



BLOOMINGDALE BULLETIN

NEIGHBORHOOD
HISTORY GROUP

Discovering, preserving, and sharing our history

Issue No. 9

Winter 2023

New Year's Greetings

As we look forward to a new year, we also look back to honor the history of our neighborhood. This first issue of 2023 features the celebration of the centennials of two local residential buildings and offers tips on how you can do the same for the building you call home.

Also note other events and items of interest in our neighborhood between 96th and 110th Streets from Central Park to the Hudson River. The Bloomingdale Neighborhood History Group welcomes your feedback, comments, and ideas [here](#).

Support Our Shared Local History

You can help explore, preserve and share our local history by making a [donation](#) to the Bloomingdale Neighborhood History Group. In the past, we collected contributions at our live events in a basket on the check-in table. That possibility vanished three years ago when the pandemic arrived. Now we're asking for your support of our free public programs, walking tours, website, Building Database, and other helpful resources.

We are able to process donations through a Go Fund Me site created in partnership with the non-profit Columbus-Amsterdam Business Improvement District, making your donation fully tax-deductible. Visit our website [Donate Page](#) to learn more. We know that there are many requests for your support and we appreciate that you consider ours.

Thank you.

Upcoming Programs

Free Walking Tours

Jim Mackin

Sunday, January 8, 2:00 pm

Sunday, February 12, 2:00 pm

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

Winter weather has never deterred tour guide Jim Mackin, author of the popular book, [Notable New Yorkers of Manhattan's Upper West Side](#). Jim's lively stories about the history of the people and places of the Bloomingdale neighborhood warm locals and visitors alike. His tours are different each time and last between one and two hours. Jim is also the founder of [Weekday Walks](#), with tours every Wednesday morning covering a different part of the city each time.



Jim Mackin

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

Featuring Jim Mackin, Pam Tice, Vita Wallace, and other members of the Bloomingdale Neighborhood History Group.

Wednesday, February 8, 5:30-6:30 pm *Live, in person, and free!*

Bloomingdale Library, 150 West 100th Street, between Amsterdam and Columbus Avenues, 2nd floor (wheelchair accessible)



Hear enticing stories of noteworthy places in our neighborhood – such as the New York Cancer Hospital pictured here in 1893 – and discover the thrills of chasing them down yourself. The presentation introduces the library's local history collection and gives tips for doing your

own research. This event will also be live-streamed if possible. Please check our [website](#) for more information closer to the date.

Past Programs

Down by Riverside: The Park, the Drive, and Bloomingdale

Stephanie Azzarone
November 30, 2022

Stephanie Azzarone treated us to an engaging, sweeping history of the land that was once Native American hunting grounds, farmland, and home to elegant country estates. She traced the creation and evolution of the Park and Drive, and described the powerful men who conceived and promoted it, while also giving a view of the families who lived in Bloomingdale both before and after the Park and Drive came to be.

Author of the new book, [Heaven on the Hudson: Mansions, Monuments, and Marvels of Riverside Park](#), Stephanie is a member of the Bloomingdale Neighborhood History Group Planning Committee. You can see a recording of the program on our [website](#).

Homemade History Exchange Fall Encore

Organized by Vita Wallace
Co-sponsored by the Bloomingdale Neighborhood History Group and the Columbus Amsterdam BID as part of the Open Streets program
October 16, 2022



Alice Grossman at the Homemade History Exchange

An October encore event for Bloomingdale locals to gather in person and exchange information about the neighborhood followed the great success of the first-ever [Homemade History Exchange](#) in August. A wealth of materials and information included a select collection of historical photos, articles, maps, and other items related to the immediate neighborhood. History Group volunteers offered tips on how to research your building or your block, and to find further resources.



Moorish Gardens Theater on 110th Street, 1913

And who doesn't love to look at then-and-now comparisons for the block you walk on every day? The City of New York obligingly photographed nearly every building in all five boroughs in [1939-1940](#), and again in the early [1980s](#), making it easy to create your own then-and-now pairs.



109th Street and Broadway, looking north, 1940



109th and Broadway today

Get started today! There's a wide range of choices for documenting what you find, from video presentations or panel displays like Jim and Rob created, to blog posts or dedicated websites. Share your discoveries with your neighbors and with us at the Bloomingdale Neighborhood History Group.

An Upper West Side Notable

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

By Jim Mackin

Fordham University Press

Gregory Joseph Sierra (1937 – 2021)

Actor

854 Amsterdam Avenue



Gregory Joseph Sierra

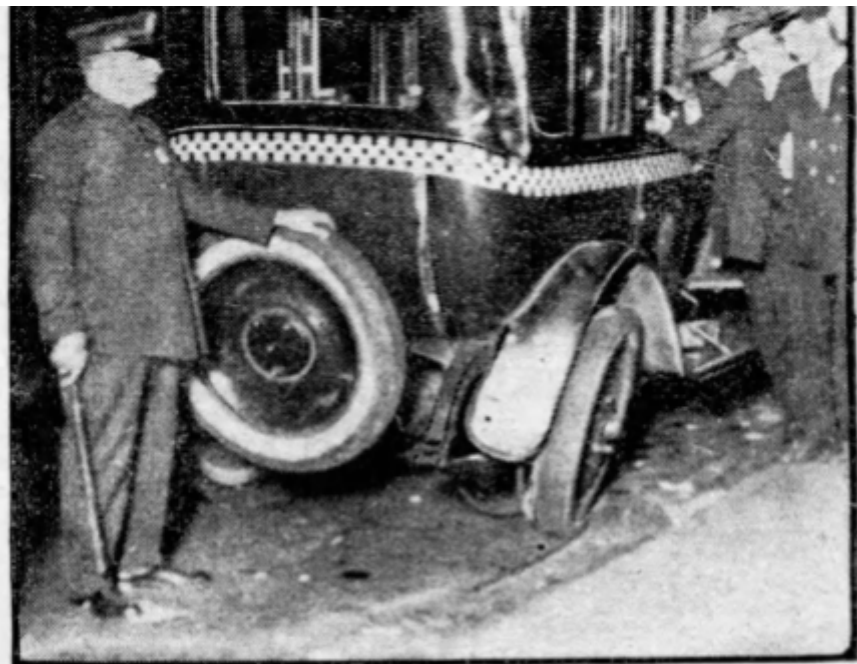
Sierra was a regular on the television sitcoms "Barney Miller" and "Sanford and Son." He was also a constant presence in such shows as "Soap," "Hill Street Blues," "Miami Vice," and "Murder She Wrote." He was born in Manhattan and raised in Spanish Harlem.

After service in the U. S. Air Force, he earned his stripes touring with the National Shakespeare Company. Following a 1967 role in King John at the

New York Shakespeare Festival, he took his talents to Los Angeles and found much work. He could stand in for characters featuring his own Puerto Rican heritage or appear as an Italian or Native American. He could be seen in numerous movies such as "The Flying Nun," "Beneath the Planet of the Apes," "Papillon," "The Towering Inferno," "Honey, I Blew Up the Kid," and others. His bread and butter, however, was television, with appearances in over 100 different shows.

100 Years Ago in Bloomingdale: Autoists and Traffic Deaths

Pam Tice has added another entry to our website [blog collection](#). What started out to be a short item for this newsletter blossomed into a longer piece as Pam found numerous mentions in the news of automobile accidents in Bloomingdale 100 years ago, many causing tragic deaths. As she delved into the reasons, Pam discovered that this was a city-wide problem and not entirely a new one.



(NEWS photo)
TAXI DEATH.—M. P. Rowan died yesterday in collision of his taxi (above) and sedan, Amsterdam Avenue.

In her post, she details the problems caused by "autoists" as cars came into more widespread use and describes how New York City has tried to resolve this urban problem, both in 1923 and today. The Place Names item in this issue was inspired by this blog post.

Place Names in Bloomingdale

By Batya Miller and Nancy Macagno

Sparked by Pam Tice's blog post about traffic accidents a century ago, we reflected that some things haven't changed all that much. Two places in our neighborhood have been memorialized for children killed by cars in recent years.

Ariel Russo Place



On June 4, 2013, a speeding car killed a four-year-old girl named Ariel Russo at the corner of 97th Street and Amsterdam Avenue. The accident occurred on the northwest corner at 8:15 a.m. when her grandmother, Katia Gutierrez, also injured, was taking her to the nursery school at Holy Name School. The 17-year-old driver of the speeding car was not licensed to drive and was pursued by the police when he crashed into Ariel. He was eventually found guilty of involuntary manslaughter and was given a sentence of three to nine years. He entered

prison in 2016 and was released in 2020.

On March 10, 2014, the corner of 97th and Amsterdam was renamed Ariel Russo Place. The renaming took place five years after she was born. Before her death, Ariel and her family had already planned her birthday party for that date to celebrate the bubbly little girl.

Cooper Stock Way

Seven months after Ariel's death, tragedy struck 97th Street again. On January 10, 2014, at 9:00 p.m., nine-year-old Cooper Stock was killed on the corner of 97th Street and West End Avenue. He and his father had just arrived home from dinner and were struck while crossing 97th Street by a taxi making a left-hand turn. Cooper and his father were holding hands and

observing the crossing signal. The taxi driver said he did not see Cooper in the crosswalk. His driver's license was suspended for six months by the Taxi and Limousine Commission for failure to yield. He was ultimately charged in court "for failure to exercise due care" and charged a fine of \$580.

The corner was renamed Cooper Stock Way on June 3, 2015. In attendance were Cooper's Troopers, fellow students from Calhoun School, where he was a popular student described as "spirited and wise."



Safety Measures

In May of 2014, Cooper's Law was passed as part of Mayor de Blasio's Vision Zero legislative package, resulting in part from the diligence of Cooper's mother, Dana Lerner. The law requires that taxi drivers who kill or seriously injure pedestrians have their licenses suspended immediately and revoked permanently if they are found to have broken any traffic laws.

Around the same time, the administration introduced safety measures for deadly intersections, including simplified signal timing, allowing more time for pedestrians to cross, eliminating left turns, making crosswalks more visible, reducing the speed limit to 25 mph, and adding safety islands, which can now be found on Amsterdam and West End Avenues near the renamed intersections.

Families for Safe Streets, an organization formed by Ariel's parents, Alan and Sofia Russo, and introduced on the day of the street renaming, has been instrumental in reducing police chases, lowering speed limits, and applying pressure on the city to continue pursuing street redesigns in keeping with the goals of Vision Zero.

The Bloomingdale Neighborhood History Group promotes research and education about the history of the Bloomingdale neighborhood, and we are available as a resource. We share our findings through free public programs, walking tours, workshops, publications, a blog, our website, www.upperwestsidehistory.org, and a Neighborhood History Collection of materials housed at the Bloomingdale Branch of the New York Public Library, 150 West 100th Street.