



**NEIGHBORHOOD
HISTORY GROUP**

BLOOMINGDALE BULLETIN

Discovering, preserving, and sharing our history

Issue No. 5

Winter 2022

Welcome!

Here's the winter 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 from Central Park to the Hudson River. The **Bloomingdale Neighborhood History Group** (BNHG) welcomes your feedback, comments and ideas [here](#).

Upcoming Program

Sol Bloom: One Amazing Life!

Jim Mackin

Tuesday, January 25, 2022, 6:30 pm

Sol Bloom (1870 - 1949) had a record of 28 years in Congress serving the Upper West Side. Jim Mackin will give a zoom presentation of his career from the 1893 World's Fair in Chicago to the creation of the United Nations.

We will send registration information in an upcoming email. You can register to receive announcements [here](#). Please join us for this interesting presentation on this very interesting and influential member of our community.



Ongoing Programs

Free Walking Tours

Sunday, January 23, 2022, 2:00 pm

Meet in front of Hostelling International-NYC, Amsterdam Avenue at West 103rd Street

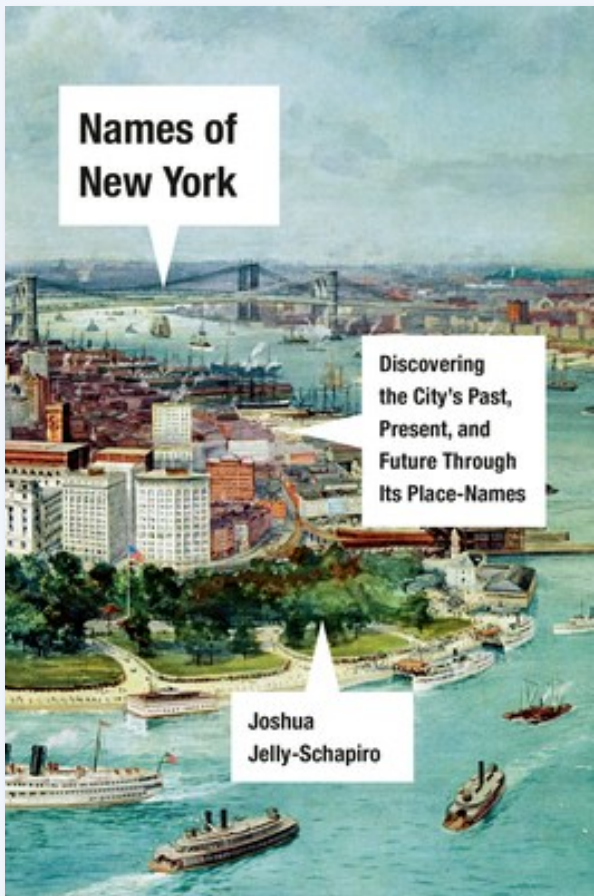
Sunday, February 27, 2022, 2:00 pm

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



The popular walking tours of historic Bloomingdale, led by renowned local historian Jim Mackin, are treasured by neighborhood locals and visitors alike. Join one to hear about highlights of the neighborhood and an endless store of fascinating tidbits about historic residents from all walks of life. You can find out future tour dates, meeting locations, and information about Jim's other [Weekday Walks](#) outings [here](#).

Recent Programs



Names of New York

Joshua Jelly-Shapiro

October 18, 2021

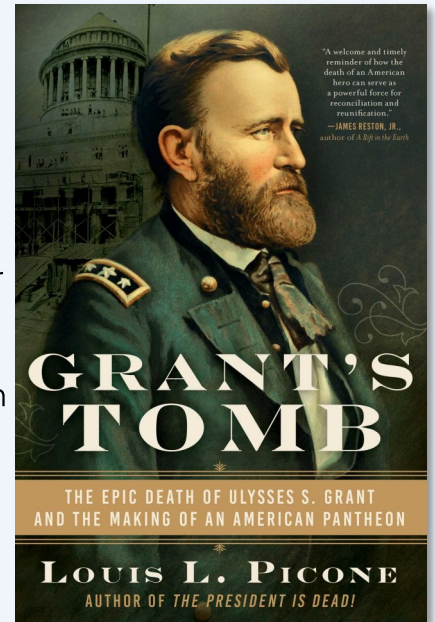
In an entertaining and fascinating presentation, geographer and author Joshua Jelly-Shapiro told the stories behind the names of our streets, neighborhoods, parks, playgrounds, and other favorite places. He deftly recounted the influence of the native Lenape population, Dutch and British settlers, and waves of immigrants over the centuries. His book is *Names of New York: Discovering the City's Past, Present and Future Through Its Place-Names*. You can see a recording of the program [here](#).

General Grant and His Tomb

Louis L. Picone

December 1, 2021

Presidential historian Louis L. Picone recounted stories, many not widely known, about the end of the life of Ulysses S. Grant, Civil War general and 18th president of the United States. He started with Grant's final year when, bankrupt and battling inoperable cancer, he fought to complete his memoirs (with the help of Mark Twain) in order to secure his family's financial future. The intense competition to select the resting place for Grant's remains, the origin of the memorial and its design, and the turbulent history of Grant's reputation are just some of the highlights. You can see a recording of the program [here](#).



2021 Jim Torain Award Presented to Caitlin Hawke

December 1, 2021



Jim Mackin presents the Jim Torain Award to Caitlin Hawke

Caitlin Hawke was the recipient of the 2021 Jim Torain Award on December 1, 2021. The Award is presented by the Bloomingdale Neighborhood History Group to honor of the memory of their former member Jim Torain. The group selected Caitlin for the impressive work she has done to help share and promote the history of our neighborhood.

Jim Torain spent most of his life working tirelessly to preserve the legacy of the Old Community where he grew up. The Old Community is the name given to the African American neighborhood that flourished on West 98th and West 99th Streets between Central Park West and Columbus Avenue – a neighborhood that was destroyed in the mid-1950s as part of

the city's urban renewal plan. Without Torain's work, the history of this vibrant neighborhood, once the home of so many talented and accomplished New Yorkers, might have been lost to time.

Caitlin Hawke became known to BNHG when she participated in creating a series about medical institutions in the neighborhood. Caitlin, who had served for many years as Executive Director of the Pasteur Foundation, helped with background on the New York Pasteur Institute, the site of groundbreaking scientific research on rabies and tetanus vaccines that once stood at 97th Street and Central Park West.

Over the years, Caitlin has developed an extensive collection of historical photographs of the Bloomingdale neighborhood and researched the context of each, turning up many fascinating stories in the "Throwback Thursdays" posts on the [blog](#) she writes for the 102nd & 103rd Streets Block Association.

Caitlin's fondness for the place she lives leads her to contribute her energies to creating the history of the neighborhood, with the Block Association and as a volunteer with Bloomingdale Aging in Place. She has encouraged others to dig out their historical photographs, guided an oral history project, and in 2020 she presented the history of her own building, 855 West End Avenue, as part of BNHG's ongoing series of public programs.

Caitlin works professionally as Associate Director of Programming at the Columbia Aging Center, a university-wide center housed at the Mailman School of Public Health.

A Bit of Old Bloomingdale Shows Up in Orlando!

We heard recently from a woman in Orlando, Florida, who found the sugar bowl pictured here in a thrift shop. She'd "Googled" the name and address imprinted on the bowl and happily found the Oxford Lunch restaurant, 2546 Broadway at 96th Street, mentioned in our [blog post](#) "Dining Out in Bloomingdale."

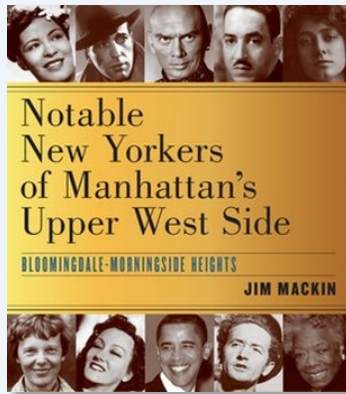


The restaurant owners, listed in a 1914 city directory, were Morris and Michael Oinick. According to an advertisement at the time in *The Columbia Spectator*, they also owned the Colonial Restaurant, with two locations: Broadway at 85th Street and Broadway near 110th Street. The sugar bowl's new owner also reported that the item is stamped as made by "N. Radus" a company that supplied restaurants.

A Notable New Yorker of Manhattan's Upper West Side

Fordham University Press

By Jim Mackin



Arthur Loesser, 1894 – 1969

Concert pianist

463 Central Park West (near 106th Street) and 14 West 107th Street
(near Manhattan Avenue)

Loesser was the half-brother of Broadway composer Frank Loesser, and self-described as “the evil of the two Loessers.” He learned to play the piano at age six from his piano-teacher father. At age 17, he debuted in Berlin, launching a career in touring with the great violinist, Mischa Elman. He played with such notable orchestras as the New York Philharmonic, the Cincinnati Symphony, and the Cleveland Orchestra. In 1926, he settled down and joined the faculty of the Cleveland Institute of Music.



Having developed a love of Japanese culture, he served in World War II as a Japanese translator. After World War II, he was the first foreigner to perform with Japan's Nippon Symphony in Tokyo. A native New Yorker, he studied at City College, Columbia, and the Institute of Musical Art before it became part of the Julliard School.

You can find out about other notables [here](#).

Fifty Years Ago in Bloomingdale

1972

by Pam Tice

The news stories for 1972 about the Upper West Side, in the New York Times and Daily News archives, may bring back memories for some of our long-time Bloomingdale residents.

Crime stories were pervasive. The poor people who lived in “welfare hotels” or SROs were blamed. Community meetings attended by elected representatives Bella Abzug and Theodore Weiss appealed to Mayor Lindsay to stop using the old residence hotels for this purpose. One headline boldly stated: “West 100th Street: Prosperity Ends and Crime Begins.” British author Anthony Burgess moved to Broadway and 93rd Street and wrote a piece for the Sunday Times magazine highlighting the cucarachas and the subway graffiti and stating, “this part of Manhattan is desperately broken down.”

At the 24th Precinct on 100th Street, the NYPD started a community policing effort to try to bring down the number of robberies in the area – at 3,100 more than in any other precinct. In the foreground of a photograph accompanying a NY Times article is David Durk, the crusading officer who, with Frank Serpico, brought about the Knapp Commission on police corruption in the 1960s and 1970s. In a July story, the murders in the city were at 800, on their way to the 1990s when the number rose to over 2,000 before falling off.

Meanwhile, up at Columbia’s campus, the NYPD moved in to take back campus buildings from students who were continuing their anti-war protests. While far less disruptive than the 1968 protests, Columbia was still a locus of student demonstrations.

Against this background of disorder, Bloomingdale nevertheless thrived. Seminars were offered to would-be brownstone house purchasers to help them through the process of fixing up a home. The brownstones cost \$100,000 to \$300,000, and more than 1,500 had already been restored. A special tour of West 94th and West 95th Streets showed off fresh paint, window boxes and carefully planted front yards. One had bullet holes to show off, too.

In April, the Women’s Architectural Auxiliary of the New York Chapter of the American Institute of Architects (yes, women had a separate organization then!) awarded 28 architects and architectural firms for their work on “healing urban blight” in the urban renewal area within Central Park West to Amsterdam, 87th to 97th Streets.

On West 84th Street, the spring block party celebrated Edgar Allan Poe. On West 89th Street, the block held a square dance. In Central Park at West 100th Street, the Discovery Play Park was built, thanks to parents who raised the funds. Harry and Leona Helmsley bought Park West Village’s 2,700 apartments where a studio rented for \$175 a month, and a 2-bedroom

for \$400. The Equity Library Theater, in the Master Apartments building at Riverside and 103rd Street, had a successful run of old Broadway hits.

Perhaps you have a memory of 1972 fifty years ago in Bloomingdale? Please share it with us [here](#).

Blog News



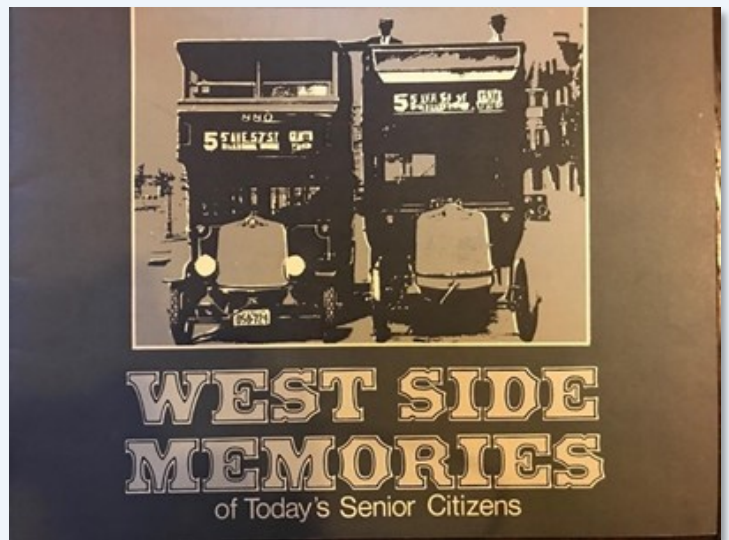
Augusta Stetson

Pam Tice has posted an essay about an interesting woman named Augusta Stetson, who was the force behind the building of the (originally) Christian Science church at Central Park West and 96th Street. It is soon to become the new home of the Children's Museum of Manhattan. You can read it [here](#).

You Can Add to Our Local History

Now that the Bloomingdale Branch of the NY Public Library is open again, it's easy to get your hands on materials related to the history of the neighborhood. The BNHG archive of materials related to local people, organizations, businesses, and institutions is readily available to the public, along with a collection of books donated to the BNHG by well-known Upper West Side historian Peter Salwen. It's easy to find, located just inside the doors of the library, next to the circulation desk.

The archiving project was started by members of the Park West Village Neighborhood History Group – primarily Win Armstrong, Ginger Leif, Hedda Fields, Cynthia Doty, and Liz Pisanhek – and, according to Vita Wallace, who is now the steward of the project, “their initial effort was tremendous.”



One of the most recent acquisitions, according to Wallace, is “a beautiful booklet of oral histories” collected in 1976 by the Association of Black Social Workers Senior Center on 107th Street. It was given to BNHG by Yahaira Mejia, the branch librarian.

Some of the materials in the library collection have been digitized. You can see them [here](#). A subject list of the library collection can be found [here](#).

In keeping with a BNHG goal to encourage community members and others to contribute materials that will help to illuminate the history of the neighborhood, everyone is invited to add any documents or photos that might enhance the collection. For more info, contact the group [here](#).

Thanks for your interest and engagement!
We'll see you in Bloomingdale.

