



Across the street from St. Peters, you will see a plaque on the building at 337 West 20th Street, referred to as the Muffin House. Reading further, you will see that this was the original bakery for Thomas' English Muffins from 1855 - 1919



#11

PS11 HANDS ON HISTORY: PRESERVING THE PAST IN THE PRESENT



The PS11 "Hands On History: Preserving the Past in the Present," created and taught by Lesley Doyel, with 5th grade teacher Jessica Griffith, has been offered as an after school class since the fall of 2011. PS11 is located on West 21st Street in Manhattan's Chelsea neighborhood.

The class engages elementary school students from the 2nd to 5th grades in the study of their Chelsea neighborhood and emphasizes the importance of preservation and adaptive reuse at after-school sessions with visiting preservationists, urban archeologists, and field trips to historic sites.

This past year the Hands On History class has visited sites in Chelsea including the General Theological Seminary, the oldest dwelling within the Chelsea Historic District, the Starrett-Lehigh and Terminal Warehouse Buildings in West Chelsea, the Chelsea Piers and Maritime Pier 66, and learned about the history of each and how they have been preserved through landmarking and repurposing. Recently, the students headed south of 14th Street to the Gansevoort Market Historic District, where they discovered and made rubbings of foundry marks on the doorways of cast iron buildings dating from the 19th century.

Last semester HOH students discovered previously unknown gym equipment dating from the 1920s in a closet in the 5th floor gymnasium of PS11. The students researched the equip-



ment, and with the help of their teachers and support of both the school's Principal, Bob Bender, and Deborah Osborne, Director of the Afterschool Program, wrote and received a Margot Gayle Education grant from the Metropolitan Chapter of the Victorian Society, a well know preservation advocacy organization. The grant is for a protective sheet of plexi-glass that will protect and preserve the antique equipment for the future.

Among its new projects, Hands on History was invited in 2013 to participate in The Uni Project, an initiative dedicated to expanding a culture of learning beyond the walls of schools and libraries and into public space. They provide Uni Cubes which act as outdoor reading rooms and classrooms. For this project, the HOH students and their teachers created a Chelsea Historic District Walking Guide, for which they did research by touring the district, learning about the history of numerous buildings, and taking photos of the sites and buildings that are in the guide book. Especially because the May 29th Uni Project takes place in the Clement Clarke Moore Park on 22nd Street and 10th Avenue, the book also focuses on Moore's life, his authorship of the famed holiday poem, A Visit from St. Nicolas, and the many significant contributions he made to the neighborhood still known as Chelsea neighborhood, which was once his family's country estate.

Since beginning in 2011, the Hands On History class has met with distinguished preservationists, including Tenzing Chadotsang of the NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission, Julie Finch and Fern Luskin, Co-Presidents of the Friends of the Hopper-Gibbons House Underground Railroad Site & Lamartine Place HD, Jean Arrington, specialist on NYC C.B.J.Snyder Schools (of which PS11 is one), Frampton Tolbert, Deputy Director of the Historic Districts Council, Urban archeologist, Alyssa Loorya, from the NYC Department of Construction and Design.

We wish to acknowledge the following for their support:

- PS11 Principal, Robert Bender
- Deborah Osborne, Director, PS11 Afterschool Program
- The Victorian Society in America, Metropolitan Chapter, of which Hands On History is an Education Initiative bringing awareness of history and historic preservation to elementary school children.

Many thanks to the Spring Semester 2013 Hands on History students:
**Diana Araujo, Lina Fana, Charn Hong, Giovanni Sanchez, Ethan Larson
 Giovanni Diaz, Valentina Huayhua**

Sources:
 Chelsea Historic District, Borough of Manhattan
 New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission Designation Report
 September 15th, 1970, LP-O666

The Greatest Grid: The Master Plan of Manhattan, 1811-2011 by Hilary Ballon, Published by The Museum of the City of New York (2011),

Turn West on 23rd Street: a toast to New York's Old Chelsea by Robert Baral, Fleet Publishing, NYC, 1965.

The PS11 HANDS ON HISTORY WALKING TOUR GUIDE of THE CHELSEA HISTORIC DISTRICT

The Hands On History Afterschool class
 Uni Project, May, 29th, 2013
 in Clement Clarke Moore Park

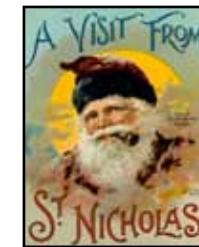


Clement Clarke Moore Park, located at 10th Avenue and 22nd Street, is named after Clement Clarke Moore, and originally opened in 1968. It is also known as the "Seal Park," because of the seal statues that spray water in summer. In 1995 renovations to the Park included a new perimeter fence and play equipment, safety surfacing, as well as plantings and transplanted trees. Every December local residents gather in the park on the last Sunday of Advent for a reading of Twas



the Night Before Christmas, authored by Clement Clarke Moore, whose family's country estate is the present day Chelsea Neighborhood.

Moore's estate, Chelsea, was on the west side of Manhattan island above Houston Street, where the developed city ended at the time, and was mostly open countryside.[5] It was once the property of Major Thomas Clarke, Clement's maternal grandfather and a retired British veteran of the French and Indian War. Clarke named his house for a hospital in London that served war veterans. The estate, which also came to be called Chelsea, was later inherited by Thomas Clarke's daughter, Charity Clarke Moore, and ultimately by grandson Clement and his family.



When New York City laid down the street grid called for in the Commissioner's Plan of 1811, the new Ninth Avenue went through the middle of the estate, city blocks were laid out. The shoreline of the Hudson River that was originally at what is now 10th Avenue, was extended with landfill made of the earth from the flattening the once hilly area. Eventually, Moore began to develop Chelsea, dividing it up into lots along Ninth Avenue and selling them to wealthy New Yorkers. **#1**

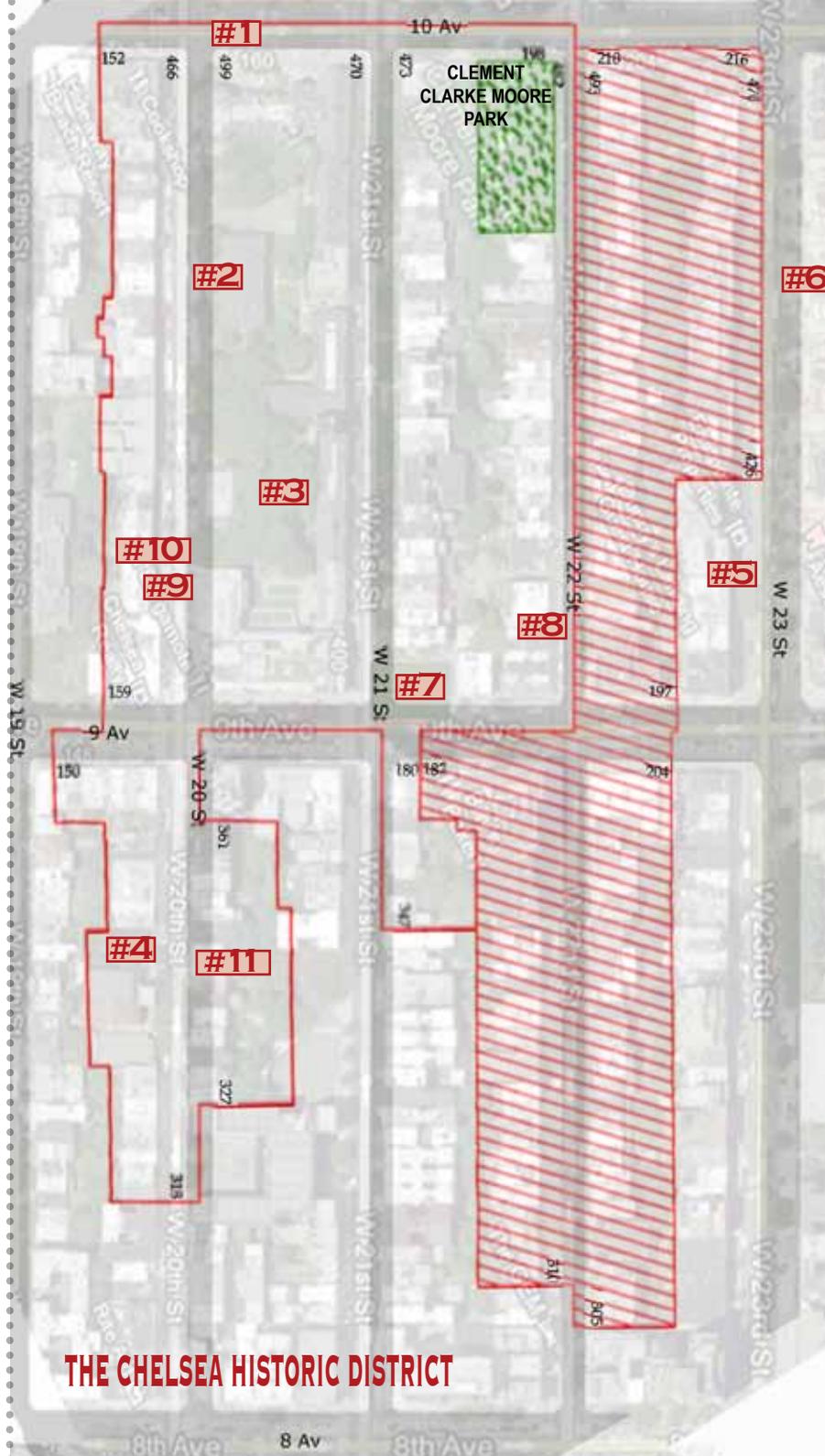
Eventually, Moore began to develop Chelsea, dividing it up into lots along Ninth Avenue and selling them to wealthy New Yorkers. Moore also donated to the Episcopal diocese an apple orchard consisting of 66 tracts for use as a seminary, construction on which began in 1827. This became the General Theological Seminary... **#2**

...where Moore served as the first professor of Oriental Languages, and which still survives on the same site, taking up most of the block between 20th and 21st Streets and Ninth and Tenth Avenues. It is oldest seminary of the Episcopal Church in the United States. As you can see in an 1838 print showing the West Building (1836), which is still stands on the grounds of the General Theological Seminary, the shoreline of the Hudson River was originally where 10th Avenue is today. You can see a sailboat in the near distance. Visitors are welcome on the grounds from 10 to 3 Monday through Saturday **#3**

Most of the original buildings at the General Seminary campus were designed by Charles Coolidge Haight (1841 - February 9, 1917), an American architect who practiced in New York City. A number of his buildings survive including at Yale University and Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut. **#4**

Ten years later, Moore also gave land on Ninth and 20th Street, east of the avenue, for St. Peter's Episcopal Church. **#4**

On West 23rd Street between 10th and 9th Avenues, you will find two references to Moore's Mansion. The first is located at 420 West 23rd Street, at the site where the mansion once stood, and the other is across the street at 435 West 23rd, which integrated into a doorway of the London Terrace apartment complex, built in 1930. **#5**



Chelsea Historic District was the first of three such districts in the Chelsea neighborhood, and was designated by the NYC Landmarks Commission in 1970, and officially extended in 1981. Like all others, the historic District can be identified by the brown Historic District street signs. The red line on the map shows the boundaries of both the Chelsea **#7**

Historic District and the extension. The other two Historic Districts are the West Chelsea Industrial District and Larmartine place on West 29th Street. A plaque describing the Chelsea HD can be found on the side of a federal style building at 401 West 23rd Street, just west of 9th Avenue. **#7**

James N. Wells established his real estate business in 1819. By 1833 he was living and running the business dealings from the quaint brick house at 183 9th Avenue, also 401 West 21st Street. As Clement Moore broke his sprawling estate, Chelsea, into plots he collaborated with Wells on the sale and development of the sites. Originally from Hudson Street in the Village of Greenwich, now Greenwich Village, Wells was instrumental in transforming Chelsea from meadows and farmland into a rapidly growing residential and commercial section. And it made him a small fortune in the meantime. **#8**

In 1835 Wells completed his own grand town house at No. 414 West 22nd Street, just about a block from his office that was in 401 west 21st Street. Its Greek Revival design was just appearing and its exceptional width stretching five bays across is over twice the size of an average townhouse lot. **#8**



The 400 Block of West 20th Street, also in the Chelsea Historic District. Near the east end of the block, the Donac apartment building at #402 negotiates the transition to garden setback by way of a gracefully curved facade. It was commissioned by a daughter of Don Alonso Cushman on land she inherited from him, and built in 1898 to a design by the mansion and apartment house specialist C.P.H. Gilbert. **#9**

The building to the right of the Donac, No. 404, has a plaque reading, "Oldest Dwelling in Chelsea, Frame House with Brick Front, 1830." Its wood siding is visible in this photo, facing the narrow slot between the buildings. The house was originally in the Federal style, but was later "modernized" to look like a Greek Revival townhouse. The roof was raised in the 1850s, and the differences in brick work reveal where the initial roof line was. To the right of No.404 are the houses of Cushman Row. **#10**

The Cushman Row, at 406-418 West 20th Street, between 9th and 10th Avenues, sit south of the General Theological Seminary. Built by Don Alonzo Cushman, a successful dry goods merchant and friend of Clement Clarke Moore, whose estate "Chelsea" once encompassed most of the current neighborhood. This row of seven Greek Revival row houses were built in 1840. Cushman also founded the Greenwich Savings Bank. **#10**



#5

#6

#8

#9

#10