

AIAA
GUIDE

**NORVAL WHITE &
ELLIOT WILLENSKY
WITH FRAN LEADON**

TO

**NEW
NEW**

**YORK
YORK**

CITY

**FIFTH
EDITION**

Walk towards the Arch, then right (west) along Waverly Place, then right (north) on MacDougal Street:

[V10] **MacDougal Alley**, off MacDougal St., bet. W.8th St. and Washington Sq. N. E side.

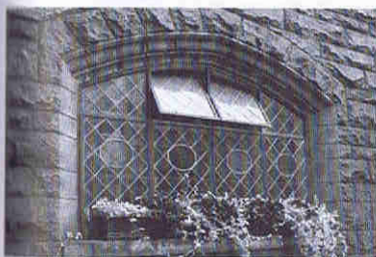
This charming cul-de-sac (less charming when filled with residents' cars) is jointly owned by property holders on Washington Square North and on the south side of 8th Street. The 30-story bulk of **No.2 Fifth Avenue** looms over it, overwhelming its space and diminishing its small-scaled delight.

Now, south on MacDougal Street:

[V11] **Tenth Church of Christ, Scientist**/originally factory and store. 171 MacDougal St., bet. W.8th St. and Waverly Place. W side. 1891. *Renwick, Aspinwall & Russell*. Converted to church, 1967, *Victor Christ-Janer*. Conversion to apartments, new chapel, restoration of 1891 façade, 2009, *Hanrahan Meyers* and *TRA Studio*.

In 2006 Landmarks Commissioners said *Mr. Christ-Janer's* "severe modern brick façade detracts from the scale and architectural character of the streetscape." It did not mention that in its own 1969 report, the spare, moody work was described as "handsome." Be that as it may be, the *Renwick and Partners* façade is returning, with "improvements," and Christian Scientists will be gathering in their own new *Hanrahan Meyers Chapel* within.

Go back to Waverly, turn right (west), then take a left (south) on Sixth Avenue:



V12

[V12] **108 Waverly Place** (house), bet. Sixth Ave. and Washington Sq. W./MacDougal St. S side. 1826. Altered, 1906, *Charles C. Haight*. Garage entrance removed, 1927.

In this pleasantly Classical street, this eccentric and dour granite house wears crenellations (presumably to protect the skylight against insurrection).

Left on Sixth Avenue, briefly:

[V13] **Washington Court** (apartments), 360-374 Avenue of the Americas, bet. Waverly and Washington Places. E side. 1986. *James Stewart Polshek & Partners*.

A brilliantly conceived, designed, detailed, and executed **postmodern** apartment house (with stores on Sixth Avenue) that captures the scale, rhythms, and some of the accretive quality of many a Village street. Yet it was built only six stories high in the rapidly boiling 1980s Manhattan real estate market—chalk up the low-rise character to the IND subway running

under part of the plot, local hyperactive citizen watchdog groups, and a vigilant Landmarks Preservation Commission.

North on Sixth Avenue, right on West 8th Street:

Frederick J. Kiesler's Film Guild Playhouse (52 West 8th Street) has vanished, its succession of owners having failed to value the Viennese architect-stage designer's visionary designs, though they were applauded and applied by theater architects throughout the world. But here, in 1928, *Kiesler* (1892-1965) made provisions for simultaneous slide projections on the side walls and created a main screen where the projection surface area could be altered in size—film projection concepts that are still considered avant-garde. The exterior bears no trace of his hand.

[V14a] **24, 26 West 8th Street**, bet. MacDougal St. and Fifth Ave. 1838.

Town houses built (together with **No.28**) as an investment by merchant *Joseph W. Alsop, Jr.*



V13

Their subsequent conversion into studios to enjoy north light has given them distinctive—and not inharmonious—window patterns.

[V14b] **New York Studio School of Drawing, Painting & Sculpture**/ the original **Whitney Museum of American Art**/earlier **Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney House** and private art gallery/originally 8, 10, 12 West 8th Street (houses), bet. MacDougal St. and Fifth Ave. Houses, 1838. Converted into House and gallery, 1931, *Auguste L. Noël* of *Noël & Miller*. Converted into Whitney Museum, 1936, *Auguste L. Noël*.

The 1930s neo-Classical entranceway remains the single hallmark of the Whitney when it opened at the onset of the Great Depression. The museum moved to a new structure next to the **Museum of Modern Art** garden, with *Noël* as architect (but with the MoMA garden façade by *Philip Johnson*), then left for its monumental Upper East Side *Breuer* building. Soon to come is the new **Gansevoort Street** satellite Whitney.