INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW

The Reminiscences of

Carol Clark

PREFACE

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview with Carol Clark conducted by Interviewer Sarah Dziedzic on August 16, 2022. This interview is part of the New York Preservation Archive Project's collection of individual oral history interviews.

The reader is asked to bear in mind that they are reading a verbatim transcript of the spoken word, rather than written prose. The views expressed in this oral history interview do not necessarily reflect the views of the New York Preservation Archive Project.

Carol Clark became involved interested in historic preservation as an outgrowth of her interest in vernacular architecture, and enrolled in the Columbia Historic Preservation Program in 1975 where she specialized in preservation planning. She landed one of the few jobs in preservation after graduating, working at the New York Landmarks Conservancy as its first employee with training in historic preservation, and establishing a precedent at the Conservancy for providing guidance on building materials. She recounts the use of the Conservancy's Historic Properties Fund, and the establishment of its Easements Program and Sacred Sites Program.

In 1988, Clark was recruited by Kent Barwick to work at the Municipal Art Society as the director of its new Planning Center, which focused on developing materials for the public on issues related to preservation planning. She was also appointed to the Historic City Committee, which was convened by the Municipal Art Society in response to threats to the Landmarks Law during Mayor Ed Koch's time in office. Her contributions focused on how planning and zoning might work together in the context of historic preservation.

Clark subsequently went to work at the Department of City Planning in 1990, and describes this as an era when the department maintained a close relationship with the Landmarks Preservation Commission. She has taught preservation planning and related topics since 1981, and has worked in numerous roles adjacent to preservation, including president of the Brooklyn Historical Society, and assistant commissioner at the Department of Housing Preservation and Development engaged with issues pertaining to affordable housing.

Transcriptionist: Svetlana Kitto	Session: 1
Interviewee: Carol Clark	Location: video call
Interviewer: Sarah Dziedzic	Date: August 16, 2022

Q: Okay, today is August 16, 2022 and this is Sarah Dziedzic interviewing Carol Clark for the New York Preservation Archive Project. And we're doing this remotely via video call. Can you start by saying your name and giving yourself a brief introduction?

Clark: Sure. I'm Carol Clark. I'm a preservationist. I'm a graduate of the Columbia [Historic] Preservation Program and someone who's done teaching in the field for all of my professional career, and continue to do that and research projects. So I'm still very much involved in preservation.[1]

Q: So what was the path that led you to historic preservation?

Clark: Well, as a child, I lived in suburban Detroit, but, at the time, we would go downtown, where, of course, the downtown has a very distinctive plan. And it has fabulous historic buildings, which, happily, finally, are being restored, which for many decades, didn't look like it was going to be the outcome. So it's really good news. And I could see that everything was different there, you know, these historic buildings—you would go into the doctor's office, and there was an elevator that went up six stories inside of a beautiful Beaux-Arts court and the

[1] A copy of this transcript with extensive handwritten edits by Carol Clark is available upon request.

materials were stunning. I mean, I noticed this from the time I was a small, small child, that this was different. It took me a long time to understand the phenomenon.

I went to college at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, I studied art history, comparative literature—a great education. And then I was recruited—I had a job as well. And I was recruited to do a similar job at the University of Vermont, which happened to have a class that was taught called Vermont in the Built Environment, where a fellow who was a graduate of the Columbia Historic Preservation Program would come from Montpelier to Burlington on a weekly basis and talk about putting buildings on the National Register of Historic Places. And there also was—this was in the fall of 1974—there was an exhibit that had been mounted in the art museum at the school that was about reusing buildings. And this was a very new concept to us at that time. With the Bicentennial a couple of years later, the reuse of buildings seemed quite commonplace. But just a couple years prior, it was unusual. Chester Liebs, the instructor, was promoting the Columbia program to me. And I was completely smitten by just looking at the vernacular buildings, which is what he was talking about—nothing high style at all—but vernacular buildings were really what Vermont in the Built Environment as a class was about.

And he introduced me to [James Marston] Fitch. I came down over the Thanksgiving weekend in 1974 and met with Jim Fitch and his wife Cleo in their apartment on East 5th Street. And we had a grand old conversation for a few hours. And it was clear that I was going to be going to the Columbia program the following fall, and it was the only program in the country, mind you, at that point in time that educated people in preservation. So it was a great privilege to get to go and discover it.

Q: And what was the Columbia program like at that time?

Clark: It was jam-packed. Our year, Fitch admitted forty-four people or forty-three. However many it is that fits on a bus, I think it's forty-four. So that was forty-three plus him. And what was so fabulous about it is that we met preservation pioneers in other cities like Newport, Annapolis, Philadelphia—the list goes on and on. He knew everyone and they were all in the weeds doing preservation, even Albany, I mean, just a lot of places. And we would go there and see these people doing their work. And they would speak to us and they were really pioneers in the field. There was plenty of book learning and regular kinds of things one does in graduate school, but it was also this experience of, with your colleagues, seeing how the field was mushrooming. And the year before, there had been something like twenty-five or twenty-seven students in the program. So the interest level in the fall of '75, when I started, had really mounted in that sort of pre-Bicentennial era. People were beginning to understand that historic preservation was a thing. And so it was pretty exciting.

Q: And when you finished that program, what kind of work were you specifically looking to do?

Clark: I wanted to get a job working in historic preservation [laughs]. There weren't very many of them. And I think the [New York] Landmarks Conservancy posted a job. Many of my colleagues applied, I applied. And I don't know exactly why I was hired. But Susan Henshaw Jones, the executive director, selected me. There were only three people at the time working for the Conservancy: Susan and two others. So, I was the first person who had training in historic

preservation who was there. And you know, the Conservancy had been formulated in part to be able to own real estate and rescue buildings and promote the adaptive use of buildings. And that's somewhat of a lesser-known fact now than it was at that time. And so it opened up a lot of prospects, we had plenty of things to do.

The Conservancy was deeply involved in the Custom House on Bowling Green, which, believe it or not, that 1906 Cass Gilbert building that's so phenomenal with all that ornament—that building had actually been threatened with demolition, and the Conservancy had engaged in a multi-year challenge to rescue the building. One of the brilliant moves that had been done before I came was that, the summer prior, they opened the building, and had a public art display in it in order to demonstrate that it could be a place of assembly. And, of course, as you well know, Sarah, finally, after a lot of effort and involving, most notably, Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, who really put his shoulder to the wheel and pushed long and hard to get the Museum of the American Indian to be the key tenant that ultimately occupied that space. But the idea had come to the Conservancy's leadership that, oh, we could show that this is a place that could be publicly accessible, that would be successful in that way. And it was an important contribution. I mean, the whole thing went on, I was thinking about this, much longer—it seemed like a very long time till the future of the building was finally, absolutely, secured. It was a long negotiation process.

And during that period, the General Services Administration [GSA], which is the federal government's entity that takes care of those buildings, decided to turn down the temperature inside of the building dramatically. And, as you may know, if you've ever gone in, there are marvelous murals by Reginald Marsh, a celebrated artist, on the ground floor. And it was quite

possible that the change in temperature and the dampness—it was like forty-eight degrees inside the building, and it was not, you know, a good thing. So I worked on reaching out to a very qualified curator at the Metropolitan Museum [of Art] who came down and examined it and wrote a letter to the GSA and attested that this kind of treatment to the murals was going to be very detrimental, and that it was essential that the heat get back up to, like, sixty degrees, at least. And so that was accomplished. So there were all these—you know, that's just one little mini thing that happened in this patchwork of effort that went on for a good couple of years to really secure the future of the building. It was a great thing when that finally happened.

Q: Let me ask you this about your training. Having had training, as you said, and then joining the Landmarks Conservancy, what were some of the things that you were able to maybe think through or approach in different ways than the staff that was already there?

Clark: I think I had an understanding of the—I'm certainly not a specialist in building conservation technology at all. My part of the field is preservation planning. There were four tracks, really: there was architectural design, building conservation technology, architectural history, and the preservation planning piece. But I knew enough about building conservation and materials to respond. We got contacted frequently by owners of brownstone buildings that were puzzled about what to do, what kind of work should they have done to repair their crumbling brownstone. The Conservancy—I think I must have come up with this idea—we conducted a sandstone study, we hired consultants who talked to contractors and not only explained the science of what was going on, but came up with guidance that we could share with those people who own brownstones but didn't know how to get them fixed. It wasn't common knowledge, the

way it is now about what needs to be done. There were questions about what really was the proper procedure and so on, and this study for the sandstone, which is the way I think of it, it was a first step towards the Conservancy's provision of preservation services, which it's done so regularly as a keystone of its work since then. But I don't think that my colleagues would have necessarily thought of that because they—I was certainly exposed to materials preservation as a subject matter in grad school.

Q: So this is the early days of the Landmarks Conservancy. Can you talk about how the programs were getting established at that time? You mentioned the preservation services, but I know that there's many others.

Clark: Yes, there were others too. There's something called the Historic Properties Fund, which lends money to owners to make necessary repairs to their buildings. And that was an effort that also took a long time—a couple of years and a lot of community outreach. But the Federal Archive Building—a building in the Village—was also threatened with demolition. The archive was moving to New Jersey, they were abandoning the building, the future of the building was uncertain. And we came in and promoted the idea that a developer could be found who would preserve the building, and then we undertook all the necessary work to make it plain what the preservation of that building would require in order to preserve its authenticity. And we were successful, but it was somewhat controversial. There were other people that were against it.

Among other things, I remember handling a big community board meeting with dozens and dozens and dozens of strong-minded people expressing their point of view about this very

matter. But the great thing that we always talked about was that it was a complicated structure by which we were able to get the building transferred [relying upon the federal Surplus Property Act] to a developer who did, in fact, restore it, and it did get turned into apartments. And it's a great—now, just this past few months ago, there was a fortieth anniversary of the Historic Properties Fund that was established and has a tremendous effect on all these other buildings that have been preserved as a result of it. So that was a big win and an exciting one.

The other program that got established in those early years, there was—the Sacred Sites Program of the Conservancy is one of its mainstays now, as well. And in that program [established in 1986], the Conservancy assists owners of religious properties and helps them to understand what might be the most important things they need to do. It's not necessarily always obvious to owners what they need to do to preserve their buildings, and the Conservancy has a great track record on that. And that all started when a preservation advocate named Evelyn Ortner, who lived in Park Slope, was really concerned about the future of a Brooklyn Heights church called St. Ann & the Holy Trinity, which at the time, had a very dwindling congregation and was in terrible physical condition. And it wasn't clear what was going to happen next with it, but the Conservancy stepped in and stepped up and devised a program through which the Arts at St. Ann's was established. That program has since moved to the Brooklyn waterfront in recent years. But it was a mainstay at the church and gave the church visibility. The congregation turned around and the church ended up becoming successful in this plan of an alternate use, and I think provided inspiration for setting up the Sacred Sites Program because it was clear that there were so many other buildings that could likely become in similar straits. And having an alternative use or exploring what needed to be done was exactly what had to happen.

Q: So the Historic Properties Fund was funded in part by the developers' profit from the reuse of the Federal Building in Greenwich Village. How is the Sacred Sites Program funded? How was that program funded? Was there a similar vision—

Clark: Fundraising, fundraising. They're very effective. Peg Breen and her team have done a fabulous job as a fundraiser for the Conservancy for decades now and hats off to them. It's not an easy thing. I've done a lot of fundraising in my career but it's a program people like to contribute to because it's kind of a feel-good thing. So they manage to handle it perfectly well.

There's also the easements program, which is—of course, an easement is a way of, through a private means, through a deed restriction, to protect the property. It doesn't have anything to do with the Landmarks [Preservation] Commission designating the property. It's a private means of providing protection. And there was a gentleman on the board of the Conservancy, William Hollingsworth Whyte, "Holly" Whyte, who had written many books. He wrote a book called *The Last Landscape.* He was a well-known author and a figure in the open space preservation world in particular, and a very esteemed urbanist. And he was very keen on having the Conservancy set up a robust easements program. There happened to be a number of board members who are attorneys. And you can begin to imagine how attorneys start thinking about, oh, what if we had an easement on a building and a brick fell and hit someone? And what if we had a lawsuit? And what would we do? So there really was internal debate that didn't embrace the scope of the Conservancy's easements program, initially, to the degree that Holly Whyte would have been perfectly happy with, but I was there as the sole staff person working on the easements program

with Holly. And writing the brochure that we produced to bring interest into it, working with Michael Gruen, another board member on it, on some early easement designation, setting up the standards for the easements program. And the Conservancy's easements program has been another important component of what its work is. It's not the big robust program that Holly might have wanted. But it certainly is an important element, I'm sure. It's a legacy unto itself. Really, it's a good thing for New York that it exists.

Q: Can you provide some examples of where that would be the right steps for the Landmarks Conservancy to take to establish an easement?

Clark: In order to preserve buildings that otherwise wouldn't be getting preserved. There were buildings in Noho, at the time, we accepted easements on the buildings, and no one was—Soho had been designated, yes—but Noho was way down the road. And there were people that were interested in preserving these buildings, they were certainly landmark quality. And so we accepted easements on the buildings and that limited what could be done in terms of changes to the facade.

One fellow who was a developer, I remember, was obligated to repair—we accepted the easement under the condition that the developer would repair the missing cornice on a part of the front façade of the building. And he was supposed to do that, according to the agreement that was signed within an eighteen-month period. Well, of course, this developer did not do that. And the Conservancy had to take him to court in order to enforce the easement. And the court agreed with the Conservancy that this man had an obligation and, ultimately, he was forced to do what

he was supposed to do. I remember having to testify in that court case about it, but it just showed you how the easements program could be kind of a hefty administrative chore when it came down to a recalcitrant owner not honoring his agreement with the Landmarks Conservancy pursuant to the easement and so, it meant that, yes, there would need to be, sometimes, lawyers involved in. Fortunately for the Conservancy, a law firm called Simpson Thacher & Bartlett for a long time was their major pro bono firm and they did the work in that case.

Q: When we talked a couple of weeks ago, you mentioned a few buildings that were really notable in terms of the Conservancy's work in those early days and your work. The Exchange Court Building and the Biltmore Hotel, the Fraunces Tavern block; would you like to talk about a few of those?

Clark: Sure, I'd love to. Well, the Fraunces Tavern block. We're all familiar, I think, with the tavern on one end—the building that is a creation of someone's early-twentieth century idea of what was originally there in the eighteenth century. But the opposite end at the Coenties Slip side, as one is going in the general direction of the seaport, one-third of the block at that time, which was 1977, was vacant, and there was talk of demolishing it to make more parking! A third of the block. And the Landmarks Commission was in the process of designating the property, it hadn't been designated yet. So the Conservancy stepped in. Mrs. [Brooke] Astor contributed funding, considerable funding, and the Conservancy was able—Mrs. Vincent Astor—to purchase that one-third of the block. And there were like five buildings.

And we undertook a historic structures report with an architectural firm, you know, the right

things to be done as proper steward of the property. And we hired an archaeologist who conducted a dig in the basement and that block had been placed on landfill. Just across the street there had been a dig that was done on what became the big Goldman Sachs building downtown. And that was on solid land. When the Dutch had arrived, Pearl Street was the edge of the island of Manhattan. So what was excavated by the archaeologists that we retained showed what people threw away in that kind of period. And it was fascinating the amount we learned. So just by having the building for that period of time, we were really a good steward.

But meanwhile, in 1978, very few people were living downtown. I mean, people lived in Southbridge Towers further north, but what we commonly think of now—how Lower Manhattan has lots of residential dwelling units—was completely not the case. In fact, ultimately we found some real rookie developers with next to no experience who took on the project. And were successful. We worked with them, they were able to use a program called J-51 [Exemption and Abatement] of the city as well as the Certified Rehabilitation Tax Credit Program of the federal and state government. So those means allowed them to create forty-four apartments in that space that at one time had been envisioned to have the buildings demolished to use to have more parking. I mean, it was sort of hard to think of [laughs]. But yeah, so that was quite the groundbreaking effort. And I remember Brendan Gill was the chairman of the board of the Conservancy, and he brought Mrs. Astor who wanted to see this dig in the basement. It was March, it was cold and wet. We went in the basement and the archaeologist, Nan Rothschild, was explaining to Mrs. Astor what all this stuff was. And it was really fascinating. I held Mrs. Astor's coat, that was my contribution [laughs]. But yeah, it was really an interesting experience. And now of course, one just takes it for granted that that whole block is a historic district.

And then, at the time, I couldn't even imagine how we would ever get Stone Street designated, which is a little bit further in and north and east. And, of course, that came with time as well, as Lower Manhattan became much more popular and the idea of having residential uses was very, very common. But it was much later when that designation came. So it was fascinating to see how things worked with the Fraunces Tavern block and I was happy to work on it.

The Biltmore is another one, the Biltmore Hotel. It was the dead of August, like this time of year it is here, and people were out of town, and Kent Barwick had been on the board of the Landmarks Conservancy. But by this time, he was the chair of the Landmarks Preservation Commission. And one Saturday morning, early, I got a phone call at home from Kent, saying that there had been a terrible thing which had happened, and that is that the contents of the Palm Court, which was a very celebrated space within the Biltmore Hotel, had been illegally removed from the building and destroyed and they were lying about on the sidewalk outside of the building, in a manner of disrespect, to say the least. So Kent wanted to know if I would get my camera and go down there and take some pictures. And I did, and it was heartbreaking to see what had happened. Then, our offices were located in the old McGraw-Hill building at the time. So I headed over to the office.

And back then, as you and I discussed when we chatted, one could actually just call up and speak to the *New York Times*, they would answer the phone. And so I called up. And by some miracle, the person who answered the phone was David W. Dunlap, who, for many, many years was the Metropolitan reporter for the *Times* after that, but this was a week or two after he had moved

back to the city from where he had graduated from Yale. He happened to have a father who was an architect in Chicago, so he was conversant in architecture. And you know, anybody could have answered the phone that was working for the Metropolitan desk, but to get someone like David, who recognized immediately what the scope of this rupture really was, and how it was the kind of story that could make a splash in a dead news time in a big way. So others did come back into town and there was an enormous amount of press, nationally, internationally. An injunction was gotten, but there was no real saving of the building, and it's been replaced by a hideous building that I still think is hideous, that's a brown marble building that was designed by a firm no one had ever heard of, I think called EnvironetX. The Biltmore was a part of the Terminal City project, which is—the Roosevelt Hotel is one remaining element of it. There's not much left to tell you what that really was. But yeah, it was real scratch.

So not everything is successful. Let's just put it that way [laughs]. Sometimes, more happens with regard to preservation by a lack of success. In that instance, the Conservancy did get some funding for other purposes as a result of it that was somewhat controversial. Laurie Beckelman mentions that in her NYPAP report, but that was a really interesting state of affairs, I would say.

Another one I would love to tell you about is the story about Exchange Court. The Exchange Court building was a Clinton and Russell designed structure from the 1890s, a twelve-story building, one block south of Wall Street at Exchange Place, a beautiful terracotta ornament, just a beautiful building. And the owners who were acquiring it, Jack Resnick & Sons [Inc.], a real estate firm known in New York, they really wanted a modern building. And this was a stretch that I personally thought had potential to be an historic district, although Kent Barwick at the

time said to me, "Carol, the Downtown Lower Manhattan Association is against having any historic districts in Lower Manhattan. They have a lot of control. We have, on the Upper East Side, hundreds of people that are interested in getting a historic district designation of the Upper East Side. That's where I have to place my priority." And I understood, of course, but I was chagrined and all the more so chagrined, when I had this feeling that something awful was going to happen to the building. And I went downtown on a hunch with my camera, and sure enough, illegally, there were the representatives of the developer hammering off the ornament on the building. We had spoken to them to suggest that there was this historic tax credit project by which they could save the facade and still have a modern inside of the building, but they were having none of it. And so they thought that by hammering off the ornament, then the building would be ineligible for the National Register, which of course it was. So that issue has really never really totally gone away. But it's not as commonplace as we encountered then. But that was really distressing.

So once again, I called the *Times* and Mrs. Ada Louise Huxtable, the architectural critic for the *Times*, was a member of our board. And so I told Mrs. Huxtable about what was going on. And she wrote a story, which appeared in the paper, that contrasted the very sad story of what happened to Exchange Court with the renovation that at the time was going on of the terracotta-clad Woolworth Building, across from City Hall Park. And it was just: what's going on here, all new or renovation? It's just a time when both things were being accommodated and when the real estate interests really had a strong handle on what was going to happen in Lower Manhattan. But Mrs. Huxtable's article, which perhaps you got a chance to look at, she writes about how, on her own, she had always been attracted to that exact part of lower Broadway because there are so

many of the core historic buildings located there. And then indeed, this Exchange Court building—its demise—didn't really do much to strengthen the appearance of that row. And so I was greatly appreciative of that insight that she offered in the article about how much she had taken solace and loved that stretch just as much as I did. And it never did get designated. There were individual designations that have been forthcoming, but not as many as we even promoted back thirty-odd years ago.

For example, there's a wonderful art deco building at 19–21. It's just one block up from the Custom House at Morris Street. It's a great building, it's not protected. I know it's not so fashionable to look at the business districts these days—the Commission's priorities are looking at neighborhoods that have not been so well served and I totally understand that. But that being said, I personally still feel that a look needs to be given to some of the key business districts and what is missing in terms of designation and, and maybe an effort could be made to rethink that priority somehow.

Q: I want to ask about your—was this kind of like your typical weekend is getting a call from Kent Barwick and having to run to different parts of the city, at least for this period in the city's history? [laughs] How did typical preservation campaigns tend to operate at that time?

Clark: Well, it wasn't a typical weekend, we were planning on going to Yankee Stadium. I remember that—that didn't happen [laughs]. But yeah, I did regard working at the Landmarks Conservancy in those first five years in my first professional career, as I would say to my friends, "Sometimes I feel like I'm working at the emergency room for dying buildings," because there

were lots of things that we couldn't do anything about. And then, of course, we could figure out what we could do something about and do something like that. That was a great thing. Like the Tweed Courthouse for example. The Tweed Courthouse is a building right near City Hall. At different points in its history, it was threatened with demolition. In the late '70s, the roof was shot, and it would rain inside the building and the city administration had decided, well, we don't need this building, I think it could be demolished. They were literally talking about demolishing the Tweed Courthouse, which has a big history. It's [Leopold] Eidlitz, you know, major architects worked on it over a twenty-year period. And so the Conservancy, using its own money, hired architects, Giorgio Cavaglieri and his associate, Denis Kuhn, worked on it. I remember walking on the roof of the Tweed Courthouse with him being terrified at the condition of the roof as I looked at it—they weren't afraid. But anyway, the Conservancy spent a good sum of its own money in order to reroof the Tweed Courthouse and then, guess what happened? The city was like really interested in using it. "We can tidy this up—this is a great space, it's really close to City Hall. It's so useful." But literally there was this sentiment in the opposite direction at a time when other buildings like Woolworth, for example, nearby were being preserved. So there were things like that. So I give the Conservancy a great deal of credit for playing a role that was also advocacy-oriented. And for, as the old saying goes, putting its money where its mouth was about things. They had a number of such programs that were really important. And buildings too.

Q: Can you can you say a little bit more about—I know your specialization isn't in the restoration, or building conservation—but a little bit more about how the Landmarks Conservancy began to kind of build its roster of specialists in materials or architects that knew

what they were doing [with regard to preservation]?

Clark: They did by demand. I mean, people were flocking to them, but there was an emerging cadre of preservation professionals who were restoration and preservation architects, many of whom are still in practice. But they all were emerging, like, there was a great deal of interest in historic preservation, after the Bicentennial, and as buildings began to be preserved. So there was, even within the American [Institute of] Architects, New York Chapter, where I served as executive director from 1994 to 1996, an historic buildings committee emerged as one of the professional organization's committees and architects would come and talk about these issues, which previously had not really been the case. So that whole number of practitioners with that expertise really grew significantly in that period of time because the market demanded it, basically.

Q: Okay, so can you talk about your move to the Municipal Art Society [MAS], how that transition happened?

Clark: Yes, I can. And since it's related to the Municipal Art Society, and it's back in that time period, there's something else I want to mention. In 1978, I served as the President of the Preservation Alumni of Columbia University. And 1978, of course, was when the Supreme Court made that important decision that upheld New York City's Landmarks Law as it applies to Grand Central Terminal, something that Mrs. [Jacqueline Kennedy "Jackie"] Onassis cared deeply about, and that was a terrific moment. And organizers, many affiliated with the Municipal Art Society, put together an old train car called the Landmark Express and the Landmark Express

went down to Washington and Mrs. Onassis was on the Landmark Express. And then when it arrived in Washington, there were lots and lots of press people there to greet Mrs. Onassis who, really, I always admired so very, very much for being willing to put herself in that milieu on behalf of the cause that she did deeply care about. She had been involved with Kent Barwick of the Municipal Art Society following that whole development and she knew one of the judges on the Supreme Court and etc. But it was such an honor for me as a young person to meet Mrs. Onassis and see all of this unfolding in real time.

And it wasn't the only time—she went up to Albany when there was a threat. There was a big faction that was active for over a decade around the time we were all working on St. Bart's [St. Batholomew's Church] to attempt to make churches and synagogues not be eligible for landmark designation here in New York. And it was a bitter, bitter fight that went on for a long, long time. And in cities like Chicago, they aren't, in fact, allowed to be—churches and synagogues do not get designated pursuant to the Chicago landmarks law. So that was a tough one. But again and again, Mrs. Onassis would be involved. And when I worked for the Municipal Art Society, we were at the Urban Center, I would see her slip out and walk up the street by herself. And, you know, she just was an upstanding citizen, and someone for whom one had to have a great deal of admiration, I felt.

And the Pennsylvania Railroad, they were really intent on jumping ahead and trying to dismantle the Landmarks Law and that decision was monumental because it really made it clear that the court strongly believed that the Landmarks Law was sound as applied to Grand Central Terminal. Always you have to look at the facts in a given case. But as it was applied to that

property, they did not prevail. And that's a good thing.

So, yes, in 1988, I went on and moved to the Municipal Art Society. Kent Barwick was back out of government and working at MAS and had an idea that he wanted to create something called the Planning Center. And fundraising was undertaken, the usual suspects, the JM Kaplan Fund, the [Vincent] Astor Foundation, the Fund for the City of New York, etc. And Kent recruited me for that position as the Planning Center director.

We were, we were doing basically three things: We were doing outreach to community groups, mainly in the outer boroughs, that didn't have people helping them with their various planning issues, fighting against improper construction, and so on, that was one thing. Providing technical preservation services to these groups. Another was that we were charged with putting up exhibits and exploring and having people see what was being done. So, for example, we had an exhibit when the Department of City Planning first instituted contextual zoning. We worked with the Department of City Planning folks and put an exhibit up that would explain to people what contextual zoning was—that it was trying to encourage building new buildings that fit more readily and identifiably into the existing built environment, basically. And so we had an educational purpose on top of that, and there's always advocacy going on. [Thirdly, we operated the Information Center, which made MAS materials of interest to the public available to those who sought it out.]

As you know, at the time, there had been pushback that Mayor [Ed] Koch had been getting from the real estate community and from the preservationists around a couple of buildings. The Coty

Building, that ultimately was designated after a very controversial set of hearings. The city's law department discovered that the developer had fraudulently obtained building permits to proceed with the project. So it didn't give the developer a whole lot of strength in this argument, did it? And then another building that was on 40th Street [the Wilkie Memorial Building] was another example of this hammering-off phenomenon and was worthy of designation and didn't get designated. So Koch was, I think, in my words, frustrated by this and wanted to do something. And he convened a group called the Cooper Commission, which met privately and came up with some recommendations, none of which were implemented, but the work of which, the Cooper Commission was perceived in the preservation community—at the time, I was at the Municipal Art Society in the late 1980s, very early 1990—it was perceived as destructive to the strength of the Landmarks Law and an imposition on the historic preservation community.

And so, as a result, Kent Barwick, who had been on the Cooper Commission—he had been one of a few people—he wasn't happy with it. He convened a sixteen-person committee—I was one of two women on the sixteen-person committee—called the Historic City Committee. And we met for a year and produced a report, the Historic City Committee Report, for which I wrote a couple of chapters with the help of Otis Pratt Pearsall, who was also on the committee. And as you know, Sarah, in that report, we had what I view as a really aspirational idea about how planning and zoning might interact. And as I've told you before, when we chatted, my subsequent position was to go work as a deputy executive director at the Department of City Planning for the next four years, [Mayor] David Dinkins was elected as mayor. Kent was happy to see me go. I mean, there was something to be done at City Planning.

And I kind of quickly learned how aspirational we had been [at MAS]. It was entirely appropriate for its time, and we did get press, and we got attention. And we had people talking about transitional zoning, although we weren't really quite sure what it was ourselves, but we kept talking about it [laughs]. Each of us might have had our own idea about what it was, but we were fulfilling the role an advocacy organization like—MAS very much was an advocacy organization for preservation at that point in time, a very big voice. And we were giving them work that was done by outsiders. We had a study where we hired a planning consulting firm to also look at this concept of transitional zoning, Abeles Phillips Preiss & Shapiro did that work for us. So we really did our homework, and had credentialed individuals helping us.

But my own personal feeling about it, reflecting on it this summer, as you and I have discussed, is that City Planning at the time was going to have to have other priorities. And the good news is that Richard Schaffer—who was the chair of the City Planning Commission, and the director of the Department of City Planning in that David Dinkins period, which, of course, was 1990 to 1994—Richard was one of the chairs of City Planning, who worked very closely with the Chair of the Landmarks Preservation Commission, Laurie Beckelman, and her general counsel, who was Dorothy Miner. And Dorothy and Laurie would come to meet with Richard and I regularly. And there was really a lot of collaboration.

I'm jumping ahead but—here we go. This is a book [holds up book] that we produced at the Department of City Planning, under Richard Schaffer, that was one of three studies of business districts. And this is called *The Plan for Lower Manhattan*. And if you turn here to page 49, one can see the goal is: "protect Lower Manhattan architectural and historic heritage," the same thing

I was just talking about a little bit ago. “Recommended: encourage the Landmarks Preservation Commission to undertake survey efforts that would identify priorities for landmark designations. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a number of architecturally significant buildings were built in Lower Manhattan, such as the cluster around Bowling Green, the Bowling Green portion of Broadway. Additionally, a series of exceptional skyscrapers built after World War II, primarily in the Wall Street area, formed the historic image of the Lower Manhattan skyline. These early skyscrapers, because of distinctive architectural, aesthetic, and historical characteristics, are strong candidates for landmark designation.” And as I’ve told you, a bunch of them still are not designated. But it was a notable period of time when the two agencies really did work together and listen to one another.

The City Planning department was involved in the rezoning of Tribeca, a major undertaking at that period of time. And at the same time, the Landmarks Commission was putting together its efforts to do the various district designations that it did. And we had a dialogue. I do remember my colleague, who was the director of the Manhattan Office of City Planning, Bob Flahive, being surprised that there was that much collaboration and cooperation going on between Landmarks and City Planning, but that’s the way Richard Schaffer wanted to do it. And it was a fortuitous time because there was a greater level of coordination than one sees, at some other points in time, as you reflect on it.

Q: And this is also a time where the Landmarks Preservation Commission was utilizing the 74-71—or 74-79?—in Tribeca zoning resolutions, is that right?

Clark: The 74-79 is the transfer of air rights from an individual building to a building that's either across the street or diagonally across the way. The transfer was going on in more limited ways. There was a lot of 74-711, which is the modification of the bulk and the use. Yes, that was much more commonplace. I think you're thinking about 74-711?

Q: Yes! So what was your experience of that, coming from—my understanding was that that was coming from the Preservation Commission. So what is your perspective from being at the Planning Commission at that time?

Clark: Well, I didn't have a ton of personal experience with 74-711. I'm familiar with it, and I've taught about it, and its use has decreased a great deal. And it was changed as a program during the time when I was at the American Institute of Architects, New York Chapter. So that was in the '90s. And I'm not briefed enough on it enough in order to answer your question.

Q: Well, let me tell you what was behind my question, which—

Clark: Yes, please.

Q: —hearing from somebody who was working at the Preservation Commission at that time, speculating that maybe the Department of City Planning didn't really like that the Landmarks Preservation Commission was determining so much about the zoning of Tribeca in particular.

Clark: It may have been the case. It's that same thinking, like my colleague, Bob Flahive, who

was the director of the Manhattan office, was schooled in that way of thinking that was—I'm not necessarily saying that Bob was anti-preservation. I'm not sure that was the case. I'm not overstating it. But he certainly had the "planning is more important than landmarks" kind of feeling, I can assure you of that. He's still a practitioner, one could ask him. But I think that he would agree that that's how he felt. And understandably, given the way he had been brought up.

You know, every New Yorker is affected by city planning. It's the buildings you live in, where you work, where you shop, parks, where you play, all these places have been shaped by planners. They use the zoning resolution, they use capital investment in the basic infrastructure systems, sometimes even urban renewal, and other tools to sort of implement things and it affects our daily lives. So the City Planning Commission and the Department are the institutions that are charged with planning in New York City. And when I got there, in 1990, they had just changed dramatically, because the Planning Commission had been a commission of seven individuals, all appointed by the mayor. But the city charter change that took place in the summer of 1990 was changing it so that the city Planning Commission had thirteen members, not seven, but thirteen members of the City Planning Commission that were appointed by, get this, seven different elected officials. So it was a very dynamic time and a time of change and adjustment.

The new charter, the city charter that had been revised, also mandated that the Department and the Commission work together to restructure and make more coherent the framework and process by which they plan for, what the planners like to call "the orderly growth of New York City." As you and I know, there's not a lot of orderly growth, but that's the term of art. And that the charter also required us to produce, by December of 1992, a planning and zoning report at

city planning, and I was looking back on it. Here it is [holds up report], the planning and zoning report. I was the person who was primarily tasked with coordinating, getting that together. And it was a major undertaking. We had plenty of help and worked with a lot of talented people there. And the City Planning Commission held hearings all around the city and got testimony. There was very serious and proper effort to do community engagement, find out what people were thinking, and do that kind of outreach. The charter mandated that this planning and zoning report have four sections, that one would be a statement of the conditions planning policy. And then a second thing would be a summary of the studies that were significant that were being then undertaken. And then an analysis of the portions of the zoning resolution that may need to be reconsidered—they might merit reconsideration in light of the policies of the Commission. As well as, finally, a way to implement the planning policy. So we were really in the weeds doing a lot of fascinating work. And we commissioned a series of papers from an independent, experienced, diverse group of people. And part one of the planning and zoning report sets the stage where the city might go from there. And then part three, Richard Schaffer talks about what he sees himself doing as the steward of the zoning resolution. There was a lot of talk back then, well, why can't we throw out the zoning and start over? Well, it doesn't really work that way. But he did a very thoughtful and thorough job. I worked closely with him on a lot of it.

We undertook a waterfront plan for the first time, examining what was thought of as the derelict waterfront. I mean, now we might look at the waterfront and say, oh, these buildings are just getting too big, what's going on? There's too many of them. It's hideous. But back then, the waterfront was really derelict. It had been zoned manufacturing. There weren't any of these buildings. And there was enormous economic opportunity to build buildings on the waterfront.

And it made sense in some locations. I do feel personally that things have gone overboard at this time in many parts of the city in terms of the size of permitted buildings. But our effort was successful in that we got the Planning Commission, of course, to vote on the waterfront rezoning. And then the City Council also had to vote on it. Technically, my job was Deputy Executive Director for Intergovernmental Relations, one of those great government titles. But what it meant was that I worked on making sure things went smoothly through the City Council and that the council voted the way we wanted them to vote. It's a similar job that I did subsequently at the Department of Housing Preservation and Development [HPD], where I was there for a decade as assistant commissioner doing that same sort of inter-governmental work, but for affordable housing purposes. So we made a great deal of progress in those in those years. I thought it was telling.

And one of the things that I wanted to speak to you about was that one of the real hallmarks of Richard Schaffer's leadership was recognizing that low-income neighborhoods require additional planning approaches because zoning regulations are much less powerful. They're not a tool for implementing change in low-income neighborhoods because there is no active—or at least back then, there were a lot of city-owned buildings, and there was very little, if any, private market activity in those low-income neighborhoods. So developers who put up housing in these neighborhoods and all of that housing is erected using subsidy money. They never really built the buildings to an inappropriate height. The buildings generally fit in very well and that's partly because they come with these subsidies. It's because a lot of the land at that time was city-owned.

During the period I was at HPD under Jerilyn Perine, in the first ten years of the twenty-first century, the city land vanished, it all was spoken for by affordable housing developers. And so it's a different set of facts at this point in time compared to the early 1990s. But the major determinants of redevelopment policies are for how one assembled and managed the disposition of city-owned land in the lower income neighborhoods. That was the key. It wasn't how one zones things. It was really the disposition, and also how the government provided the capital budget resources so that the infrastructure improvements that are vital could be completed. We understood that these were the factors that were important in those low-income neighborhoods as a different vision than Richard had.

Q: So I want to ask about that time period when you were working at City Planning, and this is right after the recommendations in the report that you were describing at MAS, through the Historic City Committee. So, once you started to actually work in planning, how did your thinking change about the recommendations in that report that MAS had put out?

Clark: I thought that the Historic City Committee report was great for MAS to put out, that we were part of putting it out when we did, that it served its purpose, that it really bought time for cooler heads to prevail in the wake of the Coty-Rizzoli and the building on 40th Street, the Cooper Commission work and that giant upset that was in the community. It was an aspirational report that we put together with an aspirational vision that was very much in keeping with what Kent was articulating, and we articulated it. And it was appropriate for its time and the right thing for the Municipal Art Society and its Planning Center to be doing. But my thinking changed because I learned so much about city planning working closely with all of my

colleagues doing these many, many different things. There are constraints to what one could accomplish at City Planning [laughs]. It simply isn't enough in the way of resources. If you look at New York, as opposed to other major cities across the country, our City Planning Department's relatively small.

Also, the thing that's really difficult is getting consensus among all the stakeholders, because just by the sheer size of New York City, to get sufficient consensus between the community, the Planning Commission, the City Council, the other elected officials, it can be a daunting challenge. Steering things in the right direction and getting there—it can be hard. And what I really learned at City Planning, that I'm not sure everyone thinks about, is that—you're aware, I suppose, Sarah, that the first city zoning ordinance was passed in 1916. And there was a feeling that buildings were just going up to the sky, and there were too many buildings, and there needed to be some brakes put on them. And although there were different efforts toward revising the 1916 zoning at various times, beginning in the '20s, again in the '30s, in the '50s. Nothing was successful until 1961, when the then-chair of the Planning Commission, James Felt, who was from the real estate industry, by the way, he chaired the effort to get the 1961 Comprehensive Amendment to the Zoning Resolution passed. And arguably, it was the most ambitious citywide land-use strategy that New York's ever seen.

But by the time I was working at City Planning in the 1990s, we began to realize what that 1961 zoning reform had been based upon was largely architectural and urban redevelopment theories and concepts of the 1920s and '30s that embraced modernism's idea of the "Towers in the Park." So that revised ordinance, not only did it have very little respect for the existing built fabric of

the city—very little—it was envisioning a completely different effort of changing the city completely. That's really what its special districts were thinking of doing. I mean, all the apparatus around it was fundamentally different than the approach that Schaffer and Laurie Beckelman were taking that we've been discussing in this more recent period when I was working there.

So change is inevitably going to occur, and it's crucial for the city's future prosperity, to be sure. But in a mature city, the question becomes: how do we fit the new in amongst the old? And that is what Richard Schaffer was looking at. And in the conclusion ["Reflections on Planning and Zoning" written by Richard Schaffer] to our planning and zoning report that I've held up before here, when he writes his third portion, he articulates that quite clearly, that the '61 vision was no longer applicable, and contextual zoning allowed for a much more nuanced ability to put in different palettes of zoning that would be more respectful of the existing city. Is it perfect? No, nothing's perfect, but it definitely was trending in a completely different direction than that '61 reform.

Q: I'm just thinking about the contrast of protecting the old amidst the building of the new and fitting the new into the existing—quite a turnaround in those fifteen years of your career, it seems.

Clark: Yes, there was a big turnaround. Things changed.

Q: Yeah. So how did your thinking about the city's ability to protect historic properties and

districts change, the more that you were working within the planning department, and maybe even also in HPD?

Clark: No, I think, in the Planning Department—I mean, I think my understanding—I always have kept teaching. In the entire time of my professional career, on the side, I've taught graduate students at Columbia, at Pratt, and more recently, at NYU—they're not graduate students, they're mature professionals, we can talk about that separately. But I just feel that Landmarks Commission needs to be given the ability to keep designating, and one's eye changes as to what one appreciates as worthy of designation. There are buildings that, thirty years ago, I never thought would have merited designation. But then after the passage of time—Fitch used to say this to us all the time, he was a southerner and had a southern accent, I won't try that. But it was clear that as time passes, one's appreciation of different things changes. And I can't say enough about how valuable the coordination was in those Dinkins years between City Planning and—it doesn't always work that way—Landmarks.

I did have occasion, however, to speak with a team of three leaders about a year ago in the fall. Last fall, the Gowanus area was rezoned, and as I've been preparing for some teaching I'm going to be doing this fall, a few weeks ago, I spoke with the three planners for a good long while about how they approached their work. And I was curious if they did coordinate with the Landmarks Commission, since some of the advocates have complained that with the Gowanus rezoning, that there were only five landmark designations that came along with it.

The designations actually preceded the zoning. But many advocates locally—I live in Park

Slope—thought that it could have been a larger number, which may indeed be true. But what the planners told me was that they worked really closely with Lisa Kersavage, who is the executive director at the Landmarks Preservation Commission, they coordinated on a number of things. She really educated them on how things would work with the Landmarks Commission and it was evident to me—I haven't spoken yet to Lisa Kersavage, who's a former student of mine, but I want to follow up on that before the class starts in the fall because it's clear to me that this recent example, the major rezoning that set a new stage, a new pattern for how City Planning is going about it, it was a great deal of a planning effort. One might not be happy that now there could be twenty-five or twenty-six story buildings that get built on in part of Gowanus; one might be distinctly unhappy, that's one's own business. But at least there's been a dialogue and there's been some, again, informed thinking where it's always better when the agencies are talking to one another.

From 2002 to 2012, when I was at HPD, there were rezonings that were going on. That was a period of time when Amanda Burden was the director at the Planning Department and chair of the City Planning Commission. Under [Mayor Michael "Mike"] Bloomberg's twelve years of being mayor, there were over one hundred rezonings that were done under Amanda's leadership. And a lot of those rezonings would go to the same land use committee of the City Council that I was taking the affordable housing work to. So I would see the stuff in real time and I was engaged in dialogues and talking about it. I didn't really have any direct role, but I certainly was able to observe it at close range and see how things were unfolding, and speak with the people who have staffers with the council and understand their perspective, and the city planners as well. So I felt very much engaged in that, in understanding what Amanda did. Amanda was one

of the commissioners when Richard Schaffer was the chair, and then Mike Bloomberg picked her to be the chair. And one hundred rezonings—need I say more? So, yeah, that's a lot. And so I think that the collaboration is really the key. And there have been times when the collaboration hasn't been there, and it's not as productive.

Q: So why don't we talk about your teaching next? Because it sounds like that's been a real thread within preservation, even while your work has taken you to some of the other components of land use in the city.

Clark: Yes, well, currently, for the Columbia Historic Preservation Program, I teach an elective class called Neighborhood Preservation. And I also advise thesis students, and I've been doing that since 1981. Advising thesis students who are in a program in which one seeks a Master of Science in Historic Preservation, which is the degree Columbia grants and the degree that Pratt Institute grants as well, it's a great experience. I had one student from Columbia this year, and one student from Pratt and I worked really closely with both of them, and we all learned a lot [laughs]. It's very satisfying. And the Neighborhood Preservation class—that's what I was looking at the rezoning of Gowanus is for because I want to use that as an example of where city planning is today. And for a twenty-two year period, I actually taught the required preservation planning class at Columbia's preservation program. So I see many alumni of my various teaching endeavors as I go about town, and it's always nice. Like the building conservation technology people tell me, "I thought I was going to hate preservation planning, but I really thought I learned a lot of practical things from you that have been serving me in good stead."

Then at Pratt's Historic Preservation Program, which is different than Columbia—Pratt's got a whole different tradition of like serious social engagement, social justice concerns, and a different bent. And there, since 2015, I've been teaching their required class in preservation law. It's a fifteen-week class, and it's Preservation Law and Policy. And I taught at Pratt beginning in 1981. The first class I taught was called the History of Cities. It had been taught by civil Sibyl Moholy-Nagy beforehand and in the '50s. I turned it into the History of American Cities quickly [laughs] because cities around the globe were not really what I knew. And then I had many years of teaching a course in Landmarks Preservation Practices at Pratt, where I had a lot of students as Pratt took many, many, many years for its preservation program to be become established. Columbia's one has been around since Fitch was a faculty member in the '60s at Columbia. And then so those both are graduate students.

And the students—one thing that's fabulous is that many times students do stay in the city, but it's also the case that they go forth and go elsewhere. And so, for example, in preparing for this Neighborhood Preservation class, in the last couple of weeks, I've been in touch with a woman named Katie McLaughlin [Friddle], who was the principal planner in Oklahoma City, where they've actually done—in Oklahoma City, they've actually done a preservation plan. She's high up in their landmarks agency. And it's a smaller place, they have an ability to do that. But she's giving me materials so that I'm going to convey that to the students since they'll be surprised to learn that, oh, my goodness, this city actually has a preservation plan that it follows and that it's adapting?!

And then there's another former student, Melissa Baldock, who's in Nashville in a similar role,

not exactly the same but similar. And she, whenever I've taught Neighborhood Preservation before, she tells me what's going on in Nashville where they have neighborhood conservation district ordinances separate from their landmarks law. And in this class, I talk a lot about these neighborhood conservation district ordinances and where they're strong and how they differ than landmarks ordinances. And generally speaking, they involve more vernacular buildings, and less conventional, proper landmarks, if you will. But I'm going to incorporate the material about Oklahoma City and Nashville into what I'm doing this fall, and it'll enliven things because people love to hear that something's actually working in places. We talk so much in New York, and seems to me, about how this doesn't work and that doesn't work.

And then the other teaching, I started about five years ago, I believe. The NYU School of Professional Studies approached me and they have adults who just are interested in things and they have Francis Morrone, who does a lot of walking tours, has been teaching there for years, and he was asked to put together a core group, where the students typically are older professionals in their thirties, or their forties, or some much older. But they're mature adults, for example, an engineer that works on historic buildings but doesn't really know anything about historic preservation planning or practice, or a woman who owns a contracting agency in New Jersey that works on historic buildings but doesn't really know how the policy and process really work. So these people I have a lot of fun with because they all have their own professional experience to share and it's varied. Like a graphic designer that's had a lot of experience with older buildings and lives in the Greenwich Village Historic District. And they're very mature students and they have all this independent experience that differs. So I find that engaging them is especially rewarding.

I'm very much rewarded by the work I do with Pratt and Columbia, don't get me wrong, but the NYU School of Professional Studies setting is different. One can take a series of courses and get a certificate in preservation from the School of Professional Studies at NYU, but many of the people who take this class just take it because they're interested in learning something about historic preservation. And I actually feel that when I'm done teaching it, I kind of feel each time like I've taught them everything I know [laughs] because we really cover a lot of ground and it's very invigorating. So there are three different examples.

Q: What are your thoughts on how important it is for somebody who is interested in doing preservation work to really have an interdisciplinary approach? I don't know if that's—I'm not necessarily asking you to compare your graduate students in historic preservation, who've maybe been on that track for a long time, with your NYU students, but maybe examining that experience as well as your own. How important is that?

Clark: I'll answer it this way. When Jim Fitch set up the program at Columbia, he knew that every single one of these elements had to be present and that one had to be conversant. "You have to be able to dial a phone!" he would exhort us. "You have to know who to call!" Obviously, we have different means of communicating these days. But it's still is a great thing to call people. It's a great way to get information. When my class arrived in 1975, Fitch was thinking about the law, to be sure, but he wasn't thinking about preservation planning. But then students in a couple of years ahead of us were saying, we want to do more looking at environmental review and planning mechanisms that tied to historic preservation, and Fitch got

it. And he hired a fellow named Charles Sullivan, who's the executive director of the Cambridge Historical Commission in Cambridge, Massachusetts, across the river from Boston, who has a degree in planning and did a superb job teaching that preservation planning class to my cohort when I was a student. And he's still active in Cambridge, working.

It's important to have all the pillars, all the basic pillars and to know who to call, really, just get an idea of what's in the field, what kind of practice do people engage in. It's not that hard—you don't have to know how to do chemistry or something to figure out building conservation technology, practical matter things. And you get an ability to speak about it that's going to be valuable as a professional in the field, regardless of where you are.

Q: And you did talk about this particular thing a little bit, but the way in which—maybe broaden it a little bit—the way in which organizations in the city that are invested in historic preservation interact with each other. I know that was a lot of what the recommendations in that report in 1988 really were about. So did any of those really come to fruition? How have those interrelationships changed? Not just with City Planning and Landmarks Commission, but all the kinds of advocacy organizations and everything that that you've been able to see from your seat in this field?

Clark: I think that things continue to change in each period depending on who are the players that are in these various positions and the profiles of certain organizations. While the Conservancy, for example, under the leadership, for decades, of Peg Breen has kept going in one direction, there have been other organizations where there has been much more significant

change. And there are differences of how things were at one time and how they are now, and that's to be expected. So it's not at all static, it's really a changing situation. That's why I was happy to bring up the example about the recent Gowanus rezoning that I've thought, once again, it's that collaboration that is vital to informing.

And of the forty years that I was working full time, maybe about half of the time was with not for profit organizations, and the other half was with city government and state government. I served as a deputy commissioner for State Parks and we acquired real estate [over 3,000 acres] for expanding our State Park system. In all of these things, it's really an open-minded collaborative approach that, in my mind, yields the best results. And it didn't hurt, in our example with State Parks, that Andrew Cuomo turned out to be a governor who was very favorable towards State Parks and gave us, whatever it was, $10 million to spend on land acquisition to fill out parts of the park parcels. There hadn't been that much money since Nelson Rockefeller was the governor that came down through the Parks system. And I just happened to be Deputy Commissioner for Real Property and Legislative Affairs, one of those great government titles, again, who was in the position of working with Scenic Hudson and the Open Space Institute and other organizations of that nature, that are in the business of taking land and holding it until such time as government will take them out and will allow the property to be conveyed to government for its purposes. Does that answer your question?

Q: Yes. Thank you. And another thing I wanted to ask about is, you had mentioned that at the time of this 1988 report that you were one of the few people who thought that the commissioners of the Landmarks Preservation Commission should be paid. So I wondered if you could talk

about your reasoning then, and also, is that still how you feel about those positions?

Clark: I mean, one can make a solid argument either way. I believe that to be true. But in my experience, seeing that, once Richard Schaffer arrived at City Planning, the City Planning Commissioners began to be paid. It was not a huge amount of money, I think it was maybe $40,000 a year. That's not an inconsequential amount of money a year. That was the number in 1990, so don't quote me now—I have no idea what they get paid today. But the Landmarks Commissioners put in hours and hours and hours and they don't get paid. And the thinking that someone like Otis Pearsall, who was on the Historic City Committee but held a view opposite to mine, he believed it could be too easy to affect someone's thinking in an improper way, if I understood Otis correctly. And he argued and carried the day. He's a terrific attorney and very good at making an argument. So I think that there's something really flawed when the city has two mayoral agencies, Planning and Landmarks, and you're paying one of them and you're not paying the other. What does that say about power? What it implies that one is less important—to me anyway. And I don't know if that's, you know, I'm not saying that that's absolutely true. But it just implies it. Like, why is it that someone that's serving as a volunteer be compensated to be one of the thirteen members of the City Planning Commission, and only the chair is compensated, who's the head of the staff at the Landmarks Preservation Commission. All the rest of the eleven commissioners are not compensated. And they put in, as you know, an extraordinary number of hours. So I can see that there's flaws. I can see arguments on both sides of the issue. But my own feeling at the end of when we put out the Historic City Committee Report was that I felt that Landmarks Commissioners should be paid. And certainly nothing that I've seen since then has made me, personally, feel any differently.

Q: Do you think that there is also some legacy there regarding who was involved in the earliest days of historic preservation activism in New York City, in the sense that Jackie Onassis doesn't need a salary to sit on the commission or something like that? Versus the Planning Commissioners? Do you think it had something to do with that?

Clark: I don't know. I don't think so. But I don't know. People perceive things in so many different ways. It's hard to imagine what people are all thinking [laughs]. It's really hard to know. But it just doesn't seem fair, personally, to me. And I think that with proper management, you can talk to people if there's some kind of problem that's emerging in some way. The general counsel is there, they can speak to them. It's never been a problem. I've heard no one complaining the City Planning Commissioners get paid, or that the BSA commissioners—the Board of Standards and Appeals, who considers when to get a zoning variance—that they get paid. But why then aren't the Landmarks Commission members get paid, you know?

Q: Why does any city employee get paid? Maybe there's a reason! And in other words, I guess my point is just that a lack of payment does not guarantee neutrality.

Clark: No, that's it exactly. You're absolutely right about that.

Q: In addition to exactly the point you're bringing up of why would one commission's members get paid and not another.

Clark: Right. And there's another thing that I realized I haven't talked to you about, which is, just briefly, I could mention this that I did serve as the president of the Brooklyn Historical Society. And that building is in Brooklyn Heights Historic District. It's designed by George Post. It's a National Historic Landmark. The top echelon of designation by the federal government. It's in the Brooklyn Heights Historic District. But anyway, after I served as the executive director of the AIA, New York Chapter, I was recruited by the Brooklyn Historical Society, which had at that time, just gotten a gift of some $20 million. And this fellow named Donald Othmer had been on the board of the Brooklyn Historical Society and when he passed away, he left money to a number of Brooklyn institutions. And no one really knew that he had such wealth. People were surprised at the time when this came about.

But the charge that we had was to renovate the building. The building had never been renovated. And to also reinvigorate its programming and its identity in the community beyond Brooklyn Heights to other parts of Brooklyn. We hired Jan Hird Pokorny [Associates], a very well-regarded architectural firm to do the renovation. And we did invigorate the programming. We did a lot of programs in the community with people that hadn't been engaged with the historical society before, and we made a specific effort to go into other neighborhoods. I didn't bring any of them out here but there was a whole series of reports that we commissioned about various communities—Red Hook/Gowanus, Greenpoint, Williamsburg, Dumbo, Bay Ridge/Fort Hamilton. A consultant named Marcia Reiss did the work and we produced these booklets and people were happy to have them and they're really very useful. So we had a lot of energy.

And then, by the way, there's also extraordinary holdings in the library of the Brooklyn

Historical Society that had never been fully catalogued. So we had to catalog, so we hired archivists, and we hired consultants, and those holdings now, actually, have been transferred to the Brooklyn Public Library, which is a significant change. And I think it's not a bad thing, because it ensures that they will be publicly accessible always. They're not dependent on a private entity like the Brooklyn Historical Society. In effect, it's private. So this was really a major undertaking, and it was successful, and the building is beautifully restored. I worked really closely with the architects and my team. We had to hire all these professionals, the appropriate professionals, to do all of these things—educators, etc., and work with the board, and do fundraising, largely in Brooklyn Heights. I had a lot of fundraising experience. In that position, it's just a given.

And then of course, there's always the problem of, when you have a lot of money, people want to spend it [laughs]. And the concept in this case, had been that, ideally, ten of the $20 million would be spent, but there would be a reserve of ten that could grow and stay and continue to have meaning in the in the future. I left after about a three-and-a-half-year period, but my understanding is that the entire $20 million got spent at the end of the day. And that certainly wasn't what was being sought at the time I was being recruited. But I can understand how that happened, too because everyone had an idea about what was necessary and not everybody was capable of getting the consensus out of the group of volunteers who were working, who were the members of the board who had standing and agency in the discussion. So it was challenging, but the building is wonderful. And it was a great experience and I'm certainly proud of the work that we did.

Q: Can you speak to the experience of working in a historic building and managing archives in a historic building?

Clark: It was fascinating for me to learn about how to manage archives from the gifted archivists we retained. I had very little prior experience with archival management, previously. I mean, it was the most beautiful office I ever had. That's for sure [laughs]. It's wooden paneled and detailed, and original artifacts are about. One can go out the door of the head of the staff's office, the president in this case, and look into the library, which they renamed The Othmer Library after Donald Othmer made his contribution. It's right across the street from the school, Saint Ann's School. It's a great spot, a really beautiful spot. I enjoyed that aspect of it. I learned a lot. And it was it was very challenging, but we were successful. We just didn't save as much of the money as I certainly had a vision of how it would have been better to have had it. But oh well.

Q: It certainly is a very beautiful building and a really nice place to see exhibits in.

Clark: Yes, definitely.

Q: Another question, I guess about your teaching. So I know that when you were working at the Municipal Art Society, you said that you were doing some outreach to people in neighborhoods who had been excluded from some of the preservation activities and outreach. So, in your neighborhood preservation classes that you've been teaching, do you see any overlaps? Or what kind of different approaches have been developed in these few decades about doing preservation work in those communities?

Clark: Well, the neighborhood preservation that I'm teaching about is more focused on the neighborhood conservation district ordinances, which exists in other cities. And New York City, because it's governed so much by its own commercial real estate interests, that those are the people who have a great deal of political power in the city. And there's no—there was a time at which I did an individual study. When was that? Let's see, I took a leave of absence for, I think it was three months when I worked at HPD working for Shaun Donovan. Independently, I raised money and I was a fellow of the Citizens Housing and Planning Council. So I worked in the office of this not for profit organization with a history of social action in the affordable housing world. And I put together a proposal entitled Reinventing Neighborhood Preservation, and my hope had been to seek to demonstrate that we could have a more vibrant neighborhood preservation kind of practice here in the city than the one that we have. Or that perhaps, ideally, we could have a different set of tools. We could have a neighborhood conservation ordinance here that could provide some protection. The Reinventing Neighborhood Preservation project was conducted in 2009. And, you know, there isn't the appetite in New York for that; it's set up on a different level and warp. It's really not oriented to what I was hoping to be able to demonstrate.

I certainly teach in the class, the Neighborhood Preservation class, I illustrate that there are almost one hundred different cities in the United States who have something like a neighborhood conservation district ordinance. They're not all called the same things. Sometimes they have a little different title but you can pretty much tell if that's what they are, when you dig into what they are and how they are. And this summer, I'm working with a young man who's a former

student of mine at Pratt, and I'm paying him to do more research work so that I have fully updated information on which of these programs are still actually flourishing because I know from firsthand experience that—like in Cambridge, Massachusetts, they do they have their own neighborhood conservation district ordinances that handle more vernacular matters. And then the same entity administers the Cambridge Historical Commission, which handles their landmarks matters. So there's a different way of organizing these things. But that's Cambridge. We're New York; it's a whole different ballgame.

You know, ten, fifteen years ago, there were neighborhoods in Queens that were maybe going to get some kind of preservation, but so much change occurred so quickly, and there was nothing to protect those areas. So they're never going to be preserved, I don't think, and certain other parts of the city as well. There's been a sense of building as big as one can. And then there's the argument that gets made by many that, the City Planning Department, through its borough offices—and I did come out with this observation at the end of my work—that if there were the appetite for it, and if this was something that were really a priority of a mayoral administration, and articulated—like Dan Garodnick, who I've worked with as a council member when I was taking HPD things through the council, he's a very, very intelligent man, and he's now chairman of the City Planning Commission and director of the Department of City Planning. I have no idea what is his exact direction is going to be under our current mayor, but if there were the desire to have a different mechanism that would provide additional protection for things like something related to—[gasps] dare I say it?—aesthetics [laughs]. I certainly don't see it in this particular political picture. But then again, if the desire were there, one way to do it would be through the borough offices of the Department of City Planning, where they're doing more local planning

efforts, and they know the community boards, and they know what issues are happening, and they could apply some of those kinds of tools. It's not impossible to set something up that would be responsive to those same goals I was seeking to fulfill back then. But you've got to have the political will.

Look what Mike Bloomberg was able to do—granted, with plenty of help—but he did a lot! I thought that his mayoralty, to me, you didn't have to love everything that happened, but it was a productive time. And he gave a lot of range to his commissioners to independently act within a framework that he and his senior-most colleagues like Deputy Mayor Dan Doctoroff, who oversaw HPD, and First Deputy Mayor Patti Harris, who oversaw the Landmarks Preservation Commission, prescribed. I was very impressed watching those twelve years of that administration. I worked for HPD from 2002 to 2012, so I had a good seat from which to observe the action. But I had reason to compare it with some of the other administrations, which have been more sloppy. Sloppy, the Bloomberg crew was <u>not</u>, in my book.

Q: My understanding is that that was also a time of really applying some managerial science or approaches to a lot of the city's agencies.

Clark: That's correct. Yes, there was a lot of thought of that nature, which was beneficial.

Q: So we've focused on your career, and I just wanted to give you some space for any kind of personal stories. So whether that's about individuals that were really significant for you to have the opportunity to work with, or buildings that you love the best, or people in your life who have

supported you and your career that you want to mention here.

Clark: Well, that's a question I hadn't anticipated [laughs]. I hadn't given that a bit of thought, wow. Well, there have been many people who've been supportive to my career and it's always been somewhat related to the built environment to some degree. Even at Parks there are many people. Susan Henshaw Jones, the executive director of the New York Landmarks Conservancy, who was my first boss, was very difficult and challenging. We worked really hard. But I came to admire Susan so much, so much so that when I was executive director of the American Institute of Architects, New York Chapter, we did an exhibit called Civic Lessons, in which we looked at public buildings that New York City architects had designed that had been built. And we celebrated them. And Susan, at the time, had moved on to the National Building Museum in Washington. And we worked together and we were able to move the exhibit, which had been put in the inside the Custom House on Bowling Green in the rotunda where those same Reginald Marsh murals are up above. And we moved Civic Lessons to the National Building Museum and Senator Moynihan got involved and promoted the idea of how important it was for public buildings, they had a role, etc. So Susan's someone who strikes me as an important influence.

And certainly Kent Barwick was another one as we've as you can hear from many times I've mentioned his name. Otis Pratt Pearsall was someone I've gone to time and again during my life and talked with. The archive project's own [Anthony] Tony Wood is an old friend. Tony, when he first came to New York, and I started collaborating on things and we've collaborated on lots of things [including "Fitch Forum: 45 Years of Preservation Law in New York City and the Nation" in 2011 at Columbia University].

In fact, currently, I'm among a group of individuals who are looking at the life of a perhaps little-known preservation advocate named George McAneny was, as you probably know, Sarah, he was the Manhattan Borough President from 1910 to 1913. But there's a book that we're going to be putting out that is making real progress. The publisher is not completely there yet, but it's getting close. And my portion of the book is to look at a period in McAneny's life when he was the president of the American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society, from 1942 to 1950. And he was instrumental, among other things, in the establishment, in 1947, of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. And he was the person who was battling—in Princeton, New Jersey, where he lived for quite a while, there's an American battlefield from the American Revolutionary War that was mainly in private hands amongst a number of individuals. And this past spring, I went to the Princeton archives and did research and looked up a lot of information. And so one of the other things I'm going to be able to write about in my chapter about the 1940s is how he was successful in getting what had then become a privately owned important battlefield from the American Revolutionary War. McAneny was able to get it assembled and acquired so that it's in public ownership today, which was a monumental thing to have achieved. So it's great fun to be among the people that are all engaged in this McAneny project. And Tony is going to be playing a role with writing a portion of the introduction to the book, Kent is going to write the introduction. So there's many people to whom I can offer credit. And I'll regret later that I didn't think of who to mention.

But I've had the privilege of working with a lot of different people and in these different positions. That's been quite fortunate. And now, I'd always planned that once I wasn't going to a

regular job every day, I would be doing my teaching and researching, and I'm doing that and it's great. It's great fun. I mean, I probably could have retired earlier, for heaven's sake [laughs]. Hindsight is always 2020.

Q: Well, I don't want you to worry too much about names because I have tried to write all of them down. And there's a lot so [laugh]—you've got three columns so far.

Clark: There you go. That's the evidence, right?

Q: Plenty, plenty. Don't worry. Well, I just wanted to ask in closing, really, if there are any other things that you wanted to talk about, or stories that you wanted to share about your career and your work in the preservation field?

Clark: I think we've covered it, in large measure. I'm sure there are other things. But when I was pondering it, in the weeks prior to this, I've dug through places, and I tried to pick real highlights of activity that would be illustrative and that weren't already recorded in what one can easily see at the New York Preservation Archive Project repository for this material.

I didn't see—I thought it was important to illuminate and illustrate those Conservancy programs, because they're very instrumental in the city and have proven to be so important and help the Conservancy to thrive. And those losses, like the Biltmore Hotel and the Exchange Court Building—the losses are just as important as the victories. And I wanted to provide some balance about that.

Q: Yeah, absolutely. It's really incredibly helpful to hear about those details and that history. Well, with that, that might be it for today.

Clark: Okay, great.

Q: Thank you. I appreciate it. I'll be in touch with the transcript when it's ready, and you'll have a chance to look it over.

Clark: Thank you. I really thought it was a fun. Take care.

Q: Bye.

[END OF INTERVIEW]