

Turtle Bay News

A Publication of the Turtle Bay Association

Spring 2011 Volume 54, Number 1

M50, Where are you?

Bruce Silberblatt, TBA Zoning and Land Use Chairman

Have you tried to take a bus from the Turtle Bay neighborhood across town recently? If you have you probably noticed that the bus situation is not improving. The lack of proper cross-town bus service has inconvenienced numerous neighborhood residents and this has not gone unnoticed. The bad news is that the lack of service will not be rectified soon. The good news is that, with the help of the efforts of Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney, the Turtle Bay Association has been invited to continue discussions with the MTA and NYC Transit regarding the M50 cross-town buses.

Last June the Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA), as part of a package of service changes to fill a nearly \$800 million budget shortfall, implemented the following cuts in the neighborhood:

- M104—42nd Street between Broadway and the United Nations —terminated.
- M27—49th/50th street between the East River and the Port Authority Terminal —terminated.
- M50—49th/50th street between the East and Hudson Rivers: —both late night and weekend and service terminated.

The M50 is of

particular concern. It is the only cross-town line from 14th street to the top of Manhattan to lack weekend service. Further, the remaining weekday

The Turtle Bay Association has been invited to continue discussions with the MTA and NYC Transit regarding the M50 Cross Town buses.

service has the worst frequency (a 20 minute wait between buses at mid-day). The gap between the nearest remaining routes, 42nd and 57th streets, is 15 blocks, which can be a difficult journey for anyone, including elderly and disabled residents to negotiate.

The absence of M50 weekend

cross-town bus service leaves the Turtle Bay community virtually isolated from Midtown Manhattan Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays. Access is denied to such major destinations as the Fifth Avenue shops, Rockefeller Center, Broadway theaters, prominent churches such as Saint Bartholomew, Saint Patricks, and Saint Thomas – and many others. It also severely restricts access by everybody, both citizens and visitors alike, to the Midtown Business District. That, in turn, will create long-term damage to the still-recovering economy of the entire city of New York.

For these reasons the Turtle Bay Association feels that these service cuts be forthwith rescinded with urgency – at the very least, those involving the M50. The Association will notify the residents of any progress made in this endeavor.





A MESSAGE FROM THE EDITORS

Welcome Back!

To the residents of Turtle Bay,

Welcome back to the Turtle Bay News! We apologize for the gap in coverage (the last newsletter was the Summer 2010 issue). The newsletter has found some new editors who are now on track and happy to bring you the latest news and information about the best neighborhood in Manhattan.

Within this issue of the newsletter you'll find out what's been going on in the neighborhood and what the board of the Turtle Bay Association (TBA) has been doing to continue its mission of preserving and enhancing our neighborhood's quality of life.

For our new members and as a reminder to our loyal returning members we thought we would start off by acquainting you with what the TBA is all about. The very active and well-respected TBA was formed in 1957 and currently has a membership of approximately 2,000 individuals, business owners, and households. The TBA board members are volunteers, and dedicate a substantial part of their time for the Association. Since the last issue of the newsletter, four new members have joined its board of directors: Steve Hennessey, JoAnn Winnick, Dee Howard and Pascale Longuet. The efforts of the board, and of the many volunteers of the neighborhood, have resulted in a safe, tree-lined, and friendly neighborhood. However, maintaining a great neighborhood is no easy task and the TBA can always use the help of its residents. If you have any concerns, suggestions, questions, or some free time to volunteer please feel free to contact the newsletter or the TBA office.

Furthermore, if you would like more information about our great neighborhood, please visit www.turtlebay-nyc.org and keep an eye out in this and future issues of the newsletter for the "Getting to Know Your Neighborhood" articles. In this issue we'll look at a brief history of the area.

Have a great spring and hope to see you in the neighborhood!

Your Turtle Bay News editors,
Pascale Longuet and Steve Hennessey

board at work

The following is a summary of the issues and activities addressed at recent Turtle Bay Association board meetings. The TBA:

- sent magazine subscriptions to the 30th street shelter to help improve quality of life
- continues to work to provide neighborhood youths activities within our parks
- is closely watching construction sites for safety and other concerns
- continues to work to beautify the neighborhood through the TBA Tree Program and support of the Turtle Bay Tree Fund
- voted on an initiative to support requiring private hospitals to have community advisory boards

TURTLE BAY ASSOCIATION

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New York, NY 10017

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E-mail: office@turtlebay-nyc.org

Website: turtlebay-nyc.org

Check our Bulletin Board:

East side of Second Avenue,
between 48th and 49th Streets,
on outside wall of the supermarket.

Board of Directors

President: William E. Curtis

Vice Presidents: Millie Margiotta,
Dolores Marsh, Bruce Silberblatt

Treasurer: Francine Irwin

Directors:

Ethel Bendove, Bunny Blei, Meryl Brodsky, Orin Buck, William E. Curtis, Denise Hamilton, Marie Louise Handal, Steve Hennessey, Dee Howard, Bill Huxley, Richard Irwin, Pascale Longuet, Millie Margiotta, Dolores Marsh, Pat McDougald, Gini Otway, Michael Resnick, Carol Rinzler, Jeannie Sakol, Bruce Silberblatt, Jo Ann Winnick

Emeritus:

Barbara Connolly, Helen Shapiro

Turtle Bay News

Editors:

Steve Hennessey, Pascale Longuet

Contributors:

Bill Huxley, Millie Margiotta, Gini Otway,
Bruce Silberblatt

Photographer:

Vivian Gordon

Community Calendar

17th Precinct Community Council

Last Tuesday every month

Open Meeting, 6 p.m.

Sutton Place Synagogue

225 East 51st Street

212-826-3228

(No meetings July, August,
December)

Community Board 6

Second Wednesday every month

Full Board Meeting, 7 p.m.

NYU Medical Center

550 First Avenue

212-319-3750

P.S. 59 TO HOLD MAY BENEFIT

Beekman Hill International School, PS 59, will hold an auction to benefit the school. Local businesses can reach more than 500 neighborhood families by donating a gift certificate for a service or product or by taking out an ad in the benefit auction journal. Everything is welcome. All donors will be listed on a special dedication page in the auction journal. **Wednesday May 18, 6:30-9:30pm.** At Crimson, 1915 Broadway (at 21st Street). For information or to donate, e-mail braccimichele@hotmail.com. Donation forms are also available at www.ps59pta.com

NEW BOOK RECOUNTS HISTORY OF FAMOUS TURTLE BAY RESIDENCE

A book, "The Luxembourg House on Beekman Place: Three Portraits in Time," tells the story of the house in which the songwriter Irving Berlin lived for more than four decades. The town house was originally built for the banker James Forrestal, who later became the first U.S. secretary of defense. It was completed in 1932 and is considered one of the last significant

private residences built in Manhattan. In 1946, Irving Berlin bought the house from Forrestal and lived there until his death in 1989. In 1990, the Luxembourg government purchased the residence for use as its New York diplomatic offices. The book is available for sale on Amazon.com or at the Consulate General of Luxembourg (cash only).

FOOD EMPORIUM OFFERS 5% DISCOUNT TO SENIOR CITIZENS.

All Food emporium supermarkets in NYC offer senior coupons in the amounts of \$5 or \$20. Each coupon to be purchased at the courtesy desk before shopping, carries a 5% discount. Clients pay with the purchased coupons, and receive no change.

CONGRATULATIONS

Our city council member Dan Garodnick and his wife Zoe are proud parents to Asher Bennett Garodnick born on January 23rd. We wish the family much happiness.

CLOSING OF "ZARELA".

The NYTimes reported on February 1 that Zarela, the Mexican restaurant that has been a fixture at 953 Second Avenue (50th Street) for 23 years, was to close after dinner on Feb. 13.

According to the NYTimes, its owner, Zarela Martinez said "she is hoping to find a sliver of a storefront where she can open a place to serve just tamales and posole, farther downtown", and to relocate Zarela downtown.

TURTLE BAY COMMUNITY SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE (CSA) PROGRAM

CSA is a volunteer-run organization that partners directly with a local NY State farm to get a weekly delivery of organic vegetables to the Vanderbilt YMCA. The 2011 season will be CSA's second year. For information, consult: turtlebaycsa.wordpress.com. For questions, contact Cara Wolinski at: turtlebaycsa@gmail.com

LILY'S AT ROGER SMITH HOTEL OFFERS A DISCOUNT TO LOCALS

This eclectic eatery is now offering a Roger Smith Family Card to regulars and locals. With the card, you can receive up to 15% off lunches, monthly special promotions, and the chance to win an office happy hour on the rooftop bar every month starting in the spring. For more information visit www.rslilys.com or call (212) 838-0844

New Businesses

These businesses that have recently joined the Turtle Bay Association. Please, support your neighborhood.

Top of the Tower

Restaurant with a view
3 Mitchell Place
(212) 980-4796

steve hennessey designs

Graphic design services
(347) 244-4863
www.stevehennesseydesigns.com

Murphy's Pub

977 Second Avenue
(212) 751-5400

Butterfield Catering

(212) 772-8782
catering@butterfieldmarket.com

Le Relais de Venise

L'Entrecote
590 Lexington Avenue
(212) 758-3989

La Cava

(wine Bar)
939 Second Avenue
(212) 223-1206

Katharine Hepburn's Garden: A Community Concern

On February 24, 2011 in the beautiful Katharine Hepburn Garden at Dag Hammarskjold Plaza, the police arrested three people for possession of drugs. This unfortunate event, following several of the same, has recently led to negative publicity.

TBA and the Friends of Dag Hammarskjold Plaza have been monitoring this area since it opened. Previous activities similar to the one of February 24th have been reported to the police in that time. Furthermore, personal meetings with each and

every commanding officer of the 17th Precinct have been held to insure that this area is checked regularly to prevent any more disturbances.

TBA and the Friends of Dag Hammarskjold Plaza wish to assure the public that with the continued cooperation from the 17th Precinct all efforts and measures are being taken to control the happenings and negative effects of these unpleasant incidents.

The Turtle Bay Association spent many

years getting Dag Hammarskjold Plaza on East 47th Street, between First and Second Avenues renovated. Due to funding issues, the Parks Department completed the plaza in three shifts, with the addition of the garden along the southern edge of the park comprising the final shift. Upon completion and realization of how beautiful this garden would be, the TBA suggested that it be named after our beloved neighbor Katharine Hepburn. Henry Stern, the parks commissioner at that time, agreed and the area was so named.

Report from the Turtle Bay Tree Fund

Look for Pink and White Tulips in our Tree Beds This Spring

Our curbside tree beds here in Turtle Bay will have a brand new look this spring. Replacing the orange tulips and yellow daffodils of past years will be an attractive blend of pink and white tulips. As the bulb catalog describes it, "This blend of sturdy compact tulips starts early and lasts a long time. It is a happy marriage of a rich pink which is hard to find among early tulips and a creamy yellow that turns pure white."

The Tree Fund planted several thousand bulbs last fall in 290 tree beds on cross-streets from 48th to 51st streets between Third Avenue and Beekman Place. During the hot summer months, workers from the Doe Fund supplement our seasonal rainfall with their tank truck, watering our begonias three times a week.

Distinct from the Turtle Bay Association, the Turtle Bay Tree Fund raises money from grants from our local elected officials, donations from



people who live on the Tree Fund blocks, two neighborhood associations and one foundation. Virtually all of the money raised is paid out for professional landscaping services.

If you would enjoy more trees and

flowers in Turtle Bay, please send your donations and suggestions to:

Turtle Bay Tree Fund
208 East 51st Street #238
New York, NY 10022
or visit www.turtlebaytreefund.org

Getting to Know Your Neighborhood

A Brief History

THE **TURTLE BAY** neighborhood, which extends from approximately 43rd to 53rd Street from Lexington Avenue to the East River, has a history of dramatic change dating back to colonial days. Then, its rolling hills and quiet meadowland surrounded a small cove, called Turtle Bay, that ran from today's 45th Street to about 48th Street. DeVoor's Mill Stream, sometimes called Turtle Creek, flowed from the pond at the southeast corner of today's Central Park into the bay at 47th Street. Two large farms dominated the area – Turtle Bay Farm, its borders running from about 41st Street to 49th Street, and Beekman Farm to the north. The farms' westerly border was the Eastern Post Road, the Manhattan stretch of the famous Boston Post Road, with an irregular path that followed approximately the route of today's Third Avenue.

In the 1760s, one of the most magnificent mansions in Manhattan was built by James Beekman on his Beekman Farm property, at what is now the intersection of First Avenue and 51st Street. The house gained notoriety during the Revolutionary War, when Lord William Howe took it over as a British command post and Nathan Hale, the American patriot spy, was tried and sentenced to death in a greenhouse on its grounds.

In the 1840s, Horace Greeley, founder of the "New York Daily Tribune," bought land along the riverfront between 48th and 49th Streets, where he and his family lived for many years. Edgar Allen Poe was his neighbor for a time, living in a house on the Bay near 47th Street. Poe was known to row out to the tip of Blackwell's Island (now Roosevelt Island), where he swam among the rocks.

By the mid-1800s, construction of Manhattan's street grid reached Turtle Bay. The big farms were broken up into building lots, and new brownstone houses turned the area into a pleasant residential neighborhood. Then, during the Civil War, construction slowed. In 1863, an army enrollment office was established in a building at Third Avenue and 46th Street, where, on July 13, an angry mob burned the building to the ground, beginning three days of draft riots that swept the city.

Brownstone construction picked up after the war, but soon the little bay was covered over and the landfill was quickly converted into a dirty industrial site, packed with stockyards, slaughterhouses and factories. A coal yard operated at the southern end of the Beekman property, and a dumping ground ran from 46th to 47th Street along the riverbank. Soon, elevated rail lines went up over Second and Third Avenues, turning the two central routes into dark, dirty roadways. Tawdry tenements and rooming houses replaced the area's one-family brownstones, and by

the end of the 19th century the neighborhood had entered a long period of decline.

Then, in the early 1920s, the area began to experience a renaissance. First, a wealthy woman, Charlotte Hunnewell Sorchan (later Mrs. Walton Martin), bought a group of 20 brownstones on 48th and 49th Street between Second and Third Avenues that she converted into an enclave she called Turtle Bay Gardens. Her architects refaced the brownstone street-fronts with pale stucco, and rearranged the interiors so that service rooms faced the street and living areas faced inward, overlooking a central Italian-style garden created from the backyards of the original brownstones. When completed, the houses were highly acclaimed by the architectural community and began to attract some of the city's most prominent residents.

About the same time, another area of Turtle Bay – Beekman Place, an enclave anchored by a two-block street hugging the East River between 49th and 51st Street – saw a rebirth when the renowned landscape architect Ellen Biddle Shipman bought the brownstone at 19 Beekman Place and converted it into a Georgian-style house.

Soon, the neighborhood of Turtle Bay would become home to some of the most famous theatrical, musical and literary names of the time. In 1932, actress Katharine Hepburn moved to Turtle Bay Gardens, to a house she owned until her death in 2003. Among others who called the Gardens home over the years were essayist E.B. White, journalist Dorothy Thompson, actress Mary Martin, writer-director Garson Kanin and his wife actress Ruth Gordon, and composer Stephen Sondheim. Among those living on Beekman Place over the years were the theater's Katharine Cornell, Noel Coward, Billy Rose, and Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontane; novelist Mary McCarthy; John D. Rockefeller III and his sister, Abby "Babs" Rockefeller; diplomat David Bruce; and songwriter Irving Berlin.

The factories and slaughterhouses remained on the banks of the East River well into the 1940s. But that changed suddenly in December 1946, when John D. Rockefeller Jr. purchased six blocks of Turtle Bay river frontage and donated it to the newly formed United Nations for its headquarters complex. Completed a few years later, the U.N. buildings became among the most architecturally influential in the world. Soon, the Third Avenue Elevated Rail Line – Manhattan's last remaining El – was demolished, paving the way for a dramatic building boom and a revitalized neighborhood that continues into the 21st century.

Today, ten Turtle Bay sites are designated landmarks by the New York Landmarks Preservation Commission. Two of them – Turtle Bay Gardens and Amster Yard – were among the first so named when the city's preservation law was initially enacted, back in 1966. For more history of the area, visit TBA's web site at: www.turtlebay-nyc.org/history.html.





Residents of the neighborhood have enjoyed many Turtle Bay events since the publication of the last newsletter including Night Out, the Annual Meeting, and the Holiday Party.(all pictured left) More recently, on February 7th, more than 100 Residents came out to celebrate the 27th Annual Love Thy Neighborhood Valentine Party at Destino Restaurant. (pictured above)

arts & activities

BYE BYE KITTY!!! Between Heaven and Hell in Contemporary Japanese Art

Japan Society, 333 East 47th Street. March 18–June 12.

An Exhibition introducing American audiences to a new wave of Japanese artists who challenge their country's long love affair with the *kawaii* (cute) aesthetic.

Japan Society Gallery exhibition reframes the prevailing perspective on contemporary Japanese art. Cuteness gives way to darker, more disorienting world views. A shimmering taxidermy deer and a gasp-inducing canvas depicting a tumulus of minuscule salary men are among the compelling works set to greet visitors. www.japansociety.org

CONCERTS AT HOLY FAMILY CHURCH

The United Nations Parish, 315 East 47th Street.

Thursday May 12 at 7:30 pm in Robbins Hall: Timothy McDevitt, baritone. Tickets: \$15 www.churchhollyfamily.org

LUCKY GUY, A new Off-Broadway Production

Little Shubert Theatre, 422 West 42nd Street. April 28–July 24.

A new musical comedy written and directed by William Beckham. Welcome to Nashville – a town full of colorful

characters all chasing after the same dream: a smash-hit record. Lucky Guy features an array of musical styles with salutes to Country, Broadway, Vaudeville, Blue grass, Pop, and Hawaiian, and weaves a tale of dreamers all willing to do whatever it takes to come out on top. Tickets through TeleCharge.com/212-239-6200. www.luckyguythemusical.com

TURTLE BAY MUSIC SCHOOL

For specific times and locations of these free events please visit www.tbms.org or contact info@tbms.org

March 25 Black Tie Voice Recital

April 1 Artist Series: Laura Kay, soprano (Kay performs seldom-heard tunes based on American literature.)

April 7 Adult Performance Workshop (Informal performance opportunities for TBMS students and social gatherings open to public.)

April 16 Suzuki Solo Recitals (TBMS Suzuki students take to the stage.)

April 26 Masterclass Series: Adult Piano Masterclass (Select TBMS Students will take the stage with Molly Morkoski.)

April 29 Suzuki Group Concert (TBMS Suzuki students take to the stage to perform in groups.)

April 30 Masterclass Series: Young People's Piano Masterclass (Select TBMS Students will take the stage with Molly Morkoski.)

May 3 Isabel Fairbanks, cello (Fairbanks

returns to the TBMS stage and performs an intimate evening of unique selections.)

May 5 Adult Performance Workshop (Informal performance opportunities for TBMS students and social gatherings open to public.)

May 13 Artist Series: Kathleen Weber, soprano (Dr. Kathy Weber performs a selection of vocal arrangements.)

May 19-22 Seventh Annual Perform-A-Thon (TBMS students rally for four days of performance for this, our annual FUNdraiser!)

May 25 Community Chorus Year-End Concert (The Turtle Bay Music School Community Chorus performs an evening of choral works.)

May 26 Artist Series: Compositions by Jonathan Sirlin (Composer premieres and revisits new compositions.)

June 2 Adult Performance Workshop

June 3 Artist Series: Siobhan Kolker, soprano (Kolker performs an evening of cabaret tunes.)

June 4 Artist Series: TBMS Guitar Faculty

June 5 Bruce Potterton Rolf Kolz Memorial Scholarship Fund Concert (A concert to commemorate Rolf Kolz's scholarship. Rolf Kolz was a faculty member at Turtle Bay and established this annual event to provide financial aid to deserving piano students.)

June 7 Artist Series: Hiroko Sasaki, piano, & Richard Locker, cello (Performance by special guests.)



TBA MEMBERSHIP COUPON

Yes, I want to join the Turtle Bay Association to help support our community's quality of life.

Annual Membership Dues

- Senior \$10 Individual \$25 Family \$30
 Business \$40 Benefactor \$100 Pacesetter \$250

Name _____

Address _____ Apt _____

City/State/Zip _____

Home Phone _____ Work Phone _____

E-mail _____

I would like to become more involved in TBA activities.

Please make your check payable to Turtle Bay Association.

Mail to: Turtle Bay Association, 224 E. 47th St., New York, NY 10017

BOOK ORDER FORM

Manhattan's Turtle Bay

Story of a Midtown Neighborhood

A Contemporary History of Turtle Bay
 Arcadia Publishing • 160 pages; 50 photos

\$15.00

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone _____

Enclosed is my check for \$_____ for _____ book/s, plus \$3 per book for postage/handling

Make check payable to
Turtle Bay Association

Mail to
**Turtle Bay Association, 224 East 47th Street,
 New York, NY 10017**

Sales Proceeds Benefit the Turtle Bay Association