LIVING ON PARK AVENUE

Presented by Deanna Kory
Living on Park Avenue
Past and Present

Presented by Deanna Kory

Much of Manhattan’s rich history, cultural heritage, celebrated architecture and renowned shopping, dining and world-class businesses are situated along Park Avenue, one of New York City’s most famed thoroughfares. Running parallel to Madison Avenue through some of the city’s most charming and vibrant East Side neighborhoods including Murray Hill, the Upper East Side, and Carnegie Hill, the Avenue showcases the unique and beautiful landscaped Park Avenue Mall extending its entire length. Originally known as Fourth Avenue until the turn-of-the-20th century, Park Avenue begins at 17th Street and continues north to 132nd Street and the Harlem River. Below 32nd Street it is known as Park Avenue South. The Avenue is bordered on both sides by some of the City’s most distinguished architectural treasures, including notable early 20th century residential cooperatives and condos, cultural institutions, and historic landmarks, as well as a few remaining single-family homes and free-standing mansions.
The predominately residential landscape above 60th Street is home to some of the most elegant real estate in Manhattan in a very distinct New York setting. Many illustrious personalities have called it home over the last century. Watching the beauty of the seasons transform along the Mall is a beautiful backdrop to daily life. For decades, Park Avenue has been regarded as an Avenue which embodies the highest cultural tastes and refined sensibilities of its residents. It is forever ingrained within the consciousness of New Yorkers and is legendary world-wide. Those who live here appreciate its charms and value it as a truly wonderful community to call home.
The History of Park Avenue

With its wide, landscaped mall, Park Avenue above 42nd Street is one of New York City’s most iconic thoroughfares. Its many gracious apartment buildings only add to Park’s luxurious appeal. Designed in the first half of the twentieth century by such architectural luminaries as Rosario Candela, J.E.R. Carpenter, Schwartz & Gross, Delano & Aldrich, Pollard & Steinam and George F. Pelham, to name just a few, these buildings create an avenue of elegance with their lavish entrance ways, grand lobbies, and palatial apartments. Many buildings contain only one residence per floor. Yet if we rewind back 111 years, this elegant avenue would be utterly unrecognizable to modern eyes. In 1902, the trains and tracks of the New York Central Railroad were visible through a partially-enclosed tunnel that snaked its way uptown, smoke and cinders spewing through its crevices. Row-houses and tenements rarely rising above five or six stories lined Park, taking advantage of what was then cheap land. In general, however, they faced adjacent side streets in order to avoid the smoke. Public institutions also partook of the discounted real estate, and during the late nineteenth century, Park Avenue was home to three hospitals, the Union Theological Seminary, the Seventh Regiment Armory, and the Normal College for Women, a training facility for teachers and Hunter College’s predecessor.
What happened to transform this soot-covered street into one of New York City’s most enviable addresses? The 1811 Commissioner’s Plan that imposed Manhattan’s famous grid named the street Fourth Avenue. This name stuck long past the rather hopeful 1888 decision to rename the section of the dirty and noisy thoroughfare from 42nd to 96th Streets Park Avenue in order to promote high-end residential development. Yet the park in Park Avenue had to become a reality in order for the thoroughfare’s fortune to change. In 1902, an accident in the Park Avenue railroad tunnel prompted the New York State Legislature to stipulate that all passenger trains in the City be electrified, which eventually led to the complete submersion of the tracks and the simultaneous construction of the incredibly beautiful and entirely modern Grand Central Station.

Wide landscaped malls soon took the place of the steam- and soot-releasing crevices, and Park Avenue reached the potential of its name. In 1907, 863 Park Avenue, an elegant twelve-story apartment house designed by the preeminent architectural firm of Pollard & Steinam, opened its doors amidst the tenements, row-houses, and public institutions that lined the street. The change spurred on by the construction of 863 Park Avenue was swift. By the end of 1909, a mere two years later, Park Avenue boasted five apartment houses more than eleven stories tall – 863 Park, 535 Park, 540 Park, 829 Park, and 925 Park (all still stand with the exception of 540 Park).
The tone had been set, and as a story in the New York Times published that same year put it, together, these five buildings had “hasten[ed] the transformation” of Park Avenue above 59th Street “into a region of apartment houses of the highest class.” The apartment houses along Park Avenue continued to rise apace, clearing out the old sooty vestiges of Fourth Avenue and replacing them with the tall apartment houses full of palatial residences that were better suited to its newer name. For example, duplex apartments at 925 Park Avenue, designed by architectural firm Delano & Aldrich and constructed in 1909, replaced, according to the Times, “five old dwellings” and were remarkably luxurious; each apartment boasted eleven rooms and four baths. Fashionable churches such as the Third Church of Christ Scientist at 583 Park and Central Presbyterian Church at 593 Park soon followed, as did exclusive clubs, the Colony Club at 560 Park being a prime example. Palatial private residences also began to dot the Avenue; 820 Park Avenue, constructed in 1920 for the princely sum of $500,000, was one of the most notable.
Park Avenue opened its doors to its first residents in October, 1930, but buyers for the apartments in the 100% cooperative building had begun to purchase homes as early as October, 1929. The 19-story building would contain only thirty units of nine to twenty-three rooms. It was home early on to its developer, James T. Lee, who was also vice president of the “Chase National Bank” and the maternal grandfather of Jacqueline Bouvier, then a young girl with no inkling that she would become one of the nation’s most beloved first ladies. The Bouviers also lived in the building in an apartment said to be the last one purchased before 740 Park Avenue shifted to a partial rental structure due to the financial hardships of the Great Depression. The legendary building was also eventually home to such New York City luminaries as John D. Rockefeller, Jr. whose family moved in during 1936. The famed architects of 740 Park Avenue were Rosario Candela and Arthur Loomis Harmon. Although Harmon was from the incredibly prestige firm of Shreve, Lamb, and Harmon, which was responsible for the design of the Empire State Building, Candela is most often credited as the true creative genius behind the limestone building characterized by hints of Classicism and the Art Deco.
By 1913, the development of Park Avenue had even caused change in residential leasing patterns. Such large numbers of Manhattan’s elite were flocking to the thoroughfare that demand was outstripping supply, and, as a story published in the Times on May 18, 1913 explained, this meant that the rental season for the fall had already begun, especially in the new apartment houses “nearing completion on and adjacent to Park Avenue.” Compare this, the story mused, to only “a few years ago” when “brokers did not look for any real evidences of activity in apartment house business before July 1, and the busy season dated from about Aug. 1.”

The story concluded with this warning: “prospective tenants who delayed until the early Fall” would be left out in the cold, “amazed” to find out “that every suite in a house not ready until Oct. 1 [had been] entirely rented.”

With demand like this, how could building cease, or even slow? Luxury apartment buildings crept higher and higher along Park Avenue, and in 1922, work began on 1075 Park, one of the first apartments buildings to be completed on the avenue above 86th Street. The exclusive neighborhood of Carnegie Hill was blossoming as an elite enclave, further extending the reach and prominence of elegant Park Avenue.

In 1928, 21 years after the boom in Park Avenue luxury real estate began, the last frame houses to stand on the elite thoroughfare were torn down to make way for 1001 Park Avenue, a luxurious fourteen-story building (a penthouse provided additional height), containing apartments of six, nine, or thirteen rooms. The thoroughfare’s past had thus been completely erased, and new structures would continue to rise along the Avenue, many replacing the first wave of apartment houses that had signaled its changing future as well as the free-standing private mansions that had been built in the early 1910s and 1920s. A well-known example is of the aforementioned 820 Park Avenue which was originally built as a single-family home in 1920 and then demolished in 1927 to make way for another luxury apartment building. More than 100 years later, it is hard to believe that glittering Park Avenue was once gritty Fourth, but this remarkable contrast and astoundingly quick transformation make the thoroughfare even more compelling. Stories of rapid rises, stunning transformations, and astounding success are, after all, the quintessence of New York.
Elegance in Design

The elegance and charm of Park Avenue has been preserved since the early part of the 20th century, retaining its structural beauty and design. Park Avenue is home to many luxurious apartment houses and cultural institutions, and the many varied designs range from Art Deco, Venetian Renaissance, Neo-Georgian, Neo-Gothic and on to the Revivalist styles. Many architectural luminaries have contributed to the Park Avenue aesthetic by designing these magnificent residential structures including Emery Roth, Schwartz & Gross, Rosario Candela and J.E.R. Carpenter.

Apartment buildings of the 1900s and 1910s were very three-dimensional, with massive cornices supported by huge brackets and modillions, Juliet balconies and festoons of fruit and flowers. However, in the 1920s, the Beaux-Arts influence gave way to the more muted architectural style of Neo-Georgian and Neo-Renaissance—with flat façades covered with a sprinkling of triangular pediments and other equally two-dimensional simplified detail.
Park Avenue from 86th to 98th Streets is included in the Carnegie Hill Historic District and just below 62nd Street to the south side of 79th Street is amidst the Upper East Side Historic District, both landmark designations. Thus reassuring the community the architecture, history and beauty would all be well-preserved for generations to come.
A few of the renowned architects who have shaped the design and beauty of the residential community on Park Avenue:

**George & Edward Blum**
555 Park, 791 Park, 830 Park, 840 Park, 875 Park, 940 Park, 1075 Park

George and Edward Blum’s work demonstrates the mastery of the Beaux-Arts – the New York City townhouses they designed range from the Neo-Georgian to the Italianate. Their Upper East Side apartment houses further demonstrate their architectural scope – 555 Park Avenue, constructed between 1912 and 1913, is designed in the Neo-Renaissance style, 791 Park, designed in 1924, is a quintessential example of the Art Deco, while 940 Park exhibits Gothic and Moorish details.

**W.L. Rouse and L. A. Goldstone**
755 Park, 760 Park, 815 Park, 850 Park, 876 Park

Although the partnership centered on the rapidly developing Upper West Side before World War I, their careful attention to composition, thoughtful selection of materials, and adaptation of historical ornamental details soon made them indispensable to Upper East Side developers eager to replace the mansions and townhouses that characterized the district with luxurious apartment buildings.

**Rosario Candela**
720 Park, 740 Park, 765 Park, 770 Park, 775 Park, 778 Park, 1021 Park (w. Kenneth M. Murchison), 1105 Park, 1172 Park, 1192 Park, 1220 Park

Rosario Candela was one of the most esteemed designers of residential architecture during the 1920s and 1930s in Manhattan. Over time, Candela’s buildings have become some of New York’s most coveted addresses.

**Emery Roth**
417 Park (for Bing & Bing), 480 Park, 570 Park, 715 Park, 784 Park, 1000 Park, 1112 Park, 1145 Park, 1175 Park

1000 Park Avenue is a terra-cotta study of the Neo-Gothic style featuring statues of a medieval warrior and builder flanking the main entrance, while 570 Park Avenue is a more restrained and graceful façade designed in a Neo-Renaissance style with English influences. Roth’s designs spanned several decades and his sons continued and expanded the family enterprise.

**George F. Pelham**
575 Park, 944 Park, 1120 Park, 1160 Park, 1225 Park

Architecture ran in the Pelham blood. The elder Pelham designed for the City’s Department of Public Parks, and employed his son as a draftsman in his firm. His son, George Fred Pelham, Jr. (who built 785 Park), joined his father’s firm in 1910, and continued the family tradition.

**J.E.R. Carpenter**

J.E.R. Carpenter would become one of the most sought-after residential architects in New York City, particularly for his designs for the luxury apartment houses that were beginning to dot the streets of the Upper East Side. 812 Park Avenue earned Carpenter a gold medal in large-scale residential design from the New York Chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) in 1927.
Schwartz & Gross
470 Park, 525 Park, 885 Park, 888 Park, 910 Park, 911 Park, 930 Park, 941 Park, 970 Park, 983 Park, 1045 Park, 1070 Park, 1095 Park, 1111 Park, 1125 Park, 1165 Park, 1185 Park

Simon I. Schwartz and Arthur Gross’ practice spanned three-and-a-half decades, covering the flamboyant styles of the pre-World War I years, the more sedate Neo-Georgian and Neo-Gothic styles of the 1920s and the Art Deco architecture of the 1930s.

Sugarman, Hess & Berger
935 Park

Born in New York, Sugarman studied at Columbia University and the National Academy of Design. He landed an incredible job immediately, first beginning his career under one of the most influential and sought-after apartment architects in New York, J.E.R. Carpenter.

Gronenberg & Leuchtag
1230 Park, 1235 Park

While the firm was responsible for another apartment building in Carnegie Hill, 9 East 96th Street, they are perhaps best known for their design for the Park Central Hotel at 860 Seventh Avenue. Completed in the same year as 1230 Park Avenue, and designed in the same neo-Renaissance style, the graceful and elegant hotel is their most famed and admired building.

Robert T. Lyons
565 Park, 955 Park, 993 Park, 1155 Park (for Bing & Bing)

Like most architects of his day, Lyons was trained in a variety of styles, manipulating and interpreting them to suit his client’s needs and desires. While he favored the Neo-Renaissance details evident in 955 and 993 Park Avenue, he also employed more expressive Beaux-Arts styles in his work. Like many of the structures owned and managed by Bing & Bing, a residence within its walls signified luxury and social prominence.

Sugarman, Hess & Berger
935 Park

Born in New York, Sugarman studied at Columbia University and the National Academy of Design. He landed an incredible job immediately, first beginning his career under one of the most influential and sought-after apartment architects in New York, J.E.R. Carpenter.

Delano & Aldrich
925 Park, 1040 Park

In addition to designing luxury apartment buildings throughout the Upper East Side, the firm was also responsible for the palatial suburban estates of the likes of John D. Rockefeller (Pocantico Hills, NY) and Otto Kahn (Cold Spring Harbor, Long Island).

Pickering & Walker
829 Park, 929 Park (remodeled by Arthur Weiser), 969 Park (remodeled by Emery Roth)

In addition to those on Park Avenue, the firm designed several buildings on the Upper East Side, including two homes, one at 127 East 64th Street (1908) and another at 113 East 65th Street (1907).
Cultural Distinction

Much historical and cultural iconography lines Park Avenue’s route, including world-renowned museums, performance spaces, religious houses, educational institutions, consulates and designated landmarks. These celebrated institutions add to the architectural and cultural vitality of the area.
Park Avenue Armory

One of the area’s famed historical treasures, the landmark Seventh Regiment Armory between 66th and 67th Streets, now houses the non-profit Park Avenue Armory. The institution is a renowned dynamic alternative arts space dedicated to the development and presentation of work in the visual and performing arts best realized in a non-traditional setting. A marvel of engineering in its time, it was designed by Regiment veteran and architect Charles W. Clinton, later a partner of Clinton & Russell, architects of the Apthorp Apartments and the famous, now demolished, Astor Hotel.
The Asia Society

The Asia Society, whose headquarters are located at 70th Street, was founded in 1956 by John D. Rockefeller III. Initially established to promote greater knowledge of Asia in the United States, today the Society is a global institution – with offices throughout the US and Asia – that fulfills its educational mandate through a wide range of cross-disciplinary programming. The nine-story building was designed by Edward Larrabee Barnes in 1980. The Asia Society Museum is host to both traditional and contemporary exhibitions, film screenings, literature, performing, and visual arts.
The Waldorf-Astoria

This Art Deco landmark, designed by architects Schultze and Weaver and dating from 1931, was the first hotel to offer room service. The Waldorf Astoria is historically significant for transforming the contemporary hotel, then a facility for transients, into a social center of the city as well as a prestigious destination for visitors and a part of popular culture.
Grand Central Terminal

At midnight on the evening of February 1, 1913 a New York landmark officially opened its doors. A minute later, a train going from New York to Boston departed, marking the first journey to begin from the great Grand Central Terminal. The February 2, 1913 edition of the *New York Times* was filled with articles detailing the new building’s plan, architectural elements, and many amenities – all of New York City was exuberant with civic pride for the new terminal, which was a feat of modern engineering and design. It was the soaring architectural spaces and incredible amenities that brought nearly 150,000 people to marvel at the new building from midnight to 7 o’clock pm on the first day that it was open.
This “vast” but simultaneously “curious and good-natured throng” questioned railroad officials present at the opening, asking “the name of the architect of the building (the firms of Reed & Stem and Whitney & Warren), the quality of marble used in its construction (Italian Botticino marble), the system of electricity, and the meaning of the painted figures on the ceiling (painted by Paul Cesar Helleu, the mural depicts a deep blue night sky adorned with gold leaf constellations of the winter Zodiac and Pegasus, Triangulum, Musca, and Orion).
The Union Club

The Union Club of the City of New York is a private social club founded in 1836. It is located at 69th Street and Park Avenue in a landmark building designed by Delano & Aldrich that opened on August 28, 1933. The Union Club is the oldest private club in New York City and the third oldest in the United States.
Lever House

The construction of Lever House by Gordon Bundschaft of Skidmore, Owings and Merrill in the International Style marked a defining moment for Park Avenue in the Midtown Manhattan district, changing from a boulevard of masonry apartment buildings to one of glass towers as other corporations adopted the style for new headquarters. In 1961 the building inspired the design of the Terminal Sud at Paris-Orly Airport and in 1965 the high-rise Europa-Center in Berlin. Lever House was designated a New York City landmark in 1982 and was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1983.
The Helmsley Building

The Helmsley Building was built in 1929 as the New York Central Building, and was designed by Warren & Wetmore, the architects of Grand Central Terminal, in the Beaux-Arts style. The building is a slab-sided skyscraper between 45th and 46th Streets, with a distinctive design that includes a means of transporting Park Avenue from street level to the divided elevated roadway that passes through the building around Grand Central Terminal to 42nd Street and back to street level. The top of the building is pyramidal, and capped by an ornate cupola.
Individual Historic Landmarks

Church of St. Ignatius Loyola, 980 Park Avenue

Henry P. and Kate T. Davison House, now the Consulate General of Italy, 690 Park Avenue

Oliver D. and Mary Pyne Filley House, now the Spanish Institute, 684 Park Avenue

Percy and Maud H. Pyne House, now the Center for Inter-American Relations, 680 Park Avenue

Reginald and Anna DeKoven House, 1025 Park Avenue

William and Frances Crocker Sloane House, now the Italian Cultural Institute, 686 Park Avenue
Community Vitality

Few neighborhoods evoke the ideal of classic New York quite like the Upper East Side, and even more specifically Park Avenue. The twentieth century saw many extraordinary and distinguished figures reside in these fine apartment houses. Primarily residential uptown, many residents exhibit a strong sensitivity to its past as groups grew dedicated to preserving and caring for the area. The Fund for Park Avenue is a community-supported conservancy that cares for, plants and maintains the Park Avenue malls, presents public art programs, including large scale installations, on the mall.
Exhibitions are presented by The Sculpture Committee of The Fund and the Public Art Program of the City of New York’s Department of Parks and Recreation in collaboration with arts organizations and artists. It also manages the annual Park Avenue tree lighting, a tradition that began in 1945 as a memorial to the men and women who lost their lives in World War II. The tree lighting ceremony takes place annually on the first Sunday in December starting in front of Brick Church at 91st Street with trees spanning fifty blocks to Grand Central.
Deanna Kory

Deanna Kory considers herself fortunate to have sold many beautiful homes in the elegant cooperatives and condominiums that line Park Avenue. Spanning nearly thirty years as a top real estate broker in Manhattan, she holds a vast knowledge of the residential real estate market, its history and current trends. With her avid interest in the architectural history of Manhattan’s numerous prewar buildings as well as its contemporary counterparts, she is thrilled to share “Living on Park Avenue” with the residents who reside in these special structures. Many of the most notable architects of the early 20th century were responsible for the aesthetic of the Avenue and it remains one of the most well-known boulevards in the city and indeed, the world. She has always admired the historical significance of the area as well as the community support Park Avenue enjoys to maintain the beauty of its mall and plantings.

Having assisted her clients with buying and selling homes on Park Avenue for many years, she understands its allure with its stately elegance which is unlike anyplace else in the world.