



**NEIGHBORHOOD
HISTORY GROUP**

BLOOMINGDALE BULLETIN

Discovering, preserving, and sharing our history

Issue No. 11

Summer 2023

Summer in Bloomingdale!

Walking tours, free history programs, library exhibits, art installation – it's a lively summer in Bloomingdale! Welcome to the latest edition of Bloomingdale Bulletin, with news of programs, projects, and a view into the history of the Upper West Side between 96th and 110th streets and Central Park to the Hudson River. The Bloomingdale Neighborhood History Group (BNHG) welcomes your feedback, comments, and ideas [here](#).

Upcoming Programs

Free Walking Tours

Jim Mackin

Wednesday, July 26 at 6:00 pm

Wednesday, August 23 at 6:00 pm

Sunday, September 17 at 2:00 pm

Meet at the south end of Straus Park, Broadway and 106th Street



Jim Mackin

Good weather makes a guided walk with Jim Mackin irresistible. Author of the popular [Notable New Yorkers of Manhattan's Upper West Side](#), Jim's tours convey wonderful nuggets about historical Bloomingdale's architectural wonders and fascinating people. His tours vary from one to the next and last one to two hours. Jim is also the founder of [Weekday Walks](#), which offers tours on select Wednesdays, covering a different part of the city each time.

Building the Metropolis

Alexander Wood

Wednesday, September 27, 6:30 pm

Free zoom presentation. Check [here](#) for the link.



Ninth Avenue El

In the late nineteenth century, New York's rapid growth created a new urban landscape, turned construction into big business, and revitalized the building trades.

Alexander Wood will cover the technological changes that transformed construction, the

importance of the building industry to the city's economy, and the role played by contractors and construction workers in politics at the time.



Alexander Wood

Alexander Wood is an architectural and urban historian. He received his Ph.D. from Columbia University and his B. Arch. from Cooper Union. In 2021-22 he was the Helen and Robert Appel Fellow in History and Technology at the New-York Historical Society.

New in the Neighborhood

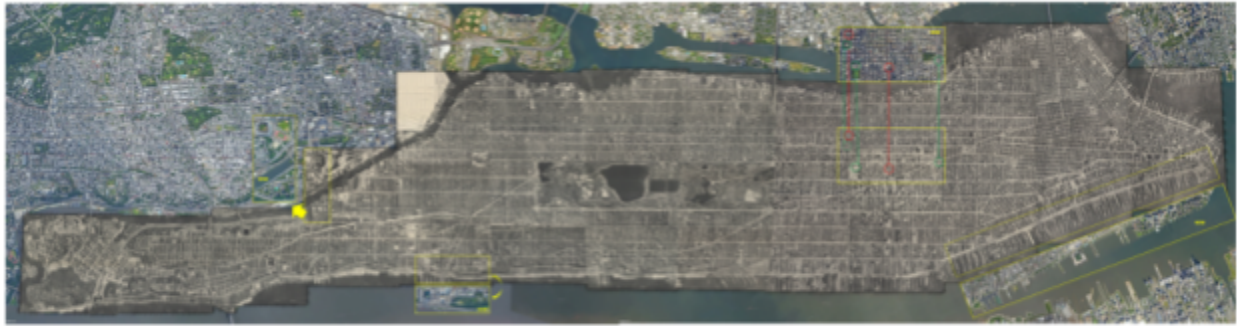
BNHG has created four exciting new installations in the Bloomingdale neighborhood.

New Library Exhibit: Bloomingdale and Manhattan in 1927

A project by Rob Garber

Hours: Mon-Tue 10am-7pm | Wed-Thu 11am-7pm | Fri-Sat 10am-5pm

A new exhibit is on display for three months at the Bloomingdale Library, West 100th Street between Amsterdam and Columbus Avenues (across from the 24th precinct station house)



Photograph photomosaic

One of the oldest sets of aerial photographs of Manhattan is the centerpiece of an exhibition at the Bloomingdale Library, on view from June through August.

The photomosaic, six feet in length, shows an island that is both familiar and different from today's city. The exhibit also features a challenge for visitors to the library: six unlabeled closeups from 1927 photographs that viewers can use to test their neighborhood knowledge.

Use of library space by the Bloomingdale Neighborhood History Group for this exhibit does not indicate endorsement by The New York Public Library.

Outdoor Exhibit Salutes Neighborhood Residents

It's well worth a walk to Booker T. Washington Middle School—108th Street between Amsterdam and Columbus Avenues—because something wonderful is happening there. As of the end of June, you can enjoy a new exhibit of eight art medallions that have been installed on the fences at the school sports field, across from Anibal Aviles playground.

They were designed by local artist Beatrice Coron and depict local luminaries from the Bloomingdale neighborhood. The project is a collaboration with the Columbus-Amsterdam Business Improvement District (BID).

The exhibit went up at the end of June and will be in place until the end of September 2023. This is the first of a set of three such exhibits planned for various locations over the next year.



Medallions

The subjects of this first set of medallions portray: John Coltrane, musician; Isamu Noguchi, artist; Jose Feliciano, musician; Mario Bauza, musician; Elizabeth Acevedo, poet; Constance Baker Motley, judge; Billy Strayhorn, composer; Abbey Lincoln, vocalist.

Each individual medallion measures 18” in diameter and weighs approximately one-and-a-half pounds. They are constructed of two pieces of stainless steel: one silver layer, backing one black layer.

Béatrice Coron studied art at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts of Lyon, and Mandarin Chinese at the Université of Lyon III, and her oeuvre includes illustration, book arts, fine art, and public art.

She cuts her characteristic silhouette designs in paper and Tyvek. She also creates works in stone, glass, metal, rubber, stained glass, and digital media. Coron is a visual storyteller.

She sees her work as stories that “are about identities and transformations or how our changes are inherent to a learning process: physically, spiritually or metaphorically.”

Her work has been purchased by major museum collections, such as the Metropolitan Museum, The Walker Art Center, and The Getty. Her public art can be seen in subways, airports, and sports facilities, among other locations.

Straus Park Poster



Strauss Park Poster

In collaboration with the Friends of Straus Park, BNHG has created a poster titled *The Story of Straus Park*. It relates information about the history of the creation of the park; the Straus family; the Memory sculpture in the park; and the history of the neighborhood.

The poster was made by BNHG planning group member Rob Garber. You’ll find it in the display case on the east side of the park, adjacent to Broadway. Take a look!

New History Kiosk



97th Street History Kiosk

A new Neighborhood History Kiosk is installed at Columbus Avenue and West 97th Street, in the tree bed near Whole Foods, a busy spot in the Bloomingdale neighborhood. It includes a map with history and information about the surrounding local area. It merits a look when you're nearby.

The kiosk project is a collaboration between the Columbus-Amsterdam Business Improvement District (BID) and the Bloomingdale Neighborhood History Group. This new installation matches the one installed some time ago at Amsterdam Avenue and West 103rd Street, near the entrance to the youth hostel.

Support Local History

The work of the Bloomingdale Neighborhood History Group reaches you through our free programs, website, walking tours, and resources such as our Building Database and Library Collection. Donations to our work are through a Go Fund Me site managed by the Columbus-Amsterdam Business Improvement District, making your gift fully tax-deductible. Visit our website [Donation Page](#) to learn more. Thank you!

Past Programs

The Maps That Made Manhattan: The History and Role of the Manhattan Topographical Bureau

Hector Rivera

Thursday, April 20, 2023



Hector Rivera

In crowded Manhattan, where property values can hinge on a fraction of an inch, everything that gets built must be precisely located—horizontally and vertically—in relation to the borough's legally adopted street system.

That's the challenge assumed by Hector Rivera, Topographical Manager at the Manhattan Borough



Randel Map Detail

President's Office. His talk about how he assures the integrity of that system was illustrated with stories about the history of the Manhattan Topographical Bureau and its archive of official maps, some dating to the 1600s. You can see a recording of the program on our [website](#).

The Paterno Buildings in Bloomingdale

Carla Paterno Golden
Thursday, May 11, 2023



Carla Paterno Golden

A good 164 buildings in Manhattan exist thanks to the Paterno Family, 1880 immigrants from Italy. Most of those buildings are apartment houses and 32 of them are in Bloomingdale alone.

Carla Golden, great-granddaughter of Dr. Charles V. Paterno, shared the stories behind the buildings and told the inspiring story about one of Manhattan's most prolific building families. She started researching her family's architectural legacy three years ago and has, for the first time ever, cataloged, researched, and photographed all the known Paterno buildings. You'll come

away eager to go for an architectural stroll through the neighborhood. You can see a recording of the program on our [website](#).

Remembering Cal Jones, 1930-2023

With the greatest fondness and respect, BNHG marks the death of Celedonia “Cal” Jones on April 15, 2023, concluding 93 years brimming with dedication and contributions to our knowledge and understanding of New York City’s history and its communities.



Cal Jones with Renell Torain

Born and raised in Central Harlem, he was a life-long New Yorker and a career civil servant. He served as the Manhattan Borough Historian for three Borough Presidents (Ruth Messenger, Virginia Fields, and Scott Stringer) spanning nearly a decade, and since 2005 remained Manhattan Borough Historian Emeritus.

During and after his service, he was a cheerleader, supporter, and inspiration for us and our work, spreading his appreciation for the importance, and fun, of exploring neighborhood histories.

Cal was the second recipient of the BNHG Torain Award, in September 2019. The award is named for Jim Torain of the West 98-99th Street Old Community that lived in the buildings replaced by Park West Village in the late 1950s in the urban renewal program forwarded by Robert Moses. Cal worked in the NYC Comptroller’s office during the financial scandal that erupted around the building of Park West Village.

His work made an important contribution to the better governance of the entire city. Jim Torain and Cal were friends and Cal was a longtime friend and colleague to many of us at BNHG, formerly Park West Neighborhood History Group.



Cal Jones receiving the Torain Award from Dr. Rob Snyder

He last gave a history program for BNHG on February 13, 2020, about the history of the Andrew Williams family, who lived in Seneca Village during 1825 to 1857. His work discovering and sharing the history of Seneca Village, a community displaced when the land was incorporated into Central Park, was a major contribution to Manhattan historiography. The BNHG files, housed at the Bloomingdale Library, have considerable information on his work and are open to the public.

His legacy and our memories of him are precious.

Winifred Armstrong is honored with a “Woman of Distinction” Award

Winifred Armstrong was celebrated as a “Woman of Distinction” for District 47 of the NY State Senate in a ceremony on May 16, 2023, in Albany. She was nominated for the District by State Senator Brad Holyman-Sigal.



Winifred is a founder of our [Bloomingdale Neighborhood History Group](#) (BNHG), formerly known as Park West Neighborhood History Group. It is but one of a striking array of contributions. Her 70-year career as a scholar and activist has

included service on many levels of community life: on the global stage, she worked with Senator John F. Kennedy on the African continent; and later, with a local focus, she served as president of the Park West Village Tenants Association (PWVTA) on the Upper West Side.

We at BNHG are proud of Win and delighted that her extraordinary talents and the richness of her life's work and accomplishments are being celebrated in this way.

Promotor of Africa's Independence

Winifred began her career working to promote Africa's independence and prosperity. After graduating with a liberal arts degree from Swarthmore College in 1951 (see their profile of Win's insights about archiving [here](#)), she traveled extensively in Africa before serving as Senator Kennedy's speechwriter and advisor on the region. The records of her work in Africa are

stored at the Kennedy Library in Boston (view the collection [here](#)) and the NY Public Library's Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in Harlem. Later in her career, she continued her investment in the continent through Columbia's Institute of African Studies, and worked with other organizations.

Upper West Side Activist

Win settled down on the Upper West Side in the late 1960s, where she worked for decades as an economist on climate change, and as a tenant activist. She was a member of Manhattan Community Board 7 as well as an active leader of the PWVTA starting in the 1980s. Her efforts contributed to New York State legislative and policy changes that benefited thousands of Park West Village residents, and tenants throughout the City and State.

Local Historian

A third pillar of Winifred's career is archiving history. As a local historian, she co-founded the BNHG in 2000. BNHG promotes research and education about the history of the Bloomingdale neighborhood, has amassed one of New York City's most extensive collections of neighborhood history at NYPL's Bloomingdale Library, organizes free walking tours and public presentations, and maintains a blog and a website. Win also collected the PWVTA archives, held at NYU's Tamiment Library, which hosted an exhibit on tenants and housing policy that she helped organize. She is currently writing a history of BNHG.

"Each Individual Matters"

Throughout her work, Winifred says she continually strives to show New Yorkers that they collectively are the "inheritors, interpreters, and creators of our history." In all her roles, she is driven by the conviction that the individual wields profound influence. In her words, "Whether it's dealing with Kennedy on international policy or composting in your building, you matter."

The Woman of Distinction Award

Every year the New York State Senate honors a select group of outstanding people who enrich their communities and strengthen the state through the "Women of Distinction" Award. The 2023 Women of Distinction award recognizes and honors New York women who have been local, statewide, and national leaders and highlights the accomplishments of women who have helped move our society forward to build a stronger and fairer New York State.

Place Names in Bloomingdale: Tribute to PS 84 Educators

PS84 Lillian Weber School, at 32 West 92nd Street, is a NYC elementary school serving pre-K through 5th grade. The names of three educators associated with PS84 are found in the neighborhood.

PS84 Lillian Weber School

The school itself is named for Lillian Dropkin Weber (1917-1994), an educator known for innovative work in early childhood education. Working with public schools in NYC, Weber organized a movement to adopt an “open corridor” model that shifted from teacher-centered classrooms to classrooms with students of different grades and abilities clustered around a corridor that provided a common space.

Born in Brooklyn, Weber was a 1938 University of Virginia graduate, held a 1959 master’s degree from Bank Street College of Education, joined the University of London School of Education in 1966, and became a professor at City College in 1967, where she became emeritus in 1987.



PS 84

In 1970, she received a Ford Foundation grant to develop an advisory training program, resulting in the creation of the Workshop Center for Open Education at City College in 1972, which provided resources to students, advisors, and teachers to move to the open

corridor approach. The Center also sponsored a Summer Institute on Open Education to rethink approaches to teaching and learning.

Weber helped establish City College’s elementary education department for the study of early childhood learning and she continued working to improve public education up until her death in 1994. Her papers are housed at the [Bank Street College Archives](#) in New York.

Sidney Morison Way

West 92nd Street at Columbus Avenue, southeast corner, is named Public School 84 Sidney Morison Way, for Sidney Morison (1931-2009), long-time principal of PS 84 Lillian Weber School. The school is located on the street that bears his name.



Sidney Morison Street Sign

Morison, a native of the Bronx, was a 1963 Columbia University graduate and did post-graduate work at Harvard. He joined the New York City school system in the 1950s as a junior high math teacher. He then rose through the ranks of District 3 to become the school principal of PS 84. He served as principal there for 26 years, from 1969 to 1995, winning awards for his work. Morison retired from the Department of Education in 1995 and went on to be a professor at City College, Bank Street College, and Barnard College, and an education consultant. The street naming took place in 2011.

John L. Nelson Way

Another educator at PS 84 Lillian Weber School, John L. Nelson, has a sign at the northeast corner of Columbus Avenue and West 91st Street. Mr. Nelson (1947-2015) managed school safety at PS 84 on West 92nd Street, for 34 years.

More than a school official, he served as a father figure and mentor for students. He spent most afternoons, evenings, and weekends at the Sol Bloom Playground next door to the school, where he informally coached the kids in sports, promoted good sportsmanship, and generally helped keep neighborhood children out of trouble. It was his practice to go to the school at 7:00 am to provide supervision for children dropped off by working parents, without compensation for the extra time.



John Nelson Street Sign

For two years following his retirement, he continued to volunteer at the school. His dedication to the school and its students made a lasting impact on all the young people he worked with and led to his being honored with the street naming in 2016.

Honoring BNHG Founder, Hedda Fields

On April 7, 2023, family and friends gathered near a bench in Central Park at 97th Street and Central Park West to remember and honor a wonderful neighbor, Hedda Fields. The Bloomingdale Neighborhood History Group remembers Hedda as one of its most stalwart members.



Hedda Fields' Central Park Bench Plaque

Hedda lived at 400 Central Park West and was instrumental in the founding of our history group, known in its early years as the Park West Neighborhood History Group. She worked on the original event, created when someone asked, “What is the history of Park West Village?” Soon the founders were researching and presenting that history, and then expanded beyond Park West Village (PWV) to our larger Bloomingdale neighborhood.

Soon after, the new history group engaged with Jim Torain and the “Old Community,” who lived in the buildings from 97th to 100th Street before they were removed for PWV’s development. Hedda was there to help make this uncommon connection. In a city that prides itself on tearing down the old and replacing it with the new, it’s unusual to have the people in the old buildings establishing contact with the people in the new buildings. This takes people with Hedda’s level of community spirit.



Hedda Fields (plaid jacket) at the Old Community Dinner 2012

Hedda's granddaughter, Alissa Cherry, is staying in touch with the Bloomingdale Neighborhood History Group. She made a presentation in May 2021, on the soundscapes of New York City, including our own Bloomingdale neighborhood.

Sprucing Up the “Old Community”

By Susan E Fridie
BNHG Volunteer

The largest single component of the [Bloomingdale Neighborhood History Group Library Collection](#) is its collection of materials about the “Old Community.” The buildings of this unique enclave within Bloomingdale disappeared in the 1950s but its residents maintained their sense of community through the following decades. The Old Community file has also flourished over the years, to the point where it grew unwieldy. So now, we have undertaken some weeding and pruning.

After a thorough going-over, the single Old Community file has been subdivided into eras:

Origin of the Old Community – Around 1905, Bloomingdale was a lightly populated area, practically a suburb of the *real* New York City further downtown.



1902 map of W 100th Street, Central Park West, W 96th Street, Columbus Avenue, inclusive of the Old Community.

Credit: NY Public Library

An African American named Phillip Patton bought a building on West 99th Street, between Central Park West and 9th Avenue (now, Columbus Avenue). He immediately started renting the empty apartments to black tenants. Surrounding white tenants started leaving at once, and so he was able to buy additional buildings at good prices. Thus, a new community was born within the surrounding area.

Thriving Neighborhood – By 1910, nearly the entire block housed “Colored” tenants and the trend was spreading to West 98th Street, too. (It never spread any further.) Churches, a few stores, and a small restaurant served the residents. The close-knit “island” community had scout troops, church picnics, sports teams, weddings, and funerals. Families lived here for generations. Many of the youngsters found marriage partners in the not-yet-old community.

Manhattantown Demolition – In the 1950s, postwar prosperity led to federal legislation for “urban renewal.” The

Government would give tax breaks to private developers to clear the “slums” and build middle-class housing. The 98th-99th Street area and several surrounding blocks were seized via eminent domain laws and all the residents were evicted. Years of political infighting, financial scandals, public protests, and general uproar ensued, before the new buildings, originally called Manhattantown, now known as Park West Village, opened in 1960 and 1961.

Survival – Though scattered to Harlem, the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Queens, the former residents of 98th and 99th Streets managed to maintain a sense of community for half a century after they were forced to leave. There were annual dinners and occasional special events. Christmas cards and photos were exchanged. In African-American social circles across the country, it wasn't unusual to see two strangers excited to discover they both had roots in the Old Community.

There are two additional sub-categories in the file:

Photographs – An assortment of photos of people and places on 98th and 99th Streets, from all eras.

Notable people – Brief profiles of musicians, historians, soldiers, students, dancers, ministers, and others who lived in the Community. The restaurant mentioned above belonged to the mother of the great jazz singer, Billie Holiday.

Note: Park West Village has its own file within the BNHG collection. Four of the seven buildings in this complex, spanning West 97th to West 100th Streets on Central Park West and Columbus Avenue, occupy the land where the Old Community once stood.

Related: *The Tragedy of Urban Renewal: The destruction and survival of a New York City neighborhood*, a six-and-a-half-minute video on YouTube (<https://youtu.be/mWGwsA1V2r4>).

An Upper West Side Notable

From [Notable New Yorkers of Manhattan's Upper West Side](#)

By Jim Mackin, Fordham University Press

Henry "Juggy" Murray (ca. 1922 - 2005)

Record Producer

The Old Community, West 98th and 99th Streets, between Central Park West and Columbus Avenue

Murray co-founded Sue Records, known as "The Sound of Soul," with his partner Bobby Robinson in 1957. The name Sue comes from Murray's wife and daughter.

Bobby Robinson ran a fabled record store in Harlem when not helping to launch the careers of Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five, or Gladys Knight and the Pips, or producing the giant hit "Kansas City" by Wilbert Harrison.



Henry "Juggy" Murray

Murray was born in South Carolina, came to New York as a youngster, and produced records in New York and California. He was called "Juggy" because he often filled his grandfather's jug with liquor. He is interviewed in the 1973 documentary movie, *Jimi Hendrix*.

The Sue label produced a few hit records, such as "Fool in Love" recorded by Ike and Tina Turner. Another hit was "Itchy Twitchy Feeling" by Bobby Hendricks – the legendary group, the Coasters, provided cameo back-up on the song.

Bobby Hendricks had been a member of another legendary group, the Drifters, where he sang lead on "Drip Drop," which Dion made into a hit again a few years later. Another Sue Records hit was "Mockingbird" by Inez and Charlie Foxx. The version recorded years later by Carly Simon and James Taylor is more widely known.

Recently Noted

From time to time we come across published items of historical interest to the Bloomingdale neighborhood, and we thought we'd share them with you. Here are two.

The Metro Diner

2641 Broadway at 100th Street

[More Than Coffee: New York's Vanishing Diner Culture](#)

By George Blecher

The New York Times

November 23, 2016

We've unearthed a fond history of the Metro Diner in a 2016 article about New York diners published in *The New York Times* (link above). Many things have changed since 2016, especially during the past few years of the Covid Era – but this well-known Bloomingdale diner is not one of them.

The article notes that the Metro is housed in one of a very small number of wood-frame buildings that still exist in Manhattan. It was built in 1871 and became a restaurant and saloon at the end of that century. (There's a fun connection to Mae West.) During its life, the space was also used as a milliner's shop, a tearoom, and home base for a theater company. The Metro opened as a diner in 1989.

Blecher also describes the immigrant stories of the people who have historically owned and worked in NYC diners, noting the predominance of Greek owners in a growth spurt that started at the end of World War II.

The Soldiers and Sailors Monument

Riverside Drive at 89th Street

[The long search for a site to build Manhattan's most glorious war memorial](#)

Ephemeral New York

May 15, 2023

Here's a vivid and wonderfully illustrated item in *Ephemeral New York* about the long effort to find a site suited for this iconic New York City monument. The lengthy search began with an 1893 decision to create a memorial for veterans of the War Between the States. Finally, at the end of 1899, agreement was reached to locate it at Riverside Drive and 89th Street. Ground was broken in 1900 and on Decoration Day 1902 the monument was dedicated in a daylong ceremony. Today the Soldiers and Sailors Monument honors veterans of all wars.

The Bloomingdale Neighborhood History Group promotes research and education about the history of the Bloomingdale neighborhood, and we are available as a resource. We share our findings through free public programs, walking tours, workshops, publications, a blog, our website www.upperwestsidehistory.org, and a Neighborhood History Collection of materials housed at the Bloomingdale Branch of the New York Public Library, 150 West 100th Street.