# West 104th Street

SEPTEMBER 2019

**BLOCK ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER** 

## PART 1

## Gilded Age Glamour

**Exploring Riverside's Mansion Neighborhood** 

By Gil Tauber

ansion" is a term used liberally by news media but rarely by people who actually live in mansions. They are more likely to call their homes simply houses. Nevertheless, most of us understand a mansion to be a large and costly dwelling, usually individually designed, and intended to be occupied by a single household of substantial wealth or rank.

One of the distinctive aspects of Riverside Drive is that, after more than a century of apartment construction, it still has buildings that can arguably





Frederick Law Olmsted; actress Marion Davies; below, the River Mansion on 106th St.

be called mansions, a few still occupied by a single family.

## Where Country Estates Flourished

In the early 1870s, when Frederick Law Olmsted was designing Riverside Park and Riverside Drive, it was assumed that the Drive would be a favored location for the homes of the very rich, returning the area to an earlier era of eminence. From the 1750s to the 1850s, the high ground along the Hudson River was occupied by the country estates of wealthy New Yorkers. They came here for the sweeping views and river breezes, but also to escape from

the epidemics of yellow fever and cholera that regularly swept through the crowded city at the southern end of Manhattan.

By the mid-1800s, a booming New York City was rapidly expanding northward. The Hudson River Railroad, completed in 1851, the ancestor of the present Amtrak line under Riverside Park, contributed to this growth. The northern enclaves of the island lost their cachet as the railroad enabled

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# Come Celebrate at the 30th Anniversary Yard Sale

## Bargains! Entertainment! Split-the-Pot Raffle and More!

At the annual West 104<sup>th</sup> Street Yard Sale on Saturday, September 21, our community will transform the block into a bustling street market bursting with bargains and neighborhood spirit for the 30<sup>th</sup> consecutive year. For those who wonder how we keep this annual event vibrant through the decades, here is the secret "day-of" routine.

Shortly after sunrise, intrepid volunteers sweep the street, chalk off the vendor stall locations, persuade defiant car owners to park on neighboring streets, and post signs to direct the imminent invasion of bargain hunters. Vendors haul boxes up the incline from Riverside Drive and furnish their curbside stalls with folding chairs, wobbly tables, and display racks. Then they pause to survey the heavens and to hope for hours of sunshine.

As vacating cars widen West 104<sup>th</sup> Street into a promenade, vendors unpack their merchandise and stock their tables, shelves, and racks with recycled treasures: jewelry, dresses, jackets, furniture, toys, board games, decorative objects, household items, collectibles, and mounds of other items seeking a new home.

Stepping out their front doors, neighbors find the curbsides from West End to Riverside converted into galleries overflowing with merchandise for bargain hounds with champagne tastes and beer budgets. At 10:00 AM, the Yard Sale officially begins. Gesticulating, they negotiate with vendors, share a laugh or two, and complete transactions. As they search for bargains, they discover old acquaintances. As they close sales, they open new friendships.

If you join them in the search for a great deal, you may want to visit the following stands sponsored by our Block Association . . .

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#### **Vendor Slots Going Fast!**

Want to reserve your own 10 x 10 foot slot to display your gently used clothing, jewelry, and household items? Please log on to www.bloomingdale.org/vendor.htm or call Gary Waskow at 212 932-9082 or email yardsale.104@ gmail.com. Vendor spaces are \$50 for on-block residents, and \$60 for off-block.

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Contributors to the July Issue:

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## W 104 ST BLOCK ASSN FINANCIAL REPORT

## July 2019

Opening Balance	\$15,969.28
Income	\$730.00
Dues	400.00
Newsletter ads	330.00
Expenses	4643.51
Guard service	4544.41
Misc	99.10

Closing Balance......\$12,015.77

## Letter

## Miracle on 104th Street

One Saturday in May as I was racing to meet friends — and so late I had to grab a cab—I used a credit card that I'd pulled out of my purse. Shortly after, our doorman at 320 Riverside Dr. calls to say, "Someone just turned in Annie's ID and cash." I'd stashed about \$50 and all my important ID in a cheesy plastic bag that afternoon for a bike ride; when I was late to meet our friends, I shoved the same bag in my going-out purse, and it must have flown out as I raced up 104th Street. Apparently two women found the wayward bag on the sidewalk, looked at the ID, and returned it to my home at 320 Riverside. The doorman said he didn't get their names…but thank you to those two remarkable women. This is the street where we live! Cheers,

Ann D. Gross, MA, Gerontology Care Management for Older Adults 320 Riverside Drive #12B New York, NY 10025 Anndgross@me.com



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We fully support Fair Housing, both in the spirit and the letter of the law.



#### West 104th Street Block Association Board **President Steven Zirinsky** 315 RSD 212.866.6732 **VP Jeff Howitt** 315 RSD 212.866.5569 **Treasurer Barbara Boynton 905 WEA** 212.864.1011 **Secretary Larry Stern** 315 RSD 212.794.2288 **MEMBERS** 315 RSD 212.864.5663 Barbara Bryan Mary Jo Gennaro 315 RSD **Alex Grannis 895 WEA** 212.316.1644 **Nancy Lian** 320 RSD 212.316.6112 Peter Littlewood 320 RSD 612.501.6919 309 W 104 Joyce Mann 212.721.6341 Martin Mann 309 W 104 212.721.6341 315 RSD 212.666.3129 Lvnn Max Hanna Rubin 315 RSD 212.865.4579 **Gary Waskow 320 RSD** 212.932.9082 **Emeritus Sid Herzfeld 895 WEA** 212,749,0085

## Yard Sale continued from page 1

- "What-A-Bargain." Dig your way through table after table cluttered
  with pre-owned bargains including jewelry, knick-knacks, kitchenware, toys, unopened personal care products, embroidery kits, and
  more—all priced from \$1 to \$20.
- Book Sale. Browse a large selection of used volumes, including novels, mysteries, plays, poetry, history, biography, children's books, cookbooks, atlases, and dictionaries, as well as CDs
- Silent Auction. Bid on antiques, vintage collectibles, posters, photographs, paintings, theater tickets, household items in their original boxes, services (piano lessons, baking, etc.), and gift certificates from restaurants, stores, museums, and other cultural institutions.
- Bake Sale. Select an afternoon snack or a delicious family dessert fresh from your neighbor's oven.

When you take a break, you can tap your foot to the folk/rock of Foley Road (James Weatherstone and Kurt Emmerich), the jazz guitar of Joe Giglio, and the Motown sound of Shailah and the Shaylettes. Don't forget to pick up a ticket for our famous 50/50 raffle. Last year, the first-prize winner took home \$2,025.50. This year, the first-prize winner will again receive half of the total pot; the second-prize winner will take home \$100; the third-prize winner, \$50.

## Help Us Make This the Greatest Yard Sale Yet!

Through your generosity, you and your neighbors make this annual celebration possible. If you have spare items or time, we welcome your donations:

**"What-a-Bargain:"** Please pack your donations in bags marked, "Yard Sale," and arrange delivery by contacting Joyce Mann at joycemann2@gmail.com or 212-721-6341. (Back-up contact: 516-238-4609 or 516-330-5397.) Please, no overused pots, pans, and glassware; outdated electronics; items missing pieces; or clothing and coffee mugs.

**Book Sale:** Please pack your donation in bags marked, "Yard Sale," and leave them with the 320 RSD doorman between September 7 and 19. Please, no textbooks, journals, magazines, theses, LPs, or books about baby care, computers, or self-help.

**Silent Auction:** Please contact Hanna Rubin at 212-865-4579 or Hanna.Rubin@verizon.net.

Bake Sale: Please call Alex Grannis at 212-316-1644.

**Donate your time:** Do you have an hour? Lend a hand at the Silent Auction, 'What-a-Bargain', Books Sale, Bake Sale, or set up and break down. Please contact Hanna Rubin at 212-865-4579 or Hanna.Rubin@verizon.net.

# On the Wing Again

## **Block Association Plans Birding Walks for Riverside Fall Migration**

By Peter Littlewood

ummer is a quiet time for birding in the city. The large numbers of people in the parks means that only the most human-tolerant birds are able to breed here. Species diversity is low, with only about 20 species breeding in Central Park and even fewer in Riverside Park. Some

species thrive, particularly Robins with first broods in April and second and third broods as late as July. If you're really lucky, you may even find a Robin that likes to sing at 4:30 in the morning right outside your window. You can also see the usual House Sparrows, Pigeons, Doves, Starlings, Blue Jays, Catbirds, Hawks, and a few other year-round birds.

The earliest fall migrants show up in late July, but the largest number arrive in September and early October. By the beginning of November, most have headed south. Fall migration can be a little tougher to bird, since the birds are not in breeding plumage and the foliage can still be pretty dense. Fortunately, a lot of the birds passing through Riverside spend time near the ground and are not particularly shy. Look for Kinglets and

a variety of Warblers (Palm, Yellow, Yellow-Rumped, Black and White, and Common Yellowthroat) along the paths or in the low plants just off of them.

The Block Association will be leading Riverside Park walks on Saturday,

September 28th and Sunday, October 12. Look for details in Block Bytes, the Block Association's e-newsletter. (If you don't already receive it, sign up for it at www.bloomingdale.org.) If you simply cannot wait that long, New York city Audubon is having a bird walk on Friday, September 13th at 5:30pm that starts at 120th.

In the meantime you can enjoy some of the other wildlife around 104th Street. Now that it's warmed up, you can see fireflies lighting up Riverside Park. While they are sometimes street-side, the best place to see them is on the hillsides down in the park. Coming back from Ellington's in the Park after sunset is a great way to spot them. If you keep your eyes open, you might also spot a raccoon poking its head out of the retaining wall during the day just north of the stairs at 108th.



West 104th Street fledgling.

# COMMONLY REQUESTED COMPOUNDING IDEAS

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- Hydrocortisone Suppositories
- Ibuprofen Suppositories 100mg / 200mg
- Progesterone Suppositories
- Hyaloronic Suppositories for vaginal dryness
- Hormone Creams for men and women
- Pain Creams

- Nipple Ointment for breastfeeding
- Hydroquinone 6% Fading Cream
- T3 T4 Thyroid Hormone Capsules
- Nitroglycerin .2% Ointment for Anal Fissure
- Nifedipine 2% Ointment
- Diltiazem 2% Ointment

\*\*\*Topical Creams (in Lipoderm Base) for nausea,
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## Gilded Age Glamour

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wealthy families to establish even grander estates farther north along the Hudson.

In 1865, the State Legislature authorized a redesign of the street system west and north of Central Park. This resulted in several new streets and parks including Riverside Park and what was initially called Riverside Avenue. Olmsted envisioned the new thoroughfare as a scenic carriage drive. He had the new roadway curve with the terrain and, to moderate slopes in steep areas, he introduced service roads that



A turn-of-the-last-century postcard of the Drive from 106th St.

A Look at Local History

Sawed Off Leg.

For more detailed information on the houses

that line Riverside Drive from 105th to 106th

Sts. (331 through 337 Riverside Drive), see

Daniel J. Wakin's 2018 book The Man With The

were separated from the main roadway by landscaped islands. Olmsted himself thought these service roads, which run between 91st and 114th streets, would be particularly suitable for the homes of the wealthy because the landscaped islands would provide extra privacy.

As it turned out, the rich were slow to embrace Riverside Drive. Meanwhile, landowners along it held out for high prices, which discouraged development of homes for the merely affluent. An 1891 real estate atlas shows only a handful of grand houses, while the bulk of the land along the Drive remained vacant.

From the 1890s through the early 20th century, about a dozen more mansions were built along the Drive. The grandest of all was the 75room house of steel magnate Charles Schwab, occupying the entire block bounded by 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Streets, West End Avenue and Riverside Drive. It was completed in 1907, by which time the remaining vacant

sites along the Drive were rapidly filling up with apartment buildings. Schwab died in 1939, but his vacant mansion—I remember peering through its rusty fence-loomed over Riverside Drive for another 15 years before it was demolished for the present 11 Riverside Drive.

By the 1920s, most of the remaining mansions along the Drive had been replaced

by apartment buildings. A rare survivor is 170 Riverside Drive, at 89th Street. This elegant Beaux Arts structure was built in 1903 for Isaac Leopold Rice (1830-1915), a polymath Bavarian immigrant who had made his fortune as a railroad lawyer and electrical manufacturer. A few years later, he sold the house to the tobacco magnate Solomon Schinasi. It was purchased by its current owner, Yeshiva Chofetz Chaim, in 1954.

#### 101st-109th Streets: "The Mansion Neighborhood"

a few are in the lower 70s and 80s. However, the largest concentration-as Olmsted predicted when he designed the service roads--is in our own neighborhood between 101st and 109th Streets. One of these survivors is 294 Riverside Drive, between  $101^{st}$  and  $102^{nd}$  Sts. It was completed in 1901 for William Baumgarten (1845-1906), who headed the firm of Herter Brothers. In the Gilded Age, Herter Brothers was the premier supplier of furniture, textiles, cabinetry, chandeliers, doorknobs and other decorative items for the mansions of the very rich. Baumgarten became rich enough himself to commission this five-story townhouse from the firm of Schickel & Ditmars.

At the northeast corner of 105th Street is 330 Riverside Drive, designed by Janes & Leo

and completed in 1901. It was built on speculation by Joseph A. Farley, a well-known builder of luxury homes. Its first buyer was Robert B. Davis "the Baking Powder King." His eponymous brand is still found on supermarket shelves. Davis was much luckier in business than in love. At 38, having made his fortune, Davis married 18-year old Jennie Weed. In 1910, the couple made headlines when R. B. Davis fled the house and sued for divorce, charging that his wife and her brother had conspired to have him declared insane so they could gain control of the company.

The divorce was still in litigation when Jennie died in 1915. J. B. died five years later and both the company and the house were inherited by their daughter Lulu and her husband George Jephson. In the mid-1950s, the house was sold to a Catholic teaching order, which later transferred it to Opus Dei, the Catholic lay order luridly portrayed in Dan Brown's novel The Da Vinci Code.

> Just north of 330 were three more houses, also designed by Janes & Leo, of which two survive. Number 331 was bought about 1912 by William P. Ahnelt, a pioneer publisher of women's magazines. His Pictorial Review once had a circulation of 2.5 million and published fiction by such authors as Edith Wharton and Kathleen Norris. In 1918 Ahnelt conveyed the house to Marion Douras, known professionally

as Marion Davies (1897-1961). She was a genuinely talented actress but is fated to go down in history as the mistress of William Randolph Hearst (1863-1951). He almost certainly paid for the Riverside Drive house. Hearst also helped Davies' parents to acquire the adjoining house at 332.

In 1925, when Hearst moved his base of operations to California, Davies went with him and sold 331 to her next-door Jephson neighbors. In the 1930s, No. 332 was heavily damaged by a fire and had to be demolished. In 1954, No. 331 and the now-vacant plot at No. 332 were acquired by the American Buddhist Academy. The New York Buddhist Church building at 332 was built in the 1963. No. 331 continues to be occupied by the New York Buddhist Academy and affiliated Buddhist organizations.

Part II of Gilded Age Glamour will cover other neighboring mansions including 337 Riverside Dr. and 350 Riverside Dr. at the corner of 107th Street.

Of the remaining houses along the Drive that could be called mansions,

## The Rat Patrol

## **Block Association attends Rat Academy**

New York City's Department of Health and Mental Hygiene sponsored an open seminar in June designed to "encourage best practices in rat prevention and management." The two-hour Rat Academy, led by Caroline Bragdon, and cosponsored by State Assembly Member, Danny O'Donnell, City Council Members Helen Rosenthal, and Mark Levine, Community Board 7, and the West 80' Neighborhood Association, was attended by Dr. Lawrence Stern, board member of the 104th Street Block Association.

"Rat prevention is an ongoing citywide problem and challenge. The only way to handle the problem is for every property to keep their garbage well contained, sealed and covered," reported Dr. Stern. "Loose garbage means rats."

The 104th Street Block Association is committed to working on this problem. The Block Association works with building owners and superintendents to encourage best practices, report rodent sightings, and requests additional help from the Dept. of Health in rat elimination.

## On and Around the Block





Clockwise from top: Board member Peter Littlewood lends a hand on Riverside Park cleanup day; board member Larry Stern and block association president Steve Zirinsky touch up the tree guards for summer; new block resident Stephen Helman lends a hand with summer planting; before the planting begins.





Rick Wohlfarth rick@wohlfarth.com Office 212.666.1600, x10 Cell 917.882.0815 Maine 207.729.9332 Fax 212.662.5865

890 WEST END AVENUE NEW YORK, NY 10025 WOHLFARTH.COM







The first person to send Steve Zirinsky an email with the correct location of the architectural detail will win one of the Block Association's new totes! Email Steve at Steve@Zirinskyarch.com.



## **Friendly Valet Cleaners**

**Quality Organic Cleaners** 



# **A Caring Neighbor**

Suba Pharmacy helps locals with its custom preparations and kind spirit. By Joyce Mann

or 37 years, Bashir Suba's neighborhood pharmacy has been on the corner of Broadway and 104th St. for 37 years. He and his multiethnic staff represent a vanishing West Side—diverse, committed, friendly.

Originally from Lahore, Pakistan, Mr. Suba graduated from Punjab University, got his masters degree from Long Island University and then received special training for compounding (preparing customized medications). He became a pharmacist almost by accident, as he tells it. "My father was an employee in Lahore High Court and the income was not enough," he recalls. "One of his ventures involved my uncle, a veterinarian in Kenya. He sent us a formulation to kill lice in sheep. With the help of that formulation we developed a product called 'Jun Mar Tel,' which means Lice Kill Oil in English. It was very successful, and that was my first pharmaceutical experience." This early experiment led to a life-long interest in both medicine and creating medical and herbal compounds.

After graduating with his pharmacy degree, Mr. Suba got a job with a pharmaceutical manufacturing company. Like many in Pakistan who dream of better opportunities, he hoped to go abroad. He was offered an opportunity to run a pharmacy in a hill station in Saudi Arabia, a place he said was pleasant to work, so much so that his parents

came and lived with him there. As devout Muslims, all three of them relished the proximity to the holy sites in Mecca and Medina.

In 1972, he was granted a visa to the United States. While pursuing a masters degree, he worked several jobs make ends meet. Eventually, he was hired at Wyckoff Heights Hospital , where for 10 years he worked as an assistant pharmacy director. Finally in 1982, Mr. Suba took the  $104^{\rm th}$  Street pharmacy over and renamed it Suba Pharmacy.

He sees its mission as "Taking care of human beings. My parents and my deep religious beliefs emphasized respect for the elderly especially, so in the early days of working here, I would deliver medicines directly to the homes of my clients. Often someone would not have the money



Bashir Suba with daughter Iram.

Suba Pharmacy does
compounding—
customized
medication—for people
and dogs and cats.

at that moment to pay for what they needed, so I just said 'Take it.' They always came and paid me back." He says his customers are the most loyal and wonderful people and this whole area always feels like a small, friendly village.

When asked about his staff, he quickly replied: "Everyone is a human being. Their color or religion doesn't matter. Islam teaches respect for all of Abraham's children and the prophets and that is all that matters. Love and help all human beings. That is what my religion teaches." In addition to his daughter Iram, a former fashion designer and now his business partner, the staff includes Victor, an Orthodox Syrian Jew (who doesn't work Friday nights or Saturdays), Carlos, a Spanish speaking Christian and Maya, from Bangladesh, a single mom of 3.

When asked the pluses and minuses are of being a small, family owned business, Mr. Suba talked about the competition from big chains like Rite Aid and Walgreens. He explained that because of his high rent and the rules and regulations imposed on dispensing medications, he loses money every month. The only way he can stay financially above water is by asking his customers to buy their over-the-counter items like shampoos, vitamins and toothbrushes

from him because he can make a small profit on those.

He carries many natural cleaning products and high quality vitamins and homeopathic remedies as well. He does compounding—customized medication—for people and dogs and cats. He can reduce dosages not available in the market: Hormones, creams, capsules, vaginal suppositories are common requests. Mr. Suba will work with a doctor and come up with a competitively priced custom prescription suitable for someone's particular needs.

When I asked him what the future holds for Suba Pharmacy he said: "I can't afford to retire, so I guess I am here for the immediate future."

## **NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES**

#### **BLOOMINGDALE AGING IN**

PLACE (BaiP) Bloominplace.org
BAiP is an intergenerational volunteer
network of neighbors working to help
older residents to continue living at home
safely and comfortably. BAiP sponsors
social and cultural activities, provides
educational tools, and a helping hand for
those in need through its Neighbor-toNeighbor (N2N) program.

The latter takes the form of providing help going places, running errands, light shopping, accompaniment at home or outdoors, and information. If you want to contact N2N for this kind of assistance, or to talk about volunteering, e-mail: N2N@bloominplace.org, or call: 212-842-8831 to leave a message with your contact information. Either way, a BAiP member will respond promptly.

### COMPUTER CONSULTANT/ PC DOCTOR

Computers repaired, maintained, viruses removed, junk mail controlled. Advice to repair or buy. I do Windows!

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Experienced, responsible, caring pet sitter. I take care of your pets like they are my own! Dogs, cats, small animals, birds, reptiles, fish. Very reasonable rates. Call Tova at 212-662-5143 or email tgetoff@gmail.com.

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Professional writer & Faulkner finalist available for critiques, editing & as a writing tutor.

Contact Pat at: 212-615-6927

## YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICE PUBLICIZED FREE!

Publicize your neighborhood service (babysitting, dog walking, apartment cleaning, etc.) free in the newsletter and on our web site for one year, renewable. To submit an ad mail/deliver this information to Hanna Rubin 315 RSD or send to Hanna.Rubin@verizon.net For our records: Your name and mailing address For publication: Your name, contact

method (phone or email address),

description of your service.

The block association board meets once a month.

We enjoy having residents attend the meetings.

Please let us know if you would like to attend one and we will send you an invitation.

steve@zirinskyarch.com

## Call for Safe Escort Home With Block Guard

If you're ever coming home at night and you'd like to have an escort, please don't hesitate to call Osbourne Thomas, our security guard. He has a special phone for these times, and he will come to meet you either on West End Avenue or Riverside Drive and walk with you to your home.

**Security Guard Phone Number:** 

347-723-1517

## 2019 3rd Quarter Dues:

Please allocate my contribution to:	Amount of check:
SecurityBeautificationSocial	_NewsletterBoard Decision(Suggested amt: \$40/quarter or \$160/year
Name	
Address	Apt. No
E-mail Address Phone (For internal use only. The Block Assn. will not sell, exchange, or lend your e-mail address to any outside parties.)	
Suggestions for the block:	Block Association Inc. ion: 905 WEA, #71, NY, NY 10025 or leave with one of the following: G. Waskow: 320 RSD, Apt. 8G J. Howitt: 315 RSD. Apt. 8C