

CHARLTON STREET BLOCK ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

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TRUMP UPDATE

Donald Trump's 45-story "condo hotel" at Spring and Varick continues on schedule toward completion in 2009 despite a series of glitches and setbacks. These setbacks include the discovery of bones from an old graveyard that once occupied the site and the marketing of condo units as residences in violation of city zoning laws. Zoning for the site allows a hotel but not residences.

Construction crews are currently digging the foundation. Trump has applied for a building permit for above-ground construction but has not yet received one. If and when he does, community groups will have to decide whether to sue to try to block the project. A suit cannot be filed until the city issues a building permit.

The Block Association periodically distributes Trump updates by email. If you would like to be added to the distribution list, send your email address to Dick Blodgett at rblodgett@nyc.rr.com.

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BYE BYE MOONDANCE

The Moondance diner site at Sixth Avenue and Grand Street is another of the nearby locations being developed as our neighborhood changes. The diner will close this year to make way for a nine-story luxury condominium.

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RADIO STATION WNYC, OUR NEW NEIGHBOR

Public radio station WNYC will become our new neighbor when it moves this summer to 160-170 Varick at the southeast corner of Charlton. The station recently signed a 20-year lease for the eighth and ninth floors as well as for most of the seventh floor. Late in the year, it plans to open a street-level broadcast auditorium in the space currently occupied by SoHo Made Soups. Plans call for the

auditorium to have glass walls so that passers-by on the street can see what's happening inside.

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BEAUTIFYING OUR BLOCK

If winter comes, can Harry Schroder and his volunteer gardeners be far behind?

Harry, who chairs the Block Association beautification committee, is finalizing plans to spruce up the block this spring. His crew will plant more ivy along Charlton, possibly in early April. In May, they expect to plant flowers on the block as well as in Charlton Plaza.

Harry needs more volunteers. Taking part is a great way to meet your neighbors, get a little exercise and contribute to the beauty of the block. We hope you will join in.

Contact Harry at 212-614-7733 (work), 212-989-1843 (home) or harry@workman.com.

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JUNE 21 CONCERT IN FATHER FAGAN PARK: WOULD YOU LIKE TO PERFORM?

The Block Association is taking part in a newly organized festival called Make Music New York. The event is modeled on la Fête de la Musique in Paris. Each June 21, the summer solstice, amateur and professional musicians take to Paris's streets and parks to perform.

The New York festival is being organized by a musician named Aaron Friedman with backing from a nonprofit group, Citizens for NYC. The Block Association jumped at the opportunity to participate and was one of the first groups in the city to say yes. After all, our local community thrives on the arts.

We plan to hold a one- or two-hour concert in Father Fagan Park (southeast corner of Sixth Avenue and Prince) on Thursday, June 21. Time of day is yet to be determined. We hope to make the concert a fun and entertaining event. Admission will be free; no tickets or reservations will be required.

Now all we need are the musicians! If you are an amateur or professional musician and would like to perform – or know someone who might want to do so – please contact Dick Blodgett at 9 Charlton; 212-620-0928; rblodgett@nyc.rr.com. The Make Music New York organizers will supply musicians for our concert if necessary, but we would like to feature performers from the neighborhood.

The musicians will not be paid. We will publicize the event with posters and press releases. Our permit from the city does not allow amplification.

About 90 community groups are taking part in this year's initial celebration. Friedman hopes the festival will eventually become a major annual cultural event, as it is in Paris, with hundreds of outdoor concerts throughout the city each June 21.

To learn more about Make Music New York, visit its website at:

www.makemusicny.org

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NO STREET FAIR IN 2007

The Block Association has held a “yard sale” street fair each June for the past two years. However, we will not hold one in 2007. The concert in Father Fagan Park will be the major Block Association event this summer.

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BLOCK ASSOCIATION DIRECTORS

We are seeking one or two new members for the Block Association board of directors. In joining the board, you would work with a group of neighbors in determining the Block Association's priorities and activities. The board meets occasionally in person but works mainly by email. We welcome all volunteers. To learn more, contact Dick Blodgett at the address in the Make Music New York article above.

Board members are Dick Blodgett, 9 Charlton, president; Tony Marzani, 30 Charlton, treasurer; Jennie Dorn, Roberta Gaal,

Lee Goldblatt and Alice Turner, 2 Charlton; Harry Schroder and Deborah Snoonian, 30 Charlton; and Sheila Strong, 42 Charlton.

Feel free to contact any of them with your comments and suggestions. The Block Association exists for the benefit of the residents of Charlton Street. We encourage your participation and ideas.

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PROPOSED SOUTH VILLAGE HISTORIC DISTRICT

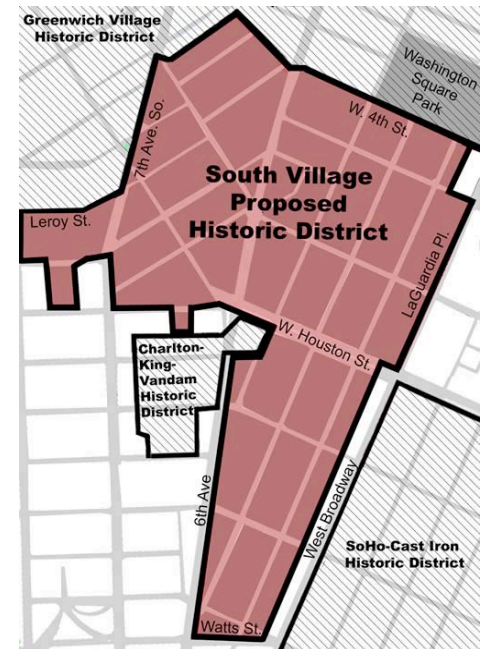
In December, the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation (GVSHP) proposed the creation of a new landmark district

immediately east and north of the Charlton-King-Vandam Historic District in which we live. The new district would stretch from Washington Square in the north to Watts Street in the south; from West Broadway/La Guardia Place in the east to Sixth Avenue/Seventh Avenue in the west. It includes

all or part of such streets as Bedford, Bleecker, Carmine, Cornelia, Downing, Leroy, Macdougall, Morton, Prince and Sullivan as well as Minetta Street and Minetta Lane.

Landmarking would preserve the district's scale and architectural integrity. The GVSHP proposal is just the start of the landmarking process. The New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission must approve the new district, and that could take years if it happens at all. GVSHP urges residents to write to Landmarks to express their support. To learn more, go to GVSHP's website at:

www.gvshp.org/southvillage.htm



MISS ANNIE LEARY AND THE ITALIAN UNIVERSITY ON CHARLTON STREET

A century ago, amid much hoopla, a new college called the Italian University was founded on our block. Its story is one of the unusual chapters in the history of Charlton Street.

The university was organized by a 73-year-old socialite named Annie Leary. She



Annie Leary, known as Miss Leary or Countess Leary, used her wealth to help the many Italian immigrants who lived in our neighborhood and to start a university on Charlton Street.

inherited great wealth from her father, an Irish immigrant who had made his fortune selling hats to New York's upper class.

Miss Leary lived in a mansion on Fifth Avenue at 84th Street and gave spectacular parties not only there but also at her "cottage" in Newport, Rhode Island.

At the same time, she was a pious Catholic who believed in the importance of charity. She was devoted, in particular, to the needs of the Italian immigrants who lived in Greenwich Village and the area south of Houston Street, including Charlton Street. She explained this devotion by saying Christopher Columbus was her childhood hero.

Leary supported an Italian immigrant mission on Sullivan Street that evolved into today's Our Lady of Pompei Roman Catholic church at Carmine and Bleecker. She also was active in educational programs for children. The *Times* said, "Miss Leary is considered

among the Italian children as a kind of fairy godmother."

But her grandest plan was to establish the Italian University on Charlton Street. She began in 1905 by purchasing the townhouses at 51 and 53 Charlton at the northeast corner of Varick. Leary was extremely well connected: Enrico Caruso gave a benefit concert and Pius X sent a papal blessing for the new university.

Recognizing it would take time for her university to become functional, she initially used 53 Charlton to provide daycare for children of Italian immigrant working mothers. She installed sandboxes and other playground equipment in the backyard and ordered that the yard be covered with a tent in summer to protect the children from the sun.

"To enable the mothers to be decently dressed when working," the *Times* said, "Miss Leary has the cupboards filled with gingham and calico dresses, which she gives to those mothers who cannot afford to buy them for themselves."

She opened a children's art school, the Christopher Columbus Art Institute, in 51 Charlton.

But starting a university proved more difficult than she had imagined, and its opening was repeatedly delayed. Meantime, she kept

In 1908, the Sisters of Reparation established their first U.S. chapter at 51 Charlton. The house was refitted with stained-glass windows and a chapel. The sisters prayed in shifts around the clock for God's pardon for the sins of the world.



providing daycare at 53 and invited the Sisters of Reparation to establish a chapter in 51. Number 51 was remodeled with a chapel on the first floor. The order's nuns withdrew from all

contact with the public, never leaving the building and praying around the clock in shifts for pardon for the sins of the world.

In 1914, any remaining dreams for the university were dashed when the city acquired 51 and 53 and tore them down to widen Varick Street and make way for the Seventh Avenue subway. The nuns moved to 28th Street.

In 1902, Pope Leo XIII made Leary a papal countess, the first in America, in recognition of her charitable work. She was thereafter referred to in the press as Countess Leary or Miss Leary. She died in 1919 and left nearly her entire estate to the Archdiocese of New York. Her remains are interred in a crypt beneath Old St. Patrick's Cathedral at Prince and Mott streets.

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GOOD NEIGHBORS COMMITTEE:
WOULD YOU LIKE TO CHAIR THIS
IMPORTANT GROUP?

Volunteers from the Block Association Good Neighbors Committee are available to provide emergency help to the elderly and others on Charlton Street. If you need help, please contact Deborah Snoonian, committee chair, at deborah.snoonian@gmail.com or 917-572-4353. All requests are held in the strictest confidence.

Sadly, Deb will be moving away from Charlton Street this summer. As a result, we need a new chair for this important committee. The chair serves as a coordinator, matching volunteers to those needing help. Heading the committee offers a tangible way to make a difference in people's lives.

If you would like to learn more, contact Dick Blodgett at 212-620-0928.

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GRAFFITI ON CHARLTON

Our block has been vandalized recently with graffiti. The best way to fight the problem is to remove the graffiti as quickly as possible.

Graffiti attracts more graffiti and even attracts other crimes by implying that the residents are lax in protecting themselves and their property.

The city has established an Anti Graffiti Initiative aimed at reducing the problem and identifying the perpetrators. If you see graffiti on our block, report it to the First Precinct Special Operations Lieutenant for graffiti at 212-334-0604 during the weekday hours of 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. The police department has promised to monitor graffiti throughout the five boroughs and strengthen enforcement in neighborhoods where there is an increase.