



THE ANTHEMION

Winter 1997-98

The Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation

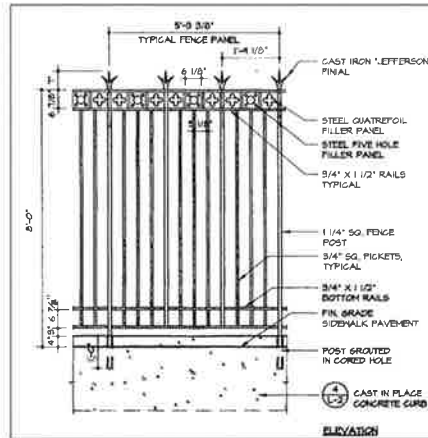
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A Link From Past to Present

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



Design for the new Jefferson Market Garden fence, which will be installed this spring.

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 notable double townhouse, owned for decades by the Ladies Christian Union and known to Villagers as Milbank House, was recently purchased by NYU for the Lillian 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 one 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)*



More than 350 people visited GVSHP's exhibition of Ruth Wittenberg Triangle design competition entries on September 14th at Village Heritage Day. Photo: GVSHP 1997.

(continued from page 1) Commission approval for a one lane ramp that preserves 225 square feet of the areaway for a garden, thus striking a balance between meeting the need for access and the need for appropriateness. All of the groups and individuals who participated in discussions and hearings about the ramp are to be commended -- the situation was resolved thanks to the cooperation of everyone concerned, and GVSHP is happy to have been part of the process.

Some very different issues were triggered by a recent C of A application for 11 West 8th Street. An application was made by the Soda shoe store, one of the four commercial tenants on the ground floor of this large apartment building, for a new storefront which was to be surrounded by black granite tile. The Village Alliance Business Improvement District was working closely with a second tenant, Eva's Restaurant, on a new storefront which planned to use a very different design motif. When GVSHP reviewed drawings of both proposals, the lack of harmony between the two clearly pointed to the need for a "master plan" for the entire building. In the public C of A hearing for Soda, we appealed to the Commission to hold off on a decision while the Alliance worked to get an agreement from building owner to require tenants to follow a unified design scheme for all four storefronts. The Commission complied, and GVSHP joined the Alliance in meeting with the owner, who agreed to the idea of a master plan for his building. In subsequent meetings convened by the Alliance, GVSHP worked alongside the tenants, their architects, and Commission staff members in the creation of the plan itself. The design scheme includes a stucco surround for the entire base of the building, a discrete sign band, anodized aluminum storefronts, and appropriate awnings. By the time the master plan received approval by the Commission several weeks later, the Alliance had convinced the owner to pay for and execute some of the work so that the tenants would only have to contribute their own storefronts. The result of the work constitutes an enormous improvement on 8th Street. As Honi Klein of the Alliance said soon after the master plan received Landmarks Commission approval, this was a successful collaborative effort that benefits all concerned parties, and the community at large.

GVSHP will continue to monitor C of A applications that come before the Commission. If you would like information about attending public hearings where applications may be commented upon by the community, call the GVSHP office for dates and times.

Vicki Weiner

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.



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 Burks 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-



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

ship organization dedicated to protecting and enhancing the state's architectural heritage, and the New York State Council on the Arts, the state's arts funding agency. It encourages the stewardship of New York State's architectural heritage by supporting locally-based projects undertaken by municipalities and not-for-profit groups throughout the state.

Since its inception in 1993, the Preservation League of New York State/New York State Council on the Arts Grant Program has awarded \$311,346 in direct project support. Eleven projects, statewide, were selected to receive funds from the Grant Program this year, and GVSHP is thrilled to be one of them.

Resources for Building Research

New York City Municipal Archives

GVSHP frequently receives calls from homeowners, students and scholars who are trying to track down information about individual Village properties. One of the lesser known sources 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, indicate where you would like the photo sent, and allow about three weeks for delivery.

You may also visit the Municipal Archives to view the photograph collection on microfilm. The Archives is located at 31 Chambers Street, at the corner

of Centre Street, and is open Mondays through Thursdays, 9 a.m.-4:30 p.m., and Fridays from 9 a.m. to 1 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) 788-8585.



#392 West Street, Department of Taxes, ca. 1939. Collections of the Municipal Archives of the City of New York, used with permission.

New Fence...

(continued from page 1) community leaders and neighbors in the vicinity of Jefferson Market 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 transferred to 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 garden site adjacent to the venerable Jefferson

Market Library will have a dignified and appropriate steel and wrought iron fence.

The New York City Parks Department and the New York Public Library have enthusiastically endorsed the new fence, and the Landmarks Preservation Commission approved the plans in October. Work will begin in early spring, and will include moving the chain link fence to secure the garden during construction, creating a concrete foundation for the new fence, installing the fence panel by panel, and replacing the entrance gate on Greenwich Avenue. The new fence will be created and installed by Architectural Iron Company of Pennsylvania, which has been involved in numerous Village fence projects. Look for an announcement of the grand unveiling of the Jefferson Market Garden fence this spring!

UPCOMING EVENTS

CONSERVATION SYMPOSIUM

Top of the House: Issues for Homeowners
Wednesday, December 3, 6:30 p.m., Salmagundi Club, 47 Fifth Avenue. \$15 Guests/FREE to GVSHP & Association of Village Homeowners Members.

Moderated by Carl Culbreth, President of Preserv Inc., and sponsored by the Chubb Group of Insurance Companies, this panel discussion will focus on roofs, chimneys, 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 Garrard Lowe**, President of the Beaux Arts Alliance, Thursday, December 11, 6:30 p.m., Church of the Resurrection, 115 East 74th Street, \$25 Guests/\$20 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 1868, after he completed Grace Church and before he began St. Patrick's Cathedral. The evening includes a lecture by noted architectural historian David Lowe, *Columns and Spires: An Historical View of New York's Splendid Sanctuaries*, and a reception.

PANEL DISCUSSION

Preserving Urban Main Streets
Monday, January 12, 6:30 p.m., King Juan Carlos I of Spain Center, 53 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 preserving urban main streets can boost local economy, improve quality of life, and enhance the urban texture of a community. Speakers include Josh Bloom of the National Main Street Center, Jennifer Keller of the New York Main Street Alliance, and Ron Melichar of the New York City Department of Business Services -- all of whom work on preservation and economic development issues within urban neighborhoods.

PRESERVATION CAFE

Bonnie Yochelson, Editor of *Berenice Abbott: Changing New York*. Monday, January 26, 6:00 p.m., Gus' Place, 145 Waverly Place. Cash bar.

Bonnie Yochelson returns to the Cafe with her newly released book, *Berenice Abbott: Changing New York*. Published by the New

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 photographer's life 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 century's greatest photographers.

ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

Saluting Preservation's Past: Jefferson Market Library 30th Anniversary. Wednesday February 25, 6:00 p.m. Jefferson Market Library, Sixth Avenue at 10th Street. FREE.

GVSHP joins 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 C. Wood, Chair of the New York Preservation Archive Project, who will discuss the preservation effort which saved 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 Cavaglieri, Margot Gayle, Harold Edelman, and Claire Tankel. On this important occasion, GVSHP's Greenwich Village Preservation Archive and Oral History Project will gather the memories of those who took part in the preservation of the Jefferson Market Courthouse. Come to share your memories on this very special occasion.

FOOD AND THOUGHT

The People & Places of Greenwich Village featuring Steven Watson, author of *The Birth of the Beat Generation: Visionaries, Rebels and Hipsters, 1944-1960*. Monday, February 23, 6:30 pm, Minetta Tavern, 113 MacDougal Street. \$65 Guests/\$55 Members.

GVSHP's new *Food And Thought* series brings an immediate meaning to the term "sense of place" by inviting friends to dine with acclaimed historians in some of the evocative places where Greenwich Village culture happened. Over drinks and dinner at the Minetta Tavern, a legendary "beat generation" hang-out, author and noted beat expert Steven Watson will share his knowledge of the maverick writers Allen Ginsberg, William S. Burroughs, and Jack Kerouac. Mr. Watson will explore the connection between beat lives and literature -- those master works which expressed rebellion against the conformity of the 1950s and the rising tide of McCarthyism, such as Ginsberg's *Howl*, Burrough's *Naked Lunch*, and Kerouac's *On the Road*. Join us for a glimpse at the beats -- and their lives -- their favorite local tavern.

Please RSVP for upcoming events by calling (212) 924-3895.

Seventh Annual Village Awards

Celebrating the Specialness of Greenwich Village

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 benefited an extraordinary number of Village projects -- the latest of which is the wrought iron fence to be constructed around Jefferson Market Garden (described on page 1).

Zito & Sons 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 1841. Architecturally renowned, the church is also known for the concerts by its choral group, a wide range of social service programs, and its beautiful flower garden on the corner of Fifth Avenue and 10th Street.

Charterhouse Antiques, which opened 35 years ago on the corner of Jane Street and Greenwich Avenue, is a little antique 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 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 its three senior centers in Greenwich Village.

Chez Brigitte, the tiny Greenwich Avenue 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 Villagers.

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 Stoop 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 stoop was successfully completed, the Hamiltons were astonished to receive notice from the Department of Transportation that the new stoop 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.

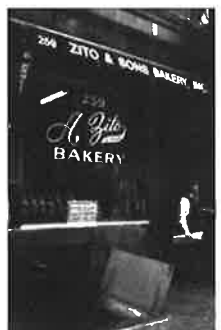
The Awards include the donation of books, given in the name of each recipient, to the Jefferson Market Library.



Mrs. Brooke Astor
Photo: Merchants House Museum



Church of the Ascension



Zito & Sons Bakery



Charterhouse Antiques



The Caring Community



Chez Brigitte



The Greenwich Village Girls Basketball League
Photo: GV Girls Basketball League



Front Stoop Award: 71 Jane Street

The Stoop: A Brief History

Plus Tips for Stoop Restoration

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 slim, the use of the stoop did provide another practical benefit. The strict grid laid over the city with the adoption of the Commissioner's Plan dictated blocks unbroken 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 too 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 "front stoop award" acknowledges those 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.

Restoring 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)

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 novella by Henry James has been re-explored by filmmaker 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

Berenice Abbott: Changing New York, edited by Bonnie Yochelson and published in conjunction with the Museum of the City of New York, is the definitive study of Abbott's WPA-funded New York City photo project of 1935-39. With all 307 images presented together for the first time, and with Abbott's newly-accessed 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 GVSHP's *Preservation Cafe* speaker in January. See the Events Calendar for details.

Cast Iron Architecture in America: The Significance of James Bogardus, by Margot 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 Bogardus, a passionate advocate for iron's strength, economy, suitability for ornamentation, and fire resistance. Margot 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 Edith 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; Eleanor Dwight, biographer of Edith Wharton; and Beaux Arts Alliance President David Garrard Lowe. For reservations and information, call 212-639-9120.

SPECIAL NYU 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 exploration 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 X15.9600), call the School of Continuing Education office at (212) 998-7133.

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Village Awards Photos (except where noted): Penelope Bateau

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Ruth Wittenberg Triangle...

(continued from page 1) The five Special Distinction Citation awardees are: *Sarah Broughton*, Architect & *John Rowland*, Urban Designer, of Hoboken, NJ; *Jerry Andrew Ferentinos* of Brooklyn, NY; *Sue Labouvie & Max Heim* of Studio L'Image in NYC; *Isabella Mancini*, 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 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

The Stoop...

(continued from page 5) had to "rent" the sidewalk space for a rather exorbitant yearly fee. The good news is that the Landmarks Preservation Commission recently stepped in to remedy what it saw as a ridiculous conundrum. The LPC established with the DOT that the restoration of a stoop within a historic district would be eligible for the "revocable consent" of DOT, instead of a sidewalk rental. Consent is granted on a yearly basis for a nominal fee of around \$25. The last remaining bad news, however, is that the DOT still requires property owners to take out a bond to cover the cost of removing a restored stoop and replacing the sidewalk should consent be

presented a wide range of proposals for redesigning this prominent intersection, which is located just south of the Jefferson Market Library.

A lengthier 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 Ruth Wittenberg Triangle.

New Visions for the Ruth Wittenberg Triangle and the September 14th exhibition were funded by generous grants from the Vincent Astor Foundation. Invaluable support was also received from the Van Alen Institute: Projects in Public Architecture.

As the City should be encouraging permanent stoop replacement whenever appropriate, not stoop removal, GVSHP has created a Stoop Task Force to consider how the "revocable consent" provision may be improved.

If you're restoring a stoop within a designated district, call the Landmarks Commission, (212) 487-6800, to discuss how to avoid fees which are higher than necessary by filing for "revocable consent" from DOT. Alex Herarra, Director of Preservation at Landmarks, has said that he will be happy to help, and suggests calling him directly.



GREENWICH VILLAGE
SOCIETY FOR
HISTORIC PRESERVATION

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