



NEWSLETTER

FALL/WINTER 2022

Welcome to the 37th edition of the newsletter of the New York Preservation Archive Project. The mission of the New York Preservation Archive Project is to protect and raise awareness of the narratives of historic preservation in New York. Through public programs, outreach, celebration, and the creation of public access to information, the Archive Project hopes to bring these stories to light.

Queens Receives a Crown Jewel

Archive Project Awards \$44,000 Grant, Its Largest Ever



From left to right: Jordan Geddes of Congresswoman Grace Meng's office; Gina Pollara, secretary of the Archive Project; Brad Vogel executive director of the Archive Project; Jennifer Ellis, senior program officer at Leon Levy Foundation; James Trent, Bowne House Historical Society trustee; Charlotte Jackson, archival consultant and Bowne House Historical Society trustee, Kathy Sciortino, Bowne House Historical Society trustee, Janet Caraisco-Alloggiamento, Bowne House Historical Society trustee, and Elise Helmers, executive director of Bowne House | Courtesy of Ron Peralta, September 29, 2022.

The Archive Project, as part of its **Shelby White & Leon Levy Archival Assistance Initiative**, awarded the **Bowne House Historical Society** a “crown jewel” grant of \$44,000. The grant, the largest ever given by the Archive Project, will facilitate a major digitization project to improve archival access to a key set of historical records.

“One of our top goals here at the Archive Project is to convince organizations in the

broader preservation field to take care of their archives,” said **Gina Pollara**, secretary of the Archive Project. “So, as you can imagine, this grant aligns splendidly with that goal.”

Delivered at a September 29th ceremony on the Bowne House grounds in Flushing, Queens, the grant will allow the Society to digitize over 300 years’ worth of archival materials connected with the historic 1661 Bowne House and the Bowne and Parsons

families dating to the 1600s. Major assistance from the **Leon Levy Foundation** allowed the Archive Project to reinstate and expand its archival assistance initiative, which had previously awarded grants in 2013, 2015, and 2017. The Bowne House grant is the first “crown jewel” grant awarded under the initiative.

The Bowne House collection slated to be digitized represents a uniquely important

Continued on page 5

Preservation's "Dr. Watson" To Be Honored At Bard Breakfast

Christabel Gough Documented Preservation History Alongside Advocacy

By Adrian Untermyer

The Archive Project's twentieth Bard Birthday Breakfast Benefit will feature an honoree who has done much for historic preservation. However, she has also done a great deal of work to document the story of the preservation movement in New York City.

Preservationist Christabel Gough's four decades as what *New York* magazine dubbed the "quietest influence in New York" began—quite literally—with a big bang.

In the darkness of a Greenwich Village morning decades ago near Gough's home on Christopher Street, her neighbors, Ron Kopnicki and Matt McGhee, heard a "sickening crash" just as the bell tolled three.

An architectural crime was afoot. The victim, in this instance, was the former Behlen Paint Company's distinctive façade. And the perpetrator—the structure's new owner, a man known to history only as "Mr. Oros"—had plowed a station wagon directly into his building in an attempt to avoid designation by New York City's nascent Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC).

Oros was "a man of action," recalled Gough in her 2021 New York Preservation Archive Project Oral History with your correspondent. But as the Oroses of the world would soon learn, Christabel Gough was poised to become a potent, persistent force on the preservation scene in the decades to come.

Mobilized by that "sickening crash" in those early-morning hours, Gough teamed up with Kopnicki and McGhee to found The Society for the Architecture of the City. The group's mission was to protect New York's vanishing architectural heritage by reviewing every proposal before the LPC, offering testimony on nearly every item, and influencing individual commissioners using the group's well-read publication, *Village Views*. And, as



Christabel Gough, the Archive Project's 2022 Preservation Award honoree. | Photo by Toby McAfee
Courtesy of the Untermyer Gardens Conservancy.

subsequent architectural crimes came across her blotter, Gough responded rapidly with resources, connections, and an unstoppable dynamism belied by her quiet voice and diminutive stature.

"[W]hat I like to say," offered Gough in her Oral History, "is that I'm Dr. Watson. Ron is Sherlock Holmes. And Matt is Mycroft."

Yet other co-conspirators find military analogies more apt. As Gough's collaborator and protégé, Save Harlem Now's co-founder Michael Henry Adams, explains, "Christabel is a commander-in-chief, perfectly and carefully arming her troops, but unafraid to ride her horse on the front lines for all to see."

Although Adams concedes that Gough does not "lie in front of doorways"—or chain herself to the LPC in protest, as Adams once did—"what she does is far better than that." Indeed, Adams believes that, "without her encouragement, I doubt some things I did would have seemed prudent to worry about."

Adams points to Gough's support for preservationists of color as an example of her battlefield acumen. Instead of paying "mere lip service to equity" in a city where preservation is often viewed "not only as elitist, but racist," Adams recalls battles like the Addisleigh Park designation, where Gough assisted with research, lobbied the LPC, and convinced Adams that what he viewed as a "hideously hopeless cause was not one."

The fight to preserve the history of preservation itself is another one of Gough's forty-year preoccupations. Rather than consign her books, papers, and personal property to the curb when vacating her Christopher Street command center, Gough invited young preservationists inside to claim objects meant to inspire and inform their burgeoning generation. And today, Gough is working with the Archive Project to explore the prospect of digitizing the *Village Views* archives and preserving her personal papers for posterity. The publication's many issues document a trove of preservation history, ranging from grassroots activism to legal developments at LPC.

There were larger battles too, like Gough's behind-the-scenes efforts to protect the Landmarks Law from illegal or immoral changes pushed by the developer class. Even unsuccessful skirmishes, such as the *Save America's Clocks* litigation in the 2010s, set the agenda for future reforms and inspired an army of local advocates, even in defeat.

It was for these reasons, and so many,

Continued on page 9

Honoring the 60th Anniversary of AGBANY's Penn Station Picket

Archive Project Event Honors Veterans, Leaders of Famed Protest

On August 1, 2022, the eve of the 60th anniversary of the famed August 2, 1962 protest outside old Pennsylvania Station opposing the building's demolition, the Archive Project hosted an event to mark the occasion.

The event, *A Toast to the Penn Station Picketers*, was held at Tracks Bar & Grill, just across 31st Street from the site of the long-since demolished Beaux Arts station edifice by McKim, Mead & White. Archive Project executive director Brad Vogel served as master of ceremonies, and speakers included Archive Project board member Adrian Untermeyer, Archive Project founder and chair emeritus Anthony C. Wood, well-known civic leader Kent Barwick, and Peter Samton, a former organizer of the group that planned and executed the renowned protest to preserve old Penn Station, Action Group for Better Architecture in New York



Kent Barwick speaks at the Archive Project's event commemorating the 60th anniversary of the AGBANY picket outside Pennsylvania Station. | Courtesy of Adrian Untermeyer, 2022.

(AGBANY). Samton's remarks, in particular, proved a moving and poignant reminder of why preservationists fight for things worth fighting for in New York City. It was powerful to hear from someone who was there six decades ago.

Toasts sent in by fellow AGBANY picket organizer Diana (Kirsch) Goldstein of San Francisco and from Joan Davidson in honor of her brother Richard Kaplan and friend Raymond Rubinow of the J.M. Kaplan Fund, who were in the picket line, were read to all those assembled.

As Goldstein wrote for the occasion: "We knew we would not win and that Penn Station would be torn down but we felt a moral obligation for the architectural profession to publicly protest. And we hoped that our protest movement would change the public attitude towards preservation in

the future so that other buildings would be protected."

Norval White, AGBANY picket organizer, along with Samton, Goldstein, and Jordan Gruzen, was also honored by various attendees.

Tables full of picket photos by photographers such as David Hirsh and copies of documents relating to AGBANY and the picket littered tables inside Tracks. Mr. Untermeyer also led small tours of the picket site and the new Moynihan Station nearby. Members of the evening's host committee, Archive Project supporters, and members of the general public partook of refreshments and engaged in convivial conversation. Members of the public also highlighted issues with the current plans for mass demolition of historic structures in the vicinity of the current iteration of Pennsylvania Station.

One unmistakable theme emerged clearly from the anniversary event: the 1962 AGBANY picket has inspired and continues to inspire historic preservation activism up to the present. ■



AGBANY protest organizer Peter Samton shares his insights 60 years after marching. | Courtesy of Adrian Untermeyer, 2022.



Anthony C. Wood, Michael Henry Adams, and Kent Barwick helped mark the occasion. | Courtesy of Adrian Untermeyer, 2022.

Archive Project Provides Archival Assistance Grants to Ten Groups

Small Grants Awarded to Improve Archival Stewardship and Access

In 2013, 2015, and 2017, the Archive Project awarded a number of archival assistance grants to small organizations around New York City. The grants were well-received and made a difference, often serving as a “first rung” source of funding for groups that could not otherwise obtain targeted funding for the care of their respective collections with minimal administrative hassle.

In 2022, the Archive Project, with the help of the **Leon Levy Foundation**, has reactivated and expanded this tradition of small grant support for improving archival stewardship and access related to historic preservation. A \$12,000 annual grant pool was set up for 2022, 2023, and 2024.

After receiving a record number of applicants for the 2022 round of the **Shelby White & Leon Levy Archival Assistance Initiative Grants**, the Archive Project deliberated and announced ten winners in late summer:

SoHo Memory Project
Museum of Reclaimed Urban Space
King Manor
Landmark West!
Dyckman Farmhouse
The Douglaston and Little Neck Historical Society
Sons of the Revolution in the State of New York
Dvořák American Heritage Association
Forest Hills Gardens Foundation
La Mama Archives

The projects funded by the grants addressed a range of archival needs. Several involve digitization of materials to improve access. **The Museum of Reclaimed Urban Space (MoRUS)** preserves the history of the Lower East Side’s grassroots activism, including urban homesteading, squats, and

community gardens. As part of its ongoing archival overhaul, MoRUS will use its grant to double its on-site archival storage capacity, re-house existing collections, and expand its digital storage capabilities for improved access. **The Douglaston and Little Neck Historical Society**, operating in Queens, will use its grant to digitize multiple sets of historic records covering architectural history, covenants, and legal battles before further degradation renders them unusable. **SoHo Memory Project** will use its grant to digitize its collection’s key documents for inclusion on www.sohomemory.org, a digital nexus of source materials related to SoHo history. The physical documents will eventually move to the New-York Historical Society’s collection. **Forest Hills Gardens Foundation** in Queens will hire a certified archivist with its funds to develop an archives management policy and scan historic documents relating to neighborhood development and urban planning policy in the early 20th century. Additionally, the **Dyckman Farmhouse Museum Alliance** in northern Manhattan, which tells the story of a house’s enduring presence from the 1780s to the present, will upgrade its online digital collection and make the entire collection publicly accessible on rotation.

Additional projects involve creating digital finding aids to provide new windows into physical collections. In Jamaica, Queens, **King Manor Museum** will hire a project archivist to process the museum’s archival collections and create digitized finding aids to make these collections, which include materials on the involvement of women in preservation efforts, more readily accessible to the public. In Manhattan, the **Dvořák American Heritage Association** will process,

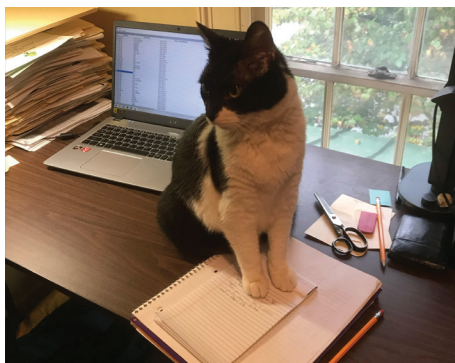


Visitors explore the recently processed and digitized *East Villager* collection at Museum of Reclaimed Urban Space’s inaugural Open Vault Night, July 2021.

Continued from page 4

organize, and describe papers donated by the late preservationist Jack Taylor in order to improve public online accessibility to materials relating to the effort to save the one-time home of composer Antonín Dvořák on Stuyvesant Square.

Finally, several projects will use small grants to purchase archival storage materials in accordance with recommendations from earlier archival collections assessments. **Sons of the Revolution in the State of New York** (aka Fraunces Tavern Museum) will utilize its grant to purchase archival storage materials



Mary King, King Manor's resident cat, helping to prepare to convert the archival information from Past Perfect to CatalogIt! She was very happy no original documents were out so she could hop on the desk. | Courtesy of King Manor Museum, 2022.

on an urgent basis as part of a larger effort to assess aspects of its collection relating to five landmarked structures. On Manhattan's Upper West Side, **Landmark West!** will use its grant to follow direct recommendations provided by an earlier archival needs assessment to re-house a collection related to grassroots community preservation activism. And **La Mama Archives** in the East Village and NoHo will use its funds to assess and improve access to documentation, including photographs and blueprints, in its collection related to efforts to renovate historic buildings that were adaptively reused as rehearsal and gallery spaces. Congratulations to all the grant awardees! ■



Shelby Carr, Membership Manager for Sons of the Revolution in the State of New York, Inc., organizes and re-houses documents and photos in the Society's archive with the help of the Shelby White & Leon Levy Archival Assistance Initiative Grant. | Courtesy of Sons of the Revolution in the State of New York, 2022.



The Forest Hills Gardens Foundation Archive Committee review documents that chronicle the development of the neighborhood in the 20th century. | Courtesy of the Forest Hills Garden Foundation, 2022.

BOWNE HOUSE continued from page 1

chronicle and cross section of the history of New York City and the borough of Queens that has thus far not been made available to the broader public online. Records relating to the house's preservation over the centuries, its ties to early colonial agitation for religious tolerance, its role in the Underground Railroad, and more will be made available online for researchers and the public for the first time.

"We are truly thrilled; this is about the memory of the city," said **Brad Vogel**, the Archive Project's executive director. "Archival work is often an unsung bit of work that goes on in the background, that people aren't even noticing, and today, I hope the city takes notice."

The grant award ceremony, complete with oversize check, featured remarks by Richard Vietor (on behalf of **Rosemary Vietor**, vice president of the Society); **James Trent**, Society trustee; Jordan Geddes, representing **Congresswoman Grace Meng**; **Jennifer Ellis**, senior program officer at the Leon Levy Foundation; Gina Pollara, Archive Project secretary; Brad Vogel, Archive Project



Color postcard of Bowne House ca 1825, Bowne House Historical Society. | Courtesy of Bowne House Archives.

executive director; and **Charlotte Jackson**, Bowne House archivist and trustee. ■

Joseph Mitchell The Preservationist

Known as a Writer, He Also Served on the Landmarks Preservation Commission

by John C. Harris, 2022 Jeffe Fellow

As many New Yorkers with an urbanist bent know, Joseph Mitchell reinvented the role of the reporter with his elaborate character studies. Works like *My Ears are Bent* (1938), *McSorley's Wonderful Saloon* (1943), and *Joe Gould's Secret* (1965) demonstrated the literary potential of journalism and cemented his legacy within the canon of American literature. However, it is not as well known that Mitchell was also a preservationist who was appointed to the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) as a commissioner.

Carolinian Beginnings

In 1929, at the age of twenty-one and midway through his stint at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Joseph Mitchell migrated from the coastal plains of Fairmont, North Carolina (population 1,314) to embark on a journalism career in New York City. He cut his teeth working nights and crime beats before making a name for himself at *The New Yorker* where he embedded key themes of historic preservation and a reverence for cultural landscapes in his work for decades.

Mitchell's concerns extended beyond the written realm, however. A figure instrumental in the early success of the South Street Seaport Museum, he served as an LPC commissioner from 1982 to 1987. His papers, found in 127 boxes spanning 56.58 linear feet at the New York Public Library, provide an understanding of an overlooked feature of the multifaceted Carolinian-turned-New Yorker—Joseph Mitchell was a committed historic preservationist.

Themes of Preservation

"As a reporter and as a curiosity seeker and as an architecture buff and as a Sunday walker and later on a member of committees in a variety of



Joseph Mitchell at the Fulton Fish Market in the 1990s at South Street Seaport where he focused his preservation efforts for over two decades. | Courtesy of James Hamilton and Manuscripts and Archives Division. The New York Public Library. Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations.

Save-this and Save-that and Friends-of-this and Friends-of-that organizations and eventually as one of the commissioners in the Landmarks Preservation Commission, I have known some of these worlds from the inside. Even so, I never really felt altogether at home in any of them."

—From Joseph Mitchell's unfinished, unpublished autobiography

Despite these aloof feelings, Mitchell dedicated himself to the legacies of New York City's historic features that meant the most to him. He was involved in the efforts to save the Jefferson Market Courthouse and in 1970

helped found the Friends of Cast Iron Architecture with Margot Gayle. As much as Mitchell went beyond immortalizing buildings in words when he helped to save them in real life, he was really a streetscape aficionado at heart. As Adele Chatfield-Taylor recalls, "He was always walking...I never saw him in a building." She recalls him walking regularly from Greenwich Village to the Battery and back.

Mitchell was often observing and sharing his insights, building an ethic that could serve as a basis for preservation efforts. For example, the historic cemeteries of Staten Island's South Shore, favorites of Mitchell's, became the focus of a memorable 1956 profile. In "Mr. Hunter's Grave," Mr. George H. Hunter and Mr. Raymond E. Brock recount to Mitchell the history of Sandy Ground, Staten Island. The two men impart the story of a historically Black oystering community centered on the Rossville African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church (1852) and its graveyard. In the essay, Mitchell weaves together a brilliant fabric of a local history. However, Mitchell was not a trained historian—his writing often traversed the line

between fact and fiction.

But it was Mitchell's inclination to "bend his ears" towards the stories of those sidelined from mainstream attention, stories at the foundations of cultural landscapes, that defined his work. More than 65 years after Mitchell's profile, Sandy Ground preservationists continue the work. In her 2017 oral history with the Archive Project, Sylvia D'Alessandro, Executive Director of the Sandy Ground Historical Society, recounted the ongoing community changes that spurred creation of the Society in 1979.

Continued from page 6

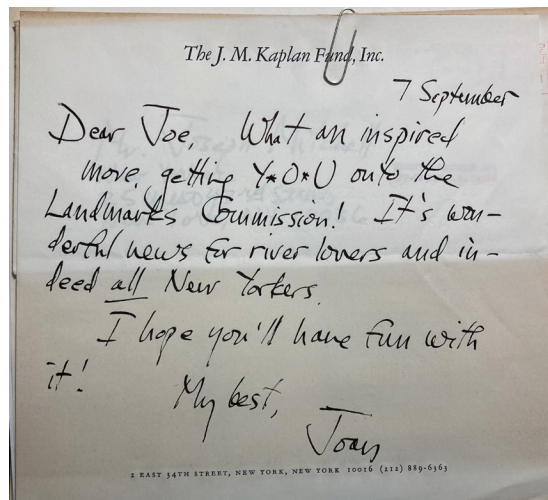
A Home at the Seaport

"I became interested in the South Street Seaport Museum and began to do volunteer work for it...because I hoped that it might preserve some of the old fish-market buildings and some of the atmosphere of the fish-market district"

—From a 1974 letter to the South Street Advisory Council upon joining the Council

Mitchell did not use his profiles in *The New Yorker* as a platform to advocate directly for historic preservation efforts, but his writing was tuned to the themes of the field. Mitchell's work as a preservationist began in earnest in the South Street Seaport. His infatuation with the Fulton Fish Market can be traced back to his 1943 fictional profile of Hugh G. Flood in "The Mayor of the Fish Market," and his adoration come through in his 1951 compilation of profiles entitled *Bottom of the Harbor* which includes the title tale, as well as "The Rats on the Waterfront" and "Dragger Captain." In these stories, he simultaneously popularized the memory of the Seaport and its industries and took on the role of the neighborhood's chronicler.

In 1966, Norma Stanford wrote to Mitchell seeking his expertise on the history of Fulton Market. A year later, after consulting with Mitchell, she and her husband Peter Stanford formed the South Street Seaport Museum. Mitchell remained an important figure at the Museum for over two decades. He volunteered for the Museum's Local History Committee, and was appointed to the South Street Advisory Council in 1974. In that latter role, Mitchell employed what the chairman of the council, E. Virgil Conway, referred to as Mitchell's "distinguished work in the history of Fulton Market, and its men," to promote a bottom-up look at the Seaport's history. Mitchell's participation ensured that the presence of ordinary laborers remained centered in the legacy of South Street Seaport. His focus on these themes justified Peter Stanford's South Street Seaport Museum mantra: "This Museum is People." In 1975 Mitchell joined the board of the South Street Seaport Museum, and a decade of preservationist advocacy culminated in the



A message from Joan K. Davidson congratulating Mitchell on his appointment to the Landmarks Preservation Commission in 1982. | Courtesy of Manuscripts and Archives Division. The New York Public Library. Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations.

creation of the highly contested South Street Seaport Historic District in 1977. There, three centuries of development reflected in mercantile architecture of Georgian, Federal, and Greek Revival styles converge to narrate the City's rise to the center of international commerce.

On the Landmarks Preservation Commission

"Met Kent Barwick at the Century and talked with him from 2:15 to 4, first in the dining

room (he had been to a luncheon where he had to speak and had missed coffee and wanted some) and then in the library[.] Told him to go ahead and put my name up[.] As I understand it, if appointed, I would succeed R. Michael Brown, who is resigning or not asking to be reappointed [to the Landmarks Preservation Commission]"

—Note in Mitchell's papers dated Thursday, May 20, 1982

In Mitchell's papers, amidst maps and inventories of architectural elements of New York City buildings "saved" by Mitchell sit countless photocopies of walking tours and guide books which indicate a keen interest in connecting stories to the places he wandered on foot and examined in essays. And despite the seemingly ambivalent acknowledgement of his nomination to the LPC, Mitchell's papers attest that he was a student of LPC long before he became a commissioner.

The collection contains communications with LPC staff from as early as 1969, as well as newspaper clippings tracking LPC sagas like the remarkable theft of the 126 year-old, 150-ton cast iron facade of the Bogardus building and the City's restoration and sale of the Harrison Street Row Houses.

Continued on page 8



Mitchell poses next to the House of Fillet at the Fulton Fish Market. | Courtesy of Shane Kelly and Manuscripts and Archives Division. The New York Public Library. Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations.

Continued from page 7

In my recent conversation with former LPC Chairman Kent Barwick, who pushed for Mitchell's nomination, Barwick added insight to Mitchell's time on the LPC that Mitchell's papers did not quite convey. The two became acquainted after Barwick encouraged Mitchell to testify against the 1971 Cooper Square Alternative Plan that threatened McSorley's Old Ale House, a special muse of Mitchell's. Barwick acknowledged Mitchell's interests and skills but emphasized that it was, oddly, Mitchell's religious beliefs that led to his becoming a commissioner. At the time, the LPC had a combative relationship with groups like the New York Board of Rabbis, the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of New York, and the Council of Churches, which banded together to champion the Flynn/Walsh Bill seeking to exclude religious properties from landmark designation. Mitchell was a vestryman at Grace Church on Broadway, so the hope was that Mitchell's participation would be a kind of olive branch to the religious community. In Barwick's 2011 Archive Project oral history, he revealed that Mitchell's participation in the Trinity Church dilemma (a spat regarding Trinity Church's attempt to construct a bridge from landmarked property to office buildings across the street) may have actually deepened the schism between the LPC and religious communities.

Mitchell's nomination as an LPC commissioner was announced in *The New York Times* on August 24, 1982; he was officially appointed to the LPC on October 7, 1982 by Mayor Edward Koch. He served for five years. Over that relatively short period, the LPC designated a wide range of buildings. Highlights include the Weir Greenhouse in Brooklyn (1982), the Woolworth Building in Manhattan (1983), RKO Keith's Theater in Flushing, Queens (1984), and Public School 31 in the Bronx (1986). The designation perhaps most evidently connected to Mitchell was the 1985 designation of the Rossville A.M.E. Zion Church Cemetery at the center of Sandy Ground, Staten Island.

On December 19, 1986, Mitchell wrote to Mayor Koch and resigned from the Landmarks Preservation Commission. He remarked, "Participating in the work

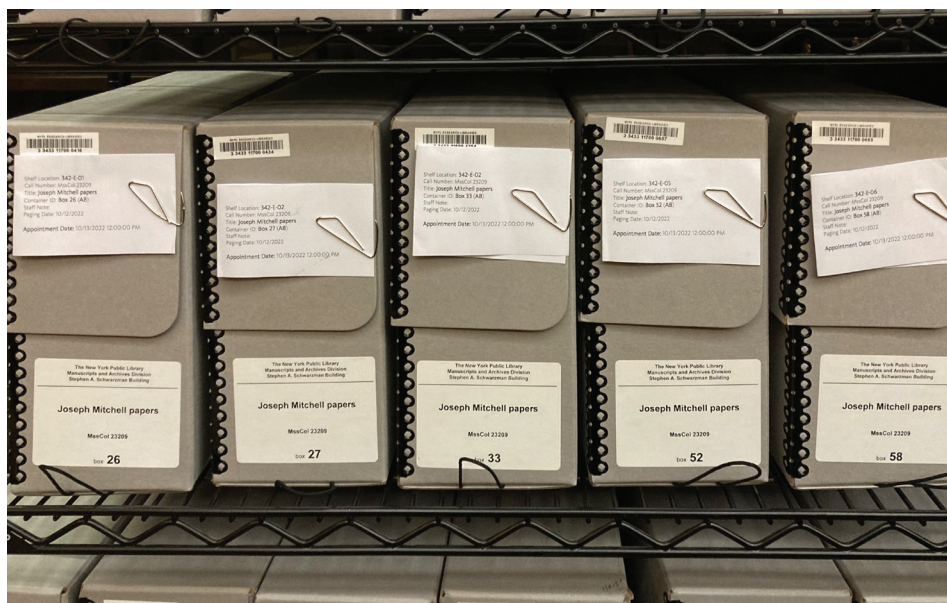


Mitchell was an avid collector and "saver" of building elements such as this collection of cast iron star bolts that reinforced buildings. | Courtesy of Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations.

of the Commission has been extraordinarily interesting and gratifying to me, [sic] if I had the choice I would serve on it indefinitely."

Mitchell's Preservation Legacy

Joseph Mitchell served as an LPC commissioner for five years. Unfortunately, any acknowledgement of the extent of his role as a commissioner is fragmentary in what are labeled as the most relevant Joseph Mitchell papers at the New York Public Library. This fact is both a reminder of why the Archive Project does what it does (save preservation papers that matter!) and a call for further research. What other historic preservation-related tidbits about Joseph Mitchell remain to be found in all the boxes I wasn't able to review? As protected historic places dear to Mitchell, such as Sandy Ground, SoHo, and the South Street Seaport, face new development- and climate-related threats, it is all the more important to find any insights that help to tell these places' full preservation stories. One never knows which set of notes from a Joseph Mitchell sidewalk stroll might, at a crucial moment, hold the key. ■



A selection of materials from the Joseph Mitchell Papers revealing his work in the field of historic preservation stands ready for researchers visiting the NYPL. | Courtesy of John C. Harris, 2022.

GOUGH continued from page 2

many others, that the Historic Districts Council bestowed upon Gough its first-ever Landmarks Lion—nicknamed 'Primo' by its recipient—in 1990. And Gough's work to preserve preservation's story, in particular, is why the Archive Project has chosen to honor Gough with this year's Preservation Award at the upcoming Bard Birthday Breakfast Benefit on December 8th. Christine Cipriani, who is writing a book on another influential woman in preservation, Ada Louise Huxtable, will present at the Breakfast on how archives have helped in crafting the Huxtable biography.

So, with guests set to raise a glass to Gough's lifetime of accomplishment soon, and with a wealth of grateful disciples now implementing her lessons throughout the five boroughs and beyond, the Archive Project salutes preservation's quiet, persistent "Dr. Watson"—and the "elementary" example she set for today's preservation historians, and for the advocates of tomorrow. ■

For further information about Christabel Gough, and to read her 2021 oral history with attorney Adrian Untermyer, please visit www.nypap.org.

NYPAP News

Reunion: Jeffe Fellows and Reisinger Scholars

On October 12, 2022, Archive Project staff and board members met with several alumni of the Jeffe Fellowship and Reisinger Scholarship roles that support the Archive Project's work each year. Former Reisinger Scholar Peter Sohmer and former Jeffe Fellow Dina Posner met current Jeffe Fellow John C. Harris and current Reisinger Scholar Bhavini Kapur at

historic McSorley's Old Ale House for an evening of happy hour conversation over lights, darks, cheese, crackers, and onions with Archive Project founder Anthony C. Wood, board member Adrian Untermyer and executive director Brad Vogel. The establishment was chosen based on Harris' and Kapur's research on the late Joseph Mitchell, a longtime habitué of McSorley's and author of an essay on the remarkably enduring watering hole. (Note our piece on page 6)



Archive Project staff and alums meet at McSorley's Old Ale House to celebrate a busy year at the Archive Project and hear about recent career pursuits. From left to right: former Reisinger Scholar Peter Sohmer, executive director Brad Vogel, Jeffe Fellow John C. Harris, board member Adrian Untermyer, founder & chair emeritus Anthony C. Wood, Reisinger Scholar Bhavini Kapur, former Jeffe Fellow Dina Posner. | Courtesy of Brad Vogel, 2022.



Lori Zabar | Courtesy of Ellen Dubin.

Note: This supplements our initial note in the Spring/Summer 2022 issue. I do not remember where or when I met Lori Zabar,

but I remember vividly many conversations with her, meals at the Century Association, and shared time at preservation events across New York City. One conversation, in particular, will always be a lasting tribute to Lori's passion, knowledge, and good nature. We were having lunch at the Century when she was in the early days of writing her book on Zabar's. I was riveted and could have listened to Lori for hours. And what struck me most about that lunch was that she was able to take a monumental story and make it so accessible. Zabar's is an icon. As Lori described her research and why she wanted

to tell Zabar's story, you could see the history of the city, immigration, and the food industry unfolding in magical ways.

Many have stronger and deeper ties to Lori than I do. Yet I feel so fortunate to have known her and spent time together. Whether it was at large events or more intimate gatherings, I can say it was always a pleasure to be in her presence. She left an indelible mark on the city she loved.

Lisa Ackerman is the Chair of the Archive Project.

In Memoriam Lori Zabar (1955–2022)

By Lisa Ackerman



Christopher Moore at his desk. |
Courtesy of K.C. Matthews.

I consider former landmarks commissioner, Christopher Moore, in many ways, the "Alex Haley" of the African American presence in New York City, in that he was able to trace and document his family's presence in New York back to the Dutch, bringing to his discussions a personal lens that reflected his New York lineage, both African and Indigenous. In his presentation of that history and its role in the evolution

In Memoriam (continued)

Christopher Moore (1952-2022)

By K.C. Matthews

of New York, he conveyed a plain-spoken sense of pride, dignity, and gravitas that was inspiring.

A graduate of Northeastern University with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in theater and journalism, Moore started his career in the city as a news editor for the National Black Network, and as an actor in a television soap opera and in an Off-Broadway production of *A Soldier's Play*. Chris went on to become a research coordinator at the New York Public Library's Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, where he curated numerous exhibitions, articles, and publications for that institution. He served as a member of the Landmarks Preservation Commission staff for two decades and wrote the reports for several Harlem landmarks, including Abyssinian Baptist Church, prior to becoming a commissioner.

I last saw Chris at a talk I gave at Columbia University on Harlem's Black and Jewish music culture. Knowing that he had been recovering from a variety of health issues, I was surprised and delighted to see him in the audience. In my shout-out acknowledging his presence, I reminisced at what a delight it always was to run into him on the streets of Harlem! Those exchanges were always like rounds of "Jeopardy," curbside exchanges of stories and facts about Harlem, its diverse players and history. He was the greatest supporter and booster of whatever you were doing, generous with his knowledge and humorous in the telling. He was a very special person.

K. C. Matthews serves as Deputy Director, Operations & External Engagement, at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in Harlem.



Paul Gunther | Courtesy of Gracie Mansion
Conservancy/Mayoral Photography Office.

I met Paul in July of 1978, when both of us started working at the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs. Paul had graduated from Yale one month earlier, but all of us at the department quickly appreciated how brilliant he was, as well as being charming and amusing. We realized that nothing was just a job for Paul -- he wanted to dig deeply to understand the history of everything we were doing.

Talking to Paul about the business of the

Paul Gunther (1956-2022)

By Randall Bourscheidt

department often led not only to his questions about how its history had evolved but how it could be enhanced in terms of positive social, educational and economic effect. He loved the whole idea of institutions -- cultural ones, like those the City was providing financial support for, and educational and social ones, which complemented and enhanced public access to the arts. It became apparent that Paul's interest extended to urban planning and architecture. This interest led quite naturally to Paul's interest in historic preservation -- of neighborhoods, waterfronts, parks, buildings, and monuments.

Paul's career led to important roles in a number of New York organizations devoted to preserving and enhancing its architectural and cultural life. At the Municipal Art Society, he developed two projects of lasting civic importance: Adopt-A-Monument, and Adopt-A-Mural. After a time running the

American Center in Paris -- reflecting a lifelong interest Paul had in France -- he went to the New-York Historical Society, where he coordinated public programs. Then he spent a decade running the Institute of Classical Architecture and Art, where he effectively advocated for the preservation of architecture in this tradition and its continuing influence on public art and architecture. Finally, he became the director of the Gracie Mansion Conservancy, where he not only kept the home of New York City mayors intact, but developed a program of art exhibits and public programs celebrating the legacy of the city's history but also the strength and diversity of its contemporary cultural life.

Randall Bourscheidt serves as director of the Archive of New York City Cultural Policy at the New York Public Library. He previously served as deputy commissioner of cultural affairs for the City of New York.



Frank Gilbert | Courtesy of the Archive Project.

I had the privilege of interviewing preservation attorney Frank Gilbert on behalf of the Archive Project in May of 2011. Traveling to Chevy Chase, Maryland, I met Frank at his home and, across two full days, discussed his storied career and contributions to the preservation field and civic arena. I was saddened to learn of his passing earlier this year, but thankful that I was able to meet him and, on occasion, have lunch at the Harvard Club when he came to New York City. Ten years later, I periodically recall our discussions fondly and ponder what Frank might think of certain current happenings and events.

Frank Gilbert (1930–2022)

By Benjamin Baccash

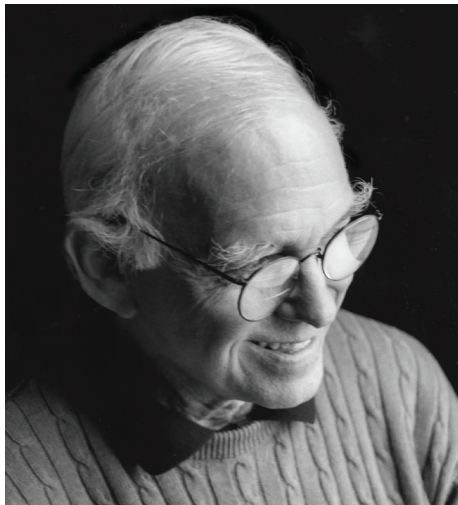
Frank Brandeis Gilbert was born in 1930 in Manhattan. Both of his parents were attorneys, and his grandfather was the esteemed Louis D. Brandeis, associate justice of the Supreme Court of the United States. A graduate of Harvard, where he received bachelor's and law degrees, Gilbert's career included positions at the Public Housing Administration in Washington, DC; the City Planning Department and Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) in New York City; and eventually the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

Gilbert's career evolved from lobbying on behalf of the City of New York in Albany to playing an instrumental role in drafting the New York City Landmarks Law and then navigating the LPC through uncharted legal territory in its early years. Eventually, Gilbert went on to share his expertise by assisting other towns and municipalities across the

United States in creating and administering their own historic preservation ordinances.

Through his work at the National Trust, Gilbert leveraged his experience creating and administering the nascent New York City Landmarks Law to benefit countless locales across the country. His career serves as a reminder of the importance of collaboration and sharing experience with others working toward a common goal. His persona shines through in this tidbit from a conversation with representatives of The Plaza Hotel before its designation in 1969; when asked why the Commission believed the building was a landmark, Gilbert replied, "I've read your advertising!"

From 2011-2012, Benjamin Baccash conducted oral histories for the New York Preservation Archive Project. Today, Ben serves as Vice President of Development at Taconic Partners.



James Polshek | Courtesy of The American Institute of Architects, 2018

I met architect Jim Polshek in the summer of 1988. I had just graduated from Princeton with a B.A. in Art History, spent six weeks with a Eurail Pass, and had decided to test the waters of architecture to see if I should aim for a M.Arch. or a Ph.D. I took a position as a marketing coordinator at James Stewart Polshek and Partners at a salary of \$18,000, found a share with Princeton friends in the

James Polshek (1930–2022)

By Sean Sawyer

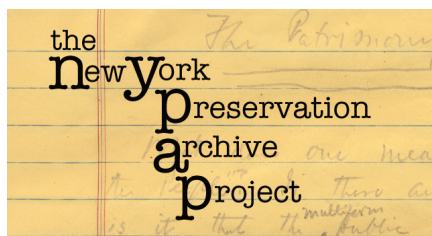
borderlands of Park Slope and Sunset Park, and was embraced by New York City and the firm. Working in marketing was a sort of elfin existence; we were not legit "architects" but we had daily, close contact with Jim and his partners as we put together proposals for new jobs and a wide variety of other pre- and post-construction tasks.

Jim was a natural mentor. This was the pre-PowerPoint era, and he would walk into the marketing office and say, "Sean, help me pull slides for my lecture at Yale." I would stand behind him at the array of vertical light boxes as he dove into the slide drawers, and he would talk me through his thought process. I had come into the office as a fervent neo-Modernist, wanting the progressive message of the movement to stay alive and relevant and detesting anything "Po-Mo." As he pulled slides, Jim showed me that there was another path. His was an architecture that embraced new materials and technologies

but always saw the building as an element of the whole, whether it was the urban grid, a campus plan, or a landscape. Invariably, he included one particular slide in his lectures. This was a photograph of Freud's desk in his London home with an array of totemic objects. As a raw youth, I struggled to comprehend its significance. Now, 35 years on, I see it as expressing his belief in the affective power of architecture. For Jim, designing a new building was introducing a new individual into the neighborhood. They should be distinct but get along. Modernism could coexist with its predecessors if it took stock of the fundamental qualities of scale, material, and composition.

Godspeed, Mr. Polshek.

Sean Sawyer serves as the Washburn and Susan Oberwager President of The Olana Partnership, which preserves and interprets Frederic Church's Hudson River estate, Olana.



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

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