

# Fifth Av. Mansions: A Zoning Appeal

By ROBERTA B. GRATZ

Preservationists and community residents take their battle to save four Fifth Av. mansions before the Board of Standards and Appeals today, where arguments will be heard on whether the owners of the E. 82d St. corner should be allowed to build a 24-story apartment house without a garage.

The corner land parcel is zoned R-10, which means that a residential building larger than 10,000 square feet cannot be built without a garage. The owners have applied for a zoning variance, which needs board approval to allow them to build a slightly larger structure with no garage.

In the meantime, The Post has learned, a neighborhood group has asked to buy the four mansions that face the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the owners have said they would sell the parcel for \$3.5 million.

The real estate complex of Sol Goldman and Alex DiLorenzo, the owners of this parcel, are among the largest landholders in the city. They reportedly purchased the Fifth Av. site—one of the last remaining rows of low-rise mansions on Fifth—for \$2.8 million.

## Hope for Delay

The decision of the Standards and Appeals body on the variance has no direct bearing on whether these four landmark-quality structures will be preserved since the owners can proceed to build a smaller structure within zoning limitations without the variance.

Community forces, however, are hoping a variance denial will delay the builders long enough so that money may be raised to purchase and pre-

## It Was No Yolk

An import-export broker whose publicity release on a huge egg import order was deliberately scrambled has drawn a two-month jail sentence.

Authorities said the report, sent out in November, 1969, on a wire service devoted to distributing press releases, wasn't what it was cracked up to be. In fact, it was barely a shell of the truth.

John P. Bauer pleaded guilty in Federal Court here yesterday to authoring the false report that 13 million dozen eggs were being imported from Spain.

Bauer's motive, authorities said, was to cause a drop in the price of contracts in egg futures. He hoped to buy them at the lower price after selling similar contracts he bought at a higher price — with borrowed funds — before the import news was announced.

serve the buildings. Demolition of two of the four structures has been under way for several weeks now, but, preservationists believe, they are not beyond redemption.

There is considerable community opposition to the demolition and the plans to build a 24-story apartment tower. But the emotions stirred have been for a variety of reasons.

Residents of some of the neighboring, super-exclusive apartment buildings fear the kind of tenants such a new structure will bring and the effect such a building will have on property values. Plans for the new 147-unit building call for mostly two-

and-a-half room apartments.

"They'll probably rent for \$400 and who but hookers or business executives needing second apartments for wrong reasons can afford that?" asked one neighboring tenant.

Other community residents fear increased traffic congestion and new danger for the children attending the Ramaz School or the New Lincoln School on 82d St. between Fifth and Madison.

A larger, citywide group of preservationists argue that these four mansions are among the "architectural elite" of this city and should not be destroyed. They are so much a part of this city's rapidly vanishing history, the argument goes that they should be declared landmarks and be preserved.

Kent Barwick, director of the Municipal Art Society, which has been in the forefront of landmark preservation, says of the four old townhouses: "These buildings individually may not be meritorious of one landmark designation but they work in combination to form a streetscape unparalleled in the city."

"The case," Barwick noted, "clearly highlights a critical weakness in New York City's landmarks law" which only allows the Landmarks Preservation Commission to hold hearings on new landmark proposals for six-months every three years. The next hearings are not scheduled until July, 1973.

"The Commission," Barwick adds, "has absolutely no power to work on an emergency basis during the interim period" and was thus powerless to act to save the Fifth Av. mansions.