

**CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY, ELIZABETH HOME FOR GIRLS,**  
307 East 12<sup>th</sup> Street, Manhattan. Built 1891-2, Vaux & Radford, architects.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 454, Lot 66.

On October 30, 2007, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Elizabeth Home for Girls and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 6). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. There were six speakers in favor of designation, including Councilmember Rosie Mendez, and representatives of the Historic Districts Council, the Metropolitan Chapter of the Victorian Society, the Landmarks Conservancy and the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation and City Lore. The Commission has received letters of support from Councilmember Tony Avella and many others. There were no speakers in opposition.

Summary

The Elizabeth Home for Girls, on Manhattan's Lower East Side, was constructed in 1891-2 as a refuge for homeless girls by the Children's Aid Society (CAS). Designed by renowned architect Calvert Vaux in a picturesque, High Victorian Gothic style in brick and sandstone with a Dutch-influenced stepped gable, this building was one of approximately twelve that the architect created for this organization in the 1880s and 90s. It was the only lodging house designed for girls and one of only a few surviving CAS buildings. The Children's Aid Society was founded by Charles Loring Brace in 1853 to help New York's poorest children improve their lives through education and the advantages of "home-like" living quarters. Brace believed that it was necessary to remove poor children from the bad influences of their environment, where they often had no one to care for them and no opportunities for education, in order to improve their lives and alleviate the crushing poverty of the city. He was able to enlist many wealthy supporters and established a strong organization that continues to exist for the benefit of children and their families today. The Children's Aid Society employed several approaches to achieve its goals, including sending orphan children to homes in the Midwest where they could enjoy the "benefits" of a home in a more rural setting, lodging houses for homeless children and industrial schools where they were trained for trades and employment. The Children's Aid Society ran the Elizabeth Home in this building until 1930 when it was sold to Benjamin Lust, a practitioner of a natural "water cure" for illnesses, who coined the term naturopathy. In 1946, the building was purchased by the Florence Crittendon League and used again as a residence for girls without other places to live, called Barrett House. In 1984, the building changed ownership again and was converted to co-op apartments. Its picturesque façade is significant for its architecture and as an evocation of the working class history of the Lower East Side.



## DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

### Development of the East Village Area<sup>1</sup>

Prior to the arrival of European fur traders and the Dutch West India Company, Manhattan and much of the modern-day tri-state area was populated by bands of Native Americans from the Lenape tribe. The Lenape traveled from one encampment to another with the seasons. Fishing camps were occupied in the summer and inland camps were used during the fall and winter to harvest crops and hunt. The main trail ran the length of Manhattan from the Battery to Inwood following the course of Broadway adjacent to present day City Hall Park before veering east toward the area now known as Foley Square. It then ran north with major branches leading to habitations in Greenwich Village and the Lower East Side at a place called Rehtauck or Naghtogack in the vicinity of Corlears Hook. In 1626, Dutch West India Company Director Peter Minuit “purchased” the island from the Lenape for sixty guilders worth of trade goods.<sup>2</sup>

Under the Dutch, most inhabitants of New Amsterdam lived south of Fulton Street, where they could be close to each other for protection and close to the harbor for the essential shipping activities on which the colony depended. North of the settlement, many wealthy families owned large estates, used as farms and plantations and as country retreats, especially for those recurring times when epidemics threatened the crowded population on the island’s tip. The area now known as the Lower East Side and the East Village was divided into a series of large farms, which by the mid-eighteenth century were owned by three families: the Stuyvesants, Rutgers and De Lanceys. The Rutgers property ran from Chatham Square to Montgomery Street between the East River shore and Division Street. The De Lancey holdings consisted of two large parcels (approximately 340 acres) abutting the Rutgers property on the north and east, acquired by Lieutenant Governor James De Lancey around 1741. Peter Stuyvesant, who came to the colony in 1647, owned a large working farm he called his Bowerie. It lay between present day 5<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Streets, from Fourth Avenue to the East River.<sup>3</sup> He owned about 40 slaves, most employed in farm work. This property remained in the ownership of Stuyvesant’s descendents for many years. By the mid-nineteenth century, Peter Stuyvesant’s grandson Gerardus still lived in the original family house. Gerardus’ sons, Petrus and Nicholas lived nearby and divided the property between them. Nicholas called his section Bowery while his brother’s was called Petersfield, and this area included the property on which the Elizabeth Home was constructed.

After slavery was outlawed in New York in 1827, many former slaves settled in several black enclaves, including that near the Bowery, another in Greenwich Village, and still another in the growing slum area that came to be known as Five Points. During the eighteenth century Greenwich Village had been a small rural hamlet, but also was the site of a number of summer estates for wealthy families from downtown Manhattan. Its population swelled during the large cholera and yellow fever epidemics that struck in the early nineteenth century. The 1830s brought a huge economic boom to New York, attracting many more people and a great need for more commercial space as well as housing. African-Americans and other poor people were forced northward as more land was opened to development for the upper classes. The areas around Great Jones, Bleecker and Bond Streets were all being paved and built up with “genteel residences”<sup>4</sup> while Lafayette Place and St. Mark’s Place developed into some of the city’s most fashionable

addresses. Seeking to take advantage of this boom, Petrus Stuyvesant began to subdivide his property in the 1830s and sell lots for development in the 1840s. Many of the buyers of these lots were large landholders who purchased extensive property and built speculative homes here, waiting for the housing need to catch up. These individual houses were first rented, and then sold to middle class families.<sup>5</sup> Middle class residents however, did not stay too long in this section.

By the 1850s, the population of New York soared, due primarily to an influx of European immigrants as well as newly-freed African-Americans who were drawn to Manhattan because of the availability of jobs.<sup>6</sup> Immigrants had been arriving in New York continuously and already by 1825, over one fifth of the population of New York was foreign born. In the 1840s, many of these immigrants were Irish who started coming in large numbers looking for work after the collapse of Irish agriculture and the rapid industrialization that displaced many workers.

Germans had always had a strong presence in New York, but after the failed revolutions of 1848, 70,000 more arrived in New York, fleeing “land shortages, unemployment, famine and political and religious oppression.”<sup>7</sup> Many were poor and unskilled and tried to find housing in Manhattan’s notorious slum known as Five Points but the Irish and free Blacks who were already there did not welcome them. Although they were all classified as German, this name covered a multitude of ethnicities, and people tended to subdivide themselves, preferring to live among others who came from the same native communities and regions. The German immigrants first congregated in the five-block span between Canal and Rivington Streets, but the newcomers were forced to look elsewhere as landlords continued to crowd more and more people into inhuman living conditions. They moved northward, up the eastern side of Manhattan island, pushing out existing residents of this area, including the African-Americans who had been there.<sup>8</sup> Some of the existing homes in what is now the East Village<sup>9</sup> were subdivided or changed into boardinghouses, while others were torn down to make way for tenement buildings, constructed to fit more people into the same space. Eventually the area north of Division Street up to 18<sup>th</sup> Street and from Third Avenue to the East River filled with German immigrants until it became the third largest concentration of German speakers in the world.<sup>10</sup> This section came to be known as *Kleindeutschland*, Little Germany, Dutchtown, or *Deutschlandle* and was “the first large immigrant neighborhood in American history that spoke a foreign language” and remained the major German-American center in the United States for the rest of the century.<sup>11</sup>

German businesses congregated near Broadway creating a lively commercial strip, while various German groups created institutions to remind them of home and to help ease their way in their new lives. The *Staats-Zeitung* was the most popular of many German language newspapers. The German Dispensary (a designated New York City Landmark) helped with the health needs of the community, while the Ottendorfer Branch of the Free Circulating Library (a designated New York City Landmark) provided books in their native tongue. Social and other support organizations (vereins) organized around a place of origin or a particular outlook or activity. German shooting clubs became popular<sup>12</sup> as did clubs for music, such as the Aschenbroechel Verein. Beer gardens and dance halls such as Scheffel Hall (a designated New York City Landmark) provided places for lively entertainment.<sup>13</sup>

## The City's Poor

The poor German immigrants who lived in *Kleindeutschland* did not have the wherewithal to take advantage of these institutions. They could barely find a place to sleep and a way to feed their families. Since its earliest years, New York has dealt with the poor and helpless among its population with a combination of benevolence and disdain. When the Dutch West India Company sent a group of Dutch orphans to the colony “to be bound out as apprentices and servants” in 1656, Peter Stuyvesant established the first public home for orphans and an “Orphan Masters’ Court.”<sup>14</sup> Generally however, under the Dutch, religious organizations were expected to care for the city’s poor. Under the English, in 1693, the Common Council passed its first “poor rate” tax to enable them to distribute fuel, clothes, food and cash to the “deserving” poor and established an almshouse on Broad Street for those who were unable to care for themselves.<sup>15</sup> A two-story brick building was constructed on the Common in 1736, housing a mix of the city’s poor along with the unruly as well as convicted criminals, all of whom were required to attend prayer services and work if they were physically able, so they would not be a “Burthen to the Publick.”<sup>16</sup>

With time, the gap between the rich and poor grew, and increasing numbers of people needed financial help to overcome problems that were sometimes created by illness or the death of a spouse. The city provided more and more “outdoor relief” and also had to build more almshouses to accommodate the growing need. Religious and philanthropic organizations also helped, their efforts usually involving “education in the habits of self-discipline and the self-reliance necessary to survive in a wage-based economy... to instill prudence, decency, sobriety, thrift, punctuality” since poverty was usually seen as “moral turpitude, not misfortune.”<sup>17</sup> In 1806, the Isabella Graham Society for the Relief of Poor Widows opened an orphanage where poor children “could be brought up to lead productive lives,” that eventually led to the formation of the Orphan Asylum Society.<sup>18</sup>

By the early nineteenth century, only half of all children in New York attended school even though the traditional apprenticeship system for learning trades and behavior no longer existed. Many children were caught stealing or engaging in otherwise disruptive behavior and the Society for the Reformation of Juvenile Delinquents began in 1823 to try to deal with these problems. The first New York House of Refuge opened in 1825 to house children under sixteen years old, and the authorities used religion and education to try to redeem the children brought there.<sup>19</sup>

By the 1850s, conditions for the poor were only getting worse. The huge numbers of immigrants coming into New York increased the competition for jobs and housing, and crowded conditions led to higher rates of illness and crime. Efforts of groups such as the American Tract Society were comprised of preaching and giving away bibles, while the Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor was able to attract the interest and donations of many of New York’s wealthiest citizens. They managed to get more needy people into almshouses on Blackwell’s Island, build a new one for the able-bodied poor, and get a new truancy law passed that enabled the police to round up delinquent children to get them off the streets.<sup>20</sup>

### Children's Aid Society

The Children's Aid Society, another in a wide variety of efforts to deal with the problem of poor and uneducated children, was started by Charles Loring Brace (1826-1890) in 1853 and continued under his leadership for the next 37 years. Brace graduated from Yale University and studied theology at the Union Theological Seminary. After a trip to Europe, during which he traveled in England with Frederick Law Olmsted,<sup>21</sup> Brace began serving with Rev. Pease at the Five Points Mission in 1852. He was discouraged that the traditional methods of outreach were not helping change the lives of the people he saw. He also was struck by the large numbers of boys and girls who apparently had nothing useful to do and no one to look after them, and who seemed to be headed only for lives of crime. He decided that the most effective way to change conditions for the poor was to reach these children and try to change their circumstances.<sup>22</sup> He wanted to "help the helpless, neglected children of the city to help themselves to become good and useful citizens."<sup>23</sup> Typically, their families could not care for them and they were sent out on the streets to fend for themselves, or to find some way to bring money or food back home.<sup>24</sup> Because they were small, they were often preyed on by unsavory types who sent them out to steal, or they sold things on the streets or helped organ grinders in their trade. Boys would steal, sell newspapers or hawk matches, while many girls were forced into prostitution.<sup>25</sup> Street gangs developed to offer some protection for these wretched children who often slept on steam grates or in the remains of burned out buildings.

Brace believed that if he could show these children that someone cared about them, educate them to have good habits such as industry and self-control, and help them achieve some basic skills, they could get jobs and improve their lives. He felt that "home life was better than institutions and that self-help was better than alms."<sup>26</sup>

From its beginning, the work of the Children's Aid Society involved several separate efforts. The most radical and well-known was "placing out." Over the course of the first forty years, the organization took 97,738 children from New York, (some orphans, others from difficult home situations) and sent them by train ("the Orphan Trains") to situations away from New York City, usually with "Christian families" in the Midwest where they were supposed to enjoy the benefits of a good home life in a rural setting. While some did in fact become essentially members of these families and benefitted from the experience, others were put to work in stores and on farms, in conditions close to indentured servitude. Brace felt that this effort was very positive because he believed that it was important to completely change the circumstances of these children's lives in order to have a positive impact. "The effort to place the children of the street in country families revealed a spirit of humanity and kindness, throughout the rural districts, which was truly delightful to see."<sup>27</sup>

Since Brace could not remove every poor child from the bad influences of the city, he also made local efforts. These included the development of a series of lodging houses and industrial schools located around the city. The lodging houses were places a homeless child could come so he or she did not have to sleep on the street, with separate facilities for boys and girls. A young person could stay for a night or two if his difficulty was temporary, or he could stay for extended periods, and be assured of receiving food and a bath, as well as shelter. If they could pay, the children were asked for a small amount so that they felt they were paying their own way, rather than accepting charity, or they were asked to help with certain chores. These lodging houses eventually offered

evening or morning classes to help the children with reading and writing, and specific skills that could help them gain employment. The Newsboys' Lodging House was opened in a building at Fulton and Nassau streets in 1854. The liveliness and ingenuity of the newsboys had a special resonance with Brace, who admired these qualities but felt they needed to be channeled into some productive enterprise. By 1928, the Children's Aid Society ran seven lodging houses, located throughout the city.<sup>28</sup>

Brace saw that many poor children did not attend public school, either because they could not afford proper clothes, or because they had to work to help their families, so Brace established the Industrial Schools of the Children's Aid Society to educate these children.<sup>29</sup> The Industrial Schools taught reading and writing and character building, as well as skills such as carpentry for boys and cooking and laundering for girls. They also trained children to work on machines that might help them gain employment, such as sewing machines and typewriters, filling a gap left by the public schools. They provided clothes if needed, as well as a hot meal, and were non-sectarian. The Children's Aid Society found that different groups had different needs, so they organized specific schools for Italian, German and "Colored" children, and later started medical and dental clinics for these children as well. They became active in legislative efforts to promote their cause, such as working for the passage of the Compulsory Education Law of 1874. They started mothers' groups to train them for this most important task, and day care centers for those who had to work. They eventually opened homes for sick and convalescing children, a school for crippled children, kindergartens, summer camps and playgrounds. While the Children's Aid Society no longer runs lodging houses and schools, it continues to exist today, providing a variety of social services to New York children and their families.

#### Elizabeth Wheeler Home for Girls

The first lodging house for girls, called "The Girls' Temporary Home," was opened at 27 St. Mark's Place in 1863 and during its first nine months, this building served 597 girls. The intention of this facility was to be "a resting place, a temporary home for any girl without friend or family in the city . . . to gain time to seek reputable employment" as well as a place where they could get help and advice.<sup>30</sup> The Annual Report of the Children's Aid Society of 1889 called this girls' home "one of the most successful and economical of all the branches of the Society," but noted that there was a great need for an additional building for this facility.<sup>31</sup> In the Annual Report of the following year (1890) the writer was even more adamant. ". . . we feel deeply the lack of accommodations, and look forward earnestly to the time when, with increased facilities, much more can be accomplished."<sup>32</sup> They reported that during the previous year, there had been 15,533 lodgings in the house, 49,324 meals served, 45 girls trained on typewriters and 72 girls trained on sewing machines, with 178 girls sent to situations and employment.<sup>33</sup>

In July 1891, the property at 307 East 12<sup>th</sup> Street was purchased by Emily Wheeler and conveyed by her to the Children's Aid Society.<sup>34</sup> The home was given by Mary B. Wheeler, Mary B. Ceccarini and Emily B. Wheeler in memory of Elizabeth Davenport Wheeler.<sup>35</sup> The Elizabeth Home was designed by the preeminent architectural firm of Vaux & Radford.<sup>36</sup> The home opened with a festive dedication in 1892, and

included dormitories as well as single bedrooms for girls, sitting rooms, a reading room, office, dining rooms and kitchen, and rooms fitted with sewing machines and typewriters.

### Calvert Vaux

Calvert Vaux (1824-1895)<sup>37</sup> was one of the most prolific and influential architects working in America during the second half of the nineteenth century. His picturesque buildings and romantic landscape designs were constructed in numerous cities and towns and his books had a wide-ranging audience, contributing to the vogue during this period for interesting and picturesquely styled buildings. Vaux, trained in architecture, landscape design and planning, came from England to the United States in 1850 to work with A. J. Downing in Newburgh, New York as a partner in his Bureau of Architecture. They specialized in the creation of picturesque English country houses and also began the planning of the grounds around many government buildings in Washington, D.C. After Downing's death in 1852, Vaux began a partnership with Frank Clarke Withers, with whom he designed the Jefferson Market Courthouse (1874-77, a designated New York City Landmark). Vaux's book of house designs, *Villas and Cottages* (published originally 1857) was modeled on Downing's highly popular *Cottage Residences* and became a standard for the genre.

Vaux relocated to New York City where, in 1858, he and Frederick Law Olmsted entered the competition for Central Park with their plan for a "Greensward," the first public park in the country (a designated New York City Scenic Landmark). Their design, based on the tradition of English landscape gardening, became a major influence in the development of public parks throughout the country. Vaux was responsible for the design of many of the architectural features of the park, including the bridges, and the Bethesda Terrace and Fountain. He went on to design numerous projects with Olmsted under the auspices of the landscape firm, Olmsted, Vaux and Company (1865-72). These included Prospect Park in Brooklyn (1865, a designated New York City Scenic Landmark), Riverside, Illinois (1868-70), Morningside Park (1887-94, from earlier plans), and Riverside Park (1873-88).

Vaux designed many public buildings, institutions and grounds in various cities. These included the Hartford Retreat for the Insane in Connecticut (1865, with Olmsted), Hudson River State Hospital and Grounds (1867-72), the Grounds for Gallaudet College in Washington (1866), the grounds of Parliament buildings in Ottawa (1873-79), and the park system for Buffalo, NY. With Jacob Wrey Mould, who had come earlier from England and contributed many designs for Central Park, Vaux developed a Master Plan for the Metropolitan Museum of Art (1874-80) and the American Museum of Natural History (1874-77, both designated New York City Landmarks).

Around 1873, Vaux began a partnership with George Kent Radford (dates undetermined), a civil engineer, that was to last for eighteen years. This partnership was formalized as the architectural division of Vaux & Co., Landscape Architects in 1876. In addition to numerous designs for the Children's Aid Society during the last part of his career, Vaux designed a High Victorian Gothic townhouse for Samuel J. Tilden in New York (1881-4) and the grounds for Tilden's country estate, Greystone, in Yonkers, New York (1879-80). Vaux had a long and varied career, from private homes for the wealthy to model tenements for the poor, from the landscape of individual estates, to the layout for entire cities. His designs helped establish the standard aesthetic of the late nineteenth

century, both in building and landscaping and he is known as one of the founders of the field of landscape architecture.

### Calvert Vaux and the Children's Aid Society

Vaux became increasingly interested in the way architecture could be used to better the lives of unfortunate members of society and devoted much of the last part of his career to this cause. He was a careful observer of the first model tenement competition in 1879, sponsored by the journal, *Plumber & Sanitary Engineer*. In 1880, he designed a block of model tenements on First Avenue between 71<sup>st</sup> and 72<sup>nd</sup> Streets for the Improved Dwellings Association. These apartments had windows in each room, central courtyards for improved air circulation and roof-top gardens for the residents.<sup>38</sup>

Calvert Vaux was a friend of Charles Loring Brace who lived in a house Vaux designed in Hastings, New York. By the late 1870s, Brace's organization was successful and well-funded enough to want to construct its own lodging houses, in order to create the exact type of structure they needed. In 1879, Vaux designed their first purpose-built building, the East Side Boys' Lodging House and Industrial School on East Broadway and Gouveneur Street (demolished). The picturesquely designed, 3 ½ story, brick and brownstone building had steeply pitched roofs and held dormitories, classrooms, and a well-furnished reading room as well as a dispensary and sick room. The free-standing building was a far cry from the dingy tenements of the area and was hailed in the press as "Christianity solidified in brick and mortar."<sup>39</sup>

Vaux went on to design more than a dozen buildings for the Children's Aid Society in New York, a very important part of his work. These included four lodging houses, among them the West Side Lodging House at Seventh Avenue and 32<sup>nd</sup> Street (1883, demolished) and the Tompkins Square Lodging House and Industrial School at 8<sup>th</sup> Street and Avenue B (1885, a designated New York City Landmark), and five industrial schools that had similar facilities without the beds. This latter type included the Mott Street Industrial School at 256-258 Mott Street (1888, a designated New York City Landmark), and the Fourteenth Ward Industrial School (1888-89, a designated New York City Landmark).

The 44<sup>th</sup> Street Lodging House for Boys and Industrial School (1888-9, demolished) was the first to display a large, front-facing, stepped gable. According to the Society's 46<sup>th</sup> *Annual Report of 1888*, this element came from "an old Nuremburg house called the 'Petersen' building, [which] is one of the most picturesque in the city."<sup>40</sup> This lodging house was marked by steep gables, dormer windows and oriole towers, in keeping with Vaux's intentions to create a home-like and visually interesting composition, but also was "appropriately reminiscent of the city's Dutch heritage."<sup>41</sup> Most of Vaux's buildings that were built in the following years employed this design element.

The Children's Aid Society buildings were both domestic and institutional, intended to be

an ornament to a part of the city the ugliness of which is particularly in need of some relief. It is a fortunate circumstance that the objects of the Children's Aid Society require it to undertake its building operations in quarters where, but for its efforts, it is unlikely that there would be any architecture worth looking at or discussing.<sup>42</sup>



They were usually free-standing structures, with highly varied rooflines that provided visual interest and variety. Vaux believed that,

In any architectural design, the separate groups of forms may be, in themselves, attractive, or the building may be splendid in its general conception of masses, or rich in its varied and charming detail, but it will be defective as an architectural composition if it fails in its sky-line.<sup>43</sup>

Vaux's rooflines were usually faced with slate or tile, and consisted of mansard roofs with steeply pitched towers, conical roofs or front-facing stepped gables. These buildings were built of brick and sandstone, common and inexpensive materials that were deemed to give a picturesque effect. Vaux tried to site them on corner lots because he felt that two perspectives gave him a chance to create a more interesting design. He used projecting oriels, large windows, dormers and chimneys in an attempt to create a home-like atmosphere for the neglected children who came here. Faithful to his earliest design theories, Vaux worked to evoke the imagery of a snug country inn in the middle of New York City.<sup>44</sup> By varying the placement of the entrance as well as the size and placement of the window openings, he created a lively façade, ornamented solely with decorative brickwork such as string courses and recessed panels.

#### Design of the Elizabeth Home for Girls

The Elizabeth Home for Girls, the last of this group designed by Vaux has the picturesque characteristics common to Vaux's other designs although its 40-foot-wide, mid-block site required a more restrained composition. It has two asymmetrical sections, with the entrance sited off center, in the western side. The eastern section is topped by the typical stepped gable while the western side has a mansard roof with two dormer windows, a reverse arrangement from that of the House of Reception on West 23<sup>rd</sup> Street (1890, demolished). The windows are placed along continuous sills, providing some unity in a façade of varied window sizes, shapes and groupings. Unlike many of the other CAS buildings, this one has no projecting oriel window, but here the entrance is given special emphasis by its projecting surround topped by a balustraded balcony. While not as elaborate as some of the other CAS buildings, the Elizabeth Home is a distinctive building that would have provided the sense of "hominess" so desired by both the architect and the organization. Located on a block of brick-fronted rowhouses, this building is obviously different, but not enough to be jarring. Rather, it continues to add interest and variety to the streetscape.

#### Subsequent History

In 1895, the Children's Aid Society hired architects Clinton & Russell to create a two-story addition on the north of the building to house a laundry.<sup>45</sup> Another alteration, in 1915, added bedrooms in three floors above this addition.<sup>46</sup> In 1901, the Children's Aid Society acquired the adjacent property at No. 311 East 12<sup>th</sup> Street and converted it into an addition to the Elizabeth Home.<sup>47</sup>

In 1930, the Society moved its operations to West 134<sup>th</sup> Street and sold both of these buildings to Dr. Benedict Lust, a promoter of natural healing.<sup>48</sup> Lust, a German immigrant with degrees in osteopathy and medicine, believed in natural healing, including a "water cure" and organized the Naturopathic Society of America. He

established the American School of Naturopathy which offered a post-graduate curriculum in naturopathy, chiropractic, massage and physiotherapy.<sup>49</sup>

Upon Lust's death, the buildings were purchased by the Florence Crittenton League and remodeled and reopened in 1948 as a private shelter for girls aged 16-21, called Barrett House.<sup>50</sup> The Crittenton League was started in 1883 by Charles N. Crittenton, a wealthy New York drug supply manufacturer.<sup>51</sup> Originally called the Florence Crittenton Rescue Home for Girls and Night Mission for Fallen Women (later the National Florence Crittenton Foundation), it was named after his late daughter and was established as a shelter for troubled and runaway young girls, many of whom were orphaned, and as a mission for women of ill repute. In the late 1880s, the group started a shelter and mission on Bleeker Street that gained renown for its midnight gospel readings. By the turn-of-the-century, the Crittenton Foundation operated in many large U.S. cities and was expanding its services in New York. In 1913, the group relocated its headquarters to West 27<sup>th</sup> Street and in 1946 purchased the former Children's Aid Society buildings in order to be able to care for more residents and offer expanded services. The home's residents were generally referred there by courts, clinics and private agencies and given a variety of therapies to help them emotionally, while keeping them out of the House of Detention.

In 1982, the building was sold to a developer and in 1984 it was re-opened as co-op apartments.

### Description

The Elizabeth Home for Girls is a four story brick-faced building set on a raised basement. Built originally on a street of townhouses (East 12<sup>th</sup> Street), the forty-foot-wide façade blends in by appearing to be two buildings. The western section is two bays wide and holds the building's main entrance, in the eastern bay of the first story. The raised basement has a pair of large windows framed by a sandstone lintel and watertable and fronted by an iron grille, while the areaway is marked by a non-historic iron fence. The entrance, reached by a short concrete stairway with non-historic iron railings is emphasized by a projecting brick enframement embellished by small, terra-cotta ornament, string courses and globe lights. It is capped by a projecting hood supported on stone brackets. The entrance consists of a paneled door with a large glass light flanked by paneled side sections. A plain, sandstone lintel separates it from the large, round-headed glass transom that is subdivided into small squares. A pair of plain rectangular windows on a continuous sill is in the western bay of the first story. The second story has a single window in the western bay and, in the eastern bay, is a double multi-light, non-historic door that leads to a small, balustraded balcony formed by the projecting hood over the entranceway. At the third story, two pairs of narrow, rectangular windows share a common sill and a smooth sandstone lintel. A simple, corbelled brick cornice separates the roof from the floor below. This section has a mansard roof pierced by two dormer windows with bell-shaped roofs and flanked on the western side by a stepped parapet wall that projects above the roof.

A tall, prominent chimney rises between the two sections. Its plain brick facing is marked by several narrow string courses. The section on the east is topped by a stepped, front-facing gable with a decorative sandstone molding that echoes the steps. Each floor contains grouped window openings linked by continuous sills and sometimes lintels. The

fourth story has three, round-headed windows capped by a continuous, rounded brick molding. The third story has four evenly-spaced windows under a plain, continuous stone lintel, while the second story has two pairs of windows under stone lintels and a sill that runs across the entire section. There are five windows with transoms and a continuous stone sill and lintel at the first story, and two individual windows fronted by iron grilles at the basement level. A third window (on the eastern bay) has been converted to an entrance, with a non-historic door and light. A broad sandstone lintel and watertable is located at the top of the basement level, creating a strong distinction between it and the rest of the building. A non-historic iron fence shields the areaway.

Report researched and written by  
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### NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Much of the introductory material is from: Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace, *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC), *513 Grand Street House Designation Report* (LP- 2270) (New York: City of New York, 2007), report prepared by Marianne S. Percival; and LPC, *Hamilton-Holly House Designation Report* (LP-2157) (New York: City of New York, 2004), report prepared by Jay Shockley.

<sup>2</sup> *Gotham*, 5-23; Historian R. P. Bolton speculates that the land of lower Manhattan may have been occupied by the Mareckawick group of the Canarsee which occupied Brooklyn and the East River islands. Upper Manhattan was occupied by the Reckgawawanc. The Native American “system of land tenure was that of occupancy for the needs of a group” and that those sales that the Europeans deemed outright transfers of property were to the Native American closer to leases or joint tenancy contracts where they still had rights to the property. The Weckquaesgeek fled to Rehtauck/Naghtogack to escape the Mohawks only to be massacred by order of Willem Kieft of the Dutch West India Company. Reginald Pelham Bolton, *New York City in Indian Possession*, 2d ed. (New York: Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, 1920; reprint, 1975), 7, 14-15, 79; Robert Steven Grumet, *Native American Place Names in New York City* (New York: Museum of the City of New York, 1981), 69.

<sup>3</sup> *Gotham*, 55.

<sup>4</sup> *Gotham*, 448.

<sup>5</sup> LPC, *NoHo East Historic District Designation Report* (LP-2129) (NY: City of New York, 2003), report written by Donald Presa.

<sup>6</sup> *Gotham*, 479.

<sup>7</sup> “Germans,” in *The Encyclopedia of New York*, Thomas Jackson, ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 463.

<sup>8</sup> Leslie M. Harris, *In the Shadow of Slavery, African-Americans in New York City, 1626-1863* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 267.

<sup>9</sup> The section now known as the East Village was actually part of the Lower East Side until determined real estate salesmen coined the term “East Village” in the 1950s in an effort to give it more cache.

<sup>10</sup> *Gotham*, 745.

<sup>11</sup> “Germans,” *Encyclopedia of New York*, 463.

<sup>12</sup> The clubhouse of the German-American Shooting Society at 12 St. Mark’s Place is a designated New York City Landmark.

<sup>13</sup> Terry Miller, *Greenwich Village and How It Got That Way* (New York: Crown Publ., Inc., 1990), 246.

<sup>14</sup> *Gotham*, 45.

<sup>15</sup> *Gotham*, 144-5.

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- <sup>16</sup> *Gotham*, 156.
- <sup>17</sup> *Gotham*, 383.
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>19</sup> *Gotham*, 501.
- <sup>20</sup> *Gotham*, 776-9.
- <sup>21</sup> Francis R. Kowsky, *Country Park & City, The Architecture and Life of Calvert Vaux* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 272.
- <sup>22</sup> Children's Aid Society, 38<sup>th</sup> Annual Report (November, 1890), vi-vii.
- <sup>23</sup> A. Blair Thaw, MD, *The Industrial Schools of the Children's Aid Society* (New York: Bureau of Municipal Research, 1914), 6.
- <sup>24</sup> Luc Sante, *Low Life, Lures and Snares of Old New York* (NY: Vintage Books, 1991), 305.
- <sup>25</sup> Sante, 306.
- <sup>26</sup> Children's Aid Society, *The Children's Aid Society, Its History, Plan and Results* (NY: CAS, 1893), 3.
- <sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.
- <sup>28</sup> Thaw, 42.
- <sup>29</sup> By 1893, there were 21 Industrial Schools sponsored by the Children's Aid Society. *Ibid.*, 39.
- <sup>30</sup> *Annual Report of the Treasurer of the Children's Aid Society* (1863), 8.
- <sup>31</sup> 37<sup>th</sup> Annual Report of the CAS (1889), 32.
- <sup>32</sup> 38<sup>th</sup> Annual Report of the CAS (1890), 19.
- <sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 19-20.
- <sup>34</sup> New York County Registers Office, Liber Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 6, page 246 and Liber 7, page 135. This lot had remained in the ownership of the Stuyvesant family until 1851, after which it had a long series of individual owners.
- <sup>35</sup> "Elizabeth Home for Girls," *New York Times* (Dec. 14, 1892), 9.
- <sup>36</sup> William Alex and George B. Tatum, *Calvert Vaux, Architect & Planner*, (New York: INK, Inc., 1994), 215. There has been some indication that an associate in the firm, Nicholas Gillesheimer, actually designed this building, but the building permit indicates Vaux & Radford and it is known that Calvert Vaux was very involved with these buildings throughout this period.
- <sup>37</sup> Much of the information about Calvert Vaux comes from : "Vaux, Calvert," in *Macmillan Encyclopedia of Architects*, Adolf K. Placzek, Editor (New York: The Free Press, 1982),303-4; Alex & Tatum, *Calvert Vaux*, Landmarks Preservation Commission, Children's Aid Society, Tompkins Square Lodging House for Boys and Industrial School, aka Eleventh Ward Lodging House (LP-2055) (New York: City Of New York, 2000), report prepared by Eric Washington.
- <sup>38</sup> Kowsky, 267.
- <sup>39</sup> Kowsky, 272-4.
- <sup>40</sup> Quoted in Alex, 214.
- <sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>42</sup> Robert A. M. Stern, Thomas Mellins and David Fishman, *New York 1880* (New York: Monacelli Press, Inc., 1999), 275, note 62.
- <sup>43</sup> Quoted in Kowsky, 274.
- <sup>44</sup> Kowsky, 274.
- <sup>45</sup> New York Department of Buildings, Alteration 1155-1895.
- <sup>46</sup> New York Department of Buildings, Alteration 2272-1910.
- <sup>47</sup> New York County Registers Office, Liber Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 92, page 41.
- <sup>48</sup> New York County Registers Office, Liber Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 3788, page 45; "New Housing Deals Feature Trading," *New York Times*, (Nov. 14, 1930), 24; and "East Side Realty in Brisk Demand," *New York Times* (Sept. 25, 1930), 47.
- <sup>49</sup> Gloria Cooksey, "Lust, Benedict (1872-1945)," *Gale Encyclopedia of Alternative Medicine* (New York: Gale Group, 2001).
- <sup>50</sup> New York County Registers Office, Liber Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 4420, page 245; and "Crittendon League to Occupy New Quarters: Plans Wider Program of Shelter Services," *New York Times* (May 15, 1946), 18.
- <sup>51</sup> Further information about the Crittendon League comes from LPC, *NoHo East Historic District Designation Report*.

## FINDINGS AND DESIGNATION

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 Children's Aid Society's Elizabeth Home for Girls has a special character and a 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 Elizabeth Home for Girls, constructed in 1891-2, is a fine and rare remaining example of the lodging houses/industrial schools constructed and run by the Children's Aid Society during the second half of the nineteenth century intended to improve the lives of the poor children of New York; that the Elizabeth Home was the only one built exclusively for girls and one of the last of the more than twelve buildings designed by the renowned architect Calvert Vaux for the Children's Aid Society; that this building, like the others Vaux designed, draws on the picturesque vocabulary of the High Victorian Gothic style along with German Renaissance or Dutch details such as the stepped gable; that the variety and abundance of details and window openings and its warm brick and sandstone materials added visual richness to the cheerless, working class neighborhood in which it was built; that the Children's Aid Society was founded in 1852 by Charles Loring Brace to find ways to help the numerous poor, immigrant children of the Lower East Side; that Brace, trained as a Protestant minister, believed that changing the lives of the neglected and orphaned children of poor families was the best way to help alleviate poverty; that Brace devised a number of approaches to try to help these children, including sending them to live in homes in the mid-west, creating lodging houses where homeless children could come for a warm bed and a hot meal, and industrial schools where they could receive practical training in skills that would enable them to get paying jobs; that the Children's Aid Society, run for more than half a century by Brace and his son, continues to work toward the betterment of the lives' of New York's children today; that the Children's Aid Society used this building until it moved its operation uptown in 1930; that the building was then purchased by by Dr. Benedict Lust, a German doctor who began the Naturopathic Society of America and the American School of Naturopathy until 1945; that the building was then used by the Florence Crittendon League as a home for destitute young women; that in 1984 the building was converted to co-op apartments as it is today.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 74, Section 3020 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 Children's Aid Society's Elizabeth Home for Girls, 307 East 12<sup>th</sup> Street, Manhattan, and designates as its Landmark Site Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 454, Lot 66.

Robert B. Tierney, Chair

Pablo E. Vengoechea, Vice-Chair

Diana Chapin, Joan Gerner, Roberta Brandes Gratz, Christopher Moore, Commissioners



Children's Aid Society, Elizabeth Home for Girls  
307 East 12<sup>th</sup> Street  
Manhattan  
Photo: Caroline Pasion



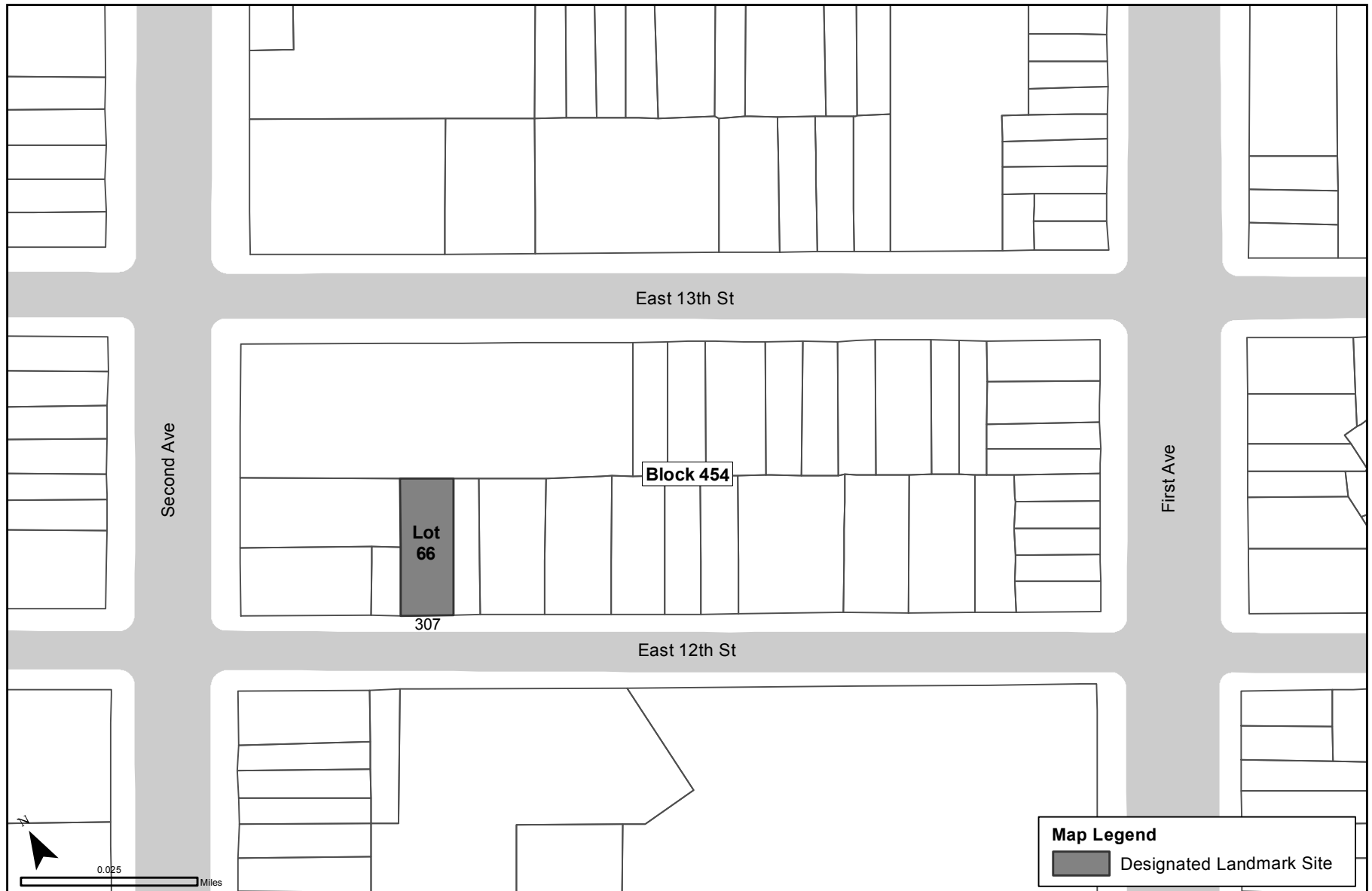
Children's Aid Society, Elizabeth Home for Girls  
307 East 12<sup>th</sup> Street, Manhattan  
Photos: Caroline Pasion





Children's Aid Society, Elizabeth Home for Girls  
Entrance detail  
Photo: Caroline Pasion





CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY, ELIZABETH HOME FOR GIRLS (LP-2274), 307 East 12th Street.  
 Borough of Manhattan, Tax Map Block 454, Lot 66.

Designated: March 18, 2008

Graphic Source: New York City Department of City Planning, MapPLUTO, Edition 06C, December 2006.  
 Author: New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, JM.