

A TALE OF TWO ARMORIES:
PRESERVATION POLITICS IN NEW YORK CITY

by

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ABSTRACT

The fates of two National Guard armories are examined. The Squadron A armory, with the exception of its front wall, was demolished in the 1960's and replaced by a public school and playground. This followed a spirited debate over what should be built on the site. The Seventh Regiment armory was declared a landmark by the City and State of New York, and by the federal government. It is still standing, despite efforts by real estate interests to acquire and re-use the highly desirable site.

As background, a short history of the historic preservation movement, and of the forces that led to the building of the armories in the 19th Century, are presented. Special attention is paid to the political and social pressures which affected the status of each armory.

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This thesis is dedicated to my husband, Leonard D. Reynolds, Jr., whose support was loving and unwavering; and to my thesis advisor, Robert M. Fogelson -- his patience, indulgence, good humor, and judicious critiques were invaluable in the development and writing of this paper.

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INTRODUCTION

Late in March 1966, in preparation for demolition, New York National Guard officials removed the cornerstone of the Squadron A armory, a grand and imposing building on the corner of 94th Street and Madison Avenue in Manhattan.

For more than seventy years the cornerstone proclaimed "Boutez en Avant" ("Charge Forward") to New Yorkers passing by the Upper East Side structure. Shortly after the removal of the cornerstone, demolition crews from the Kaiser-Nelson Steel and Salvage Corporation began to tear the building down, starting with the removal of the roof timbers over the armory's riding hall. Once the riding hall had been pounded by the hoofs of horses ridden by Guardsmen colorfully clad in their regimental uniforms. Now the pounding came as sections of steel trusses, so reminiscent of the ones in the Gare St. Lazare, fell onto the floor after being cut by acetylene torches. The whole of the armory was razed with the exception of the wall and turrets of the Madison Avenue facade.

Another armory was threatened with the same fate in 1980, when real estate interests proposed to demolish the Seventh Regiment armory, at 66th Street and Park Avenue. No demolition crews ever entered the premises, no majestic walls or trussing ever came tumbling down. This building has through the years been given landmark status by the city, the state, and the federal government. Its exquisite interiors, designed by, among others, Louis Comfort Tiffany and Stanford White, have never been bruised. It still stands 104 years later.

The Seventh Regiment, the Squadron A, and many other armories were built between the years 1880 and 1910, a period of increasing labor unrest and fears of class warfare in the United States. These

buildings invariably resembled the castles of the Middle Ages. This building style was probably a manifestation of the fear of class warfare felt by the upper classes. They perhaps felt they were under the same threats that prompted Norman signeurs to build similar looking fortifications against pagan hordes.

Eventually, though, some of these armories became obsolete; they were declared surplus property and transferred from the State to the City of New York. The Squadron A armory is one of those. Despite the grandeur, beauty, and historical significance of the structure, there were no calls by preservationists to save it; indeed there was little or no precedent for this type of action. The real estate market conditions had always been such that plans to demolish property had seldom been met with any protest or second thought. It was only after most of the armory had been demolished that there was a movement towards preserving the Madison Avenue facade. That section of the armory is still standing.

Proposals for the re-use of the site were varied, and all required demolition. They included recommendations to build a school, middle income housing, a combination of both, luxury housing, and a park. These proposals, and the arguments about the merits of each, highlighted some of the prominent issues of the day. Debates focussed on school integration, on elite dominance over the non-elite, on the virtues of building luxury housing rather than government funded middle income housing, and on the pressing need for urban open space.

Efforts to demolish or change the Seventh Regional armory were unfruitful. A proposal for the re-use of the site came a decade and a half after the Squadron A proposals. The armory had always been owned

by the regiment, and thus had never been declared surplus. However, a proposal was put forth by a real estate development firm, which called for erecting a high rise hotel-luxury apartment complex. In contrast to the feeble voice of preservationists in the case of the Squadron A Armory, this proposal caused a veritable storm of controversy and of preservation initiatives. Within three months, the proposal was abandoned.

The prominent issues in this debate were those of historic preservation versus real estate development. The debate was the converse of the one in 1964, because it pitted one group of elites (neighborhood residents and preservationists) versus another group of elites, the real estate developers. The elite/non-elite conflict present in the debate over the Squadron A armory did not exist in the debate over the Seventh Regiment armory.

I will explore the paradox of why one armory was saved and one not. This exploration will examine various issues in urban politics and historic preservation.

CHAPTER I: ARMORIES COME UNDER CITY CONTROL

On February 20, 1964, the City of New York announced that it had recovered from the State of New York four surplus armories, one in Queens, one in Brooklyn, and two in Manhattan, the Squadron A armory, at 94th Street and Madison Avenue, and the 71st Regiment armory at 33rd and Park Avenue. At the heart of this divestiture was the fact that these cavernous and forbidding buildings were no longer needed by the militia.

This announcement capped four years of testy negotiations between the city and state. Built by the city, these armories were erected in the turbulent years between 1880 and 1910, a period in which labor strife and radical agitation engendered a fear of class warfare. The city maintained and operated the armories until 1942, when the state took over National Guard units. Under the terms of the agreement, the city was allowed to use the properties as it saw fit.

The Armory Movement

The heyday of armory building was between 1880 and 1910. The sponsors and builders of those armories expected that they would be used in preserving the peace and protecting private and public property. Because riots could happen quickly, they also felt that armories should be located near rapid transit, to facilitate a speedy assembly of the militia.

Why did prominent citizens ask authorities to spend public funds on an essentially private military building? The answer is that there existed such a degree of labor strife and violence during that period, that society's elite felt a strong threat to its world, which was thought could collapse momentarily unless proper defensive measures

were taken. A historian of the militia wrote about the turbulent nature of the times:

"The last thirty years of the nineteenth century were a period of increasing industrial warfare. Most of the time in that conflict, the states maintained law and order by using the Guard to protect the property of entrepreneurs from employees organized into unions and striking for higher wages and better working conditions."¹

The new economy of industrialization and the consolidation of industries made it necessary for fledgling labor organizations to also consolidate. Hence, the last quarter of the 19th century saw an American labor movement which was struggling to be recognized as a vehicle to improve workers' situation, particularly in time of economic depression. The average weekly wage for laborers was less than \$9 per week, which was barely enough for subsistence; working conditions were abysmal. The cyclical nature of the economy often brought difficult financial times, layoffs, and cutbacks. These actions led to strikes, boycotts, and sometimes to violent protest.

The year 1877 saw a wave of bloody and costly upheavals in at least ten cities, starting in Pittsburgh, where a series of wage cuts provoked strikes and violence. Many residents joined the workers in these activities, and the result was \$5 million worth of damages. The struggle of the labor movement to gain fair wages and working conditions for its million members was marked by many such confrontations. Similar occurrences took place in Buffalo, Toledo, Chicago, and San Francisco. The American Federation of Labor, founded in 1881, did not hesitate, as other unions had, to regard strikes and boycotts as legitimate bargaining tools.

The riot and bombing at Chicago's Haymarket place occurred in 1886, during a demonstration by anarchists against police brutality.

The incident tainted the labor movement with the label of anarchism , and labor was regarded with suspicion and hostility. Strikes and boycotts were especially frequent during the depression of 1893, which brought wage cuts and layoffs. The infamous Pullman strikes, which triggered the major railroad strikes, took place in 1894. Pullman's factory workers rebelled against the five wage cuts that had been instituted in one year. These wage cuts were even more painful in light of the fact that the high rents charged by Pullman in his model factory town were still as high as they were before the wage cuts.

In the presence of riot, destruction, and demonstrations by self-declared anarchists, the elite thought it was facing a violent, quasi-revolutionary situation that it had never faced before. There was a feeling that class war was imminent, especially in light of the fact that a similar state of affairs existed in Europe at that time.²

The Seventh Regiment and Squadron A armories were just two of several armories built during this period, in cities where labor unrest had occurred: Chicago, Scranton, St. Louis, and many others. Their purpose was to serve as headquarters for the local militia companies, to provide an area in which guardsmen could drill, and also to serve as a social club. Some of the companies were exclusive in membership, and an atmosphere such as one might find at a men's club abounded within the elegant interiors of some armories. This was the case in the Seventh Regiment and Squadron A armories.

The armories were built in a style which architectural critic Montgomery Schuyler found imbued with a sense of poetry, a style "harking back to [the] obsolete, [and] partly on that account, [to] picturesque precedents."³ Schuyler recognized that armories were not purely and simply examples of military architecture. He wrote:

"Most of our armories show some such concessions to past modes of warfare by way partly of acknowledging their impotence architecturally to cope with actual modes of warfare. In the main, they suggest warfare of the bow and arrow period, or, at most of the ballista and catapult period."⁴

The armories of the late 19th and early 20th centuries invariably resembled castles of the early Middle Ages, edifices which, as strongholds of the aristocracy, were reminders of its power and superiority. This symbolism is not a surprising expression of the fears and aims of the elite of that time period.

Divestiture of Armories

By the 1960's, the old armories were no longer suited to the needs of the militia. These needs included classrooms for instruction on various topics of emergency preparedness, and increased space to store tanks and other large, modern military equipment. In addition, by the 1960's the 50-year-old movement to build armories to look like fortresses ended, as demands to train and house militia units in a central location ebbed.

There were three primary reasons that there were fewer demands placed on the militia. These were:

1. labor restored to strategies other than violent strikes, so there was less labor strife;
2. the army became larger and more mobile, while the state police began to deal with labor strife;
3. the militia became an adjunct of the military.

Lessened Labor Strife. The failure of the Pullman strike had a significant impact on the American labor movement. When Pullman factory workers threatened to strike in 1894, their union, the American Railway Union, headed by Eugene Debs, refused to handle Pullman cars unless the company subjected to arbitration, which George Pullman

rejected. Various union support eventually resulted in having almost all railroad workers west of Chicago on strike. Because U.S. mail was being delayed, the U.S. Attorney General obtained an injunction against the union, and some two thousand troops were sent to Chicago by President Grover Cleveland to enforce the injunction and to protect the mail. This led to violent confrontations in which twelve people died. The strike was broken, in essence, by federal troops. Union leaders, including Eugene Debs, were sentenced to prison. The Supreme Court upheld those sentences, thereby legitimizing the injunction as an important strike-breaking tool. In addition, the government's definition of this and other strikes as illegal trade restraints under the Sherman Anti-Trust Act was an instrumental device in management's disputes with labor. These government sanctioned actions noticeably weakened the labor movement.

A Larger and More Mobile, Standing Army. There has been a traditional distrust of a large standing army in the United States. This distrust was rooted in a fear that any one sector of society or of government could accumulate a degree of power sufficient to overwhelm other sectors. At the Constitutional Convention, delegate Luther Martin described a standing army as an "Engine of arbitrary power, which has so often and so successfully been used for the subversion of freedom."⁵ Also indicative of this seminal distaste for a large standing army were Governor Randolph's comments to the Virginia convention: "With respect to a standing army, I believe there was not a member in the Federal convention who did not feel indignation at such an institution."⁶ However, at the Constitutional Convention, Congress was authorized to call the state militias for federal service on only

three grounds: to carry out federal laws, to put down insurrections, and to defend against invasion.

Nonetheless, throughout the years, mobilization for various wars resulted in a larger and larger federal army. Finally, during and after World War I, the American standing army reached a sizeable level.

The Militia as a an Adjunct to the Military. Slowly but surely, the National Guard inched by often tiny increments towards a more military, less civil defense oriented status. During the War of 1812, Congress authorized a force of 50,000 volunteers, and a total of 100,000 militiamen were put on alert. In 1862, the Confederate Congress authorized a draft. In response, the Union Congress acted to set an important precedent: it drafted over 160,000 men, thus establishing the right to draft nationally.

By the post-Civil war period, the leadership of the National Guard had shifted its view of the Guard's mission. Rather than acting as an internal (civil) police force, the militia was seen as an integral part of the United States armed forces. Mahon writes:

"They considered their system to be an integral part of the United States military establishment [at the same time considering] the state connection of the Guard to be indispensable to the ultimate security not only of the states, but also of the nation."⁷

The misfeasance of the War Department during the Spanish American War was instrumental in changing the role of the militia. From 1885 to 1900, Congress was becoming more concerned with the civil war in Cuba. Because of the volatile situation in that country, Congress expressed its concern by appropriating \$60 million for coastal forts. The army expected that the estimated 100,000 men needed to garrison the coastal defenses would come from the National Guard. However, since there were only 114,000 men in the Guard, that plan necessitated a higher

level of federal coordination than had previously existed. Consequently, in 1895, the Guard was assigned a role; it would guard the coastline against invasion.

Unfortunately, the volunteers did not fare well in the Spanish American War. They were eager to serve, but not only did they lack the training needed to fight a war in Cuba or the Philippines, but the War Department lacked the personnel to provide this training. The litany of physical problem plaguing the volunteers was long. Accommodations were primitive and flooding was rampant. Many volunteers died of typhoid, because few doctors were knowledgeable about public sanitation. In addition, equipment such as rifles and uniforms, was scarce. It became clear, as this war progressed, that the War Department was incompetent, crippled by antiquated methods, and staffed by delinquent officers. Congress investigated the situation. After some political machinations, the investigation resulted in the Dick Act, named after its sponsor, Major General Charles Dick. It began the federalization of the National Guard in several ways. For instance, a governor's acceptance of federal aid meant acceptance of federal requirement for the Guard in his state. The Guard's primary mission had now become the peacetime training of men who would serve as volunteers in wartime.

The federalization of the National Guard continued through the years. The National Defense Act of 1916, a measure passed to raise the level of military manpower, increased federal power over the National Guard. It stated that the National Guard was an integral part of the United States Army, and mandated the length of training, controlled the states' disbanding of their units, gave the president

power to assign officers, and a required individual Guardsmen to take an oath of loyalty not just to their state, but to the United States, as well. During World War I, individual state units were broken up. Guardsmen were required to discard state insignia on their uniforms and wear the U.S. lapel pins. In 1917, the Selective Service system was enacted, bringing 2.8 million men into the armed services to fight in World War I. The manpower demands of World War II were met in the same manner. No longer was it necessary to call up the militia in wartime: the standing army had been established.

The Guard was finally absorbed by the regular army in a 1933 amendment to the National Defense Act of 1916, which stated that the National Guard was a component of the United States Army. During World War II, the National Guard Bureau came under the control of the Director of Personnel of the Army Service Forces. By the 1960's, the National Guard had been transformed from a civil peace-keeping, strike-breaking force to a back-up force for the army. This status as a federally - rather than city - oriented organization tended to render a squadron or a regiment's presence in large, urban, outmoded buildings superfluous, and paved the way for the state designating armories surplus property.

Even before the announcement that the city and state would negotiate the transfer of the armories, various groups were announcing plans for the Squadron A armory site. By the time the armory bill passed in 1964, several groups put forth plans for use of the site, which will be discussed later. The assumption common to all plans was that the amory would be torn down. There was nothing unusual about this assumption, as several New York armories had been razed in previous decades.

Twenty years later in an era of enthusiastic and widespread recycling of buildings, the existence of the unanimous assumption that the building would be razed is perplexing. Yet the assumption made perfect sense in light of the proposals that were put forth and of the real estate conditions which existed in New York.

This was the era before adaptive re-use of buildings became prominent, and the word "dispose" was synonymous with "demolition." The New York Times story reporting the disposal of the armories was in fact headlined, "Four Armories Here Face Demolition." Not only did it not occur to anyone that the Squadron A armory necessitated preservation, but the previous pattern of action in regards to armories pointed clearly towards demolition.

In 1929, the City of New York sold the old 71st Regiment armory at Park Avenue and 34th Street to an unspecified party. The armory was to be razed in an effort "to widen Park Avenue, which was very congested at that point"⁸ In 1956, the Lincoln Square redevelopment project called for the demolition of the Twelfth Regiment (212th Coast Artillery) armory on Columbus Avenue at 61st Street. The building that had been designed to be impregnable from outside attack fell to the wrecker's ball in July 1958.

In addition, as will be noted in more detail in Chapter Two, a state of constant building and re-building existed in the "boom-town" atmosphere of New York City. The destruction of a building, a group of buildings, or even square blocks of neighborhoods, to make way for new construction, was not unusual. This was a traditional method of dealing with expansion within the confines of Manhattan. Manhattan was attractive and crowded. Consequently, land prices had consistently

gone upwards since at least the turn of the century. In the case of the Squadron A armory, when the city and not a private developer took ownership of a unusually large (nearly one acre) site, groups advocating what I loosely term "civic-oriented" proposals (proposals for which they could enlist help from different civic agencies) jumped at the chance to put forth their plans. The size of the site would afford a degree of flexibility and creativity not often available with smaller parcels. Another reason for the high degree of interest in this site is that there was a need, whether real or perceived, for more housing, more schools, and more parks, developments which required a large land area.

FOOTNOTES: CHAPTER ONE

1. John K. Mahon, History of the Militia and the National Guard (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1983), p. 264.
2. The Second Paris Commune, with all its anti-capitalist rhetoric, was established in 1871. Despite ferocious repression activities on the part of the bourgeoisie, by 1880 many countries had socialist parties, all Marxist in inspiration.
3. Architectural Record, April 1906, p. 259.
4. Ibid.
5. Mahon, History of the Militia and the National Guard, p. 48.
6. Ibid, p. 48.
7. Ibid, p. 118.
8. New York Times, March 12, 1929.

CHAPTER II: HISTORIC PRESERVATION

The tearing down of old buildings, such as the armories in question, to make way for new projects, has been a constant theme in American society. This often thoughtless demolition of our physical heritage led eventually to institutionalized preservation activities.

In the early years of the United States, the longing to replace the old with the new in search of better economic and social conditions led people to settle further and further west. In an industrialized and urban area such as New York City the longing for better conditions, especially in an economic sense, took the form of constant building and rebuilding. In this "boom town" atmosphere, the destruction of familiar landmarks was neither unexpected nor out of the ordinary. The land they occupied was valuable, and had to be put to its highest and best use. When the most majestic and well loved buildings were slated for demolition, sporadic protests and attempts to save them occurred. Occasionally, these preservation efforts met with success. More often, throughout most of New York's history, the relentless move to replace old with new overwhelmed them. Coincidental with an awakening by New Yorkers to the fact that their historic environment was disappearing, the preservation movement began to flourish. It progressed to the point in the early 1960's that preservationists were able to save the facade of the Squadron A armory, even though the rest of the buildings had been demolished. By the 1980's preservation was so firmly entrenched as a movement, as an organizational network, and as a popular state of mind, that it was instrumental in turning back the development plans for the Seventh Regiment Armory.

The Preservation Movement in the United States

The movement for historic preservation in the United States dates to the 18th Century. An August 3rd, 1796, entry in the diary of British-American architect Benjamin Latrobe expresses sorrow at the impending destruction of an old manor house in Virginia. Every decade or two, similar sentiments led to local attempts to save an important structure. In 1816, the citizens of Philadelphia were victorious in their efforts to save Independence Hall. The Rhode Island Historical Society made an unsuccessful attempt to save the Governor Caddington home in 1834. In 1856, the Tennessee Legislature authorized the purchase of Andrew Jackson's home, the Hermitage. The successful effort in 1858 by the Mount Vernon Ladies Association, headed by Miss Ann Pamela Cunningham, to save George Washington's ancestral home from a group of businessmen who wanted to put a hotel on the site, set the tone for the next several decades of preservation activity.

Their tactic was a novel one. Instead of relying on a state or city's purchase of the site, or on the generosity of a benefactor, Miss Cunningham's Ladies Association was a well-organized private effort to secure the necessary funds. The Association purchased Mount Vernon, and it still owns and maintains it to this day.

An important preservation effort of the 1870's was the successful fight to save the Old South Meeting House in Boston, built in 1729. By the 1870's, the building was doomed. Not only had its congregation built a new church in the Back Bay section, but the land upon which Old South stood, near Newspaper Row and the financial district, was extremely valuable. Sentiment to save the historic edifice, where the Boston Tea Party meetings had been held, ran high, fueled as it was by the oratory of Wendell Phillips. Demolition was dramatically halted

at the last moment. A subscription drive raised funds soon thereafter to purchase the building. This preservation fight had an important effect on fledgeling preservation movements. It inspired preservation-minded people facing similar situations in their communities, and it demonstrated that idealism could win over seemingly insurmountable odds. It also caused citizens to notice, perhaps for the first time, other historic structure in their city, and to push for their restoration or protection.

The early 20th century saw another important milestone in the history of the preservation movement, for it was in 1910 that William Sumner Appleton founded the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities in Boston. The SPNEA differed from historical or patriotic societies such as the Mount Vernon Ladies Association. Instead of saving only those buildings with clear historical or patriotic associations, Appleton's SPNEA purchased and restored buildings on the grounds of architectural beauty and uniqueness. Furthermore, these buildings were kept in use and not used merely as museums.

In the 1920's, area-wide restoration efforts began in Williamsburg, the old capital of Virginia. The rector of Williamsburg's Bruton Parish, the Rev. William Goodwin, had restored his own church and the parish house, and aspired to preserve the entire town. He succeeded in enlisting the financial help of John D. Rockefeller, Jr.. In 1927, Rev. Goodwin began purchasing property, and in 1928 the restoration plan for more than 200 properties was announced. This project had no American precedent in both scale and concept, but served as an inspiration of sorts for the fabrication of Henry Ford's Greenfield Village near Dearborn, Michigan. Whereas Williamsburg had

once been a thriving and vital town, Greenfield Village attempted to create the "typical" 19th century village in which a synthetic past is on exhibit. Period buildings were either built or moved from another site to Greenfield Village; structures not relevant to the project were ignored. This "well-walled illusion", in the words of Walter Muir Whitehill, displayed a totally prefabricated and synthetic environment.

The dismal employment situation of the 1930's led to another chapter in the history of the preservation movement. Unemployed architects were hired by the WPA to conduct the Historic American Building Survey in 1931. This document provided an evaluative framework for preservation activity in the decades to come. This effort at documentation was a cooperative effort involving the American Institute of Architects, the Society of Architectural Historians, and the National Trust. The survey had a wide scope. It addressed topics as diverse as historic buildings dealing with Dutch and Swedish exploration up to 1700's. Later preservationists used it as a base of information when trying to justify saving a building.

The 1930's also marked the beginning of the historic preservation continued use district movement. The first of these districts was in Charleston, South Carolina, whose Old and Historic District was established in 1931. Furthermore, a special committee, funded by the Rockefeller and Carnegie foundations commissioned reports on over 1,000 other unprotected Charleston buildings. By 1947, a Historic Charlestown Foundation was incorporated. Its mandate was to educate people about these buildings, and to assist in their preservation. It also created a revolving loan fund with the intent of preserving buildings that lay outside the Historic District. By 1961, the HCF

had bought 26 pieces of property, which were either renovated or sold for renovation by other parties. The Charleston concept has been to "return buildings to dignified uses, even though they are not always the purposes envisioned by their builders."¹

Historic Preservation Legislation

The War Department was the first federal agency to be involved in preservation. The earliest federal attempts to commemorate great military men and the ground upon which they fought (or in which they were buried) was inspired by a sense of competition with the European way of commemorating its heroes. In turn, the European practices were derived from those of the legendary military cultures of Greece and Rome.

Congress passed the National Battlegrounds and Cemetery in 1862. It established the Arlington National Cemetery on the grounds of the estate by the same name, which had been owned by Mrs. Robert E. Lee. The estate, located near the Antietam battlefield, was a symbolic and opportunistic choice for the Federal government. Despite this expediency and symbolism in choosing the Arlington estate as a national cemetery, this Act also served to place the Federal government in the historic preservation business. A growing concern for military history led eventually to the preservation of several sites associated with battles.

In 1906, Congress passed the Lacey Act. It provided for the establishment of national monuments on federal property by Presidential proclamation, and has a strong archeological bent to it. This particular Act resulted in the establishment of the Mesa Verde Nation-

al Park in Colorado, which contains some of the best preserved Native American cliff dwellings in the United States.

The year 1916 saw the creation of the National Park Service under the aegis of the Department of the Interior. It has acquired not only millions of acres of land, but also the historic buildings and monuments on land which has come under its control. The Park Service holdings include monuments, cemeteries, battlefields, and the White House.

The National Historic Sites Act of 1935 institutionalized broader and more complex aspects of preservation. This legislation announced a national policy of preservation for public use, not only for historic sites and buildings, but also for objects of national significance. Because this Act empowered the Secretary of the Interior to designate historic sites, a majority of them were in parks administered by the National Park Service. Buttressed by the Historic American Building Survey conducted four years previously, this Act placed preservation efforts on solid footing. In addition, the Act called for the development of educational programs in historic preservation, and encouraged co-operative preservation arrangements between states, and even with Canada and Mexico

Congress created the National Trust for Historic Preservation in 1949. Inspired by England's National Trust, this legislation provided public participation in site preservation. It also empowered the Trust to receive donations of significant sites and of funds, and to administer them for public benefit.

The advent in the 1950's and 1960's of urban renewal and redevelopment, and of massive highway construction, destroyed many landmarks and threatened scores of others. In 1959, Congress set up the

National Registry of Historic Places, and later, the Historic American Building Survey, which further mandated that official recognition be given to historical and aesthetic values. Under the Housing Acts of 1961 and 1965, federal funds were made available in urban renewal projects for preservation projects.

The 89th Congress became known as the "Preservation Congress." It passed the Historic Preservation Act of 1966, declaring that existing preservation activities were inadequate to ensure that future generations would have an opportunity to appreciate the national heritage. The Historic Preservation Act expanded the National Register, authorized the Secretary of the Interior to make grants to the states and the National Trust, and created an Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, whose purpose was to:

- advise the President, Congress, agencies, and individuals on historic preservation legislation;
- recommend ways to coordinate preservation activities, and recommend studies in the area of preservation legislation;
- encourage public interest and participation in preservation activities.

In addition, since so much landmark destruction occurred during highway construction, the Transportation Act of 1966 provided protection to historic sites by requiring the Department of Transportation to withhold funds for highway programs unless provisions were made to spare historic sites.

Various attempts to save structures or locales in the United States can be grouped into stages, each with an overriding theme, a "reason" for preservation. These themes are not confined to a particular stage, but weave themselves throughout preservation philosophy. Consequently, they are integral themes in modern preservation

attempts. The eminent preservationist and historian, Walter Muir Whitehill defined these stages as being predicated on the grounds of 1) associative values; 2) inherent physical and architectural beauty; 3) "frozen-in-time" educational values; and 4) historic continued use. Far from being discrete, these stages overlap and elements of them carry forth to this day.

The earliest preservation efforts were, by and large, concerned with buildings associated with great people or events. This was exemplified by the attempts to save Mount Vernon. Miss Cunningham's first appeal to preserve the estate contained the following passage:

"Can you be still with closed souls and purses, while the world cries 'Shame upon America,' and suffer Mount Vernon, with all its sacred association, to become, as is spoken of and probable, the seat of manufacturers and manufactur-ies?...Never! Forbid it, shades of the dead!"²

The appeal to preserve another building associated with George Washington (the Hasbrouck House in Newburgh, NY, which, for a time, served as his headquarters) exemplifies the strength of associative values in preservation efforts:

"...how much more still the flame of patriotism burn in our bosoms when we tread the ground where was shed the blood of our fathers, or when we move among the stones where were conceived their noble achievements. [The visitor to this site] will feel himself a better man; his patriotism will kindle with deeper emotion; his aspirations of his country's good will ascend from a more devout mind for having visited the 'Headquarters of Washington.'"³

The pleas to save the Old South Church rang with the same oratory. Harvard President Charles Eliot reminded people that the Old South Church was loved because of "the famous men associated with it...our forefathers [who resisted] the fearful power of Great Britain."⁴

The subsequent stage of preservation concerned itself with saving buildings on architectural and/or aesthetic grounds. However, the associative criteria was by no means forgotten, for William Sumner Appleton stated that the mandate of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities also extended to buildings of historical importance.

A significant aspect of the SPNEA's approach was its attitude that buildings should be saved for continued use, rather than as "objets d'art," to be merely admired. Many SPNEA properties are preserved through occupancy. For instance, the Smith Tavern in Weston, Massachusetts, houses town and community offices. This utility factor is a function of a peculiarly American philosophy which advocates a property's return to the tax rolls unless it serves a recognizable purpose.

The preservation, re-creation, and reconstruction of Williamsburg initiated the next stage of preservation, the "frozen-in-time" stage. The focus of preservation changed from saving a building, a complex, or a site, to preserving and enhancing a whole self-contained environment. The prime example, as has been mentioned, is Williamsburg. The preservation activity that took (and continues to take) place in Williamsburg is concerned with turning back the clock to the 18th century, during which the town was capital of Virginia. In fact, the word "preservation" is a misnomer in the case of Williamsburg, as many major buildings needed to complete the period setting have been reconstructed. Whether one considers the Williamsburg experience one of preservation or fabrication, one cannot deny that it pioneered the

outlook that an entire unit such as a town, district, or neighborhood could be preserved.

The historic district/continued use phase, which began with the previously mentioned Old and Historic District of Charleston project in 1931, has been, like Williamsburg, concerned with the preservation of large areas. The difference is that this effort deals with areas in which people live, work, and carry on with their business, just as in any other locale. The purpose of these historic districts, such as Back Bay and Beacon Hill in Boston, College Hill in Providence, or the Beverly/Morgan Park area of Chicago, is not restoration, but maintenance, enhanced by proper improvements and additions.

Goals of the Preservation Movement

What did people active in various phases of the preservation movement expect to accomplish? It is obvious by reading the entreaties of early preservationists that they believed if the public were to share some part of George Washington's life, that association would contribute to its patriotic education and kindle an inspirational flame. The New York legislators who were in favor of saving the Hasbrouck House hoped that patriotic inspiration engendered by a visit to the house would minimize the North-South factionalism of the mid-19th Century. This is exemplified by a statement made in 1895 by Andrew H. Green, the president of the Commissioners of the State Reservations, while addressing the New York State legislature on the subject of preservation:

"It cannot be but that intelligent administration of these objects and areas will tend to quicken a spirit of patriotism to act as an example and stimulus to a higher standard of care of public grounds...and to cultivate attachments to localities - a most desirable influence to be fostered."⁴

This "patriotic spirit" offered two reasons for preservation. One, the building was preserved to remind people of the difficulties faced and conquered by forebears. Two, it was preserved because it exemplified the values and harmony of a nostalgic past. These considerations were thought to encourage good citizenship and patriotism among visitors. In addition, preservationists hoped that contact with a building associated with Revolutionary War heroes would strengthen people's patriotism. Wendell Phillips' hope was that such people could, "laugh at money-rings or demagogues armed with sensual temptations."⁵

The motivation of preservationists such as William Sumner Appleton was basically to save buildings of architectural significance and to re-use them. Although, as I have mentioned, he was not immune to the associative philosophy, it was not of primary importance. Much like an archivist retains significant documents for present and future research, Appleton hoped to retain buildings which represented various phases of architectural styles or which had original or unusual features.

The goal of the Williamsburg restoration effort has been to turn back the clock to a certain period of history and preserve its state. This restoration highlights many aspects of life of that glorious period of its history. Exhibition buildings draw many visitors interested in period furniture, pottery and china, metalwares, glass, and needlework. Crowds are drawn to authentic gardens, which grow those plants, flowers, and herbs, which were popular in the 18th Century. Men in breeches and women in long corseted dresses serve as guides.

The aim of historic districting is preservation "tout ensemble," a term preservationists use to denote a totality where both "good" and "bad" architecture is preserved as is. For example, 19th Century renovations to the exterior of a 17th Century building would be preserved and protected to the same extent that the unadulterated 17th Century buildings are. There are no claims made that, for instance, preserving the configuration of Beacon Hill will make inhabitants and visitors more noble and patriotic, or that a particular building is more valuable in terms of preservation than the ones next to it, for they are all preserved. There are no attempts to dress inhabitants in period costumes or have them grow "correct" herbage. An unwritten aim of historic districting, though, is financial. Although there are some claims that historic-districting lowers property values by disallowing total freedom of action with one's property, on the whole, districting maintains the increased property values that preservation activities have engendered. Furthermore, districting renders the locale extremely attractive in terms of its social, architectural, and developmental predictability.

The Philosophy of Preservation

The philosophy of the preservation movement can be examined through its vocabulary. One concept is the preservation of patrimony, one's ancestral inheritance. At its most dogmatic, this concept calls for the unimpaired, uncompromised preservation of a heritage. A culture also has a moral obligation to save this patrimony; this obligation extends to owners of historic buildings, who have a moral and profound responsibility not only to maintain their property, but also to acquaint themselves with its significance. The reason for this obligatory preservation is that these indications of the past

present a powerful physical, moral, and spiritual power. This power makes an indispensable contribution to the cultural and artistic aspects of civilization. Landmarks impart a distinctive character to an area, and counteract characteristics of modern life such as impersonality, rootlessness, and apathy.

Responsibility for preservation and educational activities does not lie solely with the individual. Local private groups also are charged with initiating and/or supporting projects. Furthermore, it is the duty of local government, from the standpoint of civic responsibility, to participate in preservation via activities such as funding, zoning, establishment of appropriate agencies, and enactment of special regulations such as demolition containment and historic district tax abatement programs.

The Preservation Movement in New York City

The sentiments which saved Mount Vernon, The Old South Church, and many significant buildings in New England, restored Williamsburg, created Greenfield Village, and which legislated historic districts, also appeared in New York City. However, the relentless destruction of old and significant New York went on pretty much unabated for reasons discussed at the beginning of this chapter. New York City, established as a trading post in 1626, and as the first American capital in 1789, contains no buildings from the 17th Century, and only nine from the 18th Century. Sporadic efforts succeeded in saving the occasional building such as the Van Cortlandt Mansion in 1896, and the Hamilton Grange in 1924. It wasn't until the late 1950's and early 1960's that an organized and sustained effort became successful in preserving landmarks. This was an urgent time, a period during which

property speculation (with its attendant tearing down and rebuilding activities) was becoming an obsession. This period saw the publication of the first index of architecturally significant buildings in New York City, and an organization called the New York Community Trust began installing plaques on landmarks. A temporary Landmarks Preservation Commission was appointed by Mayor Robert Wagner in 1961. At first, the agency had only advisory duties, which included cataloguing landmarks, sounding the alert when a historic building was threatened, and developing preservation programs with public and private agencies. By 1963, the Commission had compiled a list of 300 buildings which required landmarking. In May 1964, the Commission submitted a draft of the Landmarks Preservation Commission law. This preservation statute was enacted in April 1965.

The New York City Council established the Landmarks Preservation Law under a New York State enabling statute known as the Bard Law, which gives cities powers to "provide for the protection, enhancement, perpetuation or use [of landmarks] which may include...control of the use or appearance of...private property within public view."⁶

The Landmarks Preservation Law seeks to:

- (a) effect and accomplish the protection, enhancement and perpetuation of such improvements and of districts which represent or reflect elements of the city's cultural, social, economic, political and architectural history;
- (b) safeguard the city's historic, aesthetic, and cultural heritage, as embodied and reflected in such improvements and districts;
- (c) stabilize and improve property values in such districts;
- (d) foster civic pride in the beauty and noble accomplishments of the past;

- (e) protect and enhance the city's attractions to tourists and visitors and the support and stimulus to business and industry thereby provided;
- (f) strengthen the economy of the city; and
- (g) promote the use of historic districts and landmarks for the education, pleasure and welfare of the people of the city.

It is clear that this legislation embodies the various sentiments present in preservation thought. Sections (d) and (g) reflect aspects of the associative philosophy of preservation, by making the tenuous connection between a landmark and its capacity to inspire and ennoble visitors. Sections (a) and (b) take Appleton's philosophy one step further, and mandate preservation using not just architectural and/or aesthetic criteria, but also social, political, and economic standards.

Clause (e) relates to the Williamsburg tradition of preservation, which attracts so many visitors, and clause (c) reflects district/continuous use preservation, which, as has been discussed, maintains high property values.

When set up, the Commission designated one hundred and sixty buildings and five historic districts. Thereafter, for a thirty-six month period, no further designations were allowed. This "truce" was called because real estate interests complained that the LPC could create a cloud over property disposition at any time by indicating an interest in declaring a property a landmark. This intermittent approach to designation was institutionalized in the early days of the LPC, when each six-month designation period would be followed by a 36 month non-designation period. Presently, however, designation can take place at any time.

The LPC is administered by unsalaried commissioners appointed by the Mayor. These commissioners are usually professionals in the field of architecture and preservation, those people whom Alan Burnham, a former LPC Executive Director, called "those best qualified to designate what should be preserved."⁷

The Commission's designations are made only after a public hearing. Following the hearing, and if designation is still pursued, the LPC publishes a report of its findings. It then notifies the owner about designation, which then must be approved by New York City's Board of Estimate.

In its selection of landmarks, the LPC does not limit itself to buildings generally regarded as landmarks. Rather, it attempts to also designate buildings that are valued by specific constituencies. In this way, it attempts to bring preservation to various communities, and to tailor it to the residents' specific needs and desires.

FOOTNOTES: CHAPTER TWO

1. Walter Muir Whitehill, "The Right of Cities to be Beautiful," in U.S. Conference of Mayors, With Heritage So Rich (New York: Random House, 1966), p. 46.
2. Walter Muir Whitehill, "'Promoted to Glory...' The Origin of Preservation in the United States," in U.S. Conference of Mayors, With Heritage So Rich, p. 38.
3. Ibid., p. 37.
4. Ibid., p. 49.
5. Charles B. Hosmer, Jr., Presence of the Past: A History of the Preservation Movement in the United States Before Williamsburg (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1965), p. 265.
6. John Pyke, Jr., Landmarks Preservation (New York: Citizens Union Research Foundation, no date) p. 15-16.
7. Ibid., p. 16.

CHAPTER III: THE SQUADRON A ARMORY

The History of Squadron A

Squadron A was established in 1884 as a private mounted political club, calling itself the "First New York Hussars" or "First Dragoons." In 1889, the Dragoons were incorporated into the New York National Guard as Troop or Squadron A. It was a prestigious unit, whose members were men of wealth, social prominence, and equestrian prowess. The troop often escorted Presidents and other dignitaries, the members sporting their dress uniforms of pale blue tunics with black and yellow trimmings, topped by busbies decorated with gilt insignia and horsehair pompoms. Members of Squadron A saw riot duty in the Buffalo Streetcar strikes (1892), and at the Croton Dam Quarrymen's strike in 1900. They also served in the Spanish American War. In 1916, they were dispatched to the Mexican border, and a year later, were sent to Belgium and France as the 105th Machine Gun Battalion. The 105th was reorganized as the 101st Cavalry after World War I.

The armory was completed in 1895 at the corner of 94th Street and Madison Avenue. Aside from usual National Guard activities, the armory housed equestrian activities, especially after the construction of the indoor riding hall and polo field. It held polo matches, horse shows, and mounted military tournaments.

Ironically, it was partially this emphasis on those glorious equestrian activities which led to the decline of the armory. The 101st Cavalry was mechanized in 1942, and the horses owned by the federal government were sent to Virginia. After World War II, many of the indoor stables were converted into motor pools, but even those eventually became obsolete.

Even before the transfer of the armories from the state to the city was finalized, proposals were put forth regarding the re-use of the Squadron A armory site.

Proposals for the Squadron A Armory Site

There were five basic proposals for the armory site. These proposals, in order of their prominence and success, were to build: a park; luxury housing; middle income housing; middle income housing combined with a junior high school; and a junior high school.

A Park. Shortest-lived of all proposals, was one to turn either the 71st Regiment or the Squadron A armory site into a park. This was suggested by Eli Jacques Kahn, former president of the Municipal Art Society. A New York Times editorial echoed those feelings, stating that:

"Central Park needs satellites...A beginning can be made by turning (either armory) into little parks...Surely one of the two armories could become a starter in a program of little parks. It is time that people replaced polo ponies."¹

Several months later, Mr. Kahn wrote to the Times, saying,

"...once again an earnest plea is registered to fight down the enormous pressure of using these potential green spots for commercial or other utilitarian purposes...Unless strong public interest is aroused, these sites will be covered with massive masonry blocks that will merely add to the intensity of an already crowded city."²

Apparently, no one heeded Kahn's "earnest plea," for the proposal did not surface again.

Luxury housing. Nearly as short lived a movement as the park proposal was the idea to erect luxury housing on the site. The New York Times reported on June 21, 1962, that Paul T. O'Keefe, New York City's Commissioner of Real Estate, told a group of Upper East Side property owners,

"...that he believed middle income housing, which often enjoys property tax abatement, should not be built in the area. He said middle income developments would deprive the city of badly needed taxes that normally would be levied on the valuable land there."

O'Keefe was also quoted as saying that to use that "most valuable real estate" for middle income housing "does not make any sense." The story goes on to say that the Yorkville Community Planning Board issued a statement saying that it,

"deplores Commissioner O'Keefe's lack of understanding of the great need for middle income housing in the Yorkville area and reaffirms its support for a balanced community..."

Despite O'Keefe's enthusiasm, there is no further evidence that progress was made in erecting luxury housing on the site.

Middle Income Housing. More important was the pressure to build middle income housing on the armory site. On March 8, 1962, Manhattan Borough President Edward R. Dudley said in a proposal that the site could comfortably accommodate at least 500 moderate-cost housing units. He contended that the Upper East Side had seen far too much construction of luxury housing, which had a detrimental effect on attempts to integrate the area socially and economically. On April 12, he reiterated his belief that "a housing development on the site would contribute to the 'economic and racial integration' of an area that had seen a luxury housing boom for the last decade."³

Dudley's feelings were echoed by Russell D. Hemenway, the President of the Lexington Democratic Club, who wrote in a letter to the editor of the New York Times:

"This community has lost a major portion of its middle income residents in recent years, due to the massive demolition for new buildings. Third Avenue, once a largely middle income area, has emerged as an almost unbroken row of luxury buildings...Community organizations such as ours have been

seeking to prevent the East Side from becoming a place only for the rich."⁴

The editor of the Park East News, Morton B. Lawrence, also called for the construction of moderate housing. In an interview, Lawrence said that he had hoped construction of middle income housing would lower housing costs and enable young people starting families to remain in the area in which they had grown up. However, he said that co-op owners were concerned that middle income housing would lower their property values.

Middle Income Housing Combined with a Junior High School. Another proposal for the site was to combine housing and a school. A unique New York City Board of Education program allows this creative combination. The way it works is that the Board acquires a parcel of land for a school. It leases the air rights over the proposed school to a builder or developer. The money goes into an educational construction fund, which pays for the school's construction. There are three such "combination" schools in Manhattan, one of them, ironically, being the Robert F. Kennedy School on 34th Street, standing on the site of the old 71st Regiment armory.

By April, 1963, The Board of Education had recommended to the Mayor's Site Selection Committee that the armory site be used for a junior high school. (Unfortunately, the Board of Education refused to release any information on the site selection process.) This proposal to build Intermediate School 29 was applauded by many people for various reasons, which will be discussed further on, and pro-housing activists began to push for a combined school-housing development.

The proposal to combine both middle income housing and a school was much more controversial than previous proposals. It was also

imbued with the idealism and doctrine current in the 1960's. Phyllis Robinson, Chairman of the Community Planning Board No. 8, in whose district the armory was located, wrote to the editor of the New York

Times:

"Here is an ideal site. It is publicly owned, and so located that it will promote an integrated student body. It is a site that will not result in a single tenant eviction, an important consideration in a community that has already seen thousands of its residents evicted for luxury housing.

Because of the bulldozing [of Yorkville] and the decimation of its middle class population there is a strong community drive in Yorkville for middle income housing on the site of the armory. The need for a new junior high and for middle income housing can both be met there."⁵

Ms. Robinson's concern with "promoting an integrated student body" was more than a popular policy in the 1960's. According to Morton Lawrence, integration was an issue dear to the hearts of East Side liberals. They were stirred by a moral drive. The hope in those idealistic times, Lawrence recalled, was to build integrated schools. Provision of adequate school space in strategic areas was of utmost importance if integration was to occur. Integration was seen as a cure for social problems:

"Parents, ministers, local school board officials, political leaders, and members of civic groups from Manhattan, the Bronx and Queens also warned [at a capital budget hearing in front of the City Planning Commission] that unless the school problem was solved, the problems of school dropouts, delinquency, unemployment and crime would continue to mount."⁶

At that meeting, Mrs. Norman Eddy, a local school board member of the districts encompassing the Squadron A armory site, urged the commission,

"to give the highest priority to a new junior high school to be built on the site of the armory....She said that the communities of East Harlem and Yorkville both favored the site, which would produce a naturally integrated school."⁷

There was another reason that a school was widely supported on the site. According to Robert Low, city council member for that district, the school population was sharply increasing in the 1960's, generating a strong demand for more schools. The demand came from both the elite white population, and from the Black and Puerto Rican communities north of 96th Street.

The argument that sheer numbers of students compelled parents and activists to demand more schools no doubt has some merit. However, the number of people active in the movement to build I.S. 29, who lived south of 96th Street, as is illustrated in the next paragraph, points to pressure on the part of elite to build a new school.

By August 1964, under this pressure, the Board of Estimate voted to acquire the four surplus armories, and to set aside funds for the demolition of the Squadron A armory. This move was applauded by the co-chairmen of a committee that had sprung up, called the "Committee for the Joint Use of the 94th Street Armory for a New Public School (J29) and Middle Income Housing." In a letter to the New York Times, Barbara Blum and Alice Sachs wrote that there was a "desperate" need in the area for both middle income housing and a new intermediate school. Blum and Sachs stated that a combined school/housing complex,

"...would satisfy a vital school and housing need on the East Side of Manhattan without necessitating any relocation. And, hopefully, it would achieve the sort of economic, cultural and ethnic integration which is essential to a balance and healthy community."⁸

Blum and Sach's next statement supports Morton Lawrence's opinion that it was the East Side liberal elite community which pushed for the school:

"Many of our community's most distinguished citizens have formed a committee in support of these aims."⁹

In fact, the list of committee members is full of prominent names, among them Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., Myrna Loy, Rodman Rockefeller, Dore Schary, Mrs. David Sulzberger, Mrs. David Susskind, the Hon. Marietta Tree, and Mrs. Victor Wouk. After the last name on the list, there is the notation "Supported by Community Planning Board #8, Civic and Political Groups."

A Junior High School. The same arguments that were presented in support of building a school/housing complex, were also put forth in support of plans to build just a school. A school on this "border" site would promote racial integration and diversify the neighborhood ethnically and socially. It would render "useful" a site that had been utilized by a small group of polo-playing citizens. A new school in the neighborhood would help to relieve overcrowding in nearby Yorkville and Harlem schools, and would not require demolition of housing units, a practice that had plagued the area in the late 50's and early 60's.

Just as there was a committee for joint use, there was a "Committee for the Use of the 94th Street Armory Solely for Junior High School 29 - Manhattan." An open letter, dated March 3, 1963, seeks support for the school. Although we don't know who the committee members were (there is no list of sponsors on the letter), the group made some salient points:

- "(1) The two existing high school...are cripplingly overcrowded. By 1966, these schools will be overenrolled by some 1780 children - enough students to fill JHS 29 were it to open tomorrow!
- (2) The entire (site) must be used for school purposes in order for a new junior high school to function properly. There is no physical space for anything other than school facilities on this already small site. (Any other building) would be at the expense of the school and to its ultimate detriment...the major portion of the

block should be devoted to a high-rise school building and the remaining footage to its indispensable (sic) playground...

- (3) Immediate site designation and construction funds are necessary so that the Board of Education can begin construction of this desperately needed facility...
- (4) We parents of East Harlem and Yorkville feel that (this) site affords a singular opportunity for the creation of a quality integrated educational institution."

The letter ends with a plea that area children not be short-changed of their educational opportunities.

Because Board of Education records are unavailable, it cannot be determined at what specific point and for what specific reasons the Board decided to scrap the joint complex project and to build just a junior high school. Minutes from the Local School Board, Districts 5-7-9, meeting on February 23, 1965, suggest some of the objections:

"Mrs. Lane reported on a meeting held in the Boro President's Office concerning J-29. The difficulties with dual use are:

- a. time - it will take longer;
- b. lack of space - the area...is small...dual use will [eliminate] a playground for the school [and will mean the addition of] several additional stories and the need for elevators;
- c. legalities - ...plans for dual usage require...extensive legal procedures involving time delays."

A clue as to the Board of Education's plans to proceed with only the school can be found in the next sentence:

"d. problems of getting a sponsor. Mr. [Eugene] Hult [the Director of Design and Construction for the Board of Education] said that if there is no private sponsor for an apartment building by April 1st, he will hire an architect and proceed...without dual usage."

Further opposition to placing middle income housing on the armory site came from the Community Housing and Planning Council, a private, non-profit organization supporting low and middle income housing. In

a letter to Mayor Robert Wagner, Roger Starr, the CHPC Executive Director discussed his organization's "implacable opposition" to middle income housing on the site, whether by itself or in tandem with I.S. 29:

"We favor this site for Junior High School use. The site is...smaller (than has proven to be) satisfactory in experience. Its location, however, the acute need for a Junior High School for 1800 students in the area, and the certainty that if such a school is to be established elsewhere in the area, demolition of dwelling units would be involved -- all these facts make the armory site attractive for Junior High School use."¹⁰

The CHPC echoed other proponents of building a school on the site:

"We feel basically that this school can be of rare value in attracting a racially integrated clientele....To complicate [the school's physical requirements] with a design...providing a base for a large apartment house above it is to compromise them fatally....Parents of children in the local public schools want a good Junior High School. They want it quickly. They want a high school good enough to attract pupils from both sides of 96th Street. They insist on quick action [because this school] can make a contribution to racial concord..."¹¹

Apparently, the organization purporting to support low and moderate income housing was taken to task for its anti-housing, pro-school stance, for Starr wrote,

"Our credentials should entitle us to be heard about (the armory) without exposing us to the label of 'reactionary' or 'bigot,' two labels which have been hurled loosely about by some of the proponents of middle income housing there."¹²

Starr presented an additional argument in opposition to siting middle income housing on the site, an argument unique to his organization. He argued that because of the high value of the land due to its location, it would be assessed at such a value that charging moderate rents would have been impossible.

"Our experts...predict that family incomes would run well above \$13,000 for families occupying a two bedroom apartment. It is a clear fact that there are many apartments in

the immediate neighborhood... which are now occupied by families paying similar rents and full real estate taxes in older buildings. [Locating subsidized apartments in a luxury area] has ominous consequences...Already we have heard attack(s) on the middle income housing program on the grounds that it requires poor families to pay full taxes in order to support wealthier families who are escaping their full share of taxes."¹³

Despite Eugene Hult's apparent statement to the local school board that unless a sponsor were found for an apartment complex by April 1, 1965, he would proceed with plans for a school without dual usage, the controversy over dual usage still seemed to be raging in July. In a letter to the New York Times, Algernon Black and Edward Rutledge, the Chairman of the Board and Executive Director, respectively, of the National Committee Against Discrimination in Housing, wrote in reference to Manhattan Borough President Constance Baker Motley's support of dual usage,

"...(dual use) would cut across considerations of race and class to establish an integrated...development...in a section which is now occupied almost exclusively by white citizens residing in luxury apartments."¹⁴

The Site Selection Board of the Board of Education ended the controversy in late August 1965, by deciding to use the site for a school only. Pro-joint use Morton Lawrence, in a Park East News editorial, wrote that the decision was "shocking" and berated the Board for being "unimaginative" and for showing the characteristics of "the stagnant bureaucracy that infests the present City Administration." The editorial ends by accusing Mayor Wagner of "allow[ing] the triumph of reactionary planning," and berating the Site Selection Board for allowing "a victory for 'know-nothingism' in the community."¹⁵

It is interesting to note that even at this late date, the Landmarks Preservation Commission had not said anything either about the

demolition process or about designating the armory (or part of it) as a landmark.

The Preservation of the Front Wall

Sometime during the controversy over whether to build a school/housing complex, or just a school, another controversy arose over whether to save the facade of the armory or not. It is difficult to pinpoint the exact origin of the idea to save the armory. A 1972 letter from the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission Chairman, Harmon G. Goldstone, to Mayor John Lindsay, outlines the main points of the facade preservation process. In the letter, Goldstone states that Lindsay, prodded by his counsel, Michael Dontzin, stopped the total demolition of the armory at the eleventh hour. A cooperative agreement to save the walls and tower for "a unique school playground" was forged between the City Planning Department, the Landmarks Preservation Commission, and the Board of Education.¹⁶ This seems to indicate that preservation interest did not originate from the LPC.

A letter from Eugene Hult to Alan Burnham, the Executive Director of the LPC states that, "the idea of the preservation of the facade emanated from your office."¹⁷ On the other hand, Morton Lawrence attributed the idea of retaining the facade to Morris Ketchum, the architect of J.S. 29, and he credits Mayor Lindsay's "adventurous and innovative" administration for allowing and encouraging such a novel idea.

The retention of the facade was also on other people's minds. In a letter to the editor of the New York Times, Gabriel Laderman, an assistant professor at the Pratt Institute, wrote,

"...Would it not be possible to build the Madison Avenue facade into the projected junior high school?...the character of the north facade of the armory would blend with the style of (contemporary) architecture...the facade is picturesque and adds a little bit of pepper and salt to the neighborhood and to the city. Would it not be possible to build the Madison Avenue facade into the the projected junior high school?"¹⁸

Files from the Landmark Preservation Commission point to a degree of public feeling for saving the facade of the armory. These records set forth some relevant points. There was apparently considerable public feeling for saving the towers. Additional support came from Morris Ketchum, and, to some extent, from Eugene Hult. However, these records point out that the Mayor's authorization was needed to stay the demolition.

There also seems to have been some kind of letter writing campaign to designate the facade of the armory a landmark, for the LPC records contain a sample letter which sets forth some reasons to save the armory's facade:

"We have noted with sadness...the demolition of [the armory]. For as long as we can remember this imposing building has been a landmark in our neighborhood, and, indeed, for the whole city....We see...that at this moment, the great tower and massive front wall on Madison Avenue are still standing, and it occurs to us -- Can we not have the best of both?...the monumental vaulted entranceway could make a magnificent entrance to the school playground...The city would not only have a most interesting and original adjunct to a playground, but would be able, at the same time, to preserve for future generations a beautiful and absolutely irreplaceable landmark of our city....We would like to request, therefore, that (the front) be designated...a landmark..."

Eugene Hult's support was evident in his letter to Alan Burnham, the Executive Director of the LPC, dated July 18, 1966:

"Mr. Paletta [the Board of Education's Director of Architecture] and I visited the armory several times, and concur with the suggestion that the facade and towers be retained as landmark preservation (sic) and, although this concurrence is a matter of personal opinion since others might not

agree, we do feel that there are elements of architecture that deserve to be saved. With this spirit in mind, I have assured Mr. Dontzin that we would cooperate as best we can to make the facilities of the Board of Education, and such funds as are available, work towards this end...

As time passed, the idea of retaining and incorporation the facade became more and more entrenched. A New York Times story dated August 9, 1966, was headlined, "Turreted Playground? Come to think of it, why not?" It stated:

"Children who live in the east 90's near Madison and Park Avenue may not completely lose their 'castle'....The armory is being torn down to make way for a junior high school, but city agencies, responding to pleas of the area residents, may leave standing the last remaining wall with its turrets and battlements."

As far as the city agencies involved in the process, the story mentions that the preservation of the front wall of the armory was a collaboration between the LPC, the Board of Education, and the Mayor's Office. Furthermore, Eugene Hult is quoted as saying that his office was considering incorporating the wall into the new school's playground. Apparently, many other agencies became interested in the facade's preservation, on the August 11, 1966, the Park East News, pointed out that,

"The chairman (of the Local Community Planning Board) Landmarks Committee already has voiced support for the plan. Support has also come from the mayor's office, which ordered demolition on the site halted a day before the facade was to fall... Other city agencies encouraging the...plan are the Landmarks Preservation Commission, the Board of Education, the Department of Real Estate, the Bureau of the Budget, and the City Planning Commission."

The preservation of the armory's facade gained support steadily. Above and beyond departmental support, the approval of Mayor Lindsay was crucial. An undated note in the LPC files reads:

"[Richard] Bader [of the City Planning Commission] called up architect & Gene Hult and Demolition Co... They were all

willing to do something, but no one can act without the approval of the Mayor."

It is clear from the results that the Mayor did indeed approve of this preservation plan. By October 1, 1966, the hearing on designating the armory's facade was held. Support was by no means unanimous. Perhaps the most vocal opposition came from Roger Starr and the CHPC. On October 14, 1966, he wrote to Geoffrey Platt, the LPC Chairman:

"I am instructed by the Board of Directors [of CHPC] to record our strenuous opposition to this frivolous suggestion... I was incensed by the suggestion that [the Board of Education's] architects are so lacking in ingenuity that ...school design can be achieved only by incorporating a useless relic into an already scanty playground."

The CHPC's explained its opposition as follows:

"The bulldozers, frustrated and querulous, have been halted at the brink of the last assault... This mechanical frustration was not imposed by any shortage of funds, but by a decision [to preserve the facade]....The proponents of this expenditure of money, playground space, and afternoon sunlight, have argued that saving the Armory's west wall constitutes an appropriate genuflection towards architectural variety..."¹⁹

The crucial argument that the CHPC made was as follows:

"The Squadron "A" armory was not on the list [of structures originally designated worthy of retention during the first 18 months of the LPC's existence]. If the Armory had been designated as a landmark, the designation would probably have included the entire building, not one wall to which tradition has not assigned any particular significance."²⁰

Despite this opposition, the LPC designated the armory's facade as a landmark on October 19, 1966. The designation document states that there were twelve speakers in favor of designation, and four against. Despite the school-versus-housing controversy that had raged, the four speakers brought up only one point - that retaining the armory facade may delay construction of the school. The Commission gave the following historical and architectural reasons for designation:

"Although the turrets and battlements are reminiscent of twelfth century prototypes, the result as expressed here is a product of American inventiveness....The details [are] vigorous and rugged... the LPC finds that [the facade] has a special character, special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development [of New York City] ...[it] is an outstanding example of military architecture that is notable for its massive size and bold detail..."²¹

This designation was strongly supported by the Historic Building Committee of the New York chapter of the American Institute of Architects. Its representatives stated that the towers and connecting wall would provide a unique background for the soon-to-be built school and playground.

Resolution

After the front of the armory was designated a landmark, it would be years before the project would be fully executed. The Board of Estimate had to appropriate the extra funds needed for the project. A story in the February 11, 1971 issue of Park East states that Intermediate School 29 cost \$7.9million, and the tower restoration cost \$400,000. The school opened in September of 1971. Construction on the playground, which included the towers and the front wall, began in the fall of 1972.

The school is situated on Park Avenue, directly opposite the facade. It is a castle-like brick structure, five stories high, with almost no windows. The asphalt playground occupies the space between the school and the facade. It is ringed by brick terraces, which reflect the building materials of both structures. The firm of Morris Ketchum, Jr. and Associates, which designed both the school and the playground, won an architectural award for this project from the Fifth Avenue Association.

FOOTNOTES: CHAPER THREE

1. New York Times, June 11, 1963.
2. Ibid., January 28, 1964.
3. Ibid., April 13, 1962.
4. Ibid., May 15, 1963.
5. Ibid., April 9, 1963.
6. Ibid., December 18, 1963.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid., August 12, 1964.
9. Ibid.
10. Roger Starr to Mayor Robert F. Wagner, letter dated January 12, 1965.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
14. New York Times, July 24, 1965.
15. Park East, August 26, 1965.
16. Harmon H. Goldstone to Mayor John V. Lindsay, "Report on City-owned or -aided Landmarks," memorandum dated April 28, 1972, pp. 1-2, Landmarks Preservation Commission, New York.
17. Eugene Hult to Alan Burham, letter dated July 18, 1966.
18. New York Times, March 22, 1966.
19. Press release, Citizens' Housing and Planning Council of New York, Inc., October 14, 1966.
20. Ibid.
21. Landmarks Preservation Commission, Designation Document LP-0398, Number 6, October 19, 1966.

CHAPTER IV: THE SEVENTH REGIMENT ARMORY

In 1806, sixteen militia companies were formed in New York City to deal with the periodic British blockades of the harbor. Four remained as units and became the Seventh Regiment in 1847. The Seventh was (and is) a prestigious unit, selecting members of "good character" and elite background, and became known as the "West Point of the National Guard."

Besides serving as a social club, the Seventh Regiment was also called out to riot duty. The first time was in 1834, when it helped to quell a riot resulting from Whig-Democratic election turmoil. After New York's great fire of 1835, the Regiment patrolled the streets to prevent looting. During the Panic of 1837, which saw hungry people roaming the streets and demanding food, the Seventh took up its arms to protect property. In 1849, the Astor Place riots occurred when a mob of Irish-Americans attacked the New York Opera House, where an English actor named Macready was performing. New York's police force, only 300 strong, was overwhelmed, and the Seventh was called in to disperse a mob of some 20,000 rioters. In 1861, after the fall of Fort Sumter, the regiment marched from Annapolis to Washington D.C. to defend the capital. It served at Civil War fronts on three occasions, and helped to suppress the Draft Riots. It was also active in quelling the labor strife that occurred in 1877.

In 1857, the Seventh Regiment was headquartered at Tompkins Market on Sixth Street and Third Avenue, after moving from an arsenal at 64th Street and Central Park. In 1874, it obtained its present plot between 66th and 67th Streets and Fourth and Lexington Avenues to build a new armory.

There were other reasons that the Regiment pressed for a new armory. Like many New Yorkers, regiment members were moving north, and it was less convenient to have to travel down to Sixth Street to attend drills or to assemble if called. The remote location made it harder to recruit members. Members were dissatisfied with the second floor drill room of the Thompkin Market site.

Consequently, the Regiment set about to raise the funds needed for a new armory. Various subscriptions, a loan, and funds from insurance companies and an armory fair totalled over half a million dollars. The present armory was erected in 1879. It was (and is) much admired as a substantial and handsome structure, with elegant interiors designed by Stanford White and Louis Comfort Tiffany, paintings by Rembrandt Peale and Thomas Nast, and elaborate friezes, ornate fireplace mantels, walnut paneled walls, and ceilings inlaid with silver and mother-of-pearl.

The armory covers the entire block between Park and Lexington Avenues, and 66th and 67th Streets, one of the most elegant and expensive parts of Manhattan. The Landmarks Preservation Commission designated the armory as a landmark on June 9, 1967. In addition, it is a New York State Landmark, and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. This triple designation would prove to be a stumbling block for developers.

The building has two parts. The front, which faces Park Avenue, was originally four stories high. A fifth floor was added in 1931. This section is a crenellated fortress which houses the offices of the Seventh Regiment, dining and reception rooms, a gymnasium, and handball and squash courts. The rear three-fourths of the site is con-

vered by the 80-foot-high drill shed, in which people play tennis and military exercises are held.

The armory has been used both by military and non-military organizations. The National Indoor Tennis Championships were held there from 1900 to 1963, and the armory still houses a private tennis club. Charity affairs and fashion shows also take place in the armory. In addition, the Knickerbocker Greys, a junior cadet corps for schoolboys, has held drills at the armory since 1902.

Proposals for the Seventh Regiment Armory Site

The Seventh Regiment armory differs from other armories in that it is owned by its trustees. Originally elected by members, these senior officers are now appointed by the state. Even though the building was never turned over to the city, it too came under attack.

In January 1980, Anthony Vaccarello, a vice president of the DeMattis Organization, a real estate development firm, walked around the armory with an architect. This survey consisted of basically walking through and around the building. The DeMattis Organization is familiar with the concept of air rights construction, a method whereby construction takes place over and above an existing building, and has built several schools in New York utilizing this technique. The survey undertaken by Vaccarello was to ascertain the feasibility of constructing high-rise, market rate housing, or an office building utilizing the air rights over the armory.

Vaccarello's visit aroused concern among the Regiment, even though he stated there were no plans to raze or alter the armory. A save-the-armory campaign was soon launched. Colonel Benjamin Fowler, who was the First Vice President of the Veterans of the Seventh Regi-

ment organization as well as a retired banker and World War II Air Corps officer, (and eventually, the Chairman of the Committee to Save the Seventh Regiment Armory) sent a telegram to New York Governor Hugh Carey which stated:

"Proposals regarding alterations of the Seventh Regiment Armory are causing great consternation. Any action supporting these proposals will be vigorously opposed, if necessary by legal action."²

Supporters of the regiment signed petitions which were circulated at an antique show taking place at the time in the armory. Some 6000 signatures were gathered, including those of Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis and Mrs. Douglas MacArthur, who was named honorary Chairwoman of the Committee to Save-the-Seventh. Furthermore, Representative Mario Biaggi sent a letter to Governor Carey, arguing that he was "strongly opposed to any crass commercialization of this architectural treasure and great landmark."³

The DeMattis Organization got no further than the preliminary "walk through" survey. It was overwhelmed by the opposition, which consisted of the officers of the Seventh Regiment who, in Vaccarello's words, were "fanning flames" by leading the community in the fight to keep any sort of development at bay. According to Vaccarello, the members of the Seventh Regiment had no intention of giving up their headquarters because "They have a private world there, like the 'Sheik of Araby'... they have their private domain."⁴ Sensing the degree of potential opposition, the DeMattis Organization abandoned any plans for the site.

The next proposal to develop the armory site generated even more vigorous opposition from Regiment members and local supporters. In 1979, the Tishman-Speyer Properties, a prominent real estate firm,

informed New York Governor Hugh Carey's office that the Seventh Regiment armory site was underutilized and "not being used to its highest and best use."⁵ On November 24, 1979, Jerry Speyer, Managing Partner of Tishman-Speyer, stated that his group would be willing to pay a "substantial eight-figure price for building rights."⁶ He added that he did not suggest tearing down the landmark, but would raze only the drill area and erect a high rise hotel and residential building. On January 19, 1981, Carey's secretary, Robert Morgado, announced that the state and the city were evaluating proposals to erect a hotel or luxury apartments over the drill-hall of the armory, which occupies about three fourths of the block.

This proposal made a tremendous amount of economic sense to the developer for reasons discussed previously. The armory is in one of the most desirable parts of Manhattan. There has probably never been a shortage of both buyers willing to pay enormous amounts of money to live in the area, and high-paying tourists. It is no wonder then, that such a plan, which would also create construction jobs and bring in a goodly amount of tax revenues was backed by Governor Carey and Mayor Ed Koch.

After Speyer's contact with the Governor's office, Morgado replied to his proposal in a December 9 letter, "I have directed the Urban Development Corp. to work with our agencies for a development plan."⁷ (The UDC is a New York State authority which was established by the legislature under Governor Rockefeller in order to cure urban blight, encourage development, and revitalize urban areas.) The UDC began preliminary design work for the construction of the high-rise hotel and apartment tower. Despite Speyer's initial contact with the Governor's office, the UDC proceeded to develop criteria for the

selection of a developer. In addition, it began to explore ways to generate funds for preservation work, and to develop property disposition guidelines.

No one was prepared for the storm of opposition that was generated by this proposal. Drawing on their experience with the DeMattis plan, activists were quick to organize a movement which would grow exponentially and quickly defeat the Tishman-Speyer proposal. The magnitude of antagonism towards any development plans for the armory site, and the level of activity to "Save This Armory!" contrast sharply with the near lack of action surrounding the razing of the Squadron A armory, and the development of that site. Let us explore the organizations which opposed the razing of the drill shed, and the tactics they used.

The Veterans Groups

Several veterans organizations led strong and immediate opposition to plans to alter the armory. These included the Veterans of the Seventh Regiment, and the Military Order of the World Wars, both of which had offices in the armory. Support also came from the American Legion and the Sons of the American Revolution. Once again, the "commander" of these troops was Colonel Fowler, who had learned from the previous fight with DeMattis. Hence the framework and reasoning of opposition was in order and ready to fight by the time Tishman-Speyer was formulating its plans. A Veterans of the Seventh Regiment press release, signed by Colonel Fowler, states that:

"...no public meetings have been held...this seems like good under-the-table work for a fait accompli... The National Historic Landmark status of the Armory, with so much history attached to it should not be violated by our governments and a business without the knowledge of the

community citizens who should approve or combat the forces at work.... We know what has been done in the past to demolish memorials and buildings that have protective laws. It should not happen to the spirit of service the Regiment gave the Nation, State, and city..."⁸

Colonel Fowler argued that the Armory should be protected because it stands as a commemoration of the patriotic service rendered by the Seventh Regiment. A week later, another press release added an additional argument, based upon the functions of the National Guard as a peace-keeping, riot-quelling force:

"Cities with less populations (sic) than NYC have had millions demonstrate and riot when national and/or local tensions explode. Should similar demonstrations or riots occur in New York City with its much larger population, but a small police force (25,000), added forces would be necessary to protect the UN embassies, foreign legations, citizens and property. New York needs an armory located where the 7th Armory is... only seconds to minutes away from major targets. History repeats itself and we should be ready for any eventuality."⁹

Despite the opposition on the part of the veterans organizations, Governor Carey continued his support for the project. At his urging, Morgado ordered plans drawn up for a hotel and apartment tower in January 1981. According to the Daily News, this move was made at the request of Jerry Speyer. However, a second party with its own arguments and interests was preparing to enter the fray.

Neighborhood Groups

The opposition of veterans alone was not sufficient to stop Carey's and Tishman-Speyer's plans. However, soon others would get involved and contribute to the opposition. In early February 1981, community residents met with representatives of the Seventh Regiment in order to join forces to oppose the Tishman-Speyer proposal. A group called Neighbors of the Seventh Regiment to Save the Community

was formed. According to a newspaper story, committee member, Robert Werner,

"pointed out that if a hotel were constructed in a residential area, the property assessments would escalate even though life style declined. Owners of coops would find their maintenance increased substantially."¹⁰

The story points to further action on the part of the committee:

"At this time, letters are in the mail to presidents of local co-op buildings, schools, churches, clubs and associations urging them to join in the fight to preserve the Seventh Regiment armory."¹¹

Impressed by the sources and numbers of the opposition, politicians were quick to enter the debate. At a meeting held in late February, Manhattan Borough President Andrew Stein and City Councilman Robert Dryfoos publicly protested the demolition of any part of the armory. Congressman Mario Biaggi sponsored legislation to protect the armory, stating that "this building has too much heritage and meaning to go down the drain. [If demolition is permitted] it will be the seed of destruction that will lead to the end of the neighborhood."¹²

The pressure to save the armory from any type of development was such that by March 5, 1981, the Carey administration called off any further study of proposals or plans. Morgado claimed that it was not due to the opposition, but attributed the decision to the fact that the UDC was busy with the construction of the West Side convention center and Battery Park City, and to a "lack of clarity" as to the ownership of the armory. He discounted the effect of the organized opponents of the plan. This, however, seems unlikely.

On the evening of March 5, over 1000 people braved a heavy snowfall to attend a meeting which was originally planned as a kick-off for an intense publicity drive to oppose the development plan. It turned into a victory celebration. Despite the cheer, Colonel Fowler

expressed disbelief that the state had really given up on the proposal. Furthermore, Fowler and Neighbors of the Seventh chairman Gordon Stevens said that they planned to continue their organizing effort in case of future development actions. "We're going to continue to keep the pressure on," said Fowler. "I'm an old soldier, I like to keep the weapons shiny."¹³

The Seventh Regiment and the Neighbors of the Seventh called on the New York Landmark Conservancy, a private preservation organization, to aid in the future preservation of the armory. A document released by Conservancy states that,

"It is imperative that a careful analysis be undertaken at this time in order that we are all prepared for future threats to this landmark building."¹⁴

The activities of Conservancy calls attention to yet another group of actors. There was a group which made its presence felt very strongly in the Seventh Regiment fight, but whose representative seldom surfaced and then only indirectly (when sought out for interviews, for instance). This group was the preservationist sector. Even though much of the rhetoric and sentiment for saving the Seventh Regiment armory was derived from the preservation lexicon, no preservationist group organized and agitated to the extent that the neighborhood and veteran groups did. This may seem a little peculiar, seeing how the fight was to preserve a landmark building. In reality the work to preserve the Seventh Regiment armory was done years before the controversy began, when the preservationist erected a nearly impenetrable shield around the armory. This protection no doubt influenced, if only partially, Governor Carey and Tishman-Speyer to drop what development plans they had.

If they had wanted to press on with their plans, the process would have been as follows: one, the Governor could have de-activated the Regiment and ordered it to move from its present headquarters, thereby rendering the armory surplus and possibly weakening opposition. Two, the LPC would have had to decide to allow the alteration or destruction of the landmark, something that has only happened once since the inception of the LPC in 1967. Three, the New York State Division of Historic Preservation would also have to have granted permission to alter or destroy the building. Public hearing are integral components of the last two processes.

The armory is also on the National Register of Historic Buildings. Although this designation carries no weight unless the building is owned by the federal government, affiliation with the National Register gives a building a special cachet, which was readily invoked by groups trying to save the armory.

It is quite clear that the fight to obtain permission to alter the armory would have been hopeless. The protective legislation passed years before imbued the armory supporters with legitimacy and even more political power than they already possessed.

OOTNOTES: CHAPTER FOUR

1. Seventh Regiment, The Grand Old Armory (pamphlet) (no date)
2. The Columbia Press, February 9, 1980.
3. New York Times, February 18, 1980.
4. Interview with Anthony Vaccarello, March 1984.
5. New York Daily News, January 19, 1981.
6. New York Times, January 20, 1981.
7. New York Daily News, January 19, 1981.
8. Committee to Save the Seventh Regiment Armory, Press Release, December 22, 1980.
9. Veterans of the Seventh Regiment, Letter to Members and Friends, December 29, 1980.
10. Our Town, February 15, 1981.
11. Ibid.
12. New York Times February 18, 1981.
13. East Side Express, March 12, 1981.
14. Brendan Gill, Chairman of the New York Landmarks Conservancy, to the New York Landmarks Conservatory, letter dated December 16, 1981.

CONCLUSION

Why did the Squadron A and Seventh Regiment armories come to such different fates? There are different reasons for the outcomes.

One of the reasons the Squadron A armory was nearly totally demolished while the Seventh Regiment armory still stands, swathed in iron-clad preservation, has to do with the status of historic preservation.

The New York City Landmarks Preservation Law was enacted in 1965, as preservation sentiment was growing. It was during this period that the fate of the Squadron A armory was decided. The facade of the armory was saved in 1966, just one year later. Had the legislation been passed earlier, the whole building might have been retained.

The Seventh Regiment armory was declared a landmark in 1967 during the initial LPC designation period, when preservation sentiment was becoming more entrenched. The LPC designation, along with that of New York State and the National Register, provided this building with a considerable degree of protection against future threats. It seems significant that at this later date, even the Tishman-Speyer development firm accepted historic preservation as a fact of life. It suggested tearing down only the drill shed and leaving the more significant front part of the building standing. This probably would not have occurred before preservation became entrenched. Had preservationist sentiment not become so established as to have its own legislation (and, hence, political muscle) and be considered "fait accompli," the Seventh Regiment armory might have been totally demolished. In fact, the preservation of the front of this historic and significant building was virtually taken for granted. The arguments put forth by citizens' and veterans' groups intent on preserving

the building centered first around issues of public safety, property assessment, and neighborhoods integrity, and second around preservation.

Another reason that accounts for the different fates of the two armories is to look at the different amounts of power and prestige held by various factions concerned with the armories.

The process by which the Seventh Regiment armory was saved shows quite clearly the effect of power. Both the residents of the elite neighborhood around the armory and the members of the elite Seventh Regiment did not want the armory altered. They were aided by prestigious organizations such as the Landmarks Conservancy, as well as by notable individuals. In addition, various "save the armory" organizations sprang up for the duration of the conflict. This segment of society, wealthy, well-organized, well-educated, has a great deal of power and knows how to make that power felt. Even though Tishman-Speyer is a large, powerful, and well-connected development firm, that wasn't enough to overcome the anti-development forces.

In contrast, the inhabitants of the area around the Squadron A armory did not wield as much power, and they were not all united behind a proposal to save the whole armory. Such a proposal would have been futile. This leaves the question of why the proposal to build Intermediate School 29 and to incorporate the armory facade into the playground won out over other proposals. The facade was retained because prominent architect Morris Ketchum's innovative design captured the imagination of local neighborhood activists. It is also likely, considering all the evidence available, that I.S. 29 came about because building a school, especially an integrated one, with a

playground where children of all races could mingle, was something desired by a large segment of local activists. Furthermore, Mayor Lindsay's adventurous and innovative administration, as Morton Lawrence put it, was perhaps responsible for establishing an atmosphere in which such an unusual project could be undertaken.

Another reason that the Squadron A armory was demolished was that many people feel that building something for "the public good" is more desirable, and possibly morally superior, to building something for private gain.* For instance, had a serious move to save the entire Squadron A armory on historic preservation grounds arisen, while plans were being made for building a school or housing, it would have had to contend with charges of elitism. Opposition might have taken the form of comparing the preservation of an antiquated building (which may directly benefit only a small segment of the population) to the pressing need for more schools (or housing), which are seen as benefitting a much larger segment of the population.

Other differences in the situations of the two armories bear mentioning as we search for explanations as to their different fates.

The Seventh Regiment armory had in place a network of people opposed to development plans when Tishman-Speyer made its initial bid. This dated back to the De Mattis survey, and was immediately available to anti-development organizers. No such network existed in the case of the Squadron A armory, which had never been threatened with alteration or demolition.

*I use the term "public good" in this particular instance in the classic liberal/reform tradition sense, in which things such as education, transportation, public health, etc., are seen as benefitting the population as a whole.

The Seventh Regiment armory is multi-functional. Not only does it fulfill National Guard functions, but it serves the needs of other people and groups as well. It is a social gathering spot, it hosts fashion shows and art exhibits, and houses a tennis club. Hence, its existence is of importance to a wide group of people not even remotely connected to the National Guard. On the other hand, the Squadron A armory was just an armory, and one which had fallen on hard times because of its previous emphasis on the equestrian aspects of its unit. The building was of so little importance to members and former members of Squadron A that no one protested its demolition.

* * * *

In early 1984, I visited the site of the Squadron A armory, and the Seventh Regiment armory, and came away with a sense of irony.

For all the work and emotion expended over the course of nearly a decade, the plans for IS 29 and its innovative playground were promises only partially fulfilled. According to the Principal Karen McCarthy, the egalitarian school that was to have integrated school-children of the Upper East Side and Yorkville, "failed sometime between 1972 and 1975.... [This was a time of rising minority self-awareness, and] the people to the north of 96th Street did not want their kids sent [any further south]....they wanted to retain the flavor of their community." The school building itself was taken over by nearby Hunter College and turned into a college-affiliated exam school. It is attended by gifted children from all over New York City.

As far as the prize winning design of the school, Dr. McCarthy said, "...it is well-hated...no school should look like an armory." The innovative design has had its share of problems. Most of the building's few windows are in the stairwells. They're made of plexi-glass and thus, after a decade of being cleaned of grit and dirt, are thoroughly scratched, giving the stairwells an eerie, semi-lit look. The school relies on a ventilating system, which was installed by the lowest bidder, and hence, according to Dr. McCarthy, never works correctly. There are no solid walls between the classrooms, and the folding partitions allow noise to travel from one classroom to the next.

Sadly, the towers which some had once envisioned as part of the playground are closed off to the public for insurance reasons. The festivals and plays that some hoped would utilize the towers as a backdrop never materialized.

There is also something ironic about the Seventh Regiment armory. A stroll through its richly panelled interiors brings one enchanting surprise after another. A magnificent collection of silver is on display in one room. In another, the ceiling is inlaid with silver and mother-of-pearl. Handsome portraits are hung on the walls. Breathtaking stained glass panels and windows also lend to the plush atmosphere. This richness and splendor indicate both a physical and social permanence and immutability.

A walk up the grand staircase reveals a totally different world. It is here that, by law, homeless people are sheltered. Unshaven, threadbare, and sickly, they sit on rows of chairs or on benches, hemmed in by velvet ropes and guarded by MP's. The Seventh Regiment

and its allies fought the development plans for the armory site for a variety of reasons, not the least of which was an aversion to changes in the armory or in the neighborhood. Now they find themselves hosts to some of New York's poorest and most disturbed residents. The contrast between the wealth of the first floor of this magnificent armory, and the poverty of the residents of the second floor is rich in irony.

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Robert Low, March 6, 1984.

Karen McCarthy, March 8, 1984.

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Anthony Vaccarello, March 1984. (phone)

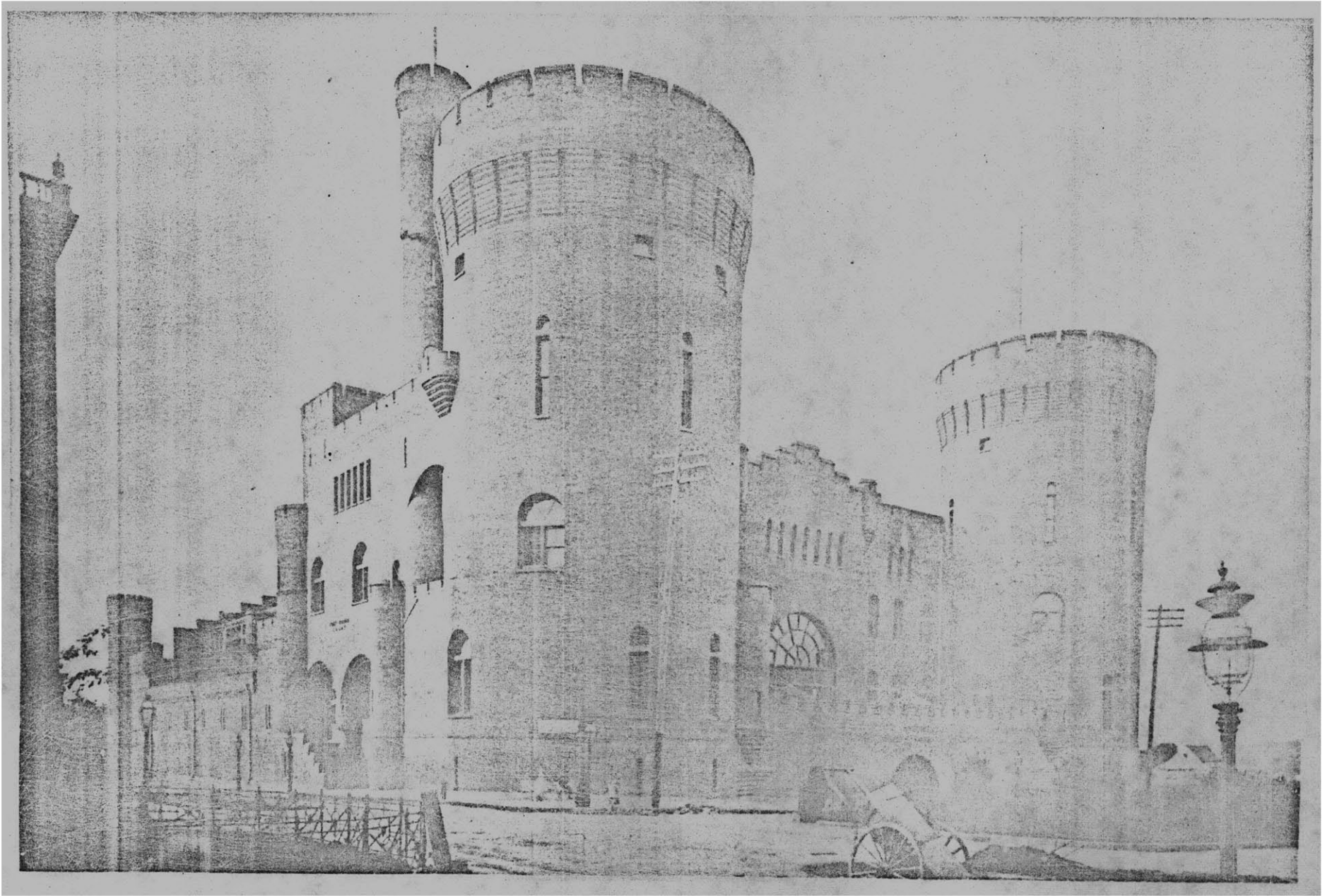
June Wilson, March 9, 1984.

NOTES ON METHODOLOGY

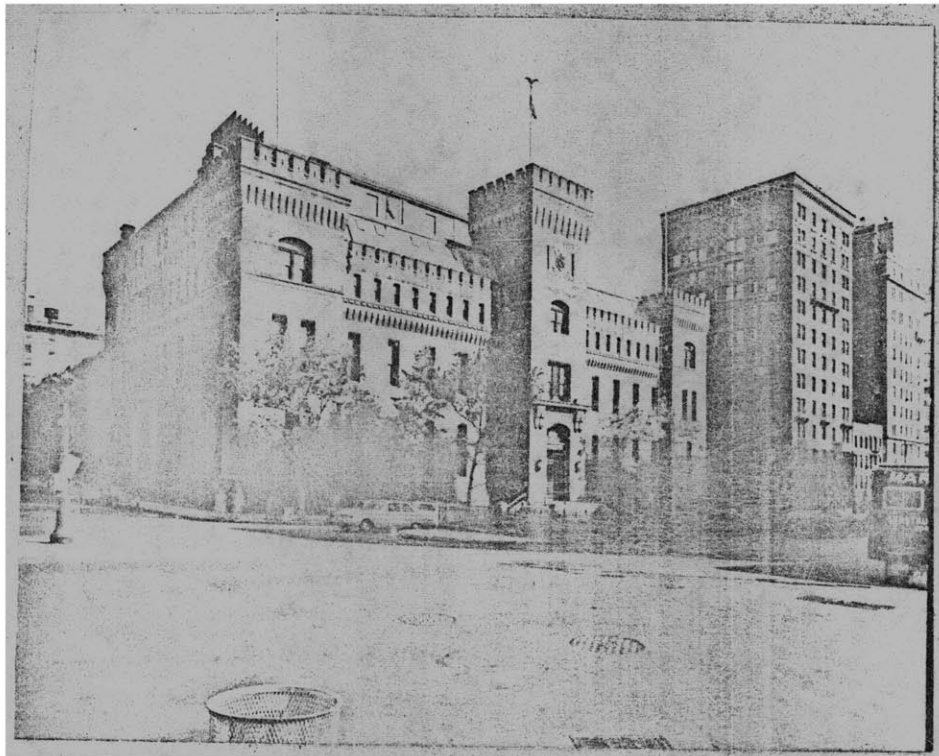
I employed various methods in carrying out this research. First, I familiarized myself with the philosophies of historic preservation mainly through readings, and discussions with Christine Boyer. Second, I read as many New York Times articles as I could find on the armories. Third, I traveled to New York City. While there, I conducted several fruitful interviews, both in person and by phone. I also gathered a lot of written material from the CHPC files, the LPC files, and the files of June Wilson, who, through the Cosmopolitan Club, was very active in the fight to Save the Seventh. I was (and am) dismayed that the Board of Education did not grant me access to the records concerning Intermediate School 29. However, I possess neither the time nor the resources to fight it out.



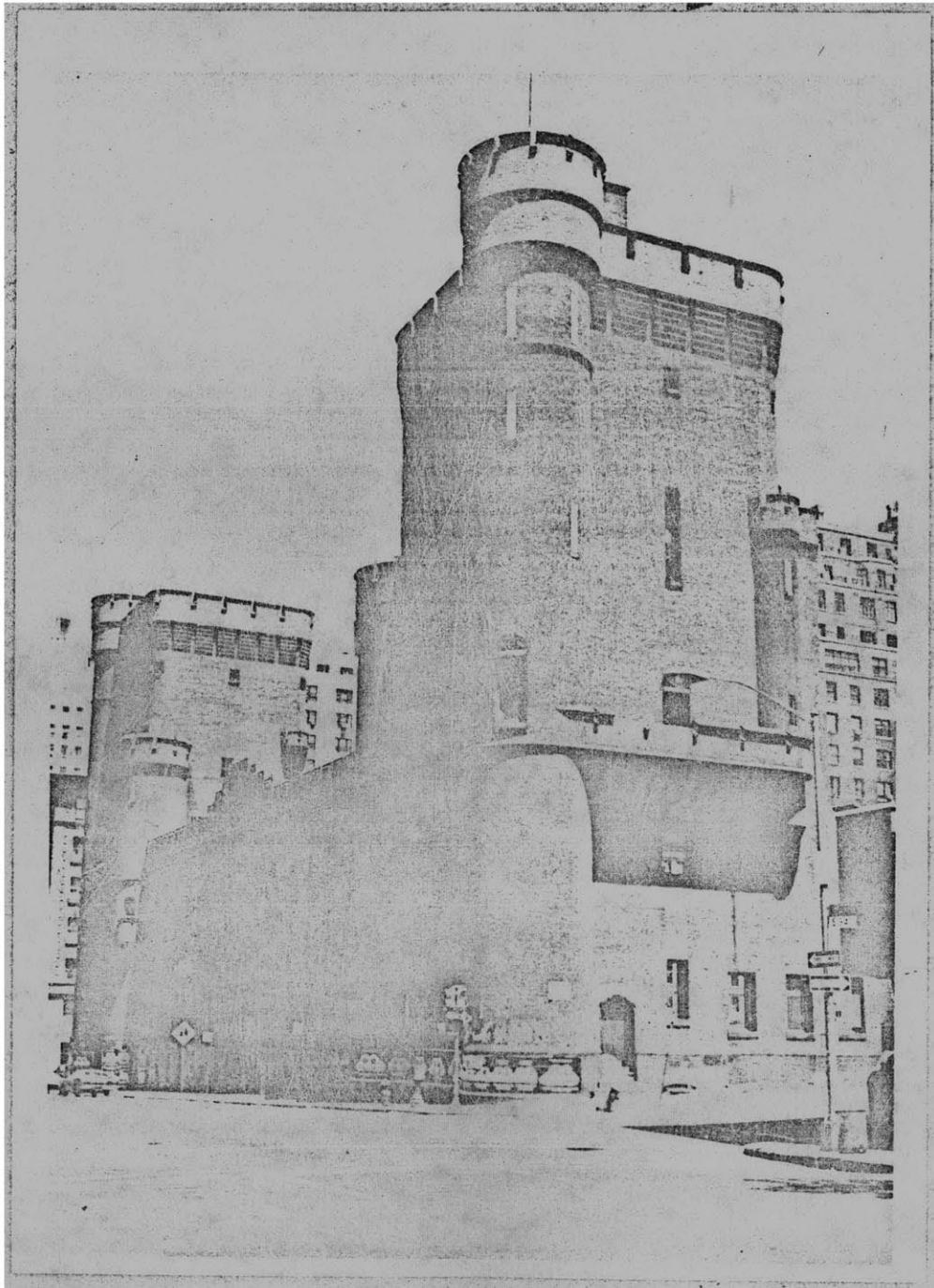
The Seventh Regiment Armory



The Squadron A Armory



Seventh Regiment Armory -- 1960's



Squadron A Armory -- 1960's