recent publication of *It's a Helluva Town: Joan K. Davidson, the J.M. Kaplan Fund, and the Fight for a Better New York* has garnered considerable attention in preservation circles, and rightly so. Written by Roberta Brandes Gratz, the book recounts the history of The J.M. Kaplan Fund (the Fund), focusing chiefly on the spirited and critical preservation, environmental, and cultural initiatives of Joan K. Davidson, who served as president of the Fund from 1977 to 1993.

Following in the footsteps of her father, Jacob M. Kaplan, the founder of the Fund, Joan acted as a catalyst to mobilize other groups to mount a variety of initiatives during her memorable tenure at the helm. Just a few of the most notable of Joan's battles include the creation of Westbeth Artists Housing—an adaptive reuse of a 13-building complex in the far West Village that had once housed Bell Telephone Laboratories—in the 1960s, and the successful fight to block the Westway project in the 1970s. Joan's numerous battles to save important historical structures are especially instructive for preservationists, such as her fight to preserve Broadway theaters in the 1970s and early 1980s as well as her support of the rescue and restoration of the Eldridge Street Synagogue on the Lower East Side, also in the 1980s.

From the perspective of the Archive Project, *It's a Helluva Town* leads quite naturally to the story of the Fund's archives. How were the materials saved and organized? What can be found in the collections? How are the materials accessible? Who uses the Fund archives, and for what purposes?

Fortunately for posterity, the Fund decided a decade ago to make its archives a priority. Previously, as is so often the case with organizations, a fairly relaxed attitude toward archival materials prevailed at the Fund—as Executive Director Amy Freitag observed in a recent conversation, things were disposed of during moves, or often not saved in the first place. According to Bill Falahee, Director of Finance and Administration

and a Fund veteran of 25 years, the decision to organize and modernize the archives, contained in boxes and file cabinets, found its inspiration at a time when action had to be taken to address a lack of space for archival items. When the Fund was still at 261 Madison Avenue prior to locating to 71 West 23rd Street, staff members realized that they were running out of room for grant files in the office itself. (Ten years of grant files were kept in the office; those predating that time period and other materials were kept in offsite storage.)

The moment of decision was at hand: either the Fund would keep putting paper records in storage, or they would have to digitize them. Opting for the latter route, the Fund began the long process of digitizing all the grant files, which were indexed on 3x5 cards with typed information. Known at the Fund as the “Bible cards,” and dating from 1944 to the 1960s, they, along with other files, filled over 300 boxes. To illustrate what the situation with these materials was really like, Bill jokingly noted that when he requested them from storage for research purposes, he needed a hazmat suit because of the dust.

As part of a team effort involving Amy, and Executive Assistants Jack Carlile, Lexi Marek, and Liz Meshel, with the full support of current Fund chair Peter Davidson, a son of Joan's, Bill approached the task of organizing the archives with the objective of creating a system that would be of use internally and externally. All grants are digitized and arranged by subject. Supplementing the grant information, the archives include texts



J.M. Kaplan, namesake of The J.M. Kaplan Foundation, and his wife, Alice, about to board a flight. | Courtesy of the J.M. Kaplan Fund Archives

from speaking engagements, papers relating to designees, photographs, and copies of the many publications that the Fund published over the years. In addition to Fund employees, grantees can now easily search the archives, as can researchers, organizations, writers, academics, and activists. While there is no direct online digital link to the archives, anyone can simply contact the Fund for assistance, and the relevant digital material will be sent. Interestingly, Bill has noticed that most of the contacts for archival information come as a result of someone seeing a mention of a Fund grant while studying something else, such as the battle over Westway.

After the digitization of the grants was completed, the Fund disposed of some unnecessary papers but kept photos and important articles. To protect the privacy of grantees, the Fund hired Shredit to shred any grantee-submitted financial statements; the company processed over three tons of material. Today, remaining offsite materials are saved at an Iron Mountain storage unit.

Continued on page 9

Continued from page 2

her home to those of her neighbors. There was also a low archway in her sub-basement that she believed led to passageways used by fugitive slaves. Along with running a hair salon at 227 Duffield, Chatel used her home as a community center, hosting performances by African drumming circles and dance troupes. After Albert's death in 1996, she offered tours of the basement to visitors. Her dream was to preserve the building's legacy by turning it into a museum.

Raul Rothblatt met Mama Joy in 2014 while protesting the use of eminent domain in the Atlantic Yards development. He visited 227 Duffield many times and confirms evidence of "connections between the buildings that had been filled in a century earlier." An 1885 map produced by the civil engineer William Perris also indicates links beneath the Duffield Street homes. "It's not that unusual to have buildings that were connected," Rothblatt notes. However, locating written evidence for the tunnel's use has proved elusive. As Historic Districts Council Executive Director Simeon Bankoff notes, "To my recollection, nobody ever conclusively proved that the house served as a station on the Underground Railroad."

The environmental review phase of Downtown Brooklyn Rezoning began in 2003. As Bankoff observes, it is during this phase of analysis that "people really start getting agitated." EDC hired the firm AKRF to prepare the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, according to *Village Views*, Volume X, No. 1. A subsequent 2006 article by *Village Views* editors Christabel Gough, Ron Kopnicki, and Matt McGhee, published by the Cityscape Foundation and the Society for the Architecture of the City, details the Duffield Street residents' fight against the use of eminent domain. Chatel and her neighbors testified during the public hearings for the Environmental Impact Study, insisting that their historic houses should be spared given the oral history connecting them to the Underground Railroad.

Underground Railroad Connection Debated

The fight over the environmental review led to further study of the block. The New York



Community leaders gather in defense of 227 Duffield Street (227 Abolitionist Place) in 2019. From l. to r.: Betty Lester, with sign, Aleah Bacquie Vaughn of CJI, Michael Higgins, Jr., with FUREE at the time, Deedra Cheatham with Council Member Stephen Levin's office, and community activist Karen Blondel. | Courtesy of Brad Vogel

City Council requested a "supplemental study of the Duffield Street houses and their association with the Underground Railroad," according to *Village Views* editors. EDC once again hired AKRF to conduct this study consisting of peer reviews and oral histories. Some of the homeowners interviewed for the study described the process as "rushed and manipulative," the article states. AKRF determined that "no documentable association" to the Underground Railroad was found at 227 Duffield Street or the neighboring buildings, adding "the potential existence of tunnels under the buildings and any corroborating artifacts could not be ascertained without further testing."

Opponents of the conclusion of the AKRF study stressed how unlikely it would have been for anyone taking part in the Underground Railroad to document their dangerous and secretive involvement. "After the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, participating in Underground Railroad activities was illegal, so no one kept records," Bankoff explained. By way of comparison, Bankoff referred to the status of the Hopper-Gibbons House in Chelsea, the only documented Underground Railroad stop in Manhattan. A letter written by a friend of the Gibbons, Joseph Hodges Choate, provided verification of the property's

Continued on page 7

Our 2021 Jeffe Fellow

Jeanette Lazo



Jeanette Lazo, 2021 Jeffe Fellow |
Courtesy of Jeanette Lazo

I have lived here in the Empire State my entire life. I graduated from St. John's University with a bachelor's degree in history in 2011, and I returned there in 2019 to complete my master's degree in public history.

Throughout my time at St. John's I learned the importance of the various aspects of the public history sector. Individuals such as archivists and preservationists are all part of a network that is not only safeguarding history, but also making it accessible to the general public. It is thanks to this network of individuals that I can continue to appreciate the rich preservation history of not just my home state but also the world at large. It is through the work of many unheralded individuals that the historical narratives of numerous places and people have been preserved.

I was fortunate enough to intern with the Queen's County Clerk's Office from 2019 through 2020, working with naturalization

records dating back to the late 1700s. In working with these historically significant documents, I glimpsed the stories of countless individuals who made their way to the United States. However, in studying these documents, I found that many were in incredibly fragile condition, and I recognized how close this history was to being lost. It is why, with a grant from the National Archives, the Queen's County Clerk's Office ultimately embarked on a mission to digitize the records to make them accessible and to preserve their contents. I am happy that I was able to be a part of that process to save these records.

This experience propelled me to further my studies, and I am currently a graduate student at Long Island University, enrolled in the Advanced Archives and Records Management program.

My role as the Jeffe Fellow allows me to research and participate in the dissemination of knowledge concerning historic preservation. By connecting with other professionals in the field I am learning about all the moving parts associated with the work of historic preservation and how the efforts of the past have contributed to contemporary approaches to preservation. It has also been very exciting to research and create in-depth content for NYPAP's many public-facing communication channels, another example of the innovative ways through which organizations such as NYPAP are

connecting with the general public and making the story of historic preservation more visible.

I am incredibly grateful to Elizabeth and Robert Jeffe for granting me the opportunity to work with the Archive Project. I look forward to the experiences I will continue to share with the preservation community during my time at the Archive Project. ■

A SPECIAL THANK YOU

The Archive Project would like to express its profound thanks to Elizabeth Rohn Jeffe for her ten years of service as the editor of our newsletter. In addition to her editorial duties, Liz has produced a steady stream of feature articles and interviews. She has been absolutely essential to the success of this publication.



Robert A. and Elizabeth R. Jeffe. The Jeffe Fellowship is made possible by the generosity of the Robert A. and Elizabeth R. Jeffe Foundation |
Courtesy of Elizabeth Jeffe

Continued from page 5

Underground Railroad roots because Choate mentions meeting an escaped slave at the Gibbons home.

In spite of the fact that the AKRF concluded that there was not sufficient evidence of any Underground Railroad activity to save the Duffield Street properties, several of the peer reviewers believed the site to be an important one that should be saved, according to Rothblatt. Dr. Judith Wellman, a historian specializing in the Underground Railroad, stated that the AKRF findings “suggest a clear possibility” that the Truesdells “may have been involved in the Underground Railroad.”

Mama Joy’s Civic Fight

Joy Chatel did not back down. She organized rallies and several events at 227 Duffield to bring attention to the fight. “We did so much,” Rothblatt remembers. “We had Hakeem Jeffries and Tish James speaking in the backyard.” (Letitia James is now New York Attorney General; in 2004, she was a newly elected member of the City Council.) Other elected officials joined the fight along with numerous organizations such as the Four Borough Neighborhood Preservation Alliance, of which Chatel was a member, the HDC, and the New York Landmarks Conservancy to pressure LPC Chair Robert Tierney to landmark 227, 231, and 233 Duffield Street. In 2007, Tierney suggested memorializing the Duffield block with a plaque instead. A separate bid to save 227 Duffield also fell through that same year when historian Richard Hourahan’s application to add the house to the National Register was rejected. Chatel and FUREE (Families United for Racial and Economic Equality) ultimately filed a lawsuit against the City in 2007. Represented by South Brooklyn Legal Services, the plaintiffs accused the City of not thoroughly investigating the history of the Duffield Street homes and omitting key information from the AKRF study.

All was not lost, however. In November, the City settled with Chatel and FUREE and agreed to exclude 227 Duffield from its development plans, but Mama Joy’s neighbors were not so fortunate. Their homes were eventually razed. As Rothblatt notes,

“[The City] didn’t have to destroy all these buildings. It was heart-wrenching to see what they did.” Just previously, in September, the City Council passed a bill co-sponsored by Letitia James co-naming Duffield Street, between Willoughby and Fulton Streets, “Abolitionist Place.” After saving 227 Duffield from demolition, Chatel and a small team, including Rothblatt, attempted to maintain the building as a museum. “We tried to keep it going, but we didn’t really have a good [organizational] structure,” Rothblatt recalls. Chatel’s health also began to decline, and she died in January 2014 at the age of 67.

227 Abolitionist Place Threatened Again

Mama Joy had led a successful effort but the threats she faced were only the first wave in a series of challenges. More than a decade later, a new developer was eyeing 227 Duffield. This was an unexpected turn of events. As Rothblatt notes, “We didn’t expect that some other developer would come in. We weren’t prepared for it.” In 2004, Chatel had signed the deed to her home over to her mother, according to *Brownstoner*, and the following year, she sold a fifty-percent stake in the property to an investor. Ten years later, Samiel Hansab, a developer, bought both the investor’s and the family’s shares. Hence, the home that Joy Chatel fought so hard to preserve was once again in peril. In June 2019, the NYC Department of Buildings issued a permit for Hansab to demolish 227 Abolitionist Place, as reported by the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*.

New Allies Join the Battle

In early 2019 Aleah Bacquie Vaughn, Executive Director of Circle for Justice Innovations (CJI), first noticed 227 Abolitionist Place while walking to work. Remnants from Mama Joy’s time at the building caught her eye. Bacquie Vaughn

Dr. Judith Wellman, a historian specializing in the Underground Railroad, stated that the AKRF findings “suggest a clear possibility” that the Truesdells “may have been involved in the Underground Railroad.”

recalls a picture of Harriet Tubman and a “map of this whole street and the area around it [that] identified all these homes occupied by abolitionists. I was really intrigued and I looked it up and found that Thomas and Harriet Truesdell had lived there. Then I did more research and found there had been a major fight for this house to be saved from demolition.” Just a few months following her discovery of the house, Bacquie Vaughn noticed an “order to vacate” sign on the front of the building. “I thought, that means they’re probably going to try to demolish it.” I then began to contact the organizations that had been cited in some of the [earlier] work,” including FUREE and Equality for Flatbush. Bacquie Vaughn was surprised to have found that “the crazy thing about it is [many of] those people who fought all those years before with Mama Joy thought it was already landmarked.”

Although Mama Joy was no longer present to protect 227 Abolitionist Place, this time around Rothblatt had new allies whose social justice and anti-gentrification causes aligned with the fight to save a symbol of Brooklyn’s anti-slavery history. In explaining why CJI joined the fight, Bacquie Vaughn said, “All the roots of the current system that we have—which is based on racism, on punishment, on control of the labor market, on all these various issues of injustice—are

Continued on page 8



Continued from page 7

Activists gather to defend 227 Duffield Street (227 Abolitionist Place) from demolition in 2019 | Courtesy of Brad Vogel

supported by slavery, and they were created at the end of slavery in order to continue to control the population of mostly Black, but also brown, people. What we're living with right now is our failure to reckon with what happened then."

CJI and Equality for Flatbush wrote letters to the LPC requesting that the agency calendar 227 Abolitionist Place for landmark consideration. The groups also organized rallies on Abolitionist Place as well as in front of the LPC offices in Manhattan. When the LPC refused to calendar the site, the next step was to contact Mayor Bill de Blasio's wife, Chirlane McCray, as well as Letitia James. In July 2019 CJI launched a petition calling on the LPC to designate 227 Abolitionist Place an individual landmark. The petition garnered more than 17,000 signatures. "It was incredibly uplifting and

inspiring to have so many new people get involved. They really got things going again," Rothblatt observed of these supporters.

News about 227 Abolitionist Place soon reached City Hall and the de Blasio administration requested that the LPC consider the building for landmark designation. In late spring of 2020, the LPC conducted additional research about the site and scheduled a hearing, citing its "rarity as a long-time home of notable abolitionists Harriet and Thomas Truesdell" and its alignment with "LPC goals of telling the stories of all New Yorkers." The hearing took place on July 14, 2020, and received more than 70 letters supporting landmark designation. In addition, 45 speakers appeared via Zoom, including Rothblatt, Bankoff, and Attorney General Letitia James to testify in favor of designating 227

Abolitionist Place. The only opposition came from the developer's attorney.

Bacque Vaughn hopes that Mama Joy's dream of transforming 227 Abolitionist Place into a museum will be realized. "[The staff of] those same hotels that are stationed there should learn about the history of that area," she observed. "People think it's just the building, but it's really the whole area. It was a hotbed of abolitionist activity." Protests last summer calling for a reexamination of American history and the removal of monuments honoring slave traffickers and Confederate leaders affirm the urgency to save this icon of Black and abolitionist history. "If you don't deal with the roots of what is causing us to do what we're doing to one another, because of race, because of background and history, then you're going to repeat it," said Bacque Vaughn. ■

Continued from page 4

Going forward, the Fund has promoted a strong sense of saving for its archives within the organization. Although there is no Fund archivist per se, everyone on staff is aware of the protocols of saving. For events, everything in the “run of the show” is automatically kept for the archives; these materials include speeches, pictures, programs, etc., and they are all saved in the Cloud using Microsoft 365. The Fund also continues to educate programming teams to ensure awareness of the necessity of uploading these materials for safekeeping.

Fortuitously, the Fund’s focus on the rebirth of its archives dovetailed beautifully with Roberta Brandes Gratz’s desire to tell the story “of Joan’s legacy and her impact, especially on some of the most vexing and controversial issues of recent decades.” There “needed to be a book” in Roberta’s view, and she was committed to writing it. She independently approached the Fund, received funding, and set about writing *It’s A Helluva Town*, not “for hire” but as an objective journalist. The timing was perfect: according to Bill, as the archival materials were being digitized, “we began to think about Joan’s story, which was a thread throughout so much of the material. The thought behind it as we went along was, ‘what’s in Joan’s head that is not written down in the files?’”

Additionally, Amy observed that through the lens of Joan’s work, “the focus of Roberta’s book is really on grant-making as it stands for itself—not just about the Fund.” Roberta mentioned in a recent interview that while she did use the archives to check on projects while writing the book, she identifies as a journalist, and she likes to base her writing primarily on her own interviews. Coming full circle, Roberta’s extensive interviews for *It’s A Helluva Town* were added to the archives, enriching its contents considerably. Amy also noted that Joan and Roberta were “well-matched” as subject and journalist: “neither one was afraid to express an opinion, and they respected each other.” To round out the picture of grant-making found in the Fund’s story, Roberta also suggests studying the history of the now “spent down” Astor Foundation (the archives of which are housed at the New York Public Library) because the two entities partnered on a number of projects.

With the archives now organized, accessible, and protected for the future, the team at the Fund involved in this endeavor is very pleased. As Bill put it, “the archival process has taken time, but being able to access files for grantees and researchers has become a streamlined process. And, because the Fund is an environmental giver, we are happy that we are now a saver as well through decreased paper use.”

From the vantage point of the Archive Project, the Kaplan Fund’s emphasis on

protecting its archives and enhancing their accessibility to the public is an inspiration for preservationists. The initiatives at the Fund in the last decade speak directly to NYPAP’s mission to save the stories of individuals active in preservation, such as Joan Davidson; the narratives of preservation battles, won and lost; the history of key grants; and photographs and Fund-generated publications that enhance our understanding of preservation history in New York City. ■

All in the Family

Peter Davidson on The J.M. Kaplan Fund Archives

In a recent interview with Elizebeth Rohn Jeffe, Peter Davidson, a son of Joan Davidson and current Chair of The J.M. Kaplan Fund, shared his perspectives on the Fund, its archives, and the future of the organization. Peter noted that publication of *It’s a Helluva Town* made him reflect on his mom, especially her work on the Westbeth Artists Housing project. He clearly recalls her involvement with the Roosevelt Island Development Corporation in 1973 as well. (This was not a Fund project; it fell into Joan’s purview as a landmarks consultant.) As Peter put it, “She was out a lot at night, and I would ask her about it, and she’d explain that there was this big fight or that big issue.” He also remembers his grandfather’s campaign to save Carnegie Hall, a memorable success story that saved a cultural landmark.

Peter confirmed that *It’s a Helluva Town* has inspired the fourth generation of the Kaplan family to become involved with the Fund. He also outlined a creative plan already in action to groom younger family members who wish to participate in the work of the Fund—Peter believes that participation should be by choice and should never feel like a burden. The Fund has created “robust education programs” for the benefit of the fourth generation who are in their 20s and 30s. Fund staff, Executive Director Amy Freitag, and former Fund employee Anthony C. Wood have created a curriculum that explains the nature of philanthropy and the history of the Fund.

Quoted in the beginning of *It’s a Helluva Town*, Peter makes clear that philanthropic funds in New York City have changed from being family organizations to large, more impersonal entities. He recalls that there was much less philanthropy years ago, and it is “huge” now, with the likes of the Gates Foundation, but bigger philanthropic entities are more institutional, and projects are scientifically tested. Peter notes that giving used to be more of an individual family endeavor, with passions and interests reflecting those of the founders, and much of this has been lost in “old money” New York philanthropy.

Peter uses the Fund’s archives as a source of information for researching background information on Fund activities. He notes that there is a “huge issue of lost Fund archives, and the history of my grandfather in terms of paper has disappeared.” He noted that a push is now on at the Fund to re-create its early history: “The true realization of the value of archives has been in the forefront for the past ten years.”

Reflecting on the Fund’s archives, Peter observed, “We came to realize how important our archives are, especially for preserving the narrative of the early motivations and desires of the founders. Family foundations need a sense of the founders’ intent to ensure proper continuation of their mission.” ■

Ciganovic, Friends of George McAneny Honored at Bard Breakfast

Archive Project Steps Into Virtual Realm



Kay Ciganovic, founder of Friends of George McAneny, was honored with the Archive Project's 2020 Preservation Award. | Courtesy of Kay Ciganovic



Shirley McKinney of the National Park Service, 2020 McAneny Medal Awardee | Courtesy of the National Park Service

The Archive Project's seventeenth annual Bard Birthday Breakfast Benefit, held in December of 2020, took on an entirely new virtual format in the face of the global pandemic. Nevertheless, the annual event managed to do what it has done best for years: provide a chance for camaraderie and inspiration for those who care about the history of the preservation movement.

Kay Ciganovic, the founder of Friends of George McAneny, was honored with the Archive Project's Preservation Award for her untiring efforts to unearth and celebrate the legacy of her great-grandfather, George McAneny. A founder of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, McAneny was also instrumental in saving well-known landmarks like Federal Hall and Castle Clinton. Paul Edmondson, President and CEO of the National Trust for Historic Preservation presented the award.

The presentation of the award was part of the robust program. Executive Director Brad

Vogel welcomed attendees to virtual breakout rooms prior to the main event and served as master of ceremonies. Chair Emeritus Anthony C. Wood called off the roll of tables named for inspiring preservationists. New Archive Project Chair Lisa Ackerman introduced herself to those gathered, and Adrian Untermeyer elucidated George McAneny's life. Crystal Hayward performed two songs, one of them an original composition with lyrics by McAneny descendant David McAneny.

A full panel discussion on "Collecting the Now" also took place during the course of the program, with independent consultant Deborah Schwartz moderating a rewarding conversation between Manhattan Borough Historian Rob Snyder, curator Aaron Bryant of the National Museum of African American History and Culture, and Nina Nazionale of the New-York Historical Society. All panelists agreed there was more to do to continue capturing the history of the pandemic in real time.

One surprise twist emerged. After receiving the Preservation Award, Kay Ciganovic switched gears and announced that she was awarding the revived McAneny Medal, originally bestowed by the American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society, to Shirley McKinney, who serves as director of Manhattan Sites for the National Park Service. McKinney and her team worked extensively to facilitate Year of McAneny events at Federal Hall and Castle Clinton in 2019, the sesquicentennial of George McAneny's birth.

At the conclusion of the event, Treasurer Shirley Ferguson Jenks took to the virtual stage to thank all attendees for joining in the unprecedented occasion. The crowd, as it had throughout the event, enthusiastically jingled keys, bells, and more from living rooms, studies, and kitchens across the region. To watch the full event, visit the Archive Project's YouTube account: www.youtube.com/user/NYPAPProject ■

NYPAP News



Ada Louise Huxtable. |
Photo by Gene Maggio, The New York Times

Remembering Ada Louise Huxtable

On March 17th, the Archive Project was proud to cosponsor a virtual event with Village Preservation, highlighting the life of renowned architecture critic Ada Louise Huxtable. During her lifetime, Huxtable wrote with fervor, fighting for the preservation of architecturally significant buildings in New York City. Learn more about Ada Louise Huxtable's New York by viewing the virtual tour on the Village Preservation YouTube channel. ■



We've transferred a majority of NYPAP's funds to
Carver Federal Savings Bank

It's the right thing to do.

Archive Project Moves to Carver Federal Savings Bank

In March, the Archive Project moved a majority of its funds to a new bank. Capping off a diligence effort going back several months, the Archive Project opened an account at Carver Federal Savings Bank. Founded in 1948 to serve African American communities with limited access to mainstream financial services, Carver Federal Savings Bank is the nation's largest Black-managed bank. NYPAP is glad to support an institution committed to its own history and the community it serves. ■



Protestors oppose demolition on Pittsburgh's North Side | Courtesy of phlf.org

Preservation Origins Series: Pittsburgh

Continuing our newest virtual program series, Preservation Origins, we traveled virtually to the city of Pittsburgh on April 14, 2021. The Archive Project explored the emergence of historic preservation in the Steel City. Panelists included Arthur Ziegler and Michael Sriprasert of The Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation. Archive Project chair emeritus Anthony C. Wood joined Carol Clark in discussion with the duo. Missed the program? Check it out on the NYPAP YouTube page. ■

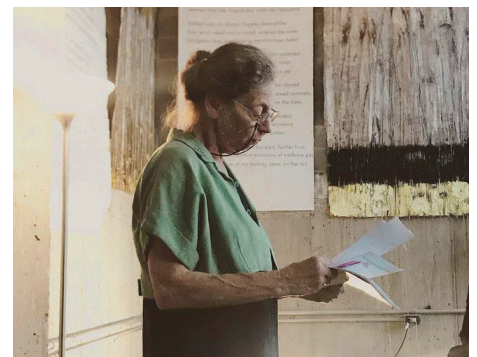
In Memoriam

"There is always a battle for Brooklyn. It's just on every front, on every doorstep, on every block somebody is trying to take away a piece of your heritage, of your culture, of your history." – Linda Mariano

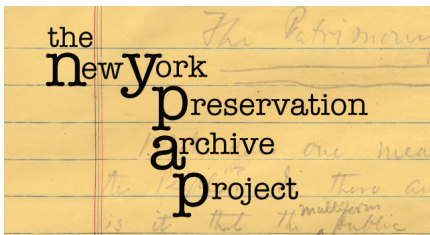
Ardent neighborhood preservationist **Linda Mariano** of Gowanus, Brooklyn passed away on April 1, 2021. Linda was a founder of Friends and Residents of Greater Gowanus (F.R.O.G.G.) and a founding member of Voice of Gowanus. In her role as a founding member of the Gowanus Landmarking Coalition, she helped push a number of

Gowanus landmarks to individual city-level designation. Linda chaired the Archaeology and Preservation Committee of the Gowanus Superfund Community Advisory Committee, and she was a passionate advocate for a Gowanus state and national register historic district.

Listen to Linda's oral history with the Archive Project on our website at www.nypap.org. A portion of her preservation papers are included in the Friends and Residents of Greater Gowanus papers at the Center for Brooklyn History. ■



Linda Mariano | Courtesy of the
Gowanus Dredgers Canoe Club



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YOUR SPRING/SUMMER 2021 NEWSLETTER HAS ARRIVED!

The Archive Project would like to thank the Leon Levy Foundation, The J.M. Kaplan Fund, the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, The Achelis and Bodman Foundation, the New York Community Trust, the New York State Council on the Arts, The Gerry Charitable Trust, Kay Ciganovic, Patrick Reisinger, CTA Architects P.C., and the Robert A. and Elizabeth R. Jeffe Foundation for their generous support. Our work could not be accomplished without their—and your—contributions.

We hope you will consider making a donation to support the documentation and celebration of the history of preservation in New York City. Donations can be made in the form of checks mailed to our office via the enclosed remittance envelope, securely online via PayPal on our website (www.nypap.org), or by credit card over the phone at 212-988-8379.

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