

# OCULUS

on current new york architecture

The New York Chapter of the American Institute of Architects

Volume 45, Number 7, March 1984



*Prospect Park through the Cleft Ridge Span*

*Photo: Paul Berizzi*

# OCULUS

# PROSPECT

## A new Preservation Plan

by Paul C

Volume 45, Number 7, March 1984

### Oculus

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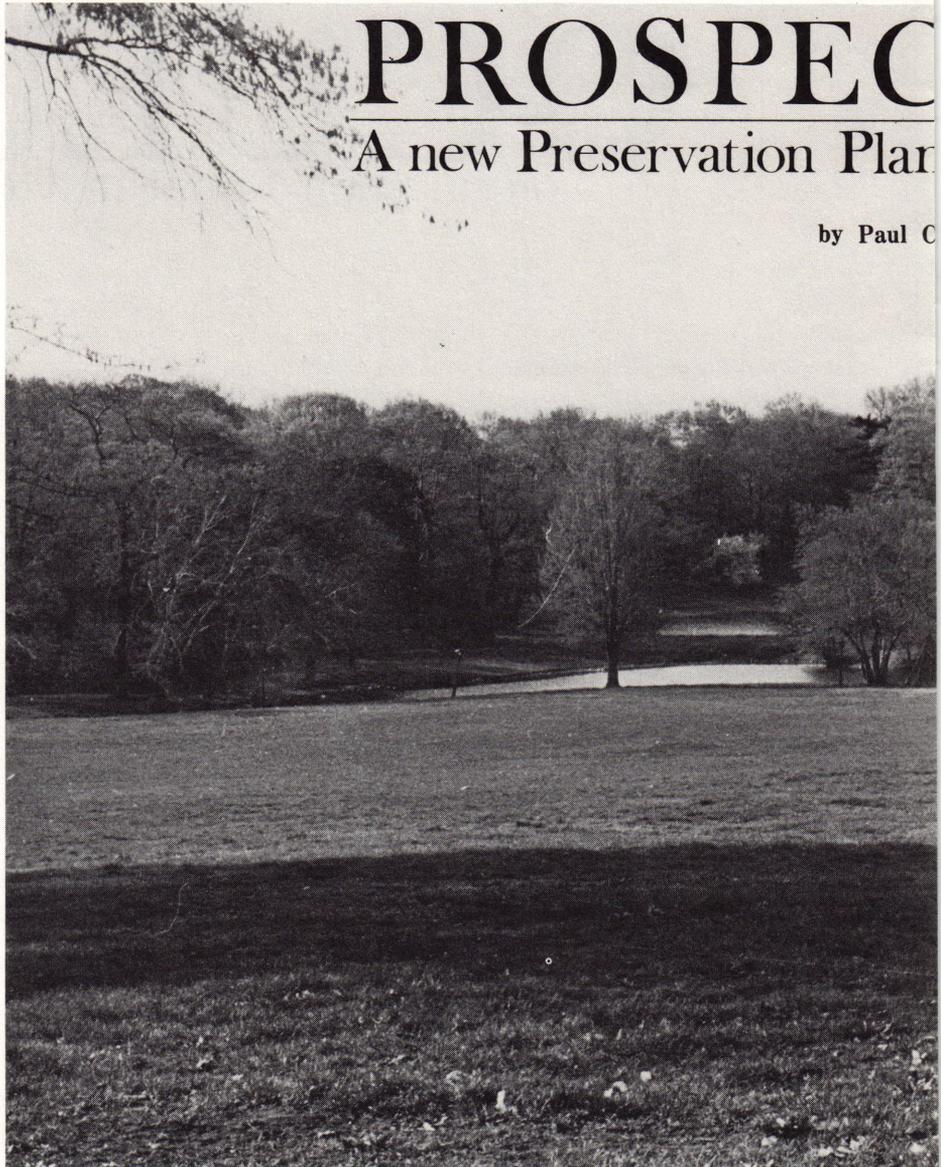
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Paul C. Berizzi is Assistant to the Prospect Park Administrator for Capital Projects and acts as liaison between the Parks Department, private consultants, and the community.

### Architecture Credits

The architects involved with the various restoration projects in Prospect Park are:

**Boathouse:** The Ehrenkrantz Group.  
**Four Arches (Meadowport, Cleft Ridge, Nethermead, and Lullwater Bridge):** Stephen B. Jacobs and Partners.

**Litchfield Villa:** Hutchins, Evans and Lefferts.

**Tennis House. Picnic House:** New York City Department of Parks.

**Zoo:** Goldstone and Hinz  
**Bandshell:** Bloom and Graff/Kane and Carruth (joint venture).

**Soldiers & Sailors Arch:** New York City Department of Parks

**Oriental Pavilion:** James Lamantia

Brooklyn's Prospect Park, designed in 1866, is one of the finest examples of 19th-century naturalistic landscape architecture and is considered by many historians to be the most successful collaboration of Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux. Situated on a 526-acre site on the terminal moraine of the last glacier, its rolling meadows, rugged forest, and expansive lake have been a source of pleasure and relaxation for Brooklyn residents since the first section was opened in 1870. Altered by the forces of nature, inadequate maintenance, and occasional user insensitivity, Prospect Park is now in the midst of a renaissance with a new Preservation Plan. This rebirth promises a greener future with the predominant goal of preserving and restoring a truly important work of art.

### The Park's History

When the Greensward plan of Olmsted & Vaux was chosen in an 1858 competition to design what was to become Central Park, the then

independent City of Brooklyn was an aspiring suburban alternative to New York. Not wanting to be outdone by its neighbor, Brooklyn began an effort to create its own grand park. In 1860, Egbert Viele, a topographical engineer, was employed to develop plans for improvement of a site to be known as Mount Prospect Park. But at the outbreak of the Civil War Viele, a graduate of the United States Military Academy, resigned his position to join the Union cause. This was fortunate for the City of Brooklyn since Viele's plan was unsophisticated and was haphazardly bisected by a major roadway.

In the ensuing years, Brooklyn Parks Commissioner James Stranahan frequently consulted Calvert Vaux, co-designer of Central Park. Neither man was impressed with Viele's plan. Good fortune prevailed when Olmsted, Vaux & Company were selected to develop an alternate design. In 1865 Vaux proposed alterations to the original boundaries of the park. Flatbush Avenue, which divided Viele's plan,

# T PARK

## s sparking a renaissance

erizzi

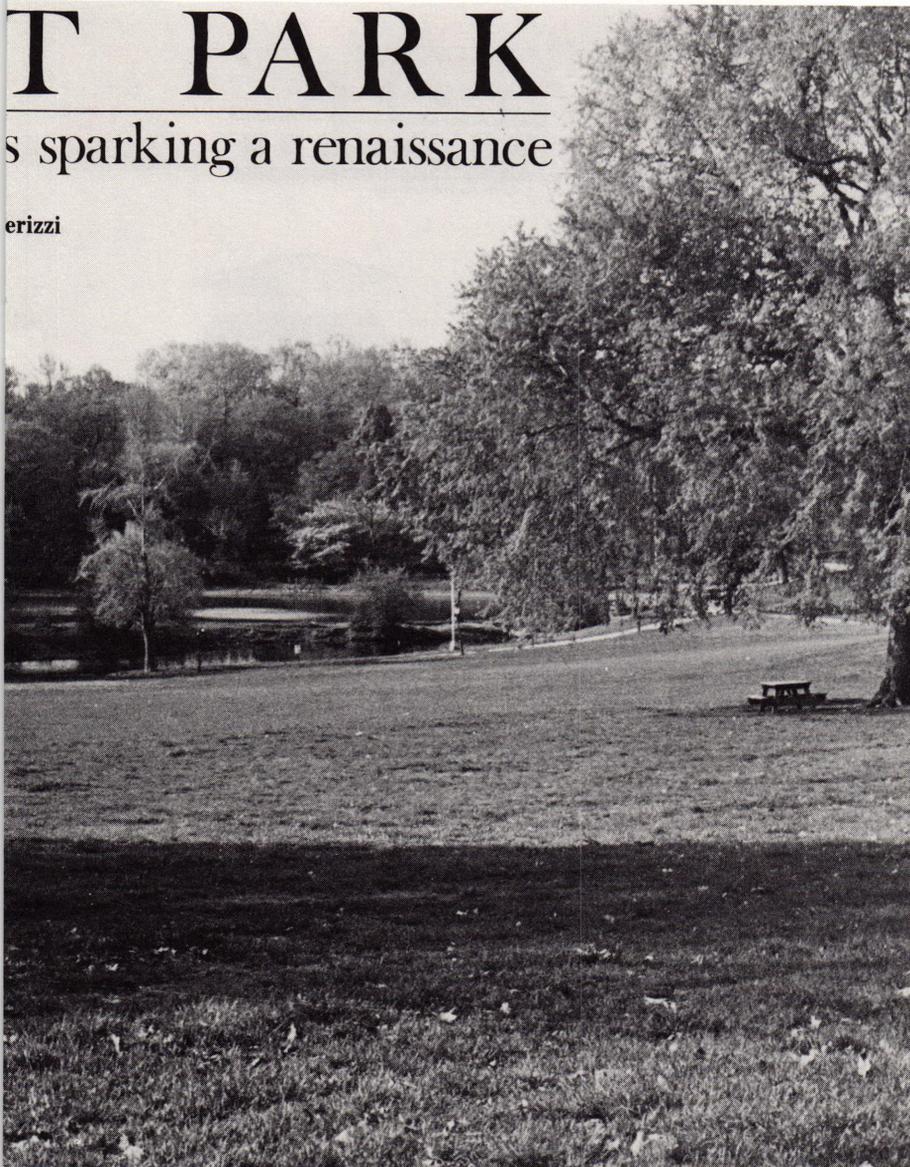


Photo: Paul Berizzi

became the northeastern border of Vaux's proposed site, and additional land was acquired to the south, since it was better suited for a major lake feature. The land north of Flatbush Avenue was then designated for cultural institutions and is now the site of the Brooklyn Museum, Botanic Garden, and Public Library.

Lacking the confines of the long, rectilinear site of Central Park, Olmsted & Vaux were freer to create what they considered the essential elements of a proper urban park — a unified experiential balance of turf, wood, and water. The pastoral landscape scenes would be enclosed by a mounded, densely planted perimeter of trees and shrubs to shut out all vestiges of the "cramped, confined, and controlling circumstances of the streets of the town." One need only examine the Olmsted & Vaux plan and notice the virtual absence of straight lines or right angles within its boundaries to understand their determination to create this contrast. The undulating Long Meadow — over

one mile in length — the wooded Ravine — reminiscent of Adirondack mountain scenery — and the expansive, 60-acre man-formed Lake became, and remain, the expressions of their ideals. As in their other work, modes of circulation are generally independent; they made provisions for the uninterrupted movement of vehicular, equestrian, and pedestrian traffic.

Olmsted & Vaux envisioned a series of "shaded pleasure drive[s]" to carry the public to Prospect Park including a direct roadway/ferry connection to Central Park. Their plans were partially realized in Eastern and Ocean Parkways.

Construction of Prospect Park began in 1866 and continued at a productive pace for seven years when Olmsted & Vaux resigned their superintendency. Their professional partnership had ended the previous year and the economic panic of 1873 brought construction to an untimely halt. Sections that had been open to the

*Long Meadow with Pools in background*

public for three years were already quite popular; work resumed in 1874, guided by subordinates of Olmsted & Vaux who largely respected the intent of the Park's creators. However by the late 1880s, the basic design of the still incomplete Park began to be altered.

### The Naturalistic Landscape

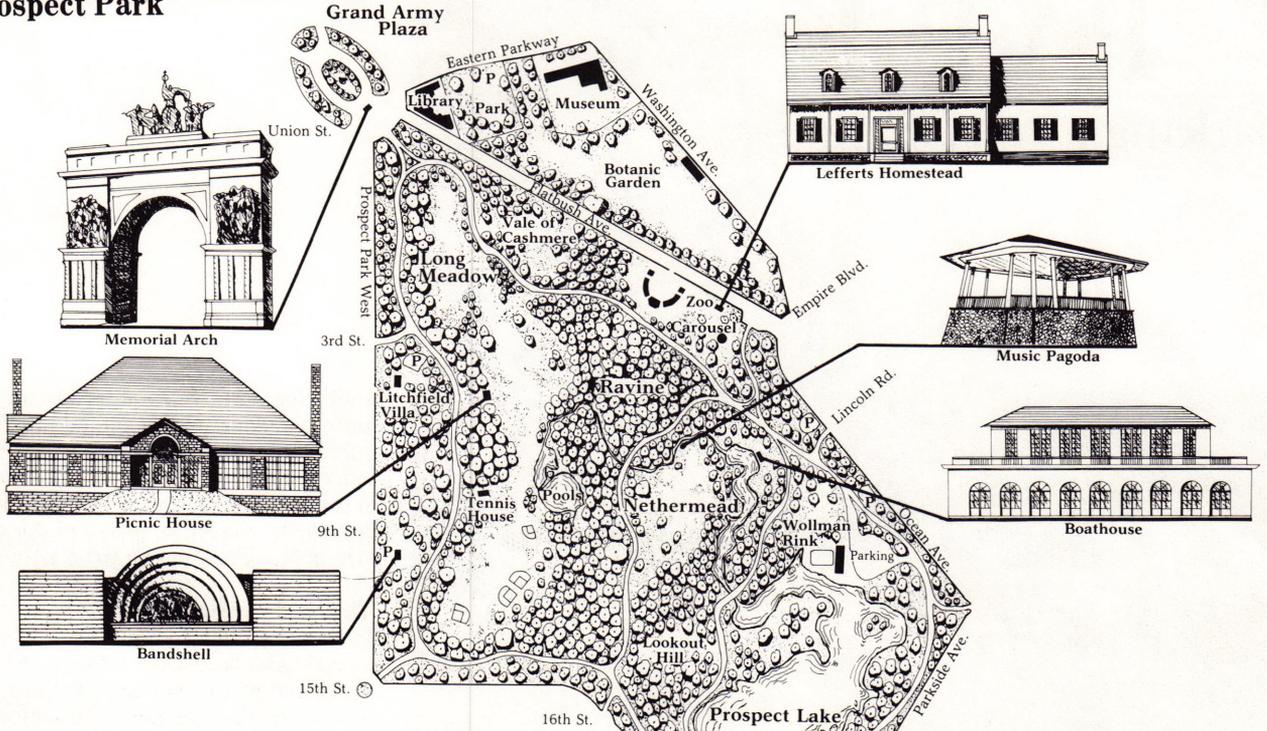
In creating such convincing naturalistic landscape effects with earth and plants, Olmsted & Vaux may have done themselves a disservice. An all-too-frequent view of the Park, then and now, has been that it is a piece of land left undeveloped and largely capable of caring for itself. Conversely, the Park is a very thoughtful series of scenic illusions created with natural materials that demand the same level of attention that a building or any more obviously 'designed' garden or park requires.

Problems of inadequate routine maintenance, which threaten our parks today, began as soon as sections of Prospect Park were completed. In 1873 O.C. Bullard, then overseeing the construction, wrote to Olmsted, "I have not been allowed to expend any labor on the nurseries this year . . . and the young stock has suffered from neglect. We shall lose a large proportion of the trees and shrubs on the lately finished ground." Upon returning to Prospect Park in 1888, Olmsted wrote, "I can't understand why (certain areas) should be so dreary but think a good deal of the foliage first planted must have died out entirely."

### Park Structures

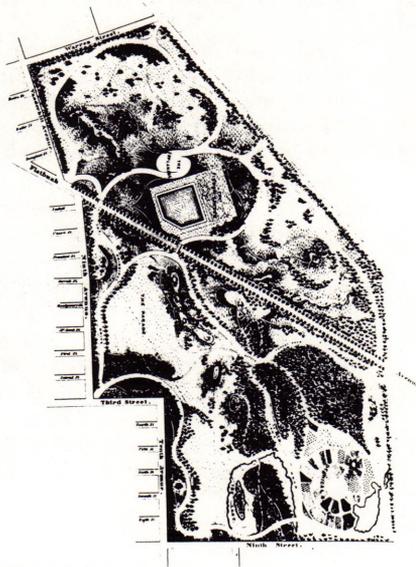
Olmsted is quoted as having said in relation to his parks, ". . . landscape is everything, the architecture nothing . . ." This may have been an overstatement. If one looks at structures original to Prospect Park, their form, color, texture, materials, adornment with plant material, and rustic character clearly suggest that architecture was intended to be secondary to the landscape. Only one original building, the Wellhouse, still stands. In addition, a number of arches and bridges remain. The Ravine's Boulder Bridge is based on the designs

# Prospect Park

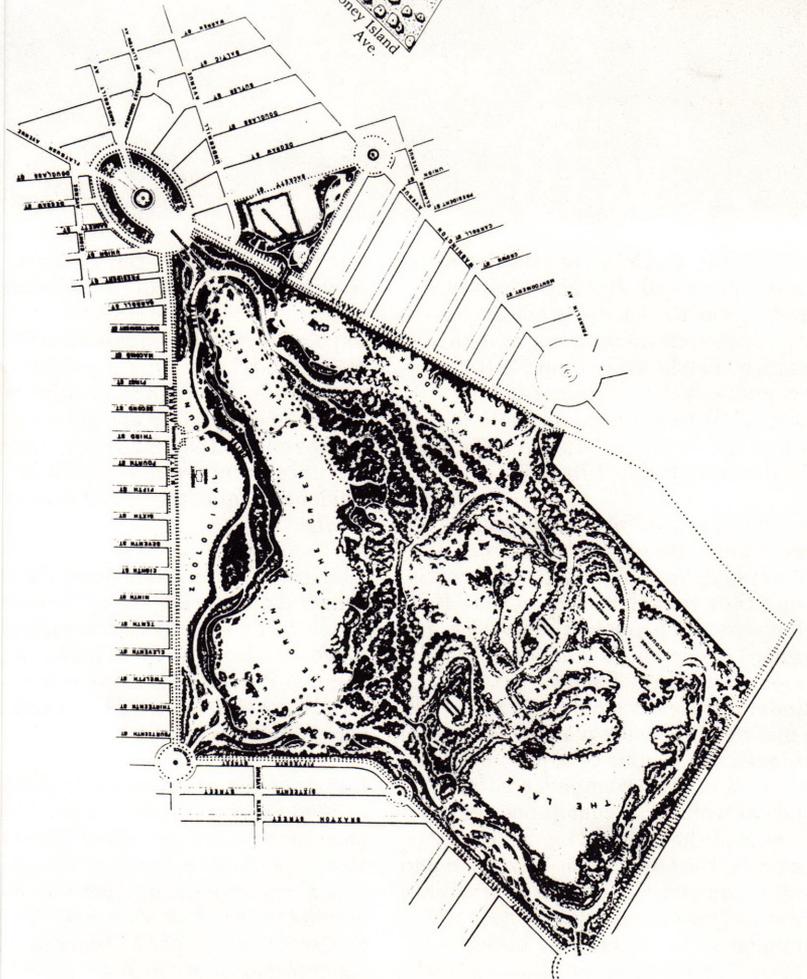


*Prospect Park Plan today*

Map by Paul Berizzi



*Prospect Park Plan, 1861*



*Olmsted & Vaux's plan, 1866*



1

*Photo: Paul Berizzi*

1. *View across the Lake from a Rustic Shelter*

2. *The Lake from Lookout Hill*

3. *Fallkill Falls, the source of the manmade water system*



2



3

*Photo: The New York Historical Society*

of Olmsted. The Nethermead Arches bridge is the clearest example of how traffic modes were to be distinct: there are provisions for vehicular movement above with separate sections below for horses, pedestrians, and the water course. The Cleft Ridge Span, based on the designs of Vaux, is believed to be the first concrete arch built in the United States. Particular attention was given to its interior, which is constructed of relief-patterned concrete blocks known as Beton-Coignet. Old photographs suggest that the exterior was to have been densely planted, with vines draped over the structure to create a tropical effect. Other Olmsted & Vaux inspired structures, such as Lullwood Bridge and numerous rustic shelters, disappeared long ago.

With the advent of late 19th-century neoclassical architecture, the character of building in Prospect Park changed, but the dedication to quality continued. At the turn of the century, McKim, Mead & White created the major entrance ensembles, beginning

at Grand Army Plaza. Their other contributions include the Renaissance Peristyle and the cast-iron clad Lullwater Bridge, which features a botanical motif. Helmle & Huberty, architects, designed the Boathouse in 1905, based on the 16th-century design of Sansovino's Library on the Piazza San Marco in Venice. In 1909, Helmle & Huberty's Palladio-inspired Tennis House was built on the western edge of the Long Meadow.

#### Park Use

At the beginning of the 20th century, Prospect Park reached a high point in public popularity. Active forms of recreation such as lawn tennis, baseball, and cycling brought millions to the Park. This further exacerbated maintenance problems and necessitated the annual reseeding of lawns. The era of Robert Moses from 1934 to 1961, which was initially encouraging for Prospect Park, brought some of the more insensitive alterations to the basic design. Thousands of trees and shrubs were planted. A large zoo was added. Roads

## Prospect Park

1. *The Boulder Bridge in the Ravine*
2. *The Nethermead Arches*
3. *The Cleft Ridge Span*
4. *Rustic Shelter*
5. *Litchfield Villa*
6. *Detail of Colonnade, Litchfield Villa*
7. *Litchfield Villa*



1



2

*Photo: Courtesy, the Herbert Mitchell Collection*

were straightened to facilitate automobile use, but they subverted the notion of leisurely vehicular movement. Still, Prospect Park remained a popular resource.

Fear of crime, a lack of adequate maintenance, and a massive fiscal crisis contributed to the Park's reaching a low point in the early 1970s. At the same time, however, a small but determined group of Prospect Park supporters began to halt the deterioration. Given monetary constraints, their efforts were minimal, but they did serve to heighten the awareness of the community, of the Parks Department, and of elected officials to the preservation and restoration needs of this valuable asset. City and National Historic Landmark status was conferred in 1975 and gave Prospect Park legal protection to fend off further destructive alterations.

### The Preservation Plan

The writing of the Prospect Park Preservation Plan by longtime park



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*Photo: Courtesy, the Herbert Mitchell Collection*



5

Photos: Stan Ries/ESTO



6

Photo: Paul Berizzi



7

professionals Joseph and Adrienne Bresnan in 1980, and its acceptance by then Parks Commissioner Gordon Davis and Mayor Koch signaled a new beginning. The Plan identified the first architectural restoration projects and defined a unique series of landscape studies that would become the basis for a long-range master plan to preserve and recreate the Olmsted & Vaux legacy.

In that same year, Tupper Thomas was appointed Administrator of Prospect Park to oversee all aspects of the revitalization. Her mandate extended beyond the rebuilding of the Park's historic buildings and landscape. Park use had dwindled to 1.7 million annual visits in 1979. According to the 1982-83 Park census, use is up over 150 percent—fostered by increased maintenance and security efforts, a year-round program of educational, recreational, and cultural activities, as well as ambitious capital restoration projects.

Owing to ambitious capital funding,

the physical restoration has begun on two fronts. One is the restoration of many major buildings, including the Boathouse, Tennis House, Picnic House, and the impending reconstruction of the Oriental Pavilion. In addition, five major arches and bridges are slated for reconstruction. Litchfield Villa of 1857 designed by A.J. Davis, which has been Brooklyn Parks headquarters since 1883, is also being studied for restoration. It is a distinguished Italianate mansion, once a private residence, and pre-dates Park construction.

In developing restoration plans for Prospect Park's historic buildings, original drawings were frequently available for study. This was not the case with the landscape. Over time, landforms have not been static. During the superintendency of Olmsted & Vaux the actual design of the Park often took place on site. It is not fanciful to imagine Olmsted directing removal of an entire hill and the replacing of it elsewhere. Little of

this on-site design was properly documented. Natural processes have substantially altered original contours and water bodies. Historic plant lists suggest extensive changes in the overall horticultural profile of the Park. Well intentioned but careless alteration has further obscured the original design. The present lake shore, for instance, while irregular in shape, has been greatly changed over the last century.

#### Historic Landscape Reports

Developing a master restoration plan for the entire Park has necessitated an exhaustive process of piecing together fragments of information, such as topographic maps and historic photographs, to ascertain as closely as possible what the designers' intentions were.

This led to the writing of Historic Landscape Reports, which have attempted to assemble information from numerous sources, to establish: what was planned, what was actually built, how the Park has been altered

## Prospect Park

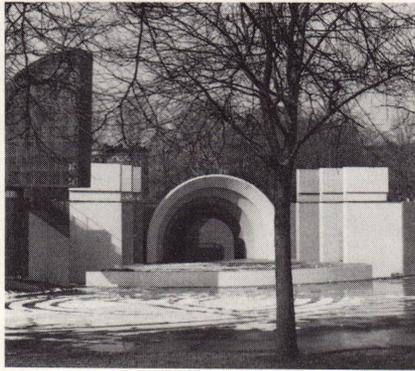
1. *The Band Shell, recently reconstructed by Bloom & Grass*
2. *Detail of Hemle & Huberty's Boathouse. Restoration by the Ehrenkranz Group*
3. *Winter view of the Boathouse*
4. *McKim Mead & White's Renaissance Peristyle was designed as a viewing structure for the adjacent Parade Ground.*
5. *Hemle & Huberty's Tennis House under reconstruction, with plans by Misia Leonard, New York City Department of Parks*

over time by natural processes and human intervention, and an inventory of present conditions and restoration tasks.

However, the original Olmsted & Vaux plan must be balanced against a series of criteria that are responsive to present conditions and necessities. As aesthetically pleasing as a return to the original gravel pedestrian walks might be, could they be reasonably maintained with current use-patterns and personnel levels? Many species of plant materials original to the Park have disappeared due to neglect, unsuitability of climatic conditions, disease, or lack of personnel to provide proper care. New plantations must adapt to present conditions. Should later but valuable historic structures be eliminated solely because they are contrary to Olmstedian dictates? Similarly, is it prudent to build planned structures that were never realized or have long since disappeared? Olmsted specifically opposed the use of pedestrian lights, which have been added to the Park. Can this be reconciled with 20th-century security needs? Should rolling meadows that have eroded to flat open lawns be replaced? Where once picturesque water features have been succeeded by marshy irrecognition, should they be restored?

The purpose of the Historic Landscape Reports is to speak to these questions and develop a series of restoration projects that respect the original design and concurrently address the requirements of late 20th-century use patterns and maintenance limitations. For study, the Park has been divided according to its four major landscape features: turf, woods, water, and perimeter lands. Essentially complete are the Long Meadow (turf) study written by George E. Patton, landscape architect, and Albert Fein, historian; and the Ravine (woods) study written by Anthony Walmsley, landscape architect, and Albert Fein. The Lake and Perimeter Historic Landscape Reports (Anthony Walmsley, landscape architect; David

*cont'd. p. 13*



1

Photo: Stan Ries/ESTO



2 Photo: New York City Department of Parks



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Photos, except as noted: Paul Berizzi



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## Chapter Reports

by George Lewis

• **Louis L. Marines** has been appointed to be the executive vice president of the AIA, succeeding David O. Meeker. Marines is a professional affiliate member of the Chapter, and we congratulate him and look forward to working constructively with him. He has been general manager of Haines Lundberg Waehler/HLW.

• **Theodore Liebman** testified at the Landmarks Commission hearing on St. Bartholomew's. "It is both the substantial mutilation of a part of an overall landmark composition and the inappropriateness of a towering office building cheek by jowl to the church and garden that are in question," he said. "The proposed 59-story structure's cantilevered mirrored cubes hover threateningly overhead, to the point where a corner of the building appears to be not more than 30 feet from the dome's surface. Domes everywhere, of whatever description or style, rise confident and open to the sky; this dome seems to be crushed by the enormous weight hovering above."

• The Chapter congratulates **Robert Esnard** on his appointment as Deputy Mayor for Policy and Physical Development. This is the highest City office an architect has attained in recent memory. Esnard is well known to the Chapter, most recently when as Buildings Commissioner, he twice came to meet with members from a cross section of firms. His appointment is a most significant event in New York City building and planning.

• Members are urged to respond to a survey form in the recent State Association of Architects newsletter *Column* concerning its annual conventions — specifically, what would make these conventions of more interest to New York chapter members.

**Architects for Social Responsibility**  
The Architects for Social Responsibility, an organization concerned over the threat of nuclear war, has available for screening a 30 minute BBC documentary on the effects of one-megaton nuclear blast



one mile above St. Paul's Cathedral. The purpose of the screening is to inform and mobilize our profession. ASR is seeking audiences of 20 or more in architects' offices. Volunteers will screen the film in your office at lunch time. Recent screenings have been standing room only at Gruzen, Polshak, Barnes, Fox and Fowle and Davis Brody. Call Lo-Yi Chan 420-8600, or Steve Yablon 840-3940.

### Religious Landmarks Hearing in Albany

• A number of Chapter members were among the 120 people from many organizations on board the "Landmarks Special" leaving Grand Central early February 8 for the Joint Public Hearing in Albany on the Religious Properties bill. This Bill, fully discussed in previous issues of *Oculus*, would remove religious properties from landmarks laws across the State. The trip up and back, with a reception at the Preservation League after the hearing, was beautifully organized by the Municipal Arts Society. Theodore Liebman testified against the legislation on behalf of the Chapter. "We have had many discussions with the leaders on both sides of the issue, and we find both sides digging in their heels. The people in favor of the legislation ignore our heritage, the character of our cities and the good business that history and character mean for our state. The opponents cite examples of relief for poor religious institutions given through the current law but close their eyes as to how to make those procedures more user friendly. The Chapter has a most concerned Historic Buildings Committee and an Executive Committee that wish to help settle this and make both sides winners. We will schedule several evenings this spring to discuss the plight of not-for-profit and religious institutions in working with the Landmarks Law and its administration. The new City Landmarks Commission chairman Gene Norman will participate along with his key associates."

At this hearing, George Lewis spoke for the NY State Association of

*Press conference during the Albany Hearing: (at table): Ralph Menapace, (behind him Ted Liebman), Joan K. Davidson, Gene Norman, (behind him Terence Benbow), Mrs. Onassis, and Brendan Gill. Photo: John Weiss*

Architects. "Since there are 100-odd communities with their own landmarks laws all across New York State, and since all the talk is about New York City, why should the Legislature tamper with home rule legislation which seems to be quite satisfactory as it is to the overwhelming majority of localities?" he asked. "The interfaith commission's 'Report on Landmarking of Religious Properties' establishes the area of controversy squarely in the arena of the New York City Landmarks Commission. Our recommendation to the Legislature is simply and urgently this: that instead of introducing an amendment to exempt a whole element of society from landmarks laws, a concentrated effort be made by all interested parties to examine, clarify, and, where necessary, improve upon the way the New York City law is administered."

Perhaps the most telling argument against the Bill was submitted by Sinclair Armstrong, a lawyer who is chairman of the Committee to Oppose the Sale of St. Bartholomew's Church. He pointed out that proponents of the Bill contend that the concept of "religion" includes all kinds of charitable, benevolent, educational, and social welfare activity, and that, "Relative to creating a basis for selling a church's properties, such activities have the obvious advantage, in contrast to devotional activities, of being infinitely and rapidly expandable or contractable in scope or cost. This in turn makes possible a sufficient expansion of *projected* expenditures on charitable and social service activities to create a *purported* need by church officials for *any amount of money* necessary to justify a proposed sale." Armstrong went on to demonstrate that under the Religious Corporation Law of New  
*cont'd. p. 12, col. 3*

# OCCULUS NYC/AIA MARCH 84

## CONTINUING EVENTS

Oculus welcomes information for the calendar pertaining to public events about architecture and the other design professions. It is due by the 7th of the month for the following month's issue. Because of the time lag between information received and printed, final details of events are likely to change. It is recommended, therefore, that events be checked with the sponsoring institutions before attending.

Send Oculus Calendar information to:  
New York Chapter/AIA, 457 Madison Avenue, N.Y. 10022.

### METAMANHATTAN

Works by artists and architects that contribute to a transformation of Manhattan. Whitney Museum of American Art, Downtown Branch, Federal Hall National Memorial, 26 Wall St. 570-3600. Closes Mar. 15.

### EXHIBITION

"Travels in Greece by French Architects in the 19th and 20th Centuries." IBM Gallery of Science and Art, Madison and 56 St. 407-6100. Closes Mar. 24.

## TUESDAY 6

### ITALIAN GARDENS

Exhibition of drawings by Barbara Stauffacher Solomon. Architectural League, 457 Madison. 753-1733. Closes March 31.

### EXHIBITION

Cornell Performing Arts Center by James Stirling and Michael Wilford. Architectural League. Closes March 31.

### TOM WOLFE & EDGAR TAFEL

Further conversations on Modern. 7:45 pm. New School. 741-5690.

## MONDAY 5

### EXHIBITION

"Fumihiko Maki: Architecture in Place." Columbia's Graduate School of Architecture and Planning, 100 Level, Avery Hall. 280-3473. Closes March 22.

## MONDAY 12

### NYC/AIA AWARDS

Deadline for submission of entries in the 1984 Distinguished Architecture Awards, NYC/AIA, 457 Madison Ave. 10022.

## THURSDAY 1

### STATUE OF LIBERTY

Lecture by Richard Hayden on program to restore the Statue of Liberty sponsored by NYC/AIA's Public Architects Committee. 6 pm. Doris Freedman Gallery at the Urban Center, 838-9670.

### BARD AWARDS

Deadline for submission of entries to: Allan B. Strauss, chairman, The City Club of New York, 33 W. 42 St. New York 10036. 921-9870.

## THURSDAY 8

### PRINCIPLES OF SEMINAR WRITING

Seminar. 9 am-4:30 pm. International Center, 823 United Nations Plaza, 11th floor. Information: Harry Bez, RBS&D Inc., 521 Fifth Ave. 867-9111.

### CSI PRODUCT FAIR

3rd Annual Product Fair sponsored by the Metropolitan NY Chapter of the Construction Specifications Institute. 11 am-7 pm. 823 U.N. Plaza. Harry Bez 867-9111.

## THURSDAY 15

### NYC/AIA INTERIORS COMMITTEE

Licensing for interior designers and the impact on architectural practice. 6 p.m. NYC/AIA headquarters, 457 Madison. 838-9670.

## FRIDAY 2

### CONFERENCE

"Interpreting the 1980 Census: Implications for Planning on Long Island" sponsored by APA/NY Metropolitan Chapter. 9:15 am-5 pm. SUNY/Stony Brook. Reservations: 725-7145.

### SEMINAR ON SATURDAY, MARCH 3

"The Architecture and Influence of Sir John Soane 1753-1837" moderated by Jonathan Foster with Anthony Alofsin, Columbia's Div. of Historic Preservation; Michael Stanton, IAUS. 10-4 pm. Cooper-Hewitt.

## FRIDAY 9

1961: JFK urged "decent housing for all Americans".

## FRIDAY 16

### 1967: NYC's Landmark Preservation

Commission designated St. Bartholomew's Church and Community House as Landmarks and the entire tax map Block 1305, Lot 1, Borough of Manhattan as a Landmark site.

### LECTURE ON SUNDAY MARCH 18

"17th Century Archaeological Excavations in the Upper Hudson Valley: Some Cultural Influences" by Paul Huey, archeologist for Historic Preservation of the NYS Dept. of Parks & Recreation. 3 pm. New York Historical Society, 170 Central Park West. 873-3400.

## WEDNESDAY 14

### CHANGE IN THE 20th CENTURY

"Upheaval in the Workplace" by A.H. Raskin, in 5-Wednesday lecture series. 8 pm. Cooper-Hewitt Museum, 2 E. 91 St., 860-6868.

## WEDNESDAY 7

### LECTURE

"Building Books" by David Macaulay, Architect, in Columbia's Graduate School of Architecture & Planning series. 6 pm. Wood Auditorium, Avery Hall. 280-3473.

### CHANGE IN THE 20th CENTURY

"Human Values: Social Decisions, by Dr. Roger Shinn, Reinhold Niebuhr Professor of Social Ethics, Union Theological Seminary, first in 5-Wednesday lecture series. 8 pm. Cooper-Hewitt Museum. 860-6868.

## WEDNESDAY 13

### DAC LECTURE

J. Frank Cross II and Annette Stramesi on the Reproduction Program at Colonial Williamsburg. 6-8 pm. Kittinger showroom, Decorative Arts Center, 305 E. 63 St.

## MONDAY 19

### GAUDI + LE CORBUSIER

Deadline for signing up for the Pratt travel workshop (April 10-22) to Barcelona, Marseilles, Lyon, Geneva, Ronchamp, Paris. Information: Michael Trencher, School of Architecture, Pratt. 636-3453.

## TUESDAY 20

### THE CITY TRANSFORMED

Slide lecture by Barry Lewis on "The Victorian Moderne" in the Municipal Art Society's course on the architectural and social history of New York City. 6 pm. Women's National Republican Club, 3 W. 51 St. Registration information: Lynette Reasonover 935-3960.

## WEDNESDAY 21

### LECTURE

"Classicism and Technology in Relationship to Nature" by Ricardo Bofill, Architect, in Columbia's Graduate School of Architecture & Planning series. 6 pm. Wood Auditorium, Avery Hall. 280-3473.

### CHANGE IN THE 20TH CENTURY

"Energy and Waste: An Urban Dilemma" by Barry Comומר in 5-Wednesday lecture series. 8 pm. Cooper-Hewitt Museum. 2 E. 91 St. 860-6868.

## THURSDAY 22

### PRODUCTS PLACES REPUTATIONS

Fourth Annual International Contract Furniture Design Symposium during WestWeek '84. Pacific Design Center, Los Angeles. Information: Judi Skalsky, Symposium Director, 635 Westbourne Drive, Los Angeles, Calif. 90069. 213-854-6307.

## FRIDAY 23

### SEMINAR ON SATURDAY,

MARCH 24  
"Archaeoastronomy: The Influence of Naked-Eye Astronomy in Architecture" moderated by Davidson Norris with guest lecturers Suzanne Preston Bleir of Columbia's Art History and Archaeology Dept., and Von del Chamberlain, astronomer with the National Air and Space Museum. 10-4 pm. Cooper-Hewitt Museum. 860-6868.

## MONDAY 26

### EXHIBITION

"Renzo Piano, Piece by Piece." Columbia's Graduate School of Architecture & Planning. 100 Level, Avery Hall. 280-3473.

## TUESDAY 27

### FOREVER WILD

Exhibition marking the Centennial of Adirondack State Park and Forest Preserve. The New York Historical Society, 170 Central Park West. 873-3400. Closes June 3.

### THE CITY TRANSFORMED

Slide lecture by Barry Lewis on "Beaux Arts New York" in the Municipal Art Society's course on the architectural and social history of NYC. 6 pm. Women's National Republican Club, 3 W. 51 St. Registration information: Lynette Reasonover 935-3960.

## WEDNESDAY 28

### LECTURE

"Piece by Piece" by Renzo Piano, Architect, in Columbia's Graduate School of Architecture & Planning series. 6 pm. Wood Auditorium, Avery Hall. 280-3473.

### CHANGE IN THE 20TH CENTURY

"Factors in Urban Change" by Dora P. Crouch, Professor of Architectural History, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, in 5-Wednesday lecture series. 8 pm. Cooper-Hewitt Museum, 2 E. 91 St. 860-6868.

## THURSDAY 29

### 1881: American architect Raymond Hood born.

## FRIDAY 30

### COLUMBUS CARSCAPE COMPETITION

April 1 is the deadline for submission of entries in the national competition for a 300-car parking lot in downtown Columbus, Indiana. Columbus Carscape Competition, c/o Director of Community Development, City Hall, 123 Washington St., Columbus, IN 47201.

## MONDAY 2 APRIL

### 1937: Trylon and Perisphere design announced for 1939 World's Fair in New York.

## TUESDAY 3 APRIL

### THE CITY TRANSFORMED

Slide lecture by Barry Lewis on "Chicago Alternatives to the Wall Street Skyscraper" in the Municipal Art Society's course on the architectural and social history of NYC. 6 pm. Women's National Republican Club, 3 W. 51 St. Registration information: Lynette Reasonover 935-3960.

## WEDNESDAY 4 APRIL

### LECTURE

"Recent Work - Architecture in Place" by Fumihiko Maki, Architect, in Columbia's Graduate School of Architecture & Planning series. 6 pm. Wood Auditorium, Avery Hall. 280-3473.

**CHANGE IN THE 20TH CENTURY**  
"Changing Images: Advertising and America's Culture of Consumerism" by Donald McQuade, Director, American Studies Program, Queens College, CUNY, in 5-Wednesday lecture series. 8 pm. Cooper-Hewitt Museum. 860-6868.

## THURSDAY 5 APRIL

### RENEWING CENTRAL PARK

1-day workshop with Elizabeth Barlow, Central Park Administrator, in spring courses of Center for NYC Affairs, The New School. 9:30-4:30 pm. 2 E. 63 St. 741-5690.

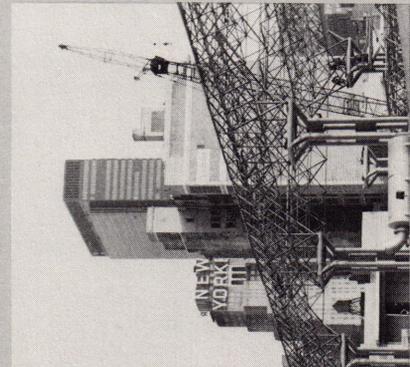


Photo: Stan Res/EISTO

## Names and News

Beyer Blinder Belle have been awarded a contract by the Downtown Redevelopment Agency of Lakewood, New Jersey, for the design of public improvements in that city's business district . . . Howard Juster has been elected Chairman of the National Institute for Architectural Education/NIAE; Byron Bell is Vice Chairman, and Robert Kupiec, Secretary; Susan Swan, Treasurer; and Megan Lawrence, Director of Education . . . Margaret Helfand Architects was featured in a nationally broadcast television documentary aired three times in February on station WTBS . . . Jurors for NYC/AIA's 1984 Distinguished Architecture Awards will be Robert Geddes of Geddes Brecher Qualls Cunningham, Princeton; Danny Samuels, Taft Architects, Houston; and James Stirling of James Stirling-Michael Wilford and Associates of London. The deadline is March 12 . . . Fumihiko Maki's "Three Projects in Progress" has been published as a catalog on the occasion of an exhibition recently held in Tokyo . . . Michael Parley has relocated to 119 West 57 Street, 2nd floor . . . Pratt Institute's Graduate Urban Design Department is sponsoring a tour of "The Cities of Italy" to study history and contemporary issues in that country (June 22-July 14) open to professionals, graduate, and undergraduate students (536-3453) . . . William Pedersen, Richard G. Stein, and Kent Barwick are jurors for the 20th Anniversary Bard Awards sponsored by the City Club of New York . . . James Marston Fitch will conduct a study tour of the art and architecture of Romania, June 6-25 (Thomas Cook Travel, 18 E. 48 St., 310-9466, Sharla Ault or Carol Geney) . . . Robert Gwathmey served on the jury for painting in the National Academy of Design's 159th Annual Exhibition (March 8-April 5) . . . Margot Henkel, Hon. NYC/AIA and NYSA, has resigned after 13 years as executive director of the New York Society of Architects. Many of our members remember her as the first staff person the Chapter ever had; she served the Chapter 18 years and was Director of Administration and Finance before being appointed by the

Society . . . Harold Buttrick and Samuel G. White have announced that Theodore A. Burtis is now a partner of the firm, the name of which has been changed to Buttrick White & Burtis, Architects & Planners . . . Paul L. Veeder II has been named senior vice president at Rogers, Burgun, Shahine & Deschler; and Larry W. Fink has been named the firm's vice president of marketing and business development . . . Stanley Abercrombie is one of the judges for the Sixth Annual Edward Fields Wool Rug Design Competition for professional and associate members of the American Society of Interior Designers . . . The City College of the City University of New York is seeking to fill a vacancy for the position of Dean, School of Architecture and Environmental Studies, for which resumes or nominations postmarked no later than April 1, 1984, should be addressed to: Search Committee for the Dean of School of Architecture and Environmental Studies, Administration Building 206, The City College of CUNY, Convent Avenue at 138th Street, New York 10031 . . . Ralph Gillis has announced the appointment of Marcia Seitz-Previti as Associate of Gillis Associates . . . Jurors for the New York Vietnam Veterans Memorial design competition (see below) are Cooper Union president Bill Lacy, landscape architect Paul Friedberg, artists Chiam Gross and Ursula von Rydingsvard, John Hightower, South Street Seaport director, Andrew Phelan, acting dean of Pratt's School of Art and Design, and William Broyles, Jr., editor-in-chief of *Newsweek* . . . We regret the death on January 30th of Geoffrey Lawford, president of NYC/AIA in 1963-64, and founding partner in the former New York architectural firm of Brown, Lawford & Forbes . . . The Art Commission of New York has named the following projects by Chapter members as winners of Awards for Excellence in Design: Newsstand for the corner of 81st Street and Columbus Avenue by Wayne Turett for the Department of Consumer Affairs; the reconstruction of a police and fire station on East 67th Street by

## Competition for New York Vietnam Veterans Memorial

"The purpose of the New York Vietnam Veterans Memorial is not to express or imply approval or disapproval of the war . . . It is to acknowledge the service and sacrifice of all veterans from New York City who did their individual collective best under trying and unusual circumstances," explains the competition announcement for the design of a memorial to be located in the Vietnam Veterans Plaza (formerly Jeannette Park) between Water and South Streets in lower Manhattan. Open to all U.S. citizens, the competition offers a top prize of \$10,000, a second prize of \$5,000, and a third of \$2,500. April 14th is the deadline for submission of entries. To enter send a \$30 entry fee to: New York Vietnam Veterans Memorial Commission, 110 Church Street, Suite 1700 A, New York 10007. 608-5800.

the Stein Partnership; 2 Riverbank Park at 138th and 145th Streets in Riverside by Richard Dattner, and the Sludge Processing Complex at the Owls Head Water Pollution Control Plant in the Red Hook section of Brooklyn by the Ehrenkrantz Group . . . Bart Voorsanger was named a winner in *Architecture* magazine's interior design contest for NYC/AIA headquarters offices; and Timothy Wood won for the design of a Manhattan apartment . . . The following NYC/AIA Chapter members have been advanced to Fellowship: Iris Alex, John Belle, Alfredo De Vido, Stephen Jacobs, Richard R. Moger, Rolf Ohlhausen, Donald Ryder, Robert A.M. Stern, Walter Wagner, and Elliot Willensky.

## Chapter Reports

*cont'd. from p. 9*

York, an "incorporated church" is "a religious corporation created to enable its members to meet for divine worship or other religious observance. Lumping 'religious' with 'charitable benevolent or educational objects' as 'mission and ministry' is inconsistent with the distinction made by the courts." These are sketchy excerpts from a full statement, which can be seen at the Chapter. It is of particular interest in view of St. Bartholomew's argument that it needs the 59-story tower to finance its outreach programs.

The hearing was conducted by Senator Flynn and Assembly Majority Leader Walsh; it is not known at this writing what the recommendations to the full legislature will be.

## Prospect Park

1. *New Year's Eve fireworks over Grand Army Plaza.*
2. *The Camperdown Elm is one of the park's most important trees and symbol of the friends of Prospect Park.*
3. *Baseball on the edge of the Long Meadow*



1 *Photo: Mark Mittelman*



3 *Photo: Paul Berizzi*

*cont'd. from p. 8*  
Schuyler and Charles Beveridge, historians) are well under way.

Each report begins with a historic overview of the Park and study area. This is followed by a visual chronology of what changes can be documented from 1866 to the present. Then, an extensive inventory and evaluation is made of current landscape conditions including topography, geology, hydrology, vegetation, wildlife, microclimate, and other factors. A similar assessment is made of current usership. This is followed by a listing of restoration options, culminating in a series of recommended capital projects.

To facilitate budgetary and management constraints, projects do not generally exceed 30 acres. Since Prospect Park has 526 acres, its rebuilding will take many years. The original park construction took at least 20 years, however, and the Park has been evolving continuously since 1866.

Today this evolutionary process is taking a new form. Movement away from the original intent has been slowed. A heightened sensitivity and commitment exists to preserve and restore those Park features that have served so pleasurably for over 100 years. User studies indicate that the most frequently cited reason for coming to Prospect Park is the tranquilizing effect to be had through the experience of turf, wood, and water. Olmsted wrote, "... a sense of enlarged freedom is to all the most valuable gratification afforded by a park." It is a testimony to the vision of Olmsted & Vaux that Prospect Park did so in the beginning, does so now, and will continue to do so well into the next century.



2 *Photo: Paul Berizzi*

## New York Historical Society: HHPA Proposal

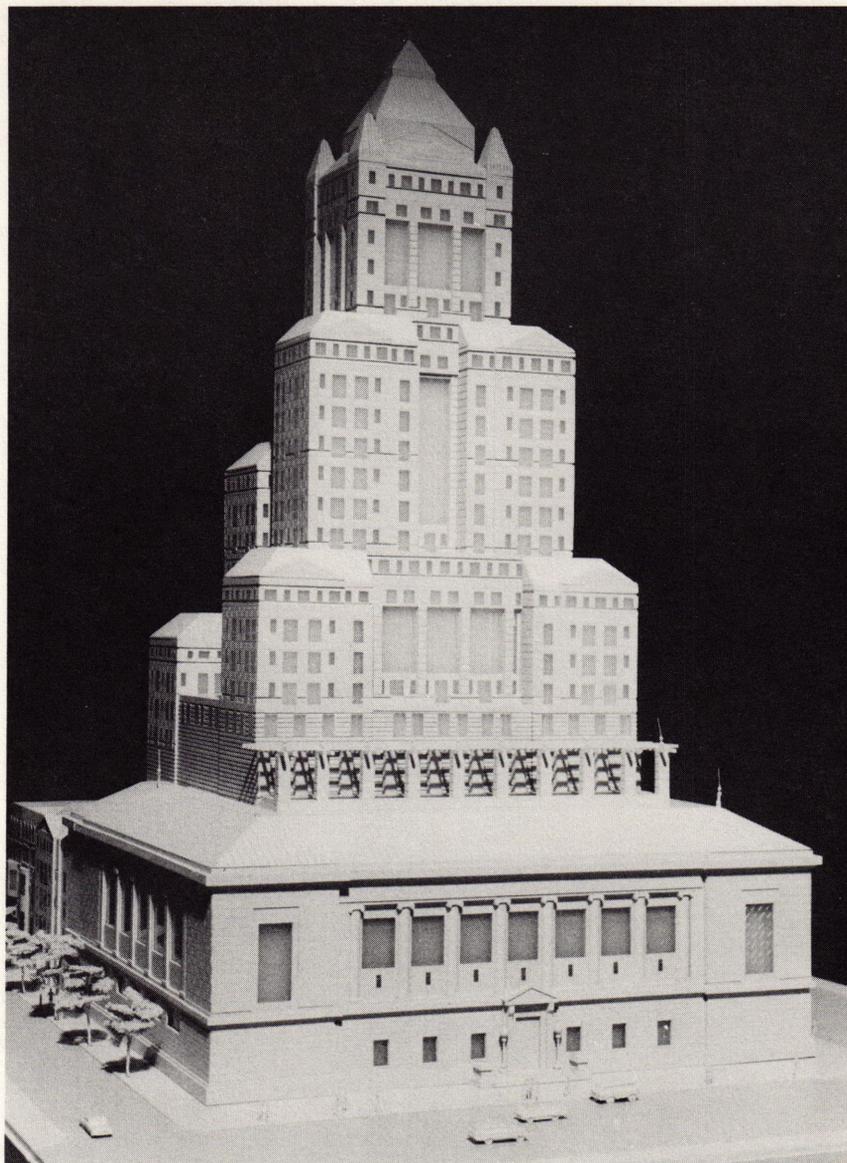
*Below are excerpts from Hugh Hardy's statement concerning the Hardy Holzman Pfeiffer Associates proposed design for a high rise above the 4-story neoclassical Historical Society building on Central Park West between 76th and 77th Streets.*

"New York is a marketplace of ideas, a community where real estate development gave rise to both a unique vertical city and the creation of the nation's first landmarks preservation commission . . . . Ironically for New York, a city which has always symbolized change, new development is suspect while preservation increases in importance. Many find the two mutually exclusive.

"But need this be true? Can we now invent a future community in which development and preservation avoid perpetual conflict?

'Hardy Holzman Pfeiffer Associates' proposal is comprised of . . . : Restoration of the Society's existing building . . . Vertical Enlargement of the Society's building at 170 Central Park West. This expands the Society's bookstacks by 28,200 square feet. Incorporated with this addition is a 132,862 square-foot apartment structure located above and adjacent to the existing building. This proposed addition is the first increase of the physical plant since 1937. This development program responds to the Society's needs by providing three new floors for expansion and rationalization of the Society's archives. The additional space substantially increases the Society's capacity to store historic material and eases the job of its preservation and retrieval. In addition, 'found' space can be claimed in unused spaces in the existing building, and new space can also be constructed below grade to the west of the existing building. These new facilities will also have improved environmental and fire control systems, enhancing the Society's ability to preserve and protect its resources, while at the same time reducing operating expense. . . .

" . . . After five months of investigation HHPA perceives the Society's landmark building can form an element in a new composition, one which we believe neither obscures nor defaces the original structure, and enhances the general context of Central Park West. . . .



" . . . This unique site offers the opportunity to provide a particular housing amenity for a particular neighborhood, a building which is a continuation of the type and scale of housing which defines the neighborhood. The seventy-odd apartments of this proposal continue a tradition of housing quality that this site both deserves and makes possible.

"This proposal seeks improvement of a public institution (whose purpose is preservation of historical continuity) through the creation of housing stock totally consistent with the larger context of Central Park West. . . .

"Some in the community believe the New York Historical Society is solving its institution's problems at their expense. The disruption, the anticipated loss of light and air, and the influx of new tenants are abhorrent [to them]. . . . In other words, they feel the Historical Society's gain is their loss, despite the creation of tax-paying real estate. . . .

"The issue of whether the Historical Society 'deserves' the right to use its resources for new high-rise construction is not the legitimate discussion of architects. However, the preservation movement has many examples in which public and private resources are joined to produce beneficial results . . . architectural issues center about whether it is possible to use the land and air rights of this venerable institution to build a new structure consistent with the long term needs of both the Society and public it serves. . . .

"Landmarks law was in part created to prevent the needless loss of architecturally distinguished buildings and neighborhoods. Central to this legislation is the idea that some structures are so special they should be preserved for the public good as future expression of past accomplishments or rare aesthetic cohesion . . . This proposal seeks to have the Historical Society preserved, not destroyed, through a continuation of the traditions which distinguish

## New York Historical Society: Chapter Opposition

*The following statement was made by the Chapter's Executive Director to the Landmarks Preservation Commission on 24 January, 1984.*

by George Lewis

Most people will agree that the architects' design has many strong attractions, most notably its skillful proportions, subtlety of materials, and its humanity as a place for people to live. Would that apartment houses all over town were done half so well!

But even more intriguing—and more pertinent to the decision which you, the Commission, will make—is the reasoning that underlies the proposal. The architects' argument springs from the premise that Manhattan is an ever changing place, and that freezing the appearance of buildings in the Landmarks Commission's care can stand in the way of beneficial progress. "Manhattan," they say, "has long symbolized the vertical city to the world, and its exaggerated land values continue to generate tall buildings. But if this century-old tradition is confronted by a steadily increasing number of untouchable structures, many important buildings will be lost, to the detriment of all. Unless one can imagine an equally judicious process in which designation is waived, the city's growth will be contorted by increasing bulk and congestion on one hand and an advancing number of museum-like preserves on the other."

Specifically, the architects argue "that the severe plainness of the Historical Society and the simplicity of its organization permit its incorporation as an element in a new composition." They go on to say, "We suggest this can be accomplished without compromising the integrity of the original structure." Several existing examples are cited, notably the 1907 colonnade which McKim, Mead and White superimposed over the original colonnade of the Isaiah Rogers Merchant's Exchange on Wall Street. Whether the success of that effort is sufficient precedent for the present proposal is a good question.

The architects then maintain that their design would complete, in terms of urban design, the setting for the Museum of Natural History. They point to the high rise apartment house  
*cont'd. p. 17, col. 2*



*Photo: Stan Ries/ESTO*

construction on Central Park West. . . .

"The great flexibility and sophistication of landmarks law is symbolized by the word 'appropriate.' . . . Landmarks law *must* continue to be flexible and able to adjust to changing circumstances and issues. . . .

"It would be injurious to see the finely wrought precedents of this legislation used to advance limited private goals at the expense of the larger public welfare. . . .

" . . . Manhattan has long symbolized the vertical city to the world, and its exaggerated land values continue to generate tall buildings. But if this century-old tradition is confronted by a steadily increasing number of untouchable structures, many important buildings will be lost, to the detriment of all . . . the City's growth will be contorted by increasing bulk and congestion on one hand and an advancing number of museum-like preserves on the other. These distortions are intensified by the use

of air rights transfer which permits buildings adjacent to landmarks to rise to greater height than would otherwise be permissible. While such procedures may save a particular building, they destroy its context, producing contrasts in scale which again tend to ridicule the very ideas of preservation.

### "Urban Diversity

" . . . it is anti-urban to assume all landmark buildings must be kept the same regardless of what happens around them. This perspective views the City as a collection of isolated objects, not the vital interplay of forces which they symbolize and shelter. The juxtapositions of density, type, and character which identify New York streets are part of its character. European cities abound with examples of structures, one folded over another in different periods of time, but Americans have been too purist to accept compositions whose historical continuity includes more than one point in time.

*cont'd. p. 16, col. 1*

## New York Historical Society: HHPA Proposal

*cont'd. from p. 15*

### "Individual Designation

"Some structures have such symbolic or architectural power they become sacrosanct. Any modifications or additions to these icons would rightfully be regarded as a travesty. Others gain distinction because they represent good examples of a particular type, form part of a particular streetscape, or represent some particularly skillful architectural achievement. These need not be seen in isolation. Each landmark structure must be approached on its own terms, each considered in its own right. But is not this evaluation exactly what the review procedures of the Landmarks Commission have so successfully accomplished over the past 19 years? Such a patient and thorough process *and* the individuality of these buildings and their sites make it particularly difficult to cite one ruling as proof of the merits or liabilities of another. . . .

" . . . In the Designation Report of July 1966 the building's [Historical Society] facade was described as: 'divided into very severe end pavilions bounding and containing a colonnade central section which, though treated with great discipline, is nobly ornamental.' No mention was made of the protruding stack space behind the building to the west, a clear change from the original York and Sawyer design. Nor was any statement offered about the building's profile against the sky or its roofs. The description essentially outlined the principal facade, noting the importance of the front portal. Nothing is said about the building as a three dimensional entity.

### "York and Sawyer's Design

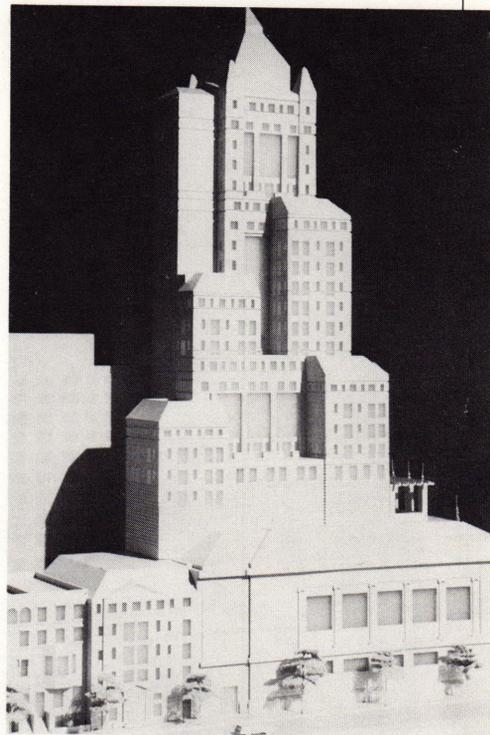
"The Historical Society's present building is actually the work of two separate architectural firms. It is an interpretation, not a totally accurate realization, of the original 1903 design. York and Sawyer, the preeminent architects of banks in New York, proposed a design for the present building which is identical in general outline (with the exception of the 1937 stack space), but considerably

different in detail than what was actually built. The Society's building is a skillful reworking by York and Sawyer of Beaux Arts elements. . . .

"Walker and Gillette completed the present structure thirty-four years later according to the general scheme of the original design, modifying the internal circulation and gallery spaces while adding a second portal facing 77th Street. At the same time fifteen stories of stack space, a new service entry and miscellaneous support spaces were included in a utilitarian and indifferent style. Subsequent alterations have 'modernized' several elements, placing glass block in the Central Park West facade, simplifying interior gallery space, removing skylights, tarring over the roof and subdividing floors. Taken as a whole the building lacks cohesion and seen from the distance is clearly unfinished.

" . . . It stands in fact as a solid, foursquare mass, similar to the base of many high-rise structures of the early 20th century. Placing a new structure above a pinnaced, domed, or pedimented building would rudely compromise the original. However, we suggest that the severe plainness of the Historical Society and the simplicity of its organization permit incorporation as an element of a new composition. We suggest this can be accomplished without compromising the integrity of the original structure. . . .

" . . . Nor do we wish to see the Historical Society's building become so successfully integrated into the housing above that the two appear as one. Rather we seek to use elements from the past and present to create a totally new composition, unique both to time and place . . . Therefore, in order to express the existing Historical Society's separate identity we have set back the volumes of the new composition with a series of offset sloping roofs. These take their form from the original structure and culminate in a pinnaced tower which is intended to be at home with the other embellishments of Central Park West. Of the 13,365,400 cubic feet of



available air rights we propose to use only 4,505,500 cubic feet.

"Perhaps most important to the character of this design is the decision to shape its four different facades in response to four different contexts. The eastern facade is set back symmetrically with pavilions, as befits the formal boulevard of Central Park West. A masonry and metalwork pergola set at the roofline of the existing building makes the transition to the new building above. The south facade responds to neighboring brownstones and contains a service entrance for both the Historical Society and the new housing above. It begins to the west with an infill of two townhouses rising to a Mansard roof pavilion containing the apartment lobby. It then sets back asymmetrically in a series of pavilions, similar to those of the front facade, and rises to the pyramidal top. The north facade is also asymmetrical, but adjusted to the 15-story height of 7 West 77th Street with a different offset organization. The west facade is wrapped at the corners with a



continuation of the fenestration patterns on adjoining sides. It also contains the off-center volume of the elevator core. . . .

"... new structures [within a landmark district] can be threaded into the existing fabric of the City without harm, if appropriately designed. . . . But is acknowledgement of the pinnacled streetwall of Central Park West a violation of this designation? . . .

"... To the north of the Museum [of Natural History] Emery Roth Senior sensitively used a high-rise apartment house to turn the corner of 81st Street and Central Park West in 1929. It most successfully sets off the open space surrounding the Museum with a 20-story brick, limestone and terracotta building in free neoclassical style. Its street wall matches those of adjoining buildings. But this composition is not matched by the disparate elements south of the Museum of Natural History. The Historical Society and an adjacent, truncated apartment house (7 West 77th Street) form an incomplete termination to the street wall which faces the Museum to the south.

#### "Linking Disparate Elements

"... Some people suggest a building the height and disposition of the Beresford should be superimposed upon the Historical Society, but such bulk would overwhelm the Church [of Ascension], put the streets in greater shadow, and offer no transition to the adjacent low-scale residential neighborhood of 76th Street. Besides, the facade of Natural History is currently asymmetrical and does not call for such a simplistic approach. With this design the stump of Number 7 West 77th Street is for the first time visually integrated with its neighbors. The offset pavilions of the new high rise combine it with the Historical Society to form an asymmetrical organization of sufficient prominence for this important corner. . . ."

## New York Historical Society: Chapter Opposition

*cont'd. from p. 15*

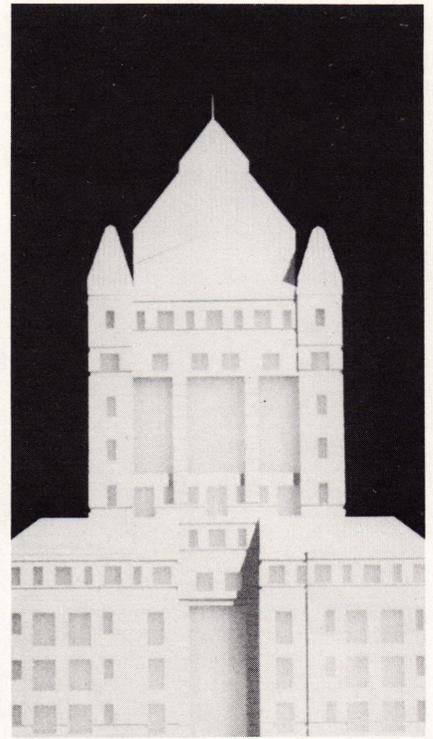
turning the corner at 81st Street which sets off the open space surrounding the Museum, an effect not matched to the south, where "The Historical Society and an adjacent truncated apartment house form an incomplete termination to the street wall which faces the Museum. . . ."

It is also advanced that the proposed design would be an appropriate addition to the Historic District, an argument interesting to those of us at the Chapter who felt so strongly that the Agrest-Gandelsonas design near the corner of 71st Street and Madison Avenue would have enhanced the East Side Historic District. But the issue here is not the same: at 71st Street the question was one of appropriateness to a Historic District; here we are dealing with an individually designated landmark building, with the Historic District being a secondary factor.

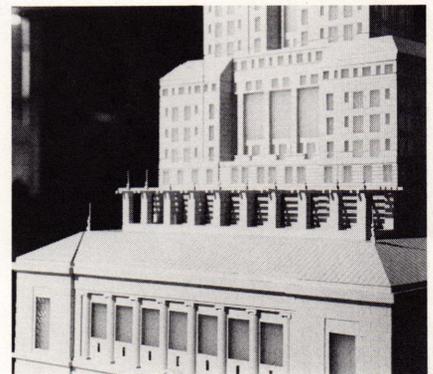
Curiously — at least within the hearing of the Chapter — there has been little said about economic necessity. Certainly there has been nothing like the economic case advanced by the Museum of Modern Art when its apartment tower was at the center of so much public discussion about the survival of cultural institutions.

Now, the Chapter, in reviewing this admirable design, so beautifully presented with such carefully considered arguments in its support, finds itself confronted by one essential question: Is this design appropriate to the landmark? We all agree that each time an application is made for a Certificate of Appropriateness, the individual situation must be examined, and that it is imperative that the Commission act with reasonable flexibility regarding the factors at hand. A rigid adherence to a policy of no modification of a building at all, ever, would violate the intent of the Law and lend fuel to those currently so anxious to undermine the Law itself.

But in the present instance matters of urban design are not primarily pertinent to the issue, nor is the



*Photos: Stan Ries/ESTO*



matter of appropriateness to the Historic District. The issue is, simply, this: If this design were executed, would it transform the essential architectural character of the landmark? We think it would, drastically. One would still be able to see the facade and the roof, but they would have become a secondary component of an overall new building form. We recommend that you deny certification. To certify this proposal as appropriate would open the doors for developers to begin imagining the possibilities in major alterations of landmarks all over town.

We disagree with the architects when they say, "The city's growth will be contorted by increasing bulk and congestion on one hand and an advancing number of museum-like preserves on the other." The Commission's power of designation is a very heavy responsibility, but once it has acted, let the city grow around the designated building unless compelling considerations call for its major modification. We do not think there is any such need here.

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