



Hon. Sarah Carroll
Chair, New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission

Subject: **Extending the Audubon Park Historic District**

July 23, 2021

Dear Commissioner Carroll,

Riverside Drive, between West 155th and 162nd Streets, flows eastward away from the river and then westward back to it, a unique and symmetrical pattern that opens from West 158th Street like two halves of a book. The Audubon Park Historic District, designated in 2009, covers only half of that book. And it tells only half of its story—architecturally, culturally, and historically. With the attached Request for Evaluation, which echoes Community Board 12’s 2007 request, the Upper Riverside Residents Alliance proposes an extension of the Audubon Park Historic District that will finally complete the tale.

Through a variety of distinct, but overlapping, architectural styles the highly intact group of buildings in the extension area illustrates typologies present in lower Washington Heights as it passed through its stages of urbanization, some of which are absent from the designated district. As the table of buildings in the RFE illustrates, the neighborhood’s evolution from suburb to urban landscape began at the northern end of the extension area, spread south into the designated district, and then alternated between the two for nearly two decades. Neither area’s narrative is complete without the other’s.

Culturally, these buildings—and equally important, the people who have lived in them—tell of northern Manhattan’s long history of diversity. At the same time, they represent this neighborhood’s complex layers of racial history as it evolved from a homogeneous Eurocentric neighborhood to a fully integrated one in the second half of the 20th century.

As such, the proposed extension to the Audubon Park Historic District fully realizes the laudable priorities you laid out in the January 2021 “Equity Framework,” which called for increased focus on designations “that represent New York City’s diversity . . . in areas less represented by landmarks.” Our neighborhood fulfills both criteria.

The Upper Riverside Residents Alliance is pleased and gratified to have broad support from our community, our local elected officials, and especially the support of leading historians in the field of enslavement and abolition, who attest to the supreme importance of preserving 857 Riverside Drive, which sits at the cultural and architectural heart of the extension area.

We encourage you and the Landmarks Preservation Commission's research department to review the attached RFE, and urge you to move it forward through calendaring at the earliest possible moment.

Members of the Alliance stand ready to escort you and your staff on a guided tour of the extension area, and the existing historic district.

Sincerely yours, on behalf of the Upper Riverside Residents Alliance,



Matthew Spady
matthewfspady@gmail.com



Joseph V. Amodio
jamodio1@gmail.com

Upper Riverside Residents Alliance Directors and Advisory Board

Michael Henry Adams	Valerie Jo Bradley	Lesley Doyel
Vivian Ducat	Christabel Gough	Peter Green
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John T. Reddick	Lenora Taitt-Magubane	Eric K. Washington
Roberta Washington	Susan Wilcox	Mitch Mondello
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CC:

NYC Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer (gbrewer@manhattanbp.nyc.gov)

NYC City Councilman Mark Levine (district7@council.nyc.gov)

NYC Public Advocate Jumaane Williams (gethelp@pubadvocate.nyc.gov)

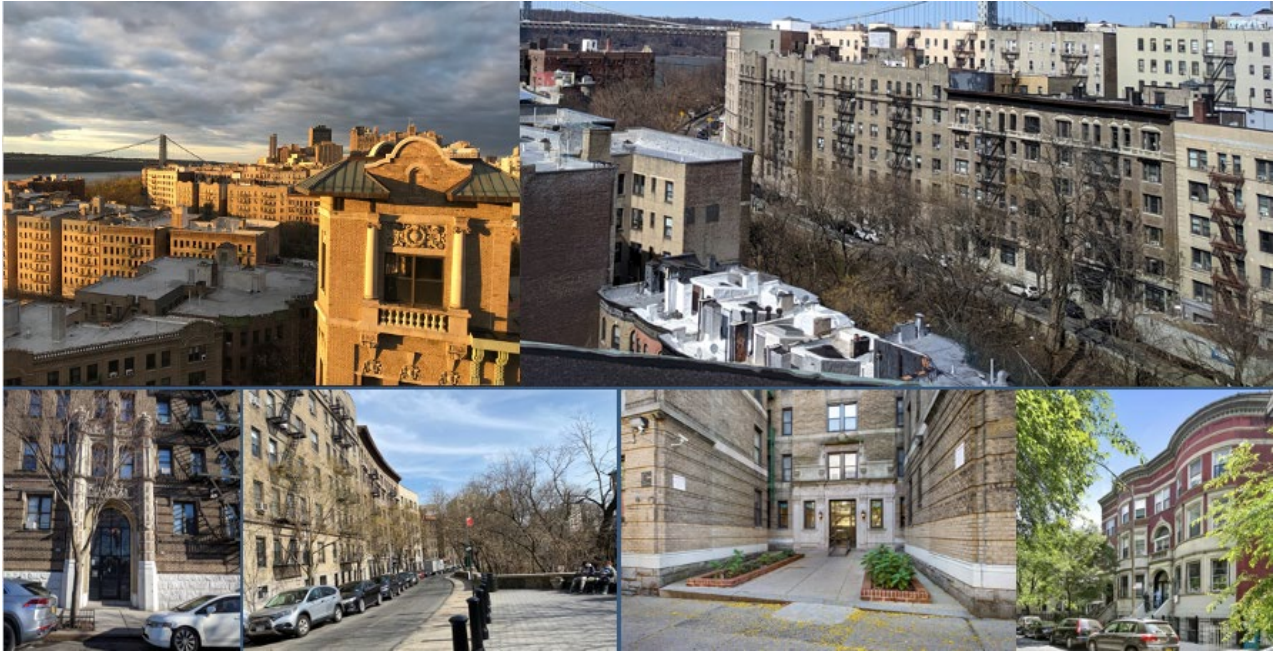
NYC City Council Speaker Corey Johnson (corey.johnson@council.nyc.gov)

NYC Mayor Bill de Blasio (<https://www1.nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor/mayor-contact.page>)

NYS State Senator Robert Jackson (jackson@nysenate.gov)

NYS Assemblyman Albert Taylor (taylora@nyassembly.gov)

Request for Evaluation: Extending the Audubon Park Historic District



Prepared by Matthew Spady and Joseph V. Amodio

Submitted to the Landmarks Preservation Commission by:
The Upper Riverside Residents Alliance

July 23, 2021

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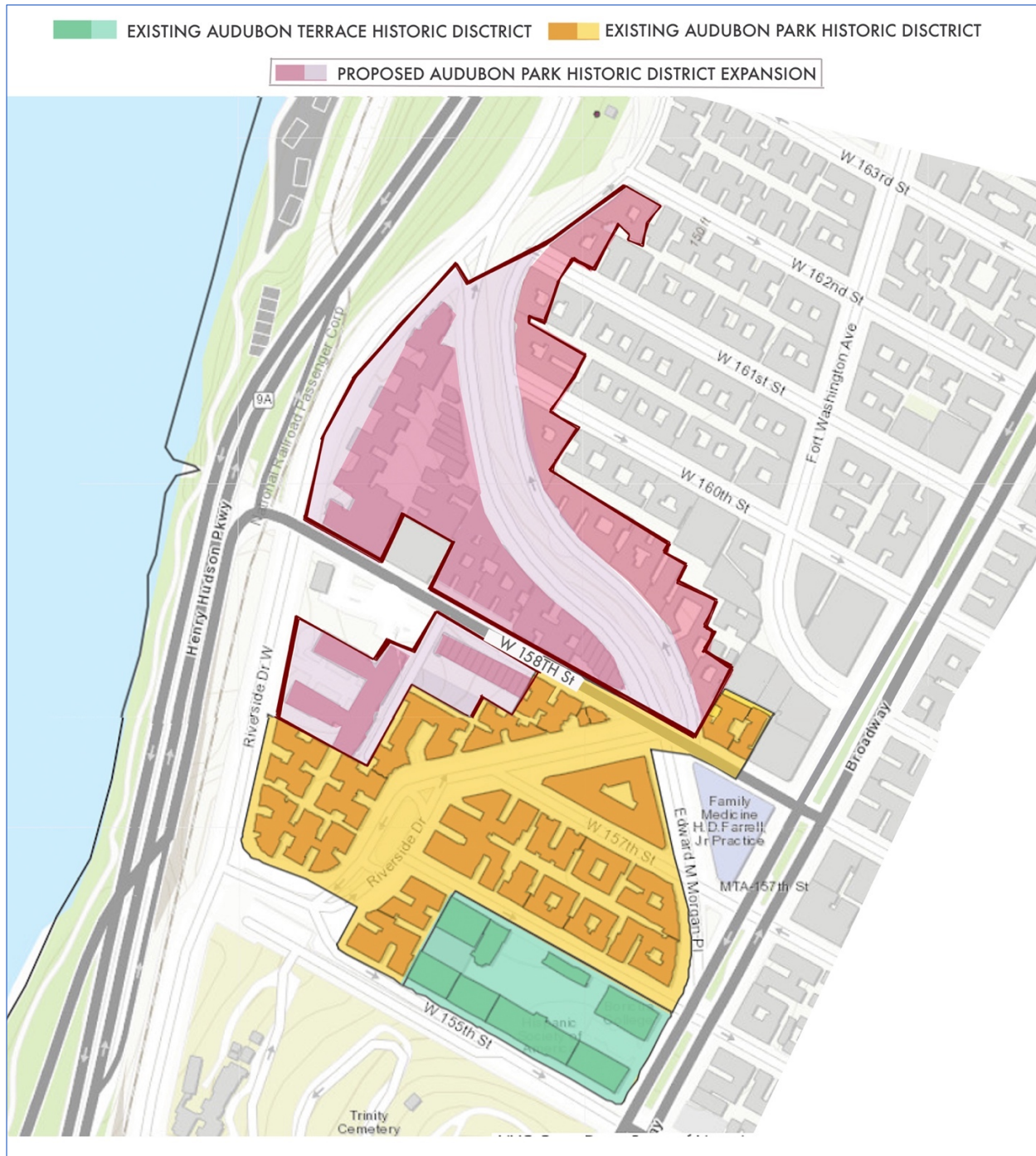
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REQUEST FOR EVALUATION: Audubon Park Historic District Extension

Map of Designated Historic District and Proposed Extension



Boundary Description

The proposed extension to the designated Audubon Park Historic District is composed of two sections adjacent to the existing historic district, located in the Washington Heights neighborhood of Manhattan. The extension will expand its western boundary to Riverside Drive West and its northern boundary to 162nd Street. This will add 41 buildings to the designated 19 apartment houses and one free-standing duplex house. The additions are:

- Fourteen apartment houses facing Riverside Drive between 158th and 162nd Streets
- Two apartment buildings facing Riverside Drive West
- A grouping of 12 row houses facing West 158th Street
- A grouping of six row houses facing the western side of Riverside Drive at 158th Street
- A grouping of six houses, free-standing and semi-detached, facing the western side of Riverside Drive at 160th Street
- One free-standing frame house facing the western side of Riverside Drive at 159th Street

The boundaries of the extension area encompass all or part of eight blocks running from West 156th Street to West 162nd Street, anchored by the “inner” Riverside Drive’s winding path between 155th and 162nd Streets. Its architecture and topography extend and complement the designated Audubon Park and Audubon Terrace Historic Districts that adjoin it on the south and east.

Summary

Riverside Drive, for most of its journey along Manhattan’s Upper West Side, follows the Hudson River until it reaches the southern tip of Washington Heights, in an area once known as Audubon Park. Here, between West 155th and 162nd Streets, it flows in a symmetrical pattern—eastward away from the river, and then westward back to it. The center point of this triangle, from which the two sides open like halves of a book, is West 158th Street. (See Figure 1.) The existing Audubon Park Historic District covers only half of that book. And it tells only half of its story—architecturally, culturally, and historically.

The proposed extension of this district completes the tale. The extension’s 16 large apartment houses, three groupings of semi-detached houses, and one frame house share a similar developmental history with the designated historic district, but they also fill vital gaps that more completely illustrate the arc of its urbanization. As Table 1 illustrates, urban development began at the northern end of the extension area at the end of the 19th century, spread south to the designated area in the early 20th century, and then, with only slight overlaps in 1914 and 1919, alternated between the two areas, ending in the extension area in the mid-20th century. Neither area’s narrative is complete without the other’s.¹

Through a variety of distinct, but overlapping, architectural styles from the late 19th century into the middle of the 20th century, the highly intact group of buildings in the extension area illustrates typologies present in lower Washington Heights as it passed through its stages of urbanization. Numerous brick and limestone buildings in a tripartite vertical composition—many in the Neo-Renaissance and Renaissance Revival styles—provide architectural cohesion between the existing historic district and the extension area. Culturally, these buildings—and more importantly, the people who have lived in them—tell of northern Manhattan’s long history of diversity, and represent this neighborhood’s complex layers of racial history as it evolved from a homogeneous Eurocentric neighborhood to a fully integrated one in the second half of the 20th century.

For centuries before the arrival of European colonists, northern Manhattan provided the peripatetic Native American Lenape seasonal hunting and fishing grounds. In the second half of the 17th century, European colonists in Harlem pushed northward to the heights above their village, putting them in conflict with the Lenape, particularly over issues about land use. After displacing the indigenous people, those colonists and their Early American descendants farmed the acres making up the current historic district and extension area, building their wealth on the labor of enslaved African-Americans.

In the 1850s, the Rev. Dennis Harris, a sugar refiner by trade, and a documented stationmaster on the Underground Railroad, established an active abolitionist community centered on the

¹ Unless otherwise specified, throughout the RFE, “historic district” refers to the current “Audubon Park Historic District, and “extension” or “extension area,” refer to the proposed extension to that historic district, regardless of the historical context in which they are used.

only abolitionist church known to exist in Northern Manhattan, which drew congregants from both the designated historic district and extension area. Throughout the second half of the 19th century and into the first half of the 20th, this area remained predominantly white, but with an intriguing measure of diversity as it evolved from farmland to suburb to cityscape. Beginning in the late 1950s, the first African-American and Latino families moved into apartment buildings as tenants and, even more significantly, African-American families bought houses on West 158th Street and Riverside Drive. Construction of the River Terrace Mitchell Lama co-op represented a further step in the neighborhood's urbanization, and in its diversity. Intended to racially and financially integrate the building as well as the surrounding neighborhood, the modernist River Terrace co-op became home to many distinguished New Yorkers of color, including David Dinkins, the city's first, and, to date, only Black mayor.

Pulsing like an artery through this unique geography and history is Riverside Drive. Its serpentine route between 155th and 162nd Street is a defining feature of the built landscape that binds the existing Audubon Park Historic District with the extension area, creating a distinct sense of place and fostering a strong sense of community. This unique element of the built landscape is the result of the union between the old Boulevard Lafayette, opened in 1895, and the Riverside Drive extension, opened in 1911 (when the city applied that name to the entire route). Further defining the neighborhood is Riverside Drive West, opened in 1928, which runs the length of the existing historic district and extension area, creating an apt western boundary for a newly extended district, just as it provides a much-needed buffer from the noisy Henry Hudson Parkway. (See Figure 1)

Naturalists and Abolitionists

The Audubon Park Historic District is named for John James Audubon (1785-1851), the naturalist and illustrator of birds and mammals, who purchased fourteen acres of undeveloped land here, overlooking the Hudson River in 1841, a few years after completing his most famous work, the Double Elephant Folio of *The Birds of America*. In the early 1840s, while the Audubon family was carving a farm from their rocky, wooded hillside, fields and woodlands predominated in northern Manhattan, with only a few farmhouses and mansions dotting the rustic landscape. In that same period, sperm-oil merchant Ambrose Kingsland (Mayor of New York City 1851-1853) and leather merchant Shepherd Knapp were building spacious homes on substantial acreage each had recently bought just north of the Audubons in the extension area.

After Audubon's death in 1851, his widow, Lucy Bakewell Audubon, and sons Victor and John Woodhouse, transformed their farm, Minnie's Land, into a suburban enclave that became known as Audubon Park—a dozen Italianate villas surrounded by forest trees, gardens, and curvilinear drives. At the same time, sugar refiner, Methodist minister, and abolitionist Dennis Harris, well-known for his anti-slavery efforts in lower Manhattan, was looking to transform this uptown area, both spiritually and economically. Besides helping to found and build his abolitionist church on what is now Amsterdam Avenue, he began accumulating and developing acreage north of the Audubons, dividing it into lots, building houses, and encouraging growth. He also built a new sugar refinery, a tenement house for workers, and a wharf, having purchased a steamboat to establish ferry service from lower Manhattan to 158th Street and on

up to Poughkeepsie. A large portion of his property makes up the extension area, though only one of the many structures he built and maintained survives—the modest wood-frame house now at 857 Riverside Drive. Built in 1851 in the Greek Revival–Italianate style, this home is also the sole remaining example of the architecture that predominated in Audubon Park as it made the transition from rural enclave to suburb.

For the remainder of the 19th Century, Audubon Park and the land north of it remained suburban, in large part because several of the individuals who owned and controlled the bulk of it were long-term investors rather than short-term speculators, but also because a lack of rapid transit put the area out of reach for many middle-class families, whose breadwinners worked in lower Manhattan. This paradigm began changing in the late 19th century with the arrival of an elevated railroad line to 155th Street and a cable line up Amsterdam Avenue. But the sea change came in the late 1890s and first decades of the 20th century, when the extension of Riverside Drive and promise of rapid transit renewed interest in northern Manhattan and opened it to new waves of middle-class residents. The ensuing transformation in the designated district and proposed expansion area is the primary reason the two areas look and feel virtually identical today.

Mirror-Image Development

The first changes came when speculative builders like John P. Leo, Francis Schnugg, and Lorenz F. J. Weiher, anticipating the population that would come with rapid transit, erected row houses in the extension area. After the subway's arrival, a new group of speculative builders focused on a different format—a series of apartment houses along Riverside Drive's winding path between 155th and 162nd Streets, all within easy walking distance of the subway stations at 157th Street. Apartment houses north of 158th Street were from designs by well-known apartment architects George Fred Pelham, Harold Young, and Samuel Katz.

Just like the apartment buildings in the designated district, the apartment houses in the extension area feature light-colored materials such as white, gray, and beige brick, terra cotta, and limestone. Their five- and six-story heights contribute to a uniform street wall, and in many instances, building façades parallel the drive, following its curves and creating a serpentine street wall, which is evident at street level, as well as in ariel views from neighboring buildings. Apartment houses in both areas incorporate complex floor plans and courtyards (both interior and exterior) to allow maximum light and ventilation.

Using marketing techniques already tested on the Upper West Side and in Morningside Heights, developers in the historic district and extension area produced ads and brochures touting fine views, fresh air, prominent addresses, and, for the safety-minded, fireproof buildings—all at affordable prices. Most developers distinguished their buildings with names to increase their desirability. In the extension area, the Kingsland at 840 Riverside Drive and the Loyal at 894 Riverside Drive are named for former property owners, while the Villa Norma at 835 Riverside Drive, the Armidale at 870 Riverside Drive, and the Deluxe at 900 Riverside Drive have fanciful, names, all intended to entice renters.

REQUEST FOR EVALUATION: Audubon Park Historic District Extension

The extension area further expands the architectural timeline represented in the Audubon Park Historic District with the 1941 River Arts apartment complex designed by Arthur Weiser and the 1964 River Terrace Mitchell-Lama co-op designed by Samuel Paul and Seymour Jarmul. Although contrasting architecturally with their neighboring buildings, both are a visual and integral part of the streetscape and thus vital parts of the built landscape. In particular, River Terrace is visible from almost every spot in the designated historic district and the extension area.

Most buildings in the extension area, as in the designated district, are “highly intact, retaining the vibrant architectural details and character that attracted residents to the area” throughout the 20th century and into the 21st. Riverside Drive’s distinctive curves and the “dramatic vistas that result from the hilly topography” run through the designated historic district and extension area in one continuous and “distinctive enclave of residential buildings with a powerful sense of place.”²

Underscoring Diversity: The Audubon Park Historic District Extension and the Landmark Preservation Commission’s Equity Framework

The proposed extension to the Audubon Park Historic District will fully realize the laudable priorities Landmarks Preservation Commission Chair Sarah Carroll laid out in the January 2021 “Equity Framework,” which called for increased focus on designations “that represent New York City’s diversity . . . in areas less represented by landmarks.”³

As LPC’s [Discover New York City Landmarks Map](#) illustrates, the preponderance of designations in Manhattan lies in the affluent, predominantly white neighborhoods south of 96th Street. The number diminishes in Harlem, and the area north of 155th Street, in largely Black and Latino Washington Heights and Inwood, boasts only 20 designations: 16 individual, the Audubon Terrace Museum complex, and three residential historic districts, each of them among the smallest in the city. Extending the Audubon Park Historic District will swiftly increase the number of designated buildings in northern Manhattan.

It will also recognize and celebrate a neighborhood whose history, particularly that of the 20th century, is rooted in diversity.

Immigrants have populated northern Manhattan since the days when European settlers from Harlem pushed northward onto the heights and displaced the Native American Lenape people, who had hunted and fished the area seasonally for millennia. Throughout the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries, the landowners were uniformly white with European roots, though those who tilled the soil and built wealth were often enslaved people torn from their homes in Africa.

² Jennifer Most and Mary Beth Betts, Audubon Park Designation Report (New York: Landmarks Preservation Commission, 2009), 4.

³ “LPC Launches Equity Framework,” January 19, 2021. <https://lpc-nyc.medium.com/lpc-launches-equity-framework-6e40fc37f6aa>

Gradual changes occurred in the early decades of the 20th century, when census records show that residents in the newly built apartment houses included people from the West Indies, Central America, and Bermuda.⁴ Then, in the late 1930s, as many immigrants fleeing Nazi oppression made their homes in lower Washington Heights, it became known as “Frankfurt on the Hudson.”⁵ In the late 1940s, after the United States Supreme Court declared that restrictive real estate covenants were illegal, people of color began moving into lower Washington Heights in greater numbers, first African-Americans coming up from Harlem and soon afterwards Cubans, Puerto Ricans, and Dominicans, followed in later decades by Haitians and additional people from Central and South America.

Three structures in particular symbolize and tell that story of racial and ethnic inclusivity:

1. At the center of the extension area, physically as well as historically and culturally, is 857 Riverside Drive, the sole remaining structure tied to an abolitionist community active in northern Manhattan in the 1850s that once included a sugar refinery, a church, and several homes. Like the “Harriet and Thomas Truesdell House” at 227 Duffield Street in Brooklyn, landmarked on February 2, 2021, 857 Riverside Drive is “a rare example of a property associated with notable abolitionists for more than a decade.”⁶
2. Around the corner on West 158th Street stands a row of houses that African-American families purchased from white owners in the 1960s and ‘70s, converting them back to single-family residences from dilapidated multi-family residences and SROs—all while overcoming the insidious practice of redlining.
3. Towering above the neighborhood, facing Riverside Drive West, the River Terrace Mitchell Lama building has been home to a host of notable individuals in politics, business, and the arts, including the late David Dinkins.

Extending the Audubon Park Historic District to encompass the buildings and the surrounding area will fully align with LPC’s pledge to designate buildings and areas that “represent New York City’s diversity . . . in areas less represented by landmarks.”

⁴ See, Matthew Spady and Jackie Thaw, *The Grinnell at 100*, (New York: Grinnell Centennial Committee, 2011).

⁵ See Steven M. Lowenstein, Ph.D., *Frankfurt on the Hudson: The German-Jewish Community of Washington Heights, 1933-1983, Its structure and Culture*, Reprint Edition. (Detroit: Wayne State University Press: 1989). As Lowenstein lays out in his book, as the century wore on, many of these Jewish immigrants moved northward on the island, and many eventually moved to the suburbs.

⁶ Hurley, Lemos McHale, and Herman, “Harriet and Thomas Truesdell House” Designation Report, 5.

REQUEST FOR EVALUATION: Audubon Park Historic District Extension

Chronological Listing of Buildings in the Existing Audubon Park Historic District and Extension Area

Year	Address	Block/Lot	Name	Building Type	Architect	Style	Audubon Park Historic District	Extension Area
1851	857 RSD	2135/23	Unnamed	Freestanding House	John Woodhouse Audubon?	Italianate Greek-Revival		X
1895	865-867 RSD	2135/28-30	Unnamed	Row Houses	Lorenz F.J. Weiher, Jr	Renaissance Revival		X
	869 RSD	2135/31	Unnamed	Detached House	Lorenz F.J. Weiher, Jr	Renaissance Revival		X
1897	859-861 RSD	2135/25-26	Unnamed	Row Houses	Kent & Jardine	Neo-Renaissance		X
	634-648 W. 158th St.	2134/148-155	Unnamed	Row Houses	John P. Leo	Eclectic designs, combining features of the Romanesque Revival, Neo-Renaissance, and Beaux-Arts styles		X
1898	626-632 W. 158th St.	2134/358, 156-158	Unnamed	Row Houses	John P. Leo	Same as above		X
1899	815-825 RSD	2135/1-6	Unnamed	Row Houses	Louis Entzer	Neo-Renaissance		X
1905	609 W. 158th St.	2136/5	Lafayette	Apartment House	Joseph C. Cocker	Renaissance Revival	X	
1909	601 W. 156th St.	2134/90	Hispania Hall	Apartment House	George Fred Pelham	Renaissance Revival	X	
	605 W. 156th St.	2134/100	Velasquez	Apartment House	Denby & Nute	Renaissance Revival	X	
	611 W. 156th St.	2134/105	Goya	Apartment House	Denby & Nute	Renaissance Revival	X	
	625 W. 156th St.	2134/110	Cortez	Apartment House	Neville & Bagge	Beaux Arts	X	
	600 W. 157th St.	2134/90	Audubon Hall	Apartment House	George Fred Pelham	Renaissance Revival	X	
	602 W. 157th St.	2134/85	Hortense Arms	Apartment House	Neville & Bagge	Renaissance Revival	X	
	614 W. 157th St.	2134/80	Kanawah Court	Apartment House	Joseph C. Cocker	Medieval Revival	X	

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Year	Address	Block/Lot	Name	Building Type	Architect	Style	Audubon Park Historic District	Extension Area
1910	788 RSD	2134/30	Rhinecleff Court	Apartment House	Schwartz & Gross	Beaux Arts	X	
	611 W. 158th St.	2136/7	Sutherland	Apartment House	Emery Roth	Beaux Arts	X	
1911	790 RSD	2134/71	Riviera	Apartment House	Rouse & Goldstone	Renaissance Revival	X	
	800 RSD	2134/195	Grinnell	Apartment House	Schwartz & Gross	Renaissance Revival with Mission Style Elements	X	
1914	780 RSD	2134/22	Vauxhall	Apartment House	George & Edward Blum	Arts and Crafts	X	
	884 RSD	2136/106	Romaine	Apartment House	Harold L. Young	Neo-Gothic		X
	894 RSD	2136/111	Loyal	Apartment House	Harold L. Young	Neo-Gothic		X
	838-844 RSD	2136/20	Kingsland	Apartment House	Samuel Katz	Neo-Renaissance		X
1915	870 RSD	2136/36	Armidale	Apartment House	Young & Wagner	Renaissance Revival		X
	900 RSD	2136/167	Unnamed	Apartment House	Young & Wagner	Neo-Gothic		X
1916	910 RSD	2136/170	Unnamed	Apartment House	Harold L. Young	Neo-Renaissance		X
	834-836 RSD	2136/18	Gustavius Court	Apartment House	Samuel Katz	Neo-Renaissance		X
	860 RSD	2136/24	Langhorne	Apartment House	George Fred Pelham	Neo-Renaissance		X
1919	801 RSD	2134/167	Cragmoor Dwellings	Apartment House	George Fred Pelham	Arts and Crafts	X	
	835 RSD	2135/7	Villa Norma	Apartment House	Harold L. Young	Neo-Renaissance		X

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Year	Address	Block/Lot	Name	Building Type	Architect	Style	Audubon Park Historic District	Extension Area
1920	809 RSD 811 RSD	2134/164 2134/165	Unnamed	Duplex House	Moore & Landseidel	Mediterranean Revival	X	
	812 RSD	2136/10	Seco Hall	Apartment House	Springsteen & Goldheimer	Arts and Crafts		X
	863 RSD	2135/27	Unnamed	Freestanding Dwelling	John H. Knubel	Neoclassical		X
1921	820 RSD	2135/13	Marion Garden	Apartment House	George Fred Pelham	Eclectic w/ Tudoresque Flourishes		X
1922	839-853 RSD	2135/13,17, 20	Unnamed	Apartment House	Harold L. Young	Renaissance Revival		X
1924	807 RSD	2134/61	Rio Rita*	Apartment House	George Fred Pelham	Mediterranean Revival	X	
1926	779 RSD	2134/65	Crillon Court*	Apartment House	Sidney H. Kitzler	Arts and Crafts	X	
1930	775 RSD 156-08 RSD W.	2134/200 2134/250	John James*	Apartment House	George G. Miller	Medieval Revival	X	
1932	765 RSD	2134/199	Unnamed	Apartment House	Schaefer & Rutkins	Medieval Revival	X	
1941	159-00 RSD W.	2135/60	River Arts	Apartment House	Arthur Weiser	Not determined		X
1963	156-20 RSD W.s	2134/206	River Terrace	Apartment House	Samuel Paul & Seymour Jarmul	Modernist		X

*Originally an unnamed building

Historical, Cultural, and Architectural Development

Between West 155th and West 162nd Street, Riverside Drive's winding path disrupts Manhattan's grid, creating a distinctive streetscape that combines the area's ancient hilly topography with its built landscape. Landmarking distinguishes and protects the Audubon Park Historic District along this serpentine roadway from West 155th to 158th Street, but it stops at the route's mid-point, leaving the historic district incomplete, architecturally, historically, and culturally. The architectural typologies represented in the designated district illustrate only a portion of the neighborhood's architectural journey to urbanization and leave chronological gaps at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end.

Culturally, the designated area focuses primarily on the white, Eurocentric part of its urbanization journey. By contrast, the extension area contains all the relevant architectural typologies, and offers an historical through-line that amplifies the area's layers of racial history, as well as the racial and ethnic diversity and inclusivity that this neighborhood now embodies.

Topography

Throughout Manhattan's history, and in its prehistory, the owners and inhabitants of the land in the extension area have shared social, cultural, and economic commonalities with those in the designated historic district. For centuries, a continuous topography that fell more than 100 feet in rocky terraces from present-day Broadway to the Hudson River encouraged similar land use across the two areas. Beginning with seasonal migration by Manhattan's Native American Lenape people and proceeding through successive stages of suburbanization and urbanization, the same tribes, groups, or individuals have inhabited both areas. After European settlers began dividing the land and claiming ownership, property boundaries often crossed between them. Demographically, owners, lessors, and renters have shared similar occupations, household incomes, and family sizes, a trend that continued in the middle of the 20th century when the area finally began to diversify racially, culturally, and economically.

The historic district was designated in part because of architecture "indicative of the area's [urban] transformation," and a "hilly topography" that offers "dramatic vistas" and defines "a powerful sense of place."⁷ And yet grading, paving, and building foundations in the designated area transformed the original topography so that its contours are now obscured by Riverside Drive, which rests on a retaining wall ranging from 10 to 40 feet in height between West 155th and West 162nd Streets. Further concealing that early topography in the historic district, 156th and 157th Streets are graded from Broadway to Riverside Drive's elevation, rather than to the river. By contrast, cascading slopes are still a part of the streetscape in the extension area, a

⁷ Most and Betts, 3-4.

tangible reminder of the landscape present when the Lenape people used these hills as a hunting ground before Europeans arrived and began humanizing the landscape.

A Shared History

As outlined in the Audubon Park Historic District designation report, peripatetic Native Americans associated with the Lenape people inhabited northern Manhattan for centuries before the arrival of European settlers. “Largely covered by birch forests,” the Audubon Park Historic District and extension were “considered to be a portion of Wiechquaesgeck, ‘the birch-bark country,’ stretching along the Hudson River from Yonkers to just below Jeffrey’s Hook.”⁸

After the first Europeans arrived in northern Manhattan in the 1630s, conflicting ideas about land use led to intermittent periods of warfare between settlers and Lenape people. By 1684, the settlers were firmly entrenched on the northern end of the island, and in 1691, Harlem’s landowners drew lots for the common land on the heights. Jan Dyckman eventually owned most of the property in the designated historic district and extension area.⁹ Stone fences, such as the one still standing at the western edge of 857 Riverside Drive, separated the allotments into pasture and farmland, and are noted as coordinates in deeds.



Figure 1: Dry-laid Stone Wall at the Western Edge of the 857 Riverside Drive Property

In 1767, Jan Dyckman’s grandson John divided his family’s farmland in lower Washington Heights and sold one parcel to import merchant John Watkins and another south of it to Lieutenant General John Maunsell, a veteran of King George III’s Indian Wars. The two men were related through their wives, who were sisters. Like Maunsell’s comrade-at-arms Roger Morris, both men situated their houses near the Kingsbridge Road, which gave them access to Manhattan’s major north-south passage, while taking advantage of maximum light, air, and views.

⁸ Most and Betts, 5.

⁹ Reginald Pelham Bolton, *Washington Heights, Manhattan, Its Eventful Past* (New York: Dyckman Institute), 105.

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During the Battle of Harlem Heights, all of the land in the Audubon Park Historic District and the extension area lay between General Washington's Second and Third Lines of Defense, at 153rd and 162nd Streets, respectively. While Washington commandeered the Morris mansion for his headquarters, his officers bivouacked at the Watkins farmhouse and their men erected barracks in the surrounding fields.

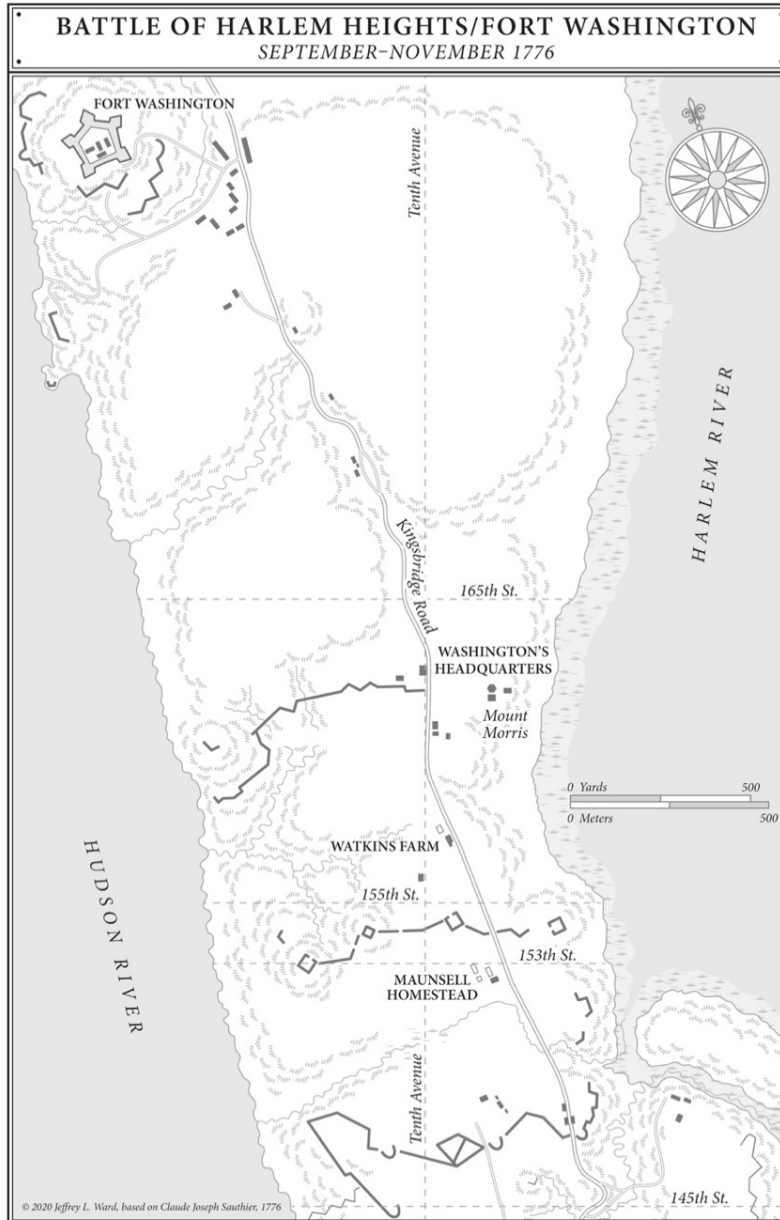


Figure 2 Map of Northern Manhattan During the Battle of Harlem Heights, Showing the Audubon Park Historic District and Extension Area Between the Second and Third Lines of Defense (Watkins Farm)¹⁰

¹⁰ Source: Spady, 30.

The Watkins Farm

John Watkins died after the war and in 1785, his widow, Lydia Watkins, advertised their farm for sale, highlighting selling points that developers would use into the 21st century: a healthy “situation” with plenty of light and air, and beautiful “prospects” or views.

To be Sold. The Farm on the Heights of Harlem, belonging to the Estate of the late John Watkins, containing about 300 Acres, bounded by the East and North River, where are plenty of Fish, Oysters, etc., and is remarkably well watered by living springs. The healthiness of the situation, with the beautiful prospect it commands, renders it an inviting purchase to a gentleman: The goodness of the land, and the large quantity of hay ground on the Farm, will make it a profitable one to a Farmer.—It will be sold as it is at present, or divided into such parts as will suit the purchasers. For terms apply to Mrs. Lydia Watkins on the Premises. (57tf.)¹¹

Lydia Watkins did not sell her farm, but continued to live there until her death in 1811. Like her widowed sister and neighbor, Elizabeth Maunsell, she depended on enslaved Africans to perform the myriad tasks—indoors and out—that kept her household and farm running. “In 1800, the enumerator for the Federal Census counted eight slaves in the Watkins household and four for Maunsell. In 1810 . . . the numbers had dropped to six and three.”¹²

Elizabeth Maunsell died in 1815, and with no children, willed her extensive property to her surviving nieces and nephews. Dr. Samuel Watkins inherited the parcel that includes all of the buildings in the Audubon Park Historic District and many of those in the extension area.

In 1834, Alexander Hamilton Jr purchased the northern part of the extension area (Lots 24 and 60 on City Registry Map 2136)¹³ and the entire blocks bounded by 160th and 163rd Streets west of Fort Washington Avenue.¹⁴ He held the property six years and then, in 1840, sold it to sperm-oil merchant (and future mayor) Ambrose Kingsland and leather merchant Shepherd Knapp. In 1841, the two men divided the land between themselves—Knapp took the northern portion and Kingsland the southern—and each built a mansion on the higher part of his property with expansive views of the Hudson (then call the “North”) River and the Palisades beyond.¹⁵

John James Audubon and Minnie’s Land

The same year that Knapp and Kingsland divided their acreage in the extension area, John James Audubon bought a 14-acre triangle carved from the old Watkins farm from the New York Bowery Fire Insurance Company, a portion of which makes up the Audubon Park Historic District.¹⁶ In August 1843, Samuel Watkins sold six acres to Audubon’s older son, Victor, and a

¹¹ “To Be Sold,” *Independent Journal*, Jun. 1, 1785; Issue; repeated on the Jun. 4, 8, 11, 15, 18, 22.

¹² Spady, 33.

¹³ Images of the Block and Lot Maps from the City Register for 2135 and 2135 are in the map section of this RFE.

¹⁴ New York City Register, Farmers Fire Insurance and Loan Company to Alexander Hamilton, Feb. 7, 1834, L310, 32.

¹⁵ New York City Register, Knapp to Kingsland, Jun. 12, 1841, L414, 609; Kingsland to Knapp, Jun. 12, 1841, L414, 614; Kingsland to Kingsland, Jul. 27, 1841, L417, 618.

¹⁶ New York City Register, New York Fire Insurance Company to Audubon, Oct. 15, 1841, L420, 206.

few months later, the remainder of his property to banker Matthew Morgan. While the Audubon-Morgan property line temporarily separated the historic district from the extension area, shared land use and cultural identity continued on both sides of that invisible boundary.¹⁷

After Audubon's death in January 1851, his widow and sons began developing their land as a way to solve their financial problems, selling the eastern portion and dividing the remainder into building lots, where they constructed houses that they could either lease or sell. Facilitating their development plans, as well as those of other property owners in the area, was the newly completed Hudson River Railroad. Its commuter stop at 152nd Street opened lower Washington Heights to a group of young merchants who wanted to raise their families beyond the confines of the city. By 1854, when the name "Audubon Park" first appeared in the *New York Times*, the transformation from farm to suburb was well underway there. Gone were the orchards and fields, animal pens, and many of the forest trees. In their place curvilinear drives encircled Italianate villas set into the hilly topography on large, irregular building lots.¹⁸

The Audubons were not the only property owners whose development scheme moved lower Washington Heights from farmland to suburb. Joining their ranks was Dennis Harris, who had a marked effect on the extension area. He purchased Ambrose Kingsland's mansion and property in 1849 and the eastern portion of the Audubon farm in 1851.¹⁹

In 1850, Harris advertised "elegant building sites, located near the Hudson River, in Carmansville" for sale, and sold three acres to John King, a fellow sugar refiner, who may have been foreman at his refinery. King paid \$8,000 for a parcel bounded by Twelfth Avenue on the east, the Hudson River Railroad tracks on the west, and the center lines of 159th and 160th Street on the south and north.

King's house, present-day 857 Riverside Drive,²⁰ was located near the river, built into the hillside, with two stories fully above grade on the eastern side, and all four stories fully visible on the western side. Built in the Greek-Revival Italianate style, with elegant wrap-around piazzas, the house bears a striking resemblance to those John Woodhouse Audubon was designing and building in Audubon Park. Given the style of the house, the Audubon's finances, and the fact that John was building a tenement house for Harris around the same time, he likely designed and built 857 Riverside Drive.

Less than a year later, Harris repurchased the property and house for \$13,000, deducting an \$8,000 mortgage from the purchase amount, suggesting that he valued the house at \$4,000.²¹ Harris kept the property for more than two years, building a carriage road to service it, and

¹⁷ New York City Register, Watkins to Audubon, Sept. 2, 1843, L437, 605; New York City Register, Watkins to Morgan, Mar. 29, 1844, L444, 424.

¹⁸ "Obituaries," *New York Times*, May 20, 1854.

¹⁹ New York City Register, Kingsland to Harris, Nov. 5, 1849, L530, 105; Audubon to Harris, Mar. 12, 1851, L567, 178.

²⁰ "Sale," *New York Daily Tribune*, December 25, 1850. See also, New York City Register, Harris to King, Mar. 1, 1851, L568, 77.

²¹ New York City Register, King to Harris, Mar. 27, 1851, L591, 542.

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then in June 1854, sold it to judge John Newhouse, his friend and business partner, for \$10,000. Newhouse, his family, and their descendants would live in the house for decades.²²

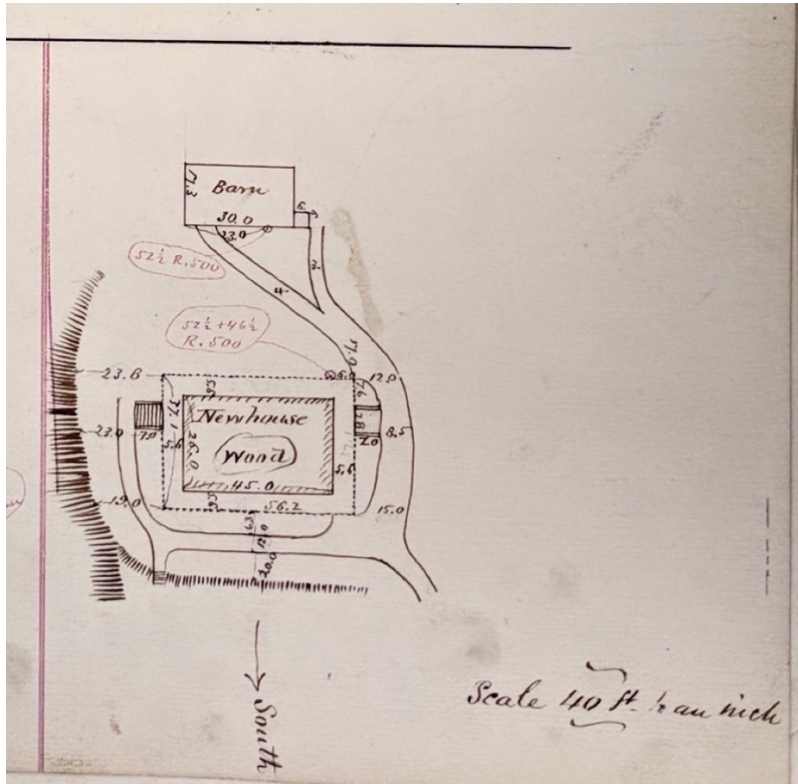


Figure 3: Sketch of the Newhouse Property for the “Blackwell Maps,” Manhattan Borough President’s Office

Although Harris had advertised large lots out of the Kingsland estate—similar to what the Audubons were doing on their property—he divided the eastern arm of Minnie’s Land into 25-foot widths, aligned to the grid. Like Carman, he seemed focused on developing a community, though he was content to adopt the name “Carmanville” rather than impose some version of “Harris” on it.

Even so, Harris’s influence on the urbanization of lower Washington Heights was significant and long-lasting. His development on 158th Street, which was graded and macadamized by the early 1850s, included houses that he, his brother William, and his son-in-law John Dalley built for themselves west of present-day Broadway, and a row of small houses Harris built on speculation between there and present-day Amsterdam Avenue.

²² New York City Register, Harris to Newhouse, Jun. 23, 1854, L672, 63. Newhouse deeded the property to his son-in-law John Tonnele in November 1854, and then it passed back and forth among family members for several decades. Census records show that John Newhouse lived in the house until he died in May 1877. See New York City Register Newhouse to Tonnele, Nov. 24, 1854 L673, 685; Tonnele to Newhouse, Mar. 9, 1868, L1048, 46; etc.

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In addition to his real estate development activities, Harris constructed a sugar refinery on the river at 161st Street and instituted steamboat ferry service on the “Jenny Lind” from a wharf he built at the foot of 158th Street—as far as lower Manhattan to the south and Poughkeepsie to the north. His brother William served as captain.

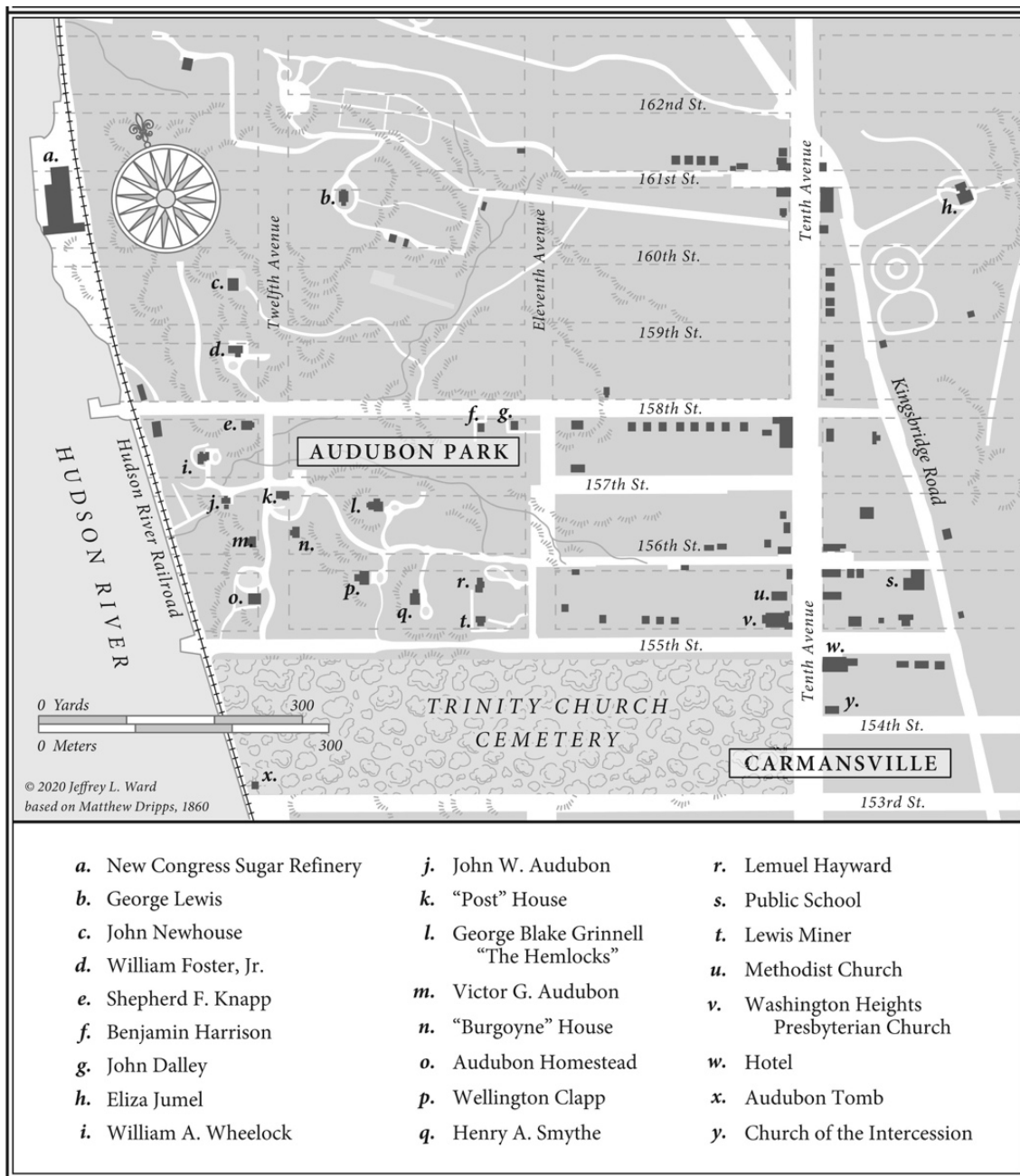


Figure 4: Development in and around Audubon Park, circa 1860²³

²³ Source: Spady, 111.

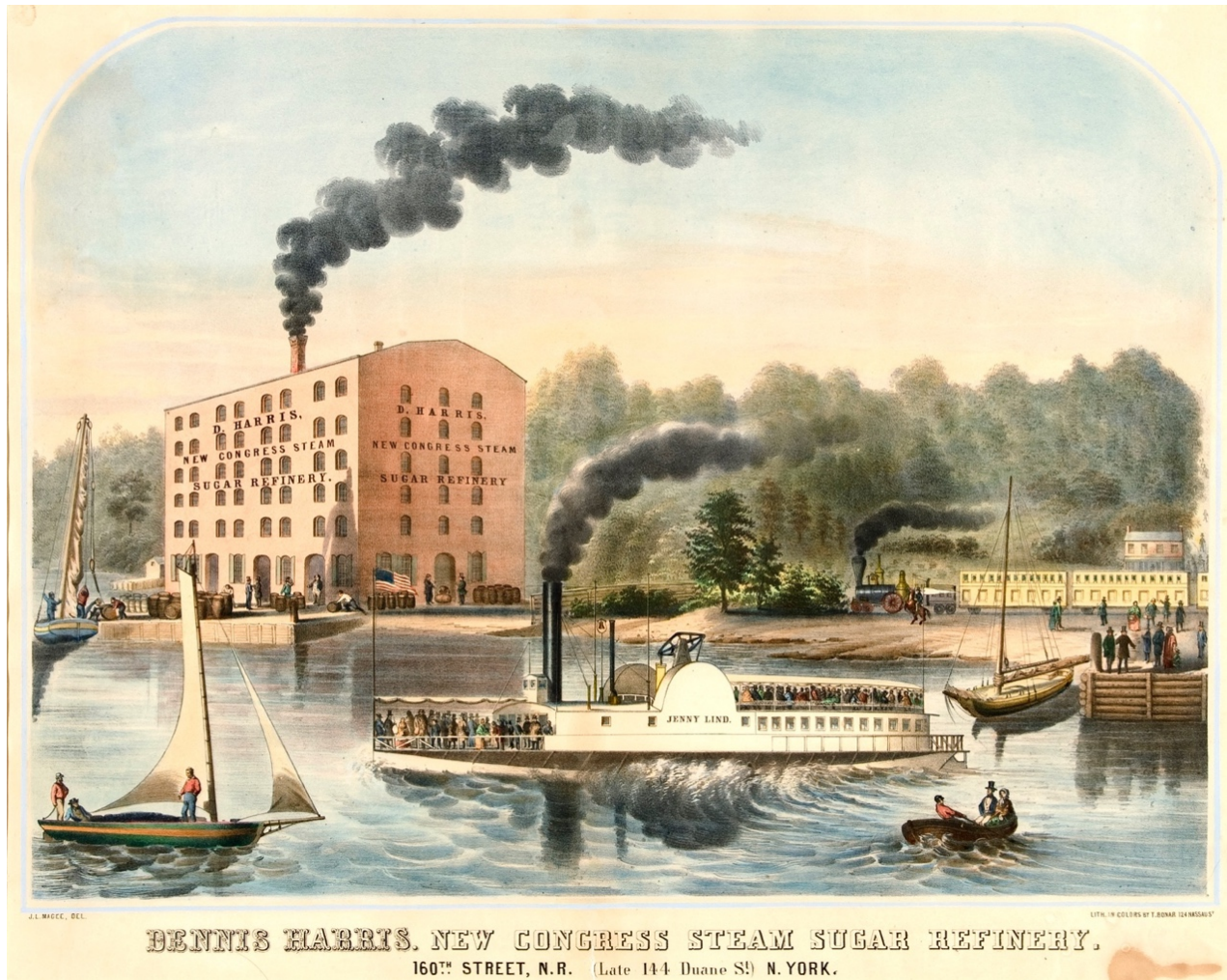


Figure 5: Lithograph of Dennis Harris's Sugar Refinery, His Steamboat, the "Jenny Lind," and Northern Manhattan in the early 1850s. The man in the rowboat, wearing a top hat, is reportedly John Newhouse.²⁴

²⁴ "An Interesting View of the Shore Front, at 160th Street and the Hudson River, New York City," *New-York Historical Society Quarterly Bulletin*, Jul. 1932, 59. Image source: Yale University Art Gallery.

1850 to 1873: Transfer of Land, Transfer of Power

Beginning in the mid-1850s and continuing into the early 1870s, land transfers on the west side of lower Washington Heights consolidated property ownership into the hands of a few owners, who held it until the last years of the century, when their heirs oversaw the transition from suburb to cityscape. Once again, events in the designated historic district and extension area aligned.

In the historic district, the Audubon sons both died in the early 1860s and their widows and mother eventually sold (or forfeited) all of their property. In the extension area, Dennis Harris, who overextended himself with real estate development and business activities, lost a large part of his property and refinery after being duped with a worthless stock deal in 1855.²⁵ By the 1860s, he was living in a modest apartment on West 45th Street, where he died in 1868. Multiple buyers snatched up plots at “fire-sale prices.”²⁶

For a few years, no single person in Audubon Park or nearby emerged as a majority property owner, with the ability to affect changes in the landscape. That changed at the end of the Civil War, when George Blake Grinnell, Shepherd Knapp, William Wheelock, and William Foster, Jr began accumulating land and houses. Grinnell and Knapp focused on land inside Audubon Park. Wheelock, a banker turned merchant and Foster, a banker actively promoting the elevated railroad, focused on the northern side of 158th Street. Both had lived in the park before moving across the street. Just north of them, John Newhouse, his daughters, and his sons-in-law—Catherine and John Tonnele, Emma and Zimri West, and Mary and Charles Whelp—were also accumulating acreage. All of these families joined in advocating for improved local services that would increase their property values, but displayed no intentions of selling their land in the near future. They had invested in homes, families, and neighborhood, not speculative ventures.²⁷

Amid these families was a very different kind of property holder: Columbia College. After Dennis Harris lost the Kingsland estate in the extension area, it passed through several hands before William Wheelock sold it to Gouveneur Odgen, Stephen P. Nash, and Charles R. Swords for \$375,000 in 1872.²⁸ The three men, who were trustees for Columbia College, expected that an

²⁵ New York City Register, Edwards (Referee) to Taylor, Oct. 20, 1856, L716, 404; New York City Register, Willet (Sheriff) to Williams, Aug. 7, 1856, L717, 141; “Washington Height: Valuable Property,” *New-York Herald*, Apr. 13, 1859; “Men Wanted—In A Sugar House,” *New-York Herald*, Sep. 11, 1865.

²⁶ Spady, 94; “Auction Notices,” *New York Herald*, Dec. 12, 1856. The auctioneer offered rosewood and mahogany suites, kitchen furniture, carriages and harness, sleighs, bells, and robes. Among the household items were a rosewood piano, an organ, and a melodion. See also New York City Register, “Edwards (Referee) to Blanco,” Mar. 25, 1857, L729, 146-184; “Edwards (Referee) to Knapp,” Mar. 21, 1857, L726, 386; “Blanco to Knapp” Oct. 17, 1861, L846, 290; New York City Register, Edwards (Referee) to Taylor, Oct. 20, 1856, L716, 404; Willet (Sheriff) to Williams, Aug. 7, 1856, L717, 141

²⁷ See, for example, New York City Register, Whitbeck to West, Dec. 2, 1865, L958, 16; Williams to West, May 2, 1866, L971, 513; Tonnelle to Newhouse, Mar. 9, 1868, L1048, 46; Tonnele to Whelp, Sep. 22, 1871, L1179, 299; etc.

²⁸ New York City Register, Edwards (Referee) to Taylor, Oct. 29, 1856, L716, 404; Taylor to Lewis, Jan. 21, 1858, L752, 149. See also Knapp to Lewis, Oct. 3, 1860, L819, 662; Lewis to Wheelock, Oct. 30, 1869, L1124, 167; Wheelock to Odgen, Nash, and Swords, Nov. 20, 1872, L1235, 149. See also, Court of Appeals, Phillips Phoenix and Lloyd Phoenix,

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elevated railroad line up Eleventh Avenue would open this part of Manhattan and had acquired ten acres of the land “between 160th and 162nd Streets, Eleventh Avenue [Broadway] and the river,” for the college. At the time Columbia was located at Madison Avenue and 49th Street, and considering a new home. When the Ninth Avenue elevated ran to a station at 155th Street in the lowlands on the eastern side of the island, the “New Educational Site” lost its allure. Nevertheless, the trustees held a mortgage on the house and acreage, which it bought in 1884. For a few years, the college let the old Kingsland mansion for \$1,000 per annum, but for the most part, it was a white elephant.²⁹



Figure 6: The Kingsland Mansion, While Columbia College Owned It³⁰

vs. Trustees of Columbia College in the City of New York and others, February 14, 1901, 120-122, 125, 365-366, 448, and others.

²⁹ New York City Register, Nash to Trustees of Columbia College in the City of New York,” Dec. 31, 1885, L1844, 331.

³⁰ Source: *Museum of the City of New York*

The First of the Curving Thoroughfares: Boulevard Lafayette

The curving artery that defines both the historic district and the extension area resulted from the joining of two separate thoroughfares, each designed to open northern Manhattan and stimulate urbanization. The first of those roadways (as will be true of the first row houses) appeared in the extension area.

Even though several property owners inhibited land transfers in the last quarter of the 19th Century, city development progressed. Before the Civil War, property owners in northern Manhattan petitioned the New York State Legislature to create a street commission, similar to the one that had created the grid pattern in 1811. The resulting commission spent \$40,000 on a detailed set of maps and sketches (the “Blackwell Maps,” now housed in the Manhattan Borough President’s office), but after four years, had not settled on a plan.³¹

In 1865, the legislature gave Andrew Haswell Green and the Board of Commissioners of Central Park (CPC) “exclusive power to lay out streets, roads, public squares and places” north of 155th Street where the 1811 Commissioners’ Plan had terminated.³² The CPC developed the Grand Boulevard, an extension of Broadway from 59th Street to 155th Street, or as the *Atlantic Monthly* described it “Broadway run out into the country ... to enjoy a breath of fresh air.” It then approved plans for extending the Grand Boulevard across Audubon Park’s northeast corner toward the river and then up it to Manhattan’s northern tip. The roadway, eventually named the Boulevard Lafayette, finally opened to Dyckman Street three decades later, in the summer of 1895, and provided access to roadways leading into Yonkers and Westchester County, as well as return routes to the city via Western Boulevard, Fort Washington Avenue, and the Harlem Speedway, all to the delight of pleasure seekers.³³

Beyond access into the countryside, the Boulevard Lafayette’s serpentine path between 158th Street and 161st Street created the unique footprint that to this day distinguishes the streetscape in the extension area—the northern half of the neighborhood that hinges on West 158th Street.



Figure 7: “Bird’s Eye View” of Boulevard Lafayette and Northern Manhattan³⁴

³¹ See Spady, 110-111.

³² “The Washington Heights Commission and the Kingsbridge Road,” *New York Herald*, Mar. 15, 1864. See also “City Improvements—The Region Around the Park, Washington Heights, etc.” *New York Herald*, May 30, 1864 and Spady, 132-134.

³³ Spady, 202.

³⁴ Source: *Scientific America*, January 1900

Public Transit Brings Growth to Lower Washington Heights

The Ninth Avenue elevated railroad station at 155th Street (1879) and a cable road running on Amsterdam Avenue from 125th Street to 179th Street (1886) boosted residential growth in lower Washington Heights, and encouraged growth of organizations like the Washington Heights Taxpayers Association and Washington Heights Athenaeum Society, whose primary goal was “purchasing, holding, and improving real estate, and selling and leasing the same in New York.”³⁵ They also brought northern Manhattan back into the view of real estate speculators.

Throughout the last quarter of the 19th century, New York City’s press was bullish on development in Washington Heights, none more so than the *Real Estate Record and Builder’s Guide*, which published frequent articles about the area’s beauty, healthfulness, and suitability for upper class development. The drawback was a lack of rapid transit—not just mass transit, such as the Ninth Avenue Elevated or Tenth Avenue Cable Car Line provided—but transit that would significantly shorten travel time to lower Manhattan. Only then could Washington Heights compete with Brooklyn, New Jersey, and the “Annexed District” in Westchester County for New York City’s expanding population.³⁶

The New York State legislature’s passage of the Rapid Transit Bill of 1891 raised hopes that this long-held dream would soon become a reality. At the same time, a new generation of property owners, often the children of the “original purchasers,” began rethinking the value of owning large blocks of land in southern Washington Heights. While these new property owners were not, for the most part, interested in building or developing property themselves, they fully understood that the decreased travel time to lower Manhattan would open northern Manhattan to a new wave of residents, likely the largest yet. Their overarching question in the 1890s was how and when to maximize the potential of their land once the city approved a plan for an underground railroad reaching into Washington Heights.

In 1895, Charles J. Rodd, a Westchester county resident, gave them one answer when he built three brick and limestone houses on the newly opened Boulevard Lafayette at the northern end of the extension area (Block 2135, Lots 28-31). He bought the Newhouse property and after selling the southern lots, hired builder-developer Lorenz F.J. Weiher, Jr to design two semi-detached houses and one detached house for the three northernmost lots (28, 30, 31), all in a Renaissance Revival style.³⁷ Each of the three-story houses sat on a raised basement with a high entry stoop and distinctive rounded bay that echoed the curve in the Boulevard Lafayette. Multiple transactions involving the three Rodd houses in the last years of the 19th century and

³⁵ “New York City,” *New York Daily Tribune*, Feb. 3, 1888.

³⁶ See “A Waiting Population: The Promising Future of Washington Heights,” *The New York Times*, May 6, 1883; and “Drives in Upper Manhattan: Interesting Sights and Beautiful Views Revealed,” *The New York Times*, Sep. 22, 1895; “The Upper West Side,” *Real Estate Record and Builder’s Guide*, Jun. 5, 1897, 965, among others.

NOTE: From this point forward, for the sake of brevity, we’ll use *Record & Guide* to refer to this periodical.

³⁷ New York City Register, Whelp and Newhouse to Fox, Oct. 18, 1893, L3, 56; Fox to Coleman, Oct. 24, 1893, L3, 61; Coleman to Rodd, Feb. 25, 1895, L5, 362.

into the 20th suggest that several speculators owned and let them while waiting for prices to rise.

John P. Leo took a different financing approach, beginning in 1897, when he built eight speculative houses in the southern end of the extension, on West 158th Street (2134/148-155). He sold each for \$1.00, with the purchaser assuming an \$8,500 mortgage on it.

Leo was fully aware of the importance of rapid transit on housing construction in northern Manhattan. "There is no doubt whatever that building operations have been begun and property bought in the belief that a short time would see a rapid transit railroad begun within a year or so," he told the *Record & Guide* in May 1896, adding that "as the work approached the northern end of the city, values would increase." He had concluded from his own experience that the "houses he had built and sold were nearly all owned by men carrying on business in the lower part of the city, extending as far down as City Hall."³⁸

A month later, the *Record & Guide* again addressed the correlation between rapid transit and land development north of 155th Street:

That portion of Manhattan Island lying north of 155th street looks to be the land of future promise for the speculator and builder. When the promise is to be fulfilled may be a matter of dubiety just now, but real estate developments have a habit of ripening suddenly and unexpectedly, and the city is growing so fast that it would be as equally rash to fix a distant date as to name a very near one for this fruition . . . One thing is certain, that property in this section is very responsive to transit news.³⁹

The other catalyst for growth was Chapter 665 of the 1897 legislature, which extended Riverside Drive from its terminus at Grant's Tomb to meet the Boulevard Lafayette, which the *Record & Guide* believed would have "an extensive influence in making values north of Manhattan Valley . . . the act will no doubt add a long stretch to the high-class residence portion of the city and enhance the value of contiguous portions proportionately."⁴⁰

In January 1897, while Leo was building his eight row houses on 158th Street, the Rapid Transit Commission finally adopted a plan for a subway system into Washington Heights. The Leos sold their first house on 158th Street in June 1897, and by September, had sold all but one, which they sold the following April.⁴¹ Meanwhile, John Leo's business partner John G. R. Lilliendahl bought four more lots on the street (2134/358, 156-158) and commissioned Leo to design and

³⁸ "Enter or Exit Rapid Transit?" *Record & Guide*, May 30, 1896.

³⁹ "The Upper West Side," *Record & Guide*, June 5, 1897.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ See New York City Registry: Leo to Cordes, Jun. 11, 1897, L7, 304; Leo to Shipman, Apr. 28, 1897, L8, 490; Leo to Bolton, Sep. 23, 1897, L10, 233; Leo to Baer, Jun. 15, 1897, L9, 233; Leo to Creamer, Sep. 27, 1897, L9, 277; Leo to Werckshagen, Sep. 20, 1897, L9, 271; Leo to Dulon, Apr. 2, 1898, L11, 134; Leo to Stabler, Jun 25, 1897, L9, 245. See also New York City Register: Grinnell to Lilliendahl, Dec. 6, 1897, L10, 371; Germania Life Insurance Company to Cordes, Dec. 8, 1897, L10, 385; Cordes to Lilliendahl, Dec. 8, 1897, L10, 386; Lilliendahl Cordes Agreement, Dec. 8, 1897, L10, 388.

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build houses on them. Lilliendahl moved his family into one house, and sold the other three in the summer of 1898.

Just as Leo was finishing his houses on West 158th Street, Danish-born Charles B. Meyer, a lawyer living in Westchester County, commissioned Kent & Jardine to design two three-story brick and limestone houses on raised rusticated-stone basements on the Boulevard Lafayette adjacent to the old Newhouse home (2135/25-26). Like Rodd's houses, they had full-height rounded bays complementing the curves of the roadway. Meyer took #49 Boulevard Lafayette for his family and woolen merchant Edward G. Payne took #51.⁴² Between the Meyer and Rodd houses lay one undeveloped lot, #27, which New Jersey resident Clement C. Speiden bought. He then signed party-wall agreements with Payne on the south and Emma Fish, who had bought the house to the north.



Figure 8: John P. Leo Houses on West 158th Street Circa 1898⁴³

In 1898, developer Francis Schnugg built a set of buff-brick and limestone row houses on the northwest side of the Boulevard Lafayette, just after it crossed West 158th Street (2135/1-6). Louis

⁴² 1900 United States Federal Census Records.

⁴³ Source: *New-York Historical Society*

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Enzer designed five three-story houses on raised basements, with low stoops, and, adapting to West 158th Street's steep grade, one four story house on a raised basement for the corner lot. All six were in a Neo-Renaissance style. Like Leo, Schnugg sold his houses, though he apparently over-extended himself with his speculation and lost two of them in legal proceedings.⁴⁴

Demographically, the individuals buying and living in most of these houses reflected the population that would soon inhabit the apartment buildings covering Audubon Park at the end of the next decade. Most retained at least one servant (some had two), and most were either born in the United States or were of northern European ancestry. Solidly middle-class professional people, they joined the Church of the Intercession, Washington Heights Presbyterian, the descendant of Harris's abolitionist church, and Washington Heights Methodist Episcopal; participated in the Washington Heights Taxpayers Association; and lobbied for public improvements such as the subway, Riverside Drive extension, and well-maintained streets.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ New York City Register, Schnugg to Brameyer, Jul. 17, 1900, L14, 458; Brameyer to Condit-Smith, L14, 457; Schnugg to Baiz, Sep. 29, 1900, L12, 391; L20, 60; Schnugg to Crane, May 25, 1899, L13, 169; 1910 Schnugg to Bainbridge, Oct. 15, 1901, L15, 329; Grodon (Ref) to Tuthill, May 26, 1903, L20, 60; Donnelly (Ref) to Mayer, Jul. 14, 1902, L15, 441; 1910 United States Federal Census Records.

⁴⁵ In 1913, for instance, the Taxpayers' Association appointed a host of row house owners from the extension area to a committee on "New York Central and Riverside Drive improvement matters," including 158th Street's Benjamin Blauvelt (#632), Andrew Shipman (#636), Reginald P. Bolton (#638), Oscar Dike (#648), and Riverside Drive residents Arthur Baiz (#819), William Bainbridge (#823), the Rev. Milo Gates (#861), Otto Hartmann (#865); in "On Guard," Record & Guide, Apr. 19, 1913, 839.



Figure 9: Audubon Park in 1899, with the Francis J. Schnugg Houses in the Foreground⁴⁶

The Riverside Drive Extension and the Boulevard Lafayette

The idea for a scenic roadway encircling northern Manhattan's coastlines had originated with Andrew Haswell Green and the Central Park Commissioners in the 1860s.⁴⁷ Extending Riverside Drive to join the Boulevard Lafayette and then to the Harlem River Speedway via Dyckman Street would fulfill that vision nearly four decades later. The logical route, straight up the river to join the Boulevard Lafayette at 162nd Street, would bypass the Grinnells' extensive property holdings in Audubon Park. So, in January 1897, they and several other property owners formed the Riverside Drive Extension Association, which used its political connections to craft a route that abruptly turned east at 155th Street and snaked across Audubon Park to meet the Boulevard Lafayette at 158th Street. But for the Grinnells self-interested interference, the serpentine roadway that distinguishes the Audubon Park Historic District would only have existed in the extension area — thanks to the Boulevard Lafayette — and the current historic district's sense of place would be dramatically different from what it is today.

⁴⁶ Source: *Private Collection*.

⁴⁷ Spady, 132-133.



Figure 10: Construction of Riverside Drive at 156th Street, with the Mansard Roof on the Audubon Homestead Barely Visible⁴⁸

A glance at a map told the New York City's Board of Street Openings and Improvement (and anyone else who was interested) that the mandated path was illogical. Besides three turns that slowed traffic, it narrowed and veered away from the river—a rare occurrence for *Riverside Drive*. But the serpentine path served another purpose: it forced grading for 156th and 157th Streets “up” to the level of the extended Drive, which ameliorated the topographical drop on the Grinnell's property and improved its suitability for construction.

The local landscape changed significantly when the subway opened, with Archer Milton Huntington's Hispanic Society Library and Museum building on 155th Street, two five-story apartment buildings north of the park, and on Broadway, the Audubon Park Apartments, designed by architects Simon I. Schwartz and Arthur Gross with Bertram M. Marcus.

⁴⁸ Source: *Private Collection*



Figure 11: Subway Excavations at Broadway and 157th Street, October 1900⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Source: New York Transit Museum

The First Wave of Apartment House Construction: 1908-1917

In 1908, the Grinnell family sold the bulk of its property and by 1914, apartment houses ranging from six to eleven stories covered most of the old Audubon Park. Detailed descriptions and histories of these buildings appear in the Landmark Preservation Commission's designation report for the Audubon Park Historic District, so a full accounting is not necessary here. What is important to note is that apartment house construction in the extension area complemented that in the designated area, both architecturally and chronologically, so that together, they flow in a continuous developmental timeline, illustrating changing aesthetics as well as changing demands from renters. (See Table 1)

Equally important is how development in each area spurred speculative builders in the other.⁵⁰ Until Audubon Park's rapid transformation from suburb to cityscape, the typology representing growth in the extension area was the row house, an urbanization stage the designated area had skipped. Following the park's rapid transformation, savvy speculative builders erected apartment houses in the extension area, beginning with Harold Young's exuberant Neo-Gothic designs for the Riverside Drive blockfront between 160th and 161st Streets. As in the historic district, apartment houses in the extension area would generally evolve into simpler, less-ornamented designs with smaller apartments.

The first area developed in the extension was the large block Columbia University had held for the last quarter of the 19th century. In 1914, Henry Friedman, president of the Melvin Construction Company, filed plans for the first in a series of apartment houses fronting Riverside Drive between 160th and 162nd Streets where the roadway bent into a graceful convex curve. Real estate investor Loyal L. Smith had bought the property at the turn of the 20th century, but died soon after. J. Romaine Brown, whom the *Record & Guide* called "the father of real estate brokers," facilitated a sale for Smith's heirs to Maurice Mandelbaum,⁵¹ who quickly flipped the property to Friedman. Development of the "Loyal Smith Estate" captured interest just as Audubon Park's "rapid transformation" had a few years earlier.

The resale of a large Riverside Drive corner by Harris and Maurice Mandelbaum this week to apartment house builders brings to the last stage another of the remarkable operations or series of operations that have marked the city's growth. The plot is the last of 135 lots in the section acquired by these operators from the executors of the Loyal L. Smith estate, within the last three years, all of which have been resold for high-class apartment house improvement. Within this comparatively short space of time a wild strip of woodland and rock has been transformed into a flourishing residential community, where apartment houses have been built that embody the most modern details of construction, and where the rentals range as high as \$15 per room.⁵²

⁵⁰ Most and Betts, *Audubon Park Designation Report*. For a discussion of this period of growth in Audubon Park see also, Spady, *Neighborhood Manhattan Forgot*, 254-271.

⁵¹ "Fifty Years in Real Estate," *Record & Guide*, May 5, 1906, 818; "Convenances" *Record & Guide*, Apr. 17, 1915, 153.

⁵² "A Remarkable Record: Resale of 135 Lots on Washington Heights Closes Series of Operations," *Record & Guide*, Jul. 3, 1913, 10; see also "Block Front to be Improved," *Record & Guide*, Jun. 20, 1914, 1104.

As reported in the *Sun* in August 1914, work would soon begin on “the largest apartment operation yet undertaken on Washington Heights.”⁵³ The first two apartment houses sat on the drive between 160th and 161st Streets. Drawing inspiration from Venice, architect Harold Lawrence Young designed the six-story pair in a Neo-Gothic style, with particular focus on the entrances and cornice lines. The projected cost was \$300,000 for each building. The Romaine (2136/106), on the northeast corner of 160th and the Loyal (2136/111), on the southeast corner of 161st, memorialized the previous owner and the realtor who had brokered the deal.



Figure 12: Architectural Renderings for the Romaine and Loyal Apartment Houses from the *New York Tribune*, June 20, 1915

The next year, Friedman hired Young again, this time in partnership with Stewart Wagner, to design buildings on either side of the Romaine and Loyal—the Neo-Gothic 900 (the Deluxe) and 910 Riverside Drive (2136/146) to the north and the Renaissance Revival 870 Riverside Drive (2136/34-36), named the Armidale, to the south. Excepting the seven-story Armidale, these buildings were uniformly six stories tall. Combined, their façades curved to accommodate Riverside Drive between 160th and 162nd Streets, just as in the historic district, George Fred Pelham’s 1908 Audubon Hall and Hispania Hall adapted to the entrance to the Boulevard

⁵³ “New Heights Apartments,” *The Sun*, Aug. 2, 1914.

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Lafayette between 156th and 157th Street, and Schaefer & Rutkins's 1932 apartment house at 765 Riverside Drive would align to the curving roadway at 155th Street.⁵⁴

While Friedman was focused on the blocks between 160th and 162nd Streets, the Sand Construction Company raised a new six-story apartment house farther south on Riverside Drive, at 838-844 (2136/20). The architect, Samuel Katz, worked in a Neo-Renaissance style for the six-story brick apartment building, which he capped with a distinctive denticulated and modillioned cornice with coffers. The developer named the building the Kingsland, honoring former mayor Ambrose Kingsland, who had once owned the property.

Construction continued in 1916, when Samuel Katz again used the Neo-Renaissance style for an apartment building on the lot just south of the Kingsland, 834-836 Riverside Drive (2136/18). At six-stories, the brick and limestone structure complemented the existing streetscape. Inscribed in the bracketed cornice above the entry was "Gustavius Court," taken from the name of the construction company. That same year, the Langhorne Construction company filed plans for a six-story brick apartment building at 860 Riverside Drive (2136/24). The architect was George Fred Pelham, who in 1907 had designed the first apartment houses to appear in the Audubon Park neighborhood. The developer named the Neo-Renaissance 860 Riverside, the Langhorne. Suggesting that the market was not yet saturated with apartment houses and that the neighborhood remained a popular one, rental agents Slawson & Hobbs reported in August 1917 that they had rented all of the apartments in the unfinished building "from the plans" – sight unseen.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ The partnership of Young & Wagner seems to have been brief, because the next year, the *Record & Guide* announced that Wagner was setting up his own practice on Fourth Avenue while Young moved from Fifth Avenue to Union Square. See "Personal and Trade Notes," *Record & Guide*, Apr. 15, 1916, 596-597.

⁵⁵ "Manhattan," *Record & Guide*, Aug. 18, 1917, 212.

Second Wave of Apartment Building: 1919-1932

Despite that encouragement, between 1917 and 1919, apartment house construction came to a halt on Riverside Drive between 155th and 162nd Streets. First, the United States entered World War I in April 1917 and then, the country endured the influenza pandemic in 1918 and 1919. Construction resumed in both areas in 1919.

In the historic district, George Fred Pelham designed the Cragmoor Dwellings (2134/167) for the North River Building Corporation, the first residential building to appear on the western side of the drive along its entire route.⁵⁶ That same year, Ramsey Realty Company, also known as the Villa Norma Realty Company, commissioned Harold Young to design a six-story apartment house for 835 Riverside Drive (2135/7) named the “Villa Norma.” Providing harmony with his previous buildings, Young designed another Neo-Renaissance brick structure, though this one was in an H-shaped plan, with a deep entry court, similar to those in the historic district that Schwartz and Gross had designed for the Rhinecliff Court at 788 Riverside Drive (2134/30), and Rouse and Goldstone had provided the Riviera at 790 Riverside Drive (2134/71). Also like those buildings, the Villa Norma in the extension area had an elaborate entry, with limestone swags, festoons, and urns. Because of Riverside Drive’s sinuous path, the Villa Norma stretched through to 158th Street, allowing the developer to capitalize on its light and air, and advertise “no rear apartments.” Signaling a new renter expectation, the Villa Norma also advertised a ‘Frigidaire in every apartment.’⁵⁷

Between 1920 and 1922, developers filled all the undeveloped lots on Riverside Drive between 158th and 161st Streets, except the northeastern edge of William Wheelock’s old property. His mansion still stood on the southern end.

In 1920, while Nathan Berler and Charles S. Levy built their distinctive duplex in the historic district, the Se Co Holding Corporation hired the architectural firm of Springsteen & Goldheimer to design a six-story apartment house for 812 Riverside Drive, (2136/10). They came up with an Arts & Crafts building in variegated buff brick with an irregular-shaped plan that featured a limestone base. The other new building in 1920 was a three-story freestanding dwelling at 863 Riverside Drive (2135/27) in the extension area, which sat between the two existing row-house groupings near 161st Street. John H. Knubel designed the brick and limestone house for William La Hiff in a Neoclassical style. Its flat façade, right on the sidewalk’s edge, contrasted with the bowed fronts and high entry stoops of the Neo-Renaissance row houses on either side of it.

In 1921, the 683 Westend Avenue Corporation began plans for a five-story apartment building to sit at 820 Riverside Drive (2136/13). The company’s president was Anthony Campagna, a builder-developer who had first worked for the Paterno Brothers (and married into the family) before forming his own construction company. He is noted for destroying “architecturally significant buildings” such as the Clark mansion on Fifth Avenue and the old Rialto Theatre on

⁵⁶ The late 19th-century rowhouses described earlier would have had that distinction, except that when they were constructed, their address was still Boulevard Lafayette.

⁵⁷ “Unfurnished Apartments for Rent,” *The Sun and the New York Herald*, Aug. 29, 1920, 8.

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42nd Street, and replacing them with luxury high rises. His demolition of the “Brokaw Mansion” in 1965 was a key moment in the activism that resulted in the New York City Landmarks Law.⁵⁸

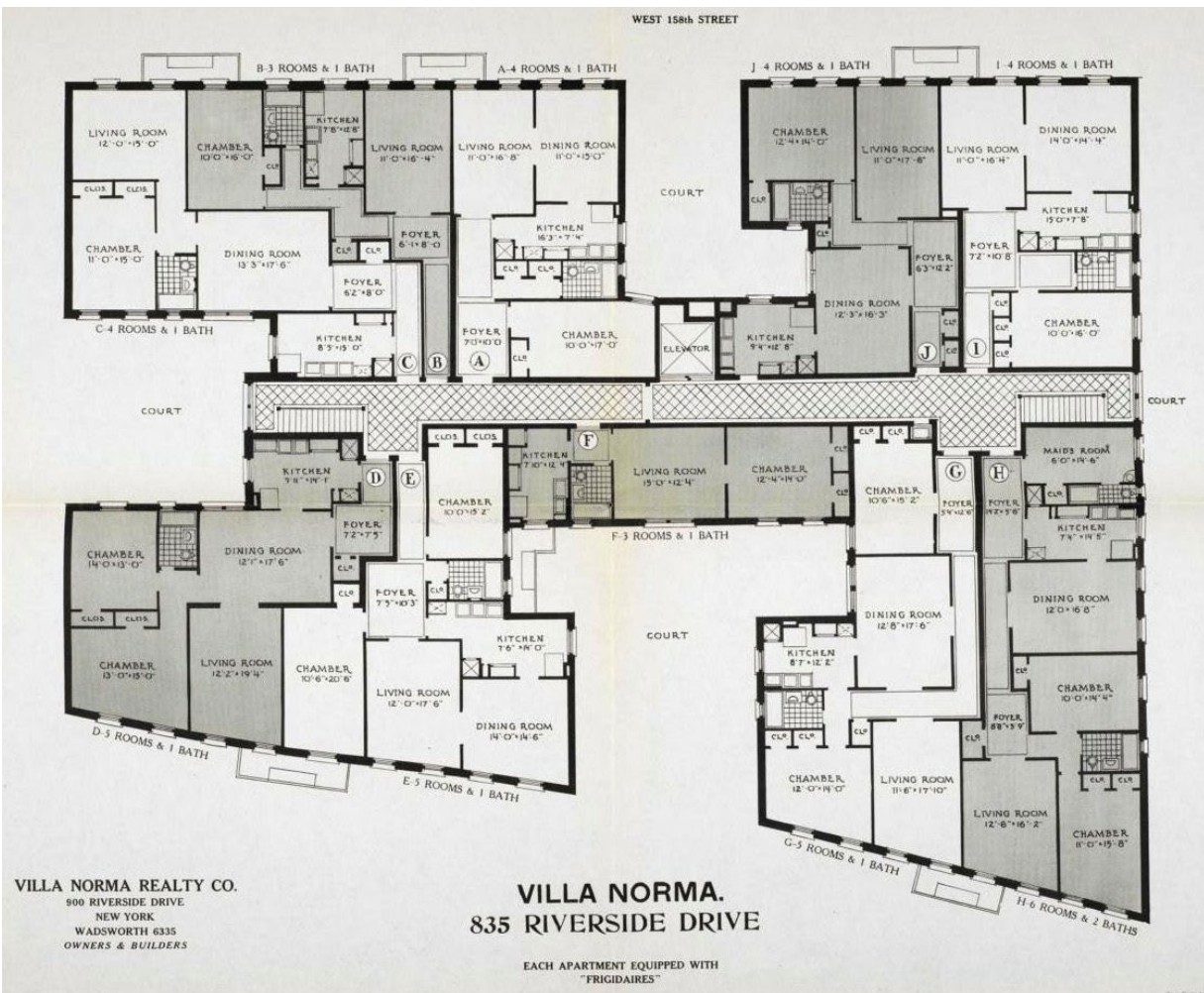


Figure 13: Villa Norma Floor Plan from New York Real Estate Brochure Collection, Columbia University Libraries

Campagna hired George Fred Pelham to design the apartment house. Contrasting with his earlier styles—Renaissance Revival (Audubon Hall, Hispania Hall, and the Langhorne), Mediterranean Revival (807 Riverside Drive), and Arts and Crafts (Cragmoor Dwellings)—Pelham employed an Eclectic style for 820, with Tudoresque flourishes such as thick squared roof brackets and applied half-timbering and plaster. A tiled-roof entry gate led into an open, landscaped garden, which—like the Grinnell across West 158th Street in the historic district—provided increased light and circulation to apartments. Perhaps the garden inspired the

⁵⁸ “Anthony Campagna,” The New York Preservation Archive Project, <https://www.nypap.org/preservation-history/anthony-campagna/>

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building's name, Marion Gardens. The building, with units three to six rooms, was ready for tenants in September 1921. Although elevators were by then a standard feature of apartment buildings, 820 was a walk-up.

In 1922, Henry Friedman once again collaborated with Harold Young, this time for a complex of three six-story apartment buildings for 839 to 853 Riverside Drive (2135/13, 17, 20). In keeping with other structures on the street—both apartment houses and row houses--Young used the Renaissance Revival style, with Venetian-inspired flourishes such as corbeling with lionheads and intricately carved moldings with crest tiles.

When that three-building complex was complete, new apartment house construction returned to the historic district.



Figure 14: Marion Gardens, 820 Riverside Drive⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Source: *New York Public Library*

The Evolution of a Neighborhood

Never satisfied with the path of Riverside Drive through Audubon Park, the Board of Street Openings and Improvement began planning a change in its route even before construction on the Audubon Park section was complete. The Washington Heights Taxpayers Association, whose leadership included 158th Street property owners Reginald Pelham Bolton and George W. Blauvelt, also lobbied for an additional Riverside Drive to correct the original path, “which competent engineers as well as city authorities, [considered] undesirable and even dangerous.” Debate on what corrective path was best continued for almost a decade, with schemes from Frederic Law Olmstead and Arnold W. Brunner, and Nelson P. Lewis. The solution, completed in 1928, was a viaduct connecting 155th Street and 161st Street that bypassed the “inner” serpentine route. Between 1924 and 1932, developers erected five apartment houses that replaced the last remnants of suburban Audubon Park, including the Audubon homestead.⁶⁰

Demographically, residents in the enclave enclosed by the two Riverside Drives shared similar ethnic, religious, social, and economic characteristics, whether they occupied an apartment or lived in a house. Over the next century, those shared characteristics would evolve following similar patterns across the entire neighborhood.

One interesting development was an increase in shared living spaces. As early as 1922, an owner had created at least one apartment at 861 Riverside Drive.⁶¹ Many more would follow. Major shifts in household size and composition between the 1920 and 1940 Federal censuses show that population density (the number of people living in an apartment) increased, as did the number of boarders, lodgers, unrelated families, and multiple generations living in one unit. Only one demographic category fell: the number of live-in servants, which freed former maid’s rooms for family members or lodgers. Economizing that came with the Great Depression also increased the market for smaller apartments, so in some older buildings owners divided old eight-to-ten room apartments into smaller units. In the designated area, one of the few buildings to escape this trend was the Grinnell. Remarkably, in the extension area, many buildings still have their original number of units, possibly because they had fewer rooms to begin with.

At the same time, many row house owners divided their buildings into floors or took in lodgers. Eventually, a few contained single-room occupancy units. In 1940, multiple families lived in all of the Schnugg houses on Riverside Drive at the corner of 158th Street except 823 where Mae Bainbridge, who had moved into the house with her husband when it was new, lived with her brother-in-law. Hungarian immigrant Anna Berger and her New York-born daughter Mary Johnson ran a lodging house at 861, which they rented, while Hungarian-born John Burger (perhaps an alternate spelling of Berger) rented next door, where he lived with his wife Julia, their two daughters and two sons, Julia’s two daughters from a previous marriage, her mother, and six lodgers.

⁶⁰ See Most and Betts, 13-15, and Spady, 272-287.

⁶¹ “Apartments to Let Unfurnished,” *New York Tribune*, Nov. 12, 1922.

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By the time developers replaced the Wheelock mansion at the foot of 158th Street with a six-building, 244-unit complex called the Riverside House (now River Arts), apartment sizes ranged from five and a half rooms down to studio apartments of just one and a half rooms. Another change, which accommodated an increase in privately owned cars, was “a large fireproof ramp garage on the premises for a nominal fee” with easy access to the Henry Hudson Parkway and West Side Highway. According to the building’s marketing brochure, driving time to Chambers Street was only 12 minutes.⁶²

A final step in the neighborhood’s urbanization occurred in 1964, when “Garage Village,” the series of garages and storage units that had covered an expanse between Riverside Drive and Riverside Drive West since the early 1920s, gave way to the city-sponsored Mitchell Lama building, River Terrace, which rose between West 157th and 158th Streets. A 16-story modernist apartment building in a double-T plan, River Terrace featured balconies lining its outer elevations, and towered above all the other buildings in the neighborhood. Its primary entrance was on Riverside Drive West, though its rear entrance onto an alleyway along the path of a never built Twelfth Avenue, proved much more congenial for residents heading to Broadway’s subway station and shopping district.

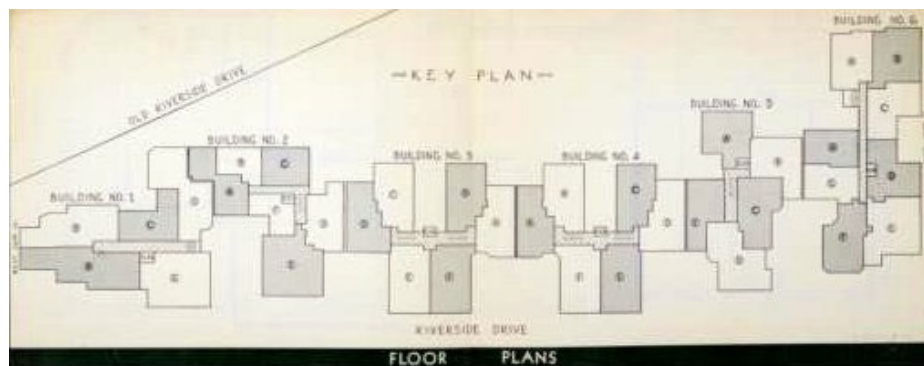


Figure 15: Floorplan from Riverside House Marketing Material from the New York Real Estate Brochure Collection, Columbia University Libraries

With this, the transformation of the region from Native American hunting grounds to bustling metropolitan neighborhood was complete. Signs of the Lenape today are all but extinct, glimpsed only occasionally, as when archaeologist (and long-time West 158th Street resident) Reginald P. Bolton and his colleagues uncovered evidence of a seasonal fishing camp where West 158th meets the Hudson. Or when the Bailey children, who moved onto West 158th Street with their parents in 1967, unearthed Native American arrowheads in the “community garden” that once existed behind the row houses there. Today that garden is a parking lot.

⁶² “New York Real Estate Brochure Collection,” Columbia University Libraries, <https://dlc.library.columbia.edu/nyre/cul:44j0zpc9k5>.

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That frequent demolition of the past, a constant throughout New York City, is what drew famed photographer Berenice Abbott to the streets of the extension in 1937, when she began capturing images of the oldest buildings in the area—including the dilapidated Wheelock mansion on 158th Street, and the still-refined and charming 857 Riverside—for her soon-to-be acclaimed exhibition “Changing New York.” She predicted these grand architectural structures were doomed. And she was right. All are gone now, save for 857 Riverside, which is currently under threat of demolition.

And yet the past is not completely gone—residents every day walk past talismans of earlier times, past the lush “glen” in the River Arts backyard, and on up the steep stone staircase connecting Riverside to 160th Street, surrounded by trees and shrubbery, a reminder of the rocky bluffs and woods that once dominated this space; past 857 Riverside, set back from the road at an angle, with its front yard and wraparound porches, a hint of the suburban villas this area was known for; past the row houses and proud apartment buildings that sprung up in response to the subway. This timeline of artifacts still exists here. All anyone has to do is look up.



Figure 16: Groundbreaking for the River Terrace Apartments⁶³

⁶³ Source: *New York City Municipal Archives*

Slavery, Abolitionism, and Decades of Diversity

While the streetscapes, building types, and exteriors of the Audubon Park Historic District and extension area have long promoted a pleasing homogeneity with a seamless flow from one end of Riverside Drive to the other, the people who have lived in those structures have represented something else entirely. The exteriors may speak of sameness, but a marked diversity—in skin tones, mother tongues, religious views, and socioeconomic status—has expressed itself for decades through those who have lived in these buildings—and who live in them still.

The beginning was rocky, with invader-indigenous hostilities, and the institution of slavery, but in the mid-19th century, Dennis Harris, John Newhouse, and a host of likeminded neighbors formed an abolitionist colony. The seeds of racial tolerance and inclusivity they planted have, if not always flourished, endured.

Descendants of the Dutch and Anglo-Saxon immigrants, who felled trees and first divided the land into lots for farms and pastures, have learned to share it with an array of “outsiders”: Irish and Jews, African-Americans, Puerto Ricans, and Dominicans, plus waves of performing artists, musicians and, in recent years, a burgeoning LGBTQ community. All have found a home here.

Early Years: Skirmishes and Slavery

For centuries, the Lenape, who lived on the New York mainland in winter, spent their summers hunting and fishing in Manhattan, including on the land now covered by the historic district and extension. Then came those earliest European settlers. Given their different understanding of land ownership and intentions for land use, fighting between the Lenape and immigrant farmers was inevitable. By the 1690s, the settlers had displaced the tribe.⁶⁴

With the Lenape gone, pioneering farmers were free to buy, sell, and work the land as they wished. The Watkins and the Maunsell families, who owned the land in the designated district and extension in the late 18th century, relied on enslaved Africans to perform the myriad tasks—indoors and out—that kept their large farms running, just as their neighbors Alexander Hamilton and Samuel Bradhurst did. In the years following the Revolutionary War, the widowed Lydia Watkins and Elizabeth Maunsell could remain in their homes thanks to their enslaved labor.

On the Watkins property in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, such work fell to an African family and two other individuals whose relationship is unclear, listed in Lydia’s will only by first names:

- * A couple, Hannon and Jane
- * Their sons, John, Bill and Peter

⁶⁴ Bolton, 5.

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* Their daughter, Tamar

* A man named Robin, and another person whose identity is unknown.

Of the earliest Black residents to live and work on the land that would one day become the Audubon Park Historic District and the proposed extension area, these are the first whose names have survived.

In 1800, an enumerator for the Federal Census counted eight enslaved people in the Watkins household and four for Maunsell; in 1810, the numbers had dropped to six and three, respectively. The Gradual Emancipation Act of 1799 freed slave children born after July 4 of that year, but even then, females remained in indentured service until they were 26 and males until they were 28.

Lydia Watkins died in 1811, freeing her slaves Hannon and Jane, and three of their four children—John, Bill and Tamar—while bequeathing their son Peter to her son Samuel until Peter was 28. According to her will, Robin, who was possibly a “freedman of color,” was “at [l]iber[ty] to go where he please & to live with any of my children whom he may choose to serve, but that he shall not in any wise be sold.”⁶⁵

Although slavery was abolished in New York in 1827, the area’s complex relationship to race would continue for decades. John James Audubon, who bought farmland here in 1841, was no stranger to slavery; he was born on the island of Saint Dominique (now Haiti), the son of a French sugar-cane plantation owner and his French mistress. Enslaved people worked the plantation and home, and after the death of Audubon’s French birth mother, who was white, his father’s mixed-race mistress raised him with her daughters, his three biracial half-sisters. The first family Audubon would have known and remembered throughout his life was mixed-race. When Audubon was about three years old, his father moved him and one of those half-sisters, apparently light enough to pass as white, to France, where his legal wife raised them. Audubon would later own slaves himself, when he and his wife, Lucy, lived in Kentucky. He sold them when his fortunes took a downturn after the Panic of 1819.⁶⁶

This racial discord echoed in the extension area. While Ambrose Kingsland was living in his mansion at what is now 162nd Street and Riverside Drive, at the northern tip of the extension area, he nursed political ambitions. In 1851, after he sold his home, he became New York’s seventy-first mayor. While in office, he earned the dubious distinction of signing the legislation that would force the evacuation of African-Americans from their Upper West Side community known as Seneca Village, which workmen razed before building Central Park.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Lydia Watkins will, Mar. 30, 1807.

⁶⁶ See Shirley Streshinsky, *Audubon: Life and Art in the American Wilderness* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1998), 3-19, 82; Francis Hobart Herrick, *Audubon the Naturalist: A History of his Life and Time*, 2nd ed. (New York and London: D. Appleton-Century, 1938), 1:39-51, 65; and Richard Rhodes, *John James Audubon: The Making of an American* (New York: Knopf, 2004), 115, 139-42.

⁶⁷ Morrison H. Heckscher, “Creating Central Park,” *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Winter, 2008), 12-15; and Maria Konnikova, “Want to Be Happier and Live Longer?”

The Abolitionists Come to Washington Heights

In the 1850s, the historic district and the extension area would undergo a major transformation, both spiritually and politically. With the arrival of Dennis Harris, John Newhouse, and like-minded neighbors, the cause of abolitionism found a home in this pocket of northern Manhattan. Within just a few years, Harris and his followers established two abolitionist churches, a rarity in New York City. One of them was the progenitor of today's North Presbyterian Church on 155th Street between Broadway and Amsterdam, which today serves an African-American congregation.

Although a group of liberal-minded families appear to have arrived in the area in the mid-19th century somewhat by serendipity, once here, they were galvanized by Harris, a sugar refiner, ordained Methodist minister, and documented stationmaster on the Underground Railroad. Harris and his wife immigrated to New York from England in 1832, and once here, he learned the sugar trade from Samuel Blackwell, himself an ardent abolitionist, who Harris met on the ship from England.⁶⁸ By the 1840s, Harris was living at 33 Vandam Street in southern Manhattan, and running his own business, the Congress Sugar Refinery, which he built at 144 Duane Street.

He also preached at the Methodist Episcopal Church on Vestry Street, where he paid a heavy price for speaking out against slavery. In 1840, an angry pastor censured and nearly stripped Harris of his ministerial duties because he had asked congregants to pray for slaves. "Thunderstruck," Harris left the church, and helped organize the "Wesleyan Connection," a movement that broke away from the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States over the issue of slavery.⁶⁹ He soon established a Wesleyan Chapel at 95 King Street, hosting frequent anti-slavery meetings that drew a Who's Who of abolitionist congregants and speakers, many of whom worked on the Underground Railroad, including Sydney Howard Gay (editor of the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*),⁷⁰ Lewis Tappan (who helped liberate enslaved Africans aboard the ship *Amistad*), Rev. Lucius Matlack and Rev. Luther Lee (leading anti-slavery lecturers and Wesleyan movement co-founders), and Henry Bibb (an African-American newspaper founder and author of an acclaimed autobiographical slave narrative).⁷¹

Protect Green Spaces," *ScientificAmerican.com*, May 16, 2013, <https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/literally-psyched/want-to-be-happier-and-live-longer-protect-green-spaces/> (accessed Jun 14, 2021).

⁶⁸ Unless otherwise noted, information on Dennis Harris's career in New York as a sugar refiner, speculative land developer and abolitionist comes from Matthew Spady, *The Neighborhood Manhattan Forgot: Audubon Park and the Families Who Shaped It* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2020), 67-73.

⁶⁹ Lucius C. Matlack, *The History of American Slavery and Methodism from 1780 to 1849: And History of the Wesleyan Methodist Connection of America* (New York, 1849), 288-91, 357-9, 367. See also *Doctrines and Discipline of the Wesleyan Methodist Church* (Ann Arbor, MI: N. Sullivan, printer, 1842), 3-4, 29-30; and Joelle Million, "Samuel Blackwell: Sugar Refiner and Abolitionist," *New York History Review* (June 14, 2017).

⁷⁰ Don Papson and Tom Calarco, *Secret Lives of the Underground Railroad in New York City*, (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc. Publishers, 2015), 118.

⁷¹ "Wesleyan Methodist Society," *New-York Daily Tribune*, May 10, 1850.

Harris's own work on the Underground Railroad was prodigious. Sydney Howard Gay included Harris's Vandam house, his Duane Street refinery, and his King Street church on his list of Underground Railroad sites in New York City.⁷² Some years after the Civil War, architect and Underground Railroad member William Johnson would recall Harris's refinery as "a sort of Grand Central Station of the Underground Railroad."⁷³

In one notable incident from 1846, Gay and his staffers at the *Standard* turned to Harris to assist in the escape of George Kirk, a man fleeing bondage who was hidden under the floorboards in Gay's office after an angry mob chased him through the streets of Lower Manhattan. Harris sent a horse-pulled dray to the *Standard* to collect boxes and wooden crates, one of which hid Kirk. The plan was to transport him to Harris's refinery, where he could hide until Underground Railroad conductors could get him out of the city. Police stopped the wagon, broke open the crate, and arrested Kirk, while spewing racial epithets.⁷⁴

Kirk was later freed by a judge and hustled out of town by the Underground Railroad. The event garnered considerable press coverage, including an 1846 hand-colored lithograph of a political cartoon published by H.R. Robinson. Rendered in racist imagery, "Arrest of the Slave George Kirk" depicts a caricature of Kirk, along with names and details of those involved. "D. Harris" is clearly printed on the wagon.⁷⁵

Underground Railroad compatriot William Johnson confirms Harris's participation in the George Kirk affair in his memoir, which was quoted in a 1922 tome on the political history of New York State. Johnson's earlier account of the incident appeared in various newspapers, including the *New-York Tribune* in 1885,⁷⁶ and in a book about New York City history from 1897.⁷⁷

⁷² Papson and Calarco, List: Gay Underground Railroad.

⁷³ Willis Fletcher Johnson, *History of the State of New York, Political and Governmental, vol. 2, 1822-1864* (Syracuse, NY: The Syracuse Press Inc., 1922), 289.

⁷⁴ Unless otherwise noted, information on the manhunt for George Kirk comes from Papson and Calarco, 43-6. It was also confirmed with the following sources: George Kirk et al., *Supplement to the New-York legal observer, containing the report of the case in the matter of George Kirk, a fugitive slave, heard before the Hon. J. W. Edmonds, circuit judge: also the argument of John Jay, of counsel for the slave* (New York: Legal Observer Office, 1847), PDF retrieved from the Library of Congress <https://www.loc.gov/item/98104378/>; "Court of Over [sic] and Terminer: Before Judge Edmonds and Ald Jackson and Johnson," *The New York Herald*, Oct. 23, 1846; "Case of the Fugitive Slave: Tremendous Excitement," *New-York Daily Tribune*, Oct. 28, 1846; "The Slave Case," *New York Evangelist*, Oct. 29, 1846, 17, 44; "The Police of New-York on a Slave-Hunt!" *New-York Daily Tribune*, Oct. 30, 1846.

⁷⁵ "The Arrest of the Slave George Kirk," Ian Brabner Rare Americana website

https://www.rareamericana.com/pages/books/3728628/c-clay/arrest-of-the-slave-george-kirk?s_oldItem=true

⁷⁶ "A Slave Hunt in New York: And a Rescue by the Underground Railroad," *New-York Tribune*, Oct. 25, 1885. The same story from the Tribune was reprinted in other regional papers, as in "A Slave-Hunt in New York: And a Rescue by the Underground Railroad," *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle*, Oct. 27, 1885.

⁷⁷ Frank Moss LL.D., *The American Metropolis, from Knickerbocker Days to the Present Time: New York City Life in All Its Phases* (New York: Peter Fenelon Collier, 1897), 245-7.



Figure 17: Arrest of the Slave George Kirk ⁷⁸

In 1848, Harris’s Duane Street refinery burned to the ground, and in 1849, he moved his family to Washington Heights, taking residence in the old Kingsland mansion at the northern edge of the extension area. Though the extent of his uptown Underground Railroad activities is unknown, he was still clearly devoted to the cause. In an 1853 letter to the renowned statesman Frederick Douglass, the Rev. L. Delos Mansfield commended Harris, along with Gerrit Smith and Arthur Tappan, two of the most influential abolitionists and Underground Railroad participants of the era, for their “numerous contributions to the cause of humanity,” in addition to their own financial donations to Mansfield’s new Advent Mission Church at 39 Forsyth Street, which housed an integrated congregation.⁷⁹

What *is* clear is that Harris proceeded to do uptown exactly what he had done while working on the Underground Railroad downtown. He built a home, he built a sugar refinery, and he established churches where he preached the sins of slavery. In 1851, he built the first of two churches, a “Wesleyan Chapel” on the corner of 158th Street and Tenth (Amsterdam) Avenue, “a chaste and beautiful specimen of a village church,” which the *New-York Daily Tribune*

⁷⁸ Source: Hand-colored Lithograph, H. R. Robinson <https://www.invaluable.com/auction-lot/hand-colored-engraving-arrest-of-the-slave-george-149-c-52c47a1956>

⁷⁹ Frederick Douglass, *The Frederick Douglass Papers, Series Three: Correspondence*, vol. 2, 1853-1865 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018), 35.

attributed to the “munificence of one man” —Harris.⁸⁰ The congregation did not survive, likely because of competition with the Church of the Intercession, which was already established.⁸¹

In 1854, Harris co-founded the Washington Heights Congregational Church with:

- **John Newhouse**, his business partner and fellow abolitionist, who purchased 857 Riverside in 1854 and lived there with his family until his death in 1868.

Newhouse became a partner in the firm of Harris & Co. in the fall of 1853, and helped oversee Harris’s refinery and steamboat service.⁸² Like Harris, Newhouse had been affiliated with the Democratic Whig (aka Whig) party, a group whose Northern members generally endorsed anti-slavery views. He was also a member of the American Art-Union, an art patronage group linked to the anti-slavery movement, supported by abolitionists like Lydia Maria Child, and often pilloried by the anti-abolitionist penny press.⁸³

- **John Tonnele**, Newhouse’s son-in-law, who lived at 857 Riverside with his wife (Newhouse’s eldest daughter), Catharine, and their 3-year-old son.
- **John Dalley**, a lumberman, who was also Dennis Harris’s son-in-law; he hosted the founding meeting for the church at his house at what is now the southwest corner of 158th Street and Broadway.

At the start, the church was a Harris-Newhouse family effort, Harris as preacher, Newhouse as church clerk, and their sons-in-law Dally and Tonnele as deacons. Tonnele would later serve as an elder and trustee.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ “Religious Items,” *New-York Daily Tribune*, Apr. 10, 1851.

⁸¹ The Methodists did re-form a few years later, however, as the Washington Heights Methodist Episcopal Church, and in 1869, hired Rembrandt Lockwood to design an edifice they built on the corner of present-day Amsterdam Avenue and 153rd Street.

⁸² “In Court of Appeals: Samuel Orchard, Respondent, against Abraham M. Binninger and Dexter B. Britton, impleaded with James E. Brown, appellants” (New York: Howard & Stover, 1868), 123-4.

⁸³ Newhouse ran as a nominee for Election Inspector on the Whig ticket in 1840; “Seventeenth Ward Democratic Whig Nomination,” *Morning Herald*, April 14, 1840. Harris served as vice president with the 12th Ward Whigs as late as 1852; “Twelfth Ward,” *The New York Herald*, July 13, 1852. For info about the American Art-Union, see “American Art-Union, 1839-1851: The Rise of American Art Literacy,” <https://www.gale.com/c/american-art-union-1839-1851-the-rise-of-american-art-literacy>; Newhouse’s membership, see “A List of Members of the American Art-Union for the Year 1850,” *Bulletin of the American Art-Union*, Dec. 31, 1850, [No] 10, 184; Child’s participation, see Kimberly Orcutt, “The American Art-Union and the Rise of a National Landscape School: Scholarly Essay,” in Kimberly Orcutt, with Allan McLeod, “Unintended Consequences: The American Art-Union and the Rise of a National Landscape School,” *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide* 18, no. 1 (Spring 2019), <https://doi.org/10.29411/ncaw.2019.18.1.14> (accessed June 13, 2021).

⁸⁴ Rev. Charles A. Stoddard, DD, *An Historical Review of the Washington Heights Presbyterian Church* (New York: New York Institution for the Deaf & Dumb, 1877), 6-7.

Other church elders and trustees from the community included:

- Banker and Audubon Park resident **William Wheelock**, whose mansion fronted 158th Street. (The River Arts Apartment complex in the extension area occupies Wheelock's former property.)
- **Dr. Harvey Prindle Peet**, principal of the local New York Asylum for the Deaf & Dumb, located on what is now the grounds of New York-Presbyterian/Columbia University Irving Medical Center; and **Isaac Peet**, Harvey's son, who taught at the school and succeeded his father as principal. Like John Newhouse and Lydia Maria Child, Harvey and Isaac were members of the American Art-Union.⁸⁵

Harvey Peet also appears in correspondence from deaf studies pioneer Thomas Gallaudet to abolitionist Gerrit Smith, after Peet was consulted regarding the creation of a "colored school" for deaf children.⁸⁶ He integrated his own Washington Heights institution—a radical act at the time. Inspired by his open-minded views, British missionaries renamed a young African boy Harvey Prindle Peet II, after freeing him from slavery; that boy, often called "Black Harvey" to distinguish him from his namesake, attended Peet's school in the 1850s along with his brother, Wia, both of whom were deaf.⁸⁷

The church also drew prominent members of the community into its fold, including:

- **Shepherd Knapp**, the well-known financier, former New York City chamberlain, and outspoken anti-slavery advocate. Knapp, who lived in a house in the extension area, organized and presided over an anti-slavery rally at the Broadway Tabernacle that drew thousands in 1854.⁸⁸ His abolitionist fervor was familial; his father-in-law, the Rev. Gardiner Spring, pastor of Manhattan's historic Brick Church, became known for the anti-slavery Spring Resolutions of 1861, which supported the Union after the South's

⁸⁵ "A List of Members of the American Art-Union for the Year 1850," *Bulletin of the American Art-Union*, Dec. 31, 1850, [No] 10, 180.

⁸⁶ Calendar of the Gerrit Smith papers in the Syracuse University Library: General Correspondence, vol. 1, 1819-1846, 10.

⁸⁷ Guilbert C. Braddock, *Notable Deaf Persons* (Washington, DC: Gallaudet College Alumni Association, 1975), 108; and *Deaf-Mutes Journal*, vol. 21, no. 49, Dec. 8, 1892, 4 (col. 1); <https://moam.info/question-who-wrote-many-books-on-military-engineering-and-5a3751851723dd81d61b954c.html> There is a brief reference to Wia's death in the *American Annals of the Deaf and Dumb*, vol. 10, no. 3, July 1858, 191, which announced, "DEATHS: At the New York Institute for the Deaf and Dumb, June 2nd, of consumption [tuberculosis], WIA, an African deaf-mute, a native of Cape Palmas [Liberia], arrived from Africa last fall."

⁸⁸ "Tribute to a Former Pastor," *The New York Observer*, September 30, 1909. For info on some of Shepherd Knapp's anti-slavery activities, see Benson J. Lossing, LLD, *History of New York City: Embracing an Outline Sketch of Events from 1609 to 1830, and a Full Account of Its Development from 1830 to 1884* (New York: The Perine Engraving and Publishing Co., 1884), 651-3; and "Nebraska Territory: Defense of the Missouri Compromise, Protest Against Its Violation," *New York Daily Times*, January 31, 1854.

secession. (Knapp's nephew and namesake, the Rev. Shepherd Knapp, would later serve as assistant pastor at Brick Church).⁸⁹

- **George Blake Grinnell** and his wife, **Helen Lansing Grinnell**, members of the Church of the Intercession, also attended services at the Harris-Newhouse church.

Helen Grinnell frequently mentioned in her journals their devotion to this church, which seems to have espoused a spiritual and political worldview, at least regarding slavery, in keeping with both George and Helen's upbringing. Her father, the Rev. Dirck Cornelius Lansing, was co-founder and first president of the Auburn Theological Seminary, an institution noted for its anti-slavery activism, and one of the first seminaries in the nation to admit African Americans.⁹⁰

George Grinnell's father (George, Jr, who spelled his surname Grennell) was a Congressman and Whig party member from Massachusetts, who had argued in favor of abolishing slavery in the District of Columbia, and in 1838 on the floor of Congress advocated that the United States disavow "national distinctions founded on color" and open international relations with the Haitian Republic, the first country in the world to abolish slavery outright.⁹¹

The Grinnells were the only family in pre-war Audubon Park, who employed an African-American servant, Hannah Demund, their cook, who was born a free woman in New Jersey.

Leading abolitionists from the region recognized and visited the church Harris and Newhouse helped found. At the church's inaugural celebration in March 1855, delegates came uptown from Congregational churches throughout the city, including Brooklyn's Plymouth Church, an institution renowned for its anti-slavery fervor and participation in New York's Underground Railroad. Abolitionist Lewis Tappan, who had attended Harris's church downtown, had helped fund the creation of Plymouth just eight years earlier, installing the famed and fiery abolitionist Henry Ward Beecher as its first pastor.⁹²

On another occasion, James W. C. Pennington, the prominent African-American writer and orator, arguably second only to Frederick Douglass in stature and influence, spoke at the church about his experiences in slavery, alongside his brother, Stephen Pembroke. Just months earlier, Pembroke had fled slavery with his two sons, arriving in New York, only to be apprehended by

⁸⁹ Barbara Meachin, "Preaching and Passion: The Brick Church Pulpit in History," BrickChurch.org, Sept. 28, 2018, <https://www.brickchurch.org/category/about/>

⁹⁰ "Auburn's History," Auburn Seminary website, <https://auburnseminary.org/history/>

⁹¹ Henry Whittmore, *Our New England Ancestors and Their Descendants, 1620-1900: Historical, Genealogical, Biographical* (New York: New England Ancestral Publishing Co., 1900), 36.

⁹² Stoddard, 7. For info on Plymouth Church, see "Social Justice: The Underground Railroad," PlymouthChurch.org <http://www.plymouthchurch.org/underground-railroad>; and "New York City and the Path to Freedom: Landmarks Association with Abolitionist & Underground Railroad History," New York City Landmarks Preservation Committee, June 19, 2020, <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/69963f59071f4ecca36e19a4a64f875c>

bounty hunters and dragged back. Pennington had been able to buy his brother's freedom, but not that of his two nephews, who were quickly sold to slavers in the Deep South.⁹³

Harris introduced the pair to the congregation, denouncing slavery as "a manifest insult to the dignity of our common human nature." Pembroke described the horrors of slavery he had witnessed, including the beating of his own father, a "kind, exemplary and affectionate" man, who was "knocked down and danced upon." Pennington provided the details of his brothers' recent ordeal, adding that their mother was still in bondage, her location unknown. "The Rev. Dr. was so deeply affected that the tears flowed down his cheeks as he spoke," a reporter noted. The congregation took up a collection for the cause.⁹⁴

The congregants in attendance, who lived in and around the historic district and extension area, were not in Harris's church by accident, nor did they give it money solely from Christian charity. In the antebellum period, places of worship in New York, and throughout the North, were growing increasingly segregated. Many Protestant ministers urged their African-American brethren to form all-black churches of their own, and they certainly did not invite Black people to speak from their pulpits. If they were allowed to attend at all, Black people sat in "negro pews," usually in a gallery.⁹⁵ Many churches, notes Pennington biographer Christopher L. Webber, wanted to downplay discussions of slavery, claiming religious services should be free from "politics."⁹⁶

Harris's neighbors would also have known his reputation. His activities often made the papers, from the fiery eulogy he delivered upon the death of imprisoned Underground Railroad pioneer Charles T. Torrey in 1846,⁹⁷ to his Wesleyan Church celebration in 1850, one year after having moved to Washington Heights, in which he invited two Native American women and African-American orator Henry Bibb to speak to his King Street congregation.⁹⁸ Later that year, he made the papers again when he hired an African American man to work a construction site

⁹³ Mike Cummings, "In the Shadows No More: Divinity School Honors Minister James W.C. Pennington," Yale News, September 30, 2016, <https://news.yale.edu/2016/09/30/shadows-no-more-yds-honors-minister-james-wc-pennington>; Gerald Renner, "Clergyman, Former Slave Among Giants of Abolition," *Hartford Courant*, February 25, 1996, <https://www.courant.com/news/connecticut/hc-xpm-1996-02-25-9602250248-story.html>; Tim Rowland, "The Tale of Former Washington County Slaves and Their Lost Land," *The Herald-Mail*, January 18, 2020, https://www.heraldmillmedia.com/opinion/tim_rowland/the-tale-of-former-washington-county-slaves-and-their-lost-land/article_0ccf98d7-176a-501d-bfec-71a8296ca89d.html; and Philip S. Foner and Robert James Branham, eds., *Lift Every Voice: African American Oratory, 1787-1900* (Tuscaloosa, AL: The University of Alabama Press, 1998), 271-3.

⁹⁴ "Public Meetings: Anti-Slavery Meeting at Washington Hights [sic]," *New-York Daily Tribune*, Aug. 11, 1854.

⁹⁵ Graham Russell Hodges, *Root and Branch: African Americans in New York and East Jersey, 1613-1863* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 238-41.

⁹⁶ Christopher L. Webber, email with author, Oct. 20, 2020.

⁹⁷ Sympathy for Rev. Charles T. Torrey," *National Aegis*, May 27, 1846. Torrey, a Congregationalist minister, died in a Maryland prison after being convicted of assisting refugees escaping slavery. Torrey estimated he had ushered nearly 400 individuals to freedom, and Harris preached that despite the "wrath of Slavery," Torrey's name would forever "be a terror in the ears of oppressors, and a talisman of encouragement to all who labor in the course in which he fell a martyr."

⁹⁸ "Wesleyan Methodist Society," *New-York Daily Tribune*, May 10, 1850.

on Duane Street, and stood up to nearly 70 Irish laborers who chose to strike in retaliation. The strikers took up a collection, hoping to bribe Harris into firing the man, but Harris refused.⁹⁹

While many abolitionists of the day, like Brooklyn residents Thomas and Harriet Truesdell, may have had subscriptions to the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, Harris himself *appeared in* that influential publication, as in the article describing his anti-slavery tour of England for the Wesleyan movement, which appeared alongside reports of the esteemed reformer Frederick Douglass.¹⁰⁰

These events strongly suggest that the leaders and congregants in this Washington Heights church were progressive and sympathetic to the cause of abolitionism. At that time, Pennington and Pembroke's appearance alone would have sent clear signals to the community that underscored the church's "liberal and abolitionist" position, asserts Graham Hodges, a professor of history at Colgate University, who has written extensively on slavery, abolitionism, and the Underground Railroad. "The church was taking a definite liberal position," concurs Webber.¹⁰¹

For financial reasons, Harris's Congregational church eventually changed its denomination and renamed itself the Washington Heights Presbyterian Church. In the late 1850s, Harris helped raise money to build a new structure, complete with clock tower, on one of his lots on the northwest corner of what is now Amsterdam and 155th Street.¹⁰²

Whether Harris ever used his church, home, refinery, or the house he sold Newhouse as stops on the Underground Railroad, as he had done with his properties downtown, is not clear. But, to suggest Harris's spirit would wane in the 1850s, just as the nation was reaching a flashpoint, is illogical and inconsistent with the facts. A mere change of address would not change his heart. In fact, his move uptown would have rendered these activities even more effective, and more urgent after passage of the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act.

As Fergus M. Bordewich, author of the standard national history of the Underground Railroad, *Bound for Canaan: The Underground Railroad and the War for the Soul of America*, has explained:

Harris's involvement in the Underground Railroad is well-documented. While the use of his Washington Heights properties as underground sites has not yet been proven, very strong circumstantial evidence suggests that they were. At the very least, further historical study is urgently called for. Destruction of the surviving building would be a

⁹⁹ "City Items," *New-York Daily Tribune*, Nov. 6, 1850. This account noted that Harris had taken a similar stand in the past, supporting Irishmen when Germans refused to work alongside them, and in turn Germans when they were targeted by others.

¹⁰⁰ "At a Meeting Held in King Street Chapel," *The National Anti-Slavery Standard*, Mar. 9, 1848. The Truesdells' subscription to this paper is noted in the NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission's "Designation Report: Truesdell House," Feb. 2, 2021, 14.

¹⁰¹ Hodges, email with author, October 20, 2020; and Webber, email with author, October 20, 2020

¹⁰² *New York City Register*, Harris to Washington Heights Congregational Society, Sep. 15, 1855, L69,62.

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travesty, and an irreparable loss to a city which has a very poor record of preserving sites related to Black and abolitionist history.

Although antebellum New York City was home to important abolitionists and a sizeable antebellum African-American population, it was also a hotbed of anti-abolitionist activity, and not a secure refuge for fugitives. There was urgent pressure to move newly arrived fugitives to safe havens upstate. Just how many fugitives passed through the city is unknowable, given the paucity of records. A reasonable estimate would be at least several hundred or perhaps as many as one thousand per year from the 1830s through the 1850s. While some continued up the coast to New England, the great majority were sent up the Hudson River to Albany and on to abolitionist strongholds in central New York or Canada.

The comparative isolation of Harris's Washington Heights properties argues for their utility as a protected, easily guarded way-station for fugitives who needed to be gotten quickly out of lower Manhattan. Harris's ownership of a steamboat strongly suggests that this vessel could well have been used, as others were, to ferry fugitive slaves, since riverboats were the primary means to move freedom-seekers northward.¹⁰³

But the rationale for designation does not end with this church, or this time period.

¹⁰³ Fergus M. Bordewich to Lesley Doyel, Upper Riverside Residents Alliance, May 25, 2021.

The Story Continues: Diversity and Development in and around Audubon Park

This spirit of inclusivity, nurtured in the earliest days of Washington Heights, would only grow in later decades, though Harris would not live to see it. He lost a considerable sum when he was duped into investing in a shady business deal, and went bankrupt with the financial Panic of 1857, forcing him to give up his riverfront mansion and shut down his refinery. He moved to a small apartment on West 45th Street, where he died in 1868.

Savvy businessmen snapped up Harris's uptown properties, including Cuban-born millionaire Don Leonardo Santos Suárez, and real-estate magnate Bartolomé Blanco de Lema, from Galicia in northwestern Spain, possibly the first native-born Spanish speakers to arrive in this area that would one day become known for its mix of Hispanic cultures. Both men's fortunes were indelibly tied to the slave trade.¹⁰⁴

Still, the complexion, and complexity of ethnic ties, in the area would soon grow. By 1880, at least a few African Americans could be counted in the Federal Census among the local residents, including Robert Magee, the Grinnells' butler, and Fanny Mills, their cook, born in Alabama in 1840; and Henry Jackson, a coachman for the Ladew family of Audubon Park, and his wife, Alberta, born in Maryland in the 1850s. All four likely learned their professional skills while in bondage.¹⁰⁵

Other progressive individuals from the area included Audubon Park resident Mary Louisa Stone, an artist and illustrator whose brother Charles Francis Stone owned one of the old Audubon family houses in the last two decades of the 19th century. Before Stone moved there, her brother added a tower room to the house for her to use as her studio. Stone attended Miss Porter's School, a private institution in Connecticut that had many ties to abolitionists, and then studied art in Ecoen, France, from 1878 to 1881. *Harper's Weekly* published her illustrations of life in reconstruction-era North Carolina, including an 1872 image of two African-American women selling their wares to a general store proprietor. She was later active with Victoria Earle Matthews's White Roses Industrial Society "for working colored girls," and held board meetings for the society in her home. She became president of the board in 1910 and involved with other similar organizations.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ Spady, 94. For info on Santos Suárez and his slave-trading employer, Peter Harmony & Co., see "Cuba: Synopsis of her Story," *Detroit Free Press*, Nov 30, 1858, and Martín Rodrigo y Alharilla, "From Slave Trade to Banking in Nineteenth-Century Spain," *Comparativ: Zeitschrift für Globalgeschichte und vergleichende Gesellschaftsforschung* 30 (2020), Heft 5/6, 604-5; for more on de Lema's wealth and ties to the slave trade, see "The Will of Don Bartolome Blanco de Lema," *The Daily Commonwealth*, Sep 22, 1874, and George R. Ryskamp, JD, "Searching for the Parents and Siblings of Benita de Lema: Surname Usage in Galicia before 1790," *Cuadernos de Estudios Gallegos*, LIX, núm. 125 (2012), 247.

¹⁰⁵ Spady, 176.

¹⁰⁶ "North Carolina," *Harper's Weekly*, Apr. 20, 1872, 315-6. The accompanying article, penned by the editors, not Stone, offers a decidedly offensive description of her illustration of a "backwoods" general store, where "on market days the poor whites and negroes go to dispose of the products of their industry, if their indolent shifts to pick up a living deserve the name." For more on Stone, see "'A Handsome Institution of This Kind for Themselves': Women in the University Building," *Researching Greenwich Village History* website, Oct. 5, 2015, <https://greenwichvillagehistory.wordpress.com/tag/mary-l-stone/>, accessed July 4, 2021; and "Mary Louisa Stone," *Les Peintres d'Ecoen* website, <https://www.peintres-ecouen.com/mary-louisa-stone-e/>, accessed Jul. 4, 2021.



Figure 18: Antique 1872 engraving from Harper's Weekly, *Interior of a Country Store in North Carolina*, engraving by Sol Eytinge Jr from a sketch by Miss Mary L. Stone

Ethnic diversity continued to bloom in the early 20th century, as the row houses and apartment buildings that sprang up in the extension area around 857 Riverside Drive drew an eclectic set of neighbors. According to the Federal Census in 1910, the majority of residents were native-born Americans, with a variety of middle-class professions, from tobacco merchant Otto Hartmann (at 865 Riverside), to overalls salesman Alberto Hemphill (857 Riverside) to clergyman Milo Gates (861 Riverside), the beloved priest who oversaw the construction of the grand new Church of the Intercession at 155th and Broadway.¹⁰⁷

By the 1920s, the origins and professions were even more varied, from Japanese banker Shigo Otake, living with his wife, infant son and maid at 884 Riverside in 1920,¹⁰⁸ to famed Australian-born concert pianist (and future Juilliard dean) Edward Hutcheson, also at 884 with his wife and two teen sons.¹⁰⁹ In 1930, Mexican typist William Solover, Syrian underwear salesman Hamy Chickeryz, and textile workers Mischa and Rose Bekiroff, from Crimea and

¹⁰⁷ 1910 United States Federal Census.

¹⁰⁸ 1920 United States Federal Census.

¹⁰⁹ 1920 United States Federal Census.

Poland, respectively, all lived in furnished rooms at 859 Riverside,¹¹⁰ just doors down from prominent piano manufacturer George Doll and his family at 825 Riverside, and 26-year-old physicist Kenneth Bainbridge, who grew up at 823 Riverside and still lived there with his mother, two brothers and uncle at the start of his renowned career, and just years before helping to lead the Manhattan Project in World War II.¹¹¹

But by far the most unusual set of next-door-neighbors had to be:

- **At 863 Riverside—Lazaros Hadjopoulos**, a bacteriologist at Beth Israel Hospital, and his family from Turkey.
- **At 865 Riverside—the Gomes Casseres sisters**, six in all, from Colombia, including translator Dora and suffragist and Barnard alum Aminta, who went on to work at J. Walter Thompson, becoming one of the first female luminaries in advertising.
- **And at 867 Riverside—the novelist and avowed racist Thomas Dixon**, who wrote a series of white-supremacy themed novels while living on Riverside Drive, including *The Clansman*, which inspired the notorious film *Birth of a Nation*.

Each of these three families, all homeowners, lived on the block for about 30 years, and the very fact that they resided directly next door to each other is a testament to the remarkable diversity that this neighborhood is still known for.

The 1920s and '30s also saw a wave of Jewish immigrants from Germany, Russia and elsewhere in Europe settle into the historic district and extension area. As Steven M. Lowenstein illustrates in *Frankfurt on the Hudson*, this was a highly educated group of immigrants, who established social and religious institutions in their new neighborhood reflecting those they had nurtured in their nations of birth. On census sheets, Yiddish, along with German, Russian and other Eastern European languages, began popping up with increasing frequency as the “mother tongue” for extension-area residents, particularly in the large apartment buildings at 834, 860, 870, and 884 Riverside Drive.

A similar pattern of ethnic diversification occurred in the extension area on 158th Street. According to the 1930 Federal census, the “nations of birth” that residents reported were far more diverse than they had been in earlier decades, stretching from Poland to Peru, along with Germany, Canada, Albania, Ireland, England, Scotland, and Belgium. In two households, the recorded “mother tongue” was Yiddish. Occupations were also far more varied: lawyer, barber, printer, nurse, sculptor, social worker, real estate broker, dry goods salesman, laundry proprietor, candy manufacturer, movie theater usher, restaurant manager, plus “stage

¹¹⁰ 1930 United States Federal Census.

¹¹¹ 1930 United States Federal Census.

performers,” and several public-school teachers (three of whom taught music). Many more women reported work “outside the home,” than had in earlier censuses.

The bulk of residents were middle-class. Although the majority of the houses were owner-occupied (ten of 12), fewer households now retained servants (three of 12) and more of them included lodgers, boarders, or relatives outside the core family (ten of 12). By 1940, no more servants lived on 158th Street, but the census did report more lodgers, and a diverse offering of national origins worthy of any atlas.¹¹²

¹¹² Origins included Latvia, England, Denmark, Poland, Germany, Colombia, Austria, and Greece.

The Next Wave: Urban Renewal and the Role of African Americans

Washington Heights today is known for its thriving Latinx community, the result of waves of immigration throughout the mid to late 20th century, first by Cubans and Puerto Ricans, then Dominicans and Haitians. Their influence is easily seen and heard. The impact of African-Americans is perhaps less obvious, but of significant importance, particularly in the extension area. It was here that Black families played a key role in protecting and maintaining the community in the difficult decades marked by urban blight.

By the middle of the 20th century, the row houses on 158th Street had lost their original luster, having been divided and sub-divided by absentee landlords into multi-family and single-room-occupancy (SRO) dwellings. That would change in the 1960s and '70s, when a host of African-American families—the Baileys, Carters, Johnsons, Keelings, and Scruggses—reclaimed and renovated homes on the block, returning them to single-family residences. Within a generation they had restored a quaint and historic charm to the previously flagging block, improving the area—while racially integrating it—through home ownership, cooperation, and vigilance. And they did this all despite systemic bias in the banking and loan industry, overcoming insidious practices like redlining.

The turnover began in 1954, when Joseph and Lavonne Scruggs purchased #626, the easternmost house on the row. Joseph Arthur Bailey moved his family into #630 in 1967, converting it from a boardinghouse to a single-family home. The next year, Sherman Carter did the same with #632. Ruth Johnson bought #634 in 1973, and a year later Marshall and Loretta Keeling moved into Reginald Pelham Bolton's old home, at #638. In 1980, the Carters leveraged their investment in #632 to buy #636, which they used for rental income. And in 1986, they joined forces with Johnson to purchase #640, which was then threatened by foreclosure.¹¹³

These Black families were professional and upwardly mobile. Harlem native Marshall Keeling served in the United States Air Force, then later graduated from City College and worked as an electrical engineer. Joseph Arthur Bailey was a lawyer and former assistant attorney general for New York State—and a lifelong Republican, who challenged Adam Clayton Powell Jr for his Congressional seat in 1956, 1960, and 1964. (He was defeated in the heavily Democratic 15th District in Harlem.) His wife, Helen Gordon Bailey, attended Hunter College and Brooklyn Law School and worked as an attorney for decades. Both Bailey and Carter were graduates of Lincoln University, in Oxford, Pennsylvania—the nation's first degree-granting Historically Black College and University. "My dad was there with Langston Hughes and Thurgood Marshall," notes Bailey's daughter, Josette Bailey, recalling her father's notable classmates.¹¹⁴

These new neighbors formed a block association to gain strength through cooperation, which helped to preserve the street for future generations. They maintained their properties—Keeling's reputation as a handyman earned him the nickname the "Black Bob Vila"—and kept a close watch on the area, quickly reporting crime or suspicious activity to the police. "Both my

¹¹³ Spady, 299-301.

¹¹⁴ "Joseph A. Bailey, 95, Lawyer and Politician," *The New York Times*, Jun 4, 2000; and email from Josette Bailey to Matthew Spady, Jul 12, 2017.

dad and Mr. Carter were Southerners,” noted Josette Bailey. “My dad from Louisiana and Mr. Carter from Virginia. Property ownership was, and is, very important to Southern Blacks.”¹¹⁵

Her mother, too, who had been raised in the Bronx, mourned the downturn she witnessed in her old neighborhoods in the 1960s and ‘70s. “I cried at the way they had gone down, and the lack of caring in the communities,” Helen Bailey recalled, in an interview at Fordham University in 2015.¹¹⁶ Thanks to families like hers, 158th Street west of Riverside managed to survive the dark days of the 1970s and ‘80s, when gang violence and drug wars overran nearby blocks closer to Broadway.

Nearby, the River Terrace Apartments have also provided a home for hundreds of African-American families who have had a beneficial impact on the community. Constructed in 1964, it was part of the Mitchell-Lama program, which was designed to provide racially integrated middle-income housing that would influence the surrounding community. The architects were Samuel Paul and Seymour Jarmul. Jarmul’s daughter later explained that her father’s “focus on co-operative and other forms of government subsidized housing coincided with his interest in projects that helped the less privileged. Previously Jarmul had designed several additions . . . to the Bulova Company’s Woodside School, in which disabled individuals learned the watchmaking and repair trade.”¹¹⁷

Among the array of esteemed New Yorkers of color who have lived at River Terrace are:

- **David Dinkins**, New York’s first and, to date, only African-American mayor. The long-time River Terrace resident was committed to his neighborhood, and in 1967, after the murder of a candy-store owner on Fort Washington Avenue, just east of the extension, the then-attorney and State Assemblyman helped lead a march of some 100 protestors to the 30th Precinct to demand greater police protection on local streets.
- Legendary jazz composer and bassist **Ron Carter**, and Rock ‘n’ Roll Hall of Famer **Nedra Talley Ross**, of the 1960s group the Ronettes.
- Chief Fire Commissioner **Robert Lowery** and Deputy Police Commissioner **Wilhelmina “Billie” Holliday**.
- TV newscaster **Norma Quarles**, journalist **Thelma Berlack Boozer**, and pioneering documentary filmmaker **William Greaves**.

¹¹⁵ Marshall Keeling obituary, Owens Funeral Home, Sep 21, 2018; email, Josette Bailey to Matthew Spady, Dec. 5, 2019.

¹¹⁶ Bailey, Helen. Interview with the Bronx African American History Project. BAAHP Digital Archive at Fordham University, 27.

¹¹⁷ Taken from Queens Modern <https://queensmodern.com/architecturalfirm/paul-jarmul/>

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- Architect **John L. Wilson Jr**, the first African-American graduate of Columbia University's School of Architecture, who went on to help design the Harlem River Houses at 151st Street, the first federally funded housing project in New York, and now a designated landmark.
- Teacher and community activist **Lily Brown**, who moved to River Terrace with her husband and two children in 1964. She formed the River Terrace Neighborhood Committee, leading it for 25 years, and the Neighborhood Action Coalition, organizing clean-up drives, green-up plantings, and playground renovations. The Lily Brown Playground at Riverside and 162nd Street, at the northern end of the extension area, was named for her in 2001.¹¹⁸

Evolving Neighborhood Institutions

As neighborhood demographics have evolved in the historic district and extension area, so have neighborhood institutions, businesses, and even place names. Particularly in neighborhood churches, people of color have assumed the role of stewards, caring for edifices that white congregations originally built.

Beginning in the late 1960s, the Church of the Intercession, which had been a predominantly white congregation since the Audubons helped found it in 1846, racially integrated with African-American congregants. Today, the Rev. Rhonda Rubinson, a convert from Judaism, conducts services in English there, while the Rev. Luis Gomez conducts services in Spanish. The vestry includes members who might attend either services, or both.



Figure 19: Church of the Intercession Congregation, 2019¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ River Terrace website: <http://riverterrace.co/>

¹¹⁹ Source: <http://www.intercessionnyc.org/about>

North Presbyterian Church, which evolved, via Washington Heights Presbyterian Church, from the abolitionist church Dennis Harris helped found in 1857, has in recent years shared its church space with the Ghanaian Mawuhle congregation as well as northern Manhattan's Headstart Program.

In 1947, even before northern Manhattan began its most significant demographic shifts, Washington Heights Methodist Episcopal Church, which also traced its lineage to Dennis Harris, sold its edifice to St. Luke African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church. The 1869 structure, designed by architect (and church member) Rembrandt Lockwood stands on present-day Amsterdam Avenue and 153rd Street. The congregation of St. Luke African Methodist Episcopal Church has owned the building and worshiped there since 1947.¹²⁰ The congregation has thrived in the space. A few years after it bought the church building, it acquired the old 30th Precinct Police Station house, which it uses as an administrative building. The church's website lists five clergymen in charge of several dozen ministries and 1,200 members.



Figure 20: Members of St. Luke AME Holding a Fundraiser During the Covid19 Crisis¹²¹

Over time, organizations like the Washington Heights Taxpayers Association, which mainly served the interests of property owners, evolved into political clubs, such as today's Barack Obama Democratic Club of Northern Manhattan, the Audubon Reform Democratic Club, and Uptown Community Democrats, which find support across a wide number of people in the

¹²⁰ See Erastus B. Treat, *Fifty Golden Years of the Washington Heights Methodist Episcopal Church*, (New York: E. B. Treat & Company, 1917), 9-10.

¹²¹ Source: *St. Luke AME Facebook Page*

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African-American, Latino, and white communities. Where once, white faces dominated political posters, now a range of candidates represent the neighborhood's diversity. Maria Luna, called "a political legend in Washington Heights" by the *New York Daily News*, is a long-time resident of 839 Riverside Drive, in the extension area. She has been involved in local politics since 1983 and is the first person of Dominican extraction to serve as a Democratic district leader.¹²²



Figure 21: Maria Luna, "A Political Legend in Washington Heights"¹²³

Populated with a large group of musicians, actors, writers, and members of other arts professions, the historic district and extension area have long included an LGBTQ community. Although several gay bars have attempted to open in the neighborhood over the years, and been denied liquor licenses, the opening of Boxers in a large space at Broadway and 161st Street in September 2018 signaled a major presence, including street-side dining. The establishment did not, however, survive the 2020 Covid19 pandemic and closed in September of that year. Its presence did signal that the LGBTQ community was large and prosperous enough to support an establishment of that type.

¹²² Frank Lombardi, "Maria Luna, 70, Still Shines Bright in Political Field, Mulls City Council Bid," *New York Daily News*, May 19, 2011.

¹²³ Source: *New York Daily News*



Figure 22: Boxers Gay Bar in Washington Heights, after Closing¹²⁴

Diversity in Naming

Street and park namings in the 21st Century also demonstrate the neighborhood’s diversity. In earlier days, developers gave neighborhood buildings fanciful names, or named them for themselves, with a focus on Eurocentric names. Among the buildings in the historic district and extension area, the only one remotely suggesting diversity was Kanawah Court on West 157th Street, perhaps a reference to the Native American name for the Kanawah River in West Virginia. The same was true of street names. When Riverside Drive opened in 1911, it superseded Boulevard Lafayette, from 158th Street northward, leaving the one small stretch between 157th and 158th Streets without a name, “Boulevard Lafayette” being a bit grand for one short block. The city first named it Audubon Place, in honor of the naturalist, and in the 1920s, changed it to Edward M. Morgan Place, to honor the city’s first postmaster to rise to that rank from mail carrier, again, focusing firmly on white men.

That focus changed in the 21st century. In March 2002, the city named the small greenspace on Broadway at 157th Street “Ilka Tanya Payán Park,” in honor of the Dominican-born actress turned lawyer and HIV/AIDS activist. She was also an organizer of the Hispanic Organization of Latin Actors (HOLA). The small greenspace, where the Boulevard Lafayette once veered west into the extension area, sits adjacent to Audubon Hall and Hispania Hall in the historic district. A group of residents, taking the name Audubon157, cleans the park and maintains plantings.

¹²⁴ Source: *Harlem Bespoke*



Figure 23: Audubon 157 Caring for Ilka Tanya Payán Park¹²⁵

In 2015, a group of residents petitioned Community Board 12's Transportation Committee to rename the stretch of Riverside Drive West bounding the extension area on the west in honor of former Mayor David Dinkins, as it ran past his former home at the River Terrace Apartments. The full Community Board approved the petition, but it eventually failed in City Council, not because the council thought he was unworthy of the honor, but because its 2008 guidelines reserved that distinction for the deceased.¹²⁶ Later that same year, Mayor Bill de Blasio signed city legislation co-naming that same stretch Robert Lowery Way, in honor of New York City's first African-American Fire Department of New York Commissioner, who died in 2001. Lowery was also a long-time resident at the River Terrace Apartments.¹²⁷

¹²⁵ Source: Audubon157 Facebook Page

¹²⁶ Lindsay Armstrong, "Board Votes to Rename Street After David Dinkins Despite City Rules," *DNAinfo*, May 6, 2015.

¹²⁷ Gustavo Solis, "First Black FDNY Commissioner to be Honored with Street Co-Naming," *DNAinfo*, Aug. 7, 2015.



Figure 24: David Dinkins on his Inauguration Day, January 1990¹²⁸

¹²⁸ Source: *New York Daily News*



Figure 25: Robert Lowery Sworn into Office by Mayor John Lindsay in 1966¹²⁹

¹²⁹ Source: DNAinfo

Black History Matters

In recent months, as word has spread about the significance of 857 Riverside Drive in the history of abolition and Black History, the level of community support for saving and preserving this house as part of an expanded Audubon Park Historic District has risen.

Among events at the house have been press conferences with a significant presence from civic leaders, Black Lives Matters Marches, and a Juneteenth Celebration with guest speaker, historian, activist, and preservationist, Michael Henry Adams.



Figure 26: Black History Matters Banner Hanging outside 857 Riverside Drive on Juneteenth

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Figure 27: Figure 27: Press Conference, March 2021



Figure 28: Press Conference, January 2021



Figure 29: Black History Matters Rally at 857 Riverside Drive, January 22, 2021



Figure 30: Black History Matters Rally at 857 Riverside Drive, January 22, 2021



Figure 31: Harlem Historian, Preservationist, and Activist Michael Henry Adams Speaking at the Juneteenth Celebration, 857 Riverside Drive



Figure 32: State Senator Robert Jackson at the Juneteenth Celebration, 857 Riverside Drive

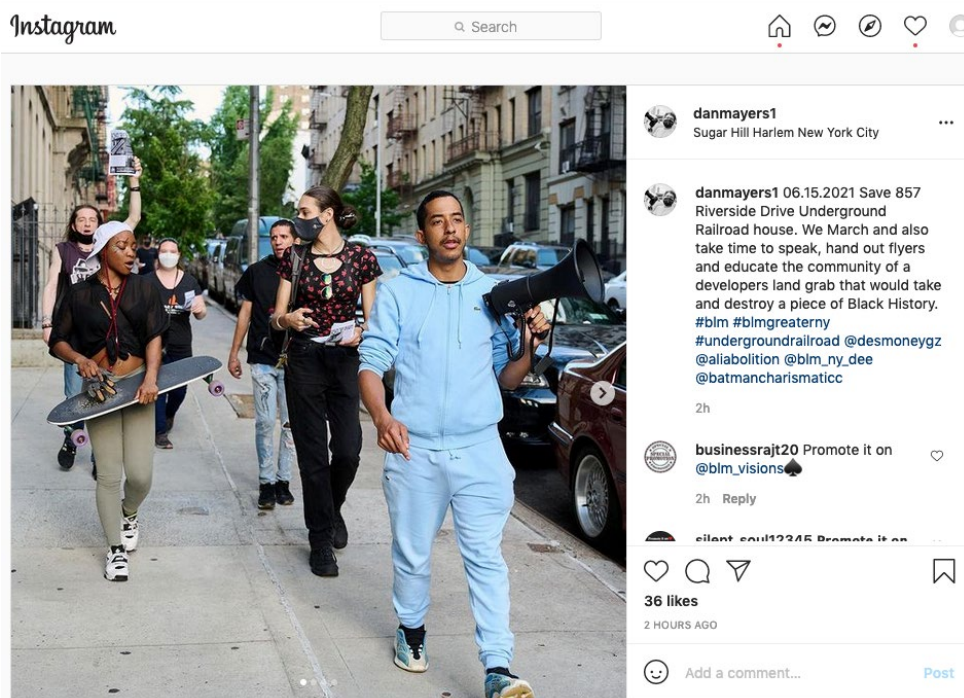


Figure 33: Black Lives Matters March

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Figure 34: March 27 Rally and Press Conference at 857 Riverside Drive

Comments from Prominent Scholars in American History

“Few sites directly connected to the Underground Railroad still exist in New York City. I urge [the Landmarks Preservation Commission] to use [its] authority to preserve this house and area with an expanded Audubon Park Historic District.”

—ERIC FONER, Bancroft- and Pulitzer Prize-winning professor emeritus of history, Columbia University, author of *Gateway to Freedom: The Hidden History of the Underground Railroad*

“While the use of [Dennis Harris’s] Washington Heights properties as [Underground Railroad] sites has not yet been proven, very strong circumstantial evidence suggests that they were. Destruction of the surviving building would be a travesty, and an irreparable loss to a city which has a very poor record of preserving sites related to Black and abolitionist history.”

—FERGUS BORDEWICH, nationally recognized Underground Railroad expert, author of *Bound for Canaan: The Underground Railroad and the War for the Soul of America*

“For historians such as myself, [these] findings are revealing and offer important new insights into the journeys enslaved people made to freedom, apart from the well-known sites in the business district.”

—GRAHAM RUSSELL HODGES, history professor, Colgate University, author of *David Ruggles: A Radical Black Abolitionist and the Underground Railroad in New York City*

“Every effort should be made to preserve the relics and landmarks of this history so it will not vanish from the earth, as Lincoln said. It will go a long way towards keeping the American dream alive.”

—TOM CALARCO, co-author of *Secret Lives of the Underground Railroad in New York City*

“In communities of color throughout New York, only tiny fractions of buildings are protected. This is wrong because our history, our heritage, our culture, is valuable, too.”

—MICHAEL HENRY ADAMS, author of *Harlem Lost and Found: An Architectural and Social History, 1765-1915*

“Mayor de Blasio I also encourage you to move beyond your verbalized support of the “Equity Framework” with the budget support that ensures all relevant City resources are mobilized to help this effort succeed.”

—JOHN T. REDDICK, architectural historian and Harlem PRIDE co-founder

Comments from New York City Civic Leaders

“Black history matters—and not just speaking those things but doing those things, and not finding excuses every time these things come up in communities [of color].”

—JUMAANE WILLIAMS, New York City Public Advocate

“There are so few landmarks in New York that link to the anti-slavery movement, and they’re all below 96th Street.”

—GALE BREWER, Manhattan Borough President

“The history of Black New Yorkers, and the history of all New Yorkers, deserves to be preserved. This is a rare opportunity to come down on the right side of history. I urge you to seize it.”

—REV. DR. CALVIN O. BUTTS, III, pastor, The Abyssinian Baptist Church in the City of New York

“This [house] shows the role our neighborhood played in the abolitionist movement. This should be in the history books, and it should be taught at PS 28 where I went to school right up the street.”

—ADRIANO ESPAILLAT, U.S. Representative (NY-13)

“We are demanding that the Audubon Park Historic District be expanded to encompass the full area: [Riverside’s] historic structures, 158th Street down the hill, with a dozen row houses—structures that are unique, that tell our history, that are part of the fabric of this neighborhood, and that are vulnerable.”

—MARK LEVINE, NYC Councilmember / Democratic Nominee for Borough President

“We should not have to demand this. If you want to be a better and brighter progressive city, then it starts by acknowledging every culture. Mr. Mayor, let’s make this happen!”

—AL TAYLOR, New York State Assembly Member

“Once it’s gone, it’s gone. Who’s going to tell the story? We don’t have the physical structures to identify, to come visit....”

—ROBERT JACKSON, New York State Senator

“We need to continue educating our communities and the future generations about [their] historic impact.”

—MARIA LUNA, Democratic District Leader

Comments from Leading Preservationists

“Under existing law, historic preservation is not limited to the preservation of architectural ornament: damage to its decoration does not preclude landmark designation of an historic building, especially one emblematic of the long struggle for civil rights.”

—CHRISTABEL GOUGH, Society for the Architecture of the City

“An extant 1851 wood frame house is, in and of itself, such a rarity in Manhattan, but one that was built by a known abolitionist, Dennis Harris, occupies a special place in New York City history and should not be demolished.”

—FERN LUSKIN, architectural historian, co-chair of Friends of the Hopper-Gibbons House Underground Railroad Site, Lamartine Place Historic District, NYC

“Documented extant sites connected to prominent abolitionists and the abolitionist movement in New York City deserve special recognition....”

—ANDERW BERMAN, executive director, Village Society for Historic Preservation

“Its embodiment of the abolitionist movement and role in the Underground Railroad rise to national significance.”

—LAURENCE FROMMER, president, Save Chelsea

“If the LPC gave landmark protection to 227 Duffield, I find it hard to understand why it would contradict that decision and fail to give the same protection to 857 Riverside. I am inspired by the story of 857 Riverside Drive, and it is a powerful message that the Abolitionist spirit in New York was not confined to my borough of Brooklyn.”

—RAUL ROTHBLATT, 227 Duffield and Downtown Brooklyn abolitionist history advocate

“[This is] a historically significant area for which CB12-M has repeatedly requested historic designation.”

—GEORGE CALDERARO, preservation committee chair, The Victorian Society of New York

“Community Board 12-M urges the City Council and Department of City Planning to approve, once it is made, the Landmarks Preservation Commission’s recommendation to extend the boundaries of the Audubon Park Historic District.”

—LAND USE COMMITTEE, COMMUNITY BOARD 12-Manhattan, June 2, 2021

Conclusion: Fulfilling the Equity Framework Through an Extended Audubon Park Historic District

As laid out in this Request for Evaluation, Riverside Drive between West 155th and 162nd Streets is something of a fluke, the combined result of centuries-old topography, sporadic city planning, and the power of private real estate interests. And yet, the serpentine path the drive takes along those blocks, the adaptive designs architects have developed to accommodate it, and the remnants of ancient topography have created a unique sense of place that flows from one end of the route to the other.

The two halves of the neighborhood, opening like a book from West 158th Street, are symbiotic twins, each needing the other to explain the area's complete architectural, cultural, and historical story. Enclosing the whole is the "outer drive," Riverside Drive West, which connects the deliciously curving "inner drive," at its two endpoints, and shelters it within the ambience of a cul-de-sac.

The extension's buildings—16 large apartment houses, three groupings of semi-detached houses, and one frame house—fill vital gaps in the historic district's urbanization narrative, and vice versa. As Table 1 illustrates, urban development moved back and forth between the two areas in chronological waves that provide a complete narrative only when they are joined. Through a wonderful variety of distinct, but overlapping, architectural styles from the late 19th century into the middle of the 20th century, the highly intact group of buildings in the extension area illustrates typologies present in lower Washington Heights as it passed through its stages of urbanization, and complements those in the historic district. Providing architectural cohesion between the two areas are numerous brick and limestone buildings in a tripartite vertical composition—many in the Neo-Renaissance and Renaissance Revival style. Culturally, these buildings—and more importantly, the people who have lived in them—tell of northern Manhattan's long history of diversity, and represent this neighborhood's complex layers of racial history as it evolved from a homogeneous Eurocentric neighborhood to a fully integrated one in the second half of the 20th century.

And yet, landmarking has split this neighborhood in two.

South of West 158th Street, the buildings on Riverside Drive and its side streets within the Audubon Park Historic District enjoy the protection and prominence that comes with a revered landmark designation. North of 158th Street and along it, buildings that share the same developmental history, the same aesthetics, and the same architectural styles and integrity are left undesignated, and unprotected.

The time is ripe for the Landmarks Preservation Commission to reexamine this half-empty, half-full paradigm, and fill the glass to the brim. This reckoning and reclamation is long past due for

a vibrant part of Manhattan that is so deserving of landmarks—but so bereft of them. Expanding the historic district, as described in this RFE, will formally and officially recognize the unity this rarefied section of Washington Heights enjoys—a cohesion those living in the area see and experience every day.

The shared architectural merits in the designated district and extension area are many, from the highly intact façades, ornamentation, and cornices on their tripartite vertical compositions to the similar light-colored building materials; uniform street walls with gently curving facades; complex floor plans; courtyards; fanciful ornamentation; and shared marketing techniques, down to the same types of exotic names for buildings, once used to entice the same sort of middle-class residents uptown.

This homogeneity in the built landscape is matched in its topography. Historically, the designated district and extension area shared a very similar landscape, with rocky terraces dropping from the highest part of the island (near today’s Amsterdam Avenue) westward down to the river. The present-day historic district merely hints at the “hilly topography” and “dramatic vistas” the Landmarks Preservation Commission cited as defining its “powerful sense of place”—retaining walls and graded streets obscured the land’s natural contours there decades ago.¹³⁰ By contrast, the extension area’s topography, from the lush rocky outcroppings that cascade along Riverside to 158th Street’s dramatic ski-slope descent, flatters the eye.

In their variety, particularly in the extension area, the buildings also tell a remarkable tale of diversity, which this community has nurtured from its earliest days. This tale starts with the area’s first residents of African descent—held in bondage—and evolves with the historic and hitherto unknown abolitionist colony centered around a heralded figure of the Underground Railroad. As the decades unfolded and development continued apace, the spirit of racial and ethnic inclusivity continued to grow, seen in the surprisingly diverse backgrounds of those living along Riverside Drive, in the heroic restoration of homes by African-American families on West 158th Street, and in the community activism and leadership driven by residents of color along Riverside Drive West.

Such flattering and unified aesthetics make the expansion of the district a sound proposal. The stories these buildings tell make that proposal essential. Extending the Audubon Park Historic District to encompass these blocks and these buildings would be significant were they located in any part of the city. But given the Landmark Preservation Commission’s recent pledge to celebrate and designate neighborhoods “that represent New York City’s diversity . . . in areas less represented by landmarks,” this gesture is even more appropriate—and even more necessary.

The expansion will bring equity to a community with a significant Latino and Black population, New Yorkers whose buildings are rarely saved, and whose stories are rarely told.

¹³⁰ Most and Betts, 9.

Building Profiles¹³¹

Except where noted, all building descriptions (“features”) were provided by historic preservation specialist Marissa Marvelli.

Riverside Drive, 812 (2136/10)

Date of Construction: 1920

Architect: Springsteen & Goldhammer, 32 Union Square

Original Owner: Eli Moran (Se Co Holding Corporation)

Type: Apartment house

Style: Arts & Crafts

Stories: 6 + Basement

Structure/Material: Brick, limestone & terra-cotta

Features: A six-story variegated buff brick Arts & Crafts style apartment building with an irregular-shape plan. The base is faced with limestone and features a centered arch entrance flanked by two pairs of engaged columns that support a Classical flat-headed entablature. The parapet is finished with terra-cotta shields and sills.

History: The estimated cost for 812 Riverside Drive was \$200,000. Rental advertisements from 1920, when the 45-unit building first opened advertised 3-, 4-, 5-, and 6-room apartments with “large rooms” and “wonderful outlook.”¹³² The next year, ads identified the building as Seco Hall, apparently derived from the Seco Holding Corporation that built the apartment house.¹³³

As at the Grinnell and Rhinecliff Court in the designated historic district, Seco Hall’s 1921 rental agent offered a 3-room and a 5-room apartment “suitable for a doctor or dentist,” though at the Seco, these appear to have been on one floor, rather than the duplexes at the Grinnell and Rhinecliff, and intended solely as offices, not as a combined office and family apartment.

The HPD website still lists 42 units at 812 Riverside Drive.

¹³¹ Unless otherwise referenced, information in these profiles comes from US Federal Census Records, New York City Directories, the HPD website (<https://hpdonline.hpdnyc.org/HPDOnline/>), I-cards, and the Office of Metropolitan History database.

¹³² “Rental Ad,” *New York Tribune*, Nov. 14, 1920.

¹³³ “Apartments for Rent,” *New York Tribune*, Jan. 30, 1921 and Feb. 1, 1921. See also “Large Mortgage Loans,” *Record & Guide*, Oct. 23, 1920, 576.

Riverside Drive, 815-825 (2135/1-6)

Date of Construction: 1898-1899

Architect: Louis Entzer

Original Owner: Francis J. Schnugg

Type: Row houses

Style: Neo-Renaissance

Stories: 3 and 4

Structure/Material: Brick & limestone

Features: (815 Riverside Drive) A four-story buff brick Neo-Renaissance style rowhouse with a raised basement and an irregular-shaped plan due to being the last building in a row of six houses on a triangular block. The uppermost story was originally a mansard with shallow dormers. An unusual surviving feature is the generous portico with fluted columns and Ionic capitals.

(817-825 Riverside Drive) Five three-story buff brick Neo-Renaissance style rowhouses with raised basements and angular bay façades. All retain character-defining features including limestone enframements, keystones, modillioned cornices, and low stoops.

History: In the decade before builder Francis J. Schnugg constructed the row of six houses on the corner of the Boulevard Lafayette and West 158th Street in 1898-99, he had collaborated often with architect Louis Entzer on projects that included tenements, stores, and semi-detached houses.¹³⁴ He announced plans for two more projects after completing this one, but they would be their last collaborations. Entzer had a mental breakdown in 1901 and apparently did not work again before his death in 1903.

Interestingly, Schnugg's first buyers for this row included three widows. Emma Condit-Smith took the large house on the corner, and lived there with her two daughters, Louise and Sally. Next door was widowed Emily Baiz with her adult daughters Florence and Margaret, her son, Arthur, who listed his occupation as "outside bank clerk," and a maid, Matilda Chambers. The deed to the house was registered in 35-year-old Florence's name, though she listed her income as "none." Harriet Crane bought the sixth house in the row, which was Schnugg's first sale, and lived there with two sons, Charles and Charlton, a daughter, Amelia, and Charlton's wife, Elisabeth; she employed one live-in servant, Maria McHale.

Stationery merchant, William Bainbridge and his wife, Mae, took the fifth house in the row, and lived there for decades with their three sons William, Kenneth, and Donald, and Mae's mother,

¹³⁴ See "Out Among the Builders," *Record & Guide*, May 17, 1890, 738; "Building News," *Record & Guide*, Jan. 29, 1898, 192; "Building News," *Record & Guide*, Apr. 21, 1900, 683; and "News of the Building Trade," *Record & Guide*, Mar. 9, 1895, 372, among others.

Kate Thomkins, as well as one servant, Nora Power. Schnugg forfeited the third and fourth houses in court cases, to Susan Tuthill and Jules Mayer.¹³⁵

The houses have been through various transformations since the original owners purchased them. Today, the HPD website lists only one, #823, as a single-family home.

815 Riverside Drive had been vacant for several years when Paul J. Kelly bought it from Ross Herschaft in 1919.¹³⁶ In 1930, broker Payton Hughes was renting the house and living there with his wife Agnes, four children aged 14 to 34 years old, and a maid. They were subletting space to Mary Weber and her sons Robert and John, and sisters Marion and Florence Lutto.

A decade later, Hughes had bought the house and, according to the 1941 I-card, divided it into eight units. By then, the only child still living with the Hugheses was their daughter Doris, who was a secretary. The 1940 Federal census shows seven family groups in the house besides the Hughes: Edward and Willa Fries and their infant son Samuel; law department manager Gustave Adler and his wife Irma; newspaper journalist Rudolph Katy and his wife Agnes; clerical worker Roland Johnson and his wife Charlotte, who worked as a hairdresser; Josef Miller, who worked as a waiter in a restaurant, and his wife Elizabeth; and physicist Richard Baker and his wife Sheila.

More recently, 815 has been reconfigured into six apartments.

817 Riverside Drive was still a single-family home in 1920, when Emily Baiz, the original purchaser, was living there with her son Arthur, a bank cashier, and her daughter Marguerite.

By 1940, the absentee owner, Emma Crawford, had divided the house into three units and rented to: Danish immigrants Bror Valdeu, a private chauffeur, and his wife Edda, who had three roomers; Ethel Mooney, a salesclerk in a department store, and her daughter Murial, who worked as a secretary for an engineering company; and elevator operator Anthony Plitouke and his wife Marion, with their daughter, Marion. Acting Chief Inspector Goldfinger reclassified 817 in 1942 to a two-family dwelling.¹³⁷

In 1956, the owner, J. M. Kaufer, who lived in the house, filed plans to convert it to six apartments, though he already had five tenants, who paid weekly rents.

The HPD website lists 817 Riverside Drive as still containing six units.

¹³⁵ New York City Register, Schnugg to Brameyer, Jul. 17, 1900, L14, 458; Brameyer to Condit-Smith, L14, 457; Schnugg to Baiz, Sep. 29, 1900, L12, 391; L20, 60; Schnugg to Crane, May 25, 1899, L13, 169; 1910 Schnugg to Bainbridge, Oct. 15, 1901, L15, 329; Grodon (Ref) to Tuthill, May 26, 1903, L20, 60; Donnelly (Ref) to Mayer, Jul. 14, 1902, L15, 441; 1910 United States Federal Census Records.

¹³⁶ "Buys a Residence on Riverside Drive," *The New York Times*, Apr. 26, 1919.

¹³⁷ New York City HPD I-card.

819 Riverside Drive was a single-family residence in 1908, home to the Gomes Casseres family—Colombian natives raised in Jamaica who had immigrated to the United States starting in 1900. By 1910, eldest sister Rebeca, 38, who owned the home, shared it with her siblings Sara, Dora, Nellie, Aminta, Manuel, and Rosa (ranging in age from 36 to 23, all single), and Esther Samuels, a Jamaican maid listed as “mulatto.” (Dora worked as a music teacher at the time and recent Barnard grad Aminta was listed as a magazine writer, her pioneering career in advertising still ahead of her.) They moved up the block around 1919.

It was still a single-family home in 1920 when John and Katherine Kennedy rented the house. He was retired. Living at 819 with the Kennedys were their son Samuel, a theater manager, and their daughters May (an office manager at a club), and Nanette. Katherine Kennedy’s mother, Bridget Devine (84), who had come to the United States in 1842, the year the Audubons moved to Minnie’s Land, also lived there. Five years later, Catherine Cousack and family rented the house.

As early as 1940, the owner, a Miss Tuthill (address unknown), had divided the house into apartments—perhaps by the traditional “floors”—and leased it to Emma Rekowska, a German immigrant, who lived there with her husband Karl, also a German immigrant. They sublet to Puerto Rican immigrants, Noel and Anna Florenz, and New Yorkers, Matthew and Virginia Wershecker. Mr. Wershecker, according to the 1940 Federal Census, had spent time in Shanghai in recent years. Although each of the three families had private space, the hallways and stairs were “public.” The house, which the HPD website now lists as having two units, has passed through a number of owners since 1968.

821 Riverside Drive was still a single-family house in 1920 when Jerles Meyer and his wife Hattie owned it. They lived there with their three daughters, Lore, Sybille, and Aimee, as well as a live-in German maid, Gesine Mehrtens.

As early as 1940, owner Paul Baruch had divided it into a two-family dwelling. Baruch, who was a German immigrant, and his wife, Aimee, had a daughter, 10-year-old Emily. They rented part of the house to Danish couple Cai and Henrietta Christensen and their adult daughter Gugrun. Unlike most of their neighbors in adjoining houses and apartment buildings, the Baruchs employed a live-in maid, German-born Frida Raynor. In the 1950s, absentee owners Nate and Hermine Farkas divided the house into five apartments. The I-card suggests it was further divided into six apartments in the 1960s, but the HPD website currently lists it as a five-unit house.

823 Riverside Drive remained a single-family house as late as 1940, when the original purchaser, 58-year-old Mae Bainbridge, still lived there, by then a widow. As late as 1920, Mae had lived in the house with her three sons, William (an engineer), Kenneth (a physicist who would go on to great renown, and help lead World War II’s Manhattan Project), and Donald (then a college student), along with her brother-in-law (a stationery proprietor like her late husband). They no longer retained a maid, and by 1940, Mae and

her brother-in-law were empty-nesters. Sometime before 1955, when Millicent Wade owned and lived in the house, it had been converted into three apartments. A city inspector confirmed that it still had three apartments in 1966. The HPD website currently lists it as a single-family home.

825 Riverside Drive was still a single-family house in 1920, when new owners George and Alice Doll lived there with Alice's three children, Hurd, Alice, and Roger Whitney. They kept two live-in servants, a housekeeper, Mimie Griffin, and cook, Mary Sullivan. George Doll's father had founded a prominent piano manufacturing company in New York, Jacob Doll & Sons, including a factory on Cypress and 133rd Street in the Bronx, which George helped run with his siblings.

Five years later, the Doll family shared the home with Forest Marcucci, a musician from Italy, his wife Betty, and their daughter Dolores; and five years after that, Sal B. and Frances Cartwright lived in the house with their two sons and a daughter. Sal and his 27-year-old son were oyster merchants. In 1940, the Dolls shared the house with two other families.

In 1955, the building inspector reported that the owner, Mae LaFort, lived on the first floor of the house and had five lodgers, with a full bathroom provided on each of the three floors. The next year, the inspector found that Ms. LaFort still lived on the first floor, but had no lodgers. The upper two floors, each with a full bathroom, were vacant and gas service was cut off. By 1961, the owner, Frederick Dames, shared the house with his sister, Vernetta Ruffin, and her children.

Today, the HPD website lists the house as containing three units.

REQUEST FOR EVALUATION: Audubon Park Historic District Extension

Riverside Drive, 820 (2136/13)

Date of Construction: 1921 (DOB 122-1921)

Architect: George Fred Pelham, 200 West 72nd Street

Original Owner: 683 West End Avenue Corp., 200 West 72nd Street, Anthony Campagna, President

Type: Apartment house

Style: Eclectic with Tudoresque flourishes

Stories: 5+ basement

Structure/Material: Brick, plaster, & tile

Features: A five-story and raised basement U-shape brick apartment building with Tudoresque flourishes. Noteworthy details include the thick squared roof brackets applied half-timbering and plaster on the upper stories of the end bays crowned with flared gables. The courtyard entrance is distinguished with tiled-roof wing walls.

History: The projected construction cost for 820 Riverside Drive, a 46-unit building (45 on the upper stories, plus a cellar apartment) was \$325,000. A 1922 advertisement for unfurnished apartments in the *New York Herald* calls the building the “Marion Garden.”¹³⁸

An earlier advertisement, from August 1920, when the building was welcoming its first tenants, offered furnished rooms at the “Hotel Elite,” suggesting that an enterprising individual had rented one or more apartments with the intention of taking in boarders. “Every room river view, with bath, telephone, elevator, hotel service; specializing home cooking; refined surroundings; catering to individual taste and only highest-grade patronage. Now booking for fall.”¹³⁹

In 2021, the HPD website still lists 45 units in the building.

¹³⁸ “Unfurnished. Washington Heights, Above 125th Street, West of 8th Av.,” *New York Herald*, Aug. 23, 1922, 20

¹³⁹ “Furnished Rooms to Let,” *The Sun and The New York Herald*, Aug. 4, 1920, 16; see also “Boarders Wanted,” *The Sun and the New York Herald*, Aug. 21, 1920.

REQUEST FOR EVALUATION: Audubon Park Historic District Extension

Riverside Drive, 834-836 (2136/18)

Date of Construction: 1916 (DOB: 191)

Architect: Samuel Katz (405 Lexington Avenue)

Original Owner: Gustavius Construction Company (office: care of architect), Gustavius Schneider, President

Type: Apartment

Style: Neo-Renaissance

Stories: 6 + basement

Structure/Material: Brick & limestone

Features: A six-story and raised basement Neo-Renaissance style brick apartment building. The centered entrance is crowned with a bracketed limestone cornice; "Gustavius Court" is inscribed in the frieze.

History: The projected cost for the building was \$65,000. The name Gustavius Court derives from the president of the construction company that built it, Gustavius Schneider.¹⁴⁰ According to the I-card, the building originally contained 31 apartments over its six stories, five apartments per floor, plus one in the cellar. The HPD website currently lists the same number of apartments in the building.

Notable early residents include Frank Lafforgue, a French-born athlete and squash pro at the Yale Club on Vanderbilt and 44th Street, known for helping to popularize the sport; and composer and vaudeville revue producer Carey Morgan, who wrote songs for stars like Vernon and Irene Castle, and Fatty Arbuckle, and served as a mentor to legendary songwriter (and *Guys & Dolls* creator) Frank Loesser.¹⁴¹

¹⁴⁰ "Unfurnished. Washington Heights, Above 125th Street, West of 8th Av.," *New York Herald*, Aug. 23, 1922, 20.

¹⁴¹ W.J. O'Connor, "Yale Club Signs Lafforgue, Who Put Racquets and Squash on Local Map," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, Jun. 15, 1917; and Ernest Havemann, "The Fine Art of the Hit Tune," *Life*, Dec. 8, 1952, 166.

REQUEST FOR EVALUATION: Audubon Park Historic District Extension

Riverside Drive, 835 (2135/7)

Date of Construction: 1919 (NB 245-1919)

Architect: Harold L. Young, 147 Fourth Avenue

Original Owner: Ramsey Realty Co. (Villa Norma Realty Company), 900 Riverside Drive, David Friedburg, President

Type: Apartment house

Style: Neo-Renaissance

Stories: 6 + basement

Structure/Material: Brick & limestone

Features: A six-story and raised basement Neo-Renaissance style brick apartment building with an H-shape plan. The parapet is distinguished with intricate brick corbeling at the parapet. The entrance, at the rear wall of the courtyard, has elaborate limestone ornamentation including swags, festoons and urns.

History: The projected construction cost for 835 Riverside Drive, the Villa Norma, was \$300,000. Like the six row houses Francis Schnugg built adjacent to the south, it faced two streets, Riverside Drive at the front and West 158th Street behind, so early advertisements noted that the building had "No rear apartments."¹⁴² Another early selling point was a 'Frigidaire in every apartment.

The I-card lists 60 apartments in total, with 55 facing the street and 5 facing the courtyard only. The first floor included a telephone and reception room, and both the first floor and cellar had a 3-room suite of offices. In 1923, apartment rents ranged from \$110 per month for a 3-room apartment to \$195 per month for a 6-room apartment.

As with many other buildings in the extension area, the HPD lists the same 60 apartments in the building today as when it was new.

¹⁴² "Unfurnished Apartments for Rent," *The Sun and the New York Herald*, Aug. 29, 1920, 8.

REQUEST FOR EVALUATION: Audubon Park Historic District Extension

Riverside Drive, 838-844 (2136/20)

Date of Construction: 1914 (DOB 63)

Architect: Samuel Katz (1 Madison Avenue)

Original Owner: Sand Construction (1029 East 163rd Street)

Type: Apartment

Style: Neo-Renaissance

Stories: 6 + basement

Structure/Material: Brick

Features: A six-story and raised basement Neo-Renaissance style brick apartment building with an O-shape plan. The building is capped with a distinctive denticulated and modillioned cornice with coffers.

History: The apartment building at 838-844 Riverside Drive is named the Kingsland in honor of Ambrose Kingsland, who had owned this property in the 1840s before selling it to Dennis Harris. Like other buildings in the historic district and extension area, lobbies and hallways had tile floors, plaster ceilings, and generous use of marble on walls and stairs.

The original plan included 42 apartments, including one in the cellar, the same number listed on the HPD website today.

REQUEST FOR EVALUATION: Audubon Park Historic District Extension

Riverside Drive, 839—853 (2135/13, 17, 20)

Date of Construction: 1922 (DOB 47)

Architect: Harold S. Young, 253 West 42nd Street

Original Owner: Friedman & White Realty Company (900 Riverside Drive), Henry Friedman, President

Type: Apartment

Style: Renaissance Revival

Stories: 6 + basement

Structure/Material: Brick & tile

Features: A sprawling three-building brick apartment complex designed in the Renaissance Revival style. All three buildings are six stories. Architectural attention is focused on the parapets, which feature distinctive Venetian-inspired corbeling with lionheads at the ends and elsewhere intricately carved moldings with crest tiles.

History: The cost for this series of three connected apartment buildings was estimated a \$350,000. Unlike most of the buildings in the extension area, these do not appear to have been named buildings.

The *New York Herald* reported in September 1922 that the group of apartment buildings was being completed to plans by Charles B. Meyers (sic), but this was another collaboration between Harold Young and Henry Friedman. Reflecting smaller households, apartments in 839—853 Riverside Drive ranged from three to seven rooms.

The *Herald* noted that the architect treated the site in “an interesting an unusual manner” by placing a garden in front of it. The buildings stretched from Riverside Drive to West 158th Street and the apartments were articulated such that, like the Grinnell at 800 Riverside Drive, all apartments overlooked a street—“no rear apartments.”¹⁴³ The building also included a private playground for children.¹⁴⁴

Although the newspaper coverage and early ads promoted the three buildings together, the building inspector prepared one I-card for 839 and 845, but another for 853. Rents at 853, which the inspector noted had a dumbwaiter system inside the apartments, ranged from \$90 per month for a 3-room apartment to \$180 for a 6-room apartment “on the front.” A comparison of the HPD website and I-cards suggests that three buildings retain their configurations. HPD lists 55 units at 853, and 94 units at 839 and 845, all matching the numbers when these buildings were new.

Maria Luna, the local political legend and longtime Democratic District Leader, has lived at 839 for decades.

¹⁴³ Rental Ad, *New York Tribune*, Nov. 19, 1922.

¹⁴⁴ “Hunting Apartments with Camera Man,” *New York Herald*, Sep. 3, 1922.

REQUEST FOR EVALUATION: Audubon Park Historic District Extension

Riverside Drive, 857 (2135/23)

Date of Construction: 1851

Architect: John Woodhouse Audubon(?)

Original Owner: John King

Type: Freestanding house

Style: Greek Revival–Italianate

Stories: 2 stories visible on Riverside Drive; 4 stories visible on western exposure

Structure/Material: Wood-frame

Features: A two-story transitional Greek Revival–Italianate style wood-frame house.

History: After purchasing the home from Dennis Harris in 1854, John Newhouse appears to have lived out his remaining years there. The 1870 Federal Census lists him as head of a still-packed house, with his wife, his daughters Mary (with her husband, lawyer Charles Whelp, and their baby boy, Charles Jr), and Emma, a well-known figure in New York’s society circles (with her husband, Zimri West, a baker, and two young children), plus two “domestics.”

Newhouse died on May 12, 1877, at age 67. By 1880, most of the Newhouse children and their families had decamped to other parts of the city, leaving just Newhouse’s widow, Annie, the Whelp family and one servant. In 1893, Ann Newhouse and the Whelps sold the property to real estate agent Patrick Fox, who immediately transferred it to Maggie Coleman.¹⁴⁵ Coleman sold the property to Charles Rodd, who began developing the land in 1895, but left the house intact.¹⁴⁶

Between 1893 and 1905, the house passed through several hands, until Thomas and Alice Connors sold it to Niels and Emma Buck in 1904. The next year, they sold it to Bell Hemphill and her husband, Alberto, an overalls salesman, according to an indenture dated March 13, 1905.¹⁴⁷ The document refers to the home by what at the time were its various street names, noting it was situated on “the Westerly side of the Public Drive, sometimes known as the French Boulevard (now known as Boulevard Lafayette.” The Hemphills remained in the house for at least 15 years, according to the Federal Censuses of 1910 and 1920, and the New York State Census of 1915. By 1930, they had moved to San Francisco.¹⁴⁸

By 1940, Daniel and Catharine Donovan occupied the house, and later that decade ownership passed to Floyd Bell and his wife, Otis Dean Bell. Shortly after purchasing the house, the Bells decided to separate. A separation agreement dated September 21, 1947, indicates that the

¹⁴⁵ New York City Register, Whelp and Newhouse to Fox, Oct. 18, 1893, L3, 56; Fox to Coleman, Oct. 24, 1893, L3, 61.

¹⁴⁶ New York City Register, Coleman to Rodd, Feb. 25, 1895, L5, 360.

¹⁴⁷ New York City Register, Buck to Hemphill, Jul. 26, 1905, L26, 279.

¹⁴⁸ 1920 United States Federal Census.

property was already on the market at that time, and they planned to divide the proceeds of the sale equally.¹⁴⁹

In the latter half of the 20th century, Ethel Lee Nelson and her husband purchased the property and lived in the house for many years. According to interviews with neighbors, the home under their care retained much of its original appearance, with an array of large rhododendron bushes and other manicured landscaping on the small yard out front.¹⁵⁰ A title search reveals that the home was sold after Ethel's death in 1994, and then again in 2002, when it was purchased by Al Wright and his wife, Doreen Green. The couple have since divorced. Wright, a retired New York City subway maintenance worker, was badly affected by the 2008 financial and mortgage crisis, and, in 2019, lost the home to developers Sigmund Freund and Michael Petrokansky in a short sale.

¹⁴⁹ New York, NY Conveyance, Book 4558, pp. 515-21.

¹⁵⁰ Lenora Taitt-Magubane, community resident for 33 years and a Nelson neighbor, interview with Joseph V. Amodio, October 11, 2020.

Riverside Drive, 859—861 (2135/25-26)

Date of Construction: 1897 (DOB 200-1897)

Architect: Kent & Jardine, 1262 Broadway

Original Owner: Charles B. Meyer, Kingsbridge, NY

Type: Semi-detached dwellings, 20x88

Style: Neo-Renaissance

Stories: 3 + basement

Structure/Material: Limestone & brick

Features: Two three-story limestone and brick rowhouses with raised basements designed in the Neo-Renaissance style. Both houses feature full-height rounded bays, rusticated stone basements, and abstract brickwork in the frieze below the modillioned cornices.

History: The estimated building cost for these houses was \$10,000 each.

After Meyer built these two houses, he and his wife, Virginia moved into #49 Boulevard Lafayette, today's 859 Riverside Drive. Their household included a daughter and two sons, plus two Irish servants. Woolen merchant Edward G. Payne and his wife, Harriet moved into #51 Boulevard Lafayette (861 Riverside Drive), with their son and daughter. They employed three live-in Irish servants. Rounding out their household was Mary Hoyt, listed as an "aunt" in the 1900 census.

859 Riverside Drive remained a single-family home for several years. In 1910, lumber merchant William Sidway was renting the house and living there with his wife, Ida, three daughters and two sons, ranging in age from 26 down to 11. The Sidways employed a live-in maid from Ireland, Mary Martin. In 1920, plumber Charles Stefan and his German-born wife, Ida, were renting the house. They lived there with their daughter, married son and his wife, and a granddaughter, and six lodgers.

By 1930, Vera Dahduh was renting the house for \$183 a month and living there with her aunt and brother. She rented furnished rooms to nine boarders, seven men and two women. The building inspector in 1940 noted that the house had been divided into apartments, with stoves and toilets in four of them, but shared bathrooms in the "stairhalls." He characterized it as Class B-Furnished Rooms. Hungarians John and Julia Berger were renting the house in that year, and living there with their two daughters and two sons, as well as Julia's two daughters and mother. They had six lodgers. Their eldest daughter was a factory worker, and eldest son was an errand boy. Julia's daughter, Theresa Fischer, worked as a typist. Robert Franklin, who owned the house in 1966, reconfigured it with a basement apartment and an apartment on the upper floors.

Manhattan Savings Bank foreclosed on the property in 1943. Joseph and Irving Bloch purchased it a month later, along with 861 Riverside (another foreclosure property), as

an investment. They flipped the rooming houses in 1947, selling both to Evelyn Washington.¹⁵¹

The HPD website now lists 4 units in the house.

861 Riverside Drive was the vicarage for the Chapel of the Intercession in 1910, when the Rev. Milo Gates and his wife, Pauline lived there with two Irish servants, Teresa McMahon and Nelly Gray. Trinity Church, which had come to an agreement with Intercession a few years earlier, was completing a new edifice for the congregation, which would include a formal and permanent vicarage for Gates. In 1915, lawyer W. H. Brady and his wife, Alice, had moved into 861 with a cook, Elizabeth Fenton, and maid, Lena O'Hare. Five years later, Italian immigrant Francis Paterno, a member of the Paterno Construction Company family, was living there with his American wife, Frances, and her parents, John and Helen Gray.

British-born Martha Crisp had moved into 861 Riverside Drive by 1925, with her sister, a dressmaker, and her two daughters Ona (25) and Winnie (24), both of whom listed themselves as actresses. Winnie had appeared on Broadway twenty years earlier in a Broadway play, *The Labrinth*, a melodrama by W. L. Courtney, which ran for 16 performances. Martha Crisp also had three lodgers living in the house.

In 1934 Citizens Savings Bank foreclosed on the property, and in 1940 Anna Berger rented 861 Riverside Drive from the bank and ran it as a rooming house. Along with her daughter, Mary, a dental assistant she had ten lodgers.

By 1970 the house was divided into three units, which is the same number the HPD website lists currently.

¹⁵¹ "Bank Transfers Penthouse and Loft Building," *New York Herald Tribune*, Apr. 5, 1943; "Upper East Side Blockfront Sold to Vilcha Corp.," *New York Herald Tribune*, May 27, 1947.

REQUEST FOR EVALUATION: Audubon Park Historic District Extension

Riverside Drive, 860 (2136/24)

Date of Construction: 1916 (DOB 230-1916)

Architect: George Fred Pelham

Original Owner: Langhorne Construction Company, 200 West 72nd Street, Jacob Axelrod, President

Type: Apartment house

Style: Neo-Renaissance

Stories: 6 + basement

Structure/Material: Brick

Features: A six-story and raised basement Neo-Renaissance style brick apartment building with an irregular-shape plan.

History: On the initial inspections in 1917, building inspectors Davidson Jones and John McEnery accounted for 49 apartments in the Langhorne, one in the cellar and eight on each of the upper floors. In 1923, the inspector also accounted for 49 apartments, with rentals ranging from \$75 per month for a “back” 4-room apartment to \$210 for a “front” 7-room apartment. Between then and 1939, some reconfiguring took place and in the latter year, when the building owner, Fred Straus, was living on the premises, the building inspector first counted 59 apartments, but on a subsequent visit, revised that number up to 62, which is the number currently listed on the HPD website.

In 1919, the Langhorne’s residents brought suit against a new owner, the Bergmill Holding Company, which had bought the building in a foreclosure settlement. When a judge of the New York State Supreme Court ruled that the foreclosure cancelled existing leases, the new owner notified tenants, many of whom held 3-year leases, that “their rents would increase 40 to 63 percent in April, and that they must sign at the new prices or leave.” The president of the Langhorne’s tenants association, Lloyd B. Willis, had been secretary to Governor Charles S. Whitman, and led the tenants in a legal battle to avoid the rent increases. Significantly, this event occurred in the midst of numerous rent strikes in New York City due in large part to severe shortages following World War I.¹⁵²

The tenants claimed that “the sale was not in good faith and that they had received assurances it would not affect their leases.”¹⁵³ Although the tenants investigated the possibility of buying the building¹⁵⁴—a citywide trend that residents at both 780 and 788 Riverside Drive in the historic district would soon join—that proved unnecessary when the Bergmill Holding Company agreed that their leases would “remain undisturbed for the remainder of their respective

¹⁵² See Robert M. Fogelson, *The Great Rent Wars: New York, 1917-1929*, [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013].

¹⁵³ “Langhorne Tenants to Fight Rent Raise,” *New York Tribune*, Mar. 23, 1919; see also “Riverside Drive Tenants Want Landlord’s Acts Probed,” *Record & Guide*, Mar. 29, 1919, 396, and “Tenants Demand Action,” *The New York Times*, Mar. 30, 1919.

¹⁵⁴ See “Tenants May Buy Apartments,” *New York Tribune*, Mar. 31, 1919.

terms.”¹⁵⁵ The victorious tenants, “with their wives and children,” held a victory parade on the street in front of their building, waving American flags and carrying signs reading, “Not for Ourselves Alone,” and “The Landlords Could Not Get Away with It.” According to the *New York Tribune*, “motion pictures were taken.”¹⁵⁶ In appreciation for Lloyd Willis’s leadership, the tenants presented him with “a set of silver tableware of 154 pieces, a gold cigarette case, and a match box.”¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁵ “Tenants Win Victory in Langhorne Apartment Case,” *Record & Guide*, Apr. 5, 1919.

¹⁵⁶ “Tenants Parade to Mark Victory Over Landlords,” *New York Tribune*, Apr. 7, 1919.

¹⁵⁷ “Honored for Baulking Landlord,” *The Sun*, Jun. 9, 1919.

REQUEST FOR EVALUATION: Audubon Park Historic District Extension

Riverside Drive, 863 (2135/27)

Date of Construction: 1920

Architect: John H. Knubel, 305 West 43rd Street

Original Owner: William La Hiff, 224 West 47th Street

Type: Freestanding dwelling

Style: Neoclassical

Stories: 3

Structure/Material: Brick & Limestone

Features: A three-story red brick Neoclassical style rowhouse with a centered stone portico supported by fluted columns with Ionic capitals. The windows above have limestone sills and flush lintels with keystones.

History: The projected cost for this house was \$18,000. In the 1925 New York State Census, the first year this house appears in census records, the builder, William LaHiff lived there with his wife Helen, and their son and daughter. La Hiff owned a well-known restaurant on West 48th Street (around the corner from his former home), that drew a clientele including actor Fatty Arbuckle, and prize fighters Johnny Dundee and Johnny Walker.¹⁵⁸ Five years later, Dr. Lazaros Hadjopoulos and his wife Helen owned 863 Riverside Drive, which they valued at \$30,000. Hadjopoulos, a bacteriologist at Beth Israel Hospital, who had immigrated to the United States in 1912, and his wife lived in the house with their two daughters Phoebe and Mary, and Lazaros's mother, Mary. They appear to have divided the house into apartments, as two other family units lived there as renters: Harriet Price and her son Harold, who paid \$166 a month, and newspaper printer John Laweor(?), his wife Ethel, and their son John Jr. They paid only \$90 a month.

The Hadjopouloses still owned 863 in 1940 and that year were renting apartments to wine steward Constantine Kinezopoulos and his wife Sophie (also Turkish immigrants), and lawyer Saul Sperling and his wife Gertrude. Unusual for the era, as well as the multi-family situation, the Sperlings had their own live-in maid, Laura Rappe.

The Hadjopouloses sold their house to Mae Patterson in 1946, but continued living there as her tenants.

Today, the HPD website lists the house as having four units.

¹⁵⁸ Stuart Oderman, *Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle: A Biography of the Silent Film Comedian, 1887-1933*, (Jefferson: McFarland and Company, 1994), 2.

Riverside Drive, 865 – 869 (2135/28-31)

Date of Construction: 1895 (NB 350-1895)

Architect: Lorenz F.J. Weiher, Jr

Original Owner: Charles J. Rodd, Nepera Park, Westchester

Type: Semi-detached dwellings + free-standing dwelling

Style: Renaissance Revival

Stories: 3 + basement

Structure/Material: Brick & Limestone

Features: A row of three brick and limestone Renaissance Revival style rowhouses with one (#869) being detached. Each is three stories with a raised basement and features a full-height rounded bay, a tall stoop, and distinctive entrance surrounds with foliate reliefs. All retain their character-defining features.

History: When Charles Rodd built these houses in 1895, each at an estimated cost of \$12,000, their address was Boulevard de Lafayette, at West 159th Street.

865 Riverside appears to have been used as a single-family home in 1910, when tobacco merchant Otto Hartmann lived there with his wife, Marie; teenage daughter, Ruth; and a young immigrant servant, Johanne Maloney. By 1920, Rebecca Gomes Casseres had sold 819 Riverside and purchased this home, living here with her sisters Sara, Nellie, Dora (who would alternate between work as a music teacher and Columbia University translator), and Aminta (now a rising star in advertising at J. Walter Thompson (JWT), who would soon work on a variety of campaigns, from Pond's, Lux, Cutex, and Rinso to GM and Lloyd's Bank. The sisters were all in their mid-thirties to forties, all still single, and still retaining a Black maid from Jamaica, Lillian Scott. Aminta would leave in 1930 to work in the JWT offices in London, but five sisters and a new Black maid, Ruth Barnes, remained. By 1940, just Rebecca, Sara, Dora and Nellie lived there, with yet another maid, Luisa Varone from Cuba (listed as "Negro" in the census), and three lodgers. As with other houses on the block, the lodgers shared a bathroom in the "public hall." Today, the house is listed on the HPD website with 2 units.¹⁵⁹

867 Riverside Drive was home to "West Side society girl" Mabel Towner, who wed Thomas Swift, a popular produce manager at a firm in the Gansevoort Market. The wedding took place at her house in 1906, where the couple were to live.¹⁶⁰

Within two years, they had sold to North Carolina native Thomas Dixon, a novelist and avowed white supremacist, a theme that permeates his work. Of his 22 novels and additional plays and essays, many written while he lived at 867 Riverside, perhaps his

¹⁵⁹ Denise H. Sutton, *Globalizing Ideal Beauty: How Female Copy Writers of the J. Walter Thompson Advertising Agency Redefined Beauty for the Twentieth Century* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 33-5, 46-7, 60.

¹⁶⁰ "Sullivan At Last Surrenders," *The National Provisioner*, Aug. 18, 1906, 44.

most significant was *The Clansman*, which inspired D.W. Griffith's notorious 1915 film, *Birth of a Nation*. Dixon lived in the house with his wife, Harriet, and two sons. They employed a live-in cook and a maid. By 1930, they were down to just the cook (Evander McDonald, an African-American man from North Carolina), and supplemented income by taking in six roomers. Given his "white supremacist" writings, relations must have been unusual, at the very least, between him and the gaggle of Gomes Casseres sisters next door, and the Turkish Hadjopoulos family two doors down. Dwindling finances forced him to give up the property in the 1930s.¹⁶¹

In 1940, refrigeration engineer Leonard Phillips lived there with his wife Marion and son, William. They rented part of the house to Florence Allen, who lived there with her daughter Marthia, and aunt, 90-year-old Mary Andrews. Today, the house has 7 units.

869 Riverside Drive passed through several hands in the 1890s and early part of the 20th century. By 1920, Rudolf Friml was renting the house. A Bohemian immigrant, he gained fame as a concert pianist—he made his Carnegie Hall debut in 1904 with the New York Symphony, conducted by the esteemed Walter Damrosch—and composer of hit Broadway shows and operettas. Friml, 45 in 1920, lived at the house into the late 1920s with his third wife, Elsie, 20, and a Czech maid. While there, he wrote some of his greatest works, including 1923's *Ziegfeld Follies*, the operetta *The Vagabond King* and the Broadway smash *Rose-Marie*, with book and lyrics co-written by a young Oscar Hammerstein II. The song "Indian Love Call," was already popular when Jeannette McDonald and Nelson Eddy made the film version of *Rose-Marie* in 1936, but it became something of a signature song for the famous duo. By 1930, Friml was divorced and living in Queens.¹⁶²

The homeowner, Mrs. Rose Woods, wife of theatrical producer Al Woods, sold the house in 1931 to Grasselli Chemical Company official Bartholomew F. Sheehan Jr. — notices described the house then as "farther north on Riverside Drive than any other dwelling." Sheehan transferred the property to William J. Fazulak with a mortgage of \$11,875 in 1938. Eudrice Hodge lived at 869 Riverside when she married David Flowers in 1961 — three years later, they left and would be the first African-American couple to move onto quiet Mount Hope Place, in the East Tremont section of the Bronx, near the Grand Concourse, where they purchased a 20-room house and raised a family.¹⁶³

Today 869 Riverside Drive has 2 units, with Bella's Castle Day Care occupying the lower floor.

¹⁶¹ "Thomas Dixon: American Writer," Britannica.com, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Thomas-Dixon/>; John W. Leonard, ed., "Dixon, Thomas Jr.," *Who's Who in New York City and State: A Biographical Dictionary of Contemporaries* (New York: L.R. Hamersly & Company, 1908), 400-1.

¹⁶² "Realty Notes," *The New-York Tribune*, Jun 13, 1913; William Everett, *Rudolf Friml* (University of Illinois, 2008), 10.

¹⁶³ "Chemical Official Buys Riverside Drive House," *New York Herald Tribune*, Jul. 15, 1931; "Manhattan Transfers," *The New York Times*, Sep. 8, 1938; "The Marriage Go-Round," *Amsterdam News*, Apr 1, 1961; "In the Tremont Area, a White Family that Didn't Flee Is Content," *The New York Times*, May 2, 1976.

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Riverside Drive, 870 (2136/36)

Date of Construction: 1915 (NB 271-1915)

Architect: Young and Wagner, Inc., 347 Fifth Avenue

Original Owner: Hudson View Construction Company, 189 Broadway, Henry Friedman, President

Type: Apartment house

Style: Renaissance Revival

Stories: 7 (6 listed in *Record & Guide*)

Structure/Material: Brick & stone

Features: A large seven-story brick Renaissance Revival style apartment building that conforms to the curve of the road. The three-bay entrance surrounds are distinguished with pairs of fluted columns with Ionic capitals, lionshead corbels, angel reliefs in the door head and a human face above the entrance.

History: Construction cost for the “Armidale” at 870 Riverside Drive was projected to be \$500,000. According to the I-card, monthly rents in 1923 ranged from \$125 for a 5-room apartment to \$225 for an 8-room apartment. The building initially included 37 apartments, with six on each floor, ranging from six to eight rooms each, and one in the basement, which residents now consider the first floor. HPD lists 37 units in the building, suggesting the apartments have not been divided.

The community bookstore, Recirculation, which specializes in used books and is a sister store to Word Up on Amsterdam Avenue, now occupies space on the first floor. For a few years in the early 1920s, Mrs. Grace T. Lapham ran a school for children from three to ten years old in that same space. By 1931, the Jumel School for Children had moved there, and could accommodate 100 children.¹⁶⁴ (The Jumel School would later move from the extension area to a first-floor apartment at the Grinnell, in the designated district, where it operated for several more decades.)

In 1920, Mrs. Lapham’s offering included “all day school with luncheons and carriage services,” as well as “suppers and care during weekends.” The next year, she expanded her curriculum to include French, dancing, and recreation classes, and took students as old as 14 years old.¹⁶⁵

Her husband, Charles C. Lapham, listed as a real estate broker in the 1920 Federal census, held several patents, including one for a typewriter support intended to reduce “the noise which usually occurs when the typewriter is operated . . . and to relieve the typewriter of shocks due to the operation of its mechanical parts.”¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁴ “Mother’s Helper and Elementary School,” *New York Tribune*, August 31, 1920.

¹⁶⁵ “Mrs. Lapham’s School,” *New York Tribune*, September 11, 1921.

¹⁶⁶ U.S. Patent Office, C. C. Lapham Typewriter Support, Patented, Nov. 6, 1917, No. 1,245, 243.

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Other noted residents of 870 Riverside Drive include:

- **William Bleet**, a middle-aged traveling “ladieswear” salesman and alleged bootlegger, who lived with his three grown siblings and their parents, and in 1925 was swept up in a raid of a major East Coast “illicit liquor syndicate.”
- Lexicographer, editor and author **Laurence Urdang**, famed for computerizing the unabridged Random House Dictionary of the English Language, grew up in the building with his parents, both public school teachers, and his sister in the late 1920s, ‘30s and ‘40s; he left in the early 1950s after he married and started a family of his own.
- **Capt. Charles F. Onasch**, formerly of the U.S. Coast Guard, lived in the building around the same period, the 1930s through ‘50s, with his wife, Elizabeth, and son, Charles Jr, until his death in 1959; he was the longest-serving New York harbor pilot at the time of his retirement in 1946.
- Likely the most famous residents from the building were the multi-E Emmy-nominated comedians and actors **Jerry Stiller** and **Anne Meara**. Before Stiller’s star turn as George Costanza’s cantankerous father on *Seinfeld*, and Meara’s acclaimed dramatic roles, from the hit film *Fame* to Broadway’s *Anna Christie*, the pair skyrocketed to fame as a husband-and-wife comedy team in the late 1950s and ‘60s, when they commuted from Washington Heights to downtown nightclubs and a steady gig on *The Ed Sullivan Show*, appearing on that TV series 36 times. Much like the extension area’s reputation for diversity and inclusivity, the duo’s appeal was due in part to their interfaith marriage (Stiller being Jewish, Meara raised Catholic), which they used as fodder for jokes. Looking for a shorter commute to the Ed Sullivan Theatre in midtown, they moved to the Upper West Side in 1965, just before the birth of their son, actor Ben Stiller.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁷ “U.S. Smashes Bootleg Trust, Seizing 19 in Opening Raid,” *New York Herald Tribune*, Dec. 4, 1925; Laurence Urdang, “Author’s Query,” *The New York Times*, Sep. 16, 1951; “Laurence Urdang, Language Expert Who Edited Dictionaries, Dies at 81,” *The New York Times*, Aug. 26, 2008; “Capt. C.E. Onasch, Retired Pilot,” *New York Herald Tribune*, Sep. 16, 1959; Mike Barnes, “Anne Meara, Comedian of Stiller & Meara Fame, Dies at 85,” *The Hollywood Reporter*, May 24, 2015, <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/general-news/anne-meara-dead-ben-stillers-797806/>

Riverside Drive, 884 (2136/106)

Date of Construction: 1914 (DOB#333)

Architect: Harold L. Young, 1204 Broadway

Original Owner: Melvin Construction Company, Henry Friedman, President (189 Broadway)

Type: Apartment house

Style: Neo-Gothic

Stories: 6 + basement

Structure/Material: Brick & stone

Features: Two large six-story brick Neo-Gothic style apartment buildings with façades that conform to the curve of the road. Gothic details abound, particularly at the main entrance: pointed arch openings, drip moldings, florets, crenellated parapets and more, articulated in stone.

History: The Romaine on the corner of Riverside Drive and 160th Street, and its sister building, the Loyal at Riverside and 161st, generated significant publicity when they were built, similar to that Audubon Park received a few years earlier. In both instances, property that had long been suburban had quickly evolved into city blocks.

The Romaine, on the northeast corner of Riverside Drive and 160th Street, at 884, was named for J. Romaine Brown, a noted real estate broker for nearly six decades, as well as executor for Loyal L. Smith, who bought the property in the early years of the 20th century and whose heirs disposed of it.¹⁶⁸ The land was part of the Kingsland estate that Dennis Harris had purchased in the late 1840s. The lobby of the Neo-Gothic style apartment house featured mosaic floors, cast iron staircases with marble risers and treads, and coffered ceilings.

Rental ads in 1915, when the building was ready for its first tenants, offered apartments of “4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 rooms with two baths,” the two baths presumably only in the larger apartments. Annual rents ranged from \$480 to \$1320. Other selling points included views of the Hudson River and New Jersey Palisades. Anyone signing a lease before October 1, 1915, was eligible for “special arrangements.”¹⁶⁹ Agents were on the premises to show apartments to potential renters. (Interestingly, while Romaine Brown offered apartments for rent on the same page of the *Sun*, he did not manage his namesake building.) The I-card in 1915 accounted for 49 apartments, but also shows that number increased to 51 in the early 1950s, and to the current 60 units in the 1960s.

The Loyal, named for real estate developer Loyal L. Smith, originally contained 48 apartments, and like its sister building, the Romaine, underwent division. At the Loyal, this took place in 1939 and resulted in today’s 55 units.

¹⁶⁸ “Convenances” *Record & Guide*, Apr. 17, 1915, p. 153.

¹⁶⁹ “Attractive Apartments to Rent,” *The Sun*, Sep. 5, 1915.

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The building's most notable resident is likely Ernest Hutcheson, a critically acclaimed Australian-born concert pianist, composer, and dean of the Juilliard School of Music, who lived in the building in the 1920s with his wife, the Baroness Irmgard Senfft von Pilsach, who hailed from a noted musical family in Germany, and their two teen sons, Arnold (who eventually worked at Steinway & Sons) and Harold (who became a teacher at Juilliard).¹⁷⁰

¹⁷⁰ "Ernest Hutcheson, Pianist, 79, Is Dead," *The New York Times*, Feb. 10, 1951; "Arnold Hutcheson Marries Ohio Girl," *The New York Times*, Mar. 2, 1936.

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Riverside Drive, 894 (2136/111)

Date of Construction: 1914 (DOB 349)

Architect: Harold L. Young (1204 Broadway)

Original Owner: Melvin Construction Company, Henry Friedman, President (189 Broadway)

Type: Apartment house

Style: Neo-Gothic

Stories: 6 + basement

Structure/Material: Brick & stone

Features: Two large six-story brick Neo-Gothic style apartment buildings with façades that conform to the curve of the road. Gothic details abound, particularly at the main entrance: pointed arch openings, drip moldings, florets, crenellated parapets and more, articulated in stone.

History: See Riverside Drive, 884, the Romaine.

REQUEST FOR EVALUATION: Audubon Park Historic District Extension

Riverside Drive, 900 (2136/167)

Date of Construction: 1915 (DOB 175)

Architect: Young & Wagner, Inc. (347 5th Avenue)

Original Owner: Melvin Construction Company, Inc., Henry Friedman, President, Charles Friedman, Sec., 189 Broadway

Type: Apartment house

Style: Neo-Gothic

Stories: 6

Structure/Material: Brick & stone

Features: A large six-story brick Neo-Gothic style apartment building with an irregular-shape plan. The highly ornate main entrance draws inspiration from the upper balcony of the Doge's Palace. The quatrefoil roundels and diamond pattern at the building's crown also reference the Venetian landmark.

History: 900 Riverside Drive, also known as 677 West 161st Street, appears as the "Deluxe" on at least one insurance map, though the name may apply to 900 and 910 together. The original estimated cost was \$750,000.

A lawsuit bought by the Southern Hardwood Flooring Corporation against the Ramsey Realty Company (another of Henry Friedman's concerns) reveals details about the original layouts. Of the nine apartments on the first floor, only eight had separate dining rooms. Besides a difference in the number of bedrooms, some of the apartments included maid's rooms and others did not. That pattern repeated on the upper five floors, each of which had ten living rooms and nine dining rooms. The floors for these spaces were to be oak parquet with borders of oak and beech strips, similar to those in other apartment buildings in both the historic district and extension area. Bedrooms had oak flooring with one strip of beech, other spaces had no decorative border. The kitchens and the janitor's apartment were to have yellow pine flooring.

Currently the building includes 72 units.

Well-known residents include **Ruth Berger**, a public-school teacher who earned local fame thanks to her woeful open-mouthed expression in a Smith Brothers cough syrup ad that ran in newspapers in 1931 and '32—"Teacher Is Taught How to Stop Cough FAST," blared the ad copy, which listed her name and Riverside Drive address. Twenty years later, from 1950 to '52, married Oberlin grads **Charles and Jan Windle** lived here during Charles' Ph.D. work in psychology at Columbia University and Jan's graduate studies at the New York School of Social Work. The Windles moved to the D.C. metro area, where Charles enjoyed a successful career as a research psychologist at the National Institute of Mental Health, serving as director of the Office of Rural Mental Health Research; and he was also an activist, helping to organize picketing of segregated theaters in Northern Virginia in 1962.

REQUEST FOR EVALUATION: Audubon Park Historic District Extension

Riverside Drive, 910 (2136/170)

Date of Construction: 1916 (NB 498-1916)

Architect: Harold L. Young, 32 Union Square

Original Owner: Shelby Realty Company, 189 Broadway, Henry Friedman, President

Type: Apartment house

Style: Neo-Renaissance

Stories: 6

Structure/Material: Brick and stone

Features: A large six-story brick Neo-Renaissance style apartment building with an irregular-shape plan. It shares the same continuous diamond pattern at the parapet as #900. The round arch entrance is distinguished with strung disks ornamentation and a textured weave pattern.

History: The estimated cost for 910 Riverside Drive was \$500,000. Initially, the building had 62 apartments spread across its six floors, with similar layouts and amenities as 900 Riverside Drive. Today 910 contains 65 units.

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Riverside Drive West, 156-20 (2134/206)

Date of Construction: 1963

Architect: Samuel Paul & Seymour Jarmul

Original Owner: 158th Street and Riverside Drive Housing Company, Inc. (?)¹⁷¹

Type: Apartment House

Style: Modernist

Stories: 16 with underground garage

Structure/Material: Brick

Features: A large 16-story modernist apartment building with an underground garage. The courtyard created by the building's double-T plan as well as the outer elevations are lined with balconies. The building's height is emphasized with red brick piers that are separated by yellow brick spandrel panels.

History: River Terrace, also known as the River Terrace Apartment House, has been part of the Mitchell-Lama program since its construction in 1963. The *New York Times* reported in 1960, that the Housing and Redevelopment Board was planning the River-Terrace apartments to house 416 families "on a site fronting on Riverside Drive West between West 155th and West 158th Streets," which would be the "largest city-aided cooperative in Manhattan." After a down payment of \$475 a room, "tenants would pay about \$21 a room a month, in addition to the cost of utilities."¹⁷² From its inception in 1955, the Mitchell Lama program, sponsored by New York State Senator MacNeil Mitchell and Assemblyman Alfred Lama, was intended to provide affordable housing for middle-income residents, both in rentals and co-ops units.

Among the noted residents who have lived at the River Terrace Apartments are:¹⁷³

- Fritz Alexander II, lawyer and jurist
- Thelma Berlack Boozer, administrator, journalist, and writer
- Emma L. Bowen, community activist and mental health professional
- Carolyn D. Brockington, neurologist and clinical professional
- Charlie E. Brown, finance and accounting
- Lily Brown, teacher and community activist
- Lloyd L. Brown, labor organizer, journalist, writer, and activist
- Christine D. Bussey, cardiologist, internal medicine

¹⁷¹ "City Speeds Riverside Drive Plan For a Mid-Income Cooperative," *The New York Times*, Dec. 12, 1961; See also "Riverside Drive to Get 2 Co-ops," *The New York Times*, Jan. 28, 1962.

¹⁷² "Davies Speeding Bellevue South," *The New York Times*, July 21, 1960.

¹⁷³ River Terrace website: <http://riverterrace.co/>

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- Ron Carter, jazz composer and bassist
- David Dinkins, lawyer, politician, and New York City's 106th mayor
- Joyce Dinkins, First Lady of New York City (1990-1993), accounting
- William Greaves, actor, documentary and feature film maker
- Maenetta "Mae" Hall, aging services
- Theresa McCallum Hartman, nurse
- Wilhelmina "Billie" Holliday, law enforcement, New York City Deputy Police Commissioner
- Edward "Eddie" Liddie, Judoian Olympian
- Robert O. Lowery, firefighter, New York City Fire Commissioner
- Norma Quarles, radio announcer, TV reporter and anchor
- Nedra Talley Ross, singer, entrepreneur, original member of the Ronettes
- Adelaide L. Sanford, educator and New York State Regent
- Thomas Vere Sinclair, Jr, lawyer, jurist
- John L. Wilson, Jr, architect

Riverside Drive West, 159-00 (2135/60)

Date of Construction: 1941 (NB 48-1940)

Architect: Arthur Weiser, 240 Madison

Original Owner: Margate Estates, Inc. 174; Wheelock Av. Corporation, Edward J. Hogarty, president, 114-84 180th, St. Albans, LI

Type: Apartment building

Style: Not determined

Stories: 7 and 8

Structure/Material: Brick

Features: A multi-wing 7- and 8-story red brick apartment building with subtle Georgian flourishes such as corner quoins and mock double-chimney gable ends in the two center wings.

History: The six-story, red-brick River Arts has few decorative elements, but is distinguished by 83 sides—possibly more than any other building in the city—five light courts, a sunny rear terrace sitting area and lush backyard wooded “glen,” and a landscaped entry courtyard. Known as the Riverside House when it opened, its projected construction cost was \$1,300,000. It was not the first building planned for the site. In 1938, Edward J. Hogarty, president of the Wheelock Avenue Construction Company located at 24 West 40th Street, had filed plans for a six-story brick apartment building (NB21-1938) designed by Emery Roth & Sons, at a projected construction cost of \$320,000.

In the original advertising material for “The Riverside House,” Margate Estate described its architecture as “colonial” and noted that it was a “group of six ultra modern (sic) apartment buildings” with a “wide view of the Palisades and George Washington Bridge.” Apartments to “fit every need” ranged from 1 1/2 to 5 1/2 rooms. A nod to the increased number of New Yorkers owning cars and using them for commuting, the marketing brochure touted “driving time to Chambers Street [being] approximately 12 minutes.”

Among the noted residents are **Herman “Denny” Farrell** (1932 –2018), native of Washington Heights, and long-time New York State Assemblyman for the 71st Assembly District, and **Dr. A. Lenora Taitt-Magubane**, a Spelman College graduate and one of the original Freedom Riders in the 1960s, now an education and social work consultant and civil rights lecturer. The building has also been home to scores of working actors, dancers, musicians, conductors and other performing artists, ever since it changed its name to the River Arts in the 1980s and began welcoming artists of all stripes—from early ‘80s up-and-comer (and eventual Academy Award nominee and *Downton Abbey* star) **Elizabeth McGovern** to OBIE-winning actor, author and playwright **Martin Moran** to American Ballet Theatre’s **Adrienne Schulte**.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁴ “Riverside House Has Garage,” *The New York Times*, Jul. 27, 1941.

¹⁷⁵ “New York Real Estate Brochure Collection,” Columbia University Libraries, <https://dlc.library.columbia.edu/nyre/cul:44j0zpc9k5>.

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West 158th Street, 626-632: by Andrew S. Dolkart¹⁷⁶ (2134/358, 158, 157, 156)

Date of Construction: 1897-1898

Architect: John P. Leo

Original Owner: John Lilliendahl

Type: Row houses

Style: Eclectic designs, combining features of the Romanesque Revival, Neo-Renaissance, and Beaux-Arts styles

Stories: 3 + basement

Structure/Material: Brick & limestone

Features: This row of four houses was built in 1896. John P. Leo designed the row in an AABB pattern, with two virtually identical pairs. All of the three-story and raised basement houses are faced with beige brick and limestone and are capped by a pressed-metal cornice. All had high stoops and deep areaways with low walls separating the areaway from the street. As with many row houses of the 1890s, these are eclectic designs, combining features of the Romanesque Revival, Neo-Renaissance, and Beaux-Arts styles.

West 158th Street, 634-648: by Andrew S. Dolkart
(2134/155, 154, 153, 152, 151, 150, 149, 148)

Date of Construction: 1896-1897

Architect: John P. Leo

Original Owner: John and Isabelle Leo

Type: Row houses

Style: Eclectic designs, combining features of the Romanesque Revival, Neo-Renaissance, and Beaux-Arts styles

Stories: 3 + basement

Structure/Material: Brick & limestone

Features: This row of eight houses was built in 1896. John P. Leo designed the row in an ABBAABBC pattern. All of the three-story and raised basement houses are faced with brick with limestone trim. They have an irregular silhouette with the A and C houses having flat, pressed-metal cornices and the B houses with gables. As with many row houses of the 1890s, these are eclectic designs, combining features of the Romanesque Revival, Neo-Renaissance, and Beaux-Arts styles. No. 648 is a Colonia Revival house. Because the houses are set on a slope,

¹⁷⁶ Andrew S. Dolkart, former Professor of Historic Preservation at the Columbia University Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation and Director of the school's Historic Preservation Program.

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all have high stoops, shorter preliminary stoops, and areaway retaining walls (most now concrete).

History: Numbers 626-648 West 158th Street comprise a cohesive group of row houses that share an architectural, cultural, and historical connection with the buildings now designated as the Audubon Park Historic District as well as those in the extension area. Constructed in two stages between June 1896 and June 1898, to designs by architect-builder-developer John P. Leo, the twelve houses represent a first wave of residential construction in response to the expanding population that developers anticipated New York City's rapid transit system would bring to northern Manhattan. Chronologically, they fit between the houses Charles Rodd built at the northern end of the extension area in 1895 and those Francis Schnugg built at the southern end in 1899.

Among the first owners on this block was engineer Reginald Pelham Bolton, who purchased 638 West 158th Street in 1897 and lived there with his wife Ethelind Huyck Bolton until his death in February 1942. Described as the "no. 1 Citizen of Washington Heights" in his *New York Times* obituary, Bolton was an avocational historian, writer, archeologist, and neighborhood activist. Most significantly, he was an early proponent of historic preservation and served as Vice President of the American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society, New York's first organized preservation lobby. Among his many achievements with that group was the preservation of the Poe Cottage in the Bronx. He also led a quarter-century effort to save the Audubon house and create a new "Audubon Park" around it, from as early as 1907 until the house was moved to a new site in 1932—where it succumbed to decay and vandals for lack of funds to restore it.

Demographically, the residents on West 158th Street have long shared similar ethnic, religious, social, and economic characteristics with those in the designated historic district. Census records illustrate homogeneity among the early residents of the apartment buildings in the historic district and those already established on West 158th Street, with many sharing northern European heritage and Protestant religious affiliations. The late 1920s and 1930s saw a wave of Jewish immigrants into the area. Most were fleeing Germany, though some also arrived from other mid-European countries and Russia. As Steven M. Lowenstein illustrates in *Frankfurt on the Hudson*, this was a highly educated group of immigrants, who established social and religious institutions in their new neighborhood reflecting those they had nurtured in their nations of birth.¹⁷⁷

In the 1930s, a key development in apartment houses adjacent to West 158th Street was shared living, with one family renting from the building owner and then taking in relatives, lodgers, boarders, or a combination of the three. The 1930 Federal Census reflects a similar pattern on 158th Street (and in the houses in the extension area on Riverside Drive).¹⁷⁸ The "nations of birth" that residents reported were far more diverse than they had been in earlier decades and

¹⁷⁷ Steven M. Lowenstein, *Frankfurt on the Hudson: The German Jewish Community of Washington Heights, 1933-1983, Its Structure and Culture*, (1989).

¹⁷⁸ 1930 United States Federal Census.

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included Poland, Germany, Canada, Albania, Ireland, England, Scotland, Peru, and Belgium. In two households, the recorded “mother tongue” was Yiddish. Occupations were also far more diverse than they had been in 1900 and included a real estate broker, dry goods salesman, printer, laundry proprietor, nurse, candy manufacturer, usher at a movie theater, barber, sculptor, restaurant manager, lawyer, social worker, “stage performers,” and several public-school teachers (three of whom taught music). Many more women reported work “outside the home,” than had in earlier censuses.

Of the original 1897-98 purchasers only Reginald P. Bolton remained (#638). Cornelia Dike (#648) had the second-longest tenure as a homeowner, having bought her home from Clara Stabler in 1904.¹⁷⁹ Although the majority of the houses were owner-occupied (ten of twelve), fewer households now retained servants (three of twelve) and more of them included lodgers, boarders, or relatives outside the core family (ten of twelve).

Based on the ratio of family to boarders and lodgers, Polish-born Nathan Lidsky and his wife Ida were running #626 as a boarding house, as was second-generation American Hedwig Caldwell in #632. At least one house, #628, appears to have been divided into apartments or floors: three families were renting, with one of those families taking in boarders.

In 1940, Reginald P. Bolton and Cornelia Dyke still represented the “old guard” on 158th Street.¹⁸⁰ Although the majority of the houses remained owner-occupied, the number of renters had increased (five of twelve). A sign of changing times, none of the households included servants and all of them included individuals who were not part of the core family. Nine of the twelve included sub-renters, lodgers, boarders, or roomers. Interestingly, Frank Bruckner, the owner of #640, listed the other member in his household as his “partner” Inez Hill.

Nations of birth continued to diversify in 1940, with Latvia, England, Denmark, Poland, Germany, Colombia, Austria, and Greece represented on 158th Street. Occupations included a priest at the Church of the Intercession and his family, several professional musicians, a hotel elevator operator, senior clerk, secretary, shoemaker, milliner, baker, dressmaker, switchboard operator, electrician, waiter in a hotel, advertising copywriter, sales lady, draftsman for the WPA, two chauffeurs, the president of an electric utility, and a linen salesman.

Vehicular traffic on 158th Street increased significantly in 1937, with the completion of the Henry Hudson Parkway and an exit at the foot of the street. The next major change on the block came in 1941, when developers demolished the Wheelock mansion at the foot of 158th Street, a fixture in the area for three-quarters of a century, and replaced it with the 244-unit complex now known as the “River Arts Apartments.”¹⁸¹ By then, apartment buildings had already filled the western side of Riverside Drive north of 158th Street, with their backs facing the twelve row houses on 158th Street. One-story garages still covered a portion of the land west of the houses

¹⁷⁹ City Register: “Stabler to Dike,” (June 27, 1904), Liber 21, Page 60.

¹⁸⁰ 1940 United States Federal Census.

¹⁸¹ See also Meyer Berger, “About New York,” *New York Times* (February 19, 1940).

on 158th Street, but came down in 1964, when the city-sponsored Mitchell Lama building rose on Riverside Drive West between 157th and 158th Streets.

The first African-American family to buy a house on West 158th Street were the Scruggs, in the late 1950s. Later came Sherman Carter, Ruth Johnson, and Joseph Arthur Bailey, all overcoming the insidious practice of redlining to finance their homes with seller-financed mortgages or rent-to-buy schemes. Bailey was described in his obituary as “a Harlem lawyer and former assistant attorney general for New York State who challenged Adam Clayton Powell Jr for his Congressional seat.”¹⁸² Bailey’s daughter, Josette vividly remembers her brothers hunting for and finding Native American arrowheads in the “community garden.”¹⁸³ Not until the late 1970s was the garden paved over and converted to a parking lot.

¹⁸² “Joseph A. Bailey, 95, Lawyer and Politician,” *New York Times* (June 4, 2000).

¹⁸³ Vivian Ducat interview with Josette Baily (April 2016).

Architects Appendix

Louis Entzer

815—825 Riverside Drive, Neo-Renaissance Row Houses

Between 1890 and 1900, architect Louis Entzer worked extensively with builder-developer Francis Schnugg, completing a variety of projects including tenements, stores, and semi-detached houses.¹⁸⁴ In March 1900, after 815—825 Riverside Drive (then bearing Boulevard Lafayette addresses) were complete, the *Record & Guide* announced that Schnugg had bought property on 110th Street near Amsterdam Avenue where he would build four 5-story brick and stone flat buildings, with Entzer as his architect.¹⁸⁵ Three months later, Schnugg announced his plans for four 5-story brick flat buildings on 91st Street, again with Entzer.¹⁸⁶

The next year, Entzer had a nervous breakdown. He was arrested for “passing a worthless check for \$15,” and imprisoned for almost a year. While he was awaiting trial, he became ill, and during the trip from the jail to Harlem Hospital, he threw a suicide note from the transport vehicle. On investigation, a *Times* reporter learned from Entzer’s relatives that he was extremely jealous of his younger wife and “this caused him to drink.”¹⁸⁷ He served a prison sentence from August 1901 to June 1902, and died in 1903.

Samuel Walter Katz

834-836 Riverside Drive

838-844 Riverside Drive

Samuel Katz was an American architect active in New York City in the first half of the 20th Century. A large part of his output was in Washington Heights and the southern Bronx.

His first mention in the *Record & Guide* was in December 1914, when the P. W. Holding Company announced plans for an apartment building on West 160th Street between Broadway and Riverside Drive.¹⁸⁸ At the time, Katz was working from an office on Madison Avenue. The next year, he worked with Nathan Wilson, president of the Sand Construction Company, on 838-844 Riverside Drive in the extension area, and two 5-story apartment houses for Vermilyea Avenue in the Bronx.¹⁸⁹ In 1916, while he was collaborating with Gustavius Schneider on 834-

¹⁸⁴ See “Out Among the Builders,” *Record & Guide*, May 17, 1890, 738; “Building News,” *Record & Guide*, Jan. 29, 1898, 192; “Building News,” *Record & Guide*, Apr. 21, 1900, 683; and “News of the Building Trade,” *Record & Guide*, Mar. 9, 1895, 372, among others.

¹⁸⁵ “Building News,” *Record & Guide*, Mar. 17, 1900.

¹⁸⁶ “Projected Buildings,” *Record & Guide*, Jun. 2, 1900.

¹⁸⁷ “Farewell Message on a Cuff,” *The New York Times*, Aug. 6, 1901.

¹⁸⁸ “Contemplated Construction,” *Record & Guide*, Dec. 20, 1913.

¹⁸⁹ “Contemplated Construction,” *Record & Guide*, Jan. 17, 1914.

836 Riverside Drive, he also worked with him on two 6-story “brick, limestone, and terra cotta apartment houses” at 172nd Street between Fort Washington and Haven Avenues.¹⁹⁰

Out of his offices at 405 Lexington Avenue, he developed several projects in the Bronx, for the Podgur Realty Company, including two 5-story buildings on College Avenue and two 5-story buildings on Morris Avenue.¹⁹¹ He also designed a 5-story apartment house for that company on Edgecombe Avenue.¹⁹² With the R. P. Construction Company, he developed two 5-story buildings on Sedgwick Avenue. In 1917, he remodeled a 2-story with basement structure at 5221 Broadway, in Marble Hill, “by constructing stores in small units to occupy the frontage and leave the rear portions available for uses in connection with the automobile traffic.”¹⁹³

In March 1918, the *Record & Guide* announced that Katz, whose father was German by birth, had closed his offices for the duration of the war, and “entered the service of the Government.”¹⁹⁴ He returned to practice after the war as S. Walter Katz and worked on several projects in association with George and Edward Blum.

With Louis Alan Abramson, Samuel Katz designed 26 Grove Street, which is designated in the Greenwich Village Historic District (1969).

Kent and Jardine

859 and 861 Riverside Drive / Renaissance Revival Row Houses

Kent and Jardine was a continuation of several firms the brothers David, John, and George Jardine operated in the second half of the 19th century. The three brothers were sons of Scottish architect-builder Archibald Jardine. After David’s death, John and George joined with William Kent to form Jardine, Kent & Jardine, whose output included 233 and 235 East 5th Street in the East Village/Lower East Side Historic District. According to the designation report for the historic district, Jardine, Kent & Jardine is also responsible for the designs of 10-12 Christopher Street and 161 Waverly Place in the Greenwich Village Historic District. The Jardines also designed “religious structures, store-and-loft buildings, warehouses, office buildings, and apartment houses.”¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁰ “To Build Heights Apartments,” *Record & Guide*, Dec. 30, 1916.

¹⁹¹ “Contemplated Construction,” *Record & Guide*, Jan. 8, 1916.

¹⁹² “Contemplated Construction,” *Record & Guide*, Feb. 6, 1915.

¹⁹³ “Real Estate Notes,” *Record & Guide*, Oct. 6, 1917.

¹⁹⁴ “Personal and Trade Notes,” *Record & Guide*, Mar. 9, 1918.

¹⁹⁵ Christopher D. Brazee, Jennifer L. Most, Donald G. Presa, and Virginia Kurshan, “East Village/Lower East Side Historic District Designation Report,” (New York: Landmarks Preservation Commission, Oct. 9, 2021), 285.

John H. Knubel

863 Riverside Drive / Neo-classical house

John A. Knubel was an architect practicing in New York City from the last decade of the 19th century into the first quarter of the twentieth. He was also the president of the Kimble Realty Company. Among his commissions were a synagogue for the Congregation Beth Israel on West 35th Street, the 16-story skyscraper at 352 Seventh Avenue (1924), the Mercantile building, at 345-353 Seventh Avenue, and remodeling of the Manheimer Building at 369 Seventh Avenue. The Office for Metropolitan History lists 382 records related to his work.

John P. Leo

626-648 West 158th Street / Eclectic designs, combining features of the Romanesque Revival, Neo-Renaissance, and Beaux-Arts styles

Captain John Patrick Leo, a New York City developer, architect, and builder, was a first generation American, born to Irish immigrants Patrick and Elizabeth Humphrey Leo in Greenpoint, Brooklyn on April 10, 1859. Where he studied architecture is not certain, but an early mention of his work appeared in 1892, when he was architect for the Twenty-second Regiment Armory (and commissioned as a Captain in the Infantry).¹⁹⁶

In 1894, he chaired the organizational meeting of the Employers' and Builders' League of the Building Trades of the City of New-York and was elected its first president. The League's goal was to "preserve, by conservative action, the interests of owners, contractors, and journeymen, and also by arbitration and discussion to remove all necessity for strikes, liens, lockouts, etc."¹⁹⁷ As president, Leo was often spokesman for the league¹⁹⁸ and presided over activities such as the opening of its Clubhouse on 125th Street in Harlem.¹⁹⁹

Leo was most active in the 1890s as a developer-architect-builder, buying property, designing row houses to fit, and then quickly selling the houses. Many of his projects were on the western side of Manhattan in the 130s and 140s, where he and his competitors speculated that rapid transit would spur growth in the region. Showing his belief in the neighborhood, he moved his wife and six children to 584 West 145th Street in the 1890s. Although Leo specialized in developing property with row houses that he built on speculation, in 1900, the *Record & Guide* featured his plans for apartment houses at 470 and 472 West 145th Street as an example of "an

¹⁹⁶ "The Armory Board," *The New York Times*, Aug. 1892.

¹⁹⁷ "Contractors and Builders Unite," *The New York Times*, Sep. 25, 1894.

¹⁹⁸ "Hearing on the Excise Bills," *The New York Times*, Mar. 13, 1895; "For Better Tenements," *New York Times*, Apr. 26, 1895; "Greater City's Taxation," *The New York Times*, Jan. 16, 1897; "A Surprise for Builders: Sidewalks of Portland Cement or Other Artificial Stone illegal—New Ordinance Desired," *New York Times*, Jul. 27, 1897.

¹⁹⁹ "Open Their New Clubhouse," *New York Times*, Apr. 12, 1895.

ingenious design to take advantage of grade of street, securing entrances and halls, etc., in basement.”²⁰⁰

According to his *New York Times* obituary, Leo’s career as an architect and builder spanned forty years. In 1918, he was appointed Chairman of the Board of Standards and Appeals and in 1921, he served an incomplete term as Street Cleaning Commissioner.²⁰¹ John P. Leo died of a heart attack at the age of sixty-five on July 23, 1923.²⁰²

Samuel Paul and Seymour Jarmul

156-20 Riverside Drive West / Modernist Apartment House

Taken from Queens Modern (<https://queensmodern.com/architecturalfirm/paul-jarmul/>)

The partnership of Samuel Paul (1912-2002) and Seymour Jarmul (1920-1994) dates to 1948 when Jarmul joined the firm as a job captain; he subsequently became junior partner in 1953. Paul had been a sole practitioner since 1944, designing modest apartment houses, and before that working as a draftsman for a variety of firms, including Skidmore Owings & Merrill. A graduate of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, Harvard’s Graduate School of Design, and Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Paul may have met or employed Jarmul due to the MIT connection, which Jarmul attended from 1945-47.

As a partnership the firm focused almost exclusively on one type of work, the mid-size residential apartment building. According to Jarmul’s daughter Ruth, Paul was the business partner, bringing in new commissions. Work steadily increased from the mid 1950s on and the firm designed more than 100 residential complexes in the 1950s and 60s, primarily in the five boroughs and Long Island.

The projects tend to be efficient, stripped-down designs primarily in brick with little detail to distinguish one from the next, but many featuring amenities to attract middle class tenants. The brochure for one project in Elmhurst states “The charm of the suburbs—the conveniences of the city...this is Gramercy House.” Extensive listing of amenities was key in drawing in new residents moving to the area.

The firm’s design pinnacle was their partnership with the Birchwood Organization, for which they designed several major projects, Sheila Terrace in Elmhurst (1963), Gramercy Spire in Manhattan (1963), Birchwood Towers in Forest Hills (1964), and Birchwood Park at Water’s Edge in Bayside (1967). These complexes, with nearly 1,500 apartments combined, were aimed at a higher income tenant with luxury amenities such as swimming pools, ornamental

²⁰⁰ “Apartment House Planning,” *Record & Guide*, Apr. 14, 1900.

²⁰¹ “John P. Leo Dies from Heart Attack,” *New York Times*, Jul. 24, 1923.

²⁰² *Ibid.*

fountains, floor to ceiling windows, private balconies, and in the case of Water's Edge, a putting green on the property.

Birchwood also offered a distinctly modern amenity-themed buildings and lobbies. Each of the Water's Edge and Birchwood Towers buildings had a different placed-based name, such as the Toledo, the Versailles, and the Kyoto, and lobby decorated in that respective theme. Gramercy Spire, on the other hand, was completely Japanese inspired, with a covered oriental walkway, a Japanese garden, and a sunken conversation pit in the lobby with oriental flourishes.

Both Birchwood Towers and Birchwood Park won Queens Chamber of Commerce Building Awards, as did Birchwood Park's temporary sales office, a large peaked pavilion within a landscaped garden, long since demolished. The firm also received awards for two hotels, the Schine Inn in Forest Hills (1961) and the Riviera in Jamaica (1963), as well as Skyline Towers in Flushing (1966), another major apartment development.

In addition to designing middle income housing, cooperative housing was also an important body of work for the firm. Together, the firm worked on major cooperative housing complexes such as the EW Jimerson Houses (Brooklyn, 1959), Grandview Towers (Queens, 1962), River Terrace Apartments (Manhattan, 1964), and Scott Tower (Bronx, 1966), as well as more than a dozen others. Jarmul's daughter states that this focus on co-operative and other forms of government subsidized housing coincided with his interest in projects that helped the less privileged. Previously Jarmul had designed several additions (gymnasium, dormitory, and swimming pool facility) to the Bulova Company's Woodside School, in which disabled individuals learned the watchmaking and repair trade.

In 1969, the partnership dissolved with Jarmul teaming up with Bernard Brizee and Paul making his son a partner. Both firms continued into the 1970s, completing similar projects.

George Fred Pelham

860 Riverside Drive / Neo-Renaissance Apartment House

820 Riverside Drive / Eclectic Apartment House, with Tudoresque flourishes

George Fred (Frederick) Pelham, a prolific apartment house designer in New York City, was born in Ottawa, where his father established an architectural office before accepting a job as designer for New York City's Department of Public Parks. The younger Pelham worked as a draftsman in his father's firm before studying architecture privately and then opening his own firm in 1890. He designed buildings for more than four decades with an output including hotels, row houses, and commercial buildings, but most notably apartment houses on Manhattan's Upper West Side and in Washington Heights.

Pelham designed six apartment buildings in the combined historic district and extension area, Hispania Hall and Audubon Hall in the historic district in 1909; the Langhorne in the extension

area in 1916; the Cragmoor Dwellings in the historic district in 1919; Marion Garden in the extension area in 1920; and 807 Riverside Drive in the historic district in 1924.

Springsteen & Goldheimer

812 Riverside Drive, Arts & Crafts Apartment House

In January 1919, the *Record & Guide* announced that George W. Springsteen, Jr and Albert Goldhammer had formed a co-partnership and would practice under the name Springsteen & Goldhammer, with offices at 32 Union Square.²⁰³ Springsteen had been a partner with Sass & Springsteen, and Goldhammer had been the chief draftsman. Among their first commissions was the conversion of a 4-story dwelling on West 85th Street into bachelor apartments and a 5-story brick and limestone apartment house for Creston Avenue in the Bronx. They filed plans for 812 Riverside Drive, which they designed for Eli Moran of the Se Co Construction company, in August of that year.²⁰⁴

Among their most noted buildings are the Amalgamated Houses in the Bronx, eleven apartment houses, the first of which opened in 1927, and the Alhambra Gardens (1928). The Amalgamated Houses cooperative was “one of the first large-scale moderate-income housing cooperatives in the country . . . founded in the mid-1920s to help workers, mainly Jewish immigrants in the needle trades, escape from lower East Side slums in which they were trapped by a post-WWI shortage of other affordable housing.”²⁰⁵ The Alhambra Gardens on Pelham Parkway South in the Bronx was also a building of “second settlement” for East European immigrants prosperous enough to leave the Manhattan’s Lower East Side.²⁰⁶

Springsteen and Goldhammer’s 153-155 West 72nd Street (1922-23) is a landmarked building.

Lorenz F.J. Weiher, Jr.

865-867 Riverside Drive / Renaissance Revival Row Houses

“Lorenz F.J. Weiher, Jr. established his practice in New York City in 1895 and continued until at least 1925. Most of his work consists of residential buildings in northern Manhattan, including the Colonial Revival style apartment building for George Doctor in the Hamilton Heights/Sugar Hill.”²⁰⁷ As a developer-architect, like John P. Leo, he designed and constructed a row of seven matching flats he called The Terrace, which recalled “the matching rows of private houses in

²⁰³ “Personal and Trade Notes,” *Record & Guide*, Jan. 4, 1919.

²⁰⁴ “Plans Filed for New Construction Work,” *Record & Guide*, Aug. 2, 1919.

²⁰⁵ “Amalgamated Houses in the Bronx” website:

<https://www.lehman.edu/vpadvance/artgallery/arch/buildings/Amalgamated%20houses.html>

²⁰⁶ “The Alhambra Gardens,” website: <https://www.lehman.edu/vpadvance/artgallery/arch/buildings/alhambra.html>

²⁰⁷ Matthew A. Postal, Donald G. Presa, and Marianne S. Percival, “Hamilton Heights/Sugar Hill Historic District Designation Report, (New York: Landmarks Preservation Commission, 2000), 186.

London and Bath, England.”²⁰⁸ He also designed the Lenox Casino on West 116th Street in Harlem.

Harold L. Young

835 Riverside Drive / Neo-Renaissance Apartment House

839 Riverside Drive / Neo-Renaissance Apartment House

845 Riverside Drive / Neo-Renaissance Apartment House

853 Riverside Drive / Neo-Renaissance Apartment House

870 Riverside Drive (with Stewart Wagner) / Renaissance Revival Apartment House

884 Riverside Drive / Neo-Gothic Apartment House

894 Riverside Drive / Neo-Gothic Apartment House

910 Riverside Drive / Neo-Renaissance Apartment House

900 Riverside Drive (with Stewart Wagner) / Neo-Gothic Apartment House

Harold L. Young, either by himself or in partnership with Stewart Wagner, designed nine of the fourteen apartment houses facing Riverside Drive between 158th and 162nd Streets. With the exception of the Villa Norma, which he designed for David Friedburg, all of the buildings were in collaboration with Henry Friedman and his variously named construction companies. Friedman seems to have favored Young, as he also employed him to design the entire block bounded by Fort Washington and Riverside Drive between 160th and 161st Streets, as well as buildings in Morningside Heights.

²⁰⁸ Christopher Gray, “Streetscapes/101 East 75th Street; When Doormen Were Sparse Along Park Avenue,” *New York Times*, Nov. 9, 1997.

Illustrations

Streetscapes, Present Day



*Figure 35: Riverside Drive North of 158th Street
Extension Area from the Roof of the Grinnell, in the Historic District*



Figure 36: 835 Riverside Drive (Villa Norma) from a Plaza on the “Upper Drive”

REQUEST FOR EVALUATION: Audubon Park Historic District Extension



Figure 37: 819-823 Riverside Drive



Figure 38: 859—869 Riverside Drive



Figure 39: 815-821 Riverside Drive



Figure 40: Stairway Connecting the "Upper" and "Lower" Parts of Riverside Drive, Near the Northern End of the Extension Area

Streetscapes, Historical



Figure 41: May 1938

*West 158th Street at Riverside Drive (junction with the old Boulevard Lafayette)
On left: 815 Riverside Drive and Villa Norma advertisement on 835 Riverside Drive
On right: 838-844 Riverside Drive (the Kingsland)*



*Figure 42: 1941
Riverside Drive West from 161st Street
Riverside House Apartments (renamed: River Arts Apartments)*

Doorways, Windows, Cornices, Present Day



Figure 43: 835 Riverside Drive (Villa Norma)



Figure 44: 870 Riverside Drive (Armidale)



Figure 45: 910 Riverside Drive (Deluxe)

REQUEST FOR EVALUATION: Audubon Park Historic District Extension



Figure 46: 884 Riverside Drive (Romaine)



Figure 47: 894 Riverside Drive (Loyal)



Figure 48: 812 Riverside Drive (Seco Hall)

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Figure 49: 825, 823, 821 Riverside Drive



Figure 50: 894 Riverside Drive (Loyal)



Figure 51: 910 Riverside Drive (Deluxe)



Figure 52: 839 – 845 Riverside Drive



Figure 53: 884 Riverside Drive (Loyal)

Photographs: Individual Buildings, Historical and Present Day

REQUEST FOR EVALUATION: Audubon Park Historic District Extension

Riverside Drive, 812 (2136/10)



Figure 54: Tax Photo 1939-41



Figure 55: Tax Photo 1983-88



Figure 56: Present Day

REQUEST FOR EVALUATION: Audubon Park Historic District Extension

Riverside Drive, 815 (2135/1)



Figure 57: Tax Photo 1939-41

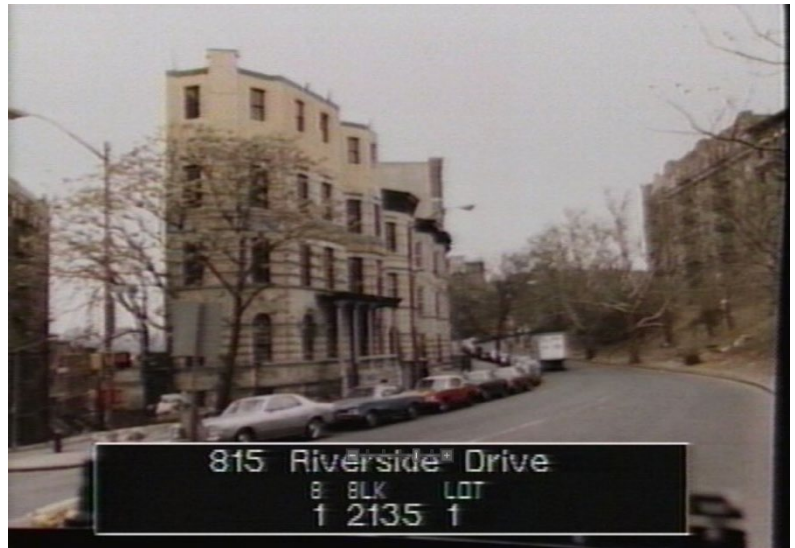


Figure 58: Tax Photo 1983-88



Figure 59: Present Day

REQUEST FOR EVALUATION: Audubon Park Historic District Extension

Riverside Drive, 817 (2135/2)



Figure 60: Tax Photo 1939-41

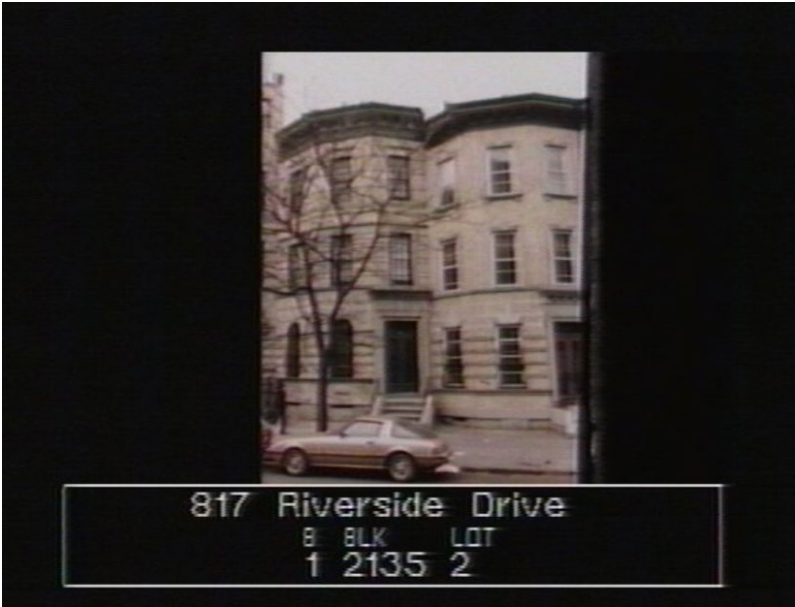


Figure 61: Tax Photo 1983-88



Figure 62: Present Day

Riverside Drive, 819 (2135/3)



Figure 63: Tax Photo 1939-41

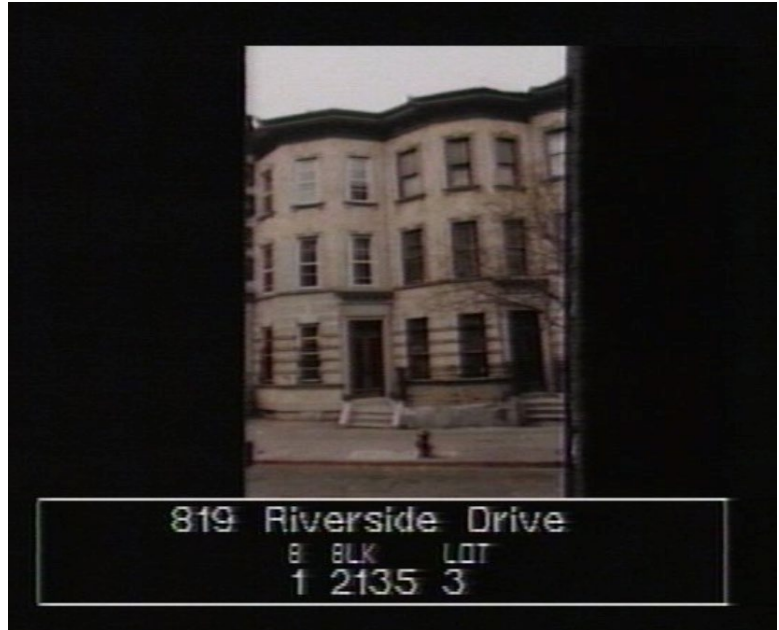


Figure 64: Tax Photo 1983-88



Figure 65: Present Day

Riverside Drive, 821 (2135/4)



Figure 66: Tax Photo 1939-41

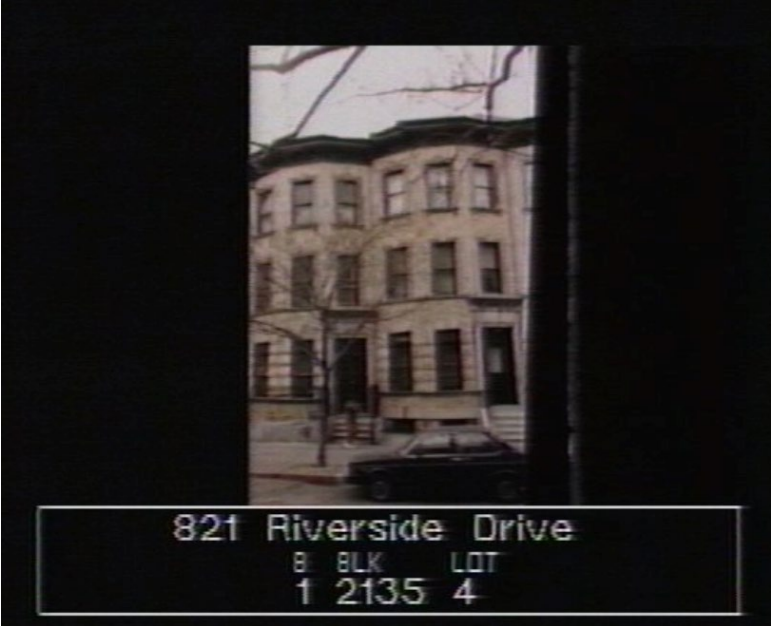


Figure 67: Tax Photo 1983-88



Figure 68: Present Day

REQUEST FOR EVALUATION: Audubon Park Historic District Extension

Riverside Drive, 823 (2135/5)



Figure 69: Tax Photo 1939-41

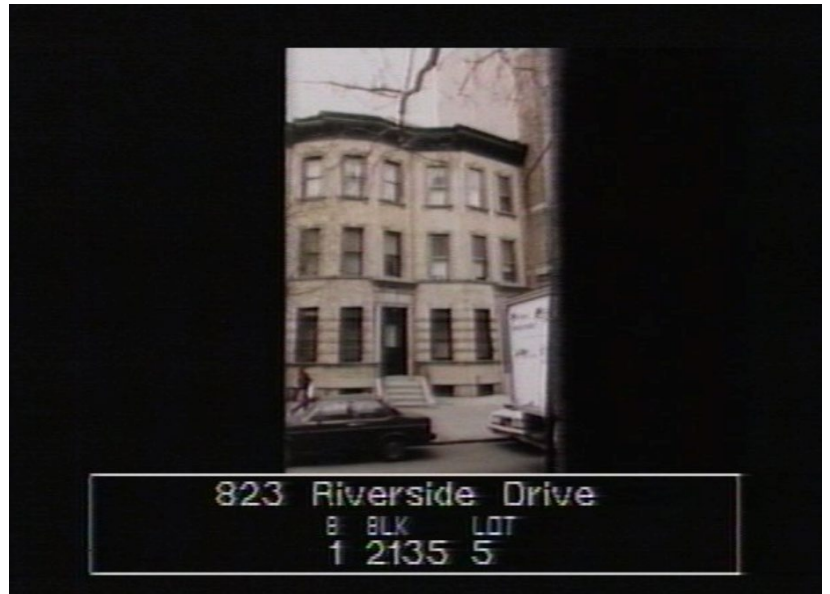


Figure 70: Tax Photo 1983-88



Figure 71: Present Day

REQUEST FOR EVALUATION: Audubon Park Historic District Extension

Riverside Drive, 825 (2135/6)



Figure 72: Tax Photo 1939-41

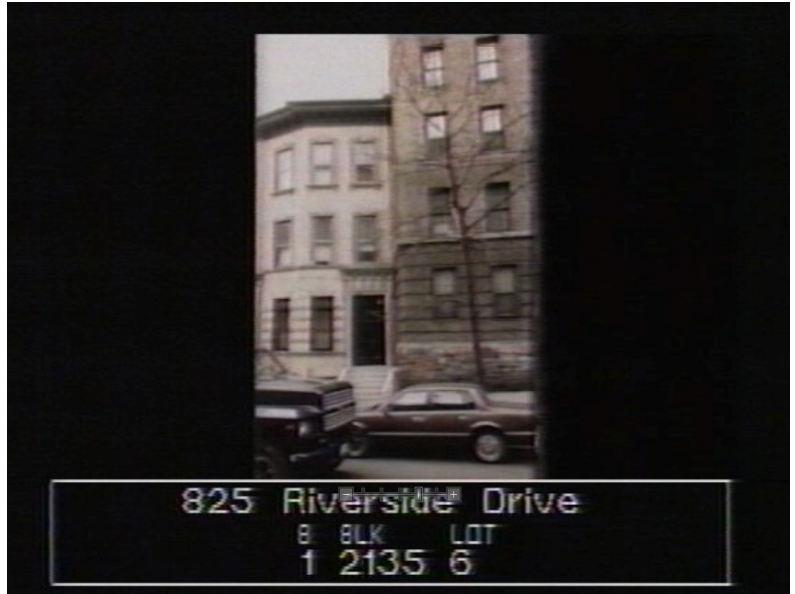


Figure 73: Tax Photo 1983-88



Figure 74: Present Day

REQUEST FOR EVALUATION: Audubon Park Historic District Extension

Riverside Drive, 820 (2136/13)



Figure 75: Tax Photo 1939-41



Figure 76: Tax Photo 1983-88



Figure 77: Present Day

REQUEST FOR EVALUATION: Audubon Park Historic District Extension

Riverside Drive, 834-836 (2136/18)



Figure 78: Tax Photo 1939-41

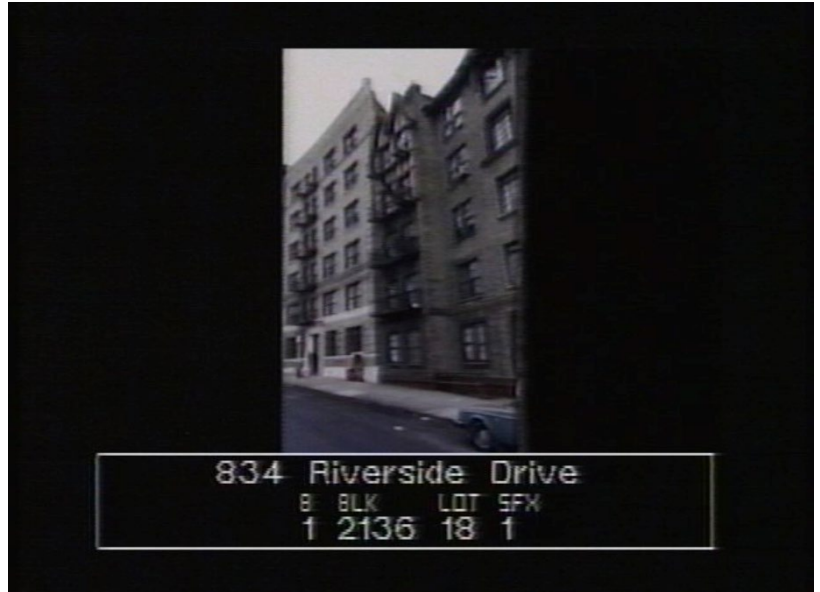


Figure 79: Tax Photo 1983-88



Figure 80: Present Day

Riverside Drive, 835 (2135/7)



Figure 81: Tax Photo 1939-41

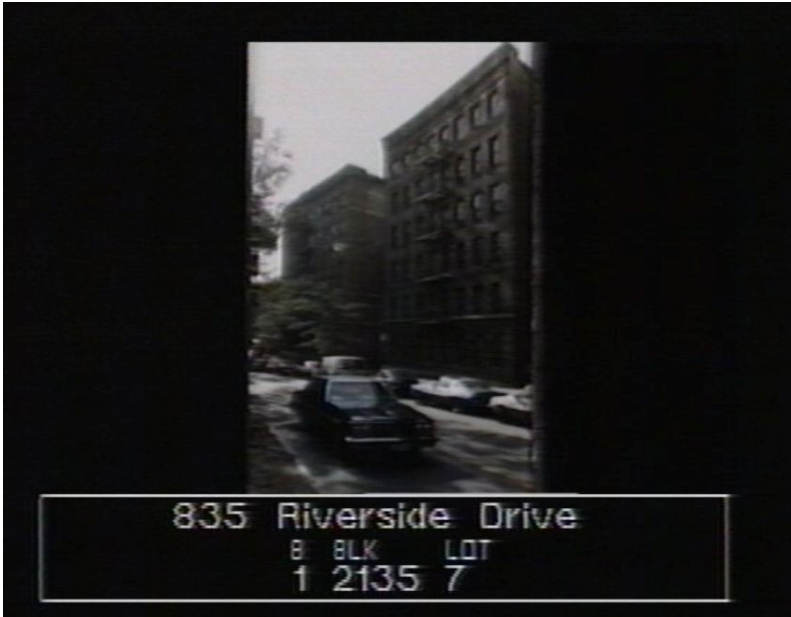


Figure 82: Tax Photo 1983-88



Figure 83: Present Day

REQUEST FOR EVALUATION: Audubon Park Historic District Extension

Riverside Drive, 838-844 (2136/20)



Figure 84: Tax Photo 1939-41



Figure 85: Tax Photo 1983-88



Figure 86: Present Day

Riverside Drive, 839 (2135/13)



Figure 87: Tax Photo 1939-41



Figure 88: Tax Photo 1983-88



Figure 89: Present Day

REQUEST FOR EVALUATION: Audubon Park Historic District Extension

Riverside Drive, 845 (2135/17)



Figure 90: Tax Photo 1939-41



Figure 91: Tax Photo 1983-88



Figure 92: Present Day

REQUEST FOR EVALUATION: Audubon Park Historic District Extension

Riverside Drive, 853 (2135/20)



Figure 93: Tax Photo 1939-41



Figure 94: Tax Photo 1983-88



Figure 95: Present Day

REQUEST FOR EVALUATION: Audubon Park Historic District Extension

Riverside Drive, 857 (2135/23)



Figure 96: Tax Photo 1939-41

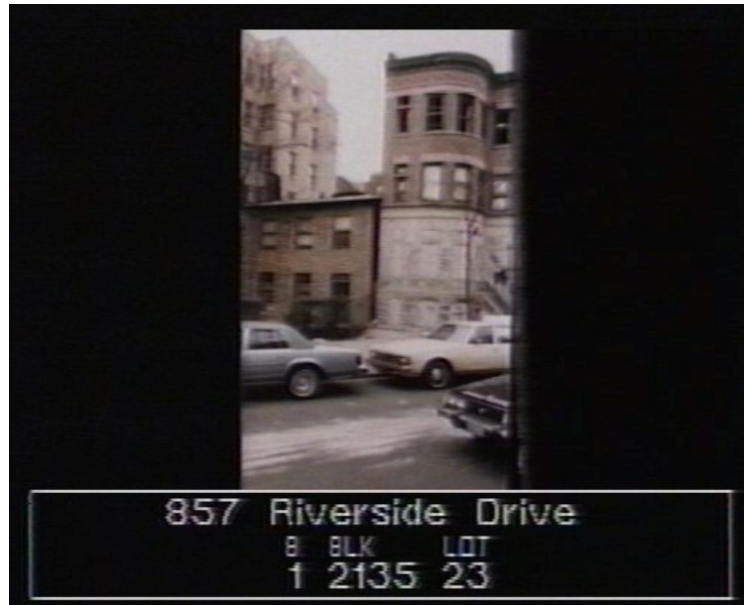


Figure 97: Tax Photo 1983-88



Figure 98: Present Day

REQUEST FOR EVALUATION: Audubon Park Historic District Extension

Riverside Drive, 859 (2135/25)



Figure 99: Tax Photo 1939-41

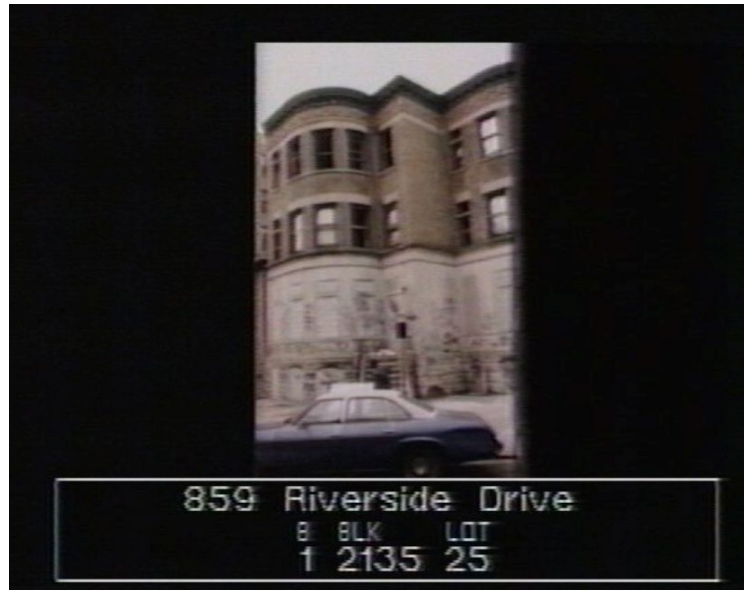


Figure 100: Tax Photo 1983-88



Figure 101: Present Day (left)

REQUEST FOR EVALUATION: Audubon Park Historic District Extension

Riverside Drive, 861 (2135/26)



Figure 102: Tax Photo 1939-41

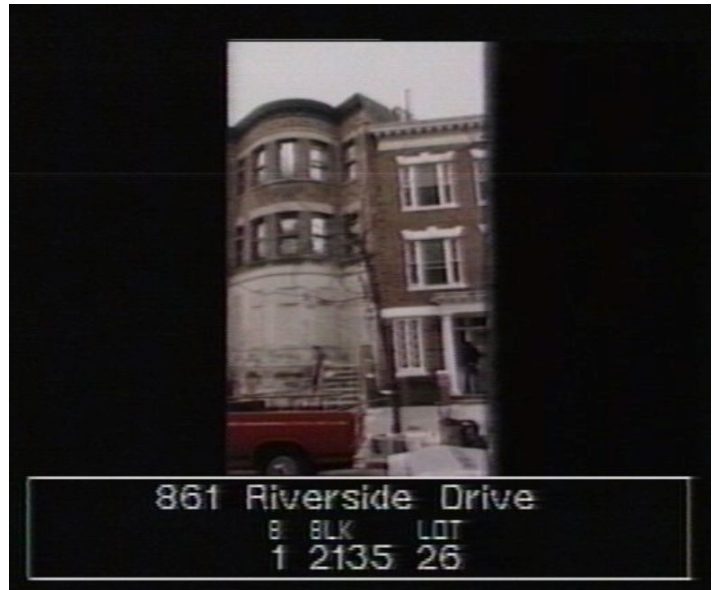


Figure 103: Tax Photo 1983-88



Figure 104: Present Day (right)

REQUEST FOR EVALUATION: Audubon Park Historic District Extension

Riverside Drive, 860 (2136/24)



Figure 105: Tax Photo 1939-41



Figure 106: Tax Photo 1983-88



Figure 107: Present Day

Riverside Drive, 863 (2135/27)



Figure 108: Tax Photo 1939-41

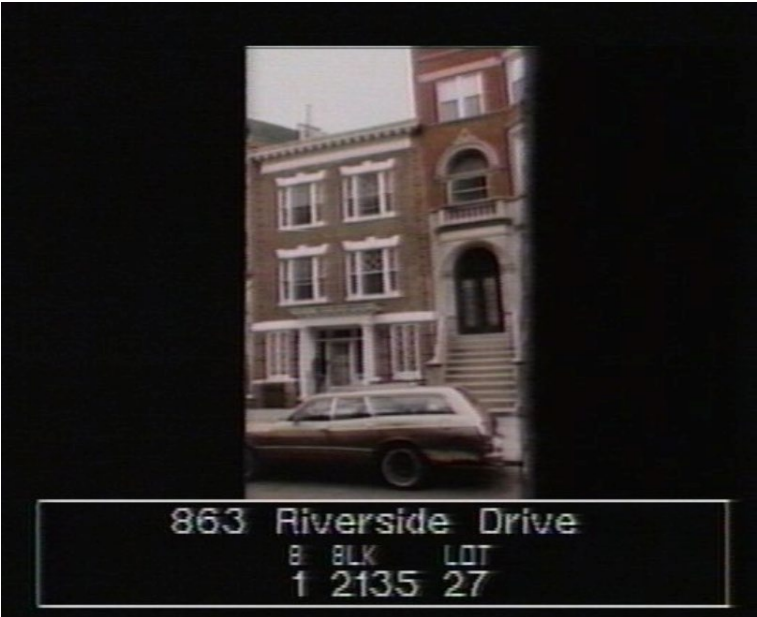


Figure 109: Tax Photo 1983-88



Figure 110: Present Day

REQUEST FOR EVALUATION: Audubon Park Historic District Extension

Riverside Drive, 865 (2135/28)



Figure 111: Tax Photo 1939-41

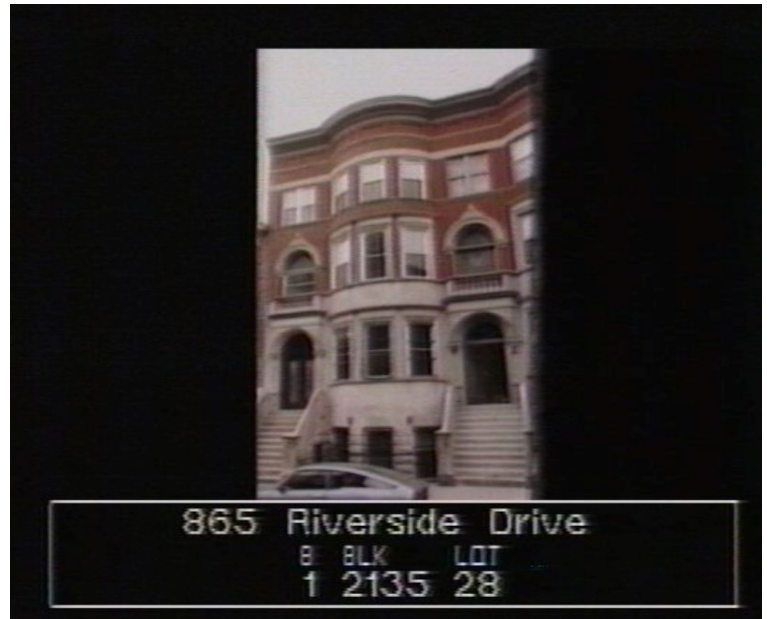


Figure 112: Tax Photo 1983-88



Figure 113: Present Day

REQUEST FOR EVALUATION: Audubon Park Historic District Extension

Riverside Drive, 867 (2135/30)



Figure 114: Tax Photo 1939-41



Figure 115: Tax Photo 1983-88



Figure 116: Present Day

REQUEST FOR EVALUATION: Audubon Park Historic District Extension

Riverside Drive, 869 (2135/31)



Figure 117: Tax Photo 1939-41

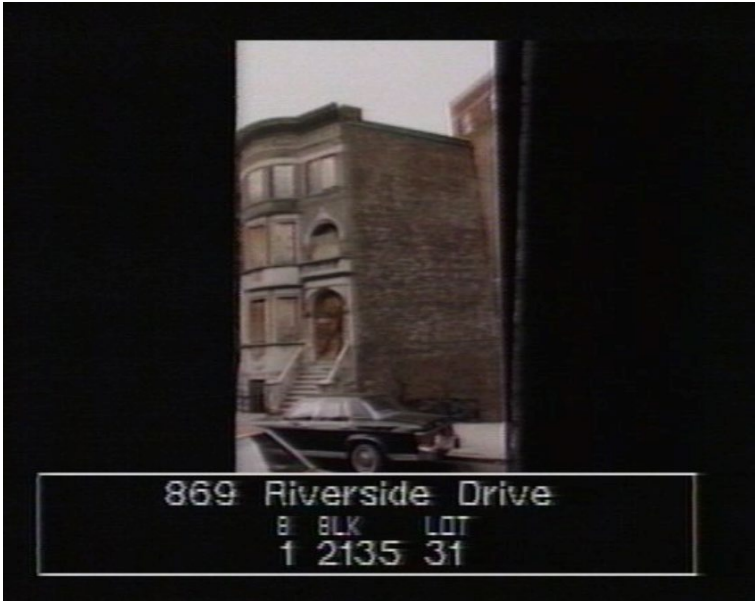


Figure 118: Tax Photo 1983-88

Present Day



Figure 119: Present Day

REQUEST FOR EVALUATION: Audubon Park Historic District Extension

Riverside Drive, 870 (2136/36)



Figure 120: Tax Photo 1939-41

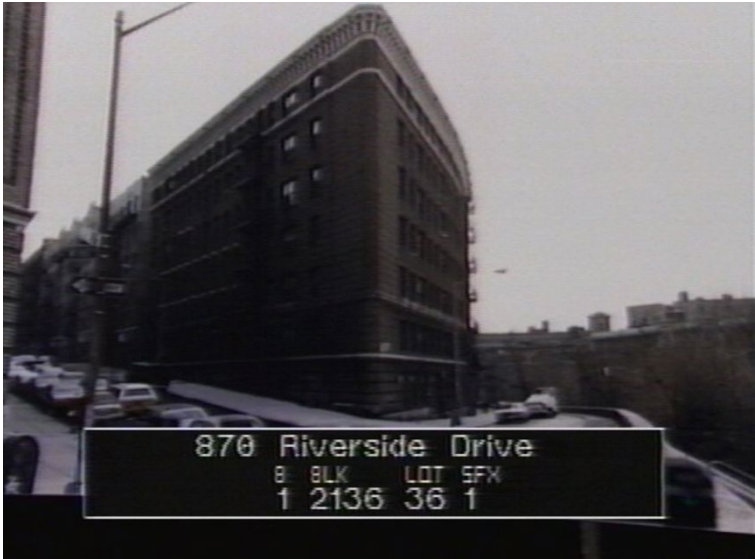


Figure 121: Tax Photo 1983-88



Figure 122: Present Day

REQUEST FOR EVALUATION: Audubon Park Historic District Extension

Riverside Drive, 884 (2136/106)



Figure 123: Tax Photo 1939-41



Figure 124: Tax Photo 1983-88



Figure 125: Present Day

REQUEST FOR EVALUATION: Audubon Park Historic District Extension

Riverside Drive, 894 (2136/111)



Figure 126: Tax Photo 1939-41



Figure 127: Tax Photo 1983-88



Figure 128: Present Day

REQUEST FOR EVALUATION: Audubon Park Historic District Extension

Riverside Drive, 900 (2136/167)



Figure 129: Tax Photo 1939-41



Figure 130: Tax Photo 1983-88



Figure 131: Present Day

REQUEST FOR EVALUATION: Audubon Park Historic District Extension

Riverside Drive, 910 (2136/170)



Figure 132: Tax Photo 1939-41

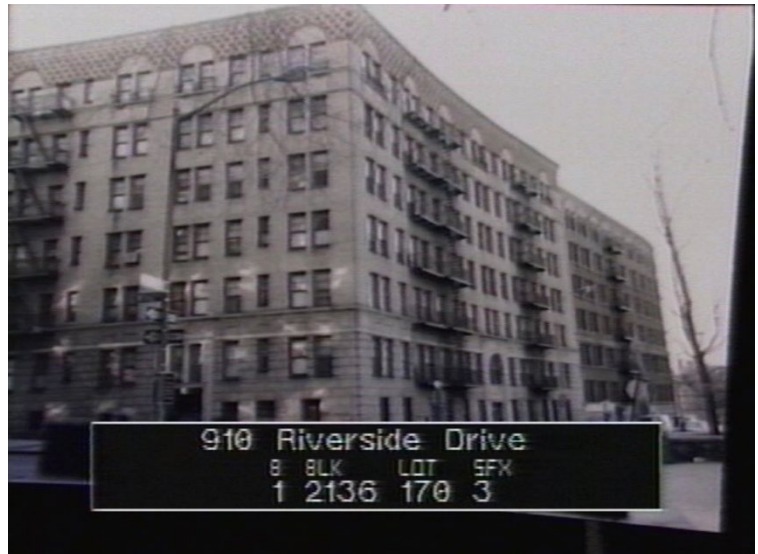


Figure 133: Tax Photo 1983-88



Figure 134: Present Day

REQUEST FOR EVALUATION: Audubon Park Historic District Extension

Riverside Drive West, 156-20 (2134/206)

Tax Photo 1939-41
Not yet constructed



Figure 135: Tax Photo 1983-88



Figure 136: Present Day

REQUEST FOR EVALUATION: Audubon Park Historic District Extension

Riverside Drive West, 159-00 (2135/60)

Tax Photo 1939-41
Not yet constructed



Figure 127: Tax Photo 1983-88



Figure 138: Present Day

REQUEST FOR EVALUATION: Audubon Park Historic District Extension

West 158th Street, 626 (2134/358)



Figure 139: Tax Photo 1939-41 (left)

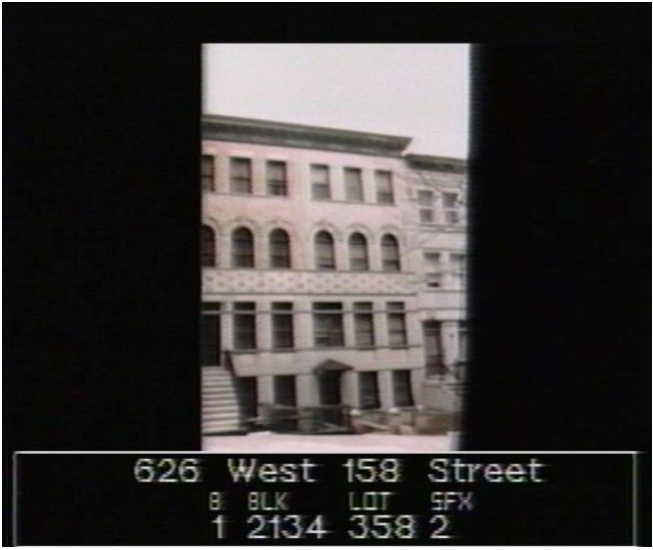


Figure 130: Tax Photo 1983-88



Figure 141: Present Day
(626 on left)

REQUEST FOR EVALUATION: Audubon Park Historic District Extension

West 158th Street, 628 (2134/158)



Figure 142: Tax Photo 1939-41 (right)



Figure 133: Tax Photo 1983-88



Figure 144: Present Day
(628 on right)

REQUEST FOR EVALUATION: Audubon Park Historic District Extension

West 158th Street, 630 (2134/157)



Figure 145: Tax Photo 1939-41



Figure 136: Tax Photo 1983-88



Figure 147: Present Day (left)

REQUEST FOR EVALUATION: Audubon Park Historic District Extension

West 158th Street, 632 (2134/156)



Figure 148: Tax Photo 1939-41



Figure 139: Tax Photo 1983-88



Figure 150: Present Day (right)

REQUEST FOR EVALUATION: Audubon Park Historic District Extension

West 158th Street, 634 (2134/155)



Figure 151: Tax Photo 1939-41



Figure 142: Tax Photo 1983-88



Figure 153: Present Day

REQUEST FOR EVALUATION: Audubon Park Historic District Extension

West 158th Street, 636 (2134/154)



Figure 154: Tax Photo 1939-41



Figure 145: Tax Photo 1983-88



Figure 156: Present Day (right)

REQUEST FOR EVALUATION: Audubon Park Historic District Extension

West 158th Street, 638 (2134/153)



Figure 157: Tax Photo 1939-41



Figure 148: Tax Photo 1983-88



Figure 159: Present Day (left)

REQUEST FOR EVALUATION: Audubon Park Historic District Extension

West 158th Street, 640 (2134/152)



Figure 160: Tax Photo 1939-41



Figure 151: Tax Photo 1983-88



Figure 162: Present Day (right)

REQUEST FOR EVALUATION: Audubon Park Historic District Extension

West 158th Street, 642 (2134/151)



Figure 163: Tax Photo 1939-41



Figure 154: Tax Photo 1983-88



Figure 165: Present Day

REQUEST FOR EVALUATION: Audubon Park Historic District Extension

West 158th Street, 644 (2134/150)



Figure 166: Tax Photo 1939-41



Figure 157: Tax Photo 1983-88



Figure 168: Present Day

REQUEST FOR EVALUATION: Audubon Park Historic District Extension

West 158th Street, 646 (2134/149)



Figure 169: Tax Photo 1939-41



Figure 160: Tax Photo 1983-88



*Figure 171: Present Day
(646, left)*

REQUEST FOR EVALUATION: Audubon Park Historic District Extension

West 158th Street, 648 (2134/148)



Figure 172: Tax Photo 1939-41



Figure 163: Tax Photo 1983-88



Figure 174: Present Day
(648, right)

Advertisements and Supplementary Material

160th St.---Riverside Drive---161st St.
and 655 West 160th St.
Overlooking the Hudson and Palisades

ROMAINE AND LOYAL

NEW BUILDINGS READY FOR OCCUPANCY
Suites of 4-5-6-7-8 Rooms, 2 Baths
Rentals \$480 to \$1320

Special Arrangements on Leases Signed Prior to October 1st

Renting Agent on Premises—Open Evenings—Phone Audubon 8591.

Friedman Construction Co. Phone Cortlandt 839 **189 Broadway**

Figure 175: New York Times, September 19, 1915

THE VILLA-NORMA

835 RIVERSIDE DRIVE

NORTH OF 158TH STREET

Highest Type Elevator Apartments

NEW BUILDING

NOW READY FOR OCCUPANCY

4 and 5 Rooms

NO REAR APARTMENTS

HOUSE FACES TWO STREETS

One of the main features contained in this building is that we have used a special metal lath on all ceilings and partitions throughout all apartments in the entire building. This makes the building strictly fireproof and prevents the walls and ceilings from cracking.

This house contains side lights in the Living Rooms, special outlets in all of the Living Rooms and Bedrooms for lamp connections. All walls are panelled with mouldings and are to be painted and stippled throughout.

The floors are all of hardwood with parquet in Foyer Halls, Dining Rooms and Living Rooms.

For further particulars apply to Agent on Premises

Figure 176: Sun and New York Times, September 26, 1920

NEW
ELEVATOR APARTMENT
812 Riverside Drive
NEAR 158TH STREET
LARGE ROOMS FINEST CONSTRUCTION
WONDERFUL OUTLOOK
3-4-5 and 6 Rooms
NORMAN DENZER
Managing Agent; Representative on premises.
3807 BROADWAY AT 159TH ST.

Figure 177: New York Tribune, November 14, 1921

New Elevator Apartments
Only a few to rent
UPPER FLOORS ONLY
5 Rooms 6 Rooms
Four Apartments. Two Apartments.
One 5 room Doctor's Apt.
SECO HALL
812 Riverside Drive
at 158th Street
NORMAN DENZER
Agent, on premises, or
Audubon 8707. 3807 B'way.

Figure 178: New York Times, February 1, 1921

859 RIVERSIDE DRIVE
NEAR 158TH ST.
3 Stories and Basement, 12 Rooms, Bath.
Price right. Reasonable terms.
Lease expires October 1.
J. ARTHUR FISCHER, 600 6TH AV.

Figure 179: Sun and Herald, August 8, 1920

Villa Norma
835 Riverside Drive
West of 158th St.
New Elevator Apartment Building
NOW BEING COMPLETED
3-4-5-6 Rooms
Apply Agent on Premises

Figure 180: Sun and Herald, August 29, 1920

Just Completing
**High Class Elevator
Apartment Houses**

839 to 853
RIVERSIDE DRIVE
NORTH OF 158TH ST.

No rear apartments; all windows face
Pallisades or the Drive. Most won-
derful arrangements of rooms. Some
apartments have all windows facing
Hudson River.

150 Complete Apartments
Arranged in Suites of
3-4-5-6-7 Rooms
(1-2-3 Baths)

Inquire on Premises or
PHONE Wadsworth 6335

Figure 181: New York Tribune, Nov. 19, 1922

Directory of Apartments

**Now Renting for Immediate Occupancy
or from October First**

<p>300 West End Ave Northeast Corner of 74th Street 10, 11 and 12 rooms</p> <p>Hotel Esplanade At 74th Street N.W. Corner West End Ave 1, 2 and 3 room suites</p> <p>325 West End Ave Northwest Corner of 75th Street 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 rooms</p> <p>334 West End Ave Southeast Corner of 76th Street 7, 8 and 10 rooms</p> <p>375 West End Ave Southwest Corner of 78th Street 8 and 9 rooms</p> <p>472 West End Ave Southeast Corner of 83rd Street 7 and 8 rooms</p> <p>505 West End Ave Northwest Corner of 84th Street 5, 6 and 7 rooms</p> <p>520 West End Ave Northeast Corner of 86th Street 2 and 3 rooms</p> <p>569 West End Ave Adjoining Southwest Corner of 88th Street 2 rooms</p> <p>575 West End Ave Southwest Corner of 84th Street 5, 6 and 7 rooms</p> <p>650 West End Ave Southeast Corner of 92nd Street 6 and 7 rooms</p>	<p>680 West End Ave Northeast Corner of 93rd Street 4, 5, 6 and 7 rooms</p> <p>930 West End Ave Adjoining Southeast Corner of 106th Street 6 and 7 rooms</p> <p>945 West End Ave Northwest Corner of 106th Street 9 rooms</p> <p>347 West 55th Street Between 8th and 9th Avenues 1 and 2 rooms</p> <p>251 West 74th Street Adjoining West End Avenue 2 and 3 rooms</p> <p>203 West 81st Street Between Broadway and Amsterdam Ave 3, 4, 5 and 6 rooms</p> <p>127 West 82d Street Between Amsterdam and Columbus Aves 4 and 5 rooms</p> <p>101 West 86th Street Northwest Corner of Columbus Avenue 7 rooms</p> <p>156 West 86th Street Between Amsterdam and Columbus Aves 6 rooms</p> <p>176 West 87th Street Southeast Corner of Amsterdam Avenue 4, 5 and 6 rooms</p> <p>320 West 89th Street Between West End and Riverside 3 and 4 rooms</p>	<p>241 West 97th Street Northwest Corner of Broadway 4, 5 and 6 rooms</p> <p>240 West 98th Street Southwest Corner of Broadway 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 rooms</p> <p>214 W. 110th Street Between Broadway and Amsterdam Ave 4 and 5 rooms</p> <p>220 W. 110th Street Between Broadway and Amsterdam Ave 5 and 6 rooms</p> <p>514 W. 114th Street Between Broadway and Amsterdam Ave 5, 6 and 7 rooms</p> <p>375 Riverside Drive South Corner of 110th Street 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 rooms</p> <p>596 Riverside Drive South Corner of 137th Street 6, 7, 8 and 9 rooms</p> <p>730 Riverside Drive North Corner of 159th Street 5, 6, 7 and 8 rooms</p> <p>The Grinnell 800 Riverside Drive Corner of 157th Street 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 rooms</p> <p>820 Riverside Drive Adjoining Corner of 158th Street 3, 4, 5 and 6 rooms</p> <p>834 Riverside Drive Between 159th and 160th Streets 3, 4 and 5 rooms</p>
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Plans and particulars mailed upon request to
Managing Agent

MARK RAFALSKY & COMPANY
21 EAST 40TH STREET NEW YORK CITY
TELEPHONE: *Vanderbilt* 2027

Figure 182: New York Herald, July 2, 1922
Ads for 820 Riverside Drive and 834 Riverside Drive (extension area),
with 800 Riverside Drive (historic district)

The Mothers Helper and Elementary School

For boys and girls, three to ten years old.

An all day school with luncheon and carriage service.

Suppers and care during week ends.

For booklet, address

Mrs. Grace T. Lapham
Director
870 Riverside Drive
Telephone: Audubon 435

Honor Roll for Season 1919-1920

Thomas Lewis Allen, Jr., 636 West 158th St.
6 1/2 years, Third Grade.

Vivian Geiger, 583 Riverside Drive.
7 years, Third Grade.

Augusta Lewis, 655 West 160th St.
7 years, Third Grade.

Grace Cummings, 665 West 160th St.
9 years, Sixth Grade.

AFTERNOONS ARE SPENT IN THE OPEN.

Figure 183: New York Tribune, August 29, 1920

MRS. LAPHAM'S SCHOOL
(Formerly The Mothers' Helper and Elementary School)

An all day school six days weekly, with luncheon and carriage service. Kindergarten through the Eighth Grade—Boys and Girls 3 to 14—French; Dancing; Afternoon Recreation Classes; an enclosed, fully equipped playground. Fall term commences September 26. Booklet.

MRS. GRACE T. LAPHAM, Director
870 Riverside Drive, N. Y. Telephone Audubon 0435

Figure 184: New York Tribune, September 11, 1921 (present day doorway, right)

The Lapham School

FROM KINDER-GARTEN TO HIGH SCHOOL

INFORMALITY AND HARD WORK GO HAND IN HAND AT THIS SCHOOL

RESIDENT AND ALL-DAY SCHOOL EIGHTH YEAR

Girls and boys from 2 to 12 years prepared for any Preparatory or High School. Number limited. Small groups. Personal attention. Luncheon is served to the all-day students, and the auto-bus makes the school accessible to all parts of the city. Hours from 9 to 5 o'clock. Daily French classes, dancing, afternoon Recreation classes; fully equipped gymnasium. The Lapham has acquired in addition to the present school, a new school building which will be used as a school for boys. Ages from 2 to 12.

Fall term commences September 25th. Booklet on request.

MRS. GRACE T. LAPHAM, Director,

The Youngest Resident Pupil Telephone Billings 0436. 870 Riverside Drive, New York City.

Figure 185: New York Tribune, September 10, 1922

A. SINIGALLIANO
Violin Instructor
STUDIOS:
838 RIVERSIDE DRIVE, N. Y.
1183 BROAD ST., Newark, N. J.

Figure 186: Advertisement for violin instruction at 838 Riverside Drive New York Tribune, October 17, 1920

TEACHER IS TAUGHT
How to Stop Cough FAST

"It was parents' day and I had a terrible cough. One of the mothers who called on me noticed how I suffered. 'Why don't you take some Smith Brothers' Cough Syrup,' she said. 'It stopped Annie's cough right away.' Well—why shouldn't a teacher take lessons? I sent right out for a bottle of Smith Brothers' Syrup and after the first swallow my head cleared, my throat felt better. In a few hours the cough had disappeared." Ruth Berger, 900 Riverside Drive, N. Y. C.

**SMITH BROTHERS
COUGH SYRUP**
ONLY 35 CENTS
It Loosens Phlegm

Figure 187: Ruth Berger of 900 Riverside Drive endorses Smith Brothers Cough Syrup Evening Star, December 12, 1932



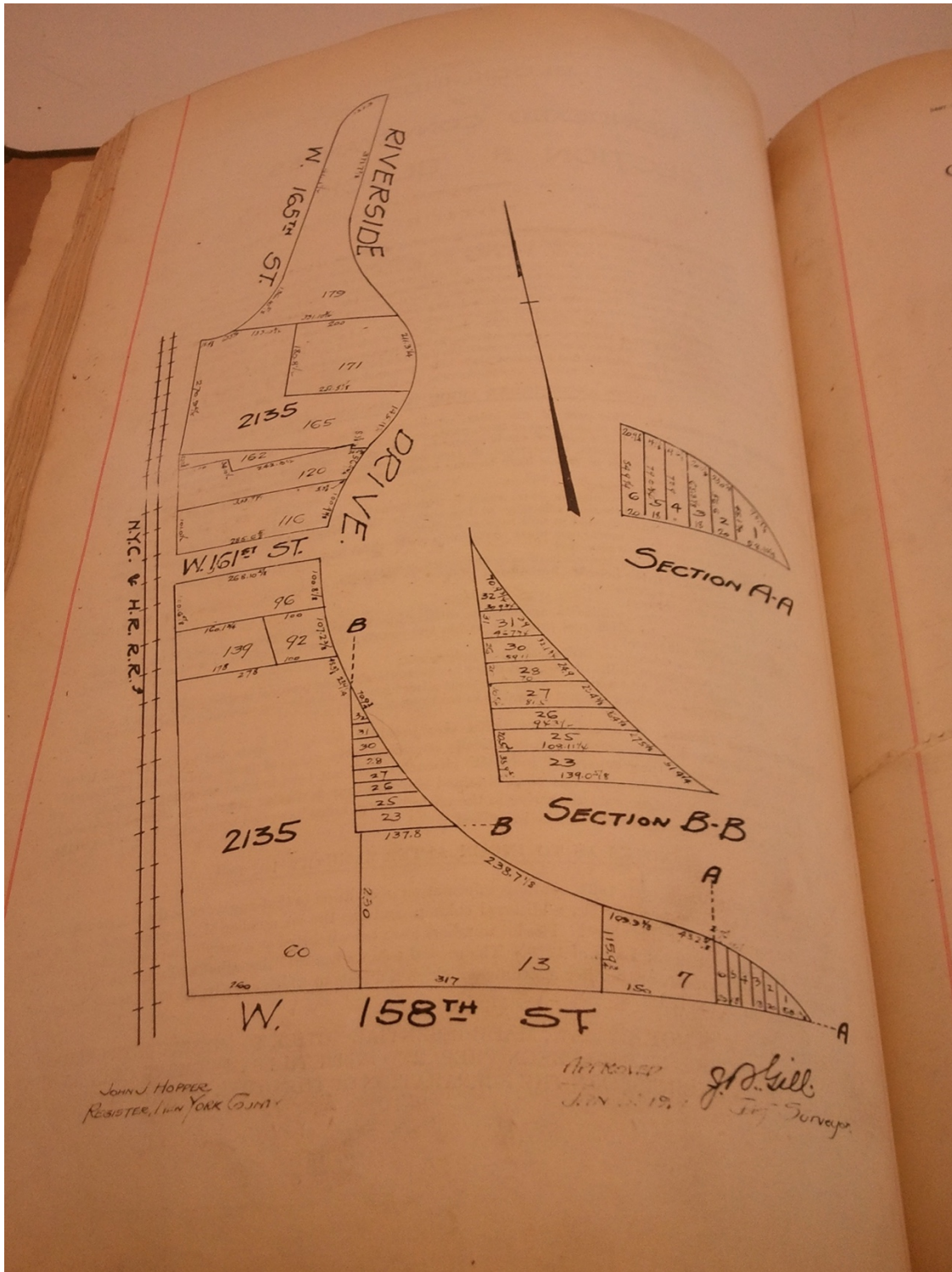
Figure 188: Composer Carey Morgan, who wrote songs for stars like Vernon and Irene Castle, and Fatty Arbuckle, and served as a mentor to legendary songwriter (and *Guys & Dolls* creator) Frank Loesser, lived at 834 Riverside Drive when the building was new.



Figure 189: Rudolf Friml, a prolific operetta composer, was living at 869 Riverside Drive in the early 1920s when he wrote probably his most famous song, "Indian Love Call."

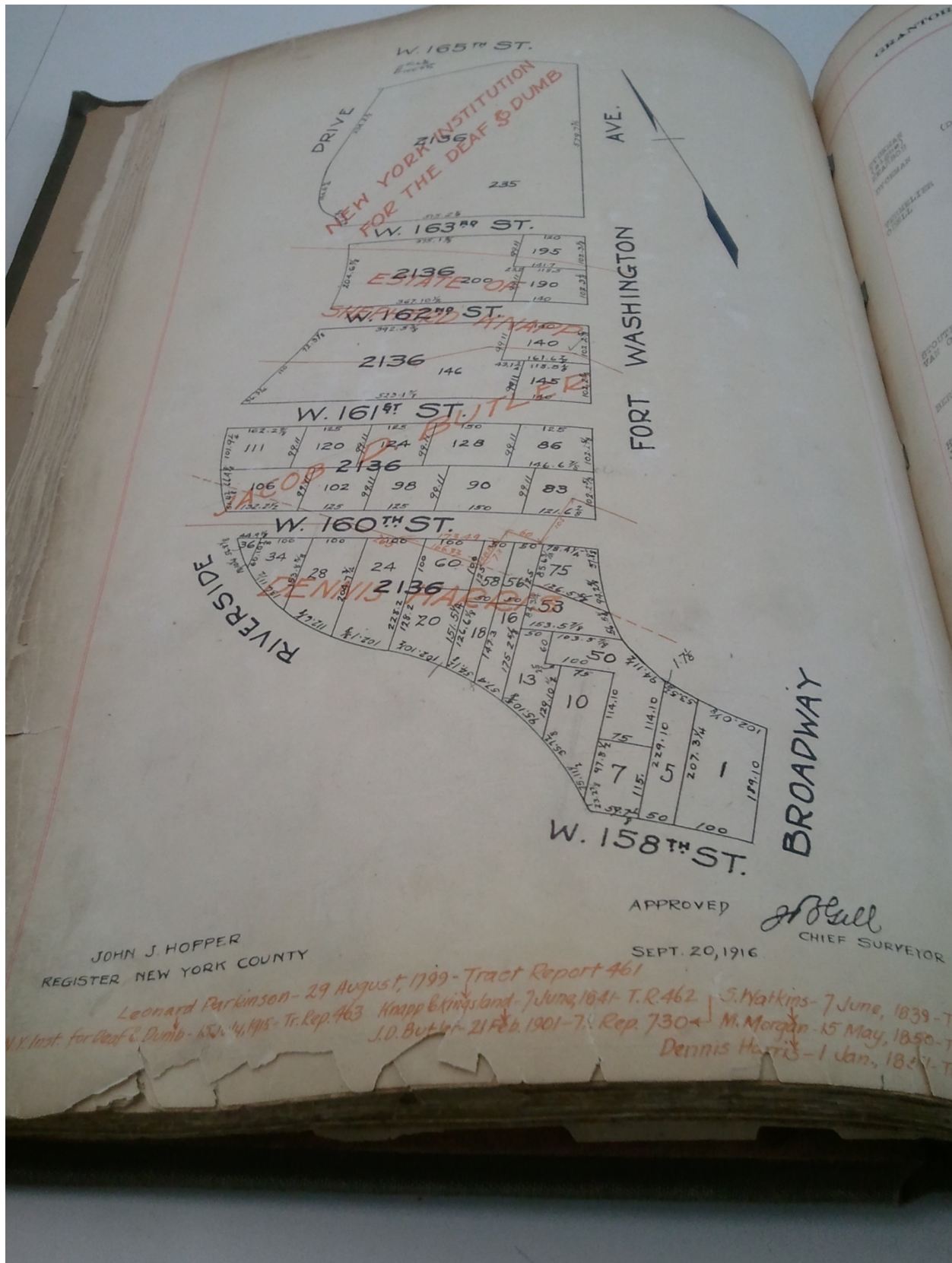
Maps

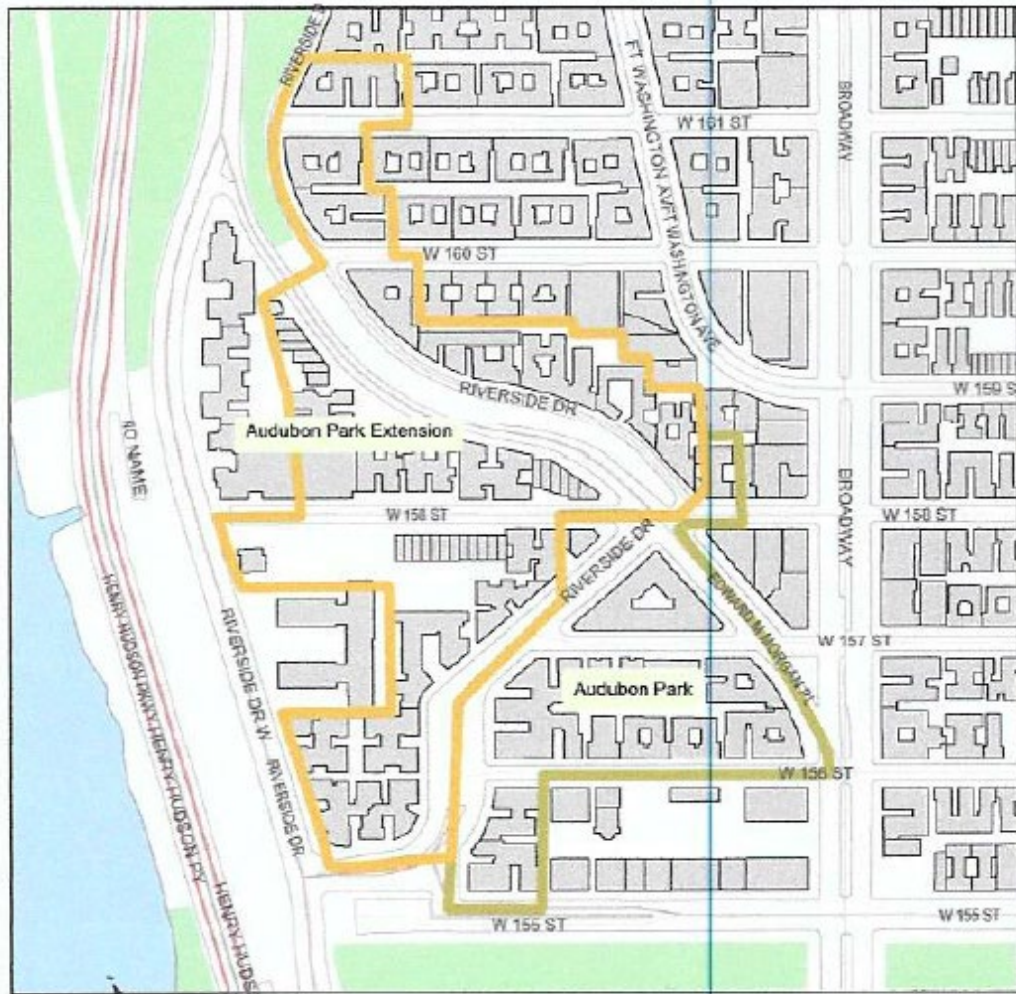
BLOCK 2135, New York City Register Map



REQUEST FOR EVALUATION: Audubon Park Historic District Extension

BLOCK 2136, New York City Register Map





Map 3.2.7a Audubon Park & Audubon Park Extension

Report on Extant Historic Fabric at 857 Riverside
Drive, New York, NY 10032, Benjamin Marcus,
Preservation Specialist

Report on extant historic fabric at 857 Riverside Drive, New York, NY

1. Introduction and summary

The following report was requested by Peter Green in order to summarize the extent of existing historic fabric at 857 Riverside Drive, a residence constructed in 1851 for the abolitionist Dennis Harris. The findings are based on an inspection of the upper two levels of the four-story structure carried out in June 2021. The inspection included visual examination and photographic documentation of the building's exterior and interior, as well as a review of ownership information and historic photographs (Bernice Abbott 1937, 1930s tax photos, 1918 views, etc.). No invasive structural inspection or materials analysis was performed, and access to the lower stories was not possible at the time of the visit.

In summary, the examination found that the exterior of 857 Riverside drive retains a significant amount of historic fabric, much of it likely dating from the abolitionist period. The interior, though heavily altered, retains some historic details and the layout is reflective of a typical mid-19th century floor plan. Structurally, the house is intact with historic brick and stone foundations and though no through-wall inspections were conducted, the framing and form of the building appears largely unchanged. The exterior of the building could be restored to a more historically appropriate appearance simply by removing modern siding and restoring existing clapboard underneath - see section 4 for more detail.

2. Exterior

Cladding and fenestration

The exterior of the building retains its historic exterior wooden clapboard largely intact. The north façade, due to the later construction of the adjacent building, has been entirely preserved with all cladding, roof brackets, and two windows of the second story (fig. 2). These windows retain their original decorative cornices, brackets, and swinging shutters (figs. 2 & 3). Below these two windows there appears to be the remnants of a third window, perhaps a former light into the existing stairwell, which was covered over at some point leaving only the sill in place.



Figure 1 Bernice Abbot photo 1930 showing decorative window surrounds



Figure 2 North façade showing preserved window surrounds, shutters and clapboard



Figure 3 Detail of remaining historic window surrounds and roof brackets, north façade.



Figure 4 South façade detail showing original clapboard covered in siding.

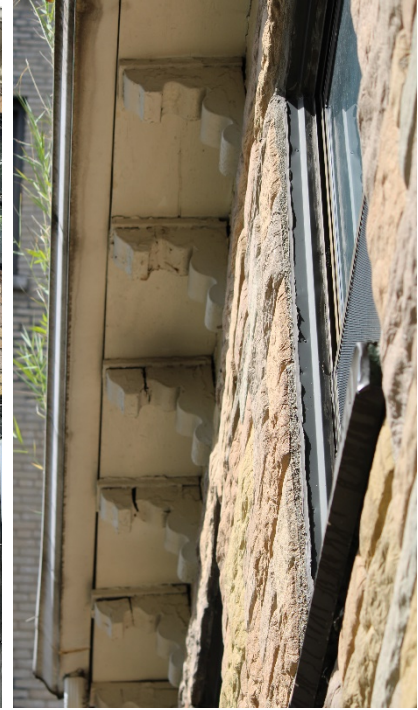


Figure 5 Detail of roof brackets and eaves

On the southern and western facades, the same clapboard is preserved below layers of siding (fig. 4). On these facades, the decorative window cornices were likely removed to accommodate the siding, but the wooden sills remain in place covered by modern anodized aluminum. The eastern street-facing façade is covered in a faux stone finish applied in the 1990s. The faux stone is superficial and not an impediment to restoring the structure, while the existing window frames on the north façade and historic photos offer a model for restoring lost window cornices. The entire building retains the historic roof brackets below overhanging wooden eaves (figure 5).

All windows were replaced by the time of the 1937 Bernice Abbot photo and have been subsequently modernized. The current window and door openings however are largely the same configuration as in historic photographs. Historic stained glass transom windows remain on the lower front windows and door. These windows retain historic wooden frames, painted in green (figures 6 & 7).



Figures 6 & 7 Four stained glass transoms may date to circa 1900, with potentially earlier wooden frames (in green).

Roof and chimneys



Figures 8-10: Aerial views of the roof and chimneys with corresponding chimney stack and fireplace on the interior

The building retains its original form and massing including hipped roof - characteristic of the italianate style - and two brick chimneys protruding from the southern part of the roof which correspond with two existing interior fireplaces.

Though these chimneys are lower than in historic photographs, their style and placement is significant as the construction is consistent with the 1850s. The framing for the cupola also remains in place as well as the original stairs which provided access to the cupola.

Foundations

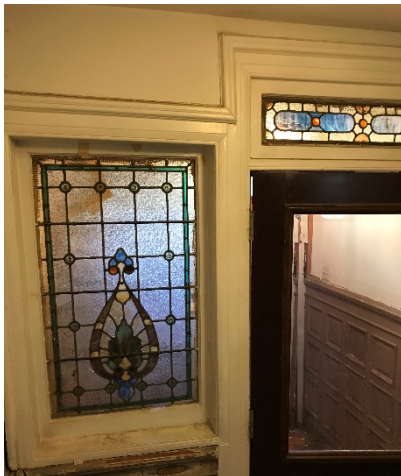
The historic foundation is most visible on the southern façade, which reveals early construction details including heavy rough-cut schist stone masonry up to the second level and brick coursing supporting a heavy wooden sill beam where the above ground two-story wood frame construction begins.

The foundation level features historic fenestration with brick arched lintels, wooden window frames, and stone sills. The foundation is parged in cement on the western façade.



Figure 11 detail of the foundation showing stone and brick coursing and historic windows.

3. Interior



Figures 12-16 Clockwise from upper left: Wainscoting in the foyer, main stairs, stained glass at the entry, restored fireplace, original access stairs to the cupola.

The interior of 857 Riverside Dr. has been heavily altered over the years with significant renovations occurring around the turn of the 19th/20th centuries and during recent owners. Despite this, the interior retains some historic details and its layout has most likely not changed significantly since construction. Existing historic details include later 19th century wainscoting, moldings and stained glass, as well as the stairs, newel post and railing.

As previously mentioned the massing of the brick chimneys remains, though the fireplaces are later additions. The access to the cupola remains intact with spiral staircase winding around a custom-made wooden post.

3. Conclusions

A more detailed investigation with documentation and conditions assessment would be needed to develop a proper preservation plan for the structure. However, it is clear from the rapid inspection that a significant amount of historic fabric remains and that nearly the entire historic building envelope, with the exception of window cornices, is intact though it is largely hidden under modern siding.

One might not expect wooden stylistic elements as delicate and susceptible to change and deterioration as the scroll work of the porch, the cupola, or even original windows to remain, and we must consider the historic significance of the building and its context; one of very few pre-civil war frame residences in a neighborhood that has undergone rapid and constant change since 1851.

The next steps in the development of a preservation plan for the building would require the involvement of community stakeholders and specialists to develop a plan for restoration. This work could be divided into phases, with phase 1 as basic stabilization and repair and phase 2 comprising the restoration of certain key elements needed to create a visually cohesive structure. Phase 3 would be the complete restoration of missing architectural ensembles such as the cupola and porch, though this phase could be prohibitively expensive and subject to conjecture, as only a few historic photographs remain as source material. Details of these steps are outlined below.

Preparation:

- As-built drawings and conditions assessment
- Structural inspection to ensure the safety of the foundation and framing as well as assessment of the clapboard
- Working with the owner, community/city stakeholders and conservator or preservation architect to prepare a preservation plan for the house.

Phase 1 – stabilization and repair

- Removal of modern siding materials to reveal the condition of the historic clapboard
- Stabilization, repair and painting of existing roof brackets, clapboard, and remaining window frames
- Any necessary repairs to the foundation and roof

Priority 2 – Restoration of basic architectural elements

- Restoration of lost window cornices based on existing examples on the north façade and historic photographs
- Installing period appropriate wooden windows and door

Priority 3 – Reconstruction of sophisticated architectural ensembles

- Restoration of cupola based on historic photographs
- Restoration of chimneys to previous appearance
- Restoration of porch woodwork and details

This report was prepared on a pro bono basis by Benjamin Marcus, preservation specialist. A graduate of Columbia University's Historic Preservation Program, Benjamin has worked for over 20 years in the private and non-profit sectors on the conservation of historic buildings and sites. Contact: blmarcus@gmail.com

Letters of Support: Historians

Fergus M. Bordewich, Author of *Bound for Canaan: The Underground Railroad and the War for the Soul of America*

Tom Calarco, Author of *Secret Lives of the Underground Railroad*, and six other volumes about the Abolitionist movement and the UGRR

Eric Foner, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863–1877*

Graham Hodges, Author of *David Ruggles: A Radical Black Abolitionist and the Underground Railroad in New York City*

Raul Rothblatt, Downtown Brooklyn Abolitionist History Advocate

John T. Reddick, Harlem Historian

D. Graham Burnett, Professor of History, Princeton University, Editor, *Cabinet Magazine for Art and Culture*

FROM THE DESK OF
FERGUS M. BORDEWICH

May 24, 2021

As you know, I am the author of the standard national history of the Underground Railroad, *Bound for Canaan: The Underground Railroad and the War for the Soul of America*. I am writing to you to lend my full support to the effort to save the Dennis Harris house at 857 Riverside Drive. This property is of potentially great importance in preserving the history of the Underground Railroad, all the more so since scarcely any traces of the underground still remain in the city, which was once a key transshipment point for northbound fugitives.

Harris's involvement in the Underground Railroad is well-documented. While the use of his Washington Heights properties as underground sites has not yet been proven, very strong circumstantial evidence suggests that they were. At the very least, further historical study is urgently called for. Destruction of the surviving building would be a travesty, and an irreparable loss to a city which has a very poor record of preserving sites related to Black and abolitionist history.

Although antebellum New York City was home to important abolitionists and a sizeable antebellum African-American population, it was also a hotbed of anti-abolitionist activity, and not a secure refuge for fugitives. There was urgent pressure to move newly arrived fugitives to safe havens upstate. Just how many fugitives passed through the city is unknowable, given the paucity of records. A reasonable estimate would be at least several hundred or perhaps as many as one thousand per year from the 1830s through the 1850s. While some continued up the coast to New England, the great majority were sent up the Hudson River to Albany and on to abolitionist strongholds in central New York or Canada.

The comparative isolation of Harris's Washington Heights properties argues for their utility as a protected, easily guarded waystation for fugitives who needed to be gotten quickly out of lower Manhattan. Harris's ownership of a steamboat strongly suggests that this vessel could well have been used, as others were, to ferry fugitive slaves, since river boats were the primary means to move freedom-seekers northward.

At a time when the nation is being called to account for its implication in the long history of slavery, and when the Underground Railroad is increasingly being recognized as a rare, sterling example of antebellum Americans bridging the color line on behalf of human rights, the Harris house deserves serious attention from preservationists and historians, not demolition.



Fergus M. Bordewich

Tom Calarco
tomcalwriter@yahoo.com / 518-573-7163
<https://undergroundrailroadconductor.com>

06/19/2021

The Honorable Bill de Blasio
Mayor of New York City
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Sarah Carroll, Chair
New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission
David N. Dinkins Municipal Building
1 Centre Street, 9th Floor North
New York, NY 10007

Dear Mayor de Blasio and Chair Carroll:

How fitting that I should address this letter to you on Juneteenth.

If ever there was a time to at least partially atone for our nation's historic racism and right the ship towards true egalitarianism, the ideal which our founding fathers sought but which we have since failed to achieve, it is now. One of the nation's leading Underground Railroad terminals was New York City, the shipping center of the nation and the leading importer of goods from the South. This made it a key entry point for fugitives from slavery to enter the North by way of the maritime industry.

At the same time, there were many individuals in NYC, both black and white, who were actively involved in helping the freedom seekers. Dennis Harris and the Wesleyan-Methodist Church members and clergy were among them. The Church also published a weekly newspaper, *The True Wesleyan*, which often reported accounts of those who had escaped slavery.

Every effort should be made to preserve the relics and landmarks of this history so it will not vanish from the earth, as Lincoln said. It will go a long way towards keeping the American dream alive.

Yours for freedom and equality,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Calarco". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "T".

Tom Calarco

Co-author of *Secret Lives of the Underground Railroad in NY City*

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

June 29, 2021

Hon. Sarah Carroll
Chair, New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission

Hon. Bill de Blasio
Mayor of the City of New York

Subject: Expanding the Audubon Park Historic District and Preserving 857 Riverside Drive

Dear Commissioner Carroll and Mayor de Blasio:

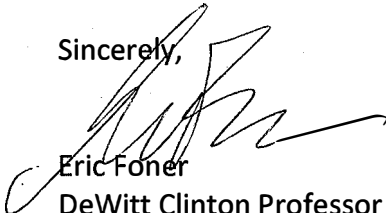
In keeping with the Landmark Preservation Commission's recently published "Equity Framework," which aims to redress the imbalance in New York City landmark designations by prioritizing designations in under-represented areas and those that represent our city's remarkable diversity, I give my full support to the Upper Riverside-Residents Alliance plan to extend the Audubon Park Historic District, as described in their Request for Evaluation. I urge you to help this effort succeed.

Through exacting research, members of the Alliance have uncovered evidence of an abolitionist community active in northern Manhattan in the decade prior to the Civil War. It was tied to Dennis Harris, a conductor in the Underground Railroad. The only remaining structure utilized by that heroic community is the wooden house currently still standing at 857 Riverside Drive. That this neighborhood, once developed by abolitionists, is now home to a diverse community of African-Americans, Latinos and whites makes the request for designation even more appropriate.

Few sites directly connected to the Underground Railroad still exist in New York City. I urge you to use your authority to preserve this house and area with an expanded Audubon Park Historic District.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Eric Foner
DeWitt Clinton Professor Emeritus of History
Columbia University

Author: "Gateway to Freedom: The Hidden History of the Underground Railroad"

Colgate University
Hamilton, NY 13346

Professor
Department of History
(315) 228-7517

Email: ghodges@colgate.edu

June 20, 2021

The Honorable Bill de Blasio
Mayor of New York City
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

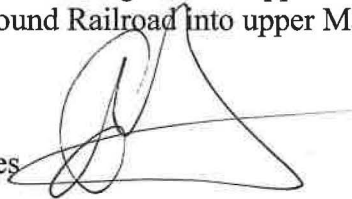
Sarah Carroll, Chair
New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission
David N. Dinkins Municipal Building
1 Centre Street, 9th Floor North
New York, NY 10007

Dear Mayor de Blasio and Chair Carroll:

This letter offers my strongest support for the efforts of Joseph Amodio and his colleagues to expand the Audubon Park Historic District. Mr. Amodio seeks to include certain buildings that his fine research has revealed as sites for the Underground Railroad in upper Manhattan. The importance of designating such historical sites is very significant in that Mr. Amodio and his associates are enlarging our knowledge of the Underground Railroad in New York City apart from the well-known sites in the business district. National media including the *New York Times* has already recognized the scrupulous scholarship in their endeavors. For historians such as myself, their findings are revealing and offer important new insights into the journeys enslaved people made to freedom, aided by sympathizers. I think it is also important that the proposed inclusions are in a community of color, making the historical data of even greater value. I urge you to recognize and approve this application and thereby implant the history of the Underground Railroad into upper Manhattan. Kindly contact me if you have further questions,

Regards,

Graham Russell Hodges



George Dorland Langdon, Jr. Professor of History

Colgate University

July 1, 2021

Sarah Carroll, Chair
Landmark Preservation Commission
David N. Dinkins Municipal Building
1 Centre Street, 9th Floor
New York City, NY 1007

Dear Chair Carroll,

I became an advocate of 227 Duffield in 2004, and for the first five years of our struggle, we worked hard to convince the LPC to give landmark protection to Mama Joy's home. When I met with LPC Chair Robert Tierney in 2009 and asked him about landmark status for the likely stop on the underground railroad, without irony he responded "That train has left the station."

It took another dozen years for the LPC to finally correct their previous denial of the importance of 227 Abolitionist Place. The designation was a victory for people who love the LPC and who celebrate that it was living up to its mission.

The issues surrounding 857 Riverside Drive are remarkably similar. If the LPC gave landmark protection to 227 Duffield, I find it hard to understand why it would contradict that decision and fail to give the same protection to 857 Riverside.

The LPC has a bias toward pretty buildings, and the designation of 227 Duffield showed that the historical importance of a building does matter. New York City was the financial capital of the Southern slave system. Many of the buildings that have landmark protect were funded in part by the sale of human beings. We tell the story of the slaveholders in New York City by lovingly preserving their buildings.

The LPC's mission is not to protect the story only of slaveholders. We have a chance to broaden the story of New York City. Obliterating the remnants of the people who resisted slavery is an abomination, and it is not a task worthy of the LPC. In 2021 it seems to be doing a better job and did a big splash with its equity framework during Black History month in 2021. But the equity framework loses credibility if it is neglected after February ends.

227 Abolitionist Place is important because its owners stood for freedom at a time when the civic and business leaders of Brooklyn openly supported White Supremacy. But this was not just the case in Brooklyn. I am inspired by the story of 857 Riverside Drive, and it is a powerful message that the Abolitionist spirit in New York was not confined to my borough of Brooklyn.

We have a chance to redeem New York City, building by building. I urge the LPC to take immediate action to protect 857 Riverside Drive.

Sincerely,



Raul Rothblatt
Downtown Brooklyn Abolitionist History Advocate
119 Prospect Place
Brooklyn, NY 11217

John T. Reddick

June 30, 2021

Hon. Sarah Carroll
Chair, New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission

Hon. Bill de Blasio
Mayor of the City of New York

Subject: Support for Expanding the Audubon Park Historic District

Dear Commissioner Carroll and Mayor de Blasio,

As a resident of this West Harlem community and someone dedicated to the preservation of its unique architecture and culture, I wish to add my support for Community Board 12's 2009 vision for an Audubon Park Historic District, defined as stretches along Riverside Drive and its tributaries from 155th to 162nd Streets. This plan would expand the current historic district architecturally, historically, and culturally, by adding the oldest continuously occupied wooden structure in northern Manhattan, three sets of row houses pre-dating and anticipating rapid transit, and apartment houses representing later periods and architects than those in the currently designated area.

Additionally, extending the historic district to include the row houses on West 158th Street, the Mitchell-Lama apartment building at 156-20 Riverside Drive West, and all the buildings lining Riverside Drive between 158th and 162nd Streets, embraces the area's cultural and historical significance in the fight for racial justice, through its working-class commitment to a New York urban community, its diversity and equality by preserving

- A row of houses on West 158th Street that African-American families reclaimed and preserved in the 1960s and '70s, and
- The River Terrace Mitchell-Lama building that has provided affordable co-ops to middle income people since the 1960s and which fostered neighborhood integration. The River Terrace was the home of David Dinkins, New York City's first and Black mayor, Robert Lowery, New York's first Black Fire Commissioner, and many celebrated activists, artists, and musicians.
- 857 Riverside Drive, a house associated with an Abolitionist community active in northern Manhattan in the mid-nineteenth century

In keeping with the Landmark Preservation Commission's recently published "*Equity Framework*" that aims to prioritize "designations that represent New York City's diversity and designations in areas less represented by landmarks," and to redress the imbalance in landmark designation in New York City, I feel compelled to urge the Commission to prioritize and calendar the Upper

618 West 142nd Street New York, NY 10031

Riverside Residents Alliance's Request for Evaluation without delay. Mayor de Blasio I also encourage you move beyond your verbalized support of the "Equity Framework" with the budget support that ensures all relevant City resources are mobilized to help this effort succeed.

Thank you for your consideration and swift response.

John

John T. Reddick
618 West 142nd Street
New York, NY 10031

SEND TO:

Landmarks Preservation Commission Chair Sarah Carroll
NYC City Council Speaker Corey Johnson
NYC Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer
NYC City Councilman Mark Levine
NYS State Senator Robert Jackson
NYC Public Advocate Jumaane Williams
NY Assemblyman Albert Taylor
Mayor Bill de Blasio (1.nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor/ or mail City Hall, NYC 10007)

cc: info@saveriverside.org

Subject: Expand the Audubon Park Historic District

Hon. Sarah Carroll
Chair, New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission

Hon. Bill de Blasio
Mayor of the City of New York

Subject: Expand the Audubon Park Historic District

Dear Commissioner Carroll and Mayor de Blasio,

The time has come to realize Community Board 12's 2009 vision for an Audubon Park Historic District that stretches along Riverside Drive and its tributaries from 155th to 162nd Streets. This plan would expand the current historic district architecturally, historically, and culturally, by adding the oldest continuously occupied wooden structure in northern Manhattan, three sets of row houses pre-dating and anticipating rapid transit, and apartment houses representing later periods and architects than those in the currently designated area.

Additionally, extending the historic district to include the row houses on West 158th Street, the Mitchell-Lama apartment building at 156-20 Riverside Drive West, and all of the buildings lining Riverside Drive between 158th and 162nd Streets, would recognize the area's cultural and historical significance in the fight for racial justice and equality by preserving

- 857 Riverside Drive, a house associated with an Abolitionist community active in northern Manhattan in the mid-nineteenth century
- A row of houses on West 158th Street that African-American families reclaimed and preserved in the 1960s and '70s, and
- The River Terrace Mitchell-Lama building that has provided affordable co-ops to middle income people since the 1960s and which fostered neighborhood integration. The River Terrace was the home of David Dinkins, New York City's first and Black mayor, Robert Lowery, New York's first Black Fire Commissioner, and many celebrated activists, artists, and musicians.

In keeping with the Landmark Preservation Commission's recently published "Equity Framework" that aims to prioritize "designations that represent New York City's diversity and designations in areas less represented by landmarks," and to redress the imbalance in landmark designation in New York City, Commissioner Carroll, we ask you to prioritize and calendar the Upper Riverside Residents Alliance's Request for Evaluation without delay. Mr. Mayor, we ask you to ensure that all relevant City resources are mobilized to help this effort succeed.

Thank you for your consideration and swift response.


Name D. Graham Burnett

Name _____

Date 23 June 2021

Address 790 Riverside Drive

Signature _____



Letters of Support: Civic Leaders

The Rev. Calvin O. Butts, III, Abyssinian Baptist Church

Gale Brewer, Manhattan Borough President

Mark Levine, City Councilman, District 7 and Democratic Nominee for Manhattan Borough President

Maria Luna, Democratic District Leader and State Committee Member

Community Board 12 Resolution (will be delivered separately)

The Abyssinian Baptist Church

in the City of New York

Founded 1808

Reverend
Dr. Calvin O. Butts, III
Pastor

Gerald Barbour
Chair, Diaconate Board

Eleanor E. Olive
Chair, Diaconate Board

Alexis E. Thomas
Chair, Trustee Board

Sheila Boston Robinson
Church Clerk

132 Odell Clark Place
New York, NY 10030
212.862.7474 T
646.870.0856 F
abyssinian.org



VIA FEDERAL EXPRESS

July 3, 2021

Commissioner Sarah Carroll
Chair, New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission
1 Centre Street
New York, NY 10007

Mayor Bill de Blasio
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Dear Commissioner Carroll and Mayor de Blasio,

I am writing you to support the request by the Upper Riverside Residents Alliance to expand the Audubon Park Historic District to include areas of importance to Black heritage in New York City, including 857 Riverside Drive, a house built in 1851 by the Abolitionist and Underground Railroad conductor, Dennis Harris, and which is in imminent danger of demolition.

The expanded district would also include a row of 12 houses along West 158th Street west of Riverside Drive that were bought and restored by Black families in the 1960s and 1970s, as well as the River Terrace Mitchell-Lama co-operative, where many prominent Black New Yorkers have made their home, including our first Black Mayor, David Dinkins.

What is at stake here is not only architecture, but a cultural and historical legacy of supreme importance to Black New Yorkers. The Abolitionist movement was the first great civil rights struggle in this country, and it remains its most momentous, culminating as it did with the Emancipation Proclamation in 1862 and six years later, the ratification of the 14th Amendment to the Constitution of the United States.

As any New Yorker can see from a look at the Landmarks Preservation Commission's own map of New York City, far fewer buildings and districts have been landmarked in neighborhoods of color and lower income than in wealthier, whiter neighborhoods. This is despite the fact that there are many worthy buildings in these neighborhoods, buildings that tell the history and reflect the culture of millions of New Yorkers of color.

Almost all of Riverside Drive and West End Avenue between 72nd and 110th streets have been incorporated into several historic districts in recognition of the area's contribution to the history and development of New York City. The same consideration should be given to the entire Audubon Park historic area, whose residents included New York City's first Black mayor, and whose unique history spans an era not reflected in most of northern Manhattan or lower Riverside Drive.

The house at 857 Riverside Drive is of particular historical and cultural importance, as the last remnant of a vibrant Abolitionist community in upper Manhattan, established after its founders were forced from their places of worship and business in the heart of New York City for voicing their anti-slavery views. The leading historian of the Underground Railroad, Fergus Bordewich, says the house certainly served as part of the Underground Railroad, helping those who had escaped slavery make their way to freedom in Canada.

Mayor de Blasio, you have pledged to dismantle the "structural and institutional racism" that is still so present in our city. Chair Carroll, you said in your recently published essay on the Landmarks commission's new "Equity Framework," that your agency would "ensure diversity and inclusion in designations, to make sure that we are telling the stories of all New Yorkers."

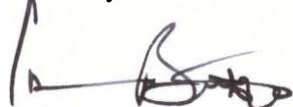
I urge you to take this opportunity to turn those words into actions. For too long, this city has ignored the history, the culture and the stories of New Yorkers of color. These buildings tell that story and deserve to be saved.

While I realize that the Landmarks Preservation Commission doesn't consider development when setting boundaries of historic districts, the proposed out-of-scale development of the areas we ask to include in the expanded Audubon Historic District will have an irreparable adverse effect on the livability and composition of the existing district. This corner of Washington Heights is an affordable, racially and culturally diverse, working-middle-class neighborhood. Historic properties don't need to be destroyed to make way for condos that will sell for millions, especially when many units in new buildings farther downtown remain unsold.

Mr. Mayor, given the uncertainty about how many people will choose to live in New York City in a post-pandemic, less office-centered job market, city leadership and the LPC should consider what types of housing will be needed and the role preservation should play in maintaining the cohesion of neighborhoods. And if the LPC is serious about sustainability and carrying out its plan to correct the imbalance in landmark designations across the city, it should recognize that the vital cultural importance of Audubon Park extends beyond the existing district, listen to neighborhood leaders and elected officials, and approve the Upper Riverside Residents Alliance's request to expand the Audubon Park Historic District without delay.

Mr. Mayor, Chair Carroll, the history of Black New Yorkers, and the history of all New Yorkers, deserves to be preserved. These stories deserve to be told to generations of New Yorkers not yet born. This is a rare opportunity to come down on the right side of history. I urge you to seize it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Calvin O. Butts, III". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "C" and "B".

Reverend Dr. Calvin O. Butts, III

Pastor, The Abyssinian Baptist Church in the City of New York



OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

1 Centre Street, 19th floor, New York, NY 10007
(212) 669-8300 p (212) 669-4306 f
431 West 125th Street, New York, NY 10027
(212) 531-1609 p (212) 531-4615 f
www.manhattanbp.nyc.gov

Gale A. Brewer, Borough President

July 7th, 2021

Sarah Carroll
Chair and Commissioner
New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission
1 Centre Street, 9th Floor North
New York, NY 10007

Dear Commissioner Carroll:

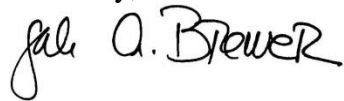
I write to urge the Landmarks Preservation Commission (“LPC”) to extend the Audubon Park Historic District northward along Riverside Drive in Washington Heights. Community Board 12 has passed numerous resolutions dating back to 2009 requesting that this district, which would include the Harris-Newhouse Home (857 Riverside Drive), be included in the Audubon Park Historic District. The extension of this district would protect numerous buildings, including historically significant sites, that are currently at risk of demolition, and would help to preserve the architectural character of this neighborhood.

The Audubon Park Historic District (LP-2335) was first designated in 2009 and includes most buildings between Broadway and Riverside Drive and between West 155th Street and West 158th Street. Notable sites not currently included in the district are the four-story row houses on the south side of West 158th Street (626-648 West 158th Street), River Terrace (15620 Riverside Drive West), and most buildings along Riverside Drive north of West 158th Street and south of West 162nd Street. The buildings along Riverside Drive all contribute to the uniqueness of the area because they include dramatic variations in grade, lush green spaces, and a rich history.

The addition of 857 Riverside Drive in an expanded Audubon Park Historic District would also create an opportunity to preserve a rare structure, one of the oldest in Upper Manhattan. With its links to the Underground Railroad, it has the potential to serve as a place of learning about the history of African Americans in this community and as a center for racial justice. Further supporting 857 Riverside Drive's recently discovered credentials as a site related to the Underground Railroad (“UGRR”) are the strong words from three nationally recognized UGRR experts as well as an examination by preservation specialist Benjamin Marcus, who concluded that "a significant amount of historic fabric remains and that nearly the entire historic building envelope is intact though it is largely hidden under modern siding. Only the window cornices are non-historic and atypical to the period." This community cannot afford to lose such a historic and architecturally significant building.

The full extent of the Audubon Park Historic District should be designated as outlined by Community Board 12. While I understand that LPC has previously considered these buildings for inclusion, I strongly believe that they should be reconsidered. I respect the view of Community Board 12 that these sites are integral to the area's character and history.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gale A. Brewer". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial "G" and a distinct "A" and "B".

Gale A. Brewer
Manhattan Borough President

DISTRICT OFFICE
500 WEST 141ST STREET
NEW YORK, NY 10031
(212) 928-6814
FAX: (646) 582-1408

CITY HALL OFFICE
250 BROADWAY, RM. 1816
NEW YORK, NY 10007
(212) 788-7007

district7@council.nyc.gov



THE COUNCIL OF
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

MARK D. LEVINE

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COMMITTEES

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PARKS & RECREATION

TRANSPORTATION

June 28, 2021

Mayor Bill de Blasio
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Commissioner Sarah Carroll
Landmarks Preservation Commission
1 Centre Street, 9th Floor
New York, NY 10007

Dear Commissioner Carroll and Mayor de Blasio,

As Council Member for the 7th District in Manhattan, representing the Upper West Side, West Harlem, and Washington Heights, I am writing in support of the Upper Riverside Residents Alliance's request for evaluation to expand the existing Audubon Park Historic District. This expansion would include areas that were part of the 2007 Community Board 12 Land Use Committee's study -- conducted with the City College of New York -- which stated that these areas also merited landmarking designation. They include:

- Twelve row houses along West 158th Street that predate the expansion of rapid transit, and were restored by African American families in the 1960s and 1970s
- Upper and lower Riverside Drive between 158th and 162nd Streets, which includes 857 Riverside Drive, a house built in the original Audubon Park style that was used by an active Abolitionist community in northern Manhattan

Incredibly important to the inclusion of 857 Riverside Drive is the recently-discovered research as a site related to the Underground Railroad. This has been certified through strong written support from three nationally recognized UGRR experts as well as an examination by preservation specialist Benjamin Marcus, who concluded that "a significant amount of historic fabric remains and that nearly the entire historic building envelope is intact though it is largely hidden under modern siding. Only the window cornices are non-historic and atypical to the period."

Because of this revelation, the house at 857 Riverside Drive should be preserved as a rare structure that reflects one of the most important movements in African-American history and racial equity in the United States. Through additional archeological and historical research, the building and its surroundings offer a means to learn more about the Underground Railroad.

Several of the row houses and 857 Riverside have been bought by developers who plan to replace them with luxury housing: a 27-story complex on West 158th Street, and a 13-story building at 857 Riverside Drive.

This would drastically and irreparably alter the character, architecture and ambience of our neighborhood, dwarf the impact of the existing Audubon Park Historic District, stress the infrastructure, and subject residents to years of noise, dust and congestion while they're already dealing with a huge construction project: the four-year rebuild of the Riverside West viaduct from West 153rd to West 160th Streets.

Virtually all of Riverside Drive and West End Avenue between 72nd and 110th Streets have been incorporated into several historic districts in recognition of the area's contribution to the history and development of New York City. The same consideration should be given to the entire Audubon Park historic area, whose residents have included the first African American mayor of New York City, and whose unique history spans an era not reflected in most of northern Manhattan or lower Riverside Drive.

While I realize that Landmark's does not consider development when setting boundaries of historic districts, the proposed, out-of-scale development of the areas we ask you to include in the expanded Audubon Historic District will have an irreparable adverse effect on the livability and composition of the existing District. This community has throughout the years prided itself as an affordable, racially and culturally diverse, middle class neighborhood where working families have raised children. We must support these historic properties by ensuring they are not destroyed to make way for luxury housing, especially when so many units in new buildings further downtown remain unsold.

I ask the Landmarks Preservation Commission to give serious consideration to the sustainability and implementation of its new Equity Framework to redress the imbalance in landmark designations across New York City, as it should recognize the cultural distinction of Audubon Park extends beyond the existing district. Let us listen to our neighborhood leaders, historians, and elected officials, and expedite the Upper Riverside Residents Alliance's Request for Evaluation without delay.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mark Levine".

Mark Levine
Council Member, 7th District

MARIA A. LUNA
DEMOCRATIC DISTRICT LEADER AND STATE COMMITTEE
839 RIVERSIDE DRIVE #4A, NEW YORK, NY 10032
212-923-8818 ~ 917-699-1017
juraluna@outlook.com

June 30, 2021

To Whom It May Concern:

Many years ago, early 1960th the Luna family moved to Washington Heights, exactly at 839 Riverside Drive, a great residential area, at that time had affordable apartments, nearby public schools, good transportation, churches of various denominations, great wonderful view of the Hudson River, the Audubon complex with Museums, the Hispanic Society, Numismatic Museum, a theater and other amenities. A mix of residents of all ethnicities, religious believes, all living in peace and harmony.

To our surprise we discovered next to our building a wood frame house owned by Mrs. Ethel Nelson, a beautiful African American lady that sat under a majestic, I believe, Cherry tree. She befriended all. I benefitted from her friendship and was invited in lots of time. Little did I know of the historical value of this house.

In the mist of rediscovering our African roots and heritage, under our nose is 857 Riverside Drive. A house owned by a well-known abolitionist, Dennis Harris, our committee has enough information, so this humble house be designated a Landmark and later to be our black history museum in Washington Heights.

This house, 857 RSD must be preserved, restored to her original beauty for its cultural heritage in our community, hundreds of famished blacks traveling about the countryside found sanctuary in the way to freedom. Built in an area within pre-war, elegant, solid buildings with unique characteristics from 155th to 161st streets upper and middle Riverside Drive, together with the privately owned three stories houses on West 158th Street down to Henry Hudson Pkwy, landmarking of this area will fit well next to the Audubon Historic District to Riverside Drive West.

I am writing this letter not just as a next-door neighbor but also as the elected NYC Democratic District Leader and State Committee 71 AD, Member of Community Board 12, Manhattan, Member of the NYS Democratic Party, President of the 33rd Precinct Police Community Council and many other civic and community-based organizations.

I urge all to join in our quest to Landmark 857 Riverside Drive and surrounding areas so future generations will not blame us for not fighting enough to keep what is left of the black history of our country. It has been said that without learning places and experiences of our country past, we will never be able to eradicate racisms and racial violence.

Respectfully,



Letters of Support: New York Preservation Community

Andrew Berman, Executive Director, Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation

George Calderaro, Preservation Committee Chair, Victorian Society in America New York-Metro Chapter

Laurence Frommer, President, Save Chelsea



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Andrew Berman

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232 EAST 11TH STREET

NEW YORK NY 10003

212 475-9585

WWW.GVSHP.ORG

January 26, 2021

Hon. Sarah Carroll, Chair
NYC Landmarks Commission
1 Centre Street, 9th Floor
New York, NY 10007

Re: 857 Riverside Drive, The Harris-Newhouse Home

Dear Chair Carroll,

I write to you to urge the Landmarks Preservation Commission to reconsider its rejection of the request to consider landmark designation of 857 Riverside Drive, Manhattan, known as the Harris-Newhouse home.

While the structure's physical appearance has changed over time, its cultural significance in relation to abolitionist history and the history of the development of New York is beyond question. Documented extant sites connected to prominent abolitionists and the abolitionist movement in New York City deserve special recognition, and No. 857 Riverside is believed to be the only remaining such site north of 96th Street. The house was owned by Dennis Harris, followed by John Newhouse — both ardent abolitionists, while Harris was also a documented participant in the Underground Railroad.

Dennis Harris, trained bricklayer and an ordained Methodist minister, came to this country in 1832 from England. He would go into the sugar refining business under the

guidance of Samuel Blackwell, father of Elizabeth Blackwell, America's first female doctor. Harris' refinery was originally downtown on Duane Street, and was a documented site of Underground Railroad activity. In 1840, Harris severed ties with the Methodist Episcopal Church and helped lead the new "Wesleyan Connection," a movement that broke away from the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States over the issue of slavery.

Harris was an anti-slavery activist who spoke publicly and frequently against the institution from the pulpit of his Wesleyan chapel at 95 King Street. He also hosted anti-slavery meetings attended by many noteworthy abolitionists of the day, including Sydney Howard Gay (editor of the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*), Lewis Tappan (who helped liberate enslaved Africans aboard the ship *Amistad*), Rev. Lucius Matlack and Rev. Luther Lee (leading anti-slavery lecturers and Wesleyan movement co-founders), and Henry Bibb (an escaped slave, newspaper founder and author of an acclaimed autobiographical slave narrative). In a letter to Frederick Douglass, the Rev. L. Delos Mansfield commended Harris, along with Gerrit Smith and Arthur Tappan, for their activism.

In 1848, Harris' refinery suffered a devastating fire. He moved himself, his family, and his business northward, purchasing 32 acres and later an additional 56 acres in the Washington Heights area. In addition to building his new refinery on the Hudson, he started selling lots within these acquisitions for development. This included the site which would be home to 857 Riverside Drive, which was sold to John King in 1851. A year later the property was sold back to Harris, and the newly built house would remain vacant for two years.

In addition to the new refinery on the Hudson River at 160th Street, Harris also developed the area as a transportation hub with the *Jenny Lind* steamboat at a wharf he built at 158th Street, providing transport between downtown Manhattan and points

as far north as Poughkeepsie. Given Harris' participation in the Underground Railroad when his refinery was located in downtown Manhattan, it is certainly reasonable to assume that the refinery, the vacant house at 857 Riverside Drive which was in close proximity to the refinery, and the *Jenny Lind* might well have all participated in the deliverance and sheltering of escaped slaves. Certainly at the very least the distinct possibility warrants further investigation.

In 1854 Harris sold No. 857 Riverside Drive to his friend, business partner, and fellow abolitionist John Newhouse, a judge. Newhouse also participated in the development of the area, and along with Harris and neighbors founded the Washington Heights Congregational Church in 1854. This religious organization was stalwart in its anti-slavery position, and would attract like-minded individuals to live in the area, including William Wheelock, Dr. Harvey Peet, and Shepherd Knapp, thus creating this uptown progressive reformist community.

The refinery, church, and home of Dennis Harris no longer survive. Only the Harris-Newhouse home serves as a physical tribute to this 19th century community and the work of these abolitionists. We therefore ask the Commission to reconsider its decision and re-examine the incredibly important history connected to this house.

Sincerely,



Andrew Berman
Executive Director

cc: Borough President Gale Brewer
Councilmember Mark Levine
Upper Riverside Residents Alliance



c/o Village Alliance
8 East 8th Street
New York, NY 10003
212 286 3742
info@vicsocny.org
vicsocny.org

November 16, 2020

Dear Commissioners La Rocca and Carroll and Director Lago,

We are writing to support and echo the request from Manhattan Borough President Brewer, Councilmember Levine, Senator Jackson, Assembly member Taylor and Community Board 12 to request that the Department of Buildings (DOB) refrain from issuing any new building or demolition permits for the site at 857 Riverside Drive, New York, NY until major concerns about its zoning and historical significance are addressed.

The owner of the site proposes to demolish the existing late 1800s two-story house and construct a 13-story residential building. But the proposed development is located on a street that is too narrow for its proposed height and does not conform to adjacent building heights, and is in a historically significant area for which CB12M has repeatedly requested historic designation.

857 Riverside Drive is on a section of Riverside Drive that is divided by a park, which separates the eastern and western sections of the street. The Department of Parks and Recreation has stated that this land is part of Fort Washington Park. Additionally, there is a significant change in topography at this location: the western section of the street is at a lower elevation, approximately two-stories lower, than the eastern section.

Further, research performed by a community resident who recently researched and wrote a book on the development and urbanization of the area revealed that the eastern section of Riverside Drive was constructed after the western section and is not part of the original northern expansion of Riverside Drive.

The separation of the two segments of Riverside by a city park and the difference in elevation between them does not justify their being considered the same or a single street, nor does it justify the designation of Riverside Drive at this location as a wide street under the zoning resolution, (Defining Riverside Drive as a narrow street is

further supported by the Department of Transportation's proposal to convert the street from two-way to one-way traffic given the limitations of its width.)

Section 23-692 of the Zoning Resolution requires that building height be restricted to either the width of Riverside Drive, or the height of the adjacent buildings. If the adjacent buildings are taller than the width of Riverside Drive, then a new building could be constructed at that same height. Adjacent buildings are between 3 and 6 stories high. The width of the proposed building is 35 feet and the site is located in an R8 district. The proposed structure would therefore not be allowed to rise to 13 stories.

The two-story house at 857 Riverside Drive is also historically significant. Community members have submitted a Request for Evaluation to the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) based on the building's importance in the abolitionist movement. That request should be properly evaluated by the LPC before any demolition permits are issued.

Moreover, the house is located one block away from the Audubon Park Historic District and is in an area that CB12M has requested on multiple occasions since 2009 be designated either as an expansion of the Audubon Park Historic District or as a related, adjacent historic district. The proposed 13-story development is entirely inappropriate near a historic district or within an area recommended for designation.

Until these questions and concerns are addressed, we urge that the DOB refrain from granting any permits to the site owner. Please do not hesitate to contact our offices with any questions or updates on this crucial project.

Sincerely,

George Calderaro, Preservation Committee Chair
Victorian Society in America New York-Metro Chapter

Landmarks Preservation Commission Chair Sarah Carroll
(testimony@lpc.nyc.gov)

NYC City Council Speaker Corey Johnson (corey.johnson@council.nyc.gov)

NYC Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer
(gbrewer@manhattanbp.nyc.org)

NYC City Councilman Mark Levine (district7@council.nyc.gov)

NYS State Senator Robert Jackson (jackson@nysenate.gov)

NYC Public Advocate Jumaane Williams (gethelp@pubadvocate.nyc.gov)
NY Assemblyman Albert Taylor (taylor@assembly.gov)
Mayor Bill de Blasio (1.nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor/ or mail City Hall, NYC
10007)
cc. petergreen@pobox.com and preserveriverside@gmail.com



PO Box 1315 Old Chelsea Station New York, NY 10113-1315
website: www.savechelseany.org email: savechelseanyc@gmail.com

November __, 2020 **DRAFT 2**

Chair Sarah Carroll,
New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission
1 Centre Street, 9th Floor North
New York, NY 10007

Re: Harris-Newhouse Home, 857 Riverside Drive

Dear Chair Carroll:

Save Chelsea has reviewed the Request for Evaluation of the Harris-Newhouse Home recently submitted to the Landmarks Preservation Commission. We wholeheartedly support landmark designation of this important structure, for its inherent architectural quality and rarity, and the important lessons in New York City's cultural history it can uniquely help teach. Its embodiment of the abolitionist movement and role in the underground railroad rise to national significance.

The Harris-Newhouse Home at 857 Riverside Drive has two qualities—a wood exterior and an association with the underground railroad—to which we in Chelsea are particularly sensitive. We have seen the oldest house in Chelsea with its rare, original, wood cladding successfully misrepresented as unsalvageable by an unscrupulous developer, and fought for years to remove an illegal addition from the Hopper-Gibbons House, part of the Lamartine Place Historic District and one of the City's very few surviving underground railroad sites.

Wooden houses in Manhattan were already rare and vanishing when Berenice Abbott created a special category for them in the work plan for her celebrated WPA photographic survey of the City, as noted in *Berenice Abbott: Changing New York* by Bonnie Yochelson (The Museum of the City of New York, 1997, p. 22). Abbott's affecting 1937 photograph of 857 Riverside Drive highlights the antique and arrestingly picturesque quality it already possessed 83 years ago. Her large-format-negative photo captures more than adequate detail to accurately replicate any exterior elements that have since been removed and cannot be based on remaining side-and-rear porch and façade elements, should an opportunity for reconstruction present itself.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Laurence Frommer".

Laurence Frommer
President, Save Chelsea

Cc: Mayor Bill de Blasio
City Council Speaker Corey Johnson
Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer
Assembly Member Richard N. Gottfried
New York State Senator Brad Hoylman

Letters of Support: 400+ Members of the Extension Area, Historic District, and Friends

Co-op and Condo Boards

Community Members and Friends

Teachers and Students