

***ASCHENBROEDEL VEREIN* (later *GESANGVEREIN SCHILLERBUND*/ now **LA MAMA EXPERIMENTAL THEATRE CLUB**) BUILDING, 74 East 4<sup>th</sup> Street, Manhattan  
Built 1873, August H. Blankenstein, architect; facade altered 1892, [Frederick William] Kurtzer & [Richard O.L.] Rohl, architects**

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 459, Lot 23

On March 24, 2009, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the *Aschenbroedel Verein* (later *Gesangverein Schillerbund*/ now La Mama Experimental Theatre Club) Building and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 11). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Four people spoke in favor of designation, including representatives of the Municipal Art Society of New York, Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation, and Historic Districts Council. In addition, the Commission received a communication in support of designation from the Metropolitan Chapter of the Victorian Society in America.

Summary

The four-story, red brick-clad *Aschenbroedel Verein* Building, in today's East Village neighborhood of Manhattan, was constructed in 1873 to the design of German-born architect August H. Blankenstein for this German-American professional orchestral musicians' social and benevolent association. Founded informally in 1860, it had grown large enough by 1866 for the society to purchase this site and eventually construct the purpose-built structure. The *Aschenbroedel Verein* became one of the leading German organizations in *Kleindeutschland* on the Lower East Side. It counted as members many of the most important musicians in the city, at a time when German-Americans dominated the orchestral scene. These included conductors Carl Bergmann, Theodore Thomas and Walter Damrosch, and the musicians of the New York Philharmonic and Theodore Thomas Orchestras. After the *Aschenbroedel Verein* moved to Yorkville in 1892, this building was subsequently owned for four years by the *Gesangverein Schillerbund*, one of the city's leading and oldest German singing societies. The design of the main facade, altered at this time with the addition of cast-iron ornament by German-born architects [Frederick William] Kurtzer & [Richard O.L.] Rohl, combines elements of the German Renaissance Revival and neo-Grec styles with folk motifs (including hearts), and features a variety of pedimented lintels, quoins, *fraktur*-like incising, three composers' busts over the second-story windows, and a prominent cornice with a large broken pediment. After 1895, the building housed a variety of disparate uses, including a series of public meeting and dance halls, the Newsboys' Athletic Club, a laundry, and a meatpacking plant. Since 1969, it has been the home of the renowned La Mama Experimental Theatre Club, established in 1961 by Ellen Stewart, and today considered the oldest and most influential off-Off-Broadway theater in New York City. The building remains one of the significant reminders of 19<sup>th</sup>-century German-American cultural contributions to New York City, as well as the continuing vitality of off-Off-Broadway theater in the East Village.



## DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

### The 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Development of (Today's) East Village Neighborhood<sup>1</sup>

The area of today's Greenwich Village was, during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the location of the small rural hamlet of Greenwich, as well as the country seats and summer homes of wealthy downtown aristocrats, merchants, and capitalists. A number of cholera and yellow fever epidemics in lower Manhattan between 1799 and 1822 led to an influx of settlers in the Greenwich area, with the population quadrupling between 1825 and 1840.<sup>2</sup> Previously undeveloped tracts of land were speculatively subdivided for the construction of town houses and rowhouses. Whereas in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century many of the wealthiest New Yorkers lived in the vicinity of Broadway and the side streets adjacent to City Hall Park between Barclay and Chambers Streets, by the 1820s and 30s, as commercial development and congestion increasingly disrupted and displaced them, the elite moved northward into Greenwich Village east of Sixth Avenue.

To the east, during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, was Dutch Governor Peter Stuyvesant's Bowery farm. In the vicinity were Native American trails, today's Broadway and Bowery, that the Lenape Indians traversed from the southern tip of Manhattan to Inwood and Harlem. St. Mark's-in-the-Bowery Church (1799)<sup>3</sup> was built on a higher, dry piece of land, while the area to the east of today's Second Avenue, known as Stuyvesant Meadows, remained an undeveloped marshy area. In the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, the area east of Second Avenue was the estate of Mangle Minthorn, father-in-law of Daniel Tompkins (1775-1825), governor of New York (1807-17) and U.S. vice president under James Monroe (1817-25). Both Stuyvesant and Minthorn were slave owners. In 1832, the Common Council created the 15<sup>th</sup> Ward out of the eastern section of the large 9<sup>th</sup> Ward, its boundaries being Sixth Avenue, Houston and 14<sup>th</sup> Streets, and the Bowery. According to Luther Harris' history *Around Washington Square*, during the 1830s-40s "this ward drew the wealthiest, most influential, and most talented people from New York City and elsewhere. For a brief period beginning in the 1820s-30s, Lafayette Place, including the grand marble Greek Revival style LaGrange Terrace (1832-33, attributed to Seth Geer),<sup>4</sup> St. Mark's Place, and Bond, Great Jones, East 4<sup>th</sup> and Bleecker Streets were also among the city's most fashionable addresses. Lower Second Avenue and adjacent side streets remained prestigious through the 1850s.

Commercial and institutional intrusions and the continual arrival of immigrants ended the fashionable heyday of these wealthier enclaves before the Civil War. In the 1850s, Broadway north of Houston Street was transformed from a residential into a significant commercial district. Also beginning in the 1850s, after the political upheavals in Europe of 1848 and the resulting influx of German-speaking immigrants to New York City, the Lower East Side (the area bounded roughly by 14<sup>th</sup> Street, the East River, the Bowery/Third Avenue, and Catherine Street) became known as *Kleindeutschland* ("Little Germany"). Aside from their presence as residents, these immigrants contributed in significant ways to the vibrant commercial and cultural life of the neighborhood and the city at large. By 1880, this neighborhood constituted one-fourth of the city's population (as one of the most densely populated neighborhoods in the world) and was the first major urban foreign-speaking neighborhood in the U.S., as well as the leading German-American center throughout the century. A massive exodus of Jews from Eastern Europe from the 1880s to World War I led to approximately two million Jewish immigrants settling in New York; most lived for a time on the Lower East Side, establishing their own cultural and religious institutions there.

Beginning in the 1850s-60s, the vicinity of 14<sup>th</sup> Street and Union Square developed into a center of musical and theatrical culture. The Academy of Music (1853-54, Alexander Saeltzer),

East 14<sup>th</sup> Street and Irving Place, an opera house with the world's largest seating capacity at the time, quickly became the center of musical and social life in New York, presenting such notable performers as Adelina Patti (who made her debut here in 1854), and events such as the grand ball in honor of the Prince of Wales in the autumn of 1860. The building burned down in 1866, and was replaced by a new Academy of Music (1868, Thomas R. Jackson).<sup>5</sup> Irving Hall (1860), a ballroom, concert, and lecture hall annex to the Academy, served as the home of the New York Philharmonic in 1861-63. The Steinway piano company opened Steinway Hall (1866), a combination showroom and recital hall at 109 East 14<sup>th</sup> Street, which for many years was the foremost concert hall in the country (it closed in 1890 and was demolished). By the mid-1860s, a number of legitimate theaters were also opening in the vicinity of Union Square, which during the last quarter of the nineteenth century became the center of New York theater. These included Wallack's Theater (1861, Thomas R. Jackson), 728 Broadway at 13<sup>th</sup> Street, the most prestigious dramatic theater in the country during this period; the Union Square Theater (1870), an adjunct of the former Union Place Hotel; Chickering Hall (1875), Fifth Avenue and 18<sup>th</sup> Street; and Amberg Theater (1888, Theodore G. Stein; Irving Place Theater after 1893), 11 Irving Place (all demolished). The Germania Theater, which along with the Amberg catered to a specifically German clientele, was located in Tammany Hall in 1874-81, in Wallack's Theater in 1881-82, and until 1902 in the former Church of St. Ann, East 8<sup>th</sup> Street near Broadway. Union Square, after the Civil War, became the traditional site for workers', union, and political protests and rallies.

As wealthier residents moved northward in the 1850s, their single-family residences were converted into multiple dwellings or boardinghouses, as well as other uses, such as clubs or community cultural institutions. For instance, the former Ralph and Ann E. Van Wyck Mead House at 110 Second Avenue in 1874 became the Isaac T. Hopper Home of the Women's Prison Association,<sup>6</sup> and, of the Federal style houses on the westernmost block of St. Mark's Place: No. 29 became the Harmonie Club, a German-Jewish singing club (1856-59); Nos. 19-21 housed another German musical club, the Arion Singing Society (1870-87), and these buildings, along with No. 23, became Arlington Hall, a ballroom-community center in 1887.<sup>7</sup> Most of the remaining houses were demolished for denser development with French flats and tenements between 1874 and 1902.

Hastening the change in the residential character of this section of the Lower East Side after mid-century were a wide variety of major cultural, religious, commercial, and educational institutions, including the Astor Place Opera House (1847; later Clinton Hall/Mercantile Library; demolished), Astor and Lafayette Places; Astor Library (1849-52, Alexander Saeltzer; 1856-69, Griffith Thomas; 1879-81, Thomas Stent), 425 Lafayette Street; Bible House (1852; demolished), home of the American Bible Society and other religious organizations, Astor Place and Third Avenue; and Cooper Union (1853-58, Frederick A. Petersen), Astor Place and Third Avenue. The New York Free Circulating Library, Ottendorfer Branch, and German Dispensary (1883-84, William Schickel), 135 and 137 Second Avenue, among others, catered to the German community. Assembly halls such as Webster Hall and Annex (1886-87, 1892, Charles Renz, Jr.), 119-125 East 11<sup>th</sup> Street, became important neighborhood social centers.<sup>8</sup> The Third Avenue elevated railroad opened in 1878.

### The *Aschenbroedel Verein*<sup>9</sup>

A social and benevolent association composed almost exclusively of German-American professional orchestral musicians, the *Aschenbroedel Verein* was founded informally in 1860, with

its name, “Cinderella Society,” supposedly a play on the last name of one of its members (and first president), August Ashe. After initially meeting at Schneider’s Hall, 371 Broome Street, by 1866 the group had grown large enough with some 300 members for it to acquire a building on East 4<sup>th</sup> Street. The *Aschenbroedel Verein* became one of the leading German organizations in *Kleindeutschland* on the Lower East Side, and counted as members many of the most important musicians in the city, including conductors Carl Bergmann, Theodore Thomas,<sup>10</sup> and Walter Damrosch, as well as all of the members of the Theodore Thomas Orchestra and most of the members of the New York Philharmonic. According to Grove’s *Dictionary of Music and Musicians* in 1880, this was also “the headquarters” of the New York Philharmonic Society, though the Philharmonic’s *Minutes* books illustrate that this was one of several locations in the neighborhood where its directors’ and business meetings were held, between 1873 and 1888.<sup>11</sup> Howard Shanet, in *Philharmonic: A History of New York’s Orchestra* (1975), stated that the *Aschenbroedel Verein* was the first organization in New York to advance the unionization of musicians, as early as 1860, an effort that culminated later with the formation of the Musical Mutual Protective Union. Shanet called *Aschenbroedel* “at once a cultural, a benevolent, a social, and a labor association.”<sup>12</sup> He further emphasized the total domination of the symphonic world in New York by the German community, with nearly all of the Philharmonic men of German birth or parentage by 1892. The *Aschenbroedel Verein*’s motto was “Freundschaft, Geselligkeit, Befoerderung der Kunst” (Friendship, Sociability, Advancement of the Art).

By 1870, there were an estimated 64 German musical societies within New York City, and a number of them were located in the vicinity, either in converted structures or purpose-built ones. These included the Arion Singing Society (founded 1854); Liederkranz (founded 1847), 31-35 East 4<sup>th</sup> Street; and Beethoven Maennerchor (founded 1859), located in a hall built in 1870 (William Graul, architect) at 210-214 East 5<sup>th</sup> Street. In addition, Turnverein Halle (1871), 66-68 East 4<sup>th</sup> Street, was built just down the block from the *Aschenbroedel Verein*.<sup>13</sup>

In 1873, the *Aschenbroedel Verein*, under president George Matzka (died 1883), constructed this purpose-built structure, clad in brick and four stories (plus basement; the rear portion is only two stories), at an estimated cost of \$24,000. Construction began in June and was completed in October. The architect was August H. Blankenstein (1830-1914),<sup>14</sup> who was born in Germany and immigrated to the U.S. in 1860. Active from 1872 to 1899, he designed tenement, flats, and factory buildings for a mostly German clientele, as well as the addition to the Centre Market Armory (1873-74; demolished), Grand and Centre Streets; work on the 55<sup>th</sup> Regiment, 23<sup>rd</sup> Regiment, and First Cavalry 22<sup>nd</sup> Regiment Armories (c. 1878); and St. Joseph’s R.C. Orphan Asylum School (1883, demolished), Avenue A and 90<sup>th</sup> Street. A 1894 lawsuit indicated that Blankenstein had been a partner of architect Henry Herter prior to 1886 (Herter then became a partner in [Ernest W.] Schneider & Herter). Blankenstein was also listed as an architect in an 1890 directory in Buffalo, N.Y.

The *Times* reported on November 7, 1873, that the *Aschenbroedel Verein* had “inaugurated its new club-house... last night, by an entertainment of music and social festivities.”<sup>15</sup> Considered “one of the most commodious German clubhouses in the city,”<sup>16</sup> its amenities included a restaurant, a library, a billiard room, and a bowling alley in the basement. Among activities conducted here were meetings of the Ancient Lodge of Perfection (Scottish Rite) in 1873, and the 1876 funeral of Philharmonic conductor and *Aschenbroedel Verein* member Carl Bergmann. For unknown reasons, the building was listed for sale in 1882, but the *Aschenbroedel Verein* remained here until it sold the building in September 1891. The society, then having some 700 members,

moved in November 1892 into a new clubhouse (George H. Griebel, architect; demolished) at 144 East 86<sup>th</sup> Street in Yorkville.

### The *Gesangverein Schillerbund* and Schillerbund Halle<sup>17</sup>

In June 1892, the *Aschenbroedel Verein* Building was acquired by the *Gesangverein Schillerbund* (Schillerbund Singing Society), one of the city's leading and oldest German singing societies. Founded in 1850 and named after the poet Johann Christoph Friedrich von Schiller (1759-1805), the *Schillerbund* had been meeting since 1872 in Turnverein Halle. The purchase price of its new building was \$1.00, subject to \$37,500 in mortgages held by the Bachmann Brewing Co. of Clifton, Staten Island. This structure was altered between September and October 1892 by the architectural firm of [Frederick William] Kurtzer & [Richard O.L.] Rohl. Interestingly, Kurtzer was a member of the Beethoven Maennerchor. In partnership from about 1888 until 1901, Kurtzer & Rohl<sup>18</sup> specialized in tenements and flats buildings for a largely German clientele; examples of its work include Nos. 95 Bedford Street (1894) and 285 West 4<sup>th</sup> Street (1900), located within the Greenwich Village Historic District, and No. 121 East 10<sup>th</sup> Street (1899), located within the St. Mark's Historic District. The firm was also responsible for the First German Reformed Church (1897, demolished), 351 East 68<sup>th</sup> Street, and its Sunday School (1901). Richard O.L. Rohl (1857-1923), an immigrant from Prussia in 1880, maintained an independent practice from 1902 until around 1919. No. 391 West Street (aka 8 Weehawken Street) (1902), located within the Weehawken Street Historic District, was his first independent commission, and he also designed the double tenement buildings at Nos. 35-39 Christopher Street (1907), located within the Greenwich Village Historic District. Frederick William Kurtzer (c. 1849- ), emigrated from Germany around 1870. He worked independently in 1901-02, then became a partner in Kurtzer & Rentz in 1903-06, with Charles Rentz, Jr. (1855-1906), an architect who was born in New York City of German descent. Rentz was extraordinarily prolific in the design of flats and tenement buildings in the 1880s, but is best known for the design of Webster Hall and Annex (1886-87, 1892). Kurtzer continued to practice in Manhattan and the Bronx until around 1925.

The Dept. of Buildings 1892 alteration application for the *Gesangverein Schillerbund* Building, as well as the docket, only listed \$1,200 in work, involving interior partition alterations in the basement (and a new bowling alley) and second story. In an article on the building's opening in November 1892, however, the *New York Times* indicated that it had been "almost entirely rebuilt and refitted," and that "the building cost in all about \$45,000. ... On the ground floor are fine bowling alleys, the kitchen and restaurant. The second floor is used for assembly and meeting rooms, the third for lodge rooms, and the top of the house is occupied by the tenant."<sup>19</sup> The 1892 tax assessment for the property increased by more than 25 percent, and the structure was later described in the *Times* as "one of the best Maennerchor clubhouses in that section of this city." The design of the main facade, altered at this time with the addition of cast-iron ornament, combines elements of the German Renaissance Revival and neo-Grec styles with folk motifs (including hearts), and features a variety of pedimented lintels, quoins, *fraktur*-like incising, three composers' busts over the second-story windows, and a prominent cornice with a large broken pediment.

A *Schillerbund* Fair was held here December 10-20, 1892. By 1895, the membership of the *Schillerbund* was around 400, and the hall, managed by Gustav Schunemann, reportedly enjoyed "much popularity among the merrymakers of that neighborhood."<sup>20</sup> In November 1896, however, the *Gesangverein Schillerbund* sold the property and moved to Yorkville (later returning to another building on East 4<sup>th</sup> Street). This building was purchased for \$40,195 by the Bachmann

Brewing Co., holder of the mortgage. The company was founded by the German-born Frederick Bachmann (1839-1905), who had immigrated to New York in 1859, and worked at the Lion Brewery in Manhattan, prior to moving to Staten Island, where he was employed by the Schmidt Brewery and Gabriel Meyer Brewery, becoming the co-owner with David Meyer until it was destroyed by fire in 1881. As indicated by Charles L. Sachs in *Made on Staten Island*, “The successful breweries were not just efficient manufacturing enterprises. To market and distribute their products the breweries acquired real estate holdings and developed close ties with the restaurant, recreation, and tourism businesses. The major breweries owned, operated, and rented saloons, taverns, beer gardens, hotels, and even resort complexes.”<sup>21</sup>

This building became a rental assembly hall, and there are references in newspapers calling it “Schillerbund Halle” as late as 1901. A sampling of meetings and events held here included: pattern makers (1895); Eastern Star chapter of the Order of Chosen Friends (1897); New York branch of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers (1897); New York Engineers & Machinists Society (1897); New York Engineers’ Protective Association (1900); and Poles celebrating the 1863 insurrection (1901).

#### Krywaczy’s Hall, Saenger Hall, and McKinley Hall<sup>22</sup>

The building continued to be used as a public rental hall and social center, under three different names, and like such sites as Webster Hall (though on a smaller scale), was a venue for organizational meetings and political and union functions, particularly for the working-class and immigrant population of the Lower East Side. As opined by historian Kathy Peiss:

For the working-class population packed into small tenement apartments, large halls that could be rented for dances, weddings, mass meetings, and other gatherings were a requirement of social life. The number of public halls in Manhattan rose substantially in a short period; business directories listed 130 halls in 1895 and 195 in 1910, an increase of 50 percent. While some of these, like Carnegie Hall, were cultural spaces of the privileged, most were located in working-class districts. The largest East Side halls... were always in great demand. <sup>23</sup>

In a September 12, 1901, *New York Times* announcement of a meeting here of the Polish community to denounce Leon Czolgosz, an anarchist who had shot President William McKinley on September 6, the location was referred to as “Krywaczy’s Hall” (McKinley died on the day of the meeting). John Krywaczy (Krywaczy) was listed in directories as a liquor dealer on Forsyth Street. City directories in 1901-03, as well as the 1903 *Brooklyn Daily Eagle Almanac*, called this “Saenger Hall.” The Bachmann Brewing Co. leased the property in April 1903 to Max Sapiro and Ike Lifschitz. Sapiro was listed in the 1910 Census as a Polish/Austrian-born café proprietor, though he was not listed in directories in connection with this property, while Issac Lifshitz (Ike Lifschitz) was Russian-born according to the 1900 Census, and was listed in directories in this building in 1903-05 (in 1903 as partner of Joseph Lublinsky) operating a saloon. Among groups meeting here were the Heinrich Heine lodge (1902), Smoking Pipe Makers’ Union (1903), and East Side Restaurant Keepers (1903). Apparently in commemoration of the assassinated President, the name of the building was changed to “McKinley Hall” by 1904. Organizations that met here included the formation of the New-York Rent Payers’ Protective Association (1904), Lady Lining Makers (1904), and Cloth Hat and Cap Makers of North America (1904-07). Frederick Bachmann was judged to be incompetent in July 1904 (he died in January 1905); in November 1904, Bachmann’s trustees transferred this property to Combined Securities Co., which held an auction

in January 1905. The auction advertisement listed “Bowling alleys in cellar. Store, meeting, lodge, music rooms, and apartments above.”<sup>24</sup> After passing through several owners, the building was acquired in February 1906 by Malka Marder; the wife of Benjamin Marder, a cloak contractor in the 1910 Census, both were Polish/Austrian-born.

#### The Newsboys’ Athletic Club<sup>25</sup>

In September 1905, the three upper stories of the former McKinley Hall were leased for use as the Newsboys’ Athletic Club, founded by Jack Sullivan (ne Jacob A. Reich), known as the “King of the Newsboys,” a former newsboy and prizefighter who then sold papers to newsboys. The Club had a gymnasium and showers, a reading/classroom, and a lodging room for over fifty boys. The club depended on donations from New York’s society – one benefit, held in March 1907 at the Academy of Music, was directed by impresarios George M. Cohan and Sam Harris. By May 1911, with the expiration of its lease, the Club, by that time serving some 2,000 newsboys, purchased the former home of the New-York Historical Society at Second Avenue and 11<sup>th</sup> Street. The basement and storefront of the Newsboys’ Athletic Club building had been leased for use as a laundry in 1905-07 to Paul C. Port (also at 88 East 4<sup>th</sup> Street), and from 1908 to March 1912 to the New System Napkin, Towel Supply & Steam Laundry Co., until legal action against the company was taken by the Marders.

#### Floral Garden Hall<sup>26</sup>

Malka Marder sold the building in February 1913, and it was purchased the following month by Sarah Hirsch, the wife of Charles Hirsch, proprietor of the Manhattan Lyceum (formerly Turnverein Halle) at 66-68 East 4<sup>th</sup> Street; both Hirsches were born in Romania. Operated as Floral Garden Hall, it was altered into a dance hall on the ground story, with meeting and banquet rooms above. Among the many events held here were: the annual convention of the Federation of Rumanian Jews of America (1913); Brotherhood Welfare Association gathering on behalf of New York’s hoboes (1913); Women Dressmakers’ Association and Journeymen Barbers’ League strike meetings (1914); a planned meeting of the Anti-Militarist League, which resulted in a riot after the owner reneged on the use of the hall (1914); Sheet Metal (Automobile) Workers’ meetings (1914); garment workers strike meetings (1916); Messenger Boys’ Union strike headquarters (1916); and Branch No. 578, *Arbeiter Ring* (Workmen’s Circle) of the Socialist Party, and Sholom Aleichem Lodge of the Jewish National Workers’ Alliance of America (1917-18). In 1916, the ground story was altered for a storefront, incorporating 1892 cast-iron pilasters (which survive). The property was foreclosed in January 1919 and sold at auction.

#### Standard Provision Co./ Hygrade Food Products Corp.<sup>27</sup>

After 45 years of use as a social and meeting hall, the former *Aschenbroedel Verein* Building for the next four decades served as meatpacking plant. The property was purchased in February 1919 by the Standard Provision Co. (Isidor Chorney, president) at 102 Rivington Street. A Dept. of Buildings application indicated that the building would be used for meatpacking, with storage in the basement, shipping and receiving on the ground story, a meat provisions and drying factory on the second story, and offices on the third story. In December 1927, Standard Provision was acquired through a merger of nine wholesale provisions companies by the Hygrade Food Products Corp. (Hugo Slotkin, president), 152 Broadway. The *Washington Post* called this “the first consolidation of delicatessen food properties ever effected.”<sup>28</sup> According to a notice in the

*New York Times*, the constituent companies

manufacture and sell frankfurters, bolognas, salamis, smoked and cured tongues, spiced, pickled and corned beef and various other ready-to-serve meat products. The companies are among the most important serving New York and Philadelphia. Their success individually and collectively has established an enviable record in the industry. Their products are sold to over 5,000 customers, including delicatessen stores, chain stores, drug stores, meat markets, clubs, grocers, hotels, restaurants, steamship and railroad companies, etc., throughout the United States and in foreign countries.<sup>29</sup>

City directories over the years variously listed divisions of the corporation here: Hebrew National Food Products (c.1928-29); Carmel Kosher Provision Co. (c. 1933-45); and Hod Carmel Kosher Provision Co. (c. 1950-57). Hygrade sold this property in February 1960.

### 20<sup>th</sup>-Century History of the East Village<sup>30</sup>

After a period of decline, Greenwich Village was becoming known, prior to World War I, for its historic and picturesque qualities, its affordable housing, and the diversity of its population and social and political ideas. Many artists and writers, as well as tourists, were attracted to the Village. By the 1910s, property owners and merchants attempted to improve the Village's economy and rehabilitate its physical condition, with "shrewd realtors beg[inning] to amass their holdings of dilapidated housing."<sup>31</sup> These various factors and the increased desirability of the Village to upper-middle-class professionals lead to a real estate boom – "rents increased during the 1920s by 140 percent and in some cases by as much as 300 percent."<sup>32</sup>

After World War II, the ethnic make-up of the Lower East Side changed again, becoming dominated by Latin American immigrants, especially those from Puerto Rico. Their immigration was encouraged by the government as a source of cheap labor, particularly for the garment trades, hotels, and small manufacturing. The community named itself Loisaida to symbolize the second generation Hispanic roots that had developed in the context of the African-American and Latino movements for social and economic justice, equality, and identity. The residential and cultural desirability of the neighborhood that came to be known as the "East Village" increased with the removal of the Third Avenue El in 1955. As indicated by Terry Miller,

the psychological barrier that had marked the eastern boundary of Greenwich Village was gone. Blocks that once had no prestige were suddenly seen as intriguing, and apartments here were less costly than those in Greenwich Village. ... As artists and writers moved east, the blocks from St. Mark's Place to Tenth Street were the first to hint that the Lower East Side was being transformed. Realtors began marketing the area as "Village East," and by 1961 as the "East Village," a name that stuck.<sup>33</sup>

From World War I to the 1940s, Second Avenue between East 14<sup>th</sup> and Houston Streets had been considered the heart of New York's Jewish community, known as the "Yiddish Rialto" for its role as the world's center of Yiddish theater. As Yiddish theater declined, the East Village gave rise in the 1950s to "Off-Broadway" theater, including the Phoenix Theater (1953-61) in the former Louis N. Jaffe Art Theater (Yiddish Art Theater) building (1925-26, Harrison G. Wiseman), 181-189 Second Avenue;<sup>34</sup> the Tempo Playhouse and Pyramid, Key, Bowery, New Bowery, and Bridge Theaters (1955-67) in the former Hamilton-Holly House, 4 St. Marks Place; and the Orpheum Theater (1958), 126 Second Avenue. An "off-Off-Broadway" theater also



emerged in the late 1950s, characterized by the small size of the venues and total avoidance of commercialism and its pressures. Joe Cino's Caffe Cino (1958), 31 Cornelia Street, is generally recognized as the first, and other significant early off-Off-Broadway theaters were Judson Memorial Church (1961) under Rev. Al Carmines; Ellen Stewart's Café La Mama/ La Mama Experimental Theatre Club (1961), 321 East 9<sup>th</sup> Street (after 1969 at 74 East 4<sup>th</sup> Street); and Theater Genesis (1964) in St. Marks in the Bowery Church under Michael Allen and Ralph Cook. Off-Off Broadway theater coincided with the emergence of gay theater in New York.

In the 1950s, the East Village also became home to a number of key Beat Generation writers, including Allen Ginsberg, William Burroughs, Norman Mailer, and W.H. Auden, and was renowned for its protest art and politics, galleries, poetry and coffee houses, bookstores, clubs, with a "counterculture" scene centered on St. Mark's Place.

#### Rodale Press, Inc.<sup>35</sup>

The 74 East 4<sup>th</sup> Street building was purchased in February 1960 by Rodale Press, Inc., of Emmaus, Pa. Jerome Irving Rodale (1898-1971) was a New York accountant who, with a brother, in 1923 founded Rodale Mfg. Co., which made commercial and residential electrical connectors. After relocating the firm to Emmaus, Rodale became interested in organic farming. Rodale Press began publishing *Organic Farming & Gardening* (1942) and *Prevention* (1950), a magazine devoted to nutrition and personal health, and later, other magazines and health books. In order to promote his concepts, he was also a playwright and theatrical producer. Rodale apparently originally intended to use No. 74 as a theater – the *Times* listed building plans as such in 1960;<sup>36</sup> instead, Rodale in 1962 purchased No. 64 East 4<sup>th</sup> Street with the intention to "convert it into an intimate playhouse, theatre workshop and acting school."<sup>37</sup> A directory in 1963 listed Rodale Press and the Rodale Theater at 62 East 4<sup>th</sup> Street, and Rodale Mfg. Co. at No. 60. Rodale sold the property in September 1967.

#### La Mama Experimental Theatre Club<sup>38</sup>

In November 1967, the former *Aschenbroedel Verein* Building was acquired by the La Mama Experimental Theatre Club, an off-Off-Broadway theater company that had been founded in 1961 by Ellen Stewart. After her arrival in New York in 1950, Ms. Stewart worked in retail clothing and fashion, becoming a freelance designer. She opened a basement Café La Mama at 321 East 9<sup>th</sup> Street in 1961, intended as a combination boutique and theater, the latter partly inspired by the experience of a brother who was an aspiring playwright. The café's first play in July 1962 was Tennessee Williams' "One Arm," and later that year Stewart put on the first American production of a Harold Pinter play, "The Room." She was forced, however, to move several times: to 82 Second Avenue in 1963, after being closed by the Dept. of Buildings due to a zoning violation; and to a loft at 122 Second Avenue in 1964, after being closed twice by the Police, Fire, Licenses, and Health Departments. In March 1964, the company was renamed the La Mama Experimental Theatre Club, and Stewart was acclaimed during its first European tour in 1965. An Actors' Equity crackdown in 1966 on coffee houses and theater workshops nearly ended the company, but the union relented in recognition of the importance in New York of experimental theater (La Mama then adhered to a policy of no formal admission charge – instead there was a \$1 per week membership fee – and a maximum of ten performances). By 1967, the *Times* called Ms. Stewart "the most active producer in New York City,"<sup>39</sup> with a new American play every two weeks. Her abiding philosophy has been that La Mama is "dedicated to the playwright and all forms of

theater.” She notes that “I started La Mama so there would be a place where a playwright could write, see and learn. Why should a new playwright be regarded on the same terms as an experienced playwright the very first time out – which is what most professional criticism does?”<sup>40</sup> She has personally selected and invited these playwrights, who then act as their own producer, with La Mama considered an attractive venue due to its lack of censorship.

La Mama received major Ford and Rockefeller Foundations grants in 1967, allowing the purchase and renovation of the 74 East 4<sup>th</sup> Street building, which was then “in ruins.” In June 1968, its Second Avenue theater closed, with plays temporarily produced at 9 St. Mark’s Place, while renovations occurred on East 4<sup>th</sup> Street. The current La Mama Experimental Theatre Club opened in March 1969, with repertory and ensemble theaters on the first and second stories, rehearsal space on the third story, and Stewart’s apartment on the top story. The first two productions inaugurating the theaters were the musical “Caution: A Love Story,” by Tom Eyan and Bruce Kirle, based on the story of the Duke and Duchess of Windsor, and Julie Bovasso’s “Gloria and Esperanza.” The first-story theater was renovated in 1972. A National Endowment for the Arts grant in 1974 allowed for the expansion into an Annex at 66-68 East 4<sup>th</sup> Street (former Turnverein Halle).

Today, La Mama, the oldest off-Off-Broadway theater in New York City, is widely considered the most influential and has been called “the most prolific of all the off off-Broadway stages,”<sup>41</sup> to date having produced an estimated 1,900 plays in New York City, and countless more around the world. La Mama has received more than sixty Obie Awards for Off-Broadway theater (including a Special Obie for its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1981), as well as dozens of Drama Desk, Bessie, and Villager Awards. Ellen Stewart, recognized as a pioneering African-American theater impresario, was the recipient of a MacArthur Fellowship Award (1985) and MacArthur Fellows Award (1991), and was inducted into the Theatre Hall of Fame (1993). Though commercial theater has not been its focus, a number of La Mama plays achieved success on Broadway, including “Godspell” and “Torch Song Trilogy,” and its resident director, Tom O’Horgan, later produced the influential hit “Hair.” Among the notable playwrights associated with La Mama have been Jean-Claude van Itallie, Paul Foster, Ruth Yorck, Tom Eyan, Julie Bovasso, David Starkweather, Sam Shepard, Lanford Wilson, Harvey Fierstein, William Hoffman, Adrienne Kennedy, Charles Ludlam, and Terence McNally; eminent directors have included O’Horgan, Joseph Chaiken, Andrei Serban, Wilford Leach, John Vacarro, Marshall Mason, and Meredith Monk; and performers of note have included Bill Irwin, Billy Crystal, Nick Nolte, Danny De Vito, Bette Midler, and Estelle Getty.

### Description

The four-story (plus basement; the rear portion is only two stories) and three-bay, red brick-clad *Aschenbroedel Verein* Building was originally built in 1873; the front facade was altered in 1892 with the addition of cast-iron ornament that combines elements of the German Renaissance Revival and neo-Grec styles with folk motifs. **Ground Story:** Four 1892 cast-iron pilasters survive, which are fluted at the base, paneled above, and ornamented with incised blocks that are surmounted by bosses and inverted hearts. The iron entablature once supported by the pilasters has been removed (post-1939); the story is terminated by a painted stone stringcourse. Alterations dating from 1969 (or after) include: the central metal-and-glass entrance doors (with stone threshold), which are surmounted by a wooden panel and sign; brick infill between and above the pilasters; announcement board on the east side of the facade; and two light fixtures placed above the entrance. **Second through Fourth Stories:** The upper stories are flanked by

vermiculated cast-iron quoins (many blocks and/or vermiculation are missing). All windows have cast-iron surrounds, ornamented with hearts on the sides and incised motifs on the sills, and are linked together and to the quoins by panels with *fraktur*-like incising. Many of the moldings once located above the hearts on the windows are missing. The second-story windows are double-height, are capped by round-arched pediments ornamented with three composers' busts, and have six-over-six double-hung wood sash (the outer windows have transoms, while the central window has double pairs). The third story windows have segmental broken-scroll pediments (only the eastern window has a surviving acroterion ornament) and six-over-six double-hung wood sash (paired in the center). The central fourth-story window is capped by a pediment, while the outer windows have entablatures (the western window's was replaced in pressed metal c. 1980s-90s; all have six-over-six double-hung wood sash (paired in the center). The prominent metal cornice has stylized modillions ornamented with hearts (the easternmost is missing), rods, and incised ends and is surmounted by a large molded, broken pediment, ornamented at the ends by sunbursts.

**Western Facade:** This facade, currently visible above the first story, has keyed returns of the front facade's quoins, and a portion of red brick facing; the rest of the facade is unarticulated and parged. **Eastern Facade:** Attached to the eastern side of the building [**and not on the designated Landmark Site**] is a tan brick wall, constructed as part of a light court for No. 63-65 Second Avenue (aka 76-82 East 4<sup>th</sup> Street) (1926, Charles B. Meyers).

Report researched and written by  
**JAY SHOCKLEY**  
 Research Department

### NOTES

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1. Adapted from LPC, *Webster Hall and Annex Designation Report* (LP-2273) (N.Y.: City of New York, 2008), researched and written by Jay Shockley.
  2. Jan S. Ramirez, "Greenwich Village," in Kenneth T. Jackson, ed., *The Encyclopedia of New York City* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Pr., 1995), 506.
  3. The church is a designated New York City Landmark.
  4. Of the original nine houses, Nos. 428-434 are extant and are designated New York City Landmarks.
  5. The Academy remained fashionable until the construction of the Metropolitan Opera in 1883; the building was converted to a theater in 1887, and was demolished around 1926.
  6. The building is a designated New York City Landmark.
  7. The Children's Aid Society's Girls' Lodging House (by 1871) and its offices (by 1891) were at Nos. 27 and 24; and No. 12 was replaced by the German-American Shooting Society Clubhouse (1888-89, William C. Frohne), today a designated New York City Landmark.
  8. All of the mentioned extant buildings are designated New York City Landmarks.
  9. New York County, Office of the Register, Liber Deeds and Conveyances; NYC, Dept. of Buildings (NB 278-1873); *New York City Directories* (1867-92); "Our Amateurs," *Dwight's Journal of Music*, Jan. 15, 1870, 173; "The German Musicians Contributing," *New York Times* (NYT), Aug. 29, 1870, 1; *Proceedings of the Supreme Council of Sovereign Grand Inspectors-General of the Thirty-Third and Last Degree, Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite* (Portland: Stephen Berry, 1873), 220; "Bad Manners of German Singers," NYT, May 30, 1880, 5; "For Sale," *New York Herald*, May 14, 1882, 5; "George Matzka's Funeral," NYT, June 18, 1883, 5; "The Aschenbroedel Concert," *New-York Tribune* and NYT, Sept. 22, 1888, 6 and 4; "All the

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- Officers Retire,” *NYT*, Apr. 23, 1889, 5; “The Aschenbroedel Verein,” *NYT*, Apr. 27, 1889, 2; “Aschenbroedel” listing in *Appleton’s Dictionary of New York* (N.Y.: D. Appleton & Co., 1892), 58; “The Aschenbroedel Verein,” *NYT*, Feb. 14, 1892, 8; “Coming Events,” *NYT*, Apr. 23, 1892, 3; “A Home for Musicians,” *NYT*, Apr. 25, 1892, 9; “Home for German Musicians,” *NYT*, Apr. 26, 1892, 8; “Aschenbroedel Verein,” *NYT*, Nov. 5, 1892, 10; “Aschenbroedel Verein,” in Moses King, *King’s Handbook of New York* (N.Y.: M. King, 1893), 572; “Years of Prosperity,” *NYT*, Jan. 26, 1896, 6.
10. Theodore Thomas (1835-1905) was one of the most important figures in classical music in the United States in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Born in Germany, he immigrated to the U.S. in 1845 and became a touring solo violinist by 1851; he performed in a series of widely noted chamber concerts at Dodworth Hall from 1855 to 1869. He began conducting in 1859, becoming conductor in 1862 of the Brooklyn Philharmonic Orchestra, and in 1864 began a series of symphony concerts at Irving Hall. The Theodore Thomas Orchestra began its national and Canadian tours in 1869. Thomas was musical director of the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia in 1876. He also conducted the New York Philharmonic Orchestra in 1877-78, but left for Cincinnati, where he directed the new College of Music. Upon his return to New York in 1880, he resumed the conductorship of both the Brooklyn and New York Philharmonic Orchestras, as well as his own Theodore Thomas Orchestra (the latter lasted until 1888). In 1882, Thomas conducted seven orchestral-choral concerts at the new Seventh Regiment Armory, 643 Park Avenue (a designated New York City Landmark and Interior Landmark), each of which was attended by some 8,000 people, and in 1883 he conducted, as the country’s preeminent Wagnerian, special memorial concerts after the composer’s death. Thomas became the musical director of the American Opera Company at the Academy of Music in 1886. In 1891, he moved to Chicago to conduct the Chicago orchestra, a position he held until his death. Considered the first significant American conductor, Thomas is also credited with popularizing classical music in the United States, as well as launching many local orchestras through the inspiration of his tours. From 1881 to 1891, Thomas rented as his residence No. 108 East 17<sup>th</sup> Street, which was owned by Mayor William R. Grace (today the house is located within the East 17<sup>th</sup> Street/ Irving Place Historic District).
  11. “Philharmonic Society of New York,” in George Grove, *A Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1880), 701-702; N.Y. Philharmonic Society, *Minutes of Directors Meetings* (1873-83) and *Minutes of Business Meetings* (1873-90).
  12. Howard Shanet, *Philharmonic: A History of New York’s Orchestra* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1975), 427.
  13. The New York Turnverein remained in this building until 1898, and this was the site of the first Yiddish-language theater performance in the U.S. in 1882.
  14. LPC, architects files; Dennis S. Francis, *Architects in Practice, New York City 1840-1900* (N.Y.: Comm. for the Pres. of Archl. Recs., 1979), 16; “August H. Blankenstein,” U.S. Census (New York, 1900 and 1910) and New York City Death Index (1914), [www.italiangen.org](http://www.italiangen.org) website; A.H. Blankenstein, *Iron Specification... Centre-Market Building* (1873); “The Armory Claims,” *NYT*, June 29, 1878, 3; “Building Intelligence,” *Manufacturer & Builder* (July 1883), 132; *Buffalo, New York Directory* (1890); “Juryman and Lawyer Argue,” *NYT*, Mar. 8, 1894, 9.
  15. “City and Suburban News,” *NYT*, Nov. 7, 1873, 8.
  16. *NYT*, Jan. 26, 1896.
  17. NY County, including Section 2, liber 12, p. 223-224, and liber 49, p. 69-70; NYC, Dept. of Buildings (Alt. 338-1892); New York Tax Assessments, 17<sup>th</sup> Ward (1890-95); *New York City Directories* (1892-98); “Recorded Real Estate Transfer,” *NYT*, June 2, 1892, 6; “Alterations,” *Real Estate Record & Builders Guide*, July 23, 1892, 131; “Schillerbund Fair” advertisement, *New Yorker Volkszeitung*, Dec. 14 and 19, 1892, 2 and 3; “The Schillerbund,” *NYT*, June 17, 1894, 20; “German Singing Society,” *NYT*, Mar. 17, 1895, 16; “Coming Events,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, May 17, 1895, 7; “May Not Molest Clubs,” *NYT*, Sept. 11, 1895, 9; “Order of Chosen Friends,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle Almanac* (1897), 187-188; “New York Engineers’ Protective Association,” *The Engineers’ List* (Jan. 1900), 43; “Poles to Celebrate,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Jan. 22, 1901, 10; F. Bachmann obit., *NYT*, Jan. 6, 1905, 5.

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18. LPC, architects files; Francis, 48, 65; Ward, 45, 65; "Richard O.L. Rohl," [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org) website, New York City Death Index (1923), [www.italiengen.org](http://www.italiengen.org) website, "New York City Marriages, 1600s-1800s," [search.ancestrylibrary.com](http://search.ancestrylibrary.com) website, Naturalization Application (1890), and U.S. Census (New York, 1900, 1910, and 1920); "William Kurtzer," U.S. Census (New York, 1870, 1910, and 1920), Naturalization Application (1881), *New York City Directories* (1915, 1925), and "German Singing Society."
  19. "In Its New Home," *NYT*, Nov. 16, 1892, 8.
  20. "A Prosperous Chorus," *NYT*, July 14, 1895, 11.
  21. Charles L. Sachs, *Made on Staten Island: Agriculture, Industry, and Suburban Living in the City* (Richmondtown, N.Y.: Staten Island Histl. Soc., 1988), 49.
  22. NY County; *New York City Directories* (1899-1905); "Ike Lifschitz," U.S. Census (New York, 1900); "Poles to Denounce Czolgosz's Act," *NYT*, Sept. 12, 1901, 2; "Philip Bauman Missing," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Jan. 15, 1902, 6; "Recorded Leases," *NYT*, Apr. 17, 1903, 14; "Pipemakers Locked Out," *NYT*, Aug. 22, 1903, 5; "Pie Sellers in Revolt," *NYT*, Nov. 7, 1903, 16; "Saenger Hall," in *Brooklyn Daily Eagle Almanac* (1903), 182; "Anti-High Renters Plan Big Parade," *NYT*, Apr. 7, 1904, 1; "Split Over Hearst Gift," and "Tenants in Discord Over Mr. Hearst's \$200," *NY Herald Tribune* and *NYT*, Apr. 11, 1904, 1 and 14; "Bachmann Trustees File \$800,000 Bond," *NYT*, July 8, 1904, 9; "Real Estate Transfers," *NYT*, Aug. 9, 1904, 10, and Nov. 11, 1904, 14; "Lady Lining Makers," *The American Almanac* (1904), 897; "In the Real Estate Field," *NYT*, May 11, 1905, 13, and Sept. 3, 1905, 16; "Real Estate Transfers," *NYT*, Sept. 8, 1905, 14, and Sept. 20, 1905, 13; "Sale of Fourth Street Property," *NYT*, Nov. 10, 1905, 15; "Real Estate Transfers," *NYT*, Dec. 9, 1905, 16, and Feb. 6, 1906, 14; "Cloth Hat and Cap Makers of North America," *Social Progress* (N.Y.: Baker & Taylor Co., 1905); "McKinley Hall," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle Almanac* (1904-05); "Max Sabiro" and "Benjamin and Malka Marder," U.S. Census (New York, 1910).
  23. Kathy Peiss, cited in Marci Reaven and Steve Zeitlin, *Hidden New York: A Guide to Places That Matter* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rivergate Bks., 2006), 65-66.
  24. "At Auction," *NYT*, Dec. 28, 1904, 12.
  25. NY County; NYC, Dept. of Buildings (Alt. 1112-1911); *New York City Directories* (1906-13); "In the Real Estate Field," *NYT*, Sept. 19, 1905, 15; "East Side Home for Newsboys," *NY Tribune*, Sept. 26, 1905, 14; "Newsboys Have Club," *NY Tribune*, Dec. 2, 1905, 3; "Athletic Newsboys Have Their Own Club," *NYT*, Dec. 5, 1905, 11; "The Newsboys' Club," *NY Tribune*, Dec. 15, 1905, 4; "Roosevelt's Greetings to Athletic Newsboys," *NYT*, Dec. 15, 1905, 10; "Newsboy Club Trouble," *NY Tribune*, Oct. 21, 1906, 12; "Newsboys' Athletic Club," *Directory of Social and Health Agencies of New York* (1906), 279; "\$5,000 Obtained for 'Newsies' Club," *NYT*, Mar. 4, 1907, 9; "Recorded Leases," *NYT*, Dec. 6, 1910, 18, and Nov. 18, 1911, 19; "Real Estate Transfers," *NYT*, Mar. 27, 1913, 19; "Marder v. New System Napkin, Towel Supply & Steam Laundry Co.," *New York State Reporter* (1914), 757-758; "Newsboys Raise Fund to Aid Their 'King'," *NY Tribune*, Sept. 2, 1912, 2; "Something About the Newsboys' Home Club of New York City," *Work With Boys* (1912), 304-307.
  26. NY County; NYC, Dept. of Buildings (Alts. 3447-1913 and 1178-1916); *New York City Directories* (1912-18); "Charles and Sarah Hirsch," U.S. Census (New York, 1900); "In the Real Estate Field," *NYT*, Sept. 28, 1901, 11; Charles Hirsch passport application (1905); "To Aid Rumanian Jews," *NYT*, July 14, 1913, 3; "Hobo Vote is 2,000,000," *Washington Post*, Sept. 7, 1913; "Dressmakers to Strike," *NYT*, Mar. 17, 1914, 2; "Barbers to Strike Today," *NY Tribune*, May 18, 1914, 16; "I.W.W. Followers In a Street Row," *NYT*, and "I.W.W. Riot When Barred From Hall," *NY Tribune*, May 25, 1914, 3 and 5; "Tramps Lose Lyceum," *NYT*, Oct. 15, 1914, 9; "New York City -- Automobile Workers," *Sheet Metal Workers' Journal* (1914), 312; "Strikers Laugh While They Quit," *NY Tribune*, May 4, 1916, 3; "Messengers See Victory," *NYT*, Nov. 2, 1916, 10; "Recorded Leases," *NYT*, Apr. 24, 1917, 17; "Recorded Mortgages," *NYT*, Sept. 8, 1917, 18; "Arbeiter Ring" and "Jewish National Workers' Alliance of America," *The Jewish Communal Register of New York City, 1917-18* (1918), 871, 883, 961-964; "Results at Auction," *NYT*, Jan. 1, 1919, 22.
  27. NY County; NYC, Dept. of Buildings (Alt. 214-1919); *New York City Directories* (1918-34); *Manhattan Address Directories* (1929-60); "Recorded Mortgages," *NYT*, Feb. 8, 1919, 20; "Delicatessen Merger Being

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- Financed Today,” *NYT*, Nov. 21, 1927, 37; “37 Meat Concerns in OPA Price Suit,” *NYT*, Nov. 28, 1944, 25; Hygrade Food Products Corp./ Hod Carmel Kosher Provision Co., advertisement, *NYT*, Aug. 6, 1953, 17.
28. “Wall Street Briefs,” *Washington Post*, Nov. 21, 1927, 15.
29. Hygrade Food Products Corp., stock notice, *NYT*, Nov. 21, 1927, 33.
30. Adapted from LPC, *Webster Hall and Annex Designation Report*.
31. Jan S. Ramirez, “The Tourist Trade Takes Hold,” in Rick Beard and Leslie C. Berlowitz, ed., *Greenwich Village: Culture and Counterculture* (New Brunswick: Rutgers Univ. Pr., 1993), 388.
32. Ramirez, in Jackson, ed., 508.
33. Terry Miller, *Greenwich Village and How It Got That Way* (N.Y.: Crown Publr., 1990), 258.
34. This building is a designated New York City Landmark and Interior Landmark.
35. NY County; NYC, Dept. of Buildings (Alt. 1347-1964); “Rodale Press, Inc.,” *International Directory of Company Histories* 23 (N.Y.: St. James Pr., 1998), 415; “Rodale,” *New York City Telephone Directory* (1963); “Double Duty Again,” *NYT*, Oct. 9, 1961, 42; “Rodale Theatre School,” *NYT*, July 11, 1962, 29; “The Book and the Bureaucrat,” *NYT*, July 18, 1967, A5; Rodale obit., *NYT*, June 8, 1971, 42.
36. “Building Plans Filed,” *NYT*, Mar. 22, 1960, 59.
37. “Rodale Will Open Intimate Theatre,” *NYT*, Jan. 13, 1962, 14.
38. NY County; NYC, Dept. of Buildings (Alt. 1347-1964); Stuart W. Little, *Off-Broadway: The Prophetic Theater* (N.Y.: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, 1972), 184-198; Barbara Lee Horn, *Ellen Stewart and La Mama: a Bio-Bibliography* (Westport, CN: Greenwood Pr., 1993), x1-39; Miller, 262-263; La Mama Experimental Theatre Club, “Archives: Play List (1962-2009),” [www.lamama.org](http://www.lamama.org) website; “La Mama Re-Enters Laughing...,” *NYT*, Dec. 9, 1966, 57; “The Theater,” *Wall Street Journal*, Apr. 24, 1967, 18; “Their Hearts Belong to La Mama,” *NYT*, July 9, 1967; “9 Theater Units Get Federal Aid,” *NYT*, Sept. 7, 1967, 51; “Off-Off-Broadway,” *The Guardian*, Sept. 13, 1967, 7; “Café La Mama Gets Help From the Rockefeller Fund,” *NYT*, Dec. 28, 1967, 25; “La Mama to Get Larger Quarters,” *NYT*, July 24, 1968, 49; “Café La Mama to Reopen in Temporary Quarters,” *NYT*, Jan. 3, 1969, 20; “La Mama Opens at New Home April 2,” *NYT*, Mar. 19, 1969, 40; “Mother Is at Home at La Mama,” *NYT*, Mar. 30, 1969, D1, 5; “Theater: ‘Caution’ Is at Café La Mama,” *NYT*, Apr. 4, 1969, 45; “Stage: Café La Mama II,” *NYT*, Apr. 5, 1969, 30; “An Old House Gets a New Home,” *Off-Off* (Aug. 1969), 49; “Theater Isn’t All on Broadway,” *NYT*, Apr. 28, 1974; “Ellen Stewart -- La Mama’s Mama,” [www.britishtheatreinfo.com](http://www.britishtheatreinfo.com) website (2006); “Ellen Stewart: Still Pushing That Pushcart,” *The Villager*, Nov. 1-7, 2006; “Ellen Stewart,” [www.answers.com](http://www.answers.com) website.
39. *NYT*, July 9, 1967.
40. Ibid.
41. Little, 195.

## 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 *Aschenbroedel Verein* (later *Gesangverein Schillerbund*/ now La Mama Experimental Theatre Club) Building 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 four-story, red brick-clad *Aschenbroedel Verein* Building, in today's East Village neighborhood of Manhattan, was constructed in 1873 to the design of German-born architect August H. Blankenstein for this German-American professional orchestral musicians' social and benevolent association; that founded informally in 1860, the *Aschenbroedel Verein* had grown large enough by 1866 for the society to purchase this site and eventually construct the purpose-built structure, becoming one of the leading German organizations in *Kleindeutschland* on the Lower East Side and counting as members many of the most important musicians in the city, at a time when German-Americans dominated the orchestral scene, including conductors Carl Bergmann, Theodore Thomas and Walter Damrosch, and the musicians of the New York Philharmonic and Theodore Thomas Orchestras; that after the *Aschenbroedel Verein* moved to Yorkville in 1892, this building was subsequently owned for four years by the *Gesangverein Schillerbund*, one of the city's leading and oldest German singing societies; that the design of the main facade, altered at this time with the addition of cast-iron ornament by German-born architects [Frederick William] Kurtzer & [Richard O.L.] Rohl, combines elements of the German Renaissance Revival and neo-Grec styles with folk motifs (including hearts), and features a variety of pedimented lintels, quoins, *fraktur*-like incising, three composers' busts over the second-story windows, and a prominent cornice with a large broken pediment; that after 1895, the building housed a variety of disparate uses, including a series of public meeting and dance halls, the Newsboys' Athletic Club, a laundry, and a meatpacking plant; that since 1969, it has been the home of the renowned La Mama Experimental Theatre Club, established in 1961 by Ellen Stewart, and today considered the oldest and most influential off-Off-Broadway theater in New York City; and that the building remains one of the significant reminders of 19<sup>th</sup>-century German-American cultural contributions to New York City, as well as the continuing vitality of off-Off-Broadway theater in the East Village.

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 *Aschenbroedel Verein* (later *Gesangverein Schillerbund*/ now La Mama Experimental Theatre Club) Building, 74 East 4<sup>th</sup> Street, Borough of Manhattan, and designates Manhattan Tax Map Block 459, Lot 23, as its Landmark Site.

Robert B. Tierney, Chair; Pablo E. Vengochea, Vice Chair  
Stephen F. Byrns, Roberta Brandes Gratz, Christopher Moore, Elizabeth Ryan, Roberta Washington, Commissioners



***Aschenbroedel Verein* (later *Gesangverein Schillerbund*/ now La Mama Experimental Theatre Club) Building**

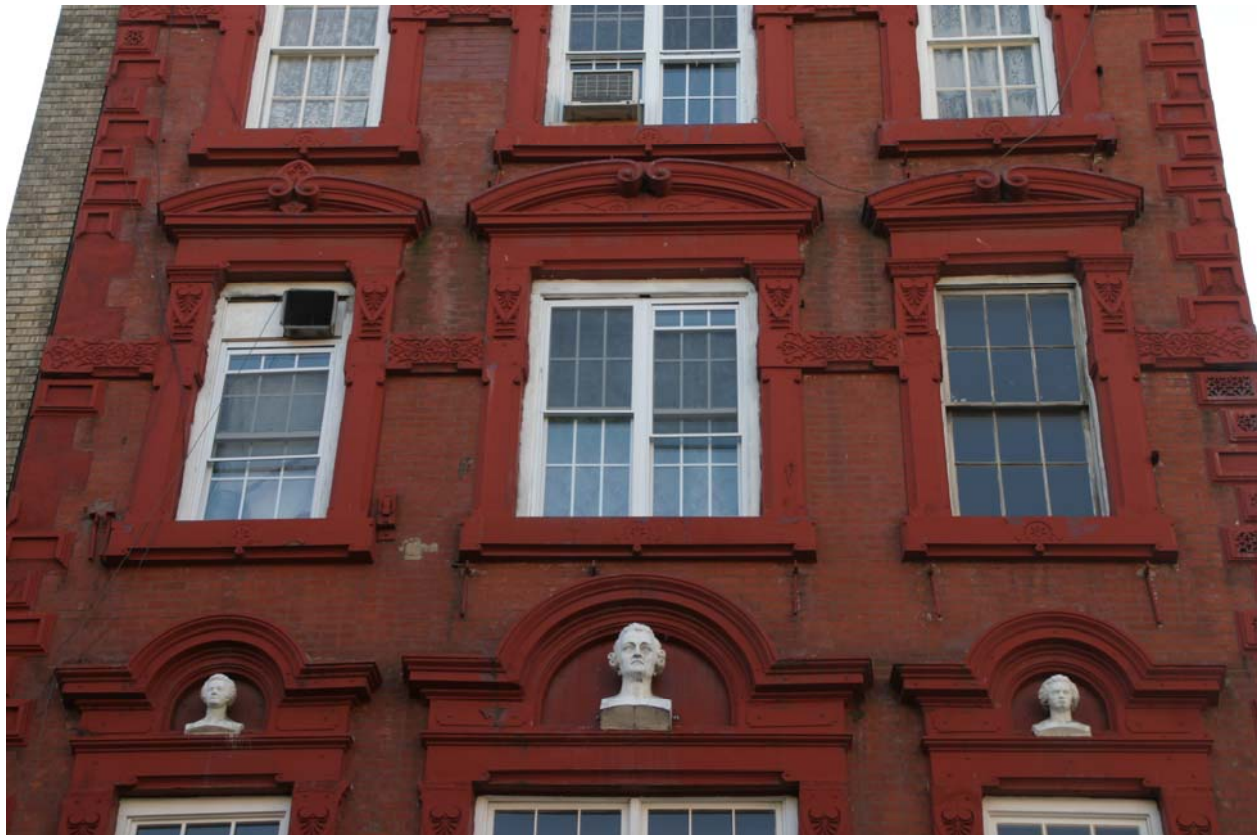
Photo: NYC, Dept. of Taxes (c. 1939)





***Aschenbroedel Verein* (later *Gesangverein Schillerbund*/ now La Mama Experimental Theatre Club) Building**

Photo: Caroline Pasion (2006)



***Aschenbroedel Verein (later Gesangverein Schillerbund/ now La Mama Experimental Theatre Club) Building, third and second stories***

Photos: Caroline Pasion (lower, 2006); Christopher D. Brazee (upper, 2009)



*Aschenbroedel Verein* (later *Gesangverein Schillerbund*/ now La Mama Experimental Theatre Club) Building, cornice and fourth story

Photos: Christopher D. Brazee (2009)



*Aschenbroedel Verein (later Gesangverein Schillerbund/ now La Mama Experimental Theatre Club) Building*, ornamental detail and ground story

Photos: Christopher D. Brazee (2009)



***Aschenbroedel Verein (later Gesangverein Schillerbund/ now La Mama Experimental Theatre Club) Building***

Photo: Christopher D. Brazee (2008)



***Aschenbroedel Verein (later Gesangverein Schillerbund/ now La Mama Experimental Theatre Club) Building***

Photo: Christopher D. Brazee (2009)



*ASCHEBROEDEL VEREIN* (later *GESANGVEREIN SCHILLERBUND*/ now LA MAMA EXPERIMENTAL THEATRE CLUB) BUILDING (LP-2328), 74 East 4th Street. Borough of Manhattan, Tax Map Block 459, Lot 23.

Designated: November 17, 2009