



NEWSLETTER

SPRING/SUMMER 2022

*Welcome to the 36<sup>th</sup> 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.*

## Archive Project Completes Two New Series of Oral Histories

Over 30 New Voices Heard from Across All Five Boroughs



Oral history narrator Peggy King Jorde |  
 Courtesy of Peggy King Jorde



Oral history narrator Robert Kornfeld, Jr.  
 at Ground Zero, 2001 |  
 Courtesy of Robert Kornfeld, Jr.



Oral history narrator Christabel Gough |  
 Courtesy of Adrian Untermeyer



Oral history narrator Eric K. Washington  
 at the former Colored School No. 4 in  
 Chelsea | Courtesy of Eric K. Washington

Oral histories are at the heart of the Archive Project's work. They provide a unique means of recording stories of the preservation movement to inform and inspire future generations. Founder Anthony C. Wood conducted oral histories with key figures in the preservation movement even before the Archive Project was incorporated nearly 25 years ago. Today, the Archive Project continues that work.

In 2021, despite the pandemic, the Archive Project completed not one but two new

series of oral histories. With help from the Peggy N. and Roger G. Gerry Charitable Trust and the New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA), the Archive Project continued its efforts to capture a more comprehensive understanding and record of New York City's preservation movement through interviews with the people who make preservation happen.

Access the new oral histories via:  
[www.nypap.org/oral-history/](http://www.nypap.org/oral-history/)

### Gerry Charitable Trust Oral History Intensive

Any collection of oral histories will inevitably contain gaps in coverage. In 2019, Executive Director Brad Vogel reviewed the Archive Project's oral history collections and sensed a number of such gaps. The Peggy N. and Roger R. Gerry Charitable Trust expressed interest in funding an effort to fill those gaps, and thus a two-year "Intensive" led by oral historian Sarah Dziedzic got underway.

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# Layers Five Decades Deep

## Historic Preservation on Roosevelt Island

*By John C. Harris, 2022 Jeffe Fellow*

Sometimes, to get to a preservation story, one must dig through mounds of history. Roosevelt Island is a case in point. It has a “layered” history, as Judith Berdy, president of the Roosevelt Island Historical Society, attested in my recent conversation with her.

### Island History

The small cigar-shaped strip of land, roughly one-eighth of a mile wide and one and a half miles long, was originally called “Minnehanonck” by the indigenous Lenape community. In 1637, Dutch colonial settlers purchased the land and expelled the Lenape. Soon after, the English defeated the Dutch for control of the region, and in 1664, the island was purchased by the wealthy Manning family. The Mannings eventually bequeathed the property to a son-in-law, Robert Blackwell; the land (“Blackwell’s Island”) remained in the Blackwell family for nearly 150 years until it was sold to the City of New York in 1828.

Roosevelt Island’s history remains entwined with a significant number of governmental entities. Throughout the 19th century, the City operated penitentiaries, an asylum, and several hospitals on Blackwell’s Island. It was renamed Welfare Island in 1921 in reference to the City Hospital operating there. The transformation of the island into a residential neighborhood began in 1969 when the New York State Urban Development Corporation (UDC), under the leadership of Edward J. Logue, signed a 99-year lease on the land with the intent to develop the property into a residential community. As part of the project, in 1974, the island was renamed in honor of President Franklin D. Roosevelt. A year later, in April 1975, the new housing developments on the island received their first residents. With this most recent repurposing of Roosevelt Island, the story of modern preservation efforts begins.

### Preservation Narratives

Like the imagery of a “layered” history



The rotunda, a remnant of the Octagon, built in 1841, was restored most recently in 2006. | Courtesy of John C. Harris

provided by Berdy above, the story of historic preservation on the island is similarly intricate. It is the story of state organizations, community groups, and inspired individuals all working together—and sometimes in competition with one another—to preserve the history and the built fabric of Roosevelt Island.

The Roosevelt Island Urban Development Corporation (RIDC), a subsidiary of UDC, began its transformation of the island with a somewhat preservationist slant. That lucky break resulted in an early victory for preservation. On November 25<sup>th</sup> 1975,

the relatively new Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) evaluated six buildings which embody key characteristics of the island’s varied cultural identities: the Blackwell House (1796), the Octagon (1841), the Smallpox Hospital (1856), the Lighthouse (1872), the Chapel of the Good Shepherd (1888), and the Strecker Memorial Laboratory (1892). In every case three unnamed representatives spoke in favor of designation while representatives from RIDC also supported landmark designation. Each of the buildings achieved individual designation on March 23, 1976. Today all of these structures are included in the New

York State Register of Historic Places and National Register of Historic Places. While any one of these buildings might be the icon that comes to mind when one considers preservation on Roosevelt Island, rest assured there is more to the story.

### Advocacy and Leadership

In 1977, immediately after the initial push to preserve the architectural heritage of the island, the Roosevelt Island Historical Society (RIHS) formed. Its founding members were Rev. Oliver Chapin, Dorothy Pavane, Carole Kennedy, and Audrey Braver. Today RIHS seeks "to recover, maintain and disseminate the record of Roosevelt Island's heritage from Colonial times to the present." The group accomplishes this mission by preserving the historical record and cultural landscape of the island, conducting educational initiatives in its visitor center, and providing self-guided historical tours.

There are always leaders within preservation movements who are uniquely dedicated to maintaining a community's place within the historical record. On Roosevelt Island, one must review the work of the late Rev. Oliver Chapin. He may very well be considered the first preservationist to reside full time on Roosevelt Island. Chapin moved to what was then called Welfare Island in 1964 as an Episcopalian minister and hospital chaplain at Coler Hospital on the island. During his 35 years on the island until his death in 1999, he took on the role of community historian.

Chapin amassed an archive of photos, records, and objects dedicated to the history of the place. From that archive he conducted research that formed the basis of his walking tours. During these tours he conveyed the history of Roosevelt Island's most important buildings, the lives they contained, and the land upon which they were built. Throughout his work, Chapin was keen on meeting community members where they were. He took advantage of community events, such as fairs and commemorative anniversary events, to present slide shows and exhibitions of the island's history. In addition to these more public ventures, Chapin completed eight chapters of a book about the history of Roosevelt Island. Unfortunately, the book was never published. However, the manuscript and contents of Chapin's archive



Blackwell House, which dates to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, was restored most recently in 2022. | Courtesy of John C. Harris

remain in the collection of Roosevelt Island Historical Society.

In the absence of Chapin, Judith Berdy now carries the torch of chief preservationist on Roosevelt Island. Her fascination with the island began in the 1960s when she worked in Goldwater Hospital. Soon after she moved to the community in 1977, Berdy attended one of Chapin's walking tours. This experience inspired her to join the newly-formed RIHS.

Despite her lack of formal training in historic preservation, Berdy became a committed steward of the island's history, and in 1999 she became the president of RIHS. Since then, her philosophy of promoting the island's captivating past to anyone who will listen has helped her expand RIHS to more than 70 members, in addition to a core team of about a dozen. Her success is founded in her adaptability as a self-described "jack of all trades." Despite the organization's well-formulated mission statement, she acknowledges that preservation often takes whatever shape that available resources can provide. In her words, preservation on Roosevelt Island occurs with "whatever flows, whatever comes along...it's not an Excel spreadsheet. We go with what we have to do."

### Recent Successes

This approach has informed the success of several initiatives during Berdy's presidency. In 2002, the group created the Roosevelt Island Historical Society Walking Tour. The

tour, along with its signage and website, was revitalized in 2014 as a collaborative project with Columbia University's School of Architecture, Planning & Preservation.

The revitalization effort was overseen in part by Archive Project board member Liz McEnaney. In 2003, Berdy and RIHS used historic photographs to publish *Roosevelt Island* as part of Arcadia Publishing's "Images of America" series, which reveal local and regional histories through historic images. They contributed to the "Images of America" series once again five years later collaborating with the Greater Astoria Historical Society to publish *The Queensboro Bridge*. In 2006, RIHS's archive informed the restoration of the landmarked Octagon and its repurposing into luxury housing. Preservation efforts by RIHS repeatedly raised awareness of the island's past, ensured the longevity of its historic fabric, and simultaneously accommodated newcomers to contribute to the future of the community.

In addition to these notable preservation highlights, Berdy is most proud of her involvement in RIHS's acquisition of the original terra cotta trolley kiosk which, from 1909 until 1957, provided access to the trolley that transported Roosevelt Island commuters to Manhattan and back by way of the Queensboro Bridge. After the opening of the Roosevelt Island Bridge between Queens and Roosevelt Island, which eliminated the need for the trolley, the Beaux Arts-style kiosk, complete with Guastavino tiled ceiling, was repurposed

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# Bard Breakfast 2021

## Familiar Faces In New Places

*By Adrian Untermeyer, Board Member*

It was billed as preservation's "Winter Wonderland"—and the 2021 Bard Birthday Breakfast Benefit did not disappoint.

On December 16, 2021, nearly 100 ardent preservationists convened inside the Upper East Side's opulent Columbus Citizens Foundation to raise their coffees (and cannoli) in the air to toast two special honorees: the Archive Project, and 2021 Preservation Award-winner **Yukie Ohta**, founder of the SoHo Memory Project.

The 2021 "BBBB," as it is known, resumed in-person that day for the first time since COVID-19 began ravaging Greater Gotham. From the very start of the Archive Project's signature annual event, the Columbus Citizens Foundation's 128-year-old townhouse found itself abuzz with the sound of old friends and new acquaintances, all connecting face-to-face at long, long last.

Although the venue was an unfamiliar setting for some, it became an instant

hit. After ascending 8 East 69<sup>th</sup> Street's august exterior staircase, attendees found themselves ensconced in a playland of lavish, hand-carved wood paneling, scintillating chandeliers festooned with wintry flare, and delectable breakfast bites reflecting the Italian heritage of the site. It all served as a perfect prelude for the events to come.

As the bell tolled nine, the festivities officially sprang into action. **Lisa Ackerman**, who serves both as the Archive Project's chair and the Columbus Citizens Foundation's executive director, welcomed the crowd with her signature grace. Archive Project founder and chair emeritus, **Anthony C. Wood**, rallied the troops with a stirring ode to the spirit of preservation (and a memorable shout-out to the aforementioned cannoli). And the Archive Project's executive director, **Brad Vogel, Esq.**, offered a poetic transition to the formal program.

Honoree **Yukie Ohta** took the floor from there, following an introduction by **Andrew**

**Berman** of Village Preservation. In her humble, intricate address, Ohta described growing up in SoHo, a neighborhood rich in cultural and architectural heritage—but which increasingly finds its memories erased with each chain store installed and each longtime resident displaced. To combat this dynamic, Ohta founded an archive dedicated to preserving people, places, and stories so that future generations of Downtowners can learn from the magic of their collective past. Her address reminded all attendees of the potent power of personal action when history appears to be slipping away.

At the conclusion of Ohta's remarks, the program transitioned to a timely panel discussion on the topic of preserving and analyzing master biographer **Robert Caro's** personal and professional papers. Caro, author of *The Power Broker*, the quintessential biography of infamous municipal builder Robert Moses, recently entrusted his papers to the New-York Historical Society.

Moderator **Dr. Valerie Paley** led panelists **Michael Miscione**, **John Reddick**, and **Michael Ryan** in an animated discussion on the pleasures—and perils—of combing through a robust roster of documents assembled by Caro, a notorious stickler for detail whose personal motto remains "turn every page." A question-and-answer period followed, which included questions from guests like **Lloyd Zuckerberg** and impromptu remarks from **Arlene Simon**, founder of Landmark West!

As the program drew to a close, guests nibbled their final cannoli and recessed to the grand entryway for a final surprise. There, your correspondent and fellow Archive Project board member **Paul Onyx Lozito** treated attendees to a book



Panelists Michael Miscione, Michael Ryan, and John Reddick share thoughts on the Robert Caro papers with moderator Valerie Paley of the New-York Historical Society looking on. | Courtesy of Nora De Broder

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# ***Saving Stuyvesant Town:***

***How One Community Defeated the "Worst Real Estate Deal in History"***

*By Elizabeth Rohn Jeffe, Vice-Chair*

Dan Garodnick, *Saving Stuyvesant Town: How One Community Defeated the Worst Real Estate Deal in History* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2021).

In *Saving Stuyvesant Town*, Dan Garodnick recounts in compelling detail how residents of Stuyvesant Town and Peter Cooper Village, known collectively as Stuyvesant Town ("Stuy Town"), mounted an ultimately successful campaign to preserve that community as both a physical place and as a way of life. The long-running battle took place from 2006 until 2015. Garodnick writes with the passion and knowledge of a frontline participant: as a member of the City Council at the time, representing the Stuy Town district, and a lifelong Stuy Town resident, he was a key player in the nine-year struggle.

Insurance giant Metropolitan Life Insurance Company ("MetLife") created Stuy Town in the 1940s for middle-class (and for many years, white-only) tenants, with special consideration given to World War II veterans. The vast complex of red brick mid-rise buildings, parks, and playgrounds comprises 80 acres, between East 14<sup>th</sup> and East 23<sup>rd</sup> Streets, from First Avenue to Avenue C. Approximately 30,000 people call it home. Stuy Town was a public-private venture, with State involvement and support. Ironically, the construction of Stuy Town in what had been historically the "gashouse district" was not itself free of controversy—razing the area's tenements caused a massive relocation of low-income residents.



Stuyvesant Town and the lower portion of Peter Cooper Village from above via Google Earth; northeast is at top of image with East River at right | Accessed April, 2022 and prepared by John C. Harris

MetLife put Stuy Town up for sale in 2006, surprising the public in general and the residents of Stuy Town in particular. Commercial realtor Tishman Speyer and investment firm BlackRock subsequently announced plans to purchase Stuy Town for a record-breaking \$5.4 billion, of which \$4.4 billion was debt. For Stuy Town residents, this posed an existential threat, since current laws would permit previously controlled rents in Stuy Town's over 11,000 units to rise following improvements made by new owners.

And more than just the cost of rent was at stake. The park-like setting of Stuy Town could be radically altered; new buildings could be erected in the existing green spaces that give Stuy Town its special ambience, a scenario that would obliterate a key element of Stuy Town's original design as a leafy sanctuary in a city of concrete.

Residents reacted swiftly. They first tried to buy Stuy Town themselves, by proposing a homeownership plan. When this option failed, they refused to admit defeat, and engaged public support through demonstrations and press coverage. Most importantly, they mounted legal challenges involving limits on decontrolling rents based on Stuy Town's history as a public-private entity. The Stuyvesant Town Tenants Association was central to all these efforts.



Memorial Day Weekend in the Stuyvesant Town Oval, 2007 | Courtesy of Marianne O'Leary

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The ensuing real estate collapse of 2008, which led to the new owners defaulting in 2010 on their highly-leveraged purchase, gave Stuy Town supporters more time in which to fight. Finally, in 2015, with the support of Mayor Bill de Blasio and the ongoing assistance of Deputy Mayor for Housing and Economic Development Alicia Glen, Stuy Town was sold to the investment firm Blackstone Group for \$5.3 billion, with the agreement that 5,000 apartments for tenants of modest incomes would remain affordable for 20 years. As a result of a lawsuit previously won on behalf of the tenants, another 1,400 units would also be safeguarded until 2025. The City pledged \$225 million in funding as part of this plan.

For preservationists, urban planners, and everyone who cares about the quality of urban life, Garodnick's account is a gold mine of information, describing in detail how a community and a local political leader can coordinate various resources to win a critical battle with far-reaching consequences.

The author's comprehensive narrative, which includes in-depth discussions of pertinent real estate law and court cases, provides an abundance of "takeaways" from this uniquely complicated and exciting case history. Indeed, readers can use *Saving Stuyvesant Town* as a template for constructing their own preservation narratives. The sources listed in the book, from Garodnick's personal notes, interviews that he conducted, emails, and tenant association press releases, to media coverage and photographs, provide a virtual roadmap of how to document a preservation battle. Additionally, *Saving Stuyvesant Town* expands preservationists' usual perception about what to save—buildings, green spaces, or streetscapes—by demonstrating that a broader, socioeconomic imperative can be part of their mission.

Garodnick, currently the chair of the New York City Planning Commission, merits



Protesters rallied in support of Stuyvesant Town in Manhattan's Grand Army Plaza outside the Plaza Hotel in 2015 | Copyright and courtesy of Anne Greenberg

accolades for this outstanding example of documenting an important chapter in the history of preservation in New York City. A preservation tale both uplifting and

cautionary, *Saving Stuyvesant Town* is a must-read, not only in New York, but in all cities, as the crisis of unaffordable housing continues. ■



Dan Garodnick and residents gathered outside Stuyvesant Town in 2015 amidst the push to preserve the complex. | Courtesy of an article in Town-Village by Sabina Mollot



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as the entrance of the Brooklyn Children's Museum (BCM). RIHS's project to return the kiosk to its home began in 2003 when BCM announced a renovation project that would remove the structure. The acquisition played out as a joint effort between RIHS and BCM, as well as the State of New York (which leases Roosevelt Island land from the City of New York, and, in turn, leased the property where the kiosk was to be located to RIHS).

In 2006, after a three-year long bureaucratic process, the trolley kiosk was placed on a truck and transported to the island. In July 2007, it opened as the Visitor Center Kiosk, operated by RIHS. It was then shut down for a three-year long restoration process. Following the reopening of the kiosk in 2011, RIHS and Judith Berdy were presented with the Friends of the Upper East Side Historic District's Restoration Award for their work on the kiosk.

### Partnerships and Challenges

It is evident that historic preservation on Roosevelt Island—like all preservation work—depends on the cultivation of working relationships within the community. That fact was clear during the restoration of Chapel of the Good Shepherd by Giorgio Cavaglieri in 1975 after recommendations made by LPC during an evaluation process. New partnerships were formed during the 13-year odyssey to acquire \$2.9 million for the restoration of the Blackwell House in 2020. Funding ultimately came from Council Member Ben Kallos, the City, and RIDC successor Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC). Dynamic collaboration continues to ensure the longevity of the historic structures today through the campaigns to preserve Smallpox Hospital spearheaded by Friends of Roosevelt Island Landmarks and Friends of the Ruin. A special relationship exists among Roosevelt Island preservationists and architect Thomas Fennimen, who since his initial work on the kiosk project, has ensured that preservation flourishes on the island. He is currently replacing the top lamp and restoring the top point of the 50-foot-tall lighthouse. The 150-year-old structure was originally built to guide vessels away from the island and around the granite boulders submerged



The Roosevelt Island Visitor Center, shown here in 2022, is now back on Roosevelt Island after a complex preservation saga. | Courtesy of John C. Harris

nearby in the East River. Today it stands as the centerpiece of Lighthouse Park at the island's northernmost point and through the efforts of dedicated preservationists, it will serve to keep the residents aware of—and connected to—the history of their community.

Despite this track record of success, historic preservation on Roosevelt Island is not without its own unique challenges. The most recent is the COVID-19 pandemic. For the first half of 2020, there were no visitor center operations. Over the duration of the pandemic, RIHS did not produce in-person programs. Both setbacks resulted in less money generated by the group. However, the RIHS remained resilient. Rising to the challenge, the society developed creative fundraising techniques like the “penny collection” at the local market, which collected loose change (and dollars) amounting to nearly \$1,200 within only a few weeks. Likewise, RIHS adjusted its programming and maintained its collaborative nature by teaming up with the local library to generate virtual programming that explores the history of the island. Furthermore, this programming gets the public involved with the curation of history by improving Roosevelt Island Wikipedia pages.

Additional preservation issues arise from RIOC's recent maneuvers. For example, RIOC's institutional archives—once stored in an unused indoor handball court of the community gymnasium—were removed

from the island and transferred to the New York State Archives in Albany. While the records might be safer in Albany, their removal reduces community access. Additionally, Berdy asserts that RIOC's virtual meetings of late seem to be structured so as to prevent any meaningful participation from the community.

Despite these recent setbacks, preservation on Roosevelt Island is thriving. The legacy of historic preservation on the island, in context of the larger story of preservation in New York, provides nearly a half century of collaborative and innovative examples of how to generate a movement that protects a community's history in the built environment. ■



Ongoing 2022 replacement of lantern and restoration of the Roosevelt Island Lighthouse designed by James Renwick, Jr. in 1872. | Courtesy of John C. Harris



What gaps did the effort address? First, the series sought to obtain narratives from a number of preservation efforts surrounding Black history sites. **Peggy King Jorde** shared important backstory regarding the preservation of remains at the African Burial Ground in the 1990s. Historian and tour guide **Eric K. Washington** focused on preservation efforts related to Black sites like the Hotel Olga and the former Colored School No. 4. Community garden leader **Yonnette Fleming** provided insights on the legacy of Bedford-Stuyvesant's Hattie Carthan and the continuing roles that gardens and markets play in community preservation.



Oral history narrator Yonnette Fleming |  
Courtesy of Yonnette Fleming

The Intensive also captured a number of previously untold stories about preservation at the Ground Zero site in Lower Manhattan in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks. Interviews with preservationist **Ken Lustbader** and architect **Robert Kornfeld, Jr.** begin to tell the stories of preservationists who initially sought to assess damage to historic buildings surrounding the World Trade Center site and eventually pivoted to focusing on preserving key elements of the site itself. These preservation efforts saved elements that are now core, large-scale artifacts at the National September 11 Memorial & Museum.

The new series also took to the watery “sixth borough” of the City, highlighting several decades-long efforts to preserve historic vessels around New York Harbor. Oral histories with dedicated figures like **David**



Oral history narrator David Sharps |  
Courtesy of Milo Hess

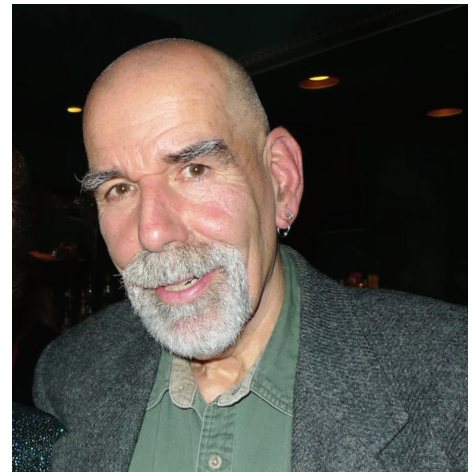
**Sharps** of the Waterfront Barge Museum, Captain **Mary Habstritt** of the Lilac Preservation Project, and **Carolina Salguero** of PortSide NewYork illuminate the many challenges faced when preserving historic ships.

Overlooked aspects of the landmark designation process also emerged in the oral histories captured by the Intensive. **Christian Zimmerman** of the Prospect Park Alliance digs into the regulatory nuts and bolts of scenic landmark designation. **Kate Wood** focuses on another category of landmarks also added via the 1973 amendments to the NYC Landmarks Law: interior landmarks. **Christabel Gough**, in addition to sharing insights from decades of preservation advocacy, provides unique perspectives from years attending nearly every meeting of the Landmarks Preservation Commission.



Oral history narrators from two new Archive Project series shared stories at Fulton Stall Market. |  
Courtesy of Brad Vogel

Finally, the Intensive focused on voices from a series of waterfront neighborhoods. **Dick Zigun**, the one-time unofficial mayor of Coney Island, talks about that neighborhood's preservation battles. **Joe Svehlak** provides backstory on Sunset Park's long push for historic districts while shedding light on preservation efforts to save remnants of Little Syria. **George Burke** tells the story of the stately Seguin Mansion on the shores of Staten Island, a site that is part of the Historic House Trust. **Richard George** reveals his remarkable odyssey to prevent the destruction of remnants of the Far Rockaway bungalow colony in Queens.



Oral history narrator Joe Svehlak |  
Courtesy of Joe Svehlak

### Inspired by Grassroots Stories: Community Architectural Advocacy

Neighborhood preservation efforts emerged at the heart of the Archive Project's second major oral history series in 2021. Growing from conversations at a 2018 board retreat and initial support from **Pat Reisinger**, the Inspired by Grassroots Stories series was funded by the New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA), with preservation consultant **Kelly Carroll** serving as moderator for a unique approach to capturing community stories.

The series operated on two tracks. On one, grassroots community preservation organizations gathered virtually on Zoom with Ms. Carroll moderating group oral history sessions that were open to public attendees. The group oral histories cover activity in Queens (**Elmhurst History and Cemeteries Preservation Society**), Staten



Island (**Preservation League of Staten Island**), Manhattan (**Mount Morris Park Community Improvement Association**), and Brooklyn (**East 25<sup>th</sup> Street Historic District Initiative and Preserving East New York**).

On the second track, individuals from around the City provided their unique perspectives in short, traditional style oral histories. **Jean Prabhu** explains local preservation efforts from her vantage point in Todt Hill, Staten Island. **Daniel Karatzas** recounts years of efforts in Jackson Heights, Queens. **Barbara Stronczer** brings a Bronx perspective, relating her experiences with the Bedford Moshulu Community Association. **Dr. Keith Taylor** provides background on the effort to preserve Dorrance Brooks Square in Harlem, and **Frank Grassi** delves into Deep South Brooklyn stories, with a focus on Bay Ridge and Dyker Heights.

In November of 2021, a number of narrators from both series of oral histories gathered at the Fulton Stall Market in the South Street Seaport Historic District (proof of

vaccination required). Following introductory remarks by Bob Lewis of the Market, preservation consultant Kelly Carroll led a public roundtable sharing session. Narrators often went beyond their oral histories as they spoke, providing insights into their historic preservation efforts and swapping lessons and stories with old and new contacts from across the city. The sharing event, held a few days before Thanksgiving, provided a welcome chance for camaraderie.

Overall, the Archive Project generated a greater number of oral histories than usual across 2020 and 2021 despite the global pandemic, dramatically expanding the collection and broadening and diversifying the public's understanding of the historic



Elmhurst History and Cemeteries Preservation Society members heart-bombing the Janta house in Elmhurst, 2022. | Courtesy of Elmhurst History and Cemeteries Preservation Society

preservation movement in New York City. The oral histories in both series may be accessed via the Archive Project website at: [www.nypap.org/oral-history/](http://www.nypap.org/oral-history/) ■

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table stacked to the rafters with Gotham-themed tomes. Eager readers snatched up dog-eared copies of such chestnuts as Ada Louise Huxtable's *Goodbye History, Hello Hamburger*—all donated by **Joyce Mendelsohn**, a fearless advocate for preserving the Lower East Side. “The books added an extra element of fun, humor, and surprise,” concluded attendee and historian **Lucie Levine**, founder of the Archive on Parade walking tour company.

All volumes that did not find a new home that day found their way to **Carnegie Hill Neighbors'** nascent public reading room. Much like the storied—and regrettably, departed—Municipal Art Society Library at the Villard Houses, Carnegie Hill Neighbors will leverage Mendelsohn's collection to inspire and inform the next generation of preservationists and urbanists as they peruse the stacks.

With bellies full, book bags bulging, and the essence of preservation invigorating their spirits, attendees bid adieu to their “Winter

Wonderland” by 11 o'clock. And with that, another successful “BBBB” drew to a close—until next year!

*For further information about the historic venue at 8 East 69<sup>th</sup> Street, we encourage you to explore page 403 of the designation report for the Upper East Side Historic District, available online at <http://ls-media.nyc.gov/agencies/lpc/lp/1051.pdf>.*

*And to learn more about **Albert Sprague Bard**, namesake of the “BBBB,” please visit the Archive Project's compendium online at <https://www.nypap.org/preservation-history/albert-sprague-bard/>. ■*



Honoree Yukie Ohta gave remarks at the Bard Breakfast as she accepted the 2021 Preservation Award. | Courtesy Nora De Broder

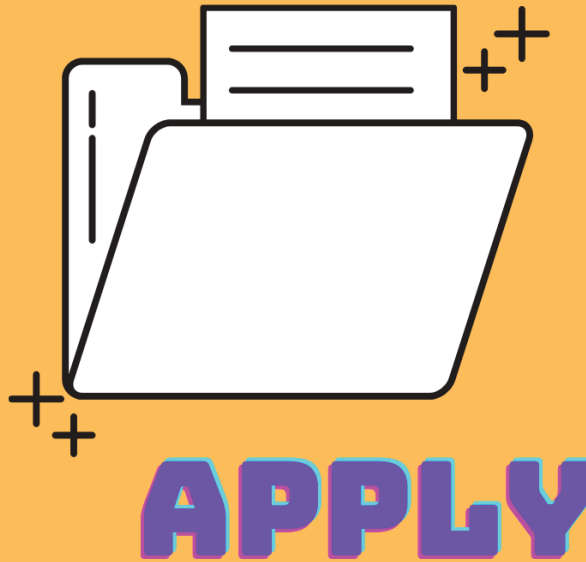
# NYPAP News

*Shelby White & Leon Levy*

## Archival Assistance Grants

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Applicants were invited to apply for the Archive Project's Shelby White & Leon Levy Archival Assistance Initiative Grants in spring of 2022. | Courtesy of the Archive Project

### Archival Assistance Initiative Returns

The Archive Project's support of archival efforts at small preservation-related organizations received a major boost for 2022. Thanks to the generosity of the Leon Levy Foundation, the Archive Project is able to offer several of its Shelby White & Leon Levy Archival Assistance Initiative Grants this year. These small grants support archival assessments, digitization, and other projects designed to make the history of the preservation movement available to the public.

Applications have already been submitted for this new grant round, and winners will be announced later this year. The new round revitalizes the Archive Project's longstanding Archival Assistance Initiative, which dates back to an initial set of grants awarded in 2013.

### Carnegie Hill Neighbors Reading Room

A variety of urbanism—and historic preservation—related books found a long-term home recently in a new reading room at the office of Carnegie Hill Neighbors (CHN) on Manhattan's Upper East Side. The Archive Project played a key role as connector. After acquiring a significant collection of books from tour guide Joyce Mendelsohn on a tip from Jay Shockley, discussions between Lo Van der Valk and Joanna Cawley from Carnegie Hill Neighbors and the Archive Project led to an arrangement for more public access and the creation of a reading room at 1326 Madison Avenue. Sweat equity from Vogel and John Harris, the Archive Project's Jeffe Fellow, as well as Nikita Klebnikov from CHN, placed the many boxes of books in their new home.

A ribbon cutting for the reading room is tentatively for June 15, 2022.

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### Mentions in *The New York Times*, *Gothamist*

The Archive Project's oral history collection and Preservation History Database are regularly cited by publications. Recently, *The New York Times* included information from NYPAP's oral history with the late Ed Kirkland and *Gothamist* cited information from the Preservation History Database regarding the City Beautiful Movement in the context of a preservation matter on the Upper West Side.



Nikita Klebnikov of Carnegie Hill Neighbors accepts a box of books for the new Preservation Reading Room from Archive Project Executive Director Brad Vogel | Courtesy of Joanna Cawley

## In Memoriam - Lori Zabar

The Archive Project notes with sadness the death of preservationist Lori Zabar. She engaged enthusiastically with preservation from telling the story of Zabar's in a recent book to supporting the Preservation League and her alma mater, Columbia University. Lori's knowledge and good humor were always in evidence at many preservation events. Please read the fitting tribute by the Preservation League of New York State available here: <https://www.preservenys.org/blog/mourning-the-loss-of-lori-zabar>. More in our fall issue.



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# In Memoriam –

## Edward Stevens Kirkland (1925–2022)

*by George Calderaro*



Ed Kirkland at the High Line, 2012. | Courtesy of Michael Kirby Smith

Ed Kirkland was the greatest inspiration for my work as a citizen preservationist.

In the early 1990s, I had the great good fortune to be inspired and educated by Ed at frequent Certificate of Appropriateness public hearings at the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC), where I worked. Ed was a regular, welcome presence at these hearings when he testified on behalf of the Historic Districts Council (HDC) where he served as a board member for many years.

As is the case today, HDC was among the very few civic organizations to review all of the many applications for significant alterations to designated landmarks and testify for and against those applications. Regardless of whether the project was a multibillion-dollar proposal from a “starchitect” or a rear-yard window replacement in an historic district, Ed provided thoughtful insights with charm and respect in his distinctive Boston accent. “I am genteel. I even get along with developers. While I may not agree with them, I realize they probably believe what

they’re doing is right, because otherwise you can’t like yourself,” he observed.

Often Ed began his testimony by noting that he was speaking for himself, not an organization, which meant that he could draw on his vast personal knowledge and experience to comment authoritatively on applications that were not reviewed by a committee. Such heartfelt testimony was frequently his most zestful and passionate.

Ed’s public advocacy was by no means limited to his LPC appearances. For a staggering thirty years (1982–2012), Ed served on Manhattan’s Community Board 4 (CB4) where he led the Preservation and Planning Committee. In that role he drove the campaign to designate the Chelsea West Historic District and was part of myriad efforts to protect New York’s built heritage through landmark designation and other necessary means.

Ed successfully lobbied for enactment of the first New York City zoning plan developed by residents rather than centralized city

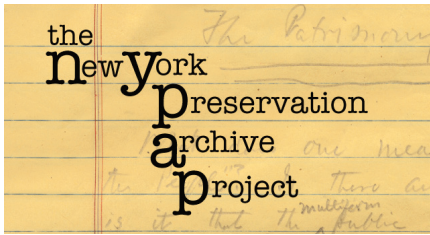
planners, as well as the designation of the West Chelsea Historic District. In his words: “I got on CB4 with the goal of rezoning residential Chelsea. I do ask myself, ‘Would I have been more useful if I had gone into a regular career?’ Surely it would have been easier for my wife not to have to continually explain why I was not gainfully employed. But would it have been better for this community? No, I don’t think so.”

Ed co-founded the Chelsea Waterside Association and was chairman of the Hudson River Park Advisory Historic Working Group, as well as his local Chelsea block association. He was also an inadvertent founding father of the High Line after introducing founders Joshua David and Robert Hammond to each other as well as to city land use processes.

I was so impressed by the work of HDC through Ed’s near-weekly testimony at the LPC that I joined the HDC Board of Directors shortly after leaving LPC. To this day, nearly thirty years later, I am inspired by Ed whenever I testify at an LPC or other hearing where I attempt to channel some of his indefatigable zeal to defend New York’s built heritage and unbuilt promise. I am heartened and grateful that his tremendous legacy is maintained in the work and hearts of many who Ed inspired, notably our mutual friend Pamela Wolff who devotedly cared for Ed to the end and who honors his life’s work as President of Save Chelsea.

Ed’s *two* oral histories with the Archive Project are available on the Archive Project website: [www.nypap.org](http://www.nypap.org) ■

*George Calderaro is a board member of the Friends of the Upper East Side Historic Districts, The Victorian Society New York, the 29<sup>th</sup> Street Neighborhood Association, the Historic Districts Council and the Art Deco Society New York, among other organizations. He is Founding Director of the Tin Pan Alley American Popular Music Project.*



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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](http://www.nypap.org)), or by credit card over the phone at 212-988-8379.

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