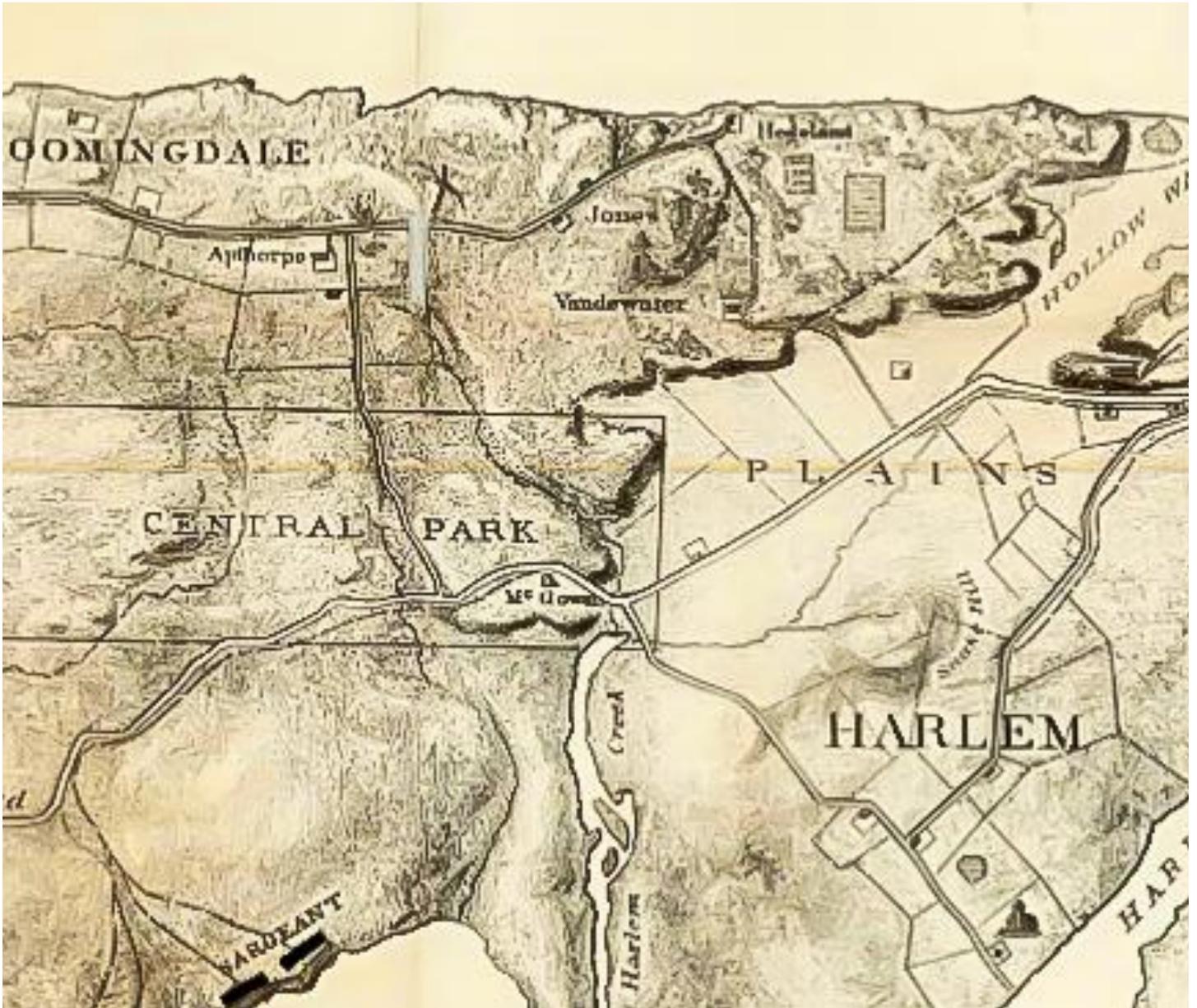




HISTORY WALK



Map of the Battle of Harlem Heights

HISTORY WALK

SITE #1

The neighborhood we now call Morningside Heights was once a Lenape hunting ground – a heavily wooded plateau, traversed by streams and defined by rugged outcroppings of Manhattan Schist.

Construction of the Bloomingdale Road began in 1703, largely to provide transportation for produce and tobacco grown in the area. An orchard was located on the western end of 111th Street, which lies near the terminus of that mythical Manhattan road.

Here, a pathway veered to the northeast, dividing the Vandewater and Hoaglandt estates and connecting to the Post or Kings Bridge Road, which led from points south to Harlem and on to Albany and Boston.

Our neighborhood was the setting for the Battle of Harlem Heights. This engagement was a first, if minor, victory for General George Washington at the start of the Revolution. Washington continued to admire our neighborhood's high ground and many years later suggested it become the setting for the U.S. capital.

Two important New York institutions were the main local presence by the mid-1800s -- the Bloomingdale and Leake & Watts Asylums. Hence, our forgotten pathway was often called Asylum Lane.

1800s maps show Gurdon S. Mumford as owner of this land. He was private secretary to Benjamin Franklin in Paris, became a member of Congress, and was a founder of the New York Stock Exchange.



Map of the Battle of Harlem Heights





1879, Riverside Drive at 111th Street, under construction, facing north

HISTORY WALK

SITE #2

390 Riverside, constructed in 1924, is a typically beautiful Morningside Heights residential building. It has been home to diverse residents of our neighborhood and represents the creative spirit of our community: Carol King lived in the building and it's possible that J.D. Salinger spent some of his childhood here.

These important and uniquely American voices embody popular culture in very different ways. Their work has been embraced by successive generations of Americans and helped define our national identity.



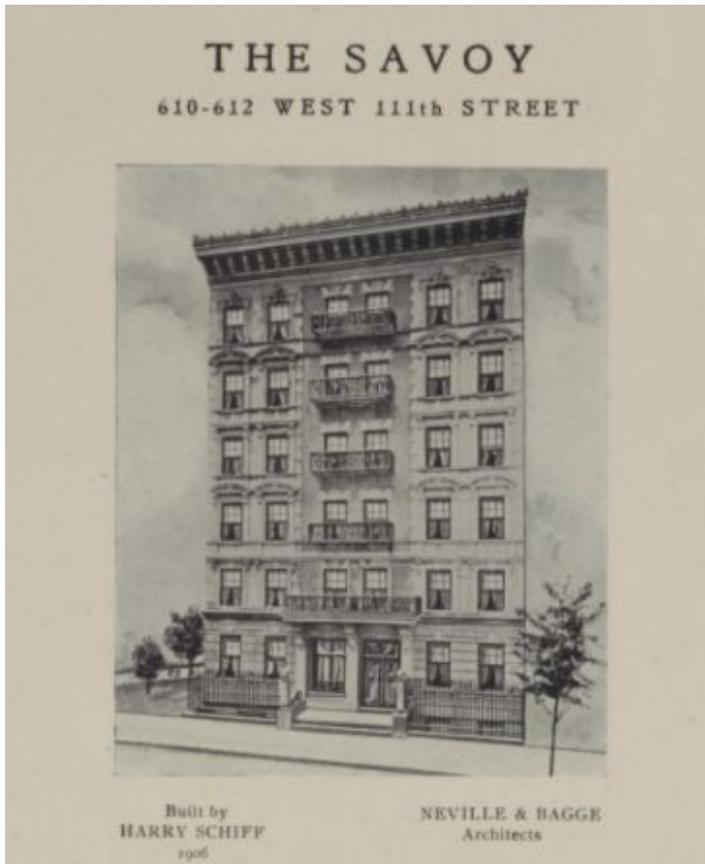
c. 1940, Riverside Drive looking north

HISTORY WALK

SITE #3

Originally named The Savoy, 610-612 west 111th Street is now known as The Ellington. Built by Harry Schiff, 1906 / Architects - Neville & Bagge, the original design provided suites of six and seven rooms. The building has had a storied past as a single-room occupancy boarding house, AIDS hospice center, a boutique hotel catering to parents of university students. In 2002, without giving notice to the community, the hotel's 88 rooms were converted to a shelter catering to women and children.

This residence is a welcome part of our community and embodies the spirit of support for those in need exhibited by Morningsiders. As a community, we have embraced The Ellington, especially during the challenges of the past year. Additionally, shelter residents have participated in many Block Association activities including neighborhood clean-ups and maintaining the West 111th Street People's Garden.



1908, Apartment Homes of the Acropolis



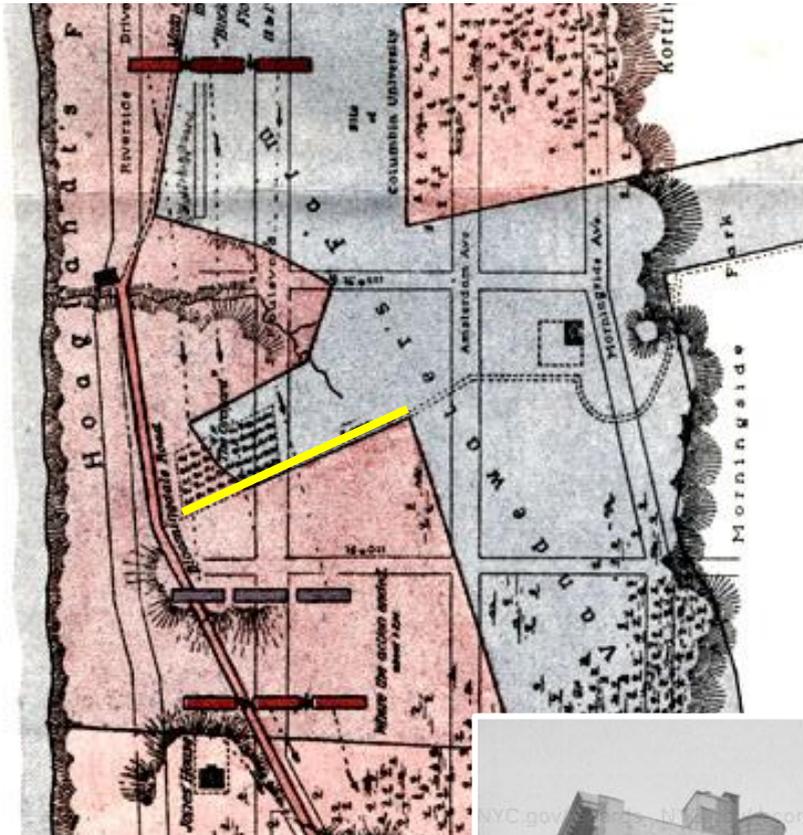
c. 1940, West 111th Street looking southwest



HISTORY WALK

SITE #4

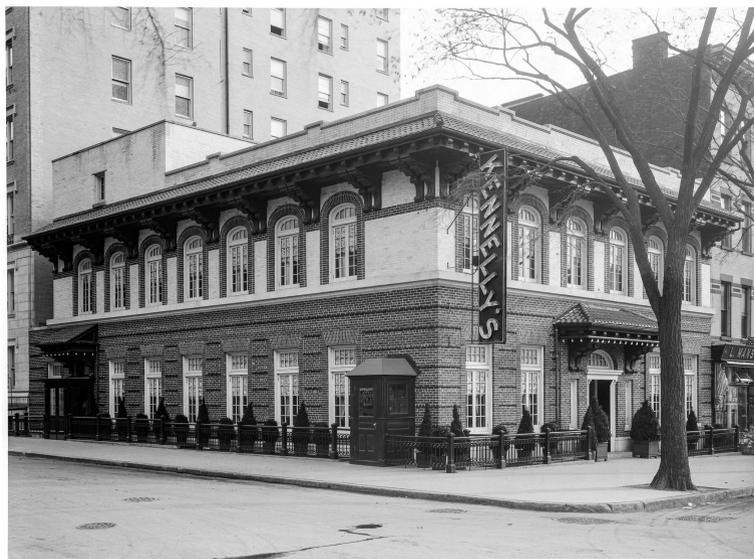
Notice the angles in the buildings of The Heights Café and the former Academy Hardware store, now Shaking Crab. These are a palimpsest of Asylum Lane.



c. 1940 northwest corner of Broadway & w111th St.

HISTORY WALK

SITE #4



c. 1910



c. 1940



c. 1982

Broadway from West 111th Street looking southeast



HISTORY WALK

SITE #5

The Bloomingdale Road was eventually straightened (somewhat) and integrated into the Manhattan Grid. Broadway begins at the southern tip of Manhattan and reaches 150 miles all the way to Albany. It is the longest street in the world. In 1869, the "Boulevard" (as it was once known) was modeled after the Champs Elysées in Paris and featured landscaped medians with broad planted walk-through malls. Streetcars ran right along each side of the malls. As the Boulevard began to develop hotels and apartments, the street was paved and by the 1890's it had become a favorite route of bicycle riders. In 1899, it was formally named Broadway.

When construction of the Seventh Avenue IRT subway line began, the malls were torn up and later re-established in 1904. The subway's arrival led to a major influx of residential development and changed our community forever: Institutions and estates no longer singularly defined the neighborhood.



c. 1900, West 111th Street looking southwest



c. 1940, Broadway from West 111th Street looking southeast

HISTORY WALK

SITE #5



1914, Broadway from West 111th Street looking northwest

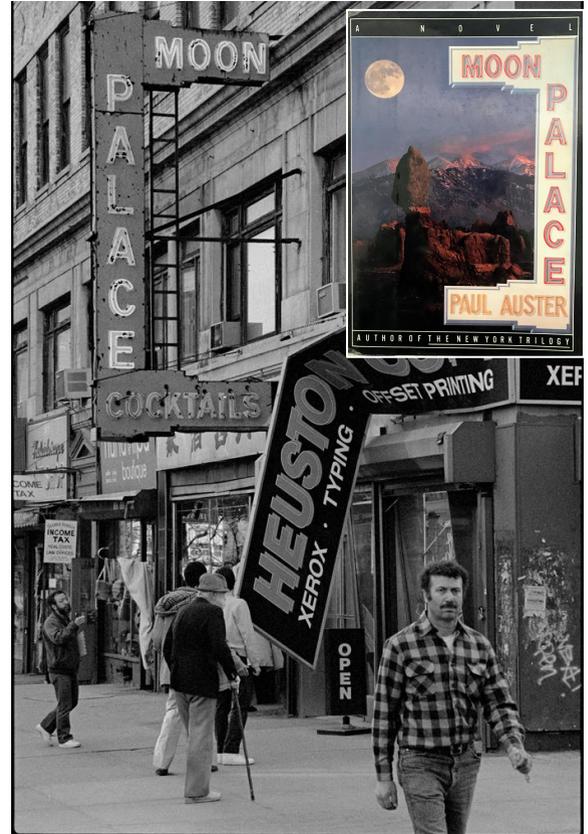
HISTORY WALK

SITE #5

These days, our local businesses face increasing challenges from real estate overdevelopment, online commerce, and chain store proliferation.



c. 1940 East side of Broadway b/t 110th & 111th Sts



c. 1980 West side of Broadway b/t 111th & 112th Sts



c. 1982 northeast corner of Broadway & w110th St.



HISTORY WALK

SITE #5

From the *New York Times*: Architects George and Edward Blum, known for their intricate Arts and Crafts and Art Nouveau designs, completed The Rockfall in 1910. Originally composed of suites from six to nine rooms, by the 1920s and '30s, landlords turned a blind eye as tenants began to make their apartments into rooming houses. Grace Davis ran at least one such operation in an apartment at the Rockfall in 1925, with 10 roomers, including four dancers, 17 and 18 years old.

The implicit prediction of the Rockfall name was fulfilled in 1935 when a 30-pound fragment of masonry fell from one of the third-floor balconies to the street, barely missing six people. By 1949 the rooming-house economy had taken over the Rockfall, and three operators controlled 44 apartments. It appears there was a dispute between the overall owner and the subletters who profited from the room rents, and someone complained about a fire hazard. The city closed down the building, cutting off the electricity and giving the roomers just days to vacate. The Rockfall had 1,200 people living in a space designed for 400, some residing in closets for \$10 a month.

The building was then renovated, the six apartments per floor becoming 14. Sometime between the early 1950s and 1980, the upper section's pergola, parapet and terra cotta, as well as the balconies, were removed.



c. 1910



c. 1940

HISTORY WALK

SITE #6

Among the notable residents of the Rockfall was Alfred Kazin (1915 – 1998), an iconic critic of American literature and culture, author, and contributor to the *New Republic*. Much of his work is rooted in the immigrant experience in New York and America.

He was an avowed liberal who opposed both Marxism and those who turned away from the left and founded the Neoconservative movement, which reached the apex of its power in planning and launching the Global War on Terrorism and the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq.

But on to more noble sentiments: Here are lines by Kazin from his 1951 memoir, "A Walker in the City:"

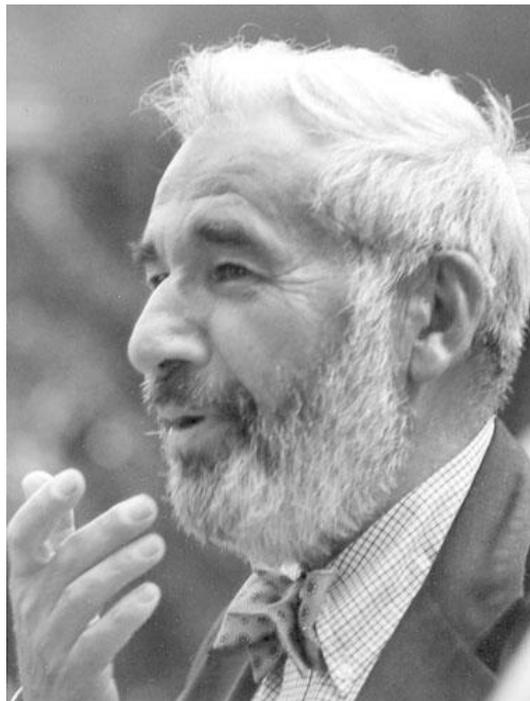
Everything ahead of me now was of a different order--wide, clean, still, every block lined with trees. I sniffed hungrily at the patches of garden earth behind the black iron spikes...

The automatic part of all my reading was history.... The past, the past was great; anything American, old, glazed, touched with dusk at the end of the nineteenth century, still smoldering with the fires lit by the industrial revolution, immediately set my mind dancing.

The past was deep, deep, full of solitary Americans whose careers, though closed in death, had woven an arc around them which I could see in space and time--'lonely Americans,' it was even the title of a book.

I had at last opened the great trunk of forgotten time in New York in which I, too, I thought, would someday find the source of my unrest.

(Thank you to Jim Mackin for his important chronicle of our neighborhood's remarkable residents, *Notable New Yorkers of Manhattan's Upper West Side - Bloomingdale, Morningside Heights.*)



Alfred Kazin

HISTORY WALK

SITE #7

Built in 1903 by Gunn & Grant, Kendal Court (517-523 West 111th Street) is now owned and managed by Columbia University. Kendal Court is currently occupied by both graduate students and long-time residents of our neighborhood.

The 521 courtyard was the best place on the block to play Chinese Handball for generations.



c. 1977

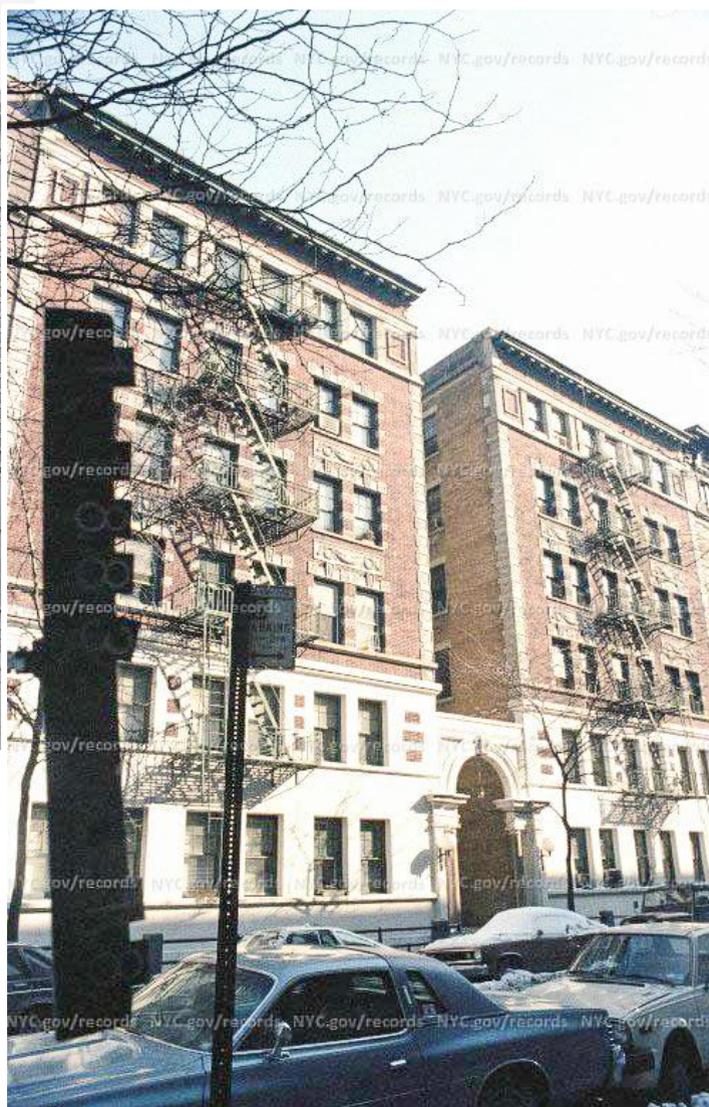
HISTORY WALK

SITE #7

Legend has it that a young Fidel Castro visited with Cuban families living in the building during one of his stays in New York.



1910



c. 1983

HISTORY WALK

SITE #7

Part of 521's lore is that, *in the olden days*, it had been home to many academics and social activists. It turns out one of these was Alvin Johnson 1874-1971, a veteran of the Spanish-American War. Originally from Nebraska, he became a prominent professor and editor of the *New Republic*. In 1918, he co-founded the New School and eventually became its first director. In the 1930s, his University in Exile saved many prominent European intellectuals from persecution.



HISTORY WALK

SITE #8

The People's Garden: Aptly named, this much-loved neighborhood sanctuary emerged as a result of a dogged effort by established local residents and newly arrived squatters to resist the construction of a massive senior housing complex that would have displaced more people than it lodged. The building that once stood on this site was a typical middle-class Morningside Heights residential building. Neighbors began to improve the lot and it was classified a Greenthumb Community Garden in the 1980s.



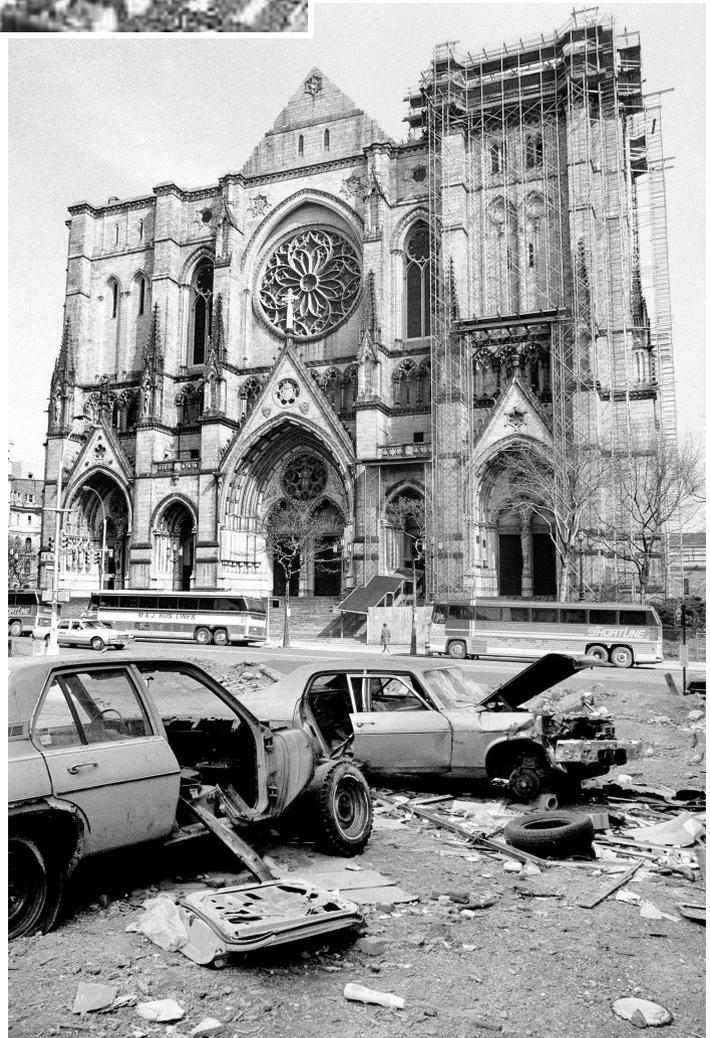
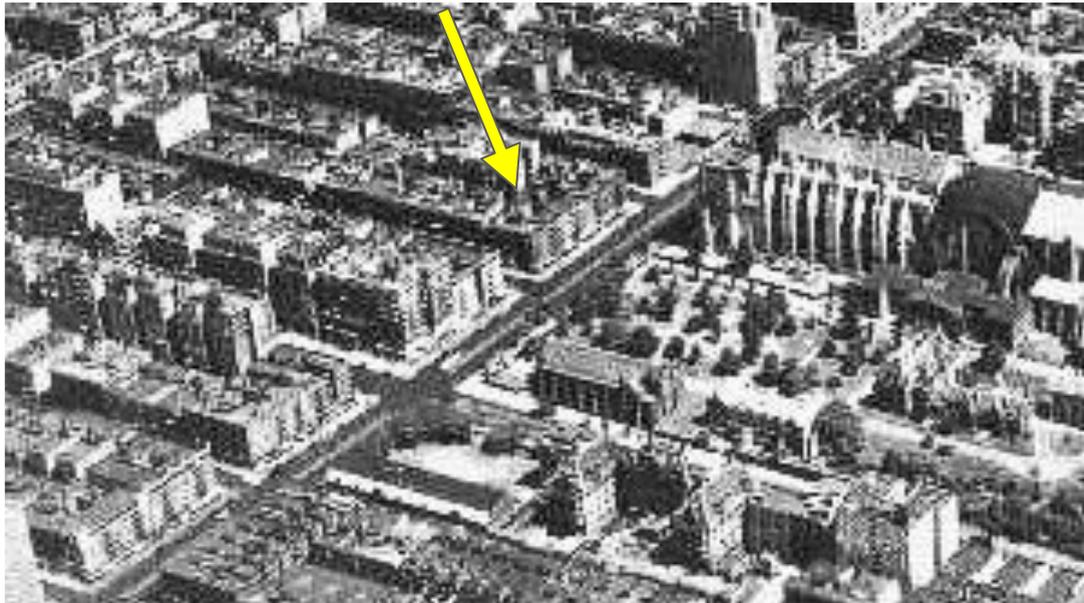
c. 1940



2020

HISTORY WALK

SITE #8



HISTORY WALK

SITE #8



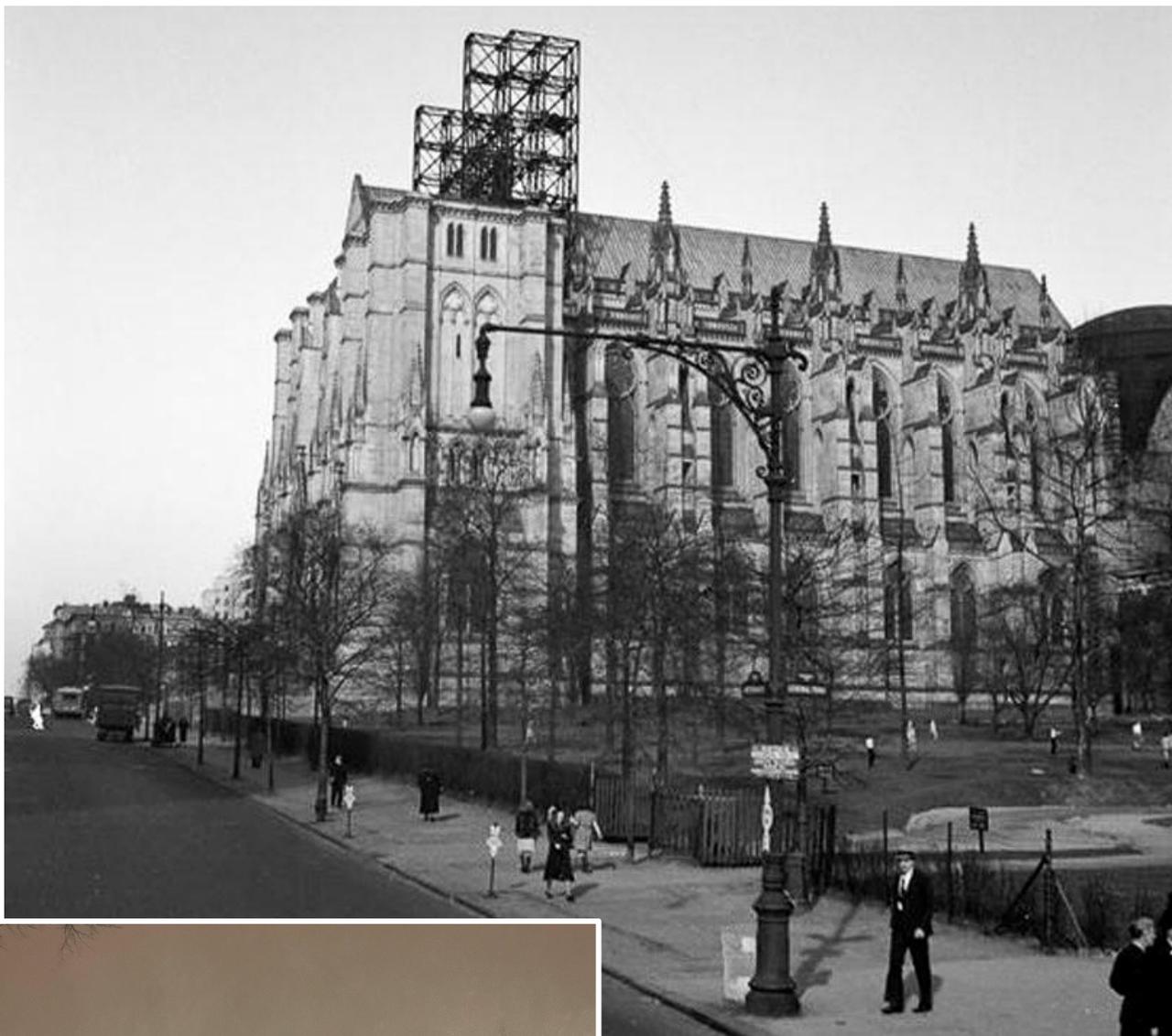
c. 1940



c. 1990

HISTORY WALK

SITE #8



1939



2021

HISTORY WALK

SITE #8

South of the Cathedral is a remnant of the Leake and Watts Orphan Asylum. It was constructed in 1843 and was designed by Ithiel Towne, a preeminent architect who also designed Federal Hall.

The orphanage was founded by wealthy lawyer John Leake, who died in 1827 with no heirs. He left his fortune to a good friend's son, Robert Watts, on the condition that he either adopt the surname Leake, or forfeit the money so it could be used to open an orphan asylum. Watts died before he could inherit the fortune, however, so the orphanage got the go-ahead and was developed by his father.

In 1891, the Asylum moved to Westchester and continues to operate as Rising Ground. St. John the Divine intended to demolish the building. For a number of years the church let the building deteriorate with the hopes that it would collapse. Ultimately, the building was restored and now houses a state of the art Tapestry and Textile Conservation Laboratory as well as other functions.



c. 1880



c. 2015

HISTORY WALK

THE END AND THE BEGINNING



1913



2020