



**NEIGHBORHOOD
HISTORY GROUP**

BLOOMINGDALE BULLETIN

Discovering, preserving, and sharing our history

Issue No. 6

Spring 2022

Welcome!

Happy Spring in Bloomingdale! Our Spring newsletter includes our latest programs and projects as we delve into the history of our Upper Westside neighborhood from 96th to 110th Street, from Central Park to the Hudson River. The Bloomingdale Neighborhood History Group welcomes your feedback, which you can send to us [here](#).

Upcoming Programs

Flowering Trees in Bloomingdale

Margaret Bracken, Riverside Park Conservancy

Wednesday, April 27, 2022



Floribunda crab apple tree

Every visitor to Riverside Park knows the springtime joy of seeing the crabapple and cherry trees blossom. Did you ever wonder how they got there? Where they came from? How old they are?

Join us to hear Margaret Bracken, Riverside Park Landscape Architect, talk about their history and about the many other flowering

trees in Bloomingdale, including the story from early in the last century about the cherry trees in nearby Sakura Park. This will be a free zoom presentation. Check our website www.upperwestsidehistory.org for the link.

Free Walking Tours

Jim Mackin, NYC Historian

Wednesday, May 4, 6:00 pm

Wednesday, June 1, 6:00 pm

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

The popular walking tours of historic Bloomingdale, led by renowned local historian Jim Mackin, are treasured by neighborhood locals and visitors alike. Jim is not your everyday tour guide – he’s a NYC historian and author of the recently released book, [Notable New Yorkers of Manhattan’s Upper West Side](#). He gives highlights about the neighborhood’s historic buildings, favorite trees, significant events, and an endless store of tidbits about notable residents from all walks of life. Walks vary from month to month.

Jim is the founder of [Weekday Walks](#), which offers tours on Wednesday mornings, covering a different part of the city each time. Coming up in June are walks around Marcus Garvey Park and City Hall Park.



Jim Mackin

Central Park’s Harlem Meer and Lasker Pool: Past and Future

Lane Addonizio, Vice President for Planning, Central Park Conservancy

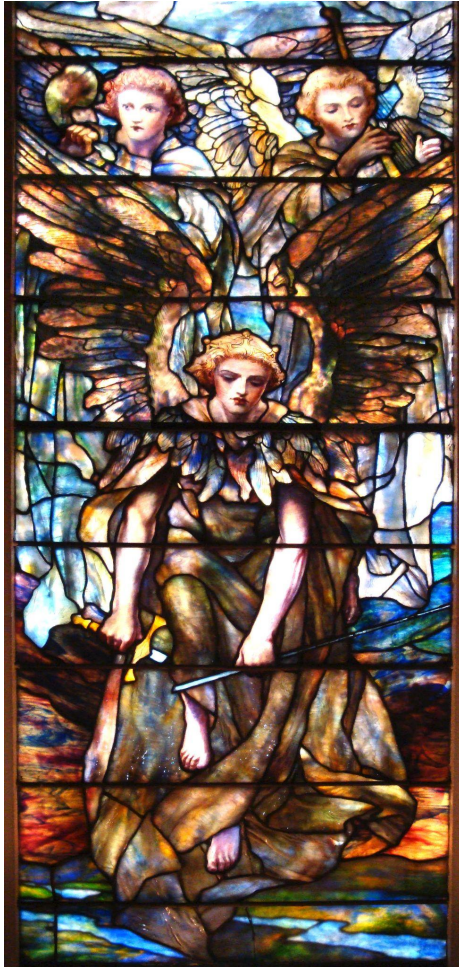
June 2022 – Date to come

There’s a lot of construction going on in the northern part of Central Park these days! It’s a major project of the Central Park Conservancy to rebuild the area of the Harlem Meer and Lasker pool. Lane Addonizio will give us a look into the history of this area and ahead to its future. This will be a free zoom presentation. Check our website www.upperwestsidehistory.org this spring for the date and the link.

Recent Events

Stained Glass Stories: Tiffany (and More) in the Bloomingdale Neighborhood

Julie L. Sloan, consultant, author, professor, and appraiser
March 16, 2022



Julie L. Sloan, a stained-glass expert specializing in conservation, treated the eye with stunning examples of stained glass in the Bloomingdale area. She showed two of Tiffany Studios' most spectacular windows – one at St. Michael's Episcopal Church (W 99th Street and Amsterdam Avenue) and another at the Lutheran Church of the Advent (Broadway and W 93rd Street).



Julie L. Sloan

Another of Tiffany's famous works, the Columbian Chapel—made for the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago—was once housed in the Cathedral of St. John the Divine.

She also discussed the area's only window by John La Farge, another major stained glass artist of the time, located only a few blocks from Bloomingdale in Columbia University's St. Paul's Chapel. You can see a recording of the program [here](#).

A New Video Overview of The Bloomingdale Neighborhood History Group

If a picture is worth a thousand words, is a video worth even more? We think so, which is why a few members of the planning committee of the BNHG got together to create this 10-minute production. It's an introduction to the

neighborhood that is our home, the neighborhood that inspires our research, and is the inspiration for the free public programs we offer throughout the year.

The video gives you an overview of Bloomingdale's history, introduces you to some of the famous people who once lived here (spoiler alert: Nina Simone, The Gershwins, Humphrey Bogart are just three of hundreds) and gives you an idea why all of us at the BNHG are so passionate about spreading the word about this amazing place.

We had fun making it and we think you'll have fun watching it. You can access it [here](#).



Gil Tauber as a Dutchman

How It Began: The Bloomingdale Neighborhood History Group 2000 – 2020

This is the first of occasional brief articles about the history of the history group, based on a report in preparation by Winifred Armstrong. The files on which it draws are in the Neighborhood History Collection at the Bloomingdale branch of the New York Public Library, 150 West 100th Street.

One day in the year 2000, someone asked Win Armstrong, who had lived in Park West Village (PWV) since 1967, about its history. That sparked an idea to organize a talk about the history leading to the construction of the seven-building apartment complex between 97th and 100th Streets, Central Park West and Columbus Avenue. The event was so popular that it generated requests for a repeat talk and raised many questions about the history of the surrounding area.

Who had lived there before the urban renewal programs of the 1950s tore down the many blocks of buildings that had stood since the late 19th century? How did it happen that in the 1960s it became Park West Village, Douglass Houses, a local police and fire station, and the Bloomingdale Library? Why is Trinity Lutheran Church (circa 1888) the only building left standing? What role was played by St. Michael's Episcopal Church, at 99th Street and Amsterdam Avenue since 1807, when its African American sister church, St. Jude's, was

torn down under the “slum clearance” mandate? Each question led to more back stories. You can read more in the blog post [Park West Village: History of a Diverse Community](#).

So began the Park West Village History Group, later broadened to become the Park West Neighborhood History Group, and now known as the Bloomingdale Neighborhood History Group – all sharing the guiding principle that “We are the inheritors, the interpreters, and the creators of our history.”

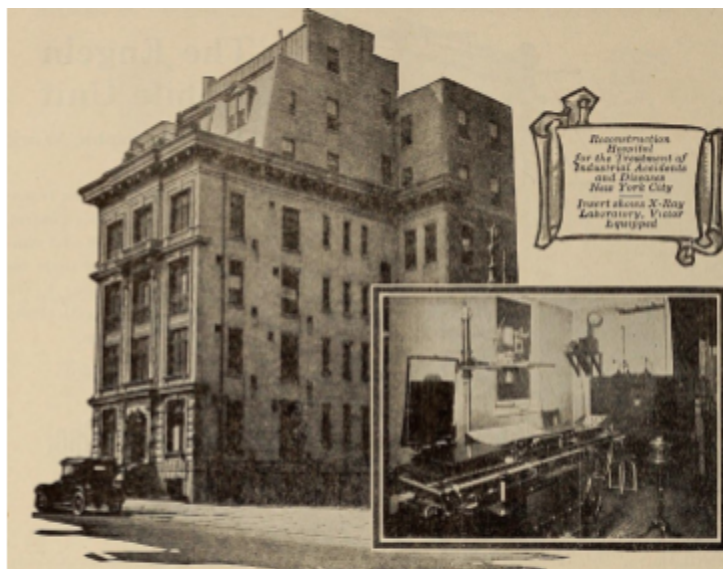
100 Years Ago in Bloomingdale: Reconstruction Hospital

Pam Tice

If you were living in Bloomingdale on January 1, 1922, you may have noticed a detailed article in *The New York Times* about the Reconstruction Hospital at 395 Central Park West, near 100th Street.

The hospital had announced a goal of raising \$1.5 million for a larger building on the empty lot on the southwest corner of 100th Street, next to its existing building. The existing hospital building had been there since 1899 when it was named the Red Cross Hospital, part of the national organization’s response to caring for the wounded and sick soldiers of the Spanish American War. The Red Cross also had a training school at 233 West 100th Street.

In 1915, the building on Central Park West became the Park Hospital in order to widen its availability to patients beyond the war wounded. Then along came another war.



Reconstruction Hospital, 1922

In the summer of 1918, when the sick and wounded of the First World War were brought to New York City, two Disembarkation Hospitals were established in midtown and downtown Manhattan. News reports in 1918-19 noted that the Park Hospital had 80% of its beds devoted to the care of soldiers and sailors.

In 1921, Park Hospital was re-named Reconstruction

Hospital, merging with two other institutions, the De Milt Dispensary on 23rd Street and the Clinic for Functional Re-Education on Livingston Place. There was also an affiliation with the Institute for the Crippled and Disabled on 23rd Street.

The first of its kind in the country, the Reconstruction Hospital sought to use the medical knowledge gained by treatment of World War I wounded for the treatment of industrial accidents and diseases. The motto of the Hospital was "Put the injured industrial worker back on the firing line." The Hospital appears to have focused on just repairing injured workers, not on workplace safety.

The Reconstruction Hospital also served the local population as an emergency room; in every news story about traffic accidents or wounds resulting from criminal activity in our neighborhood, the victims were rushed there.



Reconstruction Hospital with addition, 1940

By April, 1922, the Reconstruction Hospital announced a groundbreaking for its hoped-for 11-story addition, just north of its existing building. Two men described as "former paralytics" would help with the groundbreaking: One had fallen from an airplane during the war, while the other had lost, and then

regained, the use of his arms. A little boy who had regained the use of his legs helped also.

The new institution would have the latest rehabilitative machinery, including electro-therapy and whirlpool baths, along with vocational training in the various trades. Children with disabilities would also be treated. The hospital further planned to have the latest "radiophone" equipment to "brighten the lives of patients and keep them in touch with the world."

In October, 1922, the Reconstruction Hospital announced plans to build a one-story pavilion, constructed so that one additional story could be added.

Looking at the NYC Buildings Department photos of 1941, it appears that the second story was never built, and certainly never the dreamed-for eleven stories.

In 1930, the Restoration Hospital became part of the New York Post-Graduate Medical School. In 1947, the School was incorporated into the NYU School of Medicine. It's unclear from the available resources how long the Hospital continued to operate on Central Park West. There are no *Daily News* articles naming the site after 1949, but it's not clear if it was actually abandoned before Park West Village took over the site in the late 1950s, and built its buildings in 1961.

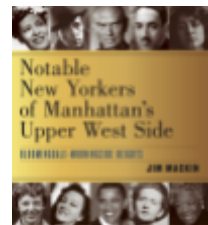
Following World War II, restoring functional capacity to disabled patients, or rehabilitative medicine, was fully recognized. Bloomingdale's Reconstruction Hospital played an important role in that effort.

Two Notable New Yorkers of Manhattan's Upper West Side

From *Notable New Yorkers of Manhattan's Upper West Side*

by Jim Mackin

John Mace & Richard Dorr



John Mace and his husband, Richard Adrian Dorr, were virtual poster boys for same-sex marriage. They were married in 2012 at the ages of 92 and 85. They provided vocal coaching to Vanessa Redgrave, Kim Basinger, Hal Linden, Tammy Grimes, Shari Lewis, Morgan Freeman, Natasha Richardson, Marsha Mason, Raquel Welch, and Bette Midler.

Born Giovanni Carmine Mace in Rhode Island, Mace was singing on radio by age 14. He fought in World War II, rising to the rank of First Lieutenant, and earned a Bronze Star for bravery in the Battle of the Bulge. In 1948, he began his studies at Julliard, where he met his future husband, then Richard Prah.

After graduating from Juilliard in 1951, he dedicated his talents to training voices. In 1955, Mace and Dorr formed the John Mace Studio in the River Mansion. In 1969, they purchased the building from Columbia University and, in 1972, they established the Vocal Arts Center there at 337 Riverside Drive, dubbing the building the Music Mansion.

Update on the BNHG Building Database

The Bloomingdale Building Database, developed by BNHG Planning Committee member Gil Tauber, was missing information for 40 buildings—until a few weeks ago when three were identified. They are 3, 5, and 7 West 101st Street, part of a group of six buildings, three of which faced Central Park West.

The buildings, built in 1898, were designed by Neville & Bagge, one of the most prolific of Upper West Side architects. The three Central Park West buildings were demolished, probably around 1925, to build 415 Central Park West.

This update was made possible by Sam Hightower of The Office of Metropolitan History, founded by Christopher Gray in 1975. This research firm locates drawings, historic photographs, and other documentation on New York City buildings. They work with building owners, architects, and attorneys, often in connection with restoration projects.

You can connect to the BNHG Building Database [here](#).