



THE ANTHEMION

THE QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF The Greenwich Village Trust for Historic Preservation

Greenwich Village, N.Y.

Volume I, Number 1 SPRING 1981

St. Luke's Rebuild Effort Underway

Unsolicited donations totaling over \$160,000 have been received so far from individuals wishing to help restore the Church of St. Luke in the Fields at 487 Hudson Street, which was ravaged in a 3-alarm fire that burned out of control for two hours in the early hours of the morning March 7. Colburn Britton, chairman of the church's fund-raising committee, expressed himself as "extremely gratified" at the rate with which donations have been received, however reconstruction is expected to total "in the millions," and no determination can yet be made as to what insurance settlement can be reached.

This was ascertained by Jack Meserole, president of The Village Trust, at a meeting with Dr. David R. Hunter, parish director of rebuilding, and Joan Swan, who will be serving as the church's liaison with the Landmarks Commission in obtaining approvals for the restoration plans. Mr. Meserole and Hilda Hollyer, a vice president of The Trust, also met with Laurie Beckelman, executive director of the New York Landmarks Conservancy, and an associate, Laurie Hammel, seeking to determine whether funds could be made available for the St.

Luke's restoration from income derived from the recent transfer of the Federal Archives Building (just west of the church) to the New York State Urban Development Corporation. The NYLC will shortly set up a separate non-profit organization, the Landmarks Restoration and Rehabilitation Fund, to be capitalized from these rental payments, which are expected to rise to approximately \$6 million over a period of a few years. No funds can be expected from this source, however, until leases have been signed and the rental income begins. The earliest this could occur, Ms. Beckelman believes, would be February, 1982.

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Trust Fetes Agnes de Mille

Agnes de Mille, the famed choreographer and long-time Village resident, was guest of honor at a champagne gala launching The Village Trust, held February 8 at the Municipal Art Society offices in the newly renovated Villard Houses, Madison Avenue & 51st Street. The party, "A Valentine for Agnes de Mille," was attended by more than two hundred Villagers and others who paid \$35 each to hear Miss de Mille reminisce about The Village, and to have the opportunity to obtain autographed copies of her new book, "America Dances," just published by Macmillan. Dr. Harold Taylor, formerly president of Sarah Lawrence College, served as the master of ceremonies. Others participating in the ceremonies included Armina Marshall, a founder of the Theater Guild, John Raitt, who played Billy Bigelow in the stage production of "Carousel," which Miss de Mille choreographed, and Ruth Wittenberg, honorary president of The Trust and chairperson of the Community Board Landmarks Committee.

Mrs. Margery Boyar, membership chairman of The Trust, served as coordinator of the event. Also responsible for the party's unanimously hailed success was catering provided courtesy of Armand Braiger and Mario De Martini, co-owners of One If By Land — Two If By Sea, 17 Barrow Street; and the Continental Restaurant, 59 Fifth Avenue, ably assisted by Judy Bendewald and her staff from the Melting Pot, 526 Hudson Street. A generous gift of *Cordoniu Blanc de Blanc* was provided courtesy of Jordi Encina of Joseph Victori Wines, Inc., Brooklyn, N.Y.



GUGGENHEIM AID: Cordelia Guggenheim, 9, a regular attendee of St. Luke's School, emptied her piggy-bank the day after the fire and turned over \$69 in savings to the Rebuild Fund. Then the third-grader began serenading passers-by with violin music on weekends, collecting additional contributions for the fund. At last count, the fund was over \$500 richer. At right; a view of the interior ruins of the church after the March 7 fire, which destroyed a new organ valued at \$200,000. (Photos: Chris Den Blaker)



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Officers Ruth Wittenberg, honorary president; Jack Meserole, president; Hilda Hollyer and Rachele Wall, vice presidents; Vera Schneider, secretary; Elizabeth Shuldiner, treasurer.

Trustees Richard Barnett, Margery Boyar, Ruth K. Dunn, William D. Eppes, Eva M. Senye Ettish, Hilda Hollyer, John McShane, Jack Meserole, Royce Rowe, Vera Schneider, James Shaw, Elizabeth Shuldiner, Stephen F. Temmer, Rachele Wall, Ruth Wittenberg.

The Greenwich Village Trust for Historic Preservation was established in 1980 by The Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation, Inc., a nonprofit corporation chartered to safeguard Greenwich Village's unrivaled cultural and architectural heritage against exploitation and decline.

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EDITORIAL

We are sorry to learn that one of the Federal Government's economies has been to abolish the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service (HCERS): the only Federal agency exclusively devoted to historic preservation. This was the agency within the Department of the Interior that, among other duties, gave final review of applications to demolish properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Its free 11593 "Technical Assistance" and "Information Exchange Notifications" put invaluable practical advice in the hands of property-owners, contractors, and preservation groups engaged across the country in the restoration and maintenance of aging sites and structures.*

The Greenwich Village Trust believes that measures such as abolition of HCERS and cutting the total Historic Preservation Fund from \$32.5 million in fiscal 1981 to \$5 million in 1982 are inconsistent with the Administration's program to reduce inflation and revive the economy.

The Trust thinks that maintenance and reuse of what America has already built is the soundest way to curb inflation and revive the economy. While sparing of energy and raw materials, preservation is labor intensive, putting hands to work in trades with severe unemployment levels. The sum of \$32.5 million seems a relatively modest investment for an undertaking with such promising dividends.

There may yet be time to save the Historic Preservation Fund. We ask that everyone who agrees with The Trust that a proven way to stabilize the American economy is to consoli-

*Remaining copies of these "Notifications" may still be obtained by writing Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, Information Exchange, Washington, D.C. 20243.

date its past achievements, communicate this view to the following, who will steer Congressional action on the Administration's proposal: Sen. Alfonse M. D'Amato, 34 Russell Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510; Sen Mark O. Hatfield, Chairman, Senate Appropriations Committee, 463 Russell Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510; Rep. Jamie L Whitten, Chairman, House Appropriations Committee, Subcommittee on Interior and Related Agencies, 2314 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515.



Some of The Trust's board members pause in their deliberations to pose for this snapshot. Seated from left to right: Royce Rowe, former publisher of *The Villager* and a producer at NBC; Ruth Wittenberg, honorary president and chairman of the CB2 landmarks committee; and Jack Meserole, president, a freelance book designer, and co-chairman of the West 11th Street Block Association. Standing left to right: Margery Boyar, membership chairman, and a board member of the Association of Village Homeowners; Vera Schneider, a founder of Friends of Christopher Park and president of the Sheridan Square/Barrow Street/Washington Place Block Association; Hilda Hollyer, a founding board member of several Village civic groups and chairman of the landmarks committee of Village Homeowners; and James Shaw, chairman of the Westbeth Theater Center and president of the West Village Committee.

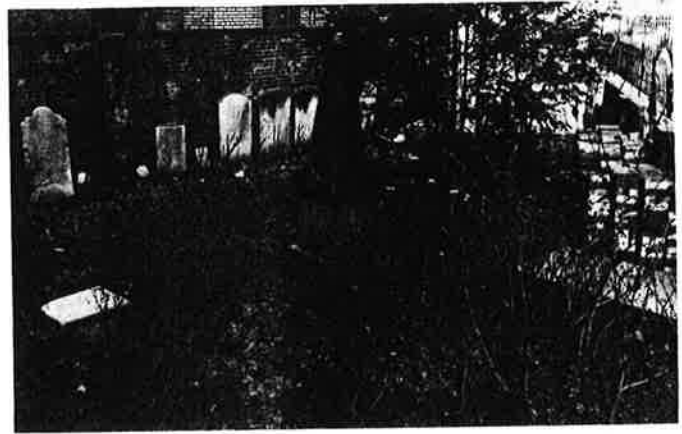
an-the-mi-on / an-'the-me-ən / n, pl **an-the-mia** / -me-ə / [Gk, fr. dim. of *anthemon* flower, fr. *anthos* — more at ANTHOLOGY]; an ornament of floral or foliated forms arranged in a radiating cluster but always flat (as in relief sculpture or in painting)

— *Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary*

The anthemion was a standard ornament of the 1820–1850 Greek Revival period in the United States. It abounds in the Greenwich Village Historic District as a cast iron cresting atop basement window grilles, in modified wooden form on doorway transoms, and elsewhere in buildings erected during this period. Since Greek Revival is the most representative early architectural style in the district, The Trust thought *The Anthemion* an appropriate name for its newsletter.

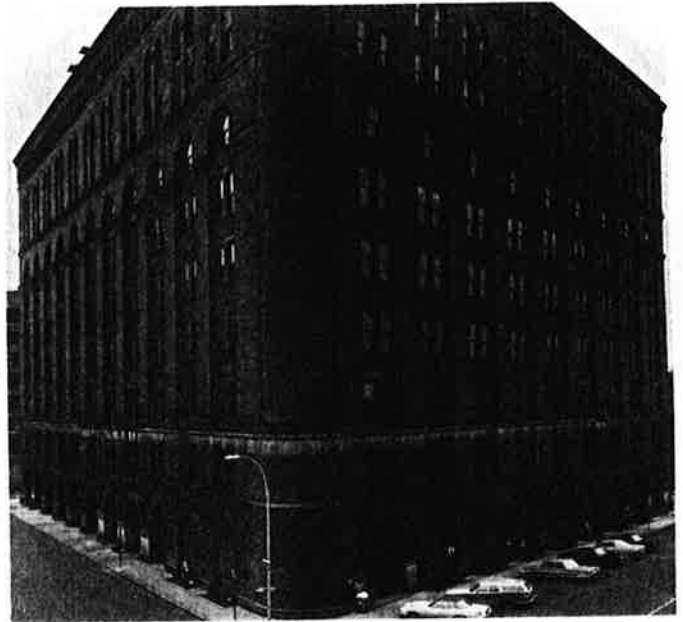
Preservation Agenda

Within the past several months, plans have been set to begin restoring a number of key buildings and sites within, or in the immediate environs, of the 65-block Greenwich Village Historic District. Of particular interest to members of the new Greenwich Village Trust is the plan to refurbish the 1805 Second Spanish-Portuguese Cemetery on West 11th Street, just east of Sixth Avenue. This will begin next month according to a plan donated by landscape designer, Pamela Berdan. The cemetery is the oldest open site in The Village. Its refurbishing will be carried out under a preservation agreement concluded between The Trust, the West 11th Street Block Association, and the Congregation Shearith-Israel, owners of the site.



The 1805 Second Spanish-Portuguese Cemetery on West 11th Street east of Sixth Avenue, which will be refurbished this spring. Plot was weeded and watered during last year's drought by block association volunteers, Walter and Sandra Brett. Bricks at right, procured by trustee Eva Ettisch from a Washington Street renovation, will be used for paths. Now if someone could donate a graffiti-proof iron fence that could replace the present masonry wall and let people see inside . . . (Photo: Judith Edelman).

Decisions made at the Federal level have given the go-ahead for the Caring Community to rehabilitate the Food and Maritime High School, located at 208 West 13th Street, and the rebuilding of the Elgin Theater on Eighth Avenue. The former high school building will be renovated with \$600,000 in Economic Development Administration funds, providing a modern cook-training school. The building's restoration is one of 62 EDA projects nationwide (seven of them in New York State) "unfrozen" by the Reagan administration. The Elgin Theater will be renovated so that it can be used by dance companies. This will be done with an EDA loan guarantee amounting to \$540,000 (announced during a meeting in New York City by President Reagan and Mayor Koch on March 14).



Last July the U.S. Department of the Interior authorized the General Services Administration to give the 10-story, red-brick Federal Archives Building, at 641 Washington Street, to the New York State Urban Development Corporation for redevelopment as a mixed residential and commercial site in accordance with a plan devised by the Teitelbaum Corp., a private developer, and the New York Landmarks Conservancy. The NYLC is a private non-profit, tax-exempt organization whose state charter enables it to protect, preserve and continue use of architecturally and culturally significant buildings throughout the state. Under the NYLC plan, the developer, together with the Starrett Housing Corporation, will carry out the renovation, providing 347 cooperative apartments, some facing inwards on a courtyard as wide as Fifth Avenue.

Federal Archives Building at 641 Washington Street, soon to be redeveloped as a mixed residential and commercial property (Photo: Steven Zane).

The decision to permit transfer of the Archives Building to UDC is the first of its kind under a 1972 Federal statute (Public Law 92-362) which allows the Government to give states or municipalities any "surplus" property if subsequent income in excess of the cost of repair, or renovation and maintenance of the property, is used by the grantee for "public historic preservation, park or recreational purposes." The NYLC estimates that the renovated Archives Building will generate almost \$6 million for a Landmark Restoration and Rehabilitation Fund over a period of 15 years. David Teitelbaum, the developer, estimates that, in lieu of state sales tax payments for construction materials, the \$21 million conversion should immediately provide \$600,000 for neighborhood preservation projects, for which proposals have already been submitted by CB2, while additional payments would be made to the city in lieu of real estate taxes.



Just east of The Village a rare example of small public courthouse architecture at Second Avenue and 2nd Street that was abandoned to vandalism in the 1960s will be given a new lease on life as an archival film museum. Nearly two years ago, the courthouse was acquired from the city by the Anthology Film Archives, of 80 Wooster Street, an organization estab-

The former courthouse at Second Avenue and 2nd Street, which will be renovated to house film archives and several viewing theaters (Photo: Hollis Melton).

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lished ten years ago to preserve and make available to the public the creative works of independent film and video artists. This renovation project, set to begin April 15, is a \$1.5 million undertaking. Grants have been received from several foundations, corporations, and from individuals and city and State agencies; however, an additional drive for \$600,000 is being mounted to make the project eligible for a \$420,000 additional Urban Development Action Grant, which is pending before the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The architectural concept and design for the museum has been rendered by Raimund Abraham. The museum will house three film and video theaters, a reference library, film and video preservation vaults, and a facility that will enable the institution to broadcast programs to the immediate neighborhood and New York metropolitan area via cable television.

Anthology Archives seeks not only financial contributions toward the \$600,000 goal, but contributions of works of art, a sponsor (providing \$200,000) for each of the theaters, preservation vaults and the library, and sponsors (at \$1,000 each) for the 300 seats that the theaters will accommodate.

A modern-day "Dutch connection" lies behind a novel preservation undertaking that has just been initiated to raise funds both in the U.S. and in Holland to complete restoration of St. Mark's Church at Second Avenue and 10th Street and the Dutch West India House in Amsterdam. The Amsterdam building dates from 1625, when a group of Dutch merchants, among them Peter Stuyvesant (1592-1672), banded together there to promote their overseas trade by erecting a fortress on the island of Manhattan. Some 175 years later (in 1795), St. Mark's was built on the spot where Stuyvesant, who served as director-general of the New Netherlands from 1646-1664, had earlier constructed a family chapel on his "bouwerie" (the Dutch term for a farm, which has since led to the Anglicized name, "Bowery," for this area of Manhattan). St. Mark's and the Dutch West India House have another thing in common: both were badly damaged in recent years by fires. To raise \$500,000 to complete the restoration of both buildings, a Dutch American West India Company Foundation has been set up with a New York branch at the General Bank of the Netherlands, 84 William Street, whose fund-raising efforts are being directed not only toward parishioners and friends of St. Mark's, but among Dutch descendants and American companies doing business in the Netherlands.

... and Westway

The 8-year community-wide battle against Westway, the \$2-3 billion Federal-State highway project to redevelop the west side of Lower Manhattan, may be lost this spring unless its protagonists can raise at least another \$25,000 for legal expenses. This is what the West Side Ad Hoc Committee Against Westway, the umbrella organization for the many local groups opposed to the redevelopment, estimates to be the cost of lawsuits against the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which has recently certified Westway, and the State of New York, which may institute condemnation proceedings for the adjacent waterfront property—with reimbursement to the City of \$100 million—after local community board hearings, which are not binding.

The West Side Committee and its affiliated organizations oppose Westway because they believe that the proposed demo-

lition of the few remaining piers on Manhattan's Lower West Side and construction of an Interstate Highway under landfill along that corridor will increase gasoline-powered traffic in Manhattan at the expense of water surface and rail transportation; that this landfill will have an adverse environmental effect on the downstream wetlands of New York and New Jersey; that the contemplated unprotected parks and housing on this landfill will stifle existing neighborhoods just now beginning to revive along this corridor; and that, finally, the \$2-3 billion might better be spent on the Metropolitan Area's decrepit mass transit system.

Community Board No. 1, which reaches from the Battery to Canal Street, and Community Board No. 2, representing Greenwich Village from Canal to West 14th Streets, have consistently opposed Westway; while Community Board No. 4, encompassing Chelsea-Clinton above West 14th Street, which initially supported the project, has reversed its position.

To help reach its \$25,000 goal the West Side Committee is sponsoring a street fair on Saturday, May 23, on West 10th Street between Sixth and Greenwich Avenues from 11:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. All individuals and organizations who wish to participate should call Mel Stevens after 6:00 P.M. at 989-0089. Those who cannot participate, but would like to make tax-deductible contributions, should make them payable to *West Side Ad Hoc Committee Against Westway* (Re: Westway Legal Fund) and mail them to 304 West 11th Street, New York, N.Y. 10014.

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Happily, this would not be too late, according to Dr. Hunter, who says he hopes that a committee independent of St. Luke's can also be set up to solicit *significant* matching grants and gifts for the church's renovation. Such a new committee, he said, might well be called "Friends of St. Luke's."

The New York architectural firm, Hardy Holzman Pfeiffer Associates, meanwhile, has been awarded the contract to redesign the interior of St. Luke's, following consideration by the vestry of the Episcopal church of plans drawn up by eight architectural organizations. The consensus of parishioners, according to Mr. Britton, is that no changes will be made to the church's exterior, although it may be advisable to make some "harmonious adjustments" internally to the hall in a rear wing of the building in order to better accommodate the great variety of social organizations and community groups that have made use of it in recent years. Hardy Holzman Pfeiffer Associates is "renowned for its sensitive renovations of 19th century buildings," according to the St. Luke's announcement. Three awards were given the firm for its work on the Cooper Hewitt Museum project, completed in 1976, and the firm has been involved in the Grand Central Terminal renovation, the renovation of Symphony Hall in Newark, N.J., and creation of the Harbor Arts Center in Boston, Massachusetts. The firm's senior partner, Hugh Hardy, a resident of The Village, will be chief designer for the sanctuary in the church. The Rev. Ledlie I. Laughlin, Jr., rector of St. Luke's, and Dr. Hunter both say they hope that the congregation will be able to worship anew in the redone (but still unfinished) structure by the end of this year.

While no decision has as yet been made on the nature of a formal fund-raising effort, the congregation has established the St. Luke's Rebuild Fund at 487 Hudson Street, New York, N.Y. 10014, and additional donations should be sent to this address.