

Landmarks Preservation Commission  
April 16, 1991; Designation List 234  
LP-1674

105 RIVERSIDE DRIVE HOUSE, 105 Riverside Drive, Borough of Manhattan. Built 1898-99, architect Clarence F. True. Altered 1910-11 by Bosworth & Holden.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1245, Lot 45.

On July 12, 1988, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the 105 Riverside Drive House, and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 12). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Seven speakers testified in favor of designation. There were no speakers in opposition to designation. The Commission has received several written submissions supporting this designation.

#### DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

##### Summary

The 105 Riverside Drive House, originally designed by well-known architect and developer Clarence F. True, was built on speculation in 1898-99 as one house of a picturesque group of six houses on the southeast corner of Riverside Drive and West 83rd Street. Today the 105 Riverside Drive House is architecturally significant and as one of the five extant houses in this group represents the first period of development on Riverside Drive. True designed several hundred houses, primarily in groups, on the Upper West Side in the years between 1890 and 1901, and was largely responsible for promoting the development and establishing the character of lower Riverside Drive. The houses in the group at Riverside and West 83rd Street were designed in True's signature "Elizabethan Revival" style based on French and English Renaissance prototypes and built by True's development firm, the Riverside Building Company; they are the northernmost of True's designs built along the Drive. This L-shaped house was originally designed with a projecting three-sided bay and a low stoop, but these features (along with those of the adjacent houses) became the focus of an interesting legal controversy several years after construction. As the result of a lawsuit brought by an adjacent property owner, the court ruled in 1903 that no one had the authority to place permanent encroachments onto public thoroughfares, and the owners of the houses in the True group facing onto Riverside Drive were thus ordered to remove the projections. In 1911 the main facades were removed and rebuilt to follow the diagonal of the Riverside Drive property lines. No. 105 (owned by Goddard and Josephine DuBois, collectors of art and Egyptiana) received a partial new design by the firm of Bosworth & Holden. The True design is characterized by such surviving picturesque elements as contrasting light orange Roman ironspot brick and limestone facing, the steeply pitched tile roof with prominent front and side dormers, and the elaborate stepped end-wall gable and oriel on the southern elevation facing a side courtyard. The Bosworth & Holden design for the Riverside Drive facade is executed in matching materials and features a large arched opening on the second story with a delicate wrought-

iron balcony and horizontal window groups on the third and fourth stories surmounted by a bracketed cornice. As seen today the 105 Riverside Drive House is a fine and compatibly integrated architectural design that reflects the work of two architectural firms.

### The Development of Riverside Drive<sup>1</sup>

The Upper West Side, known as Bloomingdale prior to its urbanization, remained largely undeveloped until the 1880s. In the early eighteenth century, Bloomingdale Road (later renamed the Boulevard and finally Broadway in 1898) was opened through rural Bloomingdale and provided the northern route out of the city which was then concentrated at the southern tip of Manhattan. The Upper West Side was included in the Randel Survey of 1811 (known as the Commissioners' Map) which established a uniform grid of avenues and cross streets in Manhattan as far north as 155th Street, although years elapsed before streets on the Upper West Side were actually laid out, some as late as the 1870s and 1880s, and the land was subdivided into building lots. Improved public transportation to the area contributed to the growth and sustained development of the Upper West Side, particularly the completion in 1879 of the Elevated Railway on Ninth Avenue (renamed Columbus Avenue in 1890).

The biggest boost to the development of the West End (the area west of Broadway), however, was the creation of Riverside Drive and Park (a designated New York City Scenic Landmark). The presence of the Park and Drive was an important factor in making this area desirable for high-quality residential development. In 1865 the first proposal for converting the land on the Upper West Side along the eastern shore of the Hudson River into an ornamental park had been presented by Park Commissioner William R. Martin. The purchase of the park site and initial plans were approved in 1866. The drive, as proposed at this time, was to be a straight 100-foot wide road; however, this plan was impractical due to the existing topography. Hired by the Commissioners in 1873, Frederick Law Olmsted (1822-1903), already distinguished by his collaboration with Calvert Vaux (1824-1895) in the successful design for Central Park, proposed an alternate scheme. Olmsted's design for Riverside Park and Drive took into consideration the pre-existing topography, landscape possibilities, and views, resulting in a park and drive that would be amenable for horses and pleasure driving, would provide shaded walks for pedestrians, and would also allow easy access to and scenic vistas from the real estate bordering it on the east. Olmsted's plan was adopted by the Commissioners but the park was not executed under his supervision, due to his departure from New York City; it was actually developed between 1875 and 1900 by other designers including Vaux, Samuel Parsons, and Julius Munckwitz, who did not adhere to Olmsted's original scheme in its entirety.<sup>2</sup> By the fall of 1879, work was completed between 72nd and 85th Streets, and Riverside Avenue (as it was called until 1908) was opened to the public in 1880.<sup>3</sup>

The Drive, from West 72nd Street to approximately 129th Street, where it is effectively terminated by the viaduct and the Manhattanville fault,<sup>4</sup> has a particularly strong character derived from its curves that break with the regular street grid and its location overlooking the park and the Hudson

River. Riverside Park and Drive fulfilled the Park Commissioners' plans for promoting the development of the area west of Broadway. The numerous and exceptional advantages of the location, namely, its situation on a plateau, its "advantages of pure air and beautiful surroundings, glimpses of New Jersey hills . . . [and] the nearness of parks,"<sup>5</sup> assisted in making the area along Riverside Drive prime real estate, deserving of the highest character of residential development.

Development of the West End began slowly due to speculation, the hesitation of developers, and to the relative inconvenience of transportation compared to the area east of Broadway. By 1885, however, the whole Upper West Side had emerged as the area in the city experiencing the most intense real estate speculation. The expectation that the blocks along Riverside Drive and West End Avenue would be lined with mansions kept the value of these lots, as well as adjacent land, consistently higher and developers were willing to wait to realize profits from the potentially valuable sites.

The initial development along Riverside Drive mostly took the form of single-family town houses and rowhouses, although some freestanding mansions were built there. Luxury apartment buildings, as they gained in popularity toward the turn of the century, also appeared. Most of the single-family residences on the Upper West Side were speculatively-built rowhouses; along West End Avenue and Riverside Drive the houses tended to be larger and more elegant than those on the side streets. Architect-developer Clarence True, who characterized the Drive and its vicinity as "the most ideal home-site in the western hemisphere -- the Acropolis of the world's second city,"<sup>6</sup> was largely responsible for the promotion of lower Riverside Drive as an attractive residential thoroughfare and his work there, like the group at 83rd Street, did much to establish the character of the area in the 1890s.

#### Clarence F. True and the Elizabethan Revival Style<sup>7</sup>

Clarence Fagan True (1860-1928) was a prolific and well-known architect (and later architect-developer) who designed, almost solely, rowhouses and town houses and practiced mainly on the Upper West Side of Manhattan during the years from 1890 to 1901. Born in Massachusetts, he came to New York City in 1880 and was trained in the office of Richard M. Upjohn beginning around 1881; he was listed in directories in 1884 and established his own firm in 1889.<sup>8</sup> True received his commissions primarily from speculative builders and developers who were rapidly constructing houses throughout the Upper West Side. True is documented as having designed at least 270 houses on the Upper West Side, the majority located west of Broadway between 71st and 107th Streets. Diverse and eclectic in architectural style and massing, these houses contribute greatly to the architectural character of the Upper West Side. He also designed some twenty houses in Harlem, including several now located in the Hamilton Heights and Mount Morris Park Historic Districts. In 1893 he published a prospectus of his work, Designs of 141 Dwelling Houses, in which he stated his aim of creating distinctive well-designed houses, both in interior plan and exterior appearance, that would mark a shift away from the homogeneity of the standard New York City brownstone rowhouse. True's executed work demonstrated that he succeeded in

his ambitions.

True was primarily an architect of rowhouse groups. In his houses of the early 1890s, True employed a variety of contemporary architectural styles, frequently mingling them in an eclectic fashion; these included the popular Romanesque and Renaissance Revival styles, as well as the Francois I and a style he called "Elizabethan Revival" which was based on French and English Renaissance prototypes. In 1894 True began to work in part as his own developer and later formed the Riverside Building Company. A second prospectus, [A True History of] Riverside Drive (1899), pictured many of the houses for the Riverside Building Company, including the group of six houses at 102 to 107-109 Riverside Drive and 332 West 83rd Street which were then under construction and completed later that same year. In this prospectus True promoted the development of lower Riverside Drive:

Mr. Clarence True, who had erected houses upon some of the lower lots, became so thoroughly impressed with the possibilities of the river front as a residence district that he secured all the available property south of 84th street, and by covering it with beautiful dwellings, insured a most promising future for the Drive.<sup>9</sup>

The area along and adjacent to Riverside Drive, from 75th to 85th Streets, includes the densest concentration of extant houses designed by True; many of these are now included in the West End-Collegiate and Riverside Drive-West 80th-81st Streets Historic Districts. These houses along the Drive -- including No. 105 and the other houses in the corner group at 83rd Street -- are characteristic of most of True's mature work; all were designed in the architect's highly idiosyncratic and readily identifiable "Elizabethan Revival" style. True's rowhouses in this vein are typified by lively silhouettes, composed of such elements as steeply-pitched roofs that often have curved or stepped gables, chimneys, stepped end-walls, turrets, bowed fronts, projecting three-sided and square bays, and dormers. The facades, varied within the group, also display a variety of contrasting materials, including fine brick and stone, and such features as quoins, keyed surrounds, stylized cornices, crenellation, parapets, and decorative ironwork. True's interest in the use of varied colors of building materials is also evident in the group at Riverside and 83rd -- the brick colors graduate in hue from house to house, from tan to light orange to orange to red.

True was one of the architects who greatly popularized the American basement plan for rowhouse design in New York City during these years. He received much favorable notice in the architectural press of the 1890s, which published a number of his designs. Real Estate Record & Guide (1893) stated that True "has earned quite a reputation for the novelty of the ideas he has carried out in a large number of houses built from his designs on the West Side in the last few years. The old method of high stoop construction has been abandoned ... the houses are entered almost on a level with the street."<sup>10</sup> Architecture and Building (1893) noted: "The facades show great variety and taste, and the plans, many of them upon narrow lots, ingenuity and skill in arrangement."<sup>11</sup> A History of Real Estate, Building, and

Architecture in New York (1899) considered True "probably the best known New York architect designing almost entirely residential structures .... His work as exemplified by his houses is a credit both to himself and the city."<sup>12</sup>

True also designed several apartment houses, hotels, and small commercial structures, as well as a church building in Harlem. Little is known about the end of his career, but it appears to coincide with the demise of rowhouse construction in New York City after the turn of the century. His last directory listing was in 1910, although Clarence True & Son received a listing in 1916-17.<sup>13</sup> True died in Greensboro, North Carolina, in 1928, and was buried in Middletown, Connecticut.

#### Ackerman vs. True<sup>14</sup>

An interesting controversy developed around the construction of the houses at 102 to 107-109 Riverside Drive which affected the design of their facades eleven years after completion. On July 28, 1898, Clarence True applied, by letter, to the Commissioner of Buildings, Thomas J. Brady, for a foundation permit for six, five-story houses. According to his accompanying plans, each of the six structures partly extended beyond the property line, due to the oblique angle of the Drive, by incorporating stoops, areaway walls, and projecting bays and bowfronts. On August 8, Brady returned a permit to True granting him permission "to construct the foundation work provided for new buildings on E. S. Riverside Drive bet. 82 & 83 St. as per plans...." On August 16, True filed an application for the erection of these six new buildings (NB 730-1898), five fronting Riverside Drive and one fronting West 83rd Street. The Department of Buildings issued an objection to the application on September 15, stating that "projections beyond building lines are unlawful." True then obtained a letter from George C. Clauson, Commissioner of Parks, dated November 21, which granted consent "to the erection of projections on six proposed buildings" and exacted a fee based on the square footage of each projection. On November 28, True filed an amendment to the application which mentioned "consent from Park [sic] Department for projection beyond building lines is filed this date with plans & etc. ...." The structures were completed a year later in November of 1899.

Building encroachments onto public property, a fairly common practice in New York City during the nineteenth century, became an increasingly debated topic at the turn of the century, as evidenced by the numerous lawsuits filed and by discussions in such periodicals as Real Estate Record & Guide. A lawsuit was brought against Clarence True, after the completion of the houses at Riverside Drive and West 83rd Street, by the adjacent property owner, Charlotte Y. Ackerman, who had purchased from True the lot to the south of the group. Ackerman's case argued that the projecting bays, bowfronts and stoops on the houses next to her property were illegal encroachments upon the public street which also diminished the value of her property through the obstruction of her view, light, and air. Ackerman won the case in 1903 on appeal to the New York State Court of Appeals, which reversed the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court's finding in favor of True. The court ruled that New York City's ownership of streets from

property line to property line was "inalienable," that an encroachment was an "appropriation of the public street for private purposes," and that no individual or agency had the authority to permit encroachments onto public property. Thus the owners of the five houses in the group facing Riverside Drive had to remove the projections on their buildings.

In 1911 the main facades of these houses were completely removed and rebuilt to follow the diagonal of the Riverside Drive property lines. No. 103 and No. 104, both altered by the architectural firm of Clinton & Russell, and No. 107-109, altered by Tracy, Swartwout & Litchfield, were rebuilt using the original materials and retaining many architectural elements; No. 105 received a new facade designed by Bosworth & Holden. No. 332 West 83rd Street and the West 83rd Street facade of No. 107-109 remained unaltered as they do not face onto the Drive and were thus apparently not subject to the lawsuit. The sixth house at 102 Riverside Drive, to the south of the existing group, was later demolished for a corner apartment building, built in 1932.

#### The 105 Riverside Drive House<sup>15</sup>

The 105 Riverside Drive House was purchased in 1909 by Goddard and Josephine Cook DuBois. The DuBois were collectors of art, furniture, and Egyptianiana who lent and later donated a portion of their collection to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. An application was filed for alterations in November of 1910 (Alt. 2703-1910), and the changes were carried out by the architectural firm of Bosworth & Holden in 1911. Francke Huntington Bosworth, Jr. (1876-1949) and Frank Howell Holden (1870-1937) collaborated between the years of 1902 and 1918 on primarily residential and institutional design. Bosworth, born in New York and a graduate of Yale and the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, served with the American Red Cross in France in 1918-19. After his return to the United States, he became dean of the College of Architecture at Cornell (1920-28) and remained a professor there until his retirement in 1940. Holden, born in Chicago, studied at MIT and the Ecole and practiced for a short time in Aurora, Ill. After his move to New York he worked in the offices of several prominent architectural firms, first [John Galen] Howard & [Samuel M.] Cauldwell, and later Carrere & Hastings and Heins & LaFarge, before joining Hoggson Brothers, specialists in bank design, as director of architecture. After World War I he was an associate in the firm of [Robert D.] Kohn & [Charles] Butler. After working on the addition to the Macy's Department Store (1924 on), Holden became Macy's director of interior design. By 1932 he had returned to private practice and specialized in commercial design.

The original design for the L-shaped 105 Riverside Drive House featured a four-story three-sided bay capped by a steeply pitched tile roof with a prominent dormer, and a side courtyard. The main facade was dismantled in 1911 and rebuilt according to a new design as a flat wall following the diagonal of the property line. Original elements retained in the house (with their original orientation to the street) are the steeply pitched red tile roof, prominent pedimented front dormer with two windows, pilasters and a cartouche, the elaborate stepped end-wall gable facing the courtyard, the south end-wall and chimney, two courtyard dormers with broken scroll

pediments, and the facades facing the courtyard which is bordered and divided by a wrought-iron fence with a gate. True's original courtyard facades, faced with light orange Roman ironspot brick and limestone trim, feature round-arched windows and a service entrance, all with keyed surrounds, on the ground story; a bowed oriel and windows with molded and keyed surrounds on the second and third stories; round-arched windows with keystones and a dentilled cornice on the fourth story; and the elaborate stepped gable embellished by scrolls, Ionic pilasters, a segmental pediment, a balcony supported by large scroll brackets, and openings with molded surrounds.

The Riverside Drive facade of 1911, also executed in light orange Roman ironspot brick and limestone, features a recessed rectangular entrance and a small window on the ground story, a large arched opening with a recessed surround and a delicate wrought-iron balcony on the second story, and horizontal window groups on the third and fourth stories separated by a decorative limestone spandrel and surmounted by a bracketed and modillioned cornice and parapet. More recent alterations have been the replacement of the entry doors with metal and glass doors (c. 1940-50s), the installation of a grille on the ground-story window, the filling in of some courtyard windows with brick, and the insertion of several small windows; it is likely that some of these changes were made in conjunction with the conversion of the building to a multiple dwelling in 1953-54. The fenestration of the 1911 facade has been replaced; it originally consisted of three glass doors and an operable transom on the second story and three casement windows each on the third and fourth stories, all with thinner framing members than exist today. Most of the one-over-one double-hung wood frame sash in the courtyard have been replaced with one-over-one metal sash.

No. 105, incorporating the work of two architectural firms in the original house of 1898-99 and its partial redesign in 1910-11, remains a fine and compatibly integrated architectural design.

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## NOTES

1. This section adapted from LPC, Riverside-West End Historic District Designation Report (LP-1626), (New York, 1989); and LPC, Prentiss Residence Designation Report (LP-1715), report prepared by Margaret M. Pickart (New York, 1991). The information on Riverside Park and Drive was adapted from LPC, Riverside Drive and Riverside Park Designation Report, (New York, 1980); and Department of Parks and Recreation, Riverside Park - Evolution and Restoration, (New York, 1984).
2. Additional changes to the park have been made over the years. Monuments and sculptures were added beginning in the early 1900s, and the railroad tracks were covered, the Henry Hudson Parkway constructed (1934-37), playing fields added, and the park replanted under the administration of Robert Moses.
3. Other sections of the road remained incomplete until 1900-02 when the viaduct at 96th Street was built.
4. A later extension of the Drive resumes north of the viaduct, meeting Fort Washington Park at 158th Street.
5. New York Herald, August 1890, cited in LPC, Riverside-West 105th Street Historic District Designation Report (LP-0323), (New York, 1973), 3.
6. Clarence True, [A True History of] Riverside Drive (New York, 1899), n.p.
7. The information in this section is derived from: LPC, 520 West End Avenue Residence Designation Report (LP-1693), report prepared by Jay Shockley (New York, 1988).
8. New York Illustrated, (New York, 1895), 90.
9. True, n.p.
10. "Some Recently Built West Side Houses," Real Estate Record & Guide 51, Supplement (Jan. 28, 1893).
11. "Literary Notes," Architecture and Building 19 (Oct. 14, 1893), 191.
12. A History of Real Estate, Building & Architecture, 233.
13. James Ward, Architects in Practice, New York City, 1900-1940 (New York, 1989), 78.
14. This section was compiled from the following sources: NYC, Department of Buildings, Manhattan, Plans Permits and Dockets, Block 1245, Lots 1 and 43-46; "Encroachments in Front of Buildings," RERG 86 (Oct. 22, 1910), 660; and Charlotte Y. Ackerman v. Clarence F. True, 175 N.Y. Rep. 353 (1903).



15. This section was compiled from the following sources: NYC, Dept. of Buildings; NY County, Office of the Register, Liber Deeds & Conveyances; NYC Directories, 1910s; True, n.p. [Photograph of the buildings under construction]; NYC, Dept. of Taxes Photograph Collection; Metropolitan Museum of Art, Registrar's Office; [Dubois Collection], NYT, Nov. 11, 1925, p. 29; Franke H. Bosworth, Jr. Obituary, NYT, Apr. 29, 1949, p. 23; and Frank H. Holden Obituary, NYT, May 30, 1937, p. 18.

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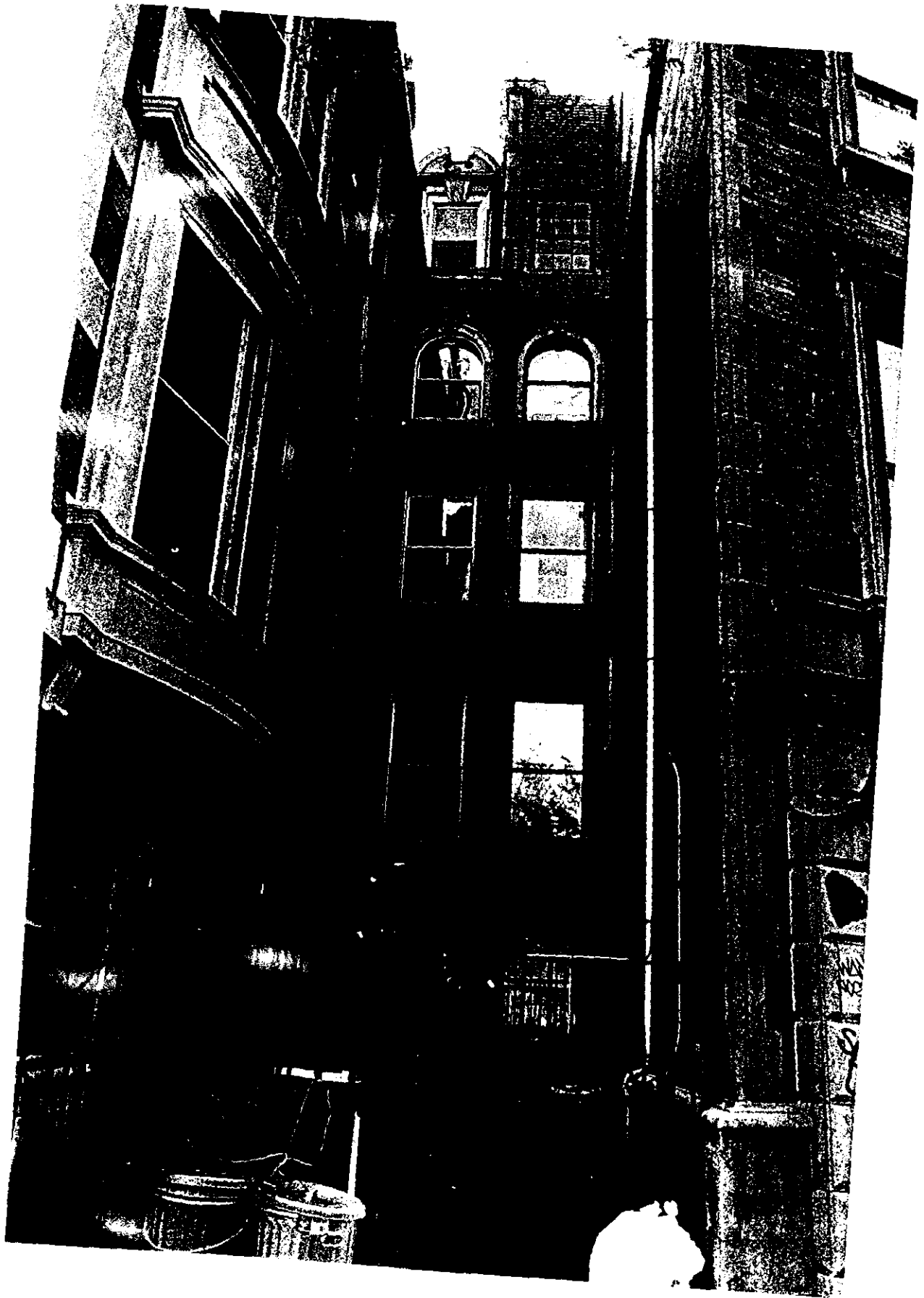
105 Riverside Drive House, 1898-99  
105 Riverside Drive

Architect: Clarence F. True  
Photo Credit: Lynne D. Marthey



105 Riverside Drive House  
Detail of Dormer on West Facade

Photo Credit: Lynne D. Marthey



Courtyard, 105 & 104 Riverside  
Drive Houses  
Photo: Carl Forster



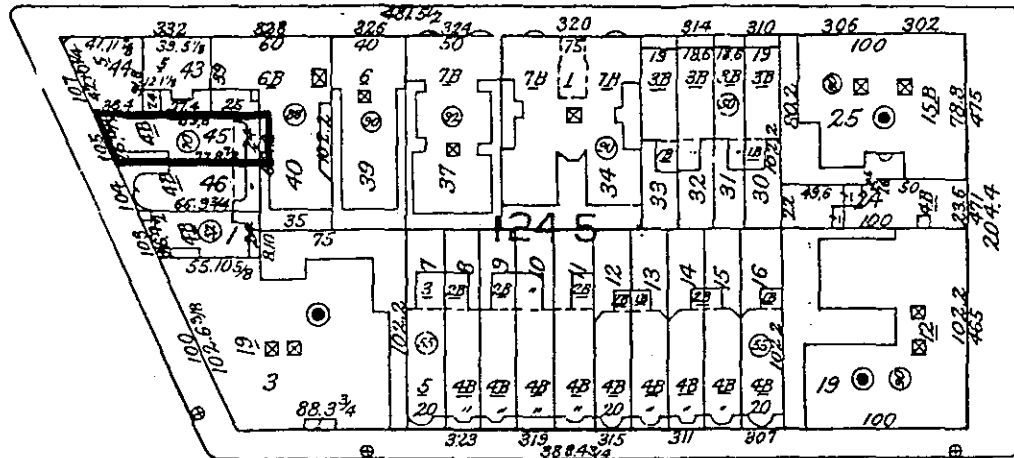
105 Riverside Drive House  
Photo: Carl Forster



Roof Detail, 105 Riverside Drive  
Photo: Carl Forster

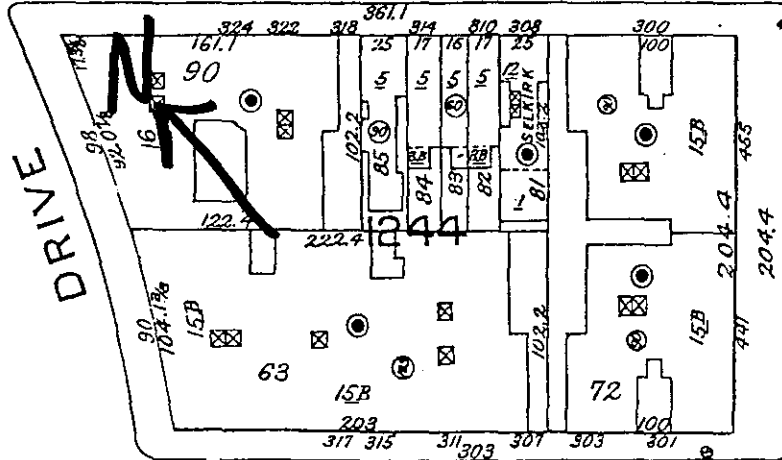
54.4 60

W. 83<sup>RD</sup>



50.8 60

W. 82<sup>ND</sup>



47 60

W. 81<sup>ST</sup>

DRIVE

AVE.

105 Riverside Drive House  
Landmark Site

Graphic Source: Sanborn Manhattan  
Land Book, 1988-89



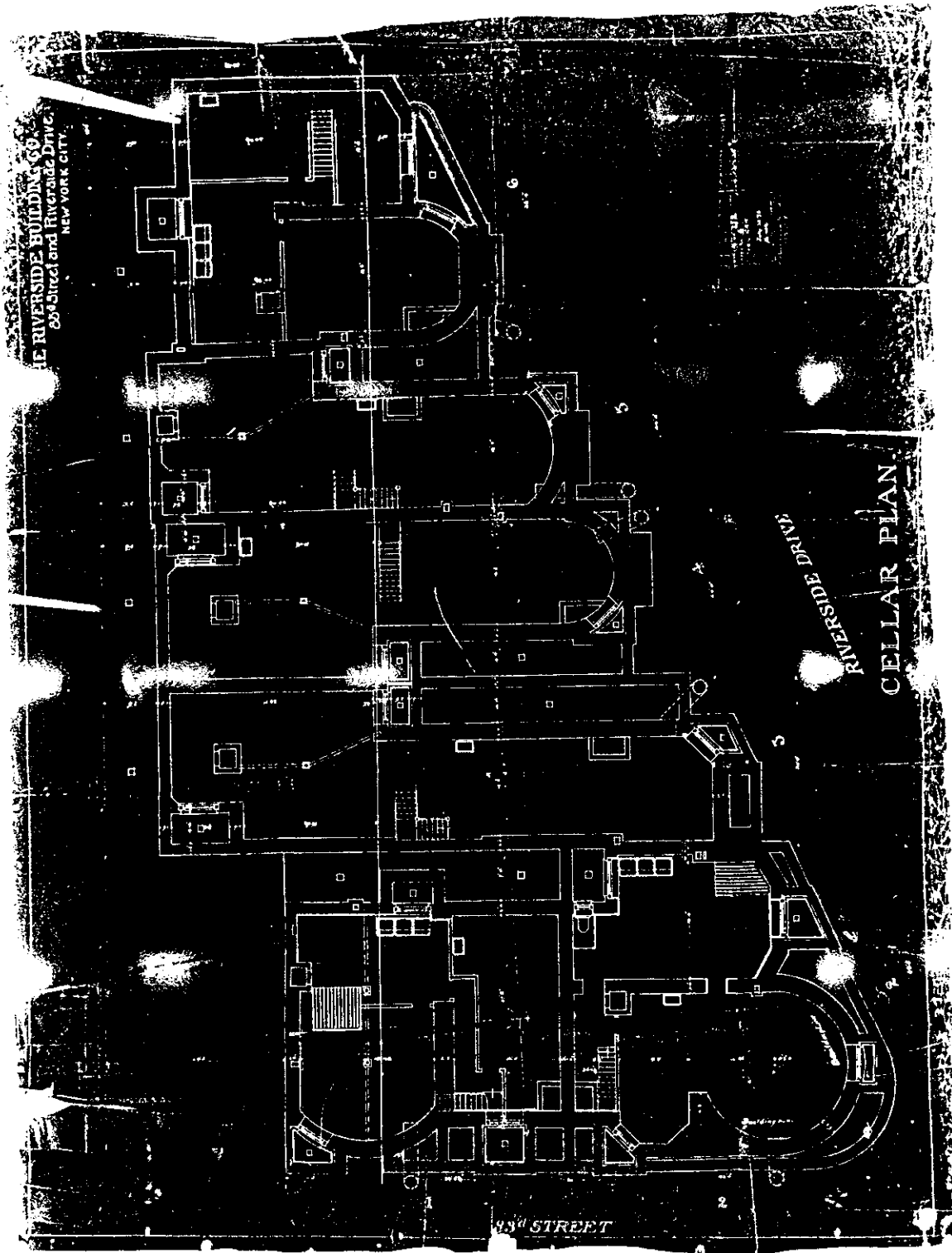


Photo Credit: Carl Forster

Original Plans by Clarence True



103-107 Riverside Drive  
and 332 West 83rd Street Houses  
Historical Photograph c. 1940  
View of Facades

Photo Credit: Municipal Archives  
City of New York, Dept. of Taxes  
Collection