

**UNION LEAGUE CLUB**, 38 East 37<sup>th</sup> Street (aka 34-38 East 37<sup>th</sup> Street, 48 Park Avenue), Manhattan. Built: 1929-31. Architect: Benjamin Wistar Morris, of Morris & O'Connor

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 866, Lot 42

On November 17, 2009, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation of the Union League Club and the proposed designation of the Landmark Site. The hearing had been advertised in accordance with provisions of law. Two people spoke in support of designation, including representatives of New York State Assembly Member Richard N. Gottfried and the Historic Districts Council. There were no speakers in opposition to designation. The Commission has received a letter supporting designation from a representative of the owner.

### Summary

Built in 1929-31, the Union League is a fine example of a neo-Classical style clubhouse, combining elements that recall the architecture of 18<sup>th</sup> century England and the American colonies. This style was especially popular with public institutions in the late 1920s and may suggest the influence of such architects as Edward Lutyens and John Russell Pope. A continuous projecting cornice divides the nine-story structure into two distinct sections that reflect the interior program. The massive lower floors house the primary social spaces, such as the dining rooms, billiard room and library, and the U-shaped upper floors contain more than sixty bedrooms. Located at the southwest corner of Park Avenue and 37<sup>th</sup> Street in the Murray Hill section of Manhattan, the main (north) façade incorporates a curved double-height entrance pavilion and oversized Palladian style windows, as well as a large pediment framing a cartouche with the club's initials. A second entrance, on Park Avenue, was intended for member's wives and daughters who had their own dining facilities and lounge on the fourth floor. The Union League was one of the first clubs in New York City to welcome women and this entrance is crowned by a decorative lintel displaying a relief with four female faces. This relief, as well as the rectangular panels that flank that 37<sup>th</sup> Street entrance, share a strong graphic quality that suggests the influence of the Art Deco style, which dominated mainstream aesthetics during this era. The Union League was founded in 1863. Members promised "absolute and unqualified" loyalty to the United States and the Republican Party. During the Civil War, the club organized the first black regiment in New York State and later played a significant role in establishing the Metropolitan Museum of Art. In 1881, after occupying former residences on Union, and then Madison Square, the club moved to Fifth Avenue and 39<sup>th</sup> Street where a clubhouse was built on leased property. The current site was assembled by J.P. "Jack" Morgan and his brother-in-law Herbert L. Satterlee, who later served as president of the Union League. These prominent families shared a strong interest in the maintaining the neighborhood's residential character and sold the property with precise covenants limiting the structure's height and massing. Since opening in February 1931, there have been few significant changes to the exterior. The original fenestration and masonry appears well maintained and the Union League continues to operate the building as a private club.



## DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

### Union League Club

The Union League was established in New York City in 1863 and incorporated in 1865. Similar to patriotic Union Leagues (also known as the Loyal National League) in Boston, Philadelphia and various cities in New York State, members pledged “absolute and unqualified loyalty to the Government of the United States, and unwavering support of its efforts for suppression of the rebellion.”<sup>1</sup> Signers of the “articles of association” included Henry Whitney Bellows, Oliver Wolcott Gibbs, and Frederick Law Olmsted – all members of the United States Sanitary Commission, which coordinated efforts by women volunteers in support of the Union army during the Civil War. Following President Abraham Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation in January 1863 and the destructive Draft Riots of July 1863, the club received permission to “enlist persons of color” from the U.S. Secretary of War and that regiment – the first in New York State – rallied outside the League’s first home, former residence of dry goods merchant Henry Parish on March 5, 1864.<sup>2</sup> Located on the north side of Union Square, “it was a fortunate site for the opening labors of the club – in full view of one of the chief places of public gatherings, military reviews and popular demonstrations; easy of access, and an advertisement in itself of the existence and activity of the association.”<sup>3</sup>

By war’s end, the Union League attracted more than 800 members, many who were successful New York City businessmen. In 1868, the club began to lease the former home of financier Leonard Jerome (1859, demolished). Located at the southeast corner of Madison Avenue and 26<sup>th</sup> Street, the Union League gathered here for thirteen years.<sup>4</sup> The clubhouse contained a large ballroom that functioned as an art gallery and a theater where representatives of various organizations met in 1869 “to found an institute and museum of art” – later known as the Metropolitan Museum of Art.<sup>5</sup>

The Union League voted to move to Murray Hill in 1879, leasing an 84-by-152 foot site from the estate of John M. Bixby at the northeast corner of Fifth Avenue and 39<sup>th</sup> Street. This decision – to rent rather than buy property – caused significant debate among members and would eventually cause the club to relocate.<sup>6</sup> Completed in early 1881, the new Fifth Avenue clubhouse was designed in the Queen Anne style by the Boston architects Peabody & Stearns. Faced with Philadelphia brick and terra-cotta reliefs, the memorably lavish interiors were decorated by Louis Comfort Tiffany and John La Farge.

Members began to investigate “abandoning” this clubhouse as early as 1905.<sup>7</sup> With large retail stores lining both sides of the avenue, the neighborhood was starting to lose prestige. Furthermore, the club’s ground lease was becoming increasingly valuable. The *New York Times* reported that such action would:

. . . probably cause greater surprise than any club removal of recent years. The change, however, is one dictated almost solely by business considerations . . . It was pointed out that the club could probably realize enough from the sale of its ground lease to erect a handsome new clubhouse on a somewhat less conspicuous and less valuable site, and own its own home free and clear.<sup>8</sup>

Around this time, such venerated clubs as the Union (1903, demolished) and the Harmonie (1905) moved farther uptown. In a similar spirit, the Union League established a new building fund in 1907. The clubhouse was described as “a little shabby” and the fire department labeled it “a fire hazard – an old trap which might someday start a general conflagration in the midtown district.”<sup>9</sup> Of equal importance were escalating expenses – not only was a refurbishment of the

interiors needed, but the annual cost of the ground lease and real estate taxes were continuing to grow. Despite such conditions, most members opposed moving – 73% as late as 1923 – and more than two decades would pass before any significant action was taken.<sup>10</sup>

Alfred E. Marling became club president in 1928 and attitudes began to shift. That year, A.E. Lefcocurt began to construct 295 Madison Avenue. Forty stories tall, this towering structure would eventually overshadow the aging clubhouse. Marling was president of Horace S. Ely, a realty firm, and once a desirable site was found he worked quietly to persuade the membership to relocate. On February 26, 1929 a decisive meeting was held in which 307 of 400 attending members approved the sale of the leasehold and the purchase of a site at the southwest corner of Park Avenue and 37<sup>th</sup> Street. One member recalled: “We had no feeling of triumph . . . We left the hall that night in the mood of men filing out from a funeral.”<sup>11</sup> The next day, the *New York Times* observed: “The Union League has a leasehold to sell. When that is sold, it will adventure into the joys and pangs of owning its own house on its own land.”<sup>12</sup>

### The Site

The Union League stands on a 90-by-130 foot parcel at the southwest corner of Park Avenue and 37<sup>th</sup> Street. Only two blocks from the lively Fifth Avenue shopping corridor, the streets that surround the club’s fourth home are noticeably quiet and mostly residential, with the majority of structures planned as single-family homes or apartment buildings.<sup>13</sup>

At the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, residents of Murray Hill became increasingly uncomfortable with the “encroachment of commercial structures.”<sup>14</sup> In response, the Murray Hill Association was established in 1914 “for the purpose of preserving and promoting the residential character of said neighborhood, for the purpose of preserving the Murray Hill restrictive agreement.”<sup>15</sup> This 1847 document stipulated that only brick-and-stone dwellings, as well as attached stables and churches, were permitted between East 33<sup>rd</sup> and 38<sup>th</sup> Streets, and what would eventually become Madison and Lexington Avenues.

The financier J. Pierpont Morgan moved to 219 Madison Avenue (1853, demolished), at the corner of 36<sup>th</sup> Street, in 1880. In 1902-7, he erected an impressive library (McKim, Mead & White, a designated New York City Landmark) beside his residence and gradually demolished some of the neighboring structures to create a park-like setting. By this time, he owned “about nineteen lots, or about two-thirds of the entire block.”<sup>16</sup> Following Morgan’s death in 1913, his son, J.P. “Jack” Morgan Jr., was elected president of the Murray Hill Association.<sup>17</sup> Though passage of the 1916 zoning ordinance protected the area’s residential character, he remained vigilant about discouraging other types of development, especially on the blocks adjoining his father’s library.<sup>18</sup> Initially, the Association tried to use legal means to enforce the 1847 covenants.<sup>19</sup> When the New York State Appellate Court ruled against them in 1916, the Morgan family started to acquire a succession of parcels in the vicinity.<sup>20</sup>

The Union League site was assembled in stages starting in 1925, when the Midban Company purchased the former home of Frederick C. Havemeyer at 34 East 37<sup>th</sup> Street. This firm was headed by the club’s future president Herbert L(ivingston) Satterlee (1863-1947),<sup>21</sup> who married J. Pierpont Morgan’s eldest daughter Louisa Pierpont Morgan (1866-1946) in 1900, and lived around the corner in a six-story house at 37 East 36<sup>th</sup> Street (McKim Mead & White, 1903, demolished).<sup>22</sup> A “mysterious buyer” then acquired the (Kate W.) Winthrop mansion at 38 East 37<sup>th</sup> Street. The *New York Times* did not identify the purchaser but reported in January 1926 that “these interests have been steadily making protective purchases in this block, which contains the Morgan homes and the library.”<sup>23</sup> By February 1929, the Union League had begun negotiating with the Flintlock Realty Company<sup>24</sup> to purchase “the old Winthrop house, the

former home of John Crosby Gage and the home of Miss Annie Burr Jennings.”<sup>25</sup> According to agreements filed with the City Register, these four lots shared air and light restrictions to protect neighboring properties. The Union League took title to the site in September 1929.<sup>26</sup> That month, a member of the Union League, developer Frederick T. Ley, paid more than \$1 million for club’s Fifth Avenue leasehold.<sup>27</sup>

### A New Clubhouse

According to public reports, the “greater part of the property was purchased from Mr. Morgan” who made no profit from the sale.<sup>28</sup> Though “Jack” Morgan was not associated with the Union League, his father had been a member for four decades, from 1873 to 1913. Furthermore, “Jack” lived in the former Stokes Mansion at the southeast corner of Madison Avenue and 37<sup>th</sup> Street and wanted some say in how his block evolved. The *New York Times* reported that the area was the “so-called quiet section of the restricted Murray Hill section” and that the sale was “destined to strengthen the home atmosphere there.”<sup>29</sup>

Plans for the new clubhouse, estimated to cost \$1 million, were announced in late August 1929. Benjamin Wistar Morris III, a Union League member since 1922, was named architect.<sup>30</sup> Though the design of the exterior was not yet finalized, a newspaper reporter described the arrangement of the interiors with accuracy, including the curved stairs, the double-height library, and 64 bedrooms.<sup>31</sup> In September 1929, the building committee approved the design of the exterior, and on December 29, 1929, a rendering was published in the *New York Times*. The laying of the cornerstone occurred six months later, in June 1930. It contained a small box with copies of various speeches, newspapers, coins and documents relating to the clubhouse project, as well as a letter from Charles Evan Hughes, chief justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, who wrote:

But the coming era most probably will have even higher privileges and opportunities, and the benediction of the past will rest graciously on the new venture. The new home will be irradiated with the same spirit and I have no doubt that the patriotic fervor which brought the club into being will give zest to its renewed endeavors.<sup>32</sup>

The building committee later boasted that the clubhouse was “a notable adornment to the neighborhood” and that Morris’ work “has been beyond praise.”<sup>33</sup>

### The Architects

The Union League was designed by Morris & O’Connor. Formed in 1930, this architectural firm was headed by Benjamin Wistar Morris III (1870-1944) and his son-in-law Robert B(arnard) O’Connor (c. 1896-1993). Born in Oregon, Morris specialized in the Classical style, attending both Columbia University and the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris. Upon returning to New York City in the mid-1890s, he worked briefly with Boring & Tilton, and later, on the design of the main building of the New York Public Library (1898-1911, a designated New York City Landmark and Interior) with Carrere & Hastings.

Morris married Alice Fenwick Goodwin, daughter of Rev. Francis Goodwin, a cousin of J. Pierpont Morgan, in 1901.<sup>34</sup> In subsequent years, he frequently benefited from his links to the Morgan family. He formed a partnership with Christopher Grant La Farge in 1910 and La Farge & Morris designed several buildings for J. Pierpont Morgan and “Jack” Morgan, including a memorial (1910-15) to Junius Morgan at the Wadsworth Athenaeum in Hartford, a neo-Georgian style country house called “Matinecock Point” (c. 1913) near Glen Cove, Long Island, as well as a library-administration building (c. 1913) on the campus of Trinity College, which Morris

attended as an undergraduate. In the late 1920s, Morris was commissioned by “Jack” Morgan to design an annex (1927-28, a designated New York City Landmark) to the Morgan Library, at the northeast corner of Madison Avenue and 36<sup>th</sup> Street. He also produced designs for several large office buildings in the financial district: the Cunard Building (1917-21, with Thomas Hastings, a designated New York City Landmark and Interior), the Seamen’s Bank for Savings (1926), and the neo-Georgian style Bank of New York & Trust Company (1927-29, a designated New York City Landmark).

Robert O’Connor attended Trinity College in the mid-1910s and was the first student to graduate from Princeton University with a professional degree in architecture (1920).<sup>35</sup> He began his career as a draftsman with Trowbridge & Livingston and later worked with Hyde & Shepherd. Following his 1924 marriage to Mary Wistar Morris, he joined her father’s firm as office manager. O’Connor became a full partner in 1930. His partnership with Morris lasted about a dozen years, until 1942.

Morris & O’Connor received fewer commissions during the Depression years. There was less work in general and traditional aesthetics were starting to lose favor. In 1934, however, they designed the Avery Memorial, an addition to the Wadsworth Athenaeum in Hartford, Connecticut, that incorporated some of the earliest museum interiors to reflect European modernism, particularly the work of Le Corbusier. This project earned them a silver medal from the Architectural League of New York. After the death of Morris in 1943, O’Connor collaborated with Boston architect Walter H. Kilham, Jr.

### Designing the Union League

The structure’s general form was determined by the club’s architectural committee and various restrictive covenants that limited height and bulk. When the Union League acquired the site from various Morgan concerns in 1929, it agreed to build no taller than 173 feet, with setbacks defined at 90 and 133 feet. The first setback was significantly lower than what the 1916 zoning resolution allowed. At 140 feet, Park Avenue is unusually wide and without such covenants the first setback could have been twice as high. The club was also required to establish a 10-foot-deep buffer between the south wall and the south lot line, and to limit the visibility of kitchen and pantry windows from the rear of the Satterlee residence on 36<sup>th</sup> Street. Lastly, the club agreed to paint the lower parts of west and south walls white, and to carry the fireplace flues “from the roof of Mr. Satterlee’s house to the highest level” of the building.<sup>36</sup>

At 11 stories, the Union League was the tallest building on the block. It stood above the row houses to the west and had the potential to cast shadows across the gardens that bordered the Morgan Library. Setbacks, however, were used to diminish the impact of the building’s height and to divide the elevations into distinct sections. While the more grandly-scaled lower floors would be devoted to social activities, the fifth through eighth stories would be used for lodgings. This difference is also expressed in the fenestration, with simpler one-over-one sash on the upper floors only. Furthermore, to control the perception of height, Morris inserted strong horizontal elements, such as projecting cornices and decorative limestone bands.

The main entrance is located on 37<sup>th</sup> Street, at the center of a rounded double-height pavilion. When clubs are built on corner parcels, they typically face a quieter side street. For instance, New York’s first purpose-built club, the Union Club (1855, demolished), was oriented towards West 22<sup>nd</sup> Street, and the earlier Union League faced East 39<sup>th</sup> Street. This arrangement allows for a central reception hall, containing stairs or elevators, with substantial social rooms on either side. Morris, however, broke from this tradition in a significant way. There are no stairs on the exterior and members walk directly into a vestibule, where steps to both the first and ground

floors are located. Not only were these floors given equal importance, but during this period institutions with walk-in entrances were perceived as more inviting and modern.<sup>37</sup>

In spite of the current popularity of the Art Deco style in New York City, the Union League was designed in a historical style. Faced with red brick and limestone, the elevations deliberately recall the architecture of 18<sup>th</sup>-century England and the American colonies, often called the Georgian style. There are arched Palladian-style windows set into shallow recessed arches, multi-story quoins, and a large pediment that frames a cartouche displaying the club's initials, as well as draped garlands and Roman fasces (bundles with ax heads). During the 1920s, numerous residences were designed in a similar manner, as well as such institutional structures as the New York Junior League (John Russell Pope, 1927-29) on East 71<sup>st</sup> Street, the Spence School (John Russell Pope, 1929) on East 91<sup>st</sup> Street, the Jewish Theological Seminary (William Gehron, 1930), and the Museum of the City of New York (Joseph H. Freedlander, 1932).

Classicism, more importantly, was viewed as particularly appropriate for social clubs. The first home of the Union Club, for instance, resembled the Travelers and Reform clubs in London and helped define how future American clubhouses would look. McKim Mead & White dominated the field from the 1880s to the 1910s, designing a succession of clubhouses based on Renaissance models: the Freundshaft Club (1885, demolished), the Century Association (1889), the Metropolitan Club (1894), and the University Club (1896). Delano & Aldrich became the leading designers of clubhouses in the 1910s and 1920s. This firm frequently used Georgian and American Colonial motifs, in such distinguished projects as the Knickerbocker Club (1915), Colony Club (1916) and Brook Club (1925). These understated structures gave the style wider social prestige and may have inspired the architects of the Union League. A 1951 club history observed that Morris:

. . . delivered a solution of an aesthetic problem by a compromise between tradition and necessity. The building's design is an adaptation of the Georgian. It reflects our American heritage, as well as the tradition of Brook's, White's, and other old English clubs.<sup>38</sup>

The *New York Times* similarly reported that the:

. . . general character of the architecture is that of the eighteenth century, English and Colonial. This style was chosen as exemplifying the American tradition and also the tradition of the period when the club life of England reached its highest development.<sup>39</sup>

While historical associations were certainly important to the Union League, Morris' design does not seem to reference a specific building. In *New York 1930: Architecture and Urbanism Between Two World Wars*, the authors found stylistic affinities to Edwin Lutyens, who recently designed the British Embassy (1928-30) in Washington, D.C. Towards the end of his prolific career, this celebrated architect frequently worked in the neo-Georgian style and was celebrated for his skillful use of bold classical forms.<sup>40</sup> Perhaps the main entrance pavilion and the outsized second-story windows owe a small debt to this talented British architect.<sup>41</sup>

### Construction

Morris submitted his plans to the Department of Buildings in August 1929 (NB 529-29). Approved in January 1930, the clubhouse was described as an eight-story plus penthouse fireproof structure, with an estimated cost of \$1.5 million. Demolition of the four houses on the

site began in November 1929 and the Hegeman-Harris Company of New York was named general contractor.<sup>42</sup>

When excavations commenced in December 1929, precautions were taken to protect “Mr. Morgan’s Library.”<sup>43</sup> The foundations were completed in May 1930 and the exterior walls were enclosed by August 1930.<sup>44</sup> As construction neared completion in November 1930, the New York Building Congress honored 18 workers with “certificates of craftsmanship and gold buttons.”<sup>45</sup>

A farewell dinner was held in the Fifth Avenue clubhouse on January 19, 1931. Four hundred members attended the event which was described as a “swan song.”<sup>46</sup> Vacated a week later, the club’s new home was formally opened with a private dinner on February 12, 1931. According Will Irwin, who co-authored a 1952 book on the Union League, when “partisans of the old Fifth Avenue clubhouse . . . surveyed their new home, [they] went on record as being well pleased.”<sup>47</sup>

The *New Yorker* magazine reported that one of the club’s most notable features was the “space for ladies.”<sup>48</sup> While the Metropolitan Club pioneered the concept with a ladies restaurant in 1894, before the late 20<sup>th</sup> century hardly any social clubs permitted women to be members or regular guests. Some welcomed them to special events and exhibitions, but the Union League was unique because it was built with a separate entrance for wives and daughters. Located near the south end of the Park Avenue façade, it features a lintel with a frieze of four female faces above a pair of wood doors and a “special elevator” to their own dining room and lounge on the fourth floor. While some members voiced strong opposition to the plan, these facilities were described as “successful beyond anticipation”<sup>49</sup> and made front page news. The *New York Times* reported that these changes were made to recognize “the position of women in the modern American world.”<sup>50</sup>

### Subsequent History

With the repeal of Prohibition widely anticipated, the architects prepared plans for “a large sumptuous bar.” This amenity reflected “the tastes of the members who have shown themselves in recent tests to be preponderantly wet.”<sup>51</sup> The Union League, in fact, would become one of the first clubs in New York City to receive a beer and wine license from the State Alcohol Beverage Control Board in 1933.

During the second term of U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt, qualifications for membership were somewhat relaxed, with a 1937 resolution permitting “enrolled Democrats” to join.<sup>52</sup> The following year, in 1938, the Union League celebrated its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary. An exhibition of the club’s “treasures” was organized and an “open house” was held, allowing women “to inspect the sanctuary of male Republicanism.”<sup>53</sup>

Women gained full membership privileges in 1988. Local Law 63, passed in 1984, determined that no club with over 400 members could discriminate on the basis of race, religion, and gender. In July 1987, the New York City Human Rights Commission filed a complaint against the Union League, the Century Association, the New York Athletic Club, and the University Club. The law was upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court, and in August 1988 the Union League’s case “was dismissed after the club passed a resolution admitting women.”<sup>54</sup>

The Union League remains a handsome and well-preserved example of an early 20<sup>th</sup>-century urban clubhouse. Now flanked by substantial apartment houses at 40 Park Avenue (Emery Roth & Sons, 1950) and 30 East 37<sup>th</sup> Street (Emery Roth & Sons, 1950), aside from the installation of HVAC machinery on the building’s roof, there have been few significant alterations to the exterior and the elevations retain all of the original neo-Classical details.

## Description

### **Historic**

The base of the Union League is granite and the main elevations are faced with red brick and limestone. The quoins, cornices, pilasters and decorative reliefs are carved limestone.

*37<sup>th</sup> Street (north) façade:* all floors, fenestration with original wood mullions; ground floor, painted iron fence with granite footing and finials, painted iron-and-glass lighting fixtures on either side of entrance pavilion, wood transom above entrance doors, iron grilles over doors flanking center entrance, iron grilles over areaways behind west fence, iron grilles in front of ground floor windows, three flagpoles with decorative metal bases; west side, recessed service entrance with iron fence on right, metal-and-glass lighting fixture above service entrance; second floor, inset arches with Palladian-style windows; fifth floor, pediment over entrance framing cartouche and garlands; sixth floor, setback and continuous iron balustrade.

*Park Avenue (east) facade:* first floor, north end, granite block with information about clubhouse, bases for flagpoles; south end, original entrance for women with carved stone lintel, fluted pilasters, glass-and-metal lighting fixture, framework for awning, wood doors with iron grilles and brass handles; ground floor, right of doors, window with decorative iron grille; sixth floor, setback and continuous iron balustrade.

*South façade (partly visible from Park Avenue and from 36<sup>th</sup> Street):* red brick and limestone elevations, windows; roof, two red brick chimneys; setbacks, southwest corner, iron balustrades.

*West façade (partially visible from 37<sup>th</sup> Street):* red brick and limestone elevations.

### **Alterations**

*37<sup>th</sup> Street (north) facade:* first floor, in-kind wood entrance doors, standpipes, blue vinyl awning with brass poles; behind west fence, air conditioning unit in center window; service entrance, box-like metal structure and fence to left, top of first floor, aluminum tubing.

*Park Avenue (east) facade:* first floor, standpipes, flagpoles removed; top of first floor, aluminum tubing; fifth and eighth floors, cell phone towers, eighth floor towers painted to match brick.

*South facade:* east/center windows, some air conditioning units; fourth/fifth floors, green metal ventilation ducts; west corner, vertical piping painted brown.

*Roof:* southwest side, hvac machinery

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### **NOTES**

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<sup>1</sup> Cited in the “Union League Club To Mark 75<sup>th</sup> Year,” *New York Times*, January 30, 1938, 37.

<sup>2</sup> *Historical Sketch of the Union League Club of New York, Its Origins, Organization and Work* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1879), 53, viewed online at <http://www.archive.org/details/historicalskech00bell>. This regiment was modeled on the 54<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Voluntary Infantry, organized by Colonel Robert Gould Shaw in March 1863.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 53.

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- <sup>4</sup> Edward G. Burrows and Mike Wallace, *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898* (Oxford University Press, 1998), 887, 897.
- <sup>5</sup> Will Irwin, Earl Chapin and Joseph Hotchkiss, *A History of the Union League Club of New York City* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1952), 88.
- <sup>6</sup> Irwin, 103.
- <sup>7</sup> “Union League May Quit Fifth Avenue,” *New York Times*, October 14, 1905, 1.
- <sup>8</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>9</sup> Irwin, 201.
- <sup>10</sup> Irwin, 205.
- <sup>11</sup> Irwin, 213.
- <sup>12</sup> “Union League to Move,” *New York Times*, February 27, 1929, 15.
- <sup>13</sup> Designated landmarks in the immediate area include the Phelps-Stokes-Morgan House (1852-53) at 231 Madison Avenue, the James Hampden & Cornelia Van Rensselaer Robb House (1888-92) at 23 Park Avenue, the Joseph Raphael De Lamar House (1902-5) at 233 Madison Avenue, and the Adelaide L.T. Douglass House (1909-11) at 57 Park Avenue. Adelaide Douglas is believed to have been mistress to J. Pierpont Morgan. See Jean Strouse, *Morgan: American Financier* (Harper Perennial, 2000), 611ff.
- <sup>14</sup> “Morgan and Others Fight to Save Murray Hill,” *New York Times*, June 7, 1914, SM2.
- <sup>15</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>16</sup> “J. P. Morgan’s Plans For Beautified Home,” *New York Times*, June 16, 1907, SM9.
- <sup>17</sup> Following the death of his father, “Jack” Morgan served as the bank’s president from 1913 to 1943.
- <sup>18</sup> “Murray Hill Favors Zones,” *New York Times*, June 14, 1916, 19; “Home-Season In Murray Hill – Interesting Changes in Old Centre,” *New York Times*, October 22, 1916, xx4.
- <sup>19</sup> “Can’t Keep Business Out of Murray Hill,” *New York Times*, January 7, 1911, 7.
- <sup>20</sup> “Murray Hill Loses Restriction Appeal,” *New York Times*, January 22, 1916, 12.
- <sup>21</sup> Satterlee was president of the Union League in 1938-39.
- <sup>22</sup> “Morgan’s Gift to Daughter,” *New York Times*, November 6, 1903, 16.
- <sup>23</sup> Two years later, in January 1928 plans were announced to erect a 15-story apartment building at the southwest corner of Park Avenue and 37<sup>th</sup> Street. This project was designed by Cross & Cross. No reasons were given as to why it did not proceed. See “New Apartment Planned,” *New York Times*, January 24, 1928, 52; “Mrs. Robert Winthrop,” *New York Times*, June 8, 1925, 15; “Park Avenue Corner in \$600,000 Deal,” *New York Times*, January 14, 1926, 44.
- <sup>24</sup> Flintlock Realty was also controlled by the Morgan family. Henry S(turgis) Morgan, son of J.P. “Jack” Morgan, was treasurer and oversaw the sale of the property. From 1928-35, he was a partner at J.P. Morgan.
- <sup>25</sup> Annie Burr Jennings (1855-1939) was the daughter of William Rockefeller. See “Union League Votes to Sell Fifth Av. Home; Negotiates for Site at Park Av. And 37<sup>th</sup> St.,” *New York Times*, February 26, 1929, 1; “Union League Adds to Site,” *New York Times*, June 6, 1929, 53.
- <sup>26</sup> *New York Times*, September 17, 1929, 60.
- <sup>27</sup> “Union League Sells Lease to Builder, September 10, 1929, 59; “Union League Clubhouse Swept by Fire; Fifth Avenue Landmark Vacant for a Year,” *New York Times*, January 27, 1932, 1.
- <sup>28</sup> “Club Site Was Sold at Cost By Morgan to Union League,” *New York Times*, September 14, 1929, 37.
- <sup>29</sup> “Activity Renewed On Murray Hill,” *New York Times*, September 28, 1930, N20.
- <sup>30</sup> Irwin, 225.

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- <sup>31</sup> “Union League Clubhouse to Cost \$1,000,000; Plans Filed for 8-Story Building in Park Av.,” *New York Times*, August 29, 1929, 1.
- <sup>32</sup> “Union League Club Lays Cornerstone,” *New York Times*, June 5, 1930, 14.
- <sup>33</sup> *Union League Club of New York, Annual Report*, (New York, 1931), 81.
- <sup>34</sup> “Architect of Bank Well Known Here,” *Hartford Courant*, September 3, 1922, X4.
- <sup>35</sup> “Trinity Honors Architect, His Firm Designed Library,” *Hartford Courant*, June 15, 1952, A1.
- <sup>36</sup> The Satterlee house, on 36<sup>th</sup> Street, was demolished in the late 1940s.
- <sup>37</sup> See the Women’s Republican Club on West 50<sup>th</sup> Street in Manhattan and early 1930s alterations to the Brooklyn Museum.
- <sup>38</sup> Irwin, 228.
- <sup>39</sup> “New Home For Union League Club,” *New York Times*, December 29, 1929, RE2.
- <sup>40</sup> Robert A. M. Stern, et al, *New York 1930* (New York: Rizzoli Books, 1987), 191.
- <sup>41</sup> The Union League interiors (not part of this designation), however, did recall American buildings from the Colonial and Federal eras. For instance, the design of the main hall was said to have been inspired by the interiors of Independence Hall in Philadelphia, where the Declaration of Independence was signed in 1776, and the curved entrance hall stairs resemble the cantilevered ones that rise inside the rotunda of New York City Hall (1802-11, a designated Interior Landmark).
- <sup>42</sup> Established by John Hegeman and John W. Harris (a Union League member) in 1917, this prolific builder was responsible for erecting such designated New York City Landmarks as the American Radiator Building (1923-24), the Daily News Building (1929-30) and 30 Rockefeller Plaza (1932-33), as well as structures throughout the United States and 17 pavilions for foreign governments at the 1939-40 New York World’s Fair.
- <sup>43</sup> *Union League Club of New York, Annual Report*, (New York: Union League, March 12, 1931), 81.
- <sup>44</sup> See *Annual Report of the Union League Club of New York* (New York, 1931), 81.
- <sup>45</sup> “Club Honors Mechanics,” *New York Times*, November 4, 1930, 50.
- <sup>46</sup> Fire swept through the former clubhouse in 1932, destroying some or all of the interior decorations by Tiffany and LaFarge.
- <sup>47</sup> Irwin, 228.
- <sup>48</sup> “New House,” *New Yorker*, February 7, 1931, 11.
- <sup>49</sup> Irwin, 230.
- <sup>50</sup> “Bar in New Union League Clubhouse Ready for the Repeal of the Prohibition Law,” *New York Times*, February 24, 1931, 1.
- <sup>51</sup> “Bar in the New Union League Clubhouse Ready for the Repeal of Prohibition Law,” *New York Times*, February 24, 1931, 1. Also see “Union League Club of New York to Poll Members on Dry Law,” *Hartford Courant*, February 17, 1930, 13; “Union League Club Votes Wet in Poll,” *Baltimore Sun*, March 12, 1930, 1.
- <sup>52</sup> Irwin, 268.
- <sup>53</sup> “Union League Club Opens 2-Day Fete,” *New York Times*, February 7, 1938, 3.
- <sup>54</sup> The first female Union League member was Faith Ryan Whittlesey, who served as ambassador to Switzerland and was a senior staff member in the Reagan White House during the 1980s. “2 Clubs Settle Suits on Bias in Membership,” *New York Times*, August 27, 1988, 27.

## FINDINGS AND DESIGNATION

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

The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, the Union League is a fine example of a neo-Classical style clubhouse; that it combines elements associated with 18<sup>th</sup> century Georgian and Federal style architecture; that a continuous cornice divides the nine-story structure into two distinct sections, with the social spaces, such as dining rooms, a billiard room and library on the lower floors and bedrooms on the upper floors; that it is located at the southwest corner of Park Avenue and 37<sup>th</sup> Street in the Murray Hill section of Manhattan; that the north façade incorporates a curved double height entrance pavilion and oversized Palladian style windows, as well as a central pediment that frames a cartouche with club's initials; that this style was popular with American institutions in the late 1920s and may suggest the influence of the contemporary British architect Edwin Lutyens and the American architect John Russell Pope; that a second entrance, located near the south end of the Park Avenue façade, was intended for member's wives and daughters who originally had their own dining facilities and lounge on the fourth floor; that this entrance is crowned by a handsome decorative lintel with four female faces; that this relief, as well as the rectangular panels that flank the main entrance, have a strong graphic quality that suggest the influence of the Art Deco style, which dominated mainstream aesthetics during this era; that the Union League was founded in 1863; that members promised "absolute and unqualified loyalty" to the United States and the Republican party; that during the Civil War, the club organized the first black regiment in New York State and it later played a significant role in establishing the Metropolitan Museum; that the site was assembled by J.P. "Jack" Morgan and his brother-in-law Herbert L. Satterlee, who later served as the club's president in 1937-38; that this was part of a larger strategy to control development around their homes and the Morgan Library; that they sold the property with precise covenants, limiting the height and massing; that since opening in February 1931, there have been few significant changes to eight-decade-old exterior; and that the Union League continues to operate the building as a private club.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 74, Section 3020 (formerly Section 534 of Chapter 21) 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 Union League Club, 38 East 37<sup>th</sup> Street (aka 34-38 East 37<sup>th</sup> Street, 48 Park Avenue) and designates Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 866, Lot 42, as its Landmark Site.

Robert B. Tierney, Chair  
Pablo Vengoechea, Vice Chair  
Diana Chapin, Michael Devonshire, Joan Gerner, Michael Goldblum  
Elizabeth Ryan, Roberta Washington, Commissioners



**Union League Club**  
38 East 37<sup>th</sup> Street (aka 34-38 East 37<sup>th</sup> Street), 48 Park Avenue)  
Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 866, Lot 42  
East/North façades, viewed from Park Avenue  
*Photo by Christopher D. Braze*



**Union League Club**  
North façade, 37<sup>th</sup> Street details  
*Photos: Christopher D. Brazee, 2011*



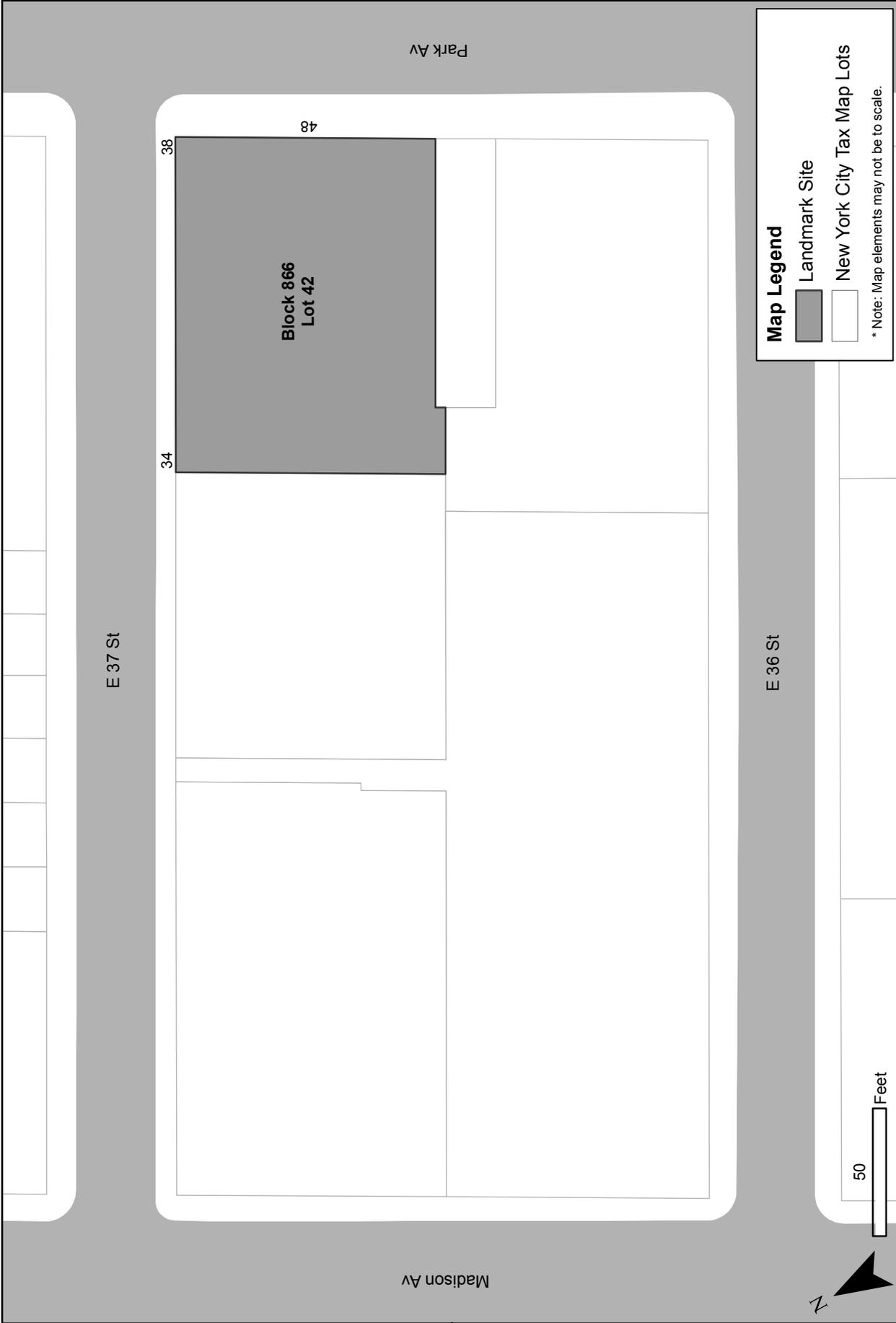
**Union League Club**  
South/East facades, view from Park Avenue  
*Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, 2011*



**Union League Club**  
Base of 37<sup>th</sup> Street facade; Park Avenue (Women's) entrance  
*Photos: Christopher D. Brazee, 2011*



**Union League Club**  
37<sup>th</sup> Street/West facade  
*Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, 2011*



**Map Legend**

- Landmark Site
- New York City Tax Map Lots

\* Note: Map elements may not be to scale.

**UNION LEAGUE CLUB (LP-2389), 38 East 37th Street (aka 34-38 East 37th Street; 48 Park Avenue)**  
 Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan, Tax Map Block 866, Lot 42

Designated: October 25, 2011