



NEIGHBORHOOD
HISTORY GROUP

BLOOMINGDALE BULLETIN

Discovering, preserving, and sharing our history

Issue No. 10

Spring 2023

It's Spring!

Happy Spring to All! Welcome to a fresh-grown edition of Bloomingdale Bulletin, with news of programs, projects, and a view into the history of the Upper West Side between 96th and 110th streets and Central Park to the Hudson River. The Bloomingdale Neighborhood History Group (BNHG) welcomes your feedback, comments and ideas [here](#).

Upcoming Programs

Free Walking Tours

Jim Mackin

Sunday, April 16, 2:00 pm

Wednesday, May 3, 6:00 pm

Wednesday, June 14, 6:00 pm

Meet at the south end of Straus Park, Broadway and 106th Street

Springtime is walk time! Join popular tour guide Jim Mackin, author of [Notable New Yorkers of Manhattan's Upper West Side](#), as he shares stories about the people and places that make up the history of the Bloomingdale neighborhood.

The walks are different each time and last between one and two hours. Jim is also the founder of [Weekday Walks](#), which offers tours on select Wednesdays, covering a different part of the city each time.



Jim Mackin

The Maps That Made Manhattan: The History and Role of the Manhattan Topographical Bureau

Hector Rivera

Thursday, April 20, 6:30 pm

Free zoom presentation. Check [here](#) for the link.



Randel map detail



Hector Rivera

In crowded Manhattan, where property values can hinge on a fraction of an inch, everything that gets built must be precisely located—horizontally and vertically—in relation to the borough’s legally adopted street system. Assuring the integrity of that system is the responsibility of the Manhattan Topographical Bureau, part of Manhattan Borough President Mark Levine’s office.

Hector Rivera, Topographical Manager at the Manhattan Borough President's Office, will talk about the work and history of the Manhattan Topographical Bureau, including its archive of official maps, some dating back to the 1600s.

The Paterno Buildings in Bloomingdale

Carla Paterno Golden

Thursday, May 11, 2023, 6:30 pm

Free zoom presentation. Check [here](#) for the link.

The Paterno Family immigrated to New York City from Castelmezzano, Italy, in 1880, and subsequently built 164 buildings in Manhattan, mostly apartment houses. Of those, 95% still stand. The family was responsible for 32 buildings in Bloomingdale alone.

Carla Golden, great-granddaughter of Dr. Charles V. Paterno, will introduce us to those Bloomingdale buildings, sharing the stories behind them, along with an enchanting tale of immigration involving one of Manhattan's most prolific building families.



Carla Golden

Carla Golden started researching her family and their architectural legacy three years ago and has—for the first time in history—cataloged, researched, and photographed all of her family's known buildings. The Paterno story is one of many immigrant stories – a tale of achieving the American Dream—but unique in character due to both the arrival and success of the Paterno family being purely accidental.

Past Programs

From the Pacific Northwest to the Upper West Side:

The Lumber that Built Our Blocks—Where It Came from, How It Got Here and How It's Being Recycled

Alan Solomon

February 23, 2023

In presenting the fascinating history of the varied types of lumber used to build the homes and factories of New York City, Alan Solomon talked about the species, forest sources, logging, and transport methods that brought these woods across the country to the Upper West Side. He focused on a Columbus Avenue building to give an example of his belief that “every building tells a story about the growth and development of our city.”

He then explained the contemporary importance of the recovery of old lumber, its reuse applications, and some of the interesting recent work by the

tree-ring lab at Columbia University, which is using salvaged lumber to research climate change.

Alan Solomon is the co-author of [Reclaimed Wood: A Field Guide](#). He is also a partner at Sawkill Lumber, specializing in supplying reclaimed wood for residential and commercial uses. He is featured in a [New Yorker profile](#) of a preservation campaign for an 1832 Manhattan warehouse.

You can see a recording of the program on our [website](#).

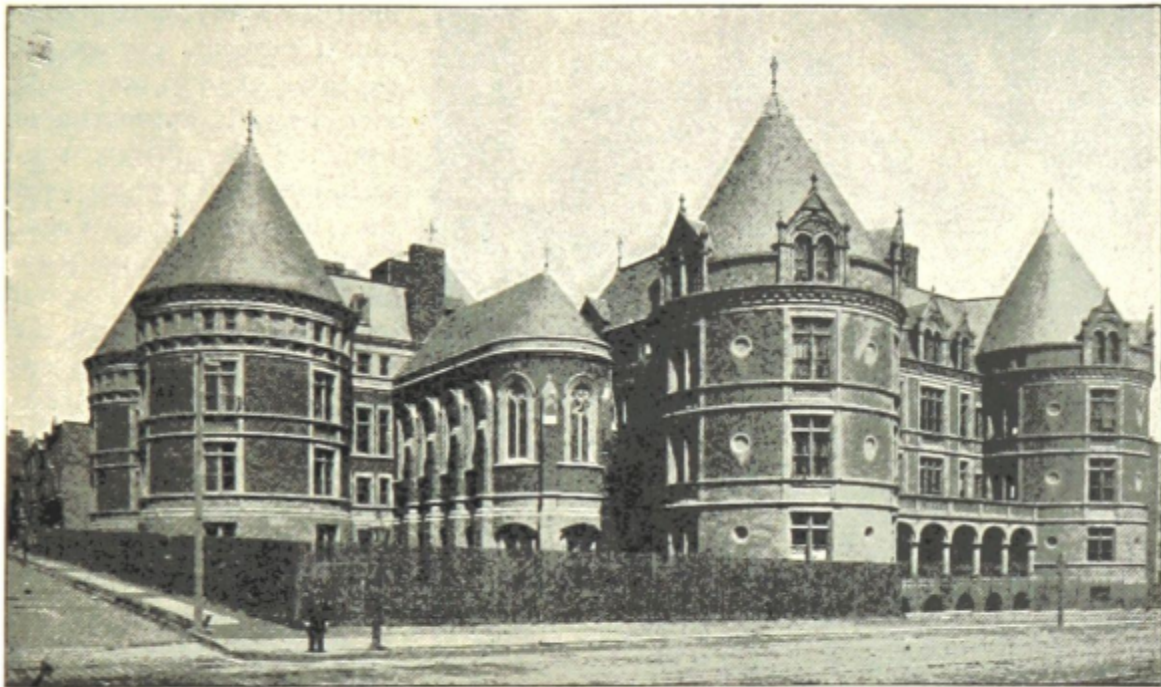
The Joys (and How-Tos) of Researching Neighborhood History

Vita Wallace, Jim Mackin, Pam Tice

February 8, 2022

This was our first hybrid in-person and zoom event at the Bloomingdale Library.

Members of the BNHG presented an introduction to the history collection housed at the Bloomingdale Library, along with tips on how to use it. Those curious about our local history were inspired to dig into the joys of uncovering it on their own.



NEW-YORK CANCER HOSPITAL, CENTRAL PARK WEST AND 106TH STREET.

The presenters also shared a rich selection of other tools, sources both online and around the city (see below), and strategies for conducting research. As an extra treat, they told stories on topics such as long-forgotten medical institutions in the neighborhood, including the New York Cancer Hospital, founded in 1884, located at 455 Central Park West.

The BNHG has been presenting history talks for more than two decades. In 2003 it established the neighborhood history collection at the Bloomingdale branch of the New York Public Library in a collaboration that has become a valuable public resource.

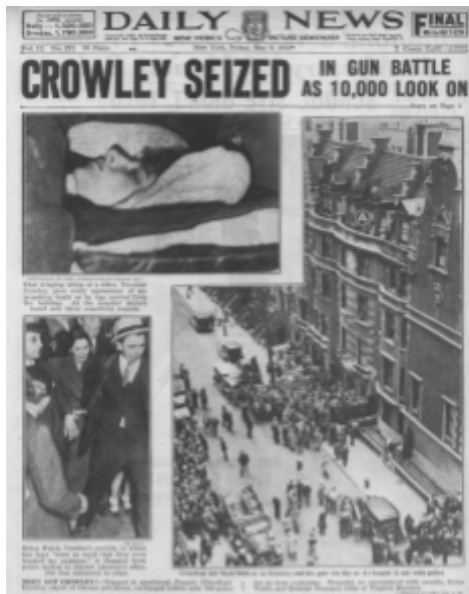
You can see a recording of the program on our [website](#).

Support Local History

The work of the Bloomingdale Neighborhood History Group reaches you through our free programs, website, walking tours, and resources such as our Building Database and Library Collection.

Donations to our work are through a Go Fund Me 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.

Police in Bloomingdale: A 200-Year History in Pictures



From the exhibit at the Bloomingdale Library

A new exhibit is on display at The Bloomingdale Library, West 100th Street between Amsterdam and Columbus Avenues – directly across from the 24th precinct station house.

Posters in a series of eight panels are chockablock with photos, newspaper articles, and text telling stories about such things as:

- the Bloomingdale police at the time of the Civil War.
- the day in 1931 when 200 officers shot 400 bullets, as 10,000 spectators watched them capture a murderer.
- how Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia showed up the FBI at the 100th Street stationhouse.

The panels were prepared by Rob Garber, a member of the Bloomingdale Neighborhood History Group's planning committee.

Library hours: Monday-Tuesday 10-7; Wednesday-Thursday 11-7; Friday-Saturday 10-5; Sunday closed.

Street Trees, A History

By Pam Tice

Last December, NYC Parks released an expanded version of its [Street Tree Map](#), announcing the addition of trees in city parks, including Riverside Park but not Central Park, which has its own tree map. Now that spring is returning, it's a good time to take another look at this wonderful map and maybe get to know your block's trees. The Upper West Side has 8,842 trees, with 164 species. The most popular is the thornless honey locust.

The Street Tree Map has been around since 2016, following the 2007 initiative of the Bloomberg administration to plant a million trees. The de Blasio administration concluded this project in 2015. Now, the city's five Borough Presidents are urging the city to plant another million trees by 2030.

Today, the benefits of an "urban forest" are well known. Trees have measured abilities to cool the air, reduce carbon dioxide, and mitigate stormwater runoff. They are recognized as an integral part of the city's infrastructure. But they also have immeasurable benefits, as they beautify city blocks, increasing human comfort and well-being.

The importance of street trees to urban life was recognized in the 19th century but did not become an organized effort until the Tree Planting Association was formed in 1896, as part of the City Beautiful movement. Property owners were urged to plant street trees at \$2.50 per tree, plus another \$2.50 for a tree guard designed to prevent people from tying their horses to the owner's investment.

In an era of tremendous development, New York's trees had



1900 Broadway at 103rd St, New York Historical Society

been destroyed while buildings, sewers, water lines, and electrical conduits were installed. In the early 20th century, subway construction began. Here, in our neighborhood, the mature trees in the center of Broadway were cut down as the IRT was built.



Broadway after the subway came; 1904 or later.

Also in the 19th century, the phenomenon of “nervousness” as a characteristic of modern civilization was recognized. One physician attributed this condition to steam power, the periodical press, the telegraph, the sciences, and the mental activity of women. Surely a few leafy street trees would help mitigate this condition!

As it became apparent that asking property owners to plant trees would never be enough, in 1899 an effort began to pass New

York State legislation to make street tree planting a government responsibility. The Medical Society of New York County urged the effort to cool the city in summer and improve public health, particularly in poor areas of the city where the hot summer months increased the deaths of children. The legislation eventually passed, placing the responsibility with the New York City Parks Department and extending their jurisdiction to the streets.

Over the next several years, New York would develop the scientific knowledge of how to grow, maintain, and replace what we now call our “urban forest.” Universities developed the profession of urban forester, expanding their scientific knowledge of tree species, and their care and maintenance. Today we also have an active volunteer program to care for street trees, [Trees New York](#).

Here in Bloomingdale, these two photos of Amsterdam Avenue at 103 Street tell the story. The first is a 1939/40 photo of PS 54 and the Association Residence for the Relief of Aged Indigent Females. The second is the same building today, now Hostelling International New York.



Amsterdam at 104th in 1939/40: Residence and PS 54



Today: Hostelling International

Sources:

Dumpelmann, Sonja *Seeing Trees, A History of Street Trees in New York City and Berlin* New Haven, CT, Yale University Press, 2018.

Day, Leslie *Field Guide to the Street Trees of New York City* Baltimore, MD, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011

Bloomingdale Before the Road



Bloomingdale before the road.

Gil Tauber, a member of BNHG and an historian of the earliest days of our neighborhood, takes you on a rewarding journey through its historic development in an outstanding essay, *Bloomingdale Before the Road*.

Although we know it today as our local neighborhood, the Bloomingdale district of colonial New York referred to an area that stretched along the Hudson River all the way from about 42nd Street to 129th Street. Accounts of its history rightly note the importance of the Bloomingdale Road. First laid out about 1708 as part of the provincial highway system, the road is credited with changing Bloomingdale from a rural backwater to a district of fashionable country estates, a reputation that lasted well into the 19th Century,

However, there was a Bloomingdale well before the road, and the creation of the road was itself a step in a gradual process.

Even before its development in 1708, the Bloomingdale area was named, defined, mapped, bought, and sold.

Consulting the earliest documents, Gil's essay examines the history of Bloomingdale up to the period when the road was laid out. You can read it on our website [here](#).

An Upper West Side Notable

From [*Notable New Yorkers of Manhattan's Upper West Side*](#)

By Jim Mackin

Fordham University Press

John M. "Pete" Corridan (1911 – 1984)

Priest

964 Amsterdam Avenue



John M. "Pete" Corridan

Father Corridan is the inspiration for the priest, "Father Barry," played by Karl Malden in the 1954 motion picture *On the Waterfront*. When Budd Schulberg wrote the screenplay for the movie, he consulted extensively with Father Corridan.

In 1945, Corridan was made the associate director of the Xavier Institute of Labor Relations and he made corruption on the waterfront his principal focus. The investigative

reporter Malcolm Johnson, with the *New York Sun* worked with Corridan and authored a series of articles that won him a Pulitzer Prize. Through both their efforts, New York and New Jersey established the Waterfront Commission to get rid of the gangster control on the piers.

Corridan grew up on Amsterdam Avenue and was educated at the prestigious Jesuit Regis High School on the East Side. Then he studied at New York University's School of Commerce and Fordham University, run by Jesuits, and then onto theological studies to be ordained a Jesuit priest in 1945.

Place Names in Bloomingdale

By Nancy Macagno

Henry Browne Boulevard

West 90th Street between Amsterdam and Columbus Avenues



If you've visited the West Side Community Garden, on West 90th Street between Columbus and Amsterdam Avenues, you may have noticed the street sign bearing the name Henry Browne Boulevard. If you become curious about that, you will learn the story of a colorful and influential social justice figure of the 1960s.

Henry Joseph Browne was born to Irish parents in 1919 in Hell's Kitchen.

Ordained a Roman Catholic priest in 1944, in 1968 he was named Pastor of St. Gregory the Great Church at 144 West 90th Street, just up the block from today's garden.

The parish of St. Gregory the Great was created in 1906 to serve the area between West 86th and West 93rd Streets during a period of population growth due to the new IRT subway. From its early years, St. Gregory's welcomed a diverse community. By the late 1950s it became active politically and socially, as a rapidly growing Puerto Rican population joined the mostly Irish parishioners. A Spanish-speaking priest was assigned in 1955 and in 1959 a Spanish-language mass was established.

This was the backdrop for the arrival of Father Henry Browne in 1958 as a parish priest. Browne's Irish gift of storytelling made him a riveting speaker and, despite an academic



St. Gregory's Church

background, he was comfortable with the language of the street.

Already an activist, in 1959 he was a founder of the Strycker's Bay Neighborhood Council, a citizens' committee organized to work with the Urban Renewal Board newly created by Mayor Robert F. Wagner, Jr. The Board was to plan the establishment of the West Side Urban Renewal Area – West 87 to West 97th Streets from Amsterdam Avenue to Central Park West.

This was an effort to design an alternative to the “slum clearance” approach carried out by Robert Moses in the 1950s. Browne was an outspoken leader in the fight against the displacement of the poor from their neighborhoods. He recognized that the make up of his parish—both the old Irish contingent and the newer Puerto Rican group—would likely have been driven out.

His work in favor of affordable public housing led to a pledge in 1962 from Mayor Robert F. Wagner to significantly increase the number of low-income and middle-income housing units and to decrease the number of luxury units.

Although he served as pastor for only two years, his influence was vast. During his tenure, the church became a center of activism against the Vietnam War and was a safe house for draft dodgers and people fleeing to Canada.

The most dramatic event took place in April of 1970. Reverend Philip F. Berrigan, younger brother of Reverend Daniel Berrigan, was on the FBI's most-wanted list for destroying draft files. He came as a fugitive to St. Gregory's to address a peace rally and Father Browne offered him sanctuary shelter in the rectory. While he was there, the FBI came to the church, broke down a door, raided the rectory, and arrested Berrigan.

That same year, Father Browne left St. Gregory's to accept a position teaching sociology at Rutgers University, which brings us to the personal side of his outsized life. In defiance of his pledge of celibacy, Henry Browne had shared a secret life with Flavia Alaya. Their alliance resulted in a family of three children who lived in New Jersey. Browne left his parish post to marry her and join them. (Alaya later went on to write a book, *Under the Rose: A Confession*.)

Henry Browne died at age 61 on November 19, 1980. In 1982, the block of St. Gregory's was dedicated as Henry Browne Boulevard.

Sources of Historical Information

Pam Tice, a member of the BNHG Planning Committee, blogger about historical subjects, and author of history articles for *The West Side Rag*, has compiled an extensive list of resources that are useful for conducting your own historical research.

It is organized into categories:

- Researching your building
- Books about New York City
- Books about the Bloomingdale and Morningside neighborhoods
- Old books
- Website archives
- Websites of New York history
- Podcasts
- Maps
- Photographs
- Newspapers
- Journals
- Government research
- History programs that were recorded on zoom
- History through walking tours

This resource is available for download on our [website](#).

A Note to Our Readers

This is our newsletter's first correction, pretty good after three years of work!

In the Summer 2021 issue, we published an article about the Rope Walk on West 106th Street, one of the many rope walks scattered around New York City where the rope for maritime industries was made, along with the twine needed to hold packages together, long before tape was invented. In the article, we'd reported that Samuel Morse came to the "Bloomingdale rope walk" on an expedition to test the ability of his telegraph wire to perform over long distances.

Thanks to further research by our colleague, Rob Garber, we recently learned that the rope walk in question was located further downtown, at the "junction of Eighth Avenue and the Bloomingdale Road." In the 1840s, the area known as Bloomingdale had a much wider definition, including much of the lower West Side. So now we know.