

Landmarks Preservation Commission  
August 2, 1988, Designation List 207  
LP-1693

**520 WEST END AVENUE RESIDENCE** (Leech Residence), 520 West End Avenue, Borough of Manhattan. Built 1892; architect Clarence F. True.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1233, Lot 1.

On July 7, 1988, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the 520 West End Avenue Residence and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 1). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. A total of 17 witnesses spoke in favor of designation. Four witnesses (the owner and his representatives) spoke in opposition to designation. The Commission also received several letters in favor of this designation.

#### DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

##### Summary

The residence at 520 West End Avenue, commissioned by developer Richard G. Platt in 1892 and completed that same year for cotton broker John B. Leech and his wife Isabella, is an early, and within the context of his career, an unusual work of architect Clarence F. True. A seminal figure in establishing the initial architectural character of the Upper West Side, True was particularly active in the development and design of rowhouses and town houses in the area west of Broadway during the years 1890 to 1901. The Leech residence, originally a large single-family town house, was built during the first period of development of West End Avenue, when it was lined with distinguished residences for prosperous New Yorkers. In the bold form of its rusticated sandstone base, the complex massing of its tan Roman ironspot brick upper stories (now painted), the subtle handling and richness of its carved stone details of Romanesque, Gothic, and Elizabethan derivation, and decorative wrought-ironwork, it is a fine example of the diverse picturesque, eclectic architecture of the late 19th century which once characterized West End Avenue as one of New York City's most desirable residential avenues. Its corner site, allowing for two principal designed facades linked by a curved corner bay, both enhances the prominence and integrity of its original architectural elements and emphasizes its status as one of the most significant surviving individually-designed large town houses on the Upper West Side.

## Development of the Upper West Side

The Upper West Side, including West End Avenue, remained largely undeveloped until the 1880s. The area, once known as Bloomingdale ("Bloemendael," named by Dutch settlers), was included in the Randel Survey (Commissioners Map) of 1811 which planned a uniform grid of broad avenues and narrow cross streets upon the rolling hills of Manhattan as far north as 155th Street. Years elapsed, however, before streets on the Upper West Side were actually laid out.

At mid-century, as New York City grew rapidly northward, residential development was concentrated primarily on the East Side, following the march uptown of New York's wealthy citizens and transit lines. Central Park, designed in 1857, was not only an amenity for all the citizens of New York, but was as well a major spur to development of the city northward.<sup>1</sup> A number of additional civic improvements also greatly contributed to the eventual development of the Upper West Side. The Eighth Avenue horse car line was extended to 84th Street in 1864. (Previously the only transit facility was a stage line along Bloomingdale Road.) The Commissioners of Central Park were authorized to complete the laying out of streets west of Central Park in 1865. West End Avenue (formerly Eleventh Avenue) was opened in 1880, from 72nd Street to 106th Street. Bloomingdale Road (renamed the Boulevard)<sup>2</sup> was widened to 1868-71 and received central planted malls from 59th to 155th Streets. The biggest boost to development of the area west of Broadway was the creation of Riverside Park and Drive near the Hudson River.<sup>3</sup> Construction on the Upper West Side was further stimulated by the completion of the Ninth Avenue Elevated in 1879.

Developers had been reluctant at first to build on the Upper West Side, after a wave of speculation following the Civil War and subsequent period of stagnation from the Panic of 1873. Although Central Park West and Riverside Drive were envisioned as residential avenues for the wealthy, on a par with Fifth Avenue, there was no agreement about the future character of the rest of the Upper West Side. High real estate prices and delays in civic improvements further discouraged investment. Edward Clark, president of the Singer Sewing Machine Co., was the first to make major investments on the Upper West Side (1877-85); the Dakota, New York's first luxury apartment house, and his rowhouses on West 73rd Street, attracted much attention to the Upper West Side.<sup>4</sup>

By 1885 the Upper West Side emerged as the city's area of most intense speculation. Developers already at work there undertook new and larger projects and were joined by nearly all of the larger builders in the city. Buildings erected on the Upper West Side now sold readily. In 1886, the Times wrote: "The west side of the city presents just now a scene of building activity such as was never before witnessed in that section . . . thousands of carpenters and masons are engaged in rearing substantial buildings . . ." <sup>5</sup> Development first occurred more rapidly on the streets between the Boulevard and Central Park than on the streets to the west of the Boulevard due, undoubtedly, to two factors: the land west of the Boulevard was less accessible to transportation, and lots along Riverside Drive, and to some degree, West End Avenue, were (like Central Park West) considered to be prime property. The notion that New York's social elite would erect mansions along these avenues caused the value of adjacent land to remain consistently higher, discouraging development for a longer

period. Promotional brochures and publicity in the press, however, began to focus attention on the territory west of the Boulevard. In 1888 the West End Association published a pamphlet entitled "West End Avenue: Riverside Park in the City of New York" which lauded the virtues of West End Avenue and environs as an ideal residential area. In August 1890, the New York Herald ran a series of editorials and articles extolling the advantages of the Upper West Side, but especially this area:

The district to the east of Riverside Park as far as Central Park is likely, or rather, sure to become within the next twenty years, perhaps the location of the most beautiful residences in the world. The advantages of pure air and beautiful surroundings, glimpses of New Jersey Hills at the end of each street, with the glitter of the Hudson between; the nearness of parks and the accessibility of the district will be insurmountable factors in popularity.<sup>6</sup>

### The Architecture of West End Avenue

By the early 1890s, three- and four-story single-family rowhouses and town houses had been built in this area of the west 70s and 80s, and the neighborhood had begun to establish itself as fashionable for the prosperous and expanding upper-middle classes, largely those in business and the professions. The Upper West Side provided a unique opportunity for persons of this status and income in New York City to purchase houses that offered a wide variety of sizes, plans, and stylistic expression. West End Avenue in particular was consistently remarked upon as an unusually pleasant residential avenue with houses of high quality and interesting architectural character. The Real Estate Record and Guide noted in 1890 that:

No avenue in New York City is lined with more attractive houses for a distance of one mile north of 70th street than West End avenue. Fifth and Madison, though adorned with residences, in many cases more costly, display row after row of brown stone fronts of the older type; houses that, architecturally speaking, are devoid of originality, framed as they are on a general plan of a somewhat stereotype character.

It was reserved for the West Side to lead the way in a general movement for a change in our house fronts. This is seen on every street in that section of the city. There is only one avenue, however, that is of a purely residential character, and which is lined with houses showing original thought on the part of their architects: And that is West End avenue ...

All these advantages [of grass plots, sidewalk trees, spacious flagging, covenant restrictions, asphalt paving, and lack of steam and horsecar traffic]... make it one of the most desirable avenues for residence purposes in New York City.<sup>7</sup>

The Upper West Side as a whole, and West End Avenue in particular, was rich in the number of individually designed town houses and speculatively built, yet distinctive, groups of houses, which were designed as harmonious units with individuality in the separate buildings. Among the prominent

architects and speculative architect-developers of West End Avenue were Edward L. Angell; Babb, Cook & Willard; Berg & Clark; Frank M. Day; M. V. B. Ferdon; C. P. H. Gilbert; Henry J. Hardenburgh; Lamb & Rich; Little & O'Connor; William J. Meritt; Charles T. Mott; Gilbert A. Schellenger; Schneider & Herter; Thom & Wilson; and Ralph S. Townsend. The period of intensive development of rowhouses and town houses on the Upper West Side, from 1885 to 1900, saw both the architectural reaction to the conformity and homogeneity of older brownstone New York and the culmination of individual house construction in Manhattan. At the time of the construction of 520 West End Avenue, houses on the Upper West Side displayed the picturesque eclecticism of late nineteenth-century architecture drawn from a wide variety of stylistic sources. The desire of architects and clients for originality, variety, and novelty was demonstrated by a freedom in design, use of stylistic sources, and materials. In the move away from brownstone as a facing material (in Edith Wharton's view "the uniform hue [that] coated New York like a cold chocolate sauce"),<sup>8</sup> an interest was shown in the use of stone in differing colors and textures, brick in various colors, and the incorporation of terra cotta. Red sandstone increased in popularity as an alternative to darker brownstone.<sup>9</sup> After 1885 bricks manufactured in such colors as white, grey, tan and gold became popular in New York City. "Tiffany brick" (also called ironspot brick), which was employed on the upper stories of 520 West End Avenue, was "semi-vitrified [Roman] brick of mottled brown shades ... especially preferred for high-class town houses."<sup>10</sup>

Helping to make West End Avenue one of the most varied streetscapes in New York City was an unusual "Dutch" architectural flavor (similar to the "Pont Street Dutch" of London)<sup>11</sup> which took hold following the construction of two groups of houses in 1885-86 by Frederick B. White and McKim, Mead & White.<sup>12</sup> The feature of stepped and curved gables was picked up by the architects of many subsequent houses along West End Avenue, as well as on the West End Collegiate Church (1892-93, Robert W. Gibson) and Public School 9 (1893-96, C.B.J. Snyder).<sup>13</sup> Other churches by noted architects which complemented the residential nature of the avenue included the Fourth Presbyterian Church (1894, Heins & Lafarge), St. Paul's M. E. Church (1895-97, R. H. Robertson), and All Angels Church (1888-90, J. B. Snook & Son).<sup>14</sup> The strong picturesque and eclectic architectural character of the avenue was further established by the rhythms created by the profusion of bowfronts, bay and oriel windows, gables, turrets, chimneys, end walls, dormers, cornices, peaked tile roofs, stoops, cornices, and ornamentation.

The residential design at 520 West End Avenue not only falls into this pattern, but its expressive and individualistic characteristics may be seen as a hallmark of the work of Clarence F. True. True played a leading role in the architectural development of West End Avenue in the years 1890-1901, as he designed at least 60 houses facing directly on the avenue (and participated in the planning of nine others) between 71st and 101st Streets.

Only a short time later, in the 1910s-20s, West End Avenue (like Riverside Drive) saw radical changes as most of its houses were demolished for the construction of the large-scale apartment buildings which now line the avenue. No. 520 West End Avenue is one of the few large town houses from the initial period of development which survives.

## Clarence F. True

Clarence Fagan True (1860-1928) was a prolific, distinctive, 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 1890-1901. Trained in the office of Richard M. Upjohn beginning around 1881, he was listed in directories in 1884 and had established his own firm by April 1890, when he filed plans for a group of houses at 301-319 West 89th Street.<sup>15</sup> He received his commissions primarily from speculative builders and developers (including William E. Lanchantin, Richard G. Platt, Theodore A. Squier, Charles G. Judson, and Smith & Stewart) 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. While diverse in architectural style and massing and eclectic in nature, these houses are a major factor in establishing the architectural character of the Upper West Side. He also designed some 20 houses in Harlem, including several 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 (which included a photograph of the residence at 520 West End Avenue, as completed) 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:

One of the striking anomalies of the City of New York where continued effort is widely exhibited in the variety, new ideas and general improvement pervading all other artistic and practical enterprises-- is the wearisome sameness and unattractiveness of its dwelling houses. John Ruskin has well said somewhere, that row after row of brown-stone fronts, mostly bad copies of the Farnese palace in detail, making up the living streets of the city, ought all to be torn down.

That this unattractiveness is everywhere visible along the avenues and streets of our city, a ride on the elevated roads from the Battery to Harlem will reveal; there being very few buildings that will attract one's attention, but in all directions we see the same brick walls, square window openings and painted galvanized iron cornices, more or less dilapidated.

The following illustrations will demonstrate an attempt to improve the houses of our citizens in appearance, plan of rooms and interior arrangements, so that home-life in the city shall be rendered enjoyable rather than passably endurable ... we are convinced that investigation will prove the houses which we have for sale are the most complete in New York, both in design and execution.<sup>16</sup>

True's executed work demonstrated that he succeeded in his ambitions.

The Leech residence at 520 West End Avenue was an early commission for True, his second of a series for builder Richard G. Platt, and his first for an individual house. True was primarily an architect of rows and groups

of houses; No. 520 West End Avenue was his only individually-designed town house for a corner site and was the largest house he is known to have designed. 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 Revival and Renaissance Revival, as well as Francois I and "Elizabethan Revival" based on French and English Renaissance prototypes. The Leech residence, an eclectic design with references to the Romanesque and Gothic styles, incorporated numerous motifs and features found in his other early rowhouse groups. These include: asymmetry; complexity of massing and articulation; picturesque silhouette composed of such elements as steeply-pitched roofs and gables; chimneys, stepped end walls, turrets, and dormers; rusticated stone; variety of materials; contrast of various windows, including bay windows and oriels; and such ornamental details as quoins, keyed enframements, stylized cornices, and parapets. Many of these elements were to continue to appear in his subsequent work. Generally these elements were used to articulate the units of a row, but at 520 West End Avenue they are found in a single house. This large town house was not part of a row, instead being designed to stand as single house, although in a dense urban context.

In 1894 True began to design houses on his own as a developer, in addition to those he did for others. He later formed the Riverside Building Co. A second prospectus, A True History of Riverside Drive (1899), pictured many of the houses which were responsible for promoting the development of lower Riverside Drive:

Mr. Clarence True, who had erected 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>17</sup>

The area along and adjacent to Riverside Drive, from 75th to 85th Streets, includes the densest concentration of extant True houses; many of these are included in the West End-Collegiate and Riverside Drive-West 80th-81st Street Historic Districts. These houses along the Drive, typical of most of True's mature work, were all designed in his highly individual, idiosyncratic, and readily identifiable "Elizabethan Revival" style. Characteristic is the use of smooth stone and brick; elaborate stepped and curved gables and dormers; end walls, chimneys, keyed enframements, and quoins; and contrast of various window groups, including bowfronts and three-sided and square bays.

True was one of the architects who greatly popularized the American basement plan house in New York City during these years. He received much favorable notice in the architectural publications of the 1890s, which printed a number of his designs. Real Estate Record and Guide in 1893 thought 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>18</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>19</sup> The 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>20</sup>

True also designed several apartment houses, hotels, and small commercial structures, as well as a Harlem church building. Little is known about the end of his career, but it appears to coincide with the demise in construction of rowhouses in New York City after the turn of the century. True died in Greensboro, North Carolina, in 1928, and was buried in Middletown, Connecticut.<sup>21</sup>

#### The Residence at 520 West End Avenue (Leech Residence)<sup>22</sup>

The site of the Leech residence was part of the Oliver Delancey Farm in colonial days. This portion of the farm was conveyed to John H. Howland in 1825 and his executors had it plotted in 1850. The lot was purchased in 1890 by Robert and Joseph Gordon, who conveyed it in November 1891 to Upper West Side developer Richard Goodman Platt. An agreement incorporating a restrictive covenant -- a common feature at the time on West End Avenue -- was made between Platt, the Gordons, Edward Kilpatrick and others, in which up to two brick and stone dwellings could be erected on the 27 foot-2 inch by 100 foot site. Kilpatrick was the owner of the three adjacent lots to the north, then undergoing construction of houses designed by Gilbert Schellenger. Platt commissioned True soon after; the Real Estate Record and Guide of November 21 announced that plans had been drawn by True for a dwelling to be built of "red stone and Tiffany brick."<sup>23</sup> True filed plans on January 4, 1892, for this single-family residence, to cost \$40,000. Construction began on February 16, 1892. On March 7, 1892, a deed agreement was signed by Platt with John B. Leech, whereby Leech was to pay \$60,000 and complete the building of the house according to True's plans. The sale of a speculatively-designed house to a wealthy purchaser was a common occurrence on both the Upper East and West Sides at this time.<sup>24</sup> Construction of the house was completed on November 26, 1892, and the property was conveyed to Isabella M. Leech, John Leech's wife, on December 9. A photograph of the residence was included in Clarence True's 1893 prospectus; the caption contained the following information: "for John B. Leech, Esq." and "Richard G. Platt, builder."<sup>25</sup> The house was one of the largest ever constructed on West End Avenue, measuring 27 feet-2inches by 80 feet. The size alone takes it out of the category of the ordinary speculator-built house and gives it a special character.

John Burgess Leech (1832-1897), "one of the best known cotton brokers in New York City,"<sup>26</sup> was born in London, immigrated to the United States in the 1850s, and moved to Memphis, Tennessee. He became a partner of cotton merchant W.A. Goodwyn, and they opened a branch office in New York City during the Civil War. Leech moved to New York in the 1870s, working on his own, and became a member of the New York Cotton Exchange (formed in 1870), where he served several terms on the board of managers. Leech died of consumption at his residence; the funeral service was held there, and burial was in Woodlawn Cemetery. Isabella Leech, born in Mississippi, kept the house until 1907.

#### Subsequent History<sup>27</sup>

Mary W. Somerville, a teacher originally from Virginia, purchased the

residence in 1907; she lived at 520 West End Avenue with several other teachers (and possibly ran a school there as well) into the mid-1910s, although ownership was transferred to James Overton Winston in 1909. Winston (1864-1947), also from Virginia, was a nationally prominent businessman and contractor who specialized in the construction of railroads, highways, dams, reservoirs, and water purification facilities.<sup>28</sup> Under Winston's ownership, the 520 West End Avenue residence became an apartment house with eight apartments and a doctor's office in the basement. The conversion of a single-family residence to multiple occupancy is typical of what happened to such houses on the Upper West Side during this period, as the character of the avenue changed when most of its houses were demolished for apartment buildings in the 1910s-20s. Winston lost the building through foreclosure in 1932 to the U. S. Trust Co.; the building had a series of owners after 1935, and during World War II (1942-44) was rented out as 20 furnished rooms. Today the residence continues to serve as an apartment house.

520 West End Avenue was designated a New York City Landmark on April 28, 1987, by a vote of 6-0-1; the designation was affirmed by the Board of Estimate on June 30, 1987, by a unanimous vote. Thereafter, as a result of a lawsuit brought by the owner, Acting Justice Schackman of the New York State Supreme Court annulled the designation on the basis that one of the six Commissioners voting in favor of the designation had previously submitted her resignation, and therefore the designation vote was found to be "in violation of lawful procedure."<sup>29</sup> The City has filed a notice of appeal from the decision. On June 21, 1988, the Commission voted to calendar a new public hearing.

### Architectural Description

No. 520 West Avenue is a picturesque, eclectic town house incorporating stylistic references to the Romanesque and Gothic Revivals. Prominently located on a large corner site (27 feet, 2 inches by 100 feet) at West 85 Street, it is 4-1/2 stories in height (now classified as five stories in current records). The building has two major designed elevations (and a third, eastern, elevation which is visible from the street): the long facade on West 85 Street contains the main entrance and is linked to the short facade on West End Avenue by a curved corner bay. Both elevations are articulated and linked horizontally by the use of continuous bandcourses with intermittent balustrades or parapets. Vertical articulation is provided by the arrangement of fenestration and blank wall, slight recesses in the wall plane, a three-story oriel on West 85 Street, quoins, steeply pitched gables, chimneys, and terminating pilasters. The asymmetrical composition has a complex roofline made up of ornamented intersecting gables and an angled pyramidal dormer.<sup>30</sup> These varied elements, characteristic of True's rowhouse designs, are here used to great effect to create a unified composition for this large and prominently sited town house.

Originally the house had presented a polychromatic range of earth-toned materials ( a fact now partly obscured by paint): the rusticated red sandstone of the basement, ground story, and massive entrance stoop; tan Roman ironspot brick of the upper stories; fine, intricately carved sandstone ornamentation of Romanesque, Gothic, and Elizabethan derivation; and tile roof. The subtlety and richness in the handling of the carved

stone detail is particularly notable. The carving on 520 West End Avenue is considered significant as an excellent example, in good condition, of the American art form of 19th-century stonecarving, as performed by European-American stonecarvers. Probably carved at the site by an itinerant carver, the work on No. 520 displays a freedom in the use of eclectic forms, an attention to craft and detail, and care in the proper working of the material.<sup>31</sup>

#### West End Avenue and West 85 Street Elevations\*

- \* location on West End Avenue facade will have notation: [WEA]
- location on West 85 Street facade will have notation: [W85]

#### Basement

rusticated red sandstone

rectangular windows:

[WEA]: one

Corner bay: pair

[W85]: one east of stoop, pair below oriel, one at east end

one-over-one double-hung wood sash; original decorative wrought-iron grilles

small one-pane wood sash windows below these (except by stoop); similar wrought-iron grilles [W85]. Alteration: small windows sealed with wood [WEA and corner bay]

areaway: along both major facades (interrupted by stoop); low sandstone wall with stone coping

stoop [WEA]: rusticated sandstone; stepped wing wall with carved scrolls; balustrade composed of arcade with dwarf columns and bosses; round-arched opening with voussoirs and decorative wrought-iron grille; iron handrail on building; basement level entrance and steps at east side; wrought-iron gate/door below stoop. Alterations: second dwarf column from right missing; parging (1987) of some of details of scrolls, and on south and east walls and interior of stoop

original Roman brick wall with stone coping [W85] encloses rear yard; Alterations: painted; new metal door; repair work at east edge of door

Alterations: doorway inserted [WEA, north end] by 1924; aluminum and glass door with transom and light fixture; areaway wall cut for entrance steps; low iron fence placed atop entire areaway wall, low iron gate east of stoop

#### Elements Common to Stories One to Four

tan Roman ironspot brick stories two - four

flush sandstone lintels and sills; sandstone keyed enframements

3-sided 3-story stone oriel window [W85, near east end], flanked by thin colonnettes; foliate motif and rosettes on base; foliate capitals and fans at top

3-story copper leader: north side of curved corner bay

Alterations: brick and trim painted red; fire escape [W85, west end] installed in 1925 and removed 1986

#### First Story

rusticated sandstone

inset terrace [WEA]: opening with elliptical arch with carved voussoirs

supported by panelled piers with carved capitals; parapet with fish bladder tracery; rear curved porch wall intersecting with rear flat porch wall; two rectangular windows: one-over-one double-hung wood sash (one curved). Alteration: part of a voussoir at south end of arch is missing

rectangular windows:

Corner bay: pair

[W85]: three on oriel, one at east end

one-over-one double-hung wood sash (curved on corner)

Alteration: new iron grilles on oriel windows

entrance [W85]: round-arched opening with enframingent with roll molding and carved foliate (vine) ornament and decorative wrought-iron tympanum grille; entablature (balcony parapet) with decorative foliate S-curve motif, supported by elongated brackets with corbels, which are ornamented by Romanesque style foliation and diaperwork; spandrels ornamented by carved oak and chestnut or beech leaves [possible reference to Leech family's English and Southern heritage] Alterations: original double doors replaced by single aluminum and glass door with sidelights; two light fixtures and address sign installed in tympanum

small window to east of entrance: sill corbel with carved bat

Alteration: casement windows; new iron grille

molded stone bandcourse below window sills, interrupted by terrace [WEA] and entrance stoop; molded stone bandcourse above lintels, interrupted by entrance entablature

### Second and Third Stories

all header bricks on corner bay

one rectangular window directly above each first story opening, except area above entrance and small window, where there are two, not directly above them; one-over-one double-hung wood sash (curved on corner); keyed enframements (except oriel)

Alteration: one small window inserted each floor to the east of the westernmost window [W85], with one-over-one double-hung wood sash

quoins: [WEA]: north edge

[W85]: east edge; flanking oriel; two eastern edges of changes in wall plane (below chimneys)

Alteration: quoins removed in 1986 [WEA]

continuous stone lintel course, surmounted by molded stone bandcourse above the third story, which is interrupted by balustrade on corner bay and parapet with quatrefoil banding (supported by foliate colonnette capitals and corbels) on oriel, and continues as a parapet [W85, atop east end]; four foliate brackets below gables flanking corner bay

### Fourth Story

Windows: one rectangular window with one-over-one double-hung wood sash above each third floor window, with the following exceptions:

[WEA]: round-arched

Corner bay: openings are at a right angle (on south and west facades of intersecting gables)

[W85]: two openings above oriel [the building does not continue above the easternmost third floor window]

Alterations: window facing south above corner bay replaced by wood and glass French doors; small window inserted to west of window

below eastern gable [W85], with one-over-one double-hung wood sash  
Ornament: [WEA]: keyed enframingent and rectangular drip molding  
with foliate spandrels  
[W85]: below gables: keyed enframingents and foliate  
lintel moldings  
above oriel: keyed enframingents  
copper leader at intersection of gables above corner bay  
quoins and terminating pilasters with finials and adjacent foliate  
scrolls flank windows below eaves of gables: [WEA] and [W85,  
westernmost]. Alteration: top portion of finials removed; north  
pilaster [WEA] removed in 1986  
quoins continue from third story (below chimneys) [W85]; between chimneys  
is stone lintel course surmounted by cornice which is tracery band  
with cusp motif; corbel at east end

#### Attic Story and Roof

one gable [WEA] and two gables [W85]; quoins; coping; crowned by finials;  
foliate panel in peak of gable [WEA]; gargoyle at junction of  
easternmost gable eave and chimney [W85]  
Alterations: top of finial removed [WEA]; small roof accretion  
placed on east side of easternmost gable [W85]  
windows: [WEA]: rectangular with double-hung wood sash with diamond  
panes; keyed enframingent; curved shelf sill supported by  
drip molding of window below  
[W85]: oval windows with wishbone-shaped foliate drip  
moldings. Alterations: eastern window partly sealed; part  
of western window enframingent missing  
peaked roof between chimneys [W85]; small angled pyramidal copper dormer  
with copper finial  
Alterations: original dormer tiles replaced by asphalt shingles;  
tops of both chimneys removed  
roof material: originally tiles, now asphalt shingles

#### East Elevation

plain three-story block surmounted by terrace setback (with continuation  
of lintel course and parapet [W85]) which is topped by asymmetrically  
placed gable (attic story)  
rectangular windows: one full-sized on floors one through three (doorway  
on floor four); two smaller on floor one, one smaller on basement  
and floors two through attic  
2 doors on basement level  
quoins on south edge of facade and in gable; gable coping  
Alterations: fire escape installed 1925 and removed 1986; metal leaders;  
most of wall painted white and red [one area of brick remains  
unpainted]; small rooftop accretion on north side of gable; pipe  
railing on parapet of terrace

Report prepared by  
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Deputy Director of Research

### Notes

1. Central Park, designed by Frederick L. Olmsted and Calvert Vaux, is a designated New York City Scenic Landmark and National Historic Landmark.
2. It became known as Broadway after 1899.
3. Legislative approval was given in 1866 for the purchase of the steep river bluff for a park, and in 1867 Riverside Drive was mapped, as a straight avenue. However, it soon became apparent that the hilly topography would necessitate extensive landfill. Frederick Law Olmsted, at the request of the Park Commissioners, produced a plan in 1873-75 for a park and curving scenic parkway adapted to the existing topography. Riverside Park and Drive, based on Olmsted's initial proposal, were constructed over the years between 1876 and 1900. Today the Park and Drive are a designated New York City Scenic Landmark.
4. The Dakota (1880-84, Henry J. Hardenbergh) is a designated New York City Landmark. Hardenbergh also designed 101-151 and 13-67 West 73rd Street (1879-80 and 1882-85). Only 101-103, 15A-19 and 41-67 are extant, the latter two groups being located in the Central Park West-West 73rd-74th Street Historic District.
5. New York Times, 1886, cited in Charles Lockwood, Manhattan Moves Uptown: An Illustrated History (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1976), p. 317
6. New York Herald, August 1890, cited in Landmarks Preservation Commission, Riverside-West 105th Street Historic District Designation Report (LP-0323) (New York: City of New York, 1973), p. 3.
7. "West Side Number," Real Estate Record and Builders Guide 46, Supplement (December 20, 1890), 46-47.
8. Edith Wharton, The Age of Innocence (1920, reprint ed. New York: Literary Classics of the U.S., Inc., 1985), p. 1072.
9. Ronald Roth, "Masonry" (New York: Landmarks Preservation Commission, 1976), p. 17.
10. Real Estate Record Association, A History of Real Estate, Building and Architecture in New York City (1898, reprint ed. New York: Arno Press, 1967), pp. 399, 402-403. The bricks for 520 West End Avenue were manufactured by the Staten Island Lumber Company of Woodbridge, N.J. This information was obtained from a brick sample from the building; this company is listed in the directory of terra cotta companies from Walter Geer, "The Story of Terra Cotta," Chapters XVI and XVII," reprinted in Sites 18 (1986), 54-55.
11. Sarah B. Landau, "The Row Houses of New York's West Side," Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians 34 (March 1975), p. 22.
12. Frederick B. White's houses at 381-389 West End Avenue and 303-307

West 78th Street are included in the West End-Collegiate Historic District. The McKim, Mead & White houses at 300-308 West 83rd Street, built for David H. King, Jr., were demolished by 1923.

13. The West End Collegiate Church and Collegiate School, at the northeast corner of West 77th Street, have been a designated New York City Landmark since 1967. P.S. 9 is located at the northeast corner of West 82nd Street.
14. Fourth Presbyterian is located at the southwest corner of West 91st Street. St. Paul's Church (now Church of St. Paul and St. Andrew), on the northwest corner of West 86th Street, is a designated New York City Landmark. All Angels Church, on the southeast corner of West 81st Street, was demolished in 1979.
15. New York City, Department of Buildings, Manhattan, New Building Dockets. NB No. 678-1890. Nos. 311-317 West 89th Street have been demolished.
16. Clarence True, Designs of 141 Dwelling Houses, Built on the West Side, From Drawings by Clarence True, Architect (New York: UNZ & Co., 1893), introduction.
17. Clarence True, A True History of Riverside Drive (New York: UNZ & Co., 1899).
18. "Some Recently Built West Side Houses," Real Estate Record and Guide 51, Supplement (January 28, 1893).
19. "Literary Notes," Architecture and Building 19 (October 14, 1893), 191.
20. Real Estate Record Association, p. 233.
21. Clarence True, obituary, New York Times, November 13, 1928, p. 31.
22. This information was compiled from: New York County, Office of the Register, Liber Deeds and Conveyances.
23. Real Estate Record and Guide 48 (November 21, 1891), 654.
24. See Landmarks Preservation Commission, Metropolitan Museum Historic District Designation Report (LP-0955) (New York: City of New York, 1977).
25. True, Designs of 141 Dwelling Houses.
26. John B. Leech, obituary, New York Times, May 20, 1897, p. 7.
27. This information was compiled from: U.S. Census 1890-1910; New York City directories; Liber Deeds and Conveyances; and New York City, Department of Buildings, Manhattan, Plans and Permits.
28. "James Overton Winston," National Cyclopaedia of American Biography (New York: James T. White & Co., 1953), vol. 38, pp. 30-31.

29. The Stux 520 Group v. New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, New York Law Journal, May 13, 1988, p. 28, col. 2.
30. Though the original Buildings Department application (NB No. 10-92) refers to a proposed slate Mansard roof, the configuration of the roof as it exists today is the same as that originally completed, as evidenced by the 1893 photograph in True's prospectus Designs of 141 Dwelling Houses.
31. Based on the public hearing testimony, July 7, 1988, of Barbara Milstein, who is an Associate Curator, Sculpture Garden and Photography, at the Brooklyn Museum.

#### FINDINGS AND DESIGNATIONS

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture and other features of this building, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the 520 West End Avenue Residence has a special character, special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, heritage and cultural characteristics of New York City.

The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, the 520 West End Avenue Residence is an important early commission by residential architect Clarence F. True, who was a seminal figure in establishing the initial character of the Upper West Side, particularly the area between Riverside Drive and West End Avenue, during the years 1890-1901; that this residence demonstrates True's skill in combining various architectural elements, stylistic sources, and materials into a picturesque eclectic composition which is notable for its bold rusticated stone base, the complex massing of its Roman brick upper stories, and the subtlety and richness in the handling of its carved stone details of Romanesque, Gothic, and Elizabethan derivation; that it is enhanced by its prominent location on a large corner site which allows for two fully designed facades linked by a curved corner bay; that it is an especially fine representative of the diverse picturesque, eclectic architecture of the late 19th century, the period of the culmination of construction of the individual house in Manhattan, during which West End Avenue was one of the most desirable residential avenues in New York City for the upper-middle classes; that its design and materials represented a reaction to the uniformity of many of New York City's older brownstone rowhouses; and that it remains one of the most significant individually-designed large town houses on the Upper West Side and a survivor of the subsequent period of apartment house construction during which most of the houses along West End Avenue were demolished.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 21, Section 534, of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 3 of Title 25 of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as a Landmark the 520 West End Avenue Residence (Leech Residence), 520 West End Avenue, Borough of Manhattan, and designates Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1233, Lot 1, as its Landmark Site.

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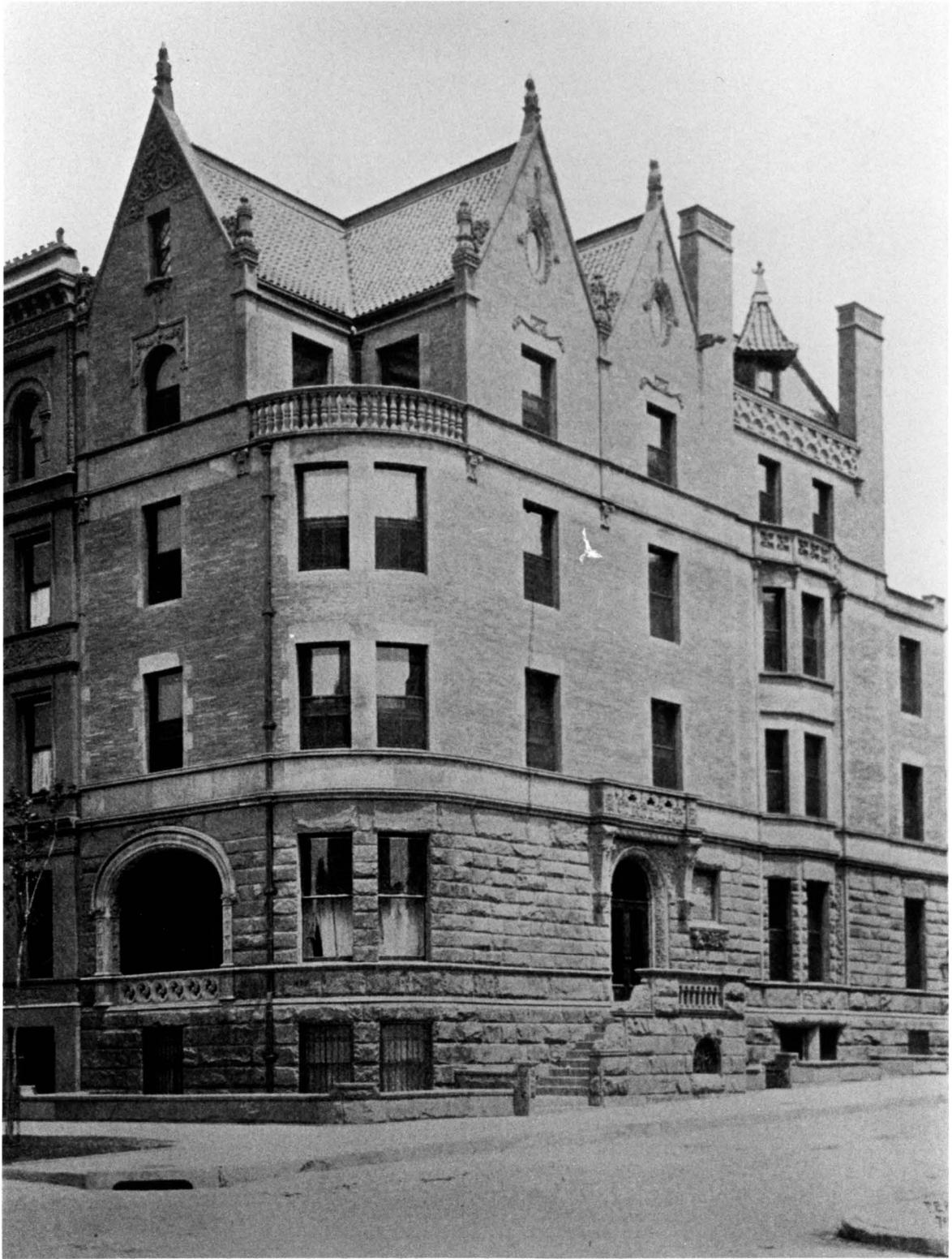
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520 West End Avenue House  
Manhattan  
Architect: Clarence True  
Built: 1892

Photo: True, "Designs of  
141 Dwelling Houses" (1893)



520 West End Avenue House  
Manhattan

Photo: LPC (1984)



Entrance stone carving  
520 West End Avenue House  
Manhattan

Photo: LPC