



Greenwich Village
Society for Historic
Preservation



September 7, 2016

Hon. Meenakshi Srinivasan, Chair
NYC Landmarks Commission
1 Centre Street, 9th Floor
New York, NY 10007

Re: Emergency Request for Evaluation, 264 East 7th Street, and 258-266 East 7th Street, Manhattan

Dear Chair Srinivasan,

We are writing you to urge you to immediately consider the calendaring and designation of 264 East 7th Street as an individual landmark and/or 258-266 East 7th Street as a historic district. It is imperative that this be considered expeditiously as demolition permit applications have been filed for No. 264.

Built c. 1842-43, this row of Greek Revival row houses is architecturally significant as a wonderfully intact ensemble of homes from the mid-19th century, and is the last remaining such row from New York's 'Dry Dock District' which was the heart of the city's booming waterfront in the early 19th century. The row is also historically significant as among the only remnants of 'Political Row,' a stretch of homes on East 7th Street which housed some of New York's most important and influential political figures and institutions during the latter half of the century. Nos. 258-266 East 7th Street have already been identified by the LPC as a potential historic district eligible for NYCL designation in the *East Village/Lower East Side Rezoning EIS* and as having potential archeological sensitivity (see attached). There are additional buildings on the north side of East 7th Street, including Nos. 271 and 263, which may merit inclusion as well (also identified in the EIS), but here we will concentrate on the buildings named above.

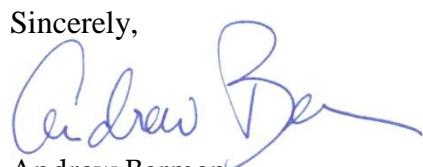
The Greek Revival brick houses at 258-266 East 7th Street between Avenue C and Avenue D retain much of their exceptional and eclectic mid-19th century details. No. 258 and No. 262 feature double doors at their entries, recessed behind molded pilasters and entablatures that have curved moldings. No. 264 also retains its original entry surround. The lintels are still intact at No. 258 and No. 262-264, and are unusual with their saw tooth molding and incised ornament. Nos. 258-264 have magnificent iron railings with swirling horizontal volutes at the top of the stoop descending to vertical volutes at the sidewalk level. No. 264 has a heavy bracketed Italianate cornice, likely added in the mid-19th century. Nos. 258 thru 262 have what appear to be their original wooden Greek Revival cornices, some with small metal coverings at the top.

The row is historically important as a remnant of the legendary Political Row, the block of Seventh Street between Avenue C and Avenue D where most of the Eleventh Ward's and some of New York's most important political figures resided. When this thoroughfare was settled during the 1840's, the inhabitants of these row houses were sea captains, merchants, factory men and carpenters employed in the major shipyards to the east known as the Dry Dock District. But during the latter half of the 19th century the stretch of 7th Street between Avenues C and D became home to a number of the city's civic leaders, many of whom were affiliated with the notorious Tammany Hall. According to *The New York Times* from 1902, on this section of East 7th Street "more politicians of every party were born and brought up than on any other street in this city." Aldermen, judges, commissioners, controllers, congressmen, district leaders, and more, from both the Democratic and Republican parties, lived in the fine row houses along this quiet leafy enclave in the midst of the teeming Dry Dock District. By the turn of the 20th century, newspaper and magazine articles began to lament the erosion of Political Row, as its denizens moved away amid the onslaught of tenement construction.

Not only notable for its early history, this distinctive block was profiled in Bernard Rudofsky's classic urban planning book, *Streets for People: A Primer for Americans* (1969) and was the setting and location for the 1987 popular film, "Batteries Not Included." Finally, it was the setting and subject of David Tapper's 1973 semi-documentary, "The Street of the Flower Boxes."

It would be a shame to lose this architecturally and historically significant building and row, especially as they were identified by the Landmarks Preservation Commission itself as landmark-eligible. The East Village remains woefully under-landmarked and therefore valuable historic resources in this area such as these are vulnerable to insensitive alteration and demolition. In light of the compelling significance of these buildings, their architectural integrity, and their place in New York City history, as well as the imminent threat to No. 264, we strongly urge the Commission to move swiftly to consider them for landmark designation.

Sincerely,



Andrew Berman
Executive Director
Greenwich Village Society
for Historic Preservation



Richard Moses
President
Lower East Side Preservation Initiative


Simeon Bankoff
Executive Director
Historic Districts Council
Andrew Coamey

Andrew Coamey
Board Member
East Village Community Coalition

cc: Borough President Gale Brewer
Council Member Rosie Mendez
State Senator Brad Hoylman
Assemblymember Brian Kavanagh
Community Board #3, Manhattan

Chapter 7: Historic Resources

that would experience incremental ground disturbance are not sensitive for archaeological resources due to 20th-century construction disturbance. (Those sites are Projected Development Site 32 and Potential Development Sites 184, 209, 218, 226, 236, 254, 265, 269, part of 270, 275, 277, 280, 287, 289, 299, and 303.)

The 25 sites identified by LPC comprise 27 tax lots on 17 City blocks and they are shown on Figure 7-1 and listed in Table 7-1. As requested by LPC, a Phase 1A Archaeological Assessment Report¹ was prepared for the identified lots and submitted to LPC for review. In an Environmental Review letter dated April 10, 2008, LPC asked that the draft Phase 1A be revised to demonstrate that the potential for human remains associated with former cemeteries was considered and to include a discussion of the burial grounds that were once within the project area. In addition, LPC asked for additional information concerning why the construction of small rear-yard buildings and/or additions without basements was concluded to have destroyed potential archaeological resources on certain sites. The Phase 1A report was subsequently revised in consultation with LPC to address the concerns expressed in the Environmental Review letter. LPC concurred with the conclusions of the revised report in April 2008.

Table 7-1
Potential Development Sites Identified
by LPC as Having Potential Archaeological Sensitivity

Development Site #	Block	Lot	Address	Sensitive	Not Sensitive	Resource Type
200	422	49	139 East Houston Street	X		Human remains
212	458	23	32 East 3rd Street	X		19th-century shaft features
213	458	24	34 East 3rd Street	X		19th-century shaft features
214	458	25	36 East 3rd Street	X		19th-century shaft features
215	458	35	28 East 2nd Street	X		19th-century shaft features
238	373	61	289 East 3rd Street	X		Jewish ritual bath and 19th-century shaft features
241	375	29	740 East 6th Street	X		19th-century shaft features
243	376	21	258 East 7th Street	X		19th-century shaft features
244	376	24	264 East 7th Street	X		19th-century shaft features
245	376	25	266 East 7th Street	X		19th-century shaft features
248	376	22	260 East 7th Street	X		19th-century shaft features
249	376	23	262 East 7th Street	X		19th-century shaft features
251	377	52	271 East 7th Street	X		19th-century shaft features
258	390	52	207 East 7th Street		X	
259	393	61	349 East 10th Street	X		19th-century shaft features
270	435	52	101 East 7th Street	X		19th-century shaft features
272	444	21	64 East 3rd Street	X		19th-century shaft features
273	445	16	100 East 4th Street	X		Jewish ritual bath and 19th-century shaft features
274	448	18	68 East 7th Street	X		19th-century shaft features
276	450	38	73 St. Mark's Place	X		19th-century shaft features
278	458	44	10 East 2nd Street		X	
284	468	54	215 East 12th Street	X		19th-century shaft features
295	372	3	18 Avenue C		X	
295	372	4	20 Avenue C		X	
295	372	5	22 Avenue C	X		Jewish ritual bath
299	429	43	118 East 1st Street	X		19th-century shaft features
300	429	49	108 East 1st Street	X		Jewish ritual bath and 19th-century shaft features

Sources: NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission, Environmental Review letters, June 28, 2007 and May 16, 2008.
Bergoffen, Celia J., Ph.D., R.P.A., Lower East Side Rezoning, Phase 1A Archaeological Assessment Report, April 16, 2008.

¹ Bergoffen, Celia J., Ph.D., R.P.A., *Lower East Side Rezoning, Phase 1A Archaeological Assessment Report*, April 16, 2008. See Appendix J for the Phase 1A report.

Table 7-3 (cont'd)
Potential Architectural Resources Within the Study Area

Map Ref. Letter/#	Address	Name/Type and Description
East Village Rezoning Area (cont'd)		
143	300 East 4th Street	Mission school for Episcopal Church of the Holy Cross. School and clergy house built in 1888 for the adjacent (and non-extant) Episcopal Mission Church of the Holy Cross. It was originally run by the Sisters of the Community of St. John the Baptist. The school is a 5-story brick building with brownstone trim. There are pointed-arch entrances on East 4th Street and Avenue C, and the roofline is characterized by a series of gables and tower forms.
144	632-652 East 9th Street	La Plaza Cultural. Community garden founded in 1976 on a series of vacant lots. The garden features garden plots, mature willow trees planted by Liz Christy, and an amphitheater constructed with the help of artist Gordon Matta-Clark. In its early years, the community and arts group CHARAS (who were located in Public School 64, #39) built a geodesic dome in the garden with Buckminster Fuller.
145	701 East 9th Street	9th Street Community Garden Park. Community garden founded in 1978. This garden features garden plots and mature willow trees.
146	710 East 9th Street	Public School 36. 4-story school built in 1876 in the Romanesque-Queen Anne style. It has an H-plan with the courtyards facing east and west. It retains an elaborate entrance enframement and arched windows, but alterations include removed cornices and pinnacles and infilled windows.
147	735 East 9th Street	Factory. Romanesque Revival-style factory built prior to 1903. For several decades it housed woodworking facilities. One of few industrial buildings in the area.
148	139-145 Avenue D	Factory. 5- and 6-story brick factory buildings with cast-iron ground floors and decorative brickwork. The building at 139-141 was part of the National Biscuit Company Milk Bone Factory (see #42, Wheatsworth Factory), and prior to that was the Crescent Biscuit Company by 1903. The building at 143-145 housed iron works, ash, and leather industries in 1903.
149	236 East 7th Street	Tenement. 5-story brick tenement with an intact wood storefront, windows with segmental architraves, and a bracketed cornice. This building dates to the 19th century.
150	253 East 7th Street	Row house. 19th-century 3½-story brick row house on a block with seven other 19th-century row houses (#151, 152, and 153). This row house has an unusual basement level entrance.
151	263 East 7th Street	Italianate row house. Italianate 19th-century 3½-story brick row house with a stoop, elaborate entrance enframement, and a bracketed cornice.
152	271 East 7th Street	Row house. 19th-century 3½-story brick row house with a Mansard roof and arched dormers. <u>LPC has determined that the row house at 271 East 7th Street appears to meet the eligibility criteria for S/NR listing.</u>
153	258-266 East 7th Street	Italianate row houses. Five 19th-century, Italianate 3½-story brick row houses. They all retain their stoops and original entrance enframements. Some only have partial cornices. <u>LPC has determined that the row houses at 258-266 East 7th Street, along with the row house at 260 East 7th Street, appear to be an LPC-eligible historic district.</u>
154	345-347 East 4th Street	San Ysidora Y San Leandro Orthodox Catholic Church of the Hispanic Rite. Uniquely designed church that originally housed the Church of St. Elizabeth of Hungary. Built 19th century or early 20th century prior to 1903. This small church on a tenement lot has pointed-arch windows with Moorish-style banded surrounds, a small gable, and a cupola. <u>LPC has determined that this church appears to meet the eligibility criteria for S/NR listing.</u>
155	340 East 4th Street	Tenement. 6-story brick tenement built in the 19th century. Ornamentation includes stone window architraves, triple-height pilasters, arched windows, decorative panels, and a denticated cornice.
156	285-287 East 3rd Street	Greek Revival row houses. Pair of 3½-story Greek Revival row houses. They retain their stoops, original entrance enframements, and cornices. One of the 19th-century row houses has an original fence.

The New York Times, May 11, 1902

<http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1902/05/11/118469878.html?pageNumber=16>

THE DOOM NEAR OF OLD "POLITICAL ROW"

New Tenement Invasion in the Famous East Seventh Street.

Justice Giegerich and Patrick Keenan Among the Few Who Still Live on a Block Rich in Memories.

This week will see the beginning of the tearing down of more of the few old houses on "Political Row" (East Seventh Street, between Avenues C and D) where more politicians of every party were born and brought up than on any other street in this city. In the place of these old houses will be built double tenements, six stories high, and equipped to accommodate forty-eight families. There are a dozen or more of these tenements, which are called "harracks," in the neighborhood at the present time, but they are scattered, so that the street has not entirely lost its identity.

The new invasion which begins this week, however, means that in a few years practically all that will be left to distinguish that famous block from the neighboring streets will be the weather-beaten signs above the houses once occupied by the late James R. Sterns, for years a police court Justice, and the father of Harry Sterns, President of the Eleventh Ward Bank.

Of the many politicians that at one time lived on "Political Row," when both sides of the street were occupied with trim, three-story brick dwellings, only three remain: Patrick Keenan, the leader of the Sixteenth Assembly District, who has lived on the Row since he came to this country as a boy, fifty years ago; Justice of the Supreme Court Leonard A. Giegerich, and Senator Hoffman, one of the most trusted Councillors, and notwithstanding the ties of old associations and the necessities of politics, the three feel that it is only a question of time when the last of the harracks will compel them to follow those who have moved to the upper part of the city.

ORIGIN OF THE NAME UNKNOWN.

East Seventh Street, between Avenues C and D, has been known as "Political Row" for three-quarters of a century or more. None of the old residents of the present day remembers just when the street received that name. Patrick Keenan says that a few years ago he heard an expression among the then old residents of the district as to the date when the name was applied to the block, but cannot remember that any of the old-timers knew themselves.

Two score years ago the old Eleventh Ward was in the center of its circle in "Political Row," was distinctly an American district, and any foreigners who found their way into the ward were promptly made to feel so uncomfortable that they moved out. At that time East Seventh Street was well up town, and there was hardly a house in the ward that could afford to keep a family. The streets were then lined with trees covered with luxuriant foliage, and each house had its green patch of yard in front. Avenue D, which runs between two covering walls of tenements, teeming with men, women, and children of foreign birth, was then regarded as the most brilliant every Sunday by the presentation of all the youth and fashion of the neighborhood. Then there were six churches in the ward, one Episcopal, three Methodist, two Methodist, and two Roman Catholic.

Now there is but one Methodist church left, which is to be soon given up as all members of the congregation have moved away. There is also one Catholic Church left, St. Brigid's, at Eighth Street and Avenue C, which has never boasted of anything like its old attendance.

Joseph E. Newburger, Judge of the Court of General Sessions, who was born and brought up on "Political Row," said yesterday that when he was a boy there was a saying in the city that if a young man would go into politics and become successful he would first have to move to "Political Row."

"At that time," said Judge Newburger, "the street was attractive in every way, leaving out the political associations altogether."

STORY.

The Eleventh Ward was long known as the "Dry Dock" district. It got this name from the absence of dry docks along the river front, and one of the chief reasons why ship yards from Stanton to Twelfth Street along the East River, including the yards of William H. Webb, John Keenan, when these yards were in full blast according to Mr. Keenan, it was almost impossible to pass through the streets of noon, as an army of workmen, dressed in overalls, would leave the yards in regiments and go home to their dinners. It was largely due to the great numbers of artisans and mechanics that the Eleventh Ward became so populous. The Eleventh Ward got such a large population to make it the most fertile field for political work in the city. All of these workers were intelligent men, but because of their close associations they were more readily brought to unanimity in political sentiments by a skillful politician and his workers.

Another thing that attracted many to the Eleventh Ward was the fact that the original Tompkins Park as a drill ground.

The majority of the new regiments of volunteers that came to the defense of this city went

to their first military training on the drill grounds of Tompkins Square.

WHEN THE INVASION BEGAN.

The foreign invasion of the Dry Dock district began between 1875 and 1880 when the Irish immigrants began to settle there in large numbers. At that time there was not a tenement house in the district. In order to accommodate the increasing population, however, a great many owners of unoccupied property put up houses for two families. When these were sold the owners would not meet the needs of the ever increasing tide of immigration, so they began to put up tenements. About 1880 the Irish invasion ceased and people of almost every country began to settle in the district. Thus, in the course of twenty-five years, what was originally an American neighborhood became almost a foreign colony. To-day the district is mainly foreign, in fact, in the vicinity of 90 per cent. of the population is foreign, with the remainder being 20 per cent. composed of Americans and British.

It is almost twenty years ago that the old residents of "Political Row" first began to move away. Among the first to go were Mr. H. Webb, the ship builder, who lived in the ward with his family for many years.

David Gideon, the famous horseman, who long resided in the corner of East Seventh and Avenue C, lived on "Political Row" for many years, but before he died was forced to move away. He represented the Sixteenth Assembly District in Albany.

The following is a list of some of the men who gained prominence in politics who formerly lived on "Political Row":

John Newburger, who formerly lived at 225 East Seventh Street; E. P. Barker, President of the Tax Commission under Mayor Strong, on Avenue C; Senator Charles E. Page, the Republican leader of the Sixteenth Assembly District; John Keenan, who gave up Patrick's job to work in a related business; Senator Sam Prince, Edward V. Lewis, Contreoller under ex-Mayor Grace, and his son, Edward V. Lewis, Jr., a member of the Court of Common Pleas; and Charles E. Lewis, who was once County Clerk and a member of the Board of Aldermen, ex-member of the City Council; John R. Sterns and his son, Henry Sterns, President of the Eleventh Ward Bank; Moses Dinkelspiel, who represented the Sixteenth Assembly District for a time in the Assembly; Assemblyman Sam Prince, Edward V. Lewis, Contreoller under ex-Mayor Grace, and his son, Edward V. Lewis, Jr., a member of the Court of Common Pleas; and Charles E. Lewis, who was once County Clerk and a member of the Board of Aldermen, ex-member of the City Council; John R. Sterns and his son, Henry Sterns, President of the Eleventh Ward Bank during the war and was defeated in his race for Avenue C, but has since sold the business. Andrew Mills, President of the Dry Dock Savings Bank, was born and brought up on "Political Row." His father, who founded the bank, lived there for many years.

Nearly all of these men attended Public School No. 1 on "Political Row." Some of them were boys. Nathaniel F. Beers, the present Principal of that school, has occupied that post for thirty years, and is held in high esteem by his former pupils, who have become prominent in many walks of life.

John Monks, who was Dock Commission-

er under Mayor Strong, once lived in the house at 287 East Seventh Street, which was one of the oldest houses on "Political Row," and which was torn down to make room for the Jefferson Club, which was put up in 1881. The Jefferson Club was organized sixteen years ago, and includes in its membership all the old residents of "Political Row" who belong to Tammany Hall. The club has 700 members, one-third of whom no longer live in the Sixteenth Assembly District.

MIL KEENAN'S HOME.

Patrick Keenan, who lives at 251 East Seventh Street, is hemmed in on both sides by two six-story tenements, built within the past two years. These tenements contain about 100 families, though the apartment consists of only four rooms, some of the families according to Mr. Keenan, number from twelve to fourteen. Mr. Keenan, who is vice-president of the Jefferson Club, has long intended to live in the "Row" for the remainder of his days. When seen at the Jefferson Club on Friday night he said: "I have lived on this block for nearly fifty years, and all the efforts of my life have been confined within the Eleventh Ward. For the past two years I have known almost every man, woman and child in the district, and at my age I do not know where I could feel at home in any other section of the city. There is a leader, I do not see how I could well leave here. However, they are doing their best to encourage me to get out, and there are only three of us left. Hardly a day goes by without some real estate agent bothers me with an offer to buy my house."

"They have bought up two tenements on each side of my house, with the result that where I used to have one neighbor on each side now I have five. This year, however, the warm weather comes upon us the street is almost impassable, and I am free to say that it is not possible for me to continue to remain here through the summer. In the course of time I may move from the old street, but doubtless I can be induced to do so in the immediate future. The old associations are too strong."

Justice Giegerich, who lives at 257 East Seventh Street, has been offered by several real estate agents with offers to purchase his property, and he was compelled to buy the houses on both sides of his lot in order to continue to live in the block with tenements, as in the case of Mr. Keenan. Justice Giegerich has a beautiful summer place in Orange, and when his large family go out in the evenings remaining until late in the Fall. The Justice's term on the Supreme Court bench expires in two years, and it is most likely he will withdraw the invasion until after the next judicial election.

Judge Hoffman is compelled by law to live within the district, but he announced the other evening that as soon as his term expired he would probably follow the example of other politicians who had been crowded out of "Political Row."

The invasion on "Political Row," which will be torn down to make way for the new tenements are 244 and 255 East Seventh Street, directly opposite the Jefferson Club. These houses are to be torn down to make way for a new bridge across the river, and will leave on the block hardly a dozen houses of the old "Row."

The destruction of a large number of tenement houses for the New York approach of the East River Bridge has had a great deal to do with the eagerness to rent or sell houses on the block between Avenue C and Avenue D, on East Seventh Street (the one street available) tenement houses which they are certain they can fill with those who are compelled to leave their homes in the neighborhood of the new bridge.

By ALBERT LINDNER



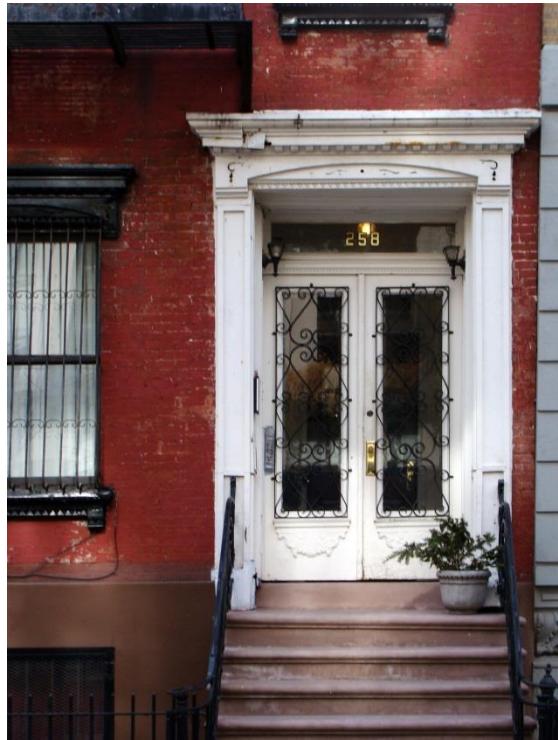
(r. to l.) 258 (red) through 266 East 7th Street. 264 East 7th Street is blue.



Iron stop railings with swirling horizontal volutes



258 East 7th Street



Entry and surround at 258 East 7th Street



260 East 7th Street



Cornice at 260 East 7th Street



262 East 7th Street



Cornice and lintel at 262 East 7th Street



Window detail at 262 East 7th Street



Double wood doors at 262 East 7th Street



264 East 7th Street



Cornice and Windows at 264 East 7th Street



Entry and Surround at 264 East 7th Street



Window at 264 East 7th Street



266 East 7th Street