A Link From Past to Present
Astor Foundation Grant Provides New Fence for Jefferson Market Garden

A very generous grant from the Vincent Astor Foundation will allow GVSHP and the Village Committee for the Jefferson Market Area to install a new wrought iron and steel fence around the Jefferson Market Garden. The new fence will replace the deteriorating chain link fence which has surrounded the garden for more than two decades. Its design complements the handsome fence installed in 1983 around the Jefferson Market Library (originally the Jefferson Market Courthouse completed in 1877), and is based upon the original 19th century fence found on the 10th Street side of the building. The chain link fence around the back lot of the Library will also be replaced, so that the new fence will link the Garden to the historic Library building itself.

Mrs. Astor and the Astor Foundation have long been active supporters of Village projects. Their involvement with the garden site dates to the 1970s, when the Women’s House of Detention was closed and subsequently demolished. The clearing of the site created an opportunity for a garden, and (continued on page 3)

FROM THE DIRECTOR
Commenting Upon Appropriateness

GVSHP has been as busy as usual these past months, with the Ruth Wittenberg Triangle competition, the Jefferson Market Garden fence project, oral history interviews, Federal rowhouse research, and, of course, our lectures, tours and Preservation Cafes. In addition, we have also been reviewing some of the Certificate of Appropriateness applications made to the Landmarks Preservation Commission for alterations to buildings in the Greenwich Village Historic District. Our members and friends may be interested in an update of C of A applications that we commented upon recently:

Last spring we joined the West 10th and West 11th Street Block Associations, and the Landmarks Committee of CB2, in voicing concern about a proposed ramp at 11 West 10th Street. This noticeable double townhouse, owned for decades by the Ladies Christian Union and known to Villagers as Milbank House, was recently purchased by NYU for the Lilian Vernon Global Faculty Center. To make the building accessible to the disabled, NYU proposed a two-lane “scissors” ramp, leading to an entrance under the stoop, which would have all but eliminated the garden that has occupied the space since long before the 1969 designation of the Historic District. While we agreed that complying with the Americans with Disability Act and providing barrier free access should absolutely be a priority of NYU, we pointed out that the proposed ramp did not meet the appropriateness requirement of the Landmarks Law because it significantly, and in our view detrimentally, altered the appearance of the building. We asked the Landmarks Commission to direct NYU to investigate alternative solutions which would more effectively comply with both the ADA and the Landmarks Law. To illustrate our belief that such a solution could be found, we supplied a drawing of a single lane ramp that was far less intrusive, preserving more than half of the front area for a garden. The unified opinion of the block associations, the Community Board, and GVSHP that this proposal needed to go “back to the drawing board” was acknowledged by the Commission, which agreed with us that other options needed to be considered. NYU accepted the comments made by the community and cooperated with the Commission by considering the use of either a mechanical lift or a one lane ramp. In the final analysis, NYU received (continued on page 2)

Ruth Wittenberg Triangle
Competition Attracts 46 Entries

Village Heritage Day offered an opportunity for GVSHP to exhibit the 46 entries received for the New Visions for Ruth Wittenberg Triangle ideas competition sponsored last spring. The special one-day exhibition, designed by the architect Jonathan Marvel, presented the entries on the chain link fence which surrounds the Jefferson Market Garden, adjacent to the Ruth Wittenberg Triangle. Throughout the exhibition GVSHP asked for comments about the entries from the public. In all, over 350 people expressed their views by affixing orange sticky-dot “votes” to the name tags of their two favorite entries.

Five Special Distinction proposals, which were awarded citations by GVSHP’s jury, were among the entries exhibited. Jury members -- former Landmarks Preservation Commission Chair Laurie Beckelman, designer Mildred Friedman, architect Thomas Hanrahan, and gallery owner Jason McCoy -- reviewed the entries last spring and awarded citations to what they believed to be the most compelling concepts for the site. (continued on page 6)

GVSHP Continues Study
Organizations to Fund Federal Period Rowhouses Research

As part of its ongoing effort to document Federal Period rowhouses in the Village and throughout Lower Manhattan, GVSHP has been awarded a grant from a joint program of the Preservation League of New York State and the New York State Council on the Arts to continue its research. Built between 1785 and 1835, as New York was being transformed into the nation’s metropolis, the rowhouses survive as reminders of Lower Manhattan’s former residential character. Originally numbering in the thousands, approximately 330 rowhouses can still be found in the area bounded by 20th Street and Battery Park.

Many of these modest structures are preserved in National Register Historic Districts and NYC Landmark Historic Districts in neighborhoods such as Greenwich Village and SoHo, but more than 100 of them have yet to be recognized for their historic importance. GVSHP will use its research to nominate many of the buildings for designation on the National Register of Historic Places.

These Federal Rowhouses on Bleecker Street are among the buildings which will be studied. Photo: Susan De Vries 1996.

The grant was presented in a special ceremony in October. From left to right: Susan De Vries, GVSHP Research Associate; Anthony C. Wood, Board member of both the Preservation League and GVSHP; Vicki Weiner, GVSHP Executive Director; Anne Van Ingen, Director of Architecture, Preservation and Planning at NYSCA; and Alexia Lalli, Board member of the Preservation League of New York State. Photo: Lynda Lee Barks for GVSHP 1997.

The Preservation League of New York State/New York State Council on the Arts Grant Program is a partnership of the Preservation League of New York State, a state-wide not-for-profit member-
Resources for Building Research
New York City Municipal Archives

GVSHP frequently receives calls from homeowners, students and neighbors asking for down information about individual Village properties. One of the lesser known tools for documentation is a remarkable collection of photographs at the New York City Municipal Archives. In a project that took from 1939 to 1941, the city had every building in all five boroughs photographed for property tax assessment purposes. This collection of 720,000 images can now be easily accessed at the Archives, and is particularly useful for those who are restoring a facade and need evidence of a building’s physical past.

If you would like to order an 8”x10” print of your building, all you need to do is send $27 to the Municipal Archives, 31 Chambers Street, New York, New York 10007. In a note to the Archives, provide: the street address of the building; the block and lot number, if known; and a brief description, such as “3-story Federal rowhouse.” Enclose a check payable to NYC Department of Records, or cash in an envelope where you would like the photo sent, and allow about three weeks for delivery.

You can also visit the Municipal Archives to view the photographic collection on microfilm. The Archives is located at 31 Chambers Street, at the corner of Centre Street, and is open Mondays through Thursday, 9 a.m.-4:30 p.m., and Fridays from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. If you’d like more information about the collection, or about other kinds of materials kept at the Municipal Archives, call Kenneth Cobb at (212) 788-8858.

UPCOMING EVENTS

CONSERVATION SYMPOSIUM
Top of the House: Issues for Homeowners
Wednesday, December 3, 6:30 p.m.
Salamagundi Club, 47 Fifth Avenue, $15 Guests FREE to GVSHP & Association of Village Homeowners Members.
Moderated by Carl Culbreath, President of Preserve Inc., and sponsored by the Chubb Group of Insurance Companies, this panel discussion will cover topics such as historic preservation, and roof gardens. Expert speakers, including architects, contractors, and conservators, will help identify and solve many difficult conservation problems encountered by homeowners.

FESTIVE HOLIDAY PARTY
With David Garrick Lowell, President of the Beaux Arts Alliance, Thursday, December 11, 6:30 p.m., Church of the Resurrection, 115 East 74th Street, $25 Guests/$30 Members.
This year we venture uptown to celebrate the holidays with the Beaux Arts Alliance at the Church of the Resurrection — designed by James Renwick in 1869, after he completed Grace Church and before he began St. Patrick’s Cathedral. The evening is punctuated by a lecture by noted architectural historian David Lowe, Columns and Spires: An Architectural History of New York’s Grand Religious edifices.

PANEL DISCUSSION
Preserving Urban Main Streets
Monday, January 12, 6:30 p.m., King Juan Carlos of Spain Center, 50 Washington Square South, Guests $15 FREE for Members.
This special panel discussion will focus on how Greenwich Village and other urban neighborhoods may be able to address the physical and financial problems encountered by their local “main streets.” A number of speakers will discuss how certain streets can boost local economy, improve quality of life, and attract the attention of a community. Speakers include Joel Bloom of the National Main Street Center, Jennifer Koller of the New York Public Library, and Ron Malnitz, Manager of the New York City Department of Economic Development.

PRESERVATION CAFE
Bonnie Yochelson, Editor of Greenwich Village Magazine, February 5, 2000, 6:30 p.m., Gus Place, 145 Waverly Place (Cam bar area).

Press in conjunction with the Museum of the City of New York, this beautiful book brings the complete collection of 307 WPA images of Depression-era New York together with an essay on the project’s history and work. WPA field notes kept by Abbott, and updates on what some of the sites look like today. A photo historian and consultant to the Museum, Ms. Yochelson will discuss the work of one of the central WPA photographers.

ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION
Saluting Preservation’s Past: Jefferson Market Library 30th Anniversary
Wednesday, September 11, 6:30 p.m., Jefferson Market Library, Ninth Avenue at 10th Street.

GVSHP invites the Jefferson Market branch of the New York Public Library in celebrating the 30th anniversary of its adaptive reuse as a library. The festivities will include remarks by Anthony Wood, Chairman of the New York Preservation Archive Project, who will discuss the preservation effort which took place in the Jefferson Market Courthouse from demolition. Among those sharing reminiscences of a multi-year, multi-dimensional campaign to save this beloved Village landmark are Giorgio Cavagnari, Margot Gayle, Harold Eideman, and Elaine Tenkel. On this important occasion, GVSHP’s Greenwich Village Preservation Archive and Oral History Project will premier one of the video projects those who took part in the preservation of the Jefferson Market Courthouse. Come to where your memories are on this very special occasion.

FOOD AND THOUGHT
The People & Places of Greenwich Village Feature Series
The Birth of the Beat Generation: Ginsberg, Rebel I, and Hipsters, 1944–1960
Monday, February 23, 6:30 p.m., Montreal’s at MacDougal Street, $15 Guests/$25 Members.

GVSHP’s new Food and Thought series brings an immediate meaning to the term “sensory place” by engaging friends to dine with acclaimed historians in some of the evocative places within Greenwich Village’s culture happened. Over dinner and during a Minetta Tavern, a legendary “beat generation” hang out, author and Beat poet Allen Ginsberg will share his knowledge of the maverick writers Allen Ginsberg, William S. Burroughs, and Jack Kerouac. With the connection between food and literature — those master stylists who expressed rebellion against the conformity of the 1950s and the rising tide of McCarthyism, such as Ginsberg’s Howl, Burroughs’ Naked Lunch, and Kerouac’s On the Road — join us for a dinner at the beats — and feel free to have another.

Please RSVP for upcoming events by calling (212) 788-8858.

The unique character of Greenwich Village is celebrated in the spring of each year during GVSHP’s presentation of the Annual Village Awards. This past June, the Seventh Annual Village Awards honored a number of interesting people, places, and organizations that have significantly contributed to the quality of life in the Village. The 1997 Village Awards were presented to:

Mrs. Brooke Astor and the Vincent Astor Foundation, whose generosity has financed an extraordinary number of Village projects — the latest of which is the wrought iron fence to be erected around the new Jefferson Market Garden.

Zito & Son Bakery, which has been baking its famous bread in coal ovens since 1924 in the same Bleecker Street location. The family tradition has been carried on by three generations of the Zito family.

Church of the Ascension, the first church constructed on Fifth Avenue, was completed in 1844, architecturally renowned. The church is also known for the concerts by its choral group, a wide range of social service programs, and its beautiful rose garden on the corner of Fifth Avenue and 10th Street.

Charthouse Antiques, which opened 35 years ago on the corner of Jane Street and Greenwich Avenue, is a little antiquite shop full of lovely 18th and 19th century china and glass. The proprietor, James Ray, is a fine storyteller of Village lore.

The Caring Community was founded in 1974 to serve the elderly and chronically homebound of Greenwich Village. Today, more than 700 volunteers provide a wide range of services, including home visits, home repairs, educational classes, and hot meals (over 350 served daily) in three senior centers in Greenwich Village.

Chez Brigitte, the tiny Greenwich village restaurant with 11 seats, opened in 1958. The current chef still cooks from the original owner’s French recipes, which may explain why the restaurant is a destination for Village.

The Greenwich Village Girls Basketball League was founded two years ago to encourage girls aged 9-13 to play basketball on weekends. The League now has 80 players divided into 8 teams, coached by neighborhood volunteers and sponsored by Village businesses.

The Front Street Award was presented to 71 Jane Street, a 1846 Greek Revival house restored by its owners Jo and Bill Hamilton. When the project of replacing the long-gone cast iron porch was successfully completed, the Hamiltons were astonished to receive notice from the City saying that the restored porch was not up to code. The new porch required the posting of a bond as well as rental payment for the use of the sidewalk underneath. With diligence and tenacity, the Hamiltons worked with the Landmarks Preservation Commission and GVSHP to resolve this issue.

The Awards include the donation of books, given in the name of each recipient, to the Jefferson Market Library.

New Fence... (continued from page 1) community leaders and activists in Greenwich Village formed the Village Committee for the Jefferson Market Area. A grant from the Astor Foundation in 1974 enabled the Committee to fulfill its dream to establish a garden on the vacant site, which had been a garbage truck parking lot, on the corner of the Department of Parks. The Astor Foundation’s important support also helped to attract additional funds to continue the garden’s maintenance.

For the past twenty years, the garden has been one of the most cherished features of the Greenwich Village Historic District. Each year, thousands of local residents and tourists stroll through the garden and marvel at its horticultural treasures. The generosity of Mrs. Vincent Astor ensures that the lovely spaces are in the same neighborhood as the GVSHP’s Nestor of Greenwich Village.

Seventh Annual Village Awards Celebrating the Specialties of Greenwich Village

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BULLETIN BOARD

FILM
Washington Square, the much-anticipated new film, was presented at the New York Film Festival at Lincoln Center this fall. The classic novel by Henry James has been re-explored by Filmaker Agnieszka Holland, with a cast that includes Jennifer Jason Leigh, Albert Finney, and Maggie Smith. The film opened at the Paris and Angelika Theaters in Manhattan, and will be seen in major theaters throughout the country later this fall.

PUBLICATIONS
Berinice Abbott: Changing New York, edited by Bonnie Yochelson and published in conjunction with the Museum of the City of New York, is a definitive study of Abbott’s WPA-funded New York City photo project of 1935-36. With 107 images presented together for the first time, and with Abbott’s newly-accredited WPA field notes, this publication offers rare insight into the life and work of one of this century’s greatest photographers. Bonnie Yochelson will be the GVSHP’s Preservation Cafe speaker in January. See the Events Calendar for details.

CAST FROM ARCHITECTURE IN AMERICA: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF JAMES BORGANUS. By Margaret Gayle and Carol Gayle, is expected to reach bookstores in January. The Gayles explore the life and work of the pioneer of American cast-iron architecture, John Bogodius, a passionate advocate for iron's strength, economy, suitability for ornamentation, and fire resistance. Margaret Gayle, the nationally known authority on cast-iron architecture, has been a passionate advocate herself--her work as a preservationist was central to the saving of Jefferson Market Courthouse, as well as the Soho Cast-Iron Historic District.

SYMPOSIUM
To celebrate the 100th anniversary of the publication of Edwin Wharton and Ogden Codman’s The Decoration of Houses, the Beaux Arts Alliance will present a panel discussion on Monday, December 1, 1997 at 6:30pm. Speakers will include H. Stafford Bryant Jr., co-editor of the new edition of the book, Einar Wright, biographer of Edwin Wharton, and Beaux Arts Alliance President David Garnett Laws. For reservations and information, call 212-639-9120.

SPECIAL N.Y.U. COURSE
Preserving Greenwich Village: Then and Now will be taught by GVSHP’s Executive Director Vicki Weiner and Trustee Anthony C. Wood in the Metropolitan Studies division of New York University’s School of Continuing Education. In eight Wednesday evening sessions, from February 4th to April 1st, the course will offer a detailed presentation of the citizen advocacy which preserved a nationally important Historic District and which continues to tackle preservation issues today. Expert guest speakers will relate first-hand knowledge of the Village’s history, sharing recollections of the preservation battles which have worked to protect the community for nearly 50 years. For information about registering for the course (catalog number X159600), call the School of Continuing Education office at (212) 998-7173.

GVSHP NEWS
The Stoop: A Brief History
The origin of the stoop is perhaps one of New York’s most frequently repeated bits of architectural lore. Attributed to the Dutch, the original stoops of the Netherlands were designed to keep the ever-encroaching flood waters at bay. Although the threat of flooding in early New York was also, the use of the stoop did provide another practical benefit. The strict grid laid over the city with the adoption of the Commissioners’ Plan dictated blocks unbrokeen by service alleys. In the early nineteenth century, the increase in rowhouse construction created entire blocks of buildings without rear access. The elevation of the first floor by the use of the stoop made it possible for a convenient cellar entrance to be created directly below. This secondary entrance could then be used by servants while the more ceremonial entrance was reserved for family and guests. Throughout the nineteenth century, the elaborately high stoop, with its ornamental ironwork and intricately carved door surround, was designed to impress the visitor with the owner’s wealth and good taste.

The removal of this integral element in rowhouse design, which detracts from the historic appearance of the streetscape, has been a much common occurrence. Fortunately, Greenwich Village is blessed with a good number of preservation-minded homeowners who wish to replace the stoops of their rowhouses. GVSHP’s “stoop swap award” acknowledges these private citizens who spend their own time and resources on labor intensive projects which enhance not just their building, but the whole block and our entire community.

Returning A Stoop: Good News/ Bad News
Several of our members who went to the trouble and expense of replacing their stoops, like 1997 Front Stoop awardees Jo and Bill Hamilton, received some bad news courtesy of the NYC Department of Transportation. As the Hamiltons learned, when a sidewalk once occupied by a stoop is outside the homeowner’s property line, it belongs to the city. Until recently, DOT required that anyone who replaced a stoop (continued on page 6)

Rush Wittenberg Triangle...
(continued from page 1)
The five Special Distinction Citation award winners are: Sarah Brougham, Architect; John Roundel, Urban Designer, of Hoboken, NJ; Jerry Andrew Ferminius of Brooklyn, NY; Sue Lalouette & Max Heim of Studio L'Image in NYC; Isabella Mercini, a student at Parsons School of Design in NYC; and Richard Sammons, Registered Architect, of NYC. A lottery will be held to determine which of the five will receive the prize of round-trip airfare to Barcelona, Spain. The competition asked for ideas which would transform the triangle at Greenwich Avenue, Sixth Avenue, and Christopher Street into a community centerpiece. The public was invited to participate, and GVSHP was gratified to receive 46 entries from architects, designers, students, and community members, who presented a wide range of proposals for redesigning this prominent intersection, which is located just south of the Jefferson Market Library. A lengthy public exhibition of entries is currently being planned for 1998. The future exhibition will be the basis for public programs and dialogue about the design needs of this important urban space located at the heart of the Greenwich Village Historic District. GVSHP hopes it will inspire the Village community to consider a new design for the Rush Wittenberg Triangle.

New Vision for the Rush Wittenberg Triangle and the September 19th exhibition were funded by generous grants from the Vincent Astor Foundation. Involved support was also received from the Van Alen Institute: Projects in Public Architecture.