

## The Ernest Flagg Rectory History Project

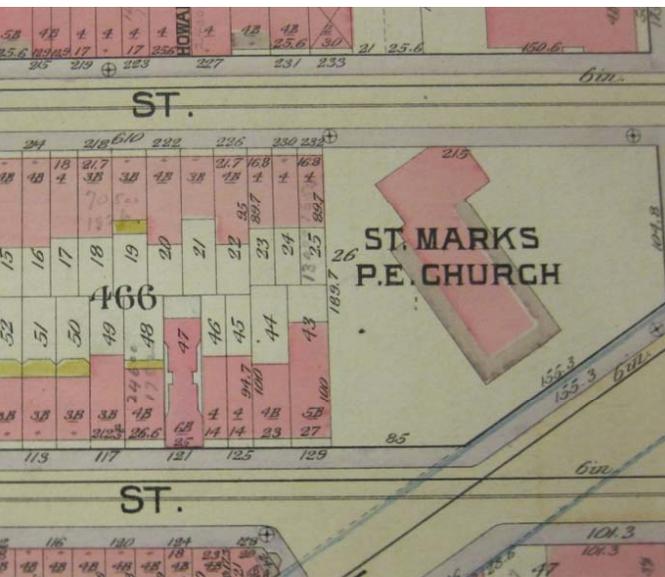


**“Plans have been prepared for a building that will be dignified in architecture, substantial in construction, and in harmony with the Church and its surroundings...”** Excerpt from *Request for Donations from Vestry to Members and Friends of St Marks*, April 2, 1900

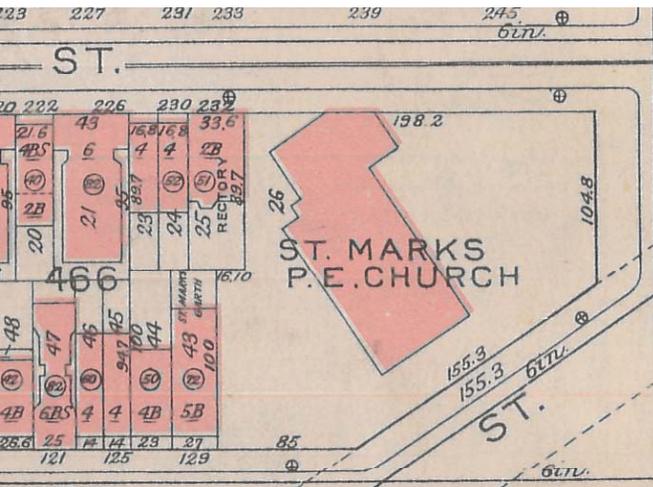
The St. Mark’s Historic Landmark Fund is proud to present the findings of an ongoing project to collect and present the history of the Ernest Flagg Rectory. Our steps included detailing the construction and subsequent renovation of the building and gathering primary documentation about the building’s residents, from the time of its construction to the present. There are still questions to be answered and further research to be done; we hope to continue this project and add even more information about the families and organizations that have called the Ernest Flagg Rectory their home.

We gratefully acknowledge and thank Jennifer Frazer who conducted the initial research presented to-date; Kate Tuohy and Colin Cotter, who did additional research; and Sean Gold and Yubi Park, who helped in this presentation. We would also like to thank the following supporters and repositories who assisted to make this public viewing of the information possible: Brent Adams, Susan De Vries, Stephen Facey, Katherine Marsengill, Roger Jack Walters, Sheryl Woodruff, Avery Art and Architectural Library at Columbia University, and St. Mark’s Church In-the-Bowery Archives.

## 1899-1901 Construction of the Rectory



Property map of 11<sup>th</sup> Street between 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenues, Bromley Atlas of the City of New York, 1891.



Property map of 11<sup>th</sup> Street between 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenues with Rectory, Bromley Manhattan Land Book of the City of New York, 1955.

**Construction** At the turn of the century, the vestry of St. Mark's Church In-the-Bowery felt that there was a necessity for a new rectory adjoining the Church, so they purchased adjoining property on 11<sup>th</sup> Street and retained Ernest Flagg to design the building. Construction began in May 1900 and was completed in 1901.

**Architect** Ernest Flagg was a noted architect both for his embrace of Beaux Arts architectural design and his belief in the social responsibility in architecture. He was a pioneer in fireproofing and tenement air construction. His influence can be seen in the Rectory's elegant proportions and restrained detailing, reminiscent of his tenement buildings.

**Cost** The Vestry kept careful records of subscriptions and payments made from the parishioners towards the cost of the building. The initial budget for the building was \$15,000. Ernest Flagg's commission was to be 3.5% of the total work. The final cost of the building was \$19,225.50. Adjusted for inflation, it would have cost \$516,405.51 in 2011 dollars.

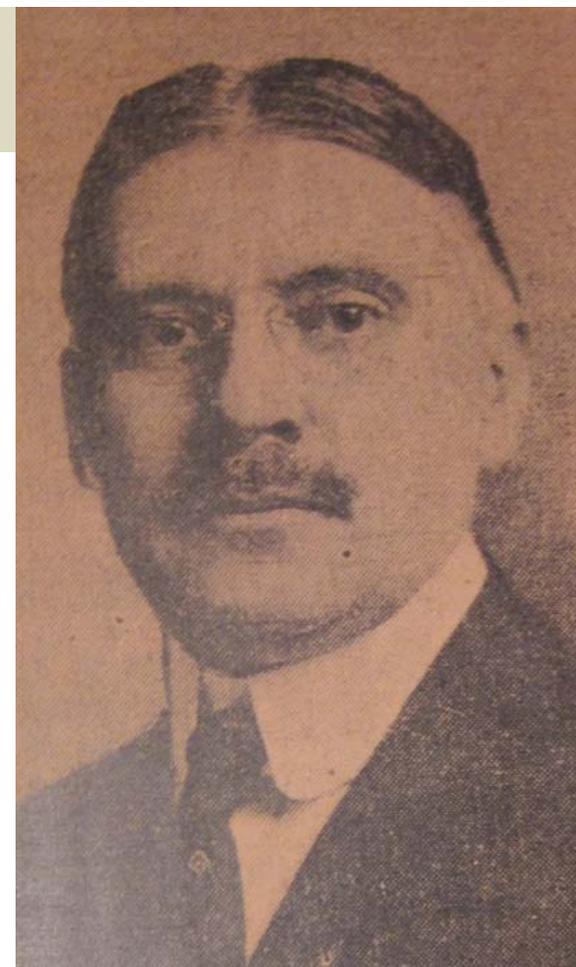
### Other Ernest Flagg Buildings

- The Scribner Building (1898)
- St. Luke's Hospital (1896)
- Annapolis Naval Hospital (1904)
- The Singer Building (1908)

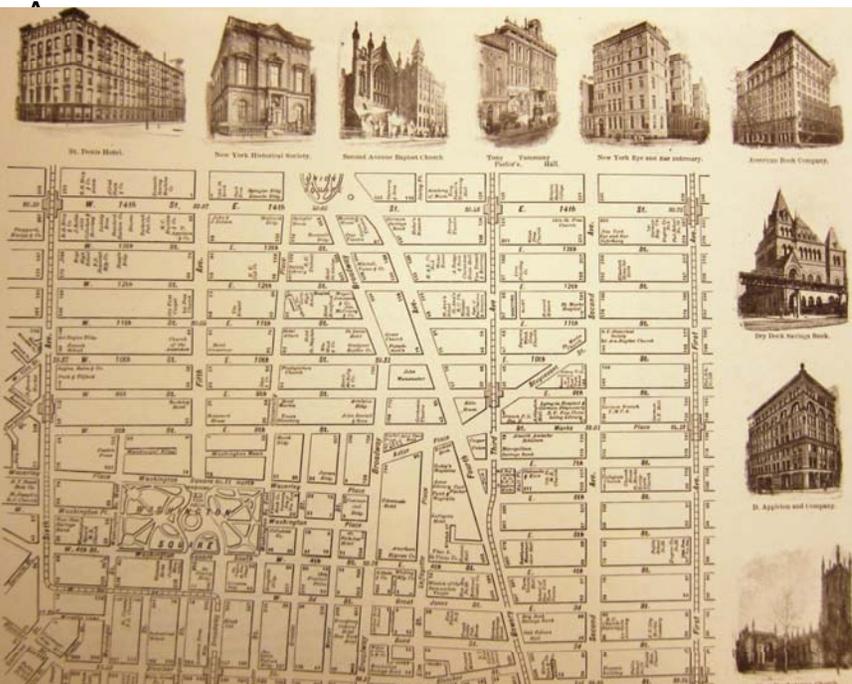
## In the Rectory: 1901-1911 Rev. Dr. Loring Batten and Family

**Family** The Rectory's first residents were the Rev. Batten, his wife, Clara, their two sons, Loring W. Jr. and Richard W., daughter Clara and servant Marie Woodley.

**The Building** Rev. Batten was the main advocate for the construction of the Rectory. The Ernest Flagg Rectory was the Church's third. Currently we know the address of the second rectory was 160 Second



b. 1859-d. 1946



*Our Neighborhood in 1899. Map of the East Village created for the annual Tulip Festival at St. Mark's Church in 1953, Avery Art and Architectural Library, Columbia University.*

### What is a Rectory?

A rector is the priest elected to head a self-supporting parish. By Episcopal Church by-laws, each parish provides housing for their rector.

**Workshops in the Rectory** Rev. Batten published several works on books of the Old Testament and the power of mental suggestion in healing.

He initiated a program of psychotherapeutic healing/hypnotism to cure alcoholism, conducting healing workshops in the Rectory, predating modern programs such as Alcoholics Anonymous.



b.1868-d. 1944

## In the Rectory: 1911-1937

### Rev. Dr. William Norman Guthrie and Family

*“Dr. Guthrie indulged in the mysteries of non-Christian worship, invited Chinese, Parsees, American-Indians to conduct their rituals in his church. Guthrie invited Dancers, such as ...Ruth St. Denis, Poet Amy Lowell, Actresses (Helen Menken and Eva Le Gallienne) and Astrologists to come and speak at afternoon and evening services. Guthrie even filled his services with dramatic colored lights, incense, and gongs.” Time Magazine, 1937.*

**Family** The Rev. Dr. William Norman Guthrie lived in the Rectory with his wife, Anna, two daughters, Clara Sylvia and Phoebe, and two servants, Katherine and Helen White.

**The Building** The Rectory’s main entrance included a porch that faced the Church, with the 11<sup>th</sup> Street stoop used as a secondary entrance.

**Dance in the Rectory** Phoebe would grow up to become a dancer, playwright, and an active member of the East Village community even after Rev. Guthrie’s departure from the Church. It has been suggested that she had a dance studio on the top floor of the Rectory.

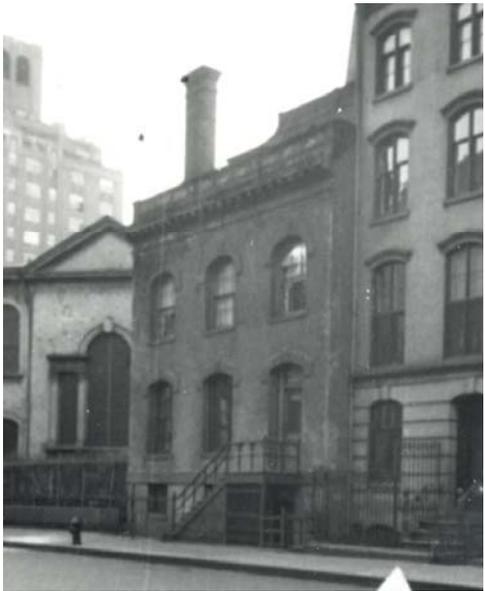
**Architecture** From 1927- c.1934, Dr. Guthrie was in correspondence with Frank Lloyd Wright about the design of three towers, primarily artists’ housing, at St. Mark’s. If built, one tower would have been located on the site of the Ernest Flagg Rectory.



*Rectory’s porch with one of Guthrie’s peacocks in the West Yard in the foreground. St. Mark’s Church In-the-Bowery Archives.*



*b. 1905-d. 1948*



*“Tax” Department Photograph, ca. 1940, New York City Department of Records and Information Services.*

## In the Rectory: 1938-1942 Rev. Charles Brocklebank and Family

**Family** The Rev. Brocklebank, the eighth head of St. Mark’s Church In-the-Bowery, lived in the Rectory with his wife, Sophie, and their son, McClane, who lived here from age four to eight.

The family departed in 1942, when Rev. Brocklebank was commissioned chaplain of the United States Naval Reserve with rank of Lieutenant.

**The Building** We know the least about the four years that Rev. Brocklebank and his family were in the building, but are continuing the search for more clues.

**Shift from Guthrie** During the Rev. Brocklebank’s tenure at St. Mark’s, the ornamentation and lights added to the Church in the Guthrie era were removed: the exterior had been stuccoed and painted pink, there was a fresco in the pediment, and multicolored lights from the Church’s interior. Rev. Brocklebank stated, “the contributions of Dr. Guthrie were so unique and so utterly dependant upon his own magnificent personality and breadth of knowledge that it would folly for anybody to try to duplicate them.”

## In the Rectory: 1943-1958

### Rev. Dr. Richard E. McEvoy and Family

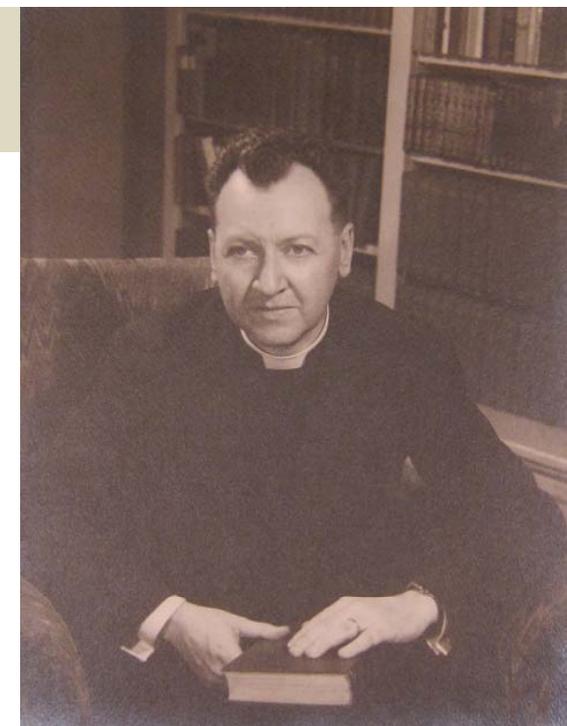
**Family/Home Life** Rev. McEvoy, his wife Leah M. Benchoff, and their daughter Cynthia moved in to the Rectory in 1943. In 1956, Cynthia was married by her father at St. Mark's, and the reception was held in the Rectory. In 1954, Mrs. Richard E. McEvoy was featured in a *New York Times* article celebrating her unusually large living quarters (by Manhattan standards) by using it for the preparation of large quantities of food for church benefits and fundraising. She described several of her favorite recipes, including Plum Pudding, Mincemeat, Banana Cake and Cuban Chicken.

**The Building** Architect Thomas Bell designed and supervised repairs from 1949-1959 including the raising of the roofline, the removal of a bulkhead and dumbwaiter, and the installation of a skylight by firm Nicholson and Galloway, Inc.

**At the Church** In addition to its regular services, St. Mark's hosted programs such as the Lower East Side Independent Artists show and permitting the St. Ann's Church for the Deaf to hold its Sunday afternoon services there.

### Changes in Neighborhood

Crime became an increasingly difficult problem in the neighborhood in the 1950s and McEvoy served as an intermediary between law enforcement and local youth accused of criminality on several occasions. At the same time, the annual Tulip Festival was still being hosted at St. Mark's to celebrate the Church's Dutch roots.



*The Rectory in 1949,  
St. Mark's Church In-the-  
Bowery Archives.*

*b.1904-d. 1983*





## In the Rectory: 1959-1970

### Rev. J.C. Michael Allen and Family

“These kids have been with us for years, destroying us. They’re angry, tortured and revengeful, and doing this hard, skilled work, making this playground, is probably the most productive thing they’ve ever done... For the first time in their [lives], these kids are proud of something.” – Rev. Allen in *The New York Times*, 1970.

**Family** Rev. Allen lived in the Rectory with his wife and children.

**The Building** In 1968, a small kitchen and pantry was installed on the first floor. The original kitchen was larger and located in the cellar. The Rectory is a part of St. Mark’s Historic District which was designated in 1969.

**Arts at St. Mark’s & Preservation Youth Project** In the early sixties, The Poetry Project and Theatre Genesis were given a home at St. Mark’s, later joined by Danspace Project. Their presence was not only a reflection of the neighborhood but recognition of the power of spirituality and ministry through the arts. In 1968 the Preservation Youth Project was founded and organized. It is the first of its kind in the country--employing local youth to work on the preservation and improvement of the historic site, beginning with the Church’s East and West Yards.

**Youth and Education** Rev. Allen became chair of the Lower East Side Civil Rights Committee, which advocated for adequate educational opportunities for neighborhood youth. He was a vocal advocate of Civil Rights.

b.1928-



*A view of the Rectory from the West Yard during the landscaping project of the Preservation Youth Project.*

*The porch collapsed in between 1963-1975. St. Mark’s Church In-the-Bowery Archives.*

## In the Rectory: 1974-1988

### Rev. David Allen Garcia and Family



**Family** In addition to its role as a home to Rev. Garcia and his wife, Migdalia DeJesus, and child, the building was used for meetings, and the basement was home to “The Silkscreen Project”, from 1976-1987, and the Community Documentation Workshop Project.

**The Building** The first, second, and third floors of the building were occupied by Rev. Garcia and his family. The northeast room of the first floor was used as a Living Room and for small committee meetings, the southeast room was used as a dining room, buffets, and larger meetings. The four rooms of the second floor were used as bedrooms and a study for the Rector’s wife. The third floor was essentially unused.



**Forum** During his tenure, Rev. Garcia referred to St. Marks as a “third world revolutionary church.” It became a 24-hour center of activities and organizations, including militant groups such as the Young Lords, Black Panthers, Puerto Rican Student Union and the Movement for Independence of Puerto Rico.

**Commitment to Preservation** Rev. Garcia became an advocate for the preservation of sacred spaces in New York City after his successful preservation efforts after the 1978 fire of the St. Mark’s Church sanctuary and the 1988 fire to the historic Ernest Flagg Rectory. He was appointed to the Landmarks Preservation Commission as a commissioner in 1987.



*View of a meeting taking place in the first floor dining room of the Rectory in the 1970s. St. Mark’s Historic Landmark Fund Archives.*

*The wedding of Rev. Garcia (b. 1944-)*

## Fire, Restoration, and Adaptive Reuse: 1988-1999

**Fire** An electrical fire on March 28, 1988 and subsequent rain caused extensive damage to the Rectory, already in need of several repairs. The fire started in the first floor kitchen (installed in 1968)-spreading to the second and third floors and causing damage to upper windows, the metal roof, and to the building's plaster, lath, millwork, floors, cabinetwork, and stairs. The St. Mark's Historic Landmark Fund raised funds for the preparation of a Historic Structures Report to inform Rectory restoration in November 1988.



**Restoration** In 1990 the roof and exterior of the building were repaired and restored. Some of the work was done by former members of the Preservation Youth Project.

**Reuse** Under the auspices of the Landmark Fund, work began in 1997 with the intent to reuse and restore as many of the original materials as possible to match the interior. At this time the idea of the Neighborhood Preservation Center was conceived as a proposed use for the cellar, first floor, and second floor, with the third floor to become an apartment for the Church's use. The architects were the Edelman Partnership, now Edelman Sultan Knox Wood Architects.



*Photo to the left and photos above document the Rectory's restoration. St. Mark's Historic Landmark Fund Archives.*

## In the Ernest Flagg Rectory: Present to Future

**Groups in the House:** In addition to the Center's founding resident partners – GVSHP, HDC, and the Landmark Fund – the Center has been home to 23 workstation/incubator groups such as Green Guerrillas, S.S. Columbia Project, Friends of the High Line, Art Deco Society of New York, and Museum of Food and Drink, as well as 20 other neighborhood preservation groups that use this as their virtual office address, like Lower East Side Preservation Initiative, New York City Community Garden Coalition, and Triangle Fire Remembrance Coalition.

**Family** Opened on November 1, 1999. The Center is the first of its kind – a resource center dedicated to facilitating citizen participation in the improvement and protection of neighborhoods . Founded through a unique partnership of three preservation groups - the Historic Districts Council, the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation and the St. Mark's Historic Landmark Fund - each representing preservation at different levels. In 12 years, organizations and individuals throughout the City have accessed the Center's programs.

While the Center occupies the bottom three floors of the building, the top floor is apartment for the Church's use. Over the past 12 years the apartment has been home to Patricia and Frank Schramm; the Rev. Julio Torres, his wife Maria and their son, Julio; Teresa Duncan and Jeremy Blake; and currently Katherine Marsengill, Brent Adams and their son, Eben.

**The Building** The Landmark Fund continues to be responsible for the management and care of the building. Among its recent efforts was participation in the Lower East Side Ecology Center's Ecobiz program which will help to guide the sustainability efforts of the Rectory for the future.



*Our submission to the New York Landmarks Conservancy's "I Heart Landmarks" program, 2011. St. Mark's Historic Landmark Fund.*



*Opening day at the Neighborhood Preservation Center, November 1, 1999. St. Mark's Historic Landmark Fund Archives.*