

West 104th Street

SEPTEMBER 2025

BLOCK ASSOCIATION

Gil's Greats

A longtime neighborhood historian picks his favorites on and around West 104th Street

By Gilbert Tauber

The history, architecture, and topography of the Bloomingdale neighborhood have captivated Gilbert Tauber for decades. Now 90, Tauber still can be found diving into archives, chatting with other Bloomingdale Neighborhood History Group members, and writing thoughtful, evocative pieces on one of the city's most storied neighborhoods. We asked Tauber to share his highlights of our own block and environs.



Straus Park's memorial fountain

1. The view of the Master Building (310 Riverside) from the north sidewalk of 104th Street. This is one of the most interesting architectural contrasts in New York City: the iconic Art Deco tower soaring above Clarence True's 1890s row houses. The best spot to view this is in front of the brownstone at 315 West 104th.

2. Kids' sports teams and their coaches meeting on the benches at 104th St. before going down to the playing fields in Riverside Park. It's heartening to be reminded that people are still raising children in the city and that it can be an enjoyable place to grow up.

3. Dru's Garden. The square plot opposite the foot of 104th St. has been lovingly tended by Dru Heidle (and Karin and Ira Gershenhorn) for many years. It presents a succession of floral pleasures. I can't retain the names of all these plants, but I enjoy looking at them and smelling them.

4. Kids using the trapeze rings at Hudson Beach. I marvel when I see people of any age using this daunting piece of playground equipment. The most successful tend to be pre-teens. I recall having to negotiate something similar in Basic Training but wasn't very good at it. The ring set, like the rest of Hudson Beach, was installed by the Parks Department after a campaign by our neighbor Ira Gershenhorn.

5. The creative brickwork on 315 Riverside Drive. In addition to cast-concrete and wrought-iron ornament, this Art Deco building is enhanced by the imaginative use of brick laid several different ways. The architects were

continued on page 5.

Come Join Us at the Yard Sale

We need you—and your donations—to make this the best ever!



Shoppers at the book table

The West 104th Street Block Association's Yard Sale will be held on Saturday, September 27. It's more than a block party or a street fair. It's a quirky, welcoming Upper West Side tradition. There are 60-plus vendors, live music—New Orleans jazz, Motown covers—a bake table heaped with homemade treats, a Silent Auction, a book table with a huge selection, and a What-a-Bargain table with finds for less than \$1.

And of course the split-the-pot raffle, by now an event in its own right. Neighbors and Block Association board members staff tables at the top of the block weeks ahead to sell tickets and grow the pot. Last year's winner took home \$3149.72.

But it's everyone on the block who makes the Yard Sale a success. We need you, your donations and your help:

Donate to the Book Sale

Do: We are looking for novels, plays, poetry, non-fiction including memoirs and history, cookbooks, children's books and current travel books. **Don't:** We cannot sell textbooks, CDs or cassettes, dictionaries or manuals, out-of-date travel books, or games and cards. Please drop off your donations between Sept. 4 and Sept. 22 with the doorman at 320 Riverside Drive in sturdy bags

Donate to 'What-a-Bargain'

Do: Contribute jewelry, toys, bric-a-brac, ceramics/pottery, musical instruments, bicycles, complete games and puzzles. **Don't:** We cannot accept clothing, heavily used pots and pans, outdated elec-

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Contributors to the September Issue:

Stephen Helman, Mary Koval, Joyce Mann, Hanna Rubin (editor), Gilbert Tauber, Sharon Waskow. Newsletter designer: Brian Hajjar. Advertising: Jennifer Jones.

W 104 ST BLOCK ASSN FINANCIAL REPORT

2ND QUARTER FINANCIALS - 2025

Opening Balance.....	\$29,246.30
Income	\$4,525.96
Dues	\$3,086.53
Merchandise	\$192.28
Fundraiser	\$6,246.87
Yard Sale Tables	\$3,027.55
Contributions	\$10.00
Credits/Other	\$825.00
Expenses	\$23,864.72
Guard Service	\$9,496.92
Printing Costs.....	\$400
Beautification.....	\$11,000.17
Merchandise	\$225.00
Activities.....	\$256.00
Yard Sale-Permits	\$25.00
Operating Exp/Acct.....	\$861.17
Closing Balance.....	\$18,080.09



Blooming in the West 104th Street Garden

A bee at work in the garden at the foot of the block. The garden is among the many local treasures celebrated by Gil Tauber in his neighborhood picks (see page 1.)

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Toasting Martin Brothers 40th Anniversary

A family business celebrates generations in the neighborhood.

By Joyce Mann

Martin Brothers Wine and Spirits has been a local favorite for more than 40 years. And a Martin Brothers store has stood on the corner of Broadway and 107th Street even longer. In the 1970s, Cuban immigrant brothers Orlirio and Roberto Martin opened “Las Antillas” “Food Market, a specialty Latin food store, on that corner. Rooted in family, culture and community, their store quickly became a go-to spot for the eclectic neighborhood.

In 1985, however, running a neighborhood food store was “a 16 hour a day, 7 day a week” endeavor, recalls Orlirio’s daughter Elizabeth Martin, who now runs the business. So the brothers decided to switch gears and open as a wine & spirits store in order to spend more time with family. Liz recalled that in those days liquor stores were required to close on Sundays, and if the brothers took turns they got two full days off a week, a real luxury Liz notes.

By 2000, Michael Martin, Orlirio’s son, was an integral part of the decision to transform the mom and pop liquor store into a specialty store for “Fine Wines and Spirits.” Because he had grown up in the store Michael had established contacts with distributors and vendors and potential local clientele.

However the store’s two founders both died within a few years of the store’s



Left: Liz Martin; right: the store has a lineup of special events

Martin Brothers upcoming events:
September 13th - 40th Anniversary Celebration
November 8th - Fall Tasting
December 13th - Holiday Tasting
Feb 7th 2026- Valentine’s Day Tasting

rebranding, and Elizabeth Martin, Michael’s sister and the current owner, promised her father Orlirio on his deathbed that she would keep his beloved business alive. In 2008, after Michael left the business, Liz immersed herself in the art of wine and earned an advanced certificate of merit from the International Wine School and the Sommelier Society of America.

Despite an encyclopedic knowledge of wines and varietals, she enjoys breaking down the alchemy of wine into easily understandable information so customers will have the best possible experience. When I asked Elizabeth what her idea of an ideal wine was, she answered: “There should be a harmonious balance of its elements: I should feel as if I’m sipping silk”

Liz hopes to continue to educate the neighborhood with curated tastings, events and informed service. She is also the co-founder of Illuminated Angels Haven, a nonprofit supporting young girls from disadvantaged homes in the Dominican Republic so they can mature with confidence and resilience. When I asked Liz how she sees the future of Martin Brothers, she said she hoped that at least one of her three children, two daughters and a son, might continue the legacy and usher the store into future generations.

Come Join Us at the Yard Sale

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tronics, items missing any pieces, drinking glasses or mugs. To donate, first contact Joyce Mann by email (joycemann2@gmail.com) or phone (516-238-4609) by Sept. 18 to determine whether your donations are saleable and arrange a dropoff time. Dropoffs will be scheduled between Sept. 4 and Sept. 19.

Donate to the Silent Auction

Do: We would like good condition antiques, collectibles, art works, framed posters and photos, fine jewelry, theater and concert tickets, household gadgets in their original boxes and services (piano lessons, resume reviews, etc.).

Don’t: We do not accept computer equipment, exercise equipment or broken or damaged items. To donate please contact Hanna Rubin via email at Hanna.Rubin@verizon.net between Sept. 4 and Sept. 21.



Donate to the Bake Sale

Share your best treats with your neighbors: cookies, cakes, pies, snacks, fingerfood, and other original creations at the block bake table. Please call Lynn Max at 917 355-7771 or Alex Grannis at 917-576-1750 to let them know what you plan to bring.

Donate Your Time

Do you have an hour? Lend a hand at the Silent Auction, “What-a-Bargain,” BookSale, Bake Sale, or set up and breakdown. Please contact Mary Jo Gennaro at mjgennaro@gmail.com.

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Gil's Greats

continued from page 1.

Boak & Paris, who also designed the Metro Theater on Broadway.

6. Our tree gardens. These plantings (by the Block Association) announce the seasons. Since I walk rather slowly, I have plenty of time to enjoy them on my uphill walks, at least until they succumb to the usual four-legged urban hazards.

7. The former Automat at 104th St. and Broadway. I have fond memories of eating at Automats. But I never ate at this one, which closed before I moved to the neighborhood. This 1930 Art Deco building, recently restored, is one of the last intact Automat buildings to survive in Manhattan. It's best seen in the afternoon when the sun glints off its polychrome terra cotta ornament.

8. The stone face above the entrance to 925 West End Avenue. This Beaux Arts style apartment building dates from 1899. Many buildings of that period are decorated with stone faces, male and female, but this one is especially touching. There is a legend that it depicts a stone carver's lost love. Whatever. I almost always glance at her when I pass by.

9. The brownstones at 102nd and West End. This group, with its "pepper-pot" corner tower, dates from 1893. It's an example of a housing type once common in Manhattan: a corner cluster of individual houses designed to look like a single grand mansion. There are three houses on West End Avenue—Nos. 854, 856 and 858—with a fourth house, fronting on West 102nd St., tucked in behind them.

10. Straus Park. Aside from the touching memorial to Isidore and Ida Straus, who died on the Titanic, this tiny park is a gem of urban landscape architecture. It is an oasis of shade in summer and a welcome patch of green in the colder months. It is beautifully maintained by the Friends of Straus Park. The sculpture is a reminder of more than one tragedy. Its model, Audrey Munson, after a period of youthful success and national celebrity, fell into obscurity and spent the last 65 years of her life in a mental institution, dying at the age of 104.

11. The mosaic at Ben & Jerry's. This corner space was once an outpost of the Riker's chain, known for its sizzling hamburgers and speedy service. It had dozens of locations throughout the city from the 1930s through the 1970s. This colorful abstract mosaic, surrounding a corner pillar, was commissioned by Riker's in 1947 from the ceramic artist Max Spivak (1906-1981). Spivak was a member of the New Deal Federal Artists Project during the Depression and later part of the postwar Abstract Expressionist movement.

12. The upper terrace at Ellington in the Park. Although it has been operated by Ellington's for several years, I can't help thinking of it as the Dog Run Café. Mornings it sells coffee and pastry, mainly to customers at the upper end of a leash. It's a great place for people watching or to observe the antics and variety of man's best friends.



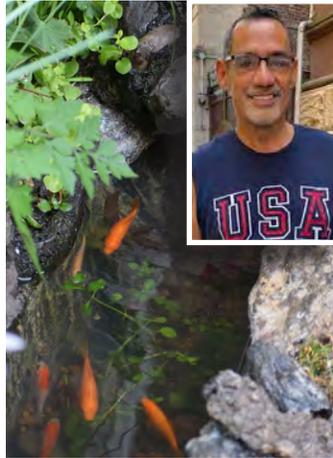
Clockwise from top left: Art deco trim on the 1930 Automat; West 104th St. garden; the 1893 "pepperpot" tower on West 102nd St.; the Automat entrance, now a City MD; ornamental brick and ironwork on 315 Riverside Dr.; the 1899 entrance to 925 West End Ave.; Ellington in the Park's terrace cafe.

A Miniature Oasis Splashes Down on the Block

A tiny koi pond brings a touch of magic to West 104th St.

By Joyce Mann

George Flores, the superintendent at 304 W.104th St. is the creator of the delightful mini koi pond built into the brick flower boxes in front of his brownstone. After several years of depressing scaffolding encasing the building, he saw that his plants were not doing well and decided to try something new and challenging.



Flores and his enchanting handiwork

Goldfish Meet Guppy

Flores began creating the pond, complete with mini waterfall, this past April and just recently finished it. The inspiration for the design, which he created out of rocks and special foam, were the Central Park waterfalls here in the northern section of the park. Early on, a leakage problem developed with the pump, but thanks to the advice of the helpful owners of Petqua pet store and You Tube, he solved the problem.

The pond contains both goldfish and guppies and natural plantings called “water lettuce” for both shade and nutrients. In addition, snails will soon be joining the lineup because they clean up the natural waste in the water. George told me that guppies multiply every 28 days. He has a 10-gallon tank in his apartment, so he has a ready supply of fish when-

ever needed, and in case the heater he has planned for the winter doesn't work out, the fish can always come inside.

Flores has lived in his current apartment for 38 years and is now the super of the 9-unit brownstone as well. His main employment, though, a job he has held for all these 38 years, is as a cook at Valley Lodge on West 108th St., a transitional shelter for senior citizens through the auspices of the West Side Federation for Senior and Supportive Housing. He cooks breakfast, lunch and preps dinner Monday through Friday, plus catering special events and holiday meals there as well. He says he had some training in food services but most of what he knows is from on the job experience. There is a dietician to direct the program, but George orders from vendors he knows will deliver fresh, healthy food since many of the residents have special dietary needs. In the fall, the building will also house a medical clinic for the entire community.

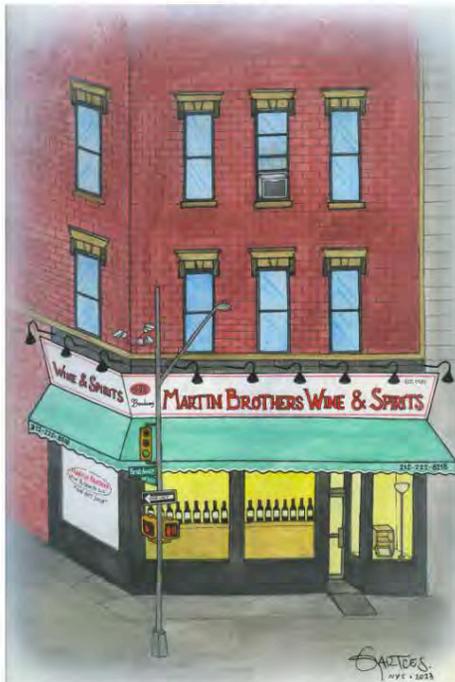
When asked him how he ended up on 104th St. he said at the time the rental for his apartment was only \$700 a month and it was near work. Back then, he says the block looked pretty much the same as it does now, was never dangerous, and always quiet, with friendly people - even more since the advent of the koi pond, which has fast become a neighborhood destination. Flores says people he never knew will now stop by to chat and view the pond. And every night our security guard, “Big L,” tells him “I’m watching them, George, they’re all right.”

Everyone who sees the tiny koi pond is charmed by it and George has graciously invited any families with young children to stop by and feed the fish, and he also invites anyone who would like to have some guppies to take home (there are always more every 28 days he says) with a laugh) can contact him via email at gflores@wsfssh.org.



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Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

Tips on how to go greener

By Sharon Waskow

By now you've likely heard of the 3R's -reduce, reuse, recycle. But why should we, when it's so easy to buy new things online, improve a bad mood with retail therapy and just throw that darn broken item away? Here are some tips from the Environmental Protection Agency on getting started on the path of waste reduction.

The best way to reduce waste is not to create it in the first place. More than 40% of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions are associated with the energy used to produce, process, transport and dispose of our food and goods. Some questions to ask before you shop:

Do you really need it? For something you don't use regularly consider borrowing, renting or sharing.

How green is it? Keep an eye out for products that are designed with the environment in mind. Is it made from recycled materials and can it be recycled?

Can you reuse it? Buy reusable instead of disposable items. Remember to bring your own container for take out drinks and restaurant leftovers. Avoid single use plastic.

Buy used items. Clothes, toys, electronics, books (or use the library) etc.

Reduce your food waste. Buy only what you need, compost food scraps and donate unused food to food banks or shelters.

Assess your current wardrobe, declutter and donate. Have you ever noticed that you tend to wear the same outfits over and over, despite having a closet full of clothes? This phenomenon is known as the 80/20 Wardrobe Rule: we typically wear

only 20% of our clothes regularly, while the other 80% goes unused.

Here are some neighborhood resources that can help with your green goals.

Visit the **West 104th St. Annual Yard Sale** on September 27. Mostly local vendors sell their no longer needed items. Music, a 50/50 raffle and home baked goods make a festive atmosphere at this quintessential reuse event.

Crown Repair at 107th and Broadway fixes vacuum cleaners, electronics and even typewriters!

Carry your reusable containers for takeaway drinks at these local participating shops: <https://www.itseasybeinggreen.org/1235-2/>.

Cut down on non recyclable single use plastic by purchasing a reusable dry cleaner bag at **Friendly Valet Cleaner** on Broadway, between 104th and 105th. **Kay French Cleaners**, 2675 Broadway, will be offering them soon.

Use this vintage map to locate used clothes and other items: <https://nycvintagemap.com/stores/upper-west-side>

Want more options to give away what you don't need/use/want? Check out **Donate NYC** <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/donate/site/home>.

Sharon Waskow is a founder of It's Easy Being Green. Sign up the organization's e-newsletter to keep abreast of environmental information and actions you can take. Subscribe at itseasybeinggreen.org.

Silver Moon Sequel: New Bakery Opens on Broadway

Visit the new No Name Bakery between 101st and 102nd Street on Broadway to sample familiar Silver Moon treats or take home a classic challah bread. The new bakery has taken over some of the beloved neighborhood standby's ovens and recipes and there are familiar faces behind the counter. And some nifty new cupcakes as well!



NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES

BABYSITTING

Experienced and eager block resident looking to babysit days, nights, and weekends. I'm a lifelong Upper West Sider and rising University of Michigan Senior. Looking forward to connecting, and please reach me on my cell at 917-834-3603.

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-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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I am a BAiP member and licensed independent agent with the AARP/United Health Care Medicare plans. I am happy to help you understand Medicare and Medicare plan options (no cost). Please feel free to contact me at (cell) 914-419-5499 or (email) susanmschorphd@gmail.com.

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steve@zirinskyarch.com

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2025 3rd Quarter Dues

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Please deliver to our vice-president, Mary Jo Gennaro, 315 Riverside Dr., Apt. 7C, NY, NY 10025 or leave with one of the following:

M. Mann: 309 W. 104, Apt 3A

G. Waskow: 320 RSD, Apt. 8G

A. Grannis: 895 West End Ave.