



THE
VICTORIAN
SOCIETY
NEW YORK

SPRING 2020

PANORAMA

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THE NEW YORK METROPOLITAN CHAPTER OF THE VICTORIAN SOCIETY IN AMERICA

Reconstruction of TriBeCa's Bogardus Garden Is Nearly Complete

Margot Gayle would be pleased.

A founder of both the Victorian Society in America and Friends of Cast-Iron Architecture, Ms. Gayle (1908-2008) was instrumental in renaming an unprepossessing TriBeCa traffic triangle for James Bogardus. Bogardus was a pioneer in the construction of cast-iron-fronted buildings beginning in 1847, and several buildings attributed to him remain in the vicinity of the triangle, at the intersection of Chambers, Hudson, and Reade Streets and West Broadway. Bogardus, whose 17th-century ancestor Everardus Bogardus was one of the first clock and watchmakers

in New York, was himself trained as a watchmaker. Besides his work with cast-iron buildings, he had several patents related to clocks, and he built a fine and unusual three-wheeled clock in a Federal-style lyre-form case.

Now, a permanent makeover of his namesake triangle is nearing completion as Bogardus Garden and will include installation of an antique Seth Thomas cast-iron sidewalk post clock.

Historically, the triangle formed by the intersection of these streets—Hudson Street begins at Chambers and runs at an angle to the grid—was just a leftover

open space in the roadway, edged at the West Broadway side by the 6th Avenue Elevated line between 1878 and 1939. As vehicular traffic increased, a raised island was built in the triangle to help control traffic flow. Later, a couple of trees were planted in the island, and eventually the

city, with the Tribeca Community Association and Friends of Cast-Iron Architecture, removed some of the concrete pavement and created a small, fenced garden around the existing trees.

In 2010, a neighboring city construction project temporarily closed to traffic the Hudson Street roadway bordering the triangle on the west, and the Friends of Bogardus Garden was organized to operate and maintain a temporary plaza with tables, chairs, and free-standing planters on the roadway. The experiment was deemed a success, and the Department of Transportation's urban plaza program agreed to close the block of Hudson Street permanently, upgrade the pavements, and enlarge the planted areas. The new design, by Mathews Nielsen Landscape Architects, was approved by the Landmarks Preservation Commission in 2015.

One of the members of the Friends of Bogardus Garden offered to donate a sidewalk post clock to the project as a tribute to Bogardus's background as a clockmaker and cast-iron pioneer, as well as to the clock that once overlooked the intersection from the third floor of the Reade Street facade of 16 Hudson Street. Your

Proposed park design
(image: Mathews Nielsen
Landscape Architects)



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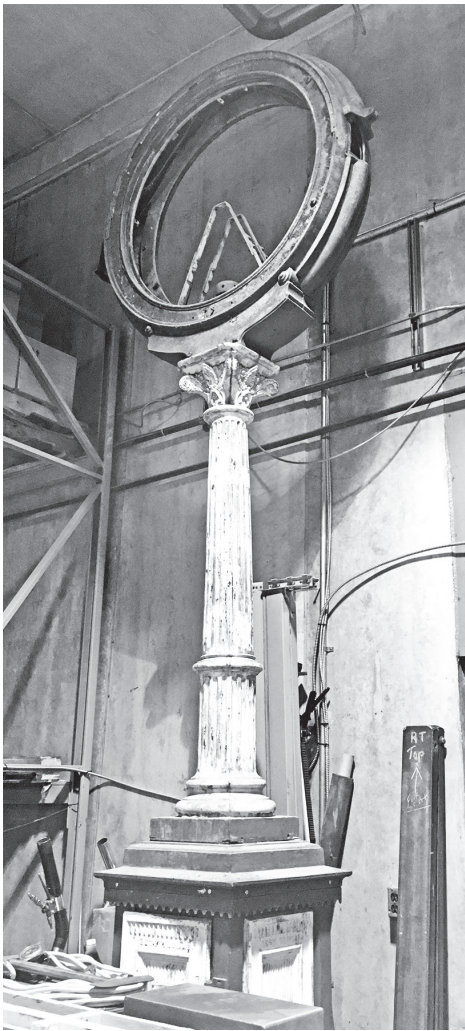
correspondent, while reviewing this project at the city's Department of Design and Construction, suggested obtaining an antique sidewalk clock rather than a new one and further, using an original mechanical clockworks rather than an electric movement.

As a result, the Friends purchased a turn-of-the 20th-century Seth Thomas cast-iron post clock that originally stood outside H.B. Morgan Jewelers on South Washington Avenue in Lansing, Michigan. The 14-foot-tall clock and weight-driven, pendulum-controlled mechanical movement are being restored and will be installed in the Garden at the northwest corner of Chambers Street and West Broadway at the conclusion of construction, now estimated for early May of 2020.

Cast-iron sidewalk post clocks, which became popular starting in the 1870s, embody three of Margot Gayle's passions: the Victorian period, cast-iron architectural design and ornament, and public clocks. With all seven of the city's historic post clocks already designated as individual landmarks, this "new" Seth Thomas, in its restored public setting, will be number eight, and the only one with a mechanical movement. Yes, Margot would be pleased.

Jeremy Woodoff

BELOW: clock awaiting restoration (photo: Jeremy Woodoff); BOTTOM CENTER, RIGHT: clock in its previous home in Lansing, Michigan (photos: Capital Area District Libraries, Lansing, Michigan)



Good News of Landmark Triumphs

Long stretches of Victorian-era structures have earned historic district designations in the last year from the city's Landmarks Preservation Commission. One particularly impressive concentration of the buildings is in Brooklyn's Sunset Park, where four new historic districts have been established. Here's a closer look at the neighborhood's evolution and surviving architecture that has been newly protected.

In the early 1900s, as Sunset Park was developed, its burgeoning population was largely middle class. Much of the residential construction consisted of two-family row houses that allowed owners to rent out portions of the buildings.

The newly created Sunset Park North Historic District, on the south side of 44th Street between 5th and 7th Avenues, contains more than 50 buildings built between 1903 and 1914. Renaissance Revival two-family row houses there have refined classical ornament. They adjoin some Renaissance Revival apartment buildings, which were among the city's earliest co-ops.

The Central Sunset Park Historic District, bounded by 5th and 6th Avenues and 47th and 49th Streets, features more than 140 buildings built between 1897 and 1907. Renaissance Revival row houses there feature highly detailed carvings—motifs include swags, festoons, dragons, and serpents—as well as a variety of angled bays, rounded bays, and flat fronts.

Sunset Park's 50th Street Historic District, between 4th and 5th Avenues, is made up of 50 row houses. They were constructed between 1899 and 1903 by two developers and two architects. Along the north and south sides of the street, this cohesive collection has stone box stoops as well as Byzantine-inspired carved details.

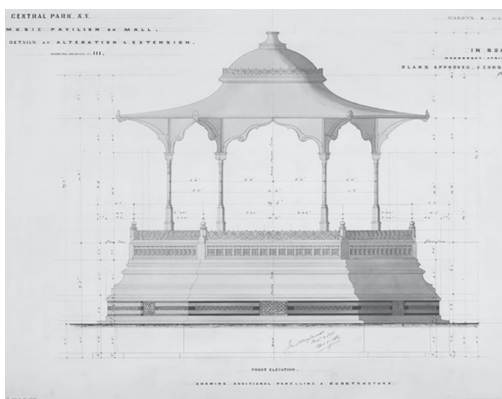
The Sunset Park South Historic District, from 54th through 59th Streets between 4th and 5th Avenues, comprises more than 250 buildings built between 1892 and 1906. This cluster of two-family row houses has the most diverse range of architectural styles of the neighborhood's historic districts, from Queen Anne to neo-Grec and Romanesque Revival. The materials palette includes brick, brownstone, and projecting metal bays.

Among the other recent landmarking triumphs from the Victorian era are LPC's protections extended to Tin Pan Alley on West 28th Street, after fervent advocacy from VSNY.

Jessica Baldwin



Restrainedly ornamented row houses (bottom) and apartment blocks (top) line 44th Street in one of Sunset Park's new historic districts (photos: Landmarks Preservation Commission)



LEFT TO RIGHT: 1886 drawing of music pavilion in Central Park (image: Municipal Archives); 1860s lithographed sheet music cover depicting romantic croquet players (image: Library of Congress); circa-1890 photo of Edith Wharton by E. F. Cooper (image: Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Yale University); Winslow Homer's 1866 painting, *Croquet Scene* (image: Art Institute of Chicago).

LECTURES

VSNY sponsors lectures at various venues. Events begin at 6:30 p.m. (reception with refreshments starts at 6:15 p.m.), unless otherwise noted. Fee: \$5 members, \$10 nonmembers, RSVP through vicsocony.org, unless otherwise noted.

TUESDAY, MARCH 24

**SVENSKA KYRKAN, 5 EAST 48TH STREET
HOW THE EMERALD OASIS CAME TO BE**

The Central Park: Original Designs for New York's Greatest Treasure (Abrams), a new book by New York City Municipal Archives conservator and art historian Cynthia S. Brenwall, is an eye-opening and magisterial study of how Manhattan's beloved oasis was born. Based on previously unpublished documentation of Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux's visions, Brenwall's lecture will explore original competition entries and designs for buildings, fixtures, and infrastructure that created pastoral and seemingly primeval landscapes. She will offer insights into how much engineering fine-tuning and big-picture aesthetic imagination went into every landscape decision, and how much 19th-century evidence survives in a well-used public space.

**CO-SPONSORED WITH ROYAL OAK FOUNDATION
MONDAY, APRIL 20**

**GENERAL SOCIETY LIBRARY, 20 WEST 44TH STREET (BETWEEN 5TH AND 6TH AVENUES)
6:15 P.M. (RECEPTION FOLLOWING LECTURE)**

DINING IN THE GILDED AGE: EDITH WHARTON AND AMERICA'S PASSION FOR EUROPEAN TASTE

TICKETS: \$35 ROYAL OAK AND VSNY MEMBERS, \$45 NON-MEMBERS, REGISTER AT WWW.ROYAL-OAK.ORG/EVENTS OR CALL KAYLA SMITH AT 212-480-2889, EXT. 201 (USE CODE CDA20 FOR DISCOUNT)

During America's Gilded Age, everything was opulent and heavily decorated, and above all, meant to impress. From the early 1870s to the beginning of World War I, rich and ambitious families looked to England and France to define their sense of culture and taste. Sumptuous design also influenced the dinner tables of the newly wealthy. While contemporary novelist Edith Wharton was not a food writer, she describes food and table settings, along with fashion and architecture, to highlight significant traits about her fictional characters. In this illustrated talk, food historian Carl Raymond—who is writing a culinary history of the Gilded Age—will use examples from Wharton's life and writings, as well as from historical descriptions and menus. From grand dining in hotels, such as the Astor House and the Fifth Avenue Hotel, to the legendary restaurants Delmonico's and Sherry's, his lecture will cover the chefs and stories, the dishes and the drama. He will provide a glimpse of Mrs. Astor's famous ballroom—with opera suppers for the famous 400—and explore,

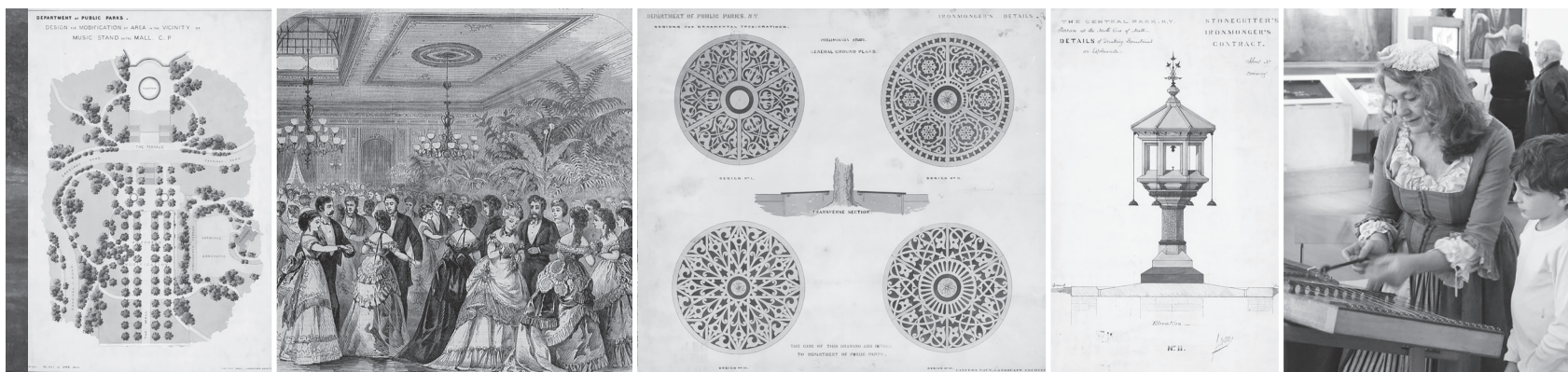
using rarely seen archival material, what was served at Stanford White and J.P. Morgan's grand salons. He will capture the Gilded Age's obsession with the most extravagant food money could buy. From the meals served at lavish tables, to those given to the servants who performed pivotal roles at the grandest social events, Carl will describe the essence and elegance of a vanished era.

TUESDAY, APRIL 21

**SVENSKA KYRKAN, 5 EAST 48TH STREET
CROQUET'S CHEATING WOMEN**

In the 1860s, the British sport of croquet caught on in America, "especially with Ladies," as one newspaper put it. Although the outdoor activity was supposedly noncompetitive and centered on socializing, it actually stirred up bitter arguments, particularly about women's behavior on the lawns. Jon Sterngass, a Saratoga Springs-based writer specializing in children's nonfiction, has uncovered evidence that certain croquet strokes were perceived as a form of symbolic castration, and that women were constantly accused of cheating at croquet by double-tapping, concealing balls under skirts, or hitting while opponents weren't looking. Sterngass will lecture on how the sport evolved as it was popularized nationwide, and how gender expectations shaped public perceptions. Find out how Victorian women, while posed on pedestals as paragons of virtue, actually played on the grassy courts to win.

Spring



LEFT TO RIGHT: 1860s landscape plan for Central Park's Mall (image: Municipal Archives); 1870 reception for a British prince at Delmonico's restaurant (image: Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper); 1872 watercolor sketches for ornate tree grates in Central Park (image: Municipal Archives); 1865 design for Central Park drinking fountain (image: Municipal Archives); performer Linda Russell plays dulcimer (photo: New-York Historical Society)

WEDNESDAY, MAY 20, 6:15-8 PM
(WITH RECEPTION/REFRESHMENTS)
SOTHEBY'S INSTITUTE, 570 LEXINGTON
AVENUE (AT 51ST STREET)
EMERGING SCHOLARS

VSNY will present young historians (proposal deadline March 10) at its annual "Emerging Scholars" event on May 20. We support scholarship about every aspect of 19th-century and early-20th-century culture, including literature, architecture, theater, fine and decorative art, politics, manufacturing, education, gender roles, reform movements, fashion, and food. Recent topics for emerging scholars have included celluloid collar advertisements, New York brothel furniture, and a mining tycoon's luxurious dinnerware. Current university students or recent graduates will give 15-minute presentations. Email 200-word proposals (preference given to American/New York topics) and CVs by March 10 to info@vicsocny.org.

MAY ANNUAL MEETING

Date and place to be announced for a festive evening event, celebrating annual award winners and Margot Gayle Fund grantees!

TOURS

Stay tuned for more details of spring walking tours/daytrips:

SATURDAY, APRIL 18
VICTORIAN RADICALS: FROM THE PRE-RAPHAELITES TO THE ARTS AND CRAFTS MOVEMENT
CURATOR-LED TOUR OF EXHIBITION AT YALE CENTER FOR BRITISH ART IN NEW HAVEN, FOR YOUNG VICTORIANS AND YOUNG-AT-HEART VICTORIANS (TRAVEL BY METRO-NORTH FROM NYC)

SATURDAY, APRIL 25
BEDFORD-STUYVESANT NEIGHBORHOOD IN BROOKLYN, WITH TOURS OF RESTORED VICTORIAN HOMES AND A LUNCHEON IN ONE OF THEM

SATURDAY, MAY 9
BRONX HAUNTS OF EDGAR ALLAN POE

NOTE FOR TOUR PARTICIPANTS
MEETING PLACES WILL BE PROVIDED WITH REGISTRATION CONFIRMATION. PARTICIPANTS MUST BE IN GOOD HEALTH, ABLE TO PARTICIPATE SAFELY IN ALL ACTIVITIES AND KEEP PACE WITH GROUPS. SITES MAY HAVE CHALLENGING STAIRS OR HILLS. IF YOU HAVE ANY CONCERNS ABOUT YOUR ABILITY TO PARTICIPATE FULLY, PLEASE CONTACT US (INFO@VICSOCNY.ORG OR 212-886-3742). VSNY RESERVES THE RIGHT TO DECLINE REGISTRATION OR END THE PARTICIPATION OF ANY TOUR GROUP MEMBER AT ANY TIME.

MARGOT GAYLE FUND EVENT

On Monday, March 9, to benefit the Margot Gayle Fund for the Preservation of Victorian Heritage, performer Linda Russell will sing the tunes and tell the stories of Victorian New York at the newly renovated Bloomingdale School of Music on the Upper West Side. Accompanying herself on dulcimer and guitar, she explores the era through love songs, patriotic anthems, minstrel tunes, hymns, and Stephen Foster melodies. Having served for many years as a balladeer for the National Park Service at Federal Hall on Wall Street, Ms. Russell now takes her music to historic sites, schools, and festivals throughout the country. New York appearances have included Lincoln Center, Carnegie Hall Folk Festival, and New-York Historical Society. The Margot Gayle Fund provides grants for preservation or conservation of Victorian-era material culture. Each year, 5% of the fund's principal is available for grants. Tickets: \$50 each (donations beyond that level are welcome). For the March 9th event, doors at 6:30 pm and the performance begins at 6:45 pm in the David Greer Recital Hall, Bloomingdale School of Music, 323 West 108th Street, New York, NY. Reception to follow.

2020

A Leap Forward with a Glance Behind, 2019's Celebration of Queen Victoria's 200th Birthday

VSNY gathered May 20, 2019, at Papillon Bistro & Bar, on East 54th Street, for their 52nd annual business meeting and a celebration of Queen Victoria's 200th birthday. President Jessica Baldwin reviewed the chapter's year of lectures, tours, and support for the preservation of buildings including Yorkville's First Hungarian Church. She thanked two of VSNY's collaborators, Alliance for a Human-Scale City and Save Tin Pan Alley. Nicole Smith was elected VSNY's first vice president, and chapter directors were reelected, including George Calderaro, Alice Dickinson, Afsy Kafai, Eve M. Kahn, Morgan Munsey, James Russiello, and Alexis Mucha. New directors elected were Mark Bench, Caroline Drabik, Lynne Funk, Eli Sterngass, and Jeremy Woodoff. The **Margot Gayle Fund for the Preservation of Victorian Heritage** awarded \$500 to the **Queens Historical Society** for kerosene lamps in the **Kingsland Homestead**; \$600 to **Stanton Street Synagogue** for the restoration of Torah Ark doors; and \$1,000 to the **American Folk Art Museum** for a symposium, "Made in New York: The Business of Folk Art." An exhibition of the same name (March-July 2019) was the focus of a Young Victorians tour on July 18, 2019.

The American Folk Art Museum also received VSNY's **Exhibition Award**, for a 2018 show, *Charting the Divine Plan: The Art of Orra White Hitchcock (1796-1863)*. Hitchcock was among the first female scientific illustrators in America, collaborating her husband, Amherst College professor Edward Hitchcock. Another **Exhibition Award** went to the **New-York Historical Society** for its 2018 show, *The Magic Lantern: The Grandfather of Cinema*. **Friends of the Upper East Side Historic Districts** received VSNY's **Publication Award** for *Shaped by Immigrants: A History of Yorkville* (2018), an illustrated history of the Upper East Side enclave's development and role as home of newly minted Americans from Ireland and Central Europe.

VSNY gave a **Performance Award** to **The Apple Boys** (appleboysnyc.com) for their Off-Broadway show, *The Apple Boys: A Barbershop Quartet Musical*, set in Coney Island at the turn of the 20th century and centered on a diverse group of friends who discover the magic of barbershop harmony. Performers accepted the award while dressed in bright colors, straw hats, and hastily applied twisted mustaches. They sent birthday greetings to Queen Victoria and then broke into a song tribute to the subway. Lyrics included, "It's heaven to take the train! It may cause you great pain, it may make you insane, but it's heaven to take the train!"

VSNY's **Preservation Award** went to the **Preservation Staff of the City of New York Landmarks Preservation Commission**. Sarah Carroll, LPC's chair, noted in her acceptance speech, "Over the past 50 years, the Commission has diligently worked to fulfill our mission by designating over 36,000 buildings and sites across all five boroughs through designation and regulation. We have designated architectural icons, like the New York County Courthouse, the Woolworth Building, and the Brooklyn

John Metcalfe, horologist extraordinaire and a former VSNY director, closed out the evening with a final toast to "one of the greatest queens who ever lived: Alexandrina was her other name, but fortunately her father stepped in and said, 'Let's also call her Victoria.'" And the happy partygoers raised glasses in birthday celebrations as Mr. Metcalfe listed her many titles as "Empress of India and Queen of England, the British Isles, Ireland, and Scotland."

James Russiello



Bridge, among many others, and historic districts, like the SoHo Cast-Iron Historic District and the Ladies' Mile Historic District. And we couldn't have done this without the support of dedicated groups like the Victorian Society New York." **Christabel Gough** received the chapter's **Lifetime Achievement Award**, which has previously been awarded to luminaries including Jack Taylor, William Dane, Catherine Hoover Voorsanger, and Everett and Evelyn Ortner. Ms. Gough is the longtime secretary of the Society for the Architecture of the City, which recently published a 71-page report, "Undoing Historic Districts" (June 2017). She attends every LPC public hearing and meeting and the associated presentation materials review sessions. Testifying on behalf of the Society, she offers insightful comments and diligently takes independent stenographer-like notes of the proceedings.

Revelers at VSNY's 2019 celebration of Queen Victoria's 200th birthday at Papillon included board members, awardees, and other fans of 19th-century culture (photo: James Russiello).

Acknowledgments

The Victorian Society New York gratefully acknowledges the generous support of members, individuals, firms, and sponsors that helps further the Chapter's mission to preserve, protect, and promote our Victorian heritage.

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Founded in New York City in 1966, the Victorian Society in America is dedicated to fostering the appreciation and preservation of our nation's 19th-century heritage as well as that of the early 20th-century (1837-1917). The Victorian Society New York (VSNY), the oldest of numerous chapters now flourishing throughout the USA, is an independent nonprofit organization affiliated with the national Society.

Membership contributions at any level help to provide the foundation for all that we do—from our lecture series, walking tours and excursions, to our grant and awards programs honoring worthy preservation projects in New York. Members also help provide scholarships to the Victorian Society in America Summer Schools for advanced study. Donations to the Margot Gayle Fund make possible monetary grants for preservation and conservation of Victorian material culture in our region.

☐ \$40 YOUNG VICTORIANS*

*Members age 35 and younger, please provide a copy of your valid ID.

☐ \$50 INDIVIDUAL*

*Seniors and full-time students receive a \$10 discount at this level. Please provide a copy of your valid ID.

☐ \$80 DUAL*

**Seniors receive a \$20 discount at this level.

☐ \$75 CONTRIBUTOR

☐ \$150 PATRON

☐ \$250 SUSTAINER

☐ \$500 PRESIDENT'S CIRCLE

Visit www.vicsocny.org for complete list of benefits and to learn about Daniel D. Badger Circle memberships.

Join the VICTORIAN SOCIETY NEW YORK today!

Additional Special Contribution(s):

VSA SUMMER SCHOOL Scholarships \$ _____

MARGOT GAYLE FUND \$ _____

Please make checks payable to: Metropolitan Chapter, VSA

Mail this form with check to: VSNY, c/o Village Alliance, 8 East 8th Street, New York, NY 10003

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Friends Group Keeping Victorian Music Alive

Pipes the size of decades-old tree trunks thrum each time the right keys, knobs, and foot pedals are pulled and pressed on the Erben Organ, an 1868 instrument at Old St. Patrick's Cathedral on Mott Street. The tiered multi-octave keyboard console is the size of a sportscar, and the mechanisms and 2,500 pipes would occupy a Manhattan townhouse. The fiery or whispery sounds resemble trumpets, cornets, flutes. The music echoes through the groin-vaulted cream-colored sanctuary, as sun streams through stained-glass windows depicting saints in jewel-tone palettes.

"It's just a sumptuous instrument, everything about it," Jared Lamenzo, the cathedral's music director and organist, said during a recent demonstration.

A new non-profit preservation group, the Friends of the Erben Organ (erbenorgan.org), is raising money for the instrument's restoration—about 12% of \$2 million needed has come in. It is the finest surviving creation of Henry Erben (1800-1884), an organ maker who had a thriving workshop nearby on Centre Street. He was Episcopalian but catered to all faiths, shipping hundreds of his works to sanctuaries as far afield as Cuba and Venezuela—prospective buyers were brought to St. Patrick's, to understand Erben's high standards.

The Catholics who had built the church, an early 19th-century structure designed by French-born architect Joseph-François Mangin, were defying xenophobes' prejudice against non-Protestant immigrants as they spent \$15,000 on an Erben product. Their investment, Lamenzo said, amounted to "a cultural stake in the ground."

Newspapers enthusiastically reviewed the first concerts there. In 1869, for instance, *The New-York Tribune* praised the machine as "more musical and satisfactory in tone than any we have heard in this city" and noted that certain performers had learned how to make the instrument "speak promptly and distinctly."

Parishioners preserved the organ when the new uptown cathedral on Fifth Avenue was constructed in the 1870s. Countless other works by Erben have been destroyed by fire or gutted or removed as musical tastes changed.

Lamenzo can still produce majestic sounds with keys labeled Dulciana, Mixture, Hautboy, Clarionet Bass, and Flageolet. And performers and the public stream in by the thousands each year, for affordably priced concerts, Pull Out All the Stops backstage tours, and a kids' summer camp called Pedals, Pipes & Peals.

Lamenzo can point out widespread condition problems including missing notes, broken couplers, wind-chest leaks, duct-tape patches, damaged floorboards, and defunct light fixtures. The entire machinery will eventually need to be dismantled and removed for scrutiny and repair offsite. Further treasures may surface in the process, Lamenzo said: "We don't even know what's under these floorboards—we might find music, who knows?"

Check out erbenorgan.org to make sure that you don't miss a chance to see and hear the pipes thrum.

Eve M. Kahn



LEFT TO RIGHT: Jared Lamenzo, music director and organist at Old St. Patrick's Cathedral, at the keyboard; magnificent thrumming pipes; keyboard console the size of a sportscar (photos: *Friends of the Erben Organ*). TOP RIGHT: organ builder Henry Erben's business card (image: *Museum of the City of New York*).