NEIGHBORHOOD HISTORY GROUP

BLOOMINGDALE BULLETIN

Discovering, preserving, and sharing our history

Issue No. 21 *Winter 2026*

Happy New Year!

The Bloomingdale Neighborhood History Group welcomes 2026 and invites you to greet the new year with us as we recall an earlier version of raids in the neighborhood, share encouraging support for the preservation of precious old maps, look into local combat in the revolutionary war that Ken Burns missed, remember a beloved local artist, and hear promising news of the future of the Metro Theater. We look forward to feedback, comments, and ideas here. We hope you enjoy it all and will choose to support us with a donation.

Upcoming Programs

Neighborhood Walking Tours
Jim Mackin
Sunday, January 4
Sunday, February 8
Sunday March 29
Free. No reservations needed.
Meet at the south end of Straus Park, Broadway and 106th Street, at 2:00 pm.


Jim Mackin

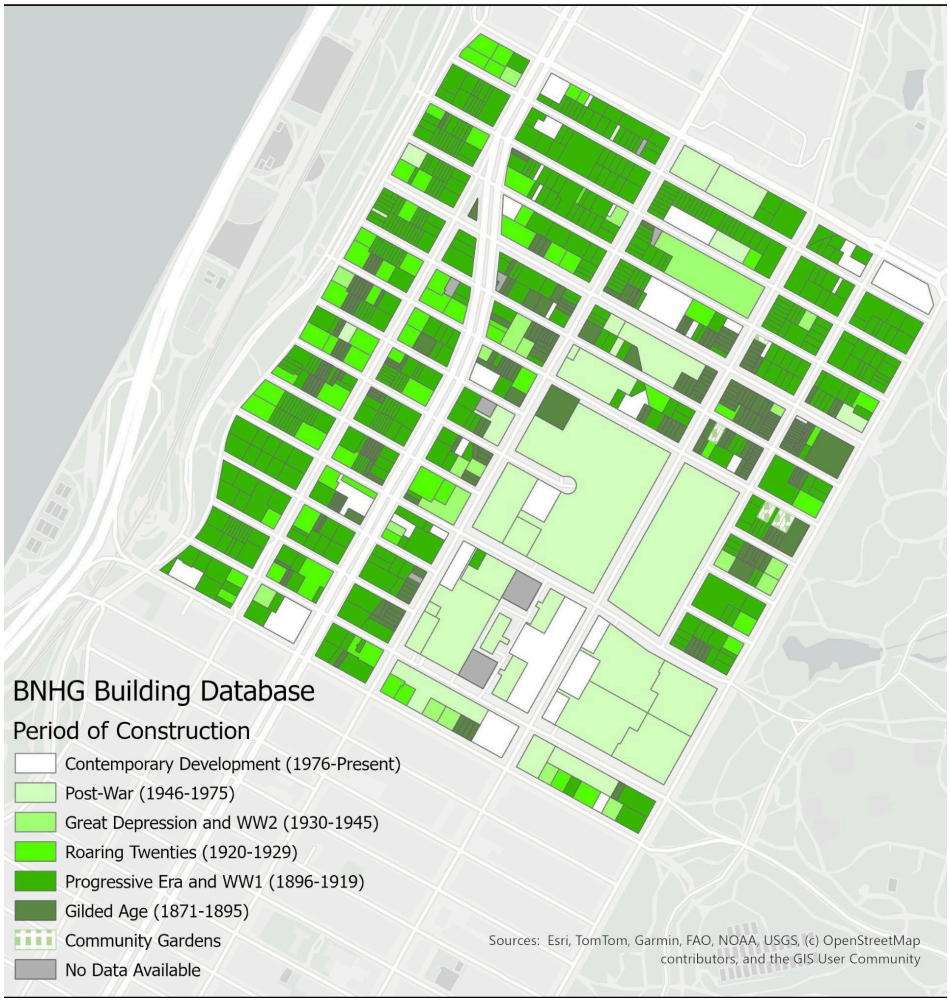
It's worth your while to bundle up for an afternoon Bloomingdale walking tour with Jim Mackin, NYC historian and author of the popular book, *Notable New Yorkers of Manhattan's Upper West Side*. There's always something new in his bottomless trove of facts and anecdotes about the people and places in

the neighborhood, all of it entertaining. Tours vary from month to month and last between one and two hours.

Spatializing History: An Interactive Map of the Bloomingdale Building Database
Abigail Jack
Thursday, January 29, 2025, 6:30 pm

The Bloomingdale Building Database was released in 2022, the product of more than three years of research and field work by BNHG members. The database was originally designed mainly to answer two questions BNHG is often asked: “How old is my building?” and “Who designed it?”

Now, Abigail Jack has enhanced the database and has represented it visually in an interactive map, making the answers easier to find and a lot more fun. Check the BNHG website to try it out.



The map includes all of the approximately 1,056 buildings in every block and lot from the north side of West 96th Street to the south side of West 110th Street between Central Park West and Riverside Drive. You can click on the map and instantly view information about the building in that location, including the street address, the architect, the number of floors and, if it's a residential building, the number of apartments. You'll also find its tax block and lot number, and NYC Department of Buildings and Department of Finance information, along with links to other resources.

Abigail Jack is a recent graduate of Barnard College and a member of the Bloomingdale Neighborhood History Group. Having lived and worked in Bloomingdale for the past three years, she is eager to make local history accessible to all.

An Angel in Bloomingdale:
A Look into the Life of the Artist Angelo Romano
Thursday, February 26, 2026, 6:00 pm


Angelo Romano

Join us for a panel discussion and a series of interviews celebrating the life and art of Angelo Romano, the Spanish-born artist whose creative spirit left an enduring mark on Bloomingdale.

Born in Madrid, Romano traveled to Argentina and Brazil as a merchant marine before finding his artistic home in New York. In his later years, he became a beloved figure in the Bloomingdale community, known for his paintings of angels inspired by everyday New Yorkers and children whose stories he captured through his collaborations with schools and local organizations.

Angelito de Angelo

Many of his works were motivated by his travels and by those whom he held close to his heart. This conversation brings together those who knew him best as friends, collaborators, and community members, who reflect on the many lives he touched and the lasting resonance of his art.

This free program will be both on Zoom and live, with the location to be determined. Check our website for further information, or you can register here to receive notice when details become available.

Past Programs

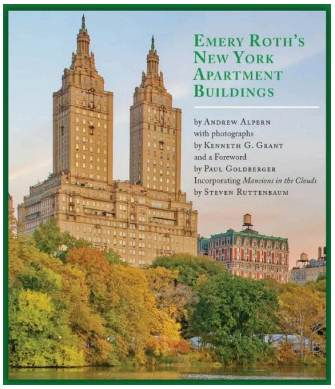
The Firemen's Memorial (and other Fabulous Fountains)
Stephanie Azzarone
October 9, 2025


Annual ceremony at the Fireman's Memorial

The elegant Firemen's Memorial on Riverside Drive honors the firefighters who have perished in the city's many conflagrations over the centuries. It is also a cherished fountain. In this presentation of the history and design of the Memorial, BNHG member Stephanie Azzarone includes stories of fallen firefighters, influential ministers, celebrated sculptors, and scandal-plagued models. As a bonus, she notes several other fabulous Bloomingdale monuments that are also fountains, drawn from her new book, *Fabulous Fountains of New York.*

You can see a recording of the program on our website.

Emery Roth's Upper West Side Architectural Masterpieces
Andrew Alpern
October 29, 2025
Co-sponsored by the Bloomingdale Neighborhood History Group (BNHG) and the Columbus Amsterdam BID



Emery Roth, the preeminent architect of many of Manhattan's stellar apartment buildings, was active primarily in the 1920s and '30s. He gave us the Normandy, the Beresford, the San Remo, and many more Upper West Side landmarks.

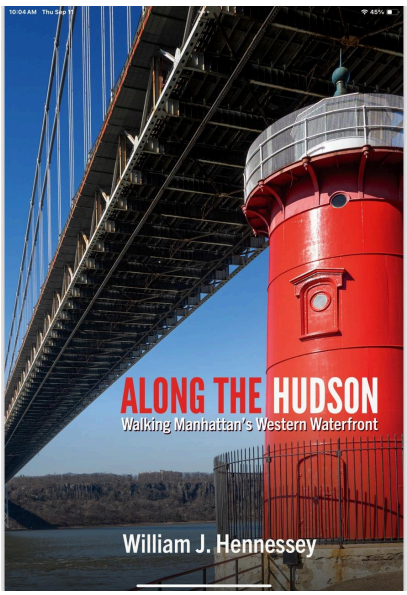
Andrew Alpern is an architectural historian, architect, and attorney, and a nationally recognized expert on historic apartment houses in New York City. He has

written 11 books, many of which tell the stories of the city's architectural beauties and their fascinating backstories. He is also an authority on Roth, the subject of his newly published book, *Emery Roth's New York Apartment Buildings*.

You can see a recording of the program on our website.

Along the Hudson: Walking Manhattan's Western Waterfront

William J. Hennessy
November 13, 2025
Co-sponsored by the Bloomingdale Neighborhood History Group and the Columbus Amsterdam BID



The rise, decline, and rebirth of Manhattan's Hudson River waterfront from the 17th century to the present day makes an extraordinary history, told here in a virtual walking tour of the shoreline. It relates stories of gritty working docks and inviting parks, great ocean liners, humble ferries, tunnels, and railways. Along the way we encounter historic events and some extraordinary personalities who shaped New York's dynamic relationship with the river.

William Hennessey is an architectural historian and retired art museum director. He is the author of three architectural guidebooks. His newest book is *Along the Hudson: Walking Manhattan's Western Waterfront*.

You can see a recording of the program on our website.

Bloomingdale's Scoundrels, Scalawags and Scrappers

John Tauranac
December 2, 2025


Scoundrels of the Gilded Age

The 1890s was the tail end of the Gilded Age. It was not a "Golden Age," just a veneer, and although the decade was called "The Gay Nineties," the gaiety was generally reserved for the gilt-edged, top 10 percenters. Here are the stories of businessmen and public servants who played by their own rules,

successfully gaming the system to their advantage.

John Tauranac writes on New York City's social and architectural history and has authored many important books on the subject. His latest is *New York's Scoundrels, Scalawags, and Scrappers: The City in the Last Decade of the Gilded Age*. Wearing another hat, Tauranac designs maps and was the creative director of MTA's 1979 "New York City Subway Map." You can see a recording of the program on our website.

Programs in Development

Schinasi Mansion

BNHG has several programs in the works for the upcoming months. One of them is coming in March, when you can hear the story of the Schinasi mansion, the bright white home that is Riverside Drive's only remaining privately owned, freestanding villa.

Check for Upcoming Events on our website and watch for our email announcements of this and other programs as dates and times are determined.


The Schinasi mansion

The BNHG Jim Torain Award is Presented to Tom Fedorek


Tom Fedorek

BNHG presented the 2025 Jim Torain Award on October 29, 2025. The annual award acknowledges a person or organization that honors the history of the Bloomingdale Neighborhood.
On behalf of BNHG, Jim Mackin presented this year's award to Tom Fedorek, a long-time Bloomingdale resident, in recognition of exceptional research and creation of a video documenting the history of his building at 345 Riverside Drive at 107th Street. Mackin called the video an exemplary model of how a building's story can be preserved and shared. The award is made as a testament to Tom and his invaluable contribution to

the Bloomingdale community, and in the hope that others will be inspired to discover and memorialize the history of their own building, learning from the work he has done.

The presentation and Tom's acceptance took place at the start of the October 29 program about Emery Roth and can be viewed here.

Tom is a graduate of Columbia University and has since lived in the Bloomingdale neighborhood. One of his interests in retirement is architecture, which he has pursued at Columbia. For a course in architectural history, he wrote a paper about the history of his building and, based on that paper, he gave a talk to residents of his building on the occasion of its 70th anniversary. He spoke about the building, its site, and gave a mini history of the Bloomingdale neighborhood. The talk was put into video format and is available on You Tube here. In accepting the award, Tom credited his daughter, Elizabeth, for contributing to the YouTube video and noted that BNHG was a valuable resource for his research.

The BNHG Jim Torain Award is named after Jim Torain, who grew up in The Old Community and ensured that its legacy, including its many talented and accomplished residents who enriched our neighborhood and our history, would not be lost or forgotten. The Old Community is the African American neighborhood that flourished on West 98th and West 99th Streets between Central Park West and Columbus Avenue until it was destroyed by urban renewal in 1955. A recording of a BNHG program about the Old Community is available here.

Events in the Neighborhood

The Metro Theater Becomes the Uptown Film Center

A rendering of the Uptown Film Center

The landmarked art deco Metro Theater, at Broadway and West 99th Street, first opened in 1933. It has been vacant since 2005. Now, the new nonprofit, Uptown Film Center, has raised funds to purchase the structure and is turning it into an Upper West Side cultural institution.

On November 20, 2025, Bloomingdale Aging in Place hosted a program by the Uptown Film Center about their project. Ira

Deutchman, president, and Adeline Monzier, vice president for Education and Community Outreach, made a Zoom presentation, now available on a YouTube recording here.

The presentation gives a richly illustrated history of the cinema. They then outline plans for the new center for art and film, including a film education program and ideas for community involvement. They also discuss ways we can support the project. The Uptown Film Center website has more information.

Our Incoming Borough President Supports the Preservation of the Historic Map Collection

Gil Tauber

In response to concerns expressed by BNHG, Brad Hoylman-Sigal, Manhattan's incoming Borough President, has voiced his support for preservation of his office's historic map collection, which is potentially threatened by a change to the City Charter.

Ballot Proposal No. 5, approved by voters this past November, will "Create a Digital City Map to Modernize City Operations." It will remove mapping functions from the five Borough Presidents' offices and centralize them in the Department of City Planning (DCP). According to the Charter Revision Commission Final Report, "It will take approximately 18 months to translate the borough maps into a unified language and scan pre-1938 maps … that exist only in paper form in borough Topographical Bureaus. Once all extant paper maps are in DCP's possession and scanned, DCP will be in a position to create a digital version of the City Map."

As communicated in a December 1 letter to Mr. Hoylman-Sigal, BNHG is concerned about the handling and eventual disposition of the old maps of historical value currently held by the Manhattan Topographical Bureau. The Bureau's files include hundreds of maps, some dating back to the 1700s, that are too fragile to be scanned by conventional means. It includes the original hand-painted 1820 Randel Map, which is the basis for the Manhattan street grid, as well as some rolled maps that are so brittle that, pending special conservation measures, they cannot safely be unrolled.

The City Map is actually a series of maps showing the exact locations of street lines, as well as boundaries of parks and other public places. It is therefore the

basis for all surveys and deed descriptions relating to real property in the city. The maps also show, for each street, the elevation of legal grade. That in turn determines the elevation of all sewers, water mains, storm drainage and other utilities, as well as the elevations of buildings.

This is a portion of the 1821 Randel Farm Map, showing the area from West 95th to West 100th Streets. At the upper right, on the east side of Bloomingdale Road just north of the future 99th Street, is St. Michael's Church. The original map is in the Topographical Bureau of the Manhattan Borough President's Office. Hand-painted in watercolors, the Randel Map consists of 92 sheets, at a scale of 100 feet to the inch. When assembled, the entire map is 11 feet wide and 50 feet long.

Until the 1938 charter revisions, each borough was responsible for its own street system, including surveying and mapping. In 1939, the separate borough departments were merged into a city-wide Department of Highways, now the Department of Transportation. However, the mapping functions, or topographical bureaus, remained in the offices of the respective borough presidents. This was because, in mapping systems begun under pre-1898 municipalities, each borough has its own "datum" — that is, its own definition of zero elevation. In addition, the boroughs have different definitions of legal grade. Manhattan measures elevation at the top of the curb. Others may measure it at the street centerline.

In past mass relocations of old city records, it was not unusual for important documents to be damaged, lost, or discarded. BNHG urged that the movement and processing of the Topographical Bureau maps be done responsibly and under appropriate professional supervision.

In his reply to BNHG's letter, Mr. Hoylman-Sigal wrote that he shared BNHG's "concern that the maps, especially the fragile pre-20th-century materials, are handled safely as they are digitized. My team and I will be coordinating closely with the other Borough Presidents to ensure that any transfer happens in a secure, professionally supervised manner. I fully share your view that these materials are public assets of exceptional value and want to be vigilant in preventing the kinds of losses or damage that have occurred in past relocations of city records."

Federal Agents in the Streets: The Slacker Raids of 1918

Pam Tice

On September 3, 1918, the federal government began a search in New York City for "slackers," young men who had not registered or completed the draft process, or who had registered but not reported for duty when called up. They also hoped to find actual Army deserters.

World War 1 poster, labeled Mayor's Committee 50 East 42nd Street

The "Slacker Raids" began in the early morning hours when thousands of agents swarmed all the railroad and ferry stations busy with commuters. Then they moved to workplaces, factory neighborhoods, certain office buildings, and, later, theaters, restaurants, saloons, barber shops, and parks.

Young men, or any man who looked to be aged 18-30, were stopped and asked for the white card that proved their draft status. If they did not have it, they were grouped and transported to the local police station in a vehicle. In the early part of the day, they were allowed to call home and get someone to bring the card to the station. Then they could be released. But, as the day wore on, and the numbers increased, this step was impossible. Next was transport to the headquarters for the operation in Manhattan and the Bronx, the 69th Regiment Armory at Lexington Avenue and 25th Street.

At the Armory, the long line of cars, trucks, and laundry wagons used for transport was met by armed soldiers who got the men into the Armory, sorted them into draft board areas, and then asked them to fill out a questionnaire. They were then taken in groups to a “sorter” who had telephone access to the draft boards, who would ensure they were legally registered, give them a card, and dismiss them. For most young men, this took three or four hours. Others were held, some overnight. Cots and sandwiches were brought in. If someone was found to be unregistered or a deserter, they were taken to the Tombs, the city’s prison.

Crowds of New Yorkers began to gather at places where agents were questioning and holding men in the streets; the news reported that one spot was Broadway and 96th Street, where the Riviera and Riverside Theaters drew their attention, along with the restaurants and saloons in the neighborhood. One young man had tied up his yacht in the North River and walked to Broadway to get a drink, and was taken in.

Crowds also gathered at the Armory. Women showed up with the white cards, or family bibles, or other documents to prove birth registration. Armed soldiers there had to control the crowd. There were also soldiers with fixed bayonets on the vehicles transporting the young men.

George Miller, a transit system flagman from West 100th Street, ended up hiding in his flagman’s shanty for five days, eventually getting arrested for not completing his registration.

The raids continued into September 4th and then ended.

How did men get the white registration card? The 1917 draft registration was a two-step process. On June 5, young men aged 21-30 were ordered to register at the polling place where they voted. In our neighborhood, that included laundries, other stores, and P.S. 165 on West 108th Street. They were given a blue card to prove they had registered. Then they were sent a questionnaire to be filled in and returned to the local draft board to determine their status, from ready to serve to exempt for a variety of reasons, including occupation or family responsibilities.

It took a while that summer for the Draft Exemption Boards to get organized. In our neighborhood, there were boards operating at two elementary schools, the West 108th Street PS 165, and PS 87 on West 78th Street. The Board finished grading their registration cards and mailed a white card, called Form 1007, to

every registered young man, assigning them a draft status. Later, if their number was called to enter the Army, the Board was responsible for conducting a physical examination and handling further appeals to change status.

Young men reporting to the NYC draft board, 1918

Who were the agents conducting the Slacker Raids? The U.S. Department of Justice organized it, using its own agents in the Bureau of Investigation (later known as the FBI). They also used the New York City Police Reserve, 2,000 soldiers from local camps, 1,000 sailors from the Brooklyn Navy Yard, 7,000 civilian volunteers from the American Protective League (APL), and women in the Women's Motor Corps who were trained to drive ambulances and other vehicles.

The New York Police Reserve was a trained civilian force formed during World War I to supplement the regular police, many of whom had left for military service.

The APL was organized in Chicago in 1917 to find spies and saboteurs, but it also helped find slackers. In our neighborhood, an APL member facilitated the arrest of a cabaret singer at the Campus Restaurant on Columbus Avenue who had not reported for Army duty. They found a New York Yankees player on West 104 who had not checked in with his draft board in Pennsylvania.

By September 5, 1918, the outrage at the Slacker Raids was well underway. The United States Senate threatened an investigation, and the U.S. Attorney General started his own. Meanwhile, those in charge sought validation, citing the number of men brought in as an accomplishment rather than a violation of rights. They bragged about how many they had "bagged" in one restaurant.

The numbers brought in are difficult to sort out because some reports covered the area, including New Jersey, while others focused on the Manhattan/Bronx raids that brought men to the Armory. In the end, about 12,000 men were detained overall, about 5,500 were brought to the Armory, and only about 200 slackers were identified.

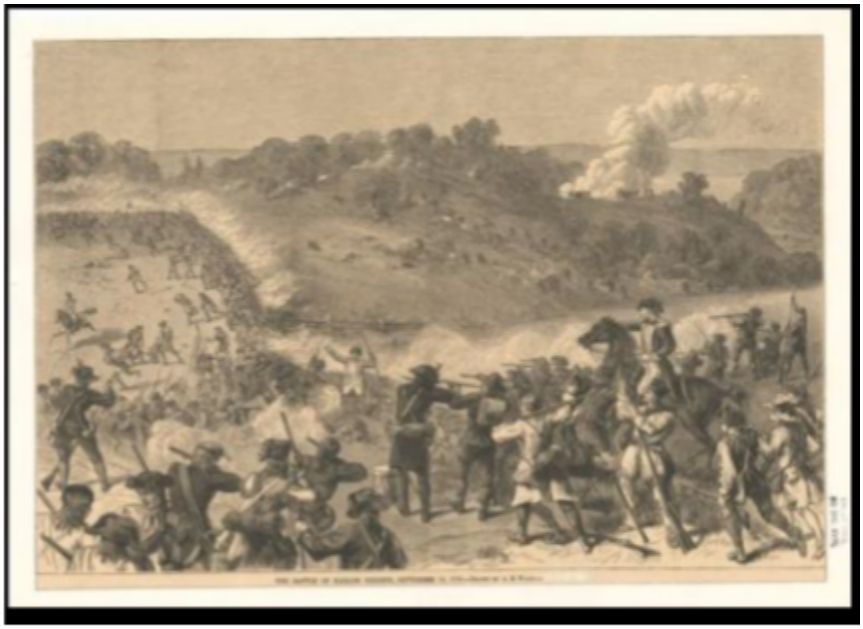
President Wilson never apologized for the raid and was said to have thought the raids put the fear of God into the young men before the next draft happened in mid-September.

The APL was disbanded shortly after the war ended in November 1918.

The American Revolution in Our Neighborhood

Pam Tice

In his recent film about the American Revolution, Ken Burns skipped over our neighborhood battle, so we will tell the tale here.



The Battle of Harlem Heights

News flash: No re-enactors are planning to be here, but the National Park Service at the Grant Memorial is planning to host a walking tour on September 16, 2026—the day of the battle in 1776—as part of the nationwide 250th celebration of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Our thanks to our colleague, Gil Tauber, for checking on this.

An article by Joshua Shepherd provides a detailed description of the battle.

In September 1776, the colonialists had retreated from the Battle of Brooklyn, where they'd suffered a major defeat, and withdrawn to northern Manhattan. General Washington was at Roger Morris' Mansion (today's Morris-Jumel Mansion). The event happened by chance when a scouting party, Knowlton's Rangers, came up against a battalion of British light infantry. The Americans stood their ground in the buckwheat field, now part of the Columbia University complex, and successfully drove the British back. The Battle's importance was the morale boost it gave the American troops just before Washington left New York and retreated into New Jersey.

The plaque at Columbia University commemorating the battle

The southern battle line that day was at the Nicholas Jones house at (today's) West End Avenue and 106th Street. The British troops retreated here after the battle, trashing Jones' home, burning his fences, and cutting down his trees. Mr. Jones filed for reparations after the war but never got any satisfaction.

The battle is commemorated with two markers. On Broadway near 117th Street, a bas-relief plaque depicts the two officers who died in the battle, Thomas Knowlton and Andrew Leitch. The Daughters of the American Revolution dedicated a stone tablet that is located just south of the Grant Memorial on Riverside Drive at 121 Street.

The Old Moms and Pops of Bloomingdale

Caitlin Hawke

From the Horn & Hardart Automat to the Movie Place, which businesses do you miss most? Where did you used to shop locally? Do you remember the Abbey Pub, Oppenheimer Meats, the Green Farm? We need your help!

Here is a special opportunity to collect neighbors' reminiscences about past Mom & Pop businesses in our neighborhood. There is also room to share your appreciation for the current Mom & Pop businesses of Bloomingdale.

Caitlin Hawke and Gil Tauber, both neighborhood history buffs, are crowdsourcing your memories of old local stores and restaurants from West 96th to West 110th Streets. Your memories will add to historical knowledge and, with your permission, become part of various projects they are both working on.

Please take just a little time to fill out the questionnaire.

Notable New Yorkers of Manhattan's Upper West Side

Jim Mackin
Author of *Notable New Yorkers of Manhattan's Upper West Side*

Jay Livingston
Composer
207 West 98th Street


Jay Livingston

"A horse is a horse,
Of course, of course."

So sang Jay Livingston one time. He didn't usually sing, but with his songwriting lyricist-partner, Ray Evans, he composed many songs and television themes like those for *Mister Ed* and *Bonanza*. They also composed such well-known songs as "Silver Bells," "Tammy," "To Each His Own," "Ally Oop," "Cara Mia," and three that won Oscars: "Buttons and Bows," "Mona Lisa," and "Que Sera Sera."

He was born Jacob Harold Levison in Pennsylvania and, while at the University of Pennsylvania, he put together a dance band and met Ray Evans. With some mentoring from the great songwriter Johnny Mercer, they teamed up in New York and were soon in great demand in Hollywood where they contributed to more than 80 motion pictures.

Place Names in Bloomingdale

Pam Tice

Catherine “Katy” Ferguson Way
Central Park West and 95th Street

On October 18th, the Second Presbyterian Church celebrated its member, Catherine Ferguson, whose name is now remembered on the new street sign at Central Park West and 95th Street, near the church on the corner of 96th Street.

The original Scotch Presbyterian Church was downtown in the financial district. The church moved to our neighborhood in the 1890s. In 1928, it made a real estate agreement for a residential building with a church and a school at its base. The Alexander Robertson School honors Ferguson’s legacy with a literacy program named after her.

Catherine Ferguson (1779-1854) was born into slavery. In 1789, she became the first Black member of the Scotch Presbyterian Church, today’s Second Presbyterian. She started the first New York “Sabbath School” in her home, a school for poor children who had to work on weekdays. Presbyterian minister Rev. Derrick McQueen testified before Community Board 7 in 2023, when the street name was proposed, explaining the importance of Sunday Schools at a time when there was no free public education.


Catherine Ferguson

The Alexander Robertson School is on West 95th Street near where the sign is placed. It includes Ferguson’s nickname “Katy” because the children used to call her “Aunt Katy.”

Isador Straus' Gold Watch

Pam Tice

Our neighborhood love story was in the news again recently when Isador Straus' gold watch was auctioned in London for $2.3 million. The watch is engraved with his initials and the date of his 43rd birthday when he received it.

Isador and Ida Straus were aboard the Titanic when it sank on April 15, 1912. Mr. Straus had given up his seat in a lifeboat, and Ida joined him back on the liner rather than be saved. Mr. Straus' body was recovered; hers was not. He was 67 years old.

The Strauses are commemorated in Straus Park at Broadway and 106th Street. Their house was a block away. BNHG did a program in 2024 about the Strauses, which you can watch here.

Divine Stones

Pam Tice

Starting in the 1970s, the Cathedral of St. John the Divine established its stonework yard next to the unfinished building at Amsterdam Avenue and West 112th Street. The continuation of construction received a lot of attention on the day in 1982 when aerialist Philippe Petit walked on his highwire across Amsterdam Avenue and handed the silver trowel to the Episcopal Bishop of New York.

Ruben Gibson works on a capital of a pair of figures with arms intertwined on June 20, 1986. On the floor is his clay model and on the wall behind him is a sketch of one of the figures.

I was recently introduced to a website where the stories of the stonework are collected: Divine Stone - Dedicated to the stonework at the Cathedral St. John the Divine. The workers, and the stones themselves, have many stories to tell.

BNHG History Posters Are Now Online

The popular posters about themes in Bloomingdale history have now been assembled all together on the BNHG website. These were created by BNHG member Rob Garber for display at the Bloomingdale Branch of the New York Public Library. The series of 11 exhibits was introduced in Spring of 2023 and the final one was mounted in October 2025. Each one was on display for approximately three months. Now you can see them all here.

Donate

You can support local history when you support the work of The Bloomingdale Neighborhood History Group. BNHG presents many free programs throughout the year, in person and on Zoom. We maintain a collection of materials at the Bloomingdale Public Library. Our website offers numerous blog posts, an interactive building database, and many other resources. Donations to our work can be made through a GoFundMe site managed by the Columbus Amsterdam Business Improvement District, making your gift fully tax-deductible. Visit our website Donation Page to learn more. Thank you!
