

West 104th Street

SEPTEMBER 2020

BLOCK ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

A Salute to West 104th Street

As the Block Association Turns 50, We Celebrate A Special Place

The Block Association was founded in 1970 by a group of neighbors concerned about block safety. The past five decades have brought many changes and improvements: a security guard on duty five nights a week, wrought-iron tree guards, twice-yearly plantings, and the Yard Sale among others. We are proud to serve our community, and grateful for our neighbors' support. On our 50th anniversary, we asked residents and neighbors to share what they love about West 104th Street—their photos, memories and reasons why our block is special to them.

50th
ANNIVERSARY



The living is easy on West 104th Street

COMING HOME

Who wouldn't want to live in a quiet neighborhood along Riverside Park, with its accompanying fragrance of honeysuckle and river (and sometimes ocean!)—yet be a stone's throw from shops, movies, outdoor cafes, etc. West 104th Street is our nook in the city.

My husband and I moved here in 1978 with our then-young son, Graig. Though we treasure the anonymity that the city offers, we also treasure the neighborhood feel of 104th Street. We quickly learned we have a Block Association, our own newsletter, and a wonderful array of neighbors.

We were hesitant at first to move to a building without a doorman, but our prospective home was too special not to take the leap. The fact that we have our very own block guard is a godsend!

My memories are here: of my husband, the love of my life, of raising our son here, of our dog, Dusty, romping in the park, of sleigh riding when it used to snow regularly (!), of biking, eating outside, tennis in the park, walks along the Hudson. This isn't a block; it's a home. Honestly, who could ask for more? —Pat Weich

More tributes to West 104th St. continued on page 5

A Fresh Coat of Paint

The Block Association touches up tree guards for the summer plantings



Volunteers from the Block Association turned out on June 6 to help repair, clean and paint the block's tree guards, all while maintaining appropriate social distance. The painting helped set off the summer plantings—red begonias and caladium. The Block Association maintains 20 tree gardens and tree guards on the block.

\$50 for Fifty

Covid-19 has prevented our holding the annual block Yard Sale, but it has not changed the spirit of our block. We will hold our annual 50/50 raffle—please look for us selling tickets on the corners of West End Avenue. And we have launched a special appeal for our 50th anniversary. Facing a significant shortfall, we are asking block residents to help keep our block beautiful and welcoming. You can give \$50, a multiple of \$50 or a fraction of \$50—we appreciate whatever you can do to help. You can donate through PayPal on our website (www.bloomingdale.org) or by check. Please make it payable to the West 104th Street Block Association and mail or drop off to Barbara Boynton, Treasurer, 905 West End Avenue, Apartment 71, New York, NY 10025.

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WEST 104 BLOCK ASSN FINANCIAL REPORT

AUGUST 2020

OPENING BALANCE	\$15,581.55
Income	5465.00
Dues	1940.00
Other Contrib.	3225.00
Other	300.00
EXPENSES	\$3010.05
Guard service	2450.66
PayPal Fee	62.59
Beautification	496.80
CLOSING BALANCE	\$15,341.54

\$50 for \$Fifty Donors

The Block Association extends warmest thanks to those who have contributed so far to the \$50 for 50 campaign. Their generosity will help us continue to provide the services that make our block a special and welcoming place.

Andrews-Cameron, Toni; Jesse Berger & Ann Gross; Laura Bronson; Sandi Cooper and Ann Cammett; Catherine Cuthell; Mary Pat Draddy & Jonathan Rosenshine; Lydia Dufour & John Cartafalsa; Teresa Elwert; Mary Jo Gennaro; Maura Gouck & Ozzie Alfonso; Carol & James Goodfriend; George Harlow & Carol Slade-Harlow; Kathleen Kearns; Roshan Leslie; Nancy & Edwin Lian; Bob Lindeman & Idee Granowitz; Peter Littlewood & Tracie Dellinger; Lynn & Steve Max; Thomas Monaco & Patricia Dail; Gail Naruo; Stephen Pred & Katherine Randall; Lisa Rabinowicz; Barbara Rosenberg; Scott Season & Sarah Danzig; Amy Singer & Richard Einhorn; David Smiley & Lauren Kogod; Patricia I. Smith; Lawrence Stern & Paul Ziegler; Gilbert Tauber; Peter Vincent & Clifton Taylor; Philipp Von Turk & Susanne Menaber; Patricia Weich; Alana Weiss & Nicholas Boos.



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Who Designed Your Building?

West 104th Street is part of a new neighborhood database that has key details on more than 1,000 buildings

Gil Tauber, a local historian and member of the Bloomingdale Neighborhood History Group, has created a database that includes nearly every building from West 96th Street to West 110th Street. It is posted on BNHG's website: www.upperwestside-history.org. With the help of volunteers and fellow BNHG members, Tauber researched information on architects, construction dates, block and lot numbers, and buildings' current number of floors and apartments. He recently spoke to Joyce Mann about the project.

Joyce: What was the motivation for the database?

Gil: BNHG has presented several programs on the architecture of our area. Very often people ask us about their own buildings: When was it built? Who designed it? The impetus was to provide the answers, even for buildings that are not landmarked.

Joyce: Constructing this database sounds like a daunting task. How long did it take?

Gil: Two years. I would particularly like to thank Nancy Macagno, Pam Tice, Dan Armstrong and Jim Mackin for their assistance in the research.

Joyce: How does it work and what can a viewer expect to find?

Gil: Once you click on it, it is arranged by street address, first all the house numbers on one side, then all on the opposite side. For each address it gives the block and lot number, which you can use to research the building on other city websites.

About a third of the buildings are landmarked. For the non-landmark buildings built between 1900-1986, we used a Building Permits Database created by the late architectural historian Christopher Gray, who for many years wrote the excellent "Streetscapes" column for the Times. The non-landmark buildings prior to 1900 were hardest. For those, we looked at 19th Century real estate maps to narrow down possible years of construction. Then we went through thirty years' worth of a trade journal that published weekly lists of building permits.

Joyce: Where did all this interest in architecture come from?

Gil: In the Army, I was stationed in northern Italy, where I was surrounded by historic architecture. In the late '50's I was a volunteer guide for Museum of the City of New York walking tours. Partly on the strength of that, I landed a job with the NY Convention and Visi-

tors Bureau and worked there for six years. Eventually, I went back to school and got a degree in urban planning.

Joyce: Now for some fun statistics: What is the oldest building in the neighborhood?

Gil: The one on the northwest corner of Broadway and 100th, which houses the Metro Diner. It was built in 1871.

Joyce: The newest?

Gil: At the moment, probably the new apartment building at 814 Amsterdam Ave. at the corner of 100th St., only a block away from the oldest. However, there are a couple of others currently under construction.

Joyce: The largest and smallest?

Gil: Largest is probably the Columbia at Broadway and 96th. The smallest may be those three-story row houses in the little historic district around Manhattan Ave and 105th St.

Joyce: The most unusual?

Gil: I'd say the landmarked former New York Cancer Hospital at 455 Central Park West, with its conical roofed towers modeled after a Loire chateau.

At one time, it was a notoriously squalid nursing home that was closed down by the State. It was converted into luxury condominiums about 20 years ago.

Joyce: What did you personally find the most exciting or interesting discovery?

Gil: Finding buildings that are not landmarked or mentioned in architectural guidebooks, but that were done by important architects. For example, the two brownstones at 237 and 239 West 105th St., one of which used to house the Movie Place video store, were designed by Henry J. Hardenbergh, the architect of both the Dakota and the Plaza Hotel!

Joyce: How about 104th St. itself? What's our story?

Gil: A surprising thing about our block is how quickly it was built up. Except for a solitary mansion on the north corner of Riverside Drive, our block of 104th St. was vacant until 1891. Within two years, both sides of the street were filled with row houses, most of which survive.

After the subway opened on Broadway in 1904, there was such an increase in land values that many row owners were willing to sell out to apartment house developers. There were several on the site of 895 West End. Some fronted on West End and one fronted on 104th St. Also on 104th St, three of the 1892 houses were torn down to build 308 and five of the 1893 houses were demolished to build 309.

The largest building on our block is 320 Riverside, with 123 apartments (though some have been combined) and a floor area of 165,000 square feet.



Broadway & West 104th Street in the early 1900s



Left to right: Local historian Gil Tauber with Block Association board members Martin and Joyce Mann.

COMMUNITY SPIRIT

When my husband and I first moved into this neighborhood from the Upper East Side, we had no idea that we were not only coming to a beautiful home on a quiet street connected to a venerable city park, but that we were coming to a real community of warm and friendly neighbors! Every time I go out I invariably say hello to at least 2 or 3 people that I am happy to see. I feel like I belong here and that it is a unique and special part of this city. I have become invested in its wellbeing. There is soul here! —Larry Stern

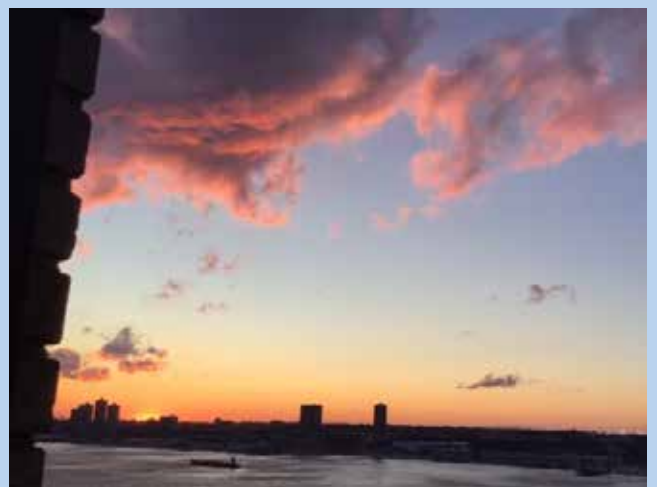
YARD SALE LUCKY FINDS

In the summer of 2016 I moved back to New York after 12 years. That fall I discovered the Yard Sale, only a block away from my new apartment. Not only did I find some things that I needed (a toaster, drink coasters), participate in the silent auction, and purchase some baked goods, but I learned about Bloomingdale Aging in Place (BAiP) from members at a table with a large banner hanging in front. I had heard about BAiP when I moved in, and here was a chance to meet members, ask questions and become involved. Three and a half years later, I became president of BAiP, and it all started with the block fair. And I still use the toaster and coasters! —Gail Naruo

THE SPLENDOR OF SUNSETS

We have lived on the block for 54 years and like to tell people that we own the sunset. No one can build across the street and take away our view.

—Nancy Lian





A View to Make You Smile

When I cross West End Avenue at 104th Street, my face lights up. I can see the park and the river—that view puts a smile on your face. And the entire block between 103rd and 104th Streets on Riverside Drive exemplifies the standard of architecture present in this neighborhood.”

—Stephen Helman

The Secret Is...

This block has a lot of fond memories. Since we moved to our first apartment on 102nd Street in 1973—after a brief summer sublet in 320—we always wanted to find something on 104th. And in 1995, we did! But for me, it’s more of non-specific, “this is home” kind of feeling, rather than any particular memory. It’s the people on the block, like my brother-in-law and his partner Deborah in 315, and so many others, give that us that. When we have visitors (foreign or domestic), after walking around the neighborhood, they often say, “Gee. Is there anyone here you don’t know?”

Not really. —Steve Pred



A Family Feeling

I have lived at 308 W 104th Street my entire life to this very day in 2020.

It’s where I’ve celebrated every holiday and life event—104 Street is truly my home. Here’s a picture of me and my friend as children (in costume) overlooking the block from our West 104th Street terrace. And here we are again in this photo from last Halloween 37 years later. I’ve laughed, cried, grown up here, and it’s just the beginning. Thank you, 308 W 104 St.; you’re not just my home. You’re my family. —Graig Weich

COMMONLY REQUESTED COMPOUNDING IDEAS

- Boric Acid Suppositories
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- Pain Creams
- Nipple Ointment for breastfeeding
- Hydroquinone 6% Fading Cream
- T3 - T4 Thyroid Hormone Capsules
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- Diltiazem 2% Ointment

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Defying Gravity



Last month, Riverside Park opened its skateboard park on 108th Street. An 11-foot deep bowl will be added later.

Changes at the West 103/104 Bus Stop

By Steve Zirinsky

The Metropolitan Transit Authority slated four areas of the 103/104 bus stop on Riverside Drive for “improvement.” These were:

1. Northbound at 103rd and the island, adding an accessible ramp and a paved walkway 5 foot wide at curbside
2. Northbound at 104th Street on the island, extending the island and raising the pedestrian walkway by 6”, and installing a curb and curb cuts. This included relocating the storm drain and gaining more planted area.
3. Southbound at 104th and Riverside Drive, rebuilding a whole section including park benches and accessible ramp, and extending pavers along the curb to 103rd St.
4. Southbound at 103rd and Riverside Drive, rebuilding an accessible ramp.

The project’s intent was to make these stops more accessible—replacing mud with pavers—and not to have the bus stop in the middle of the southbound crosswalk. The solution, the MTA determined, was to move the 104 Street bus stop to 103 Street.

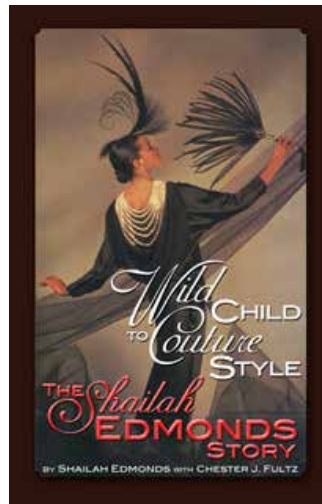
And this renovation, though not complete, appears to be an improvement, though two trees came down. The mud bus stop is replaced with pavers. The bus no longer blocks the crosswalk. The pedestrian walkway is physically separated from the road, making it much safer, and doing illegal turns becomes more difficult, which has been a big concern for a while now.

From Paris Model to Yard Sale Star

In her new memoir, Shailah Edmonds talks about the grit and glamour it took to succeed



Growing up in Portland, Oregon, Shailah Edmonds dreamed of a fashion career. Coming to New York as a young woman in the 1970s, she found few opportunities for women of color. A photographer advised her to try Paris, where Black models were in increasing demand. She moved there, and became a runway model for some of fashion’s biggest names, including Valentino and Versace. Eventually, she became a fitting model for Yves St. Laurent. Her memoir, *Wild Child to Couture Style*, has recently been published by Lyons Books (see www.shailahedmonds.com to order a copy). Shailah, who has gather crowds at the West 104th Street Yard Sale with her covers of Motown classics, shared a few thoughts with the newsletter on her Paris experiences.



What were the most rewarding aspects about modeling in Paris?

The ability to work one-on-one with top designers. And to experience the time and care that went into creating a garment, especially couture, when everything was made by hand. I learned so much about types of fabric, how to conduct myself in a sophisticated manner (after being somewhat independently wild), and was so grateful to be respected and appreciated as a professional.

Comparing Paris to New York, what were things you liked about living there?

What I loved most about living in Paris was the fact that I was treated so well. I never felt one bit of discrimination, and was always referred to as the American, instead of by the color of my skin.

I also liked the overall courtesy in Paris. When you enter any establishment there is always a greeting—“Bon Jour”—as well as when you leave, “Au revoir” or “Bonne Journée”. In New York that is very rare. When dining in Paris, it is a relaxed, enjoyable occasion. You can sit after eating and the waiter is slow to take your plate, especially while your companion is still eating. In New York, they sometimes take your empty dish as soon as you’ve finished your meal.

What advice would you give a young woman of color today seeing out on a fashion career?

To have patience, perseverance and to be resilient. It’s really a tough, competitive business. Whenever the fashion business returns, I think (and hope) there will be more diversity, due to the current climate of world events, however, you must be prepared. Study and practice your craft, make sure you fit the requirements before wasting your time, and be prepared to work hard.

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 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-to-Neighbor (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.

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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 Jon Smith, 320 RSD or send to 104thstreetba@gmail.com

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 (now via Zoom). 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

2020 3rd Quarter Dues:

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Suggestions for the block: _____

Make checks payable to West 104th Street Block Association Inc.

Please send to our treasurer: Barbara Boynton: 905 WEA, #71, NY, NY 10025 or leave with one of the following:

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A. Grannis: 895 West End Ave.

G. Waskow: 320 RSD, Apt. 8G

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