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BBC MARCH 2023 NEWS AND VIEWS

BBC Membership

Thanks to all who have re-upped. Those of you who have not rejoined will find another membership form. Be sure to make your checks payable to BBC Block Association. Membership is \$25 per person. You can also go to www.bbcblockassociation.org and click on join. Either way, please consider making an additional contribution for outtrees. You'll feel great-guaranteed!!



From BBCer Alice Elliott

Welcome Change Productions

Welcome Change is a small independent documentary production company owned by Academy Award® nominated director **Alice Elliott**. Since 1991, Welcome Change has been making films that focus on people with disabilities and communities that are reinventing themselves. Our mission is to lead social change by revealing the big stories hidden in the human heart.



Trusted Source Newsletter

Trusted Source is a free monthly newsletter that comes straight from us. Each edition features a piece of exemplary media – videos, podcasts, radio features, multi-

media pieces – on life with a disability. All of our recommendations are share-friendly in length, most under 20 min. We seek out work that is well-crafted, original, entertaining, and above all honest to the experience of people with disabilities. Each piece is accompanied by three talking points, or “reasons we like this,” to provoke thoughtful conversation. Over 1,500 educators, non-profits, activists, and advocates use our media recommendations to bring a powerfully accessible human perspective to their work.



NABE NOTES

Greenwich House Music School

Thursday, March 16 at 7:30 pm: “*Reflections on Inspiration*”. Composer-pianist **Bruce Wolosoff** performs music from his new Avie Records release “Memento” and discusses the inspirations behind the music as part of an ongoing series “Inspirations on Music.” This is the first performance of the a non-profit concert series to take place here at Greenwich House Music School. “This concert is particularly meaningful to me,” says composer Bruce Wolosoff, the Artistic Director of Reflections, “as Greenwich House Music School has been a vital force in the community for musical education and performance for many, many years. It’s a neighborhood institution that has had a powerful impact on the lives of many students and families, and New Yorkers who enjoy music and the arts.” Mr.



Wolosoff himself took lessons there with his beloved teacher and the school's former Piano **Chairman German Diez**. 46 Barrow Street, NYC. Tickets: \$20 available at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/reflections-on-inspiration-tickets-514472851147>

Saturday, March 25 at 7:00 pm: **German Diez Recital: Erika Nickrenz and Antoine Zemor**. Celebrated alumni Erika Nickrenz and Antoine Zemor return to Greenwich House Music School for the first German Diez Recital of 2023 as they look to honor their former mentor and our late piano chairperson, Maestro German Diez. These accomplished pianists will present a program dedicated to German featuring the works of **Mozart, Chopin, Schubert, Nazareth, Moszkowski, and Piazzolla**. Tickets are \$25 and a portion of proceeds will go towards the German Diez Piano Scholarship Fund, which has given help to promising piano students on the basis of merit and need since 1997. Join us at 46 Barrow Street on Saturday, March 25, 7:00 pm. Tickets: \$25 available at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/german-diez-recital-erika-nickrenz-and-antoine-zemor-tickets-543278489587>



West Village Chorale Bach Mass in B Minor Raffle.

This spring, support the West Village Chorale's performance of *Bach's Mass in B Minor* and win big! Throughout the season, the Chorale will be selling tickets for a special *Bach Mass in B Minor* funding raffle, with four cash prizes ranging from \$5,000 to \$1,000. Tickets are available now at \$100 each. Only 200 tickets will be sold! Prizes: 1st prize: \$5,000, 2nd prize: \$2500, 3rd prize: \$1500, 4th prize: \$1,000. The winners will be drawn at the *Mass in B Minor* performance on Sunday, May 21. Ready to win and support the Chorale? Contact **Ed Shiner** at emshiner411@gmail.com for tickets. Please note: purchase of raffle tickets is not tax-deductible.

Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation

The evolution of an 1853 Fifth Avenue mansion Thursday, March 23, 5:30 pm. Meet and greet the presenter in parlor 6:30 pm (Promptly) | Presentation and Q&A in skylight gallery 7:30 pm. Conversation continues over dinner if you so choose (reservations strongly suggested) Club member and esteemed architectural sleuth **Anthony Bellov** continues with Part Three of his smash series exploring the historic fabric and social history of the Hawley Mansion, today's Salmagundi Club. In Part Three he'll explore the complete transformation of the

Basement (Ground Floor) and what it had been like before Salmagundi converted it into their Bar and Dining Room. He'll also examine the intact architecture of the rarely visited Third and Fourth Floors - once the domain of the family children and servants. Joining him in this voyage will be guest speaker **Annie Haddad**, Merchant's House Museum Historian, the beloved historic house museum in NoHo. She will discuss the daily life and work of 19th century domestic servants, and how it would have been impossible to run a home like 54 Fifth Avenue without them. Ticketed attendees may stay for dinner by making a reservation via the Salmagundi Club's Reservations page with the message, "Before Salmagundi dinner". Open to the public. Eventbrite RSVP required FREE to attend.



Gotherm Center of New York

The Night Patriots Burned New York City Down: Thursday, March 30, 6:30 - 8:00 pm.

New York, the strategic center of the Revolutionary War, was the most important place in North America in 1776. That summer, an unruly rebel army under **George Washington** repeatedly threatened to burn the city rather than let the British take it. Shortly after the Crown's forces took New York, much of it burned to the ground. Who set the blaze? In *The Great New York Fire of 1776: A Lost Story of the American Revolution*, **Benjamin L. Carp** delivers the "definitive account of this crucial but forgotten episode" of the war in the first book to fully explore it. Examining why its origins remained a mystery, even after two British investigations, Carp uncovers stories of espionage, terror, chaos, and tragedy in a historical moment we normally associate with "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."



Russell Shorto, prize-winning author of the best-seller *Island at the Center of the World and Revolution Song: A Story of American Freedom*, joins in conversation. Register www.gothamcenter.org.

Historic Districts Council

Legacy of the Former “Colored” School No. 4, a 19th-century Black heritage site in Manhattan’s Chelsea neighborhood Via Zoom March 7, 6:00 -7:00 pm. New York City has few extant buildings that reflect the complex historical trajectory, milestones and breadth of the African American experience in the great metropolis. But there’s a city-owned building, hidden in plain sight in Manhattan’s Chelsea neighborhood, that sheds a telling light on Gotham’s forgotten past – the former “Colored” School No. 4. Drawing from the city’s own documentary resources in the Municipal Archives and elsewhere, historian **Eric K. Washington** will discuss his advocacy of the curiously idle schoolhouse building – recently featured in the *New York Times*, and other print and broadcast media – which has stood on West 17th Street for over a century and a half. Learn more about the notable teachers, students and visitors associated with this forlorn, yet remarkably surviving, Black heritage site, that is prompting a considerable number of community voices to call for its official city landmark designation. Friend / Senior \$20; General Admission \$25. Register www.hdc.org



ings. In the basement was a small living space for the janitress, **Mary Sallie**. There were four teachers in each school, all unmarried women. Their wages in 1855 ranged from \$400, earned by **H. A. McCormick** (about \$12,200 a year today), to the \$100 salaries earned by **Abbie M. Saunders** and **Eliza Ideson**.

By 1861 it was renumbered Primary School No. 14 and within two years it became Colored School No. 7. Two specialized teachers were added to the staff in 1868. **William Appo**, a renowned Black musician, taught music and **S. Anna Burroughs** taught drawing. Graduating from grammar school was an important milestone, especially for Black children who were often pulled from school in order to work.

The position of music teacher was taken by **Joan Imogen Howard**. Like **William Appo**, she was recognized as an accomplished musician. She was as well an ardent worker for integration and racial rights. On October 30, 1892 *The World* reported “Miss J. Imogen Howard, the only colored woman on the Board of Lady Managers of the [Chicago] World’s Fair, is busily engaged in gathering statistics concerning colored women in New York State. Reflecting the innate racism of the time, the reporter asked Howard if it were possible for a Black woman to become a member of “the learned professions here.” Her reaction was visible. “Miss Howard looked surprised,” said the article. She replied “I know of a great many. In Brooklyn there are three doctors, each of them enjoying a large practice and doing well...” She went on to list a number of other successful professional women.



JOAN IMOGEN HOWARD, A. M.

In 1873 the attendance of Colored School No. 4 was 120 pupils. An inspection by the School Board that year found in part: “ceilings cracked through and need repairing; ventilation by windows; water closets of wood, in poor condition; heated by seven wood stoves, properly shielded with tin.” The tin-lined flues of the cast iron stoves would cause problems at least twice. On January 6, 1879 *The New York Evening Express* entitled an article “Scared Colored School-Children” and reported “A defective flue caused a fire this morning in Colored School No. 4, at 128 West 17th Street. “

In 1884 **Joshua S. Lawrence** published an article in *Ballou’s Monthly Magazine* entitled “The Negroes of New York.” He praised racial advances, beginning, “What a contrast between now and twenty years ago! Then they were vassals, now they are clamoring for the offices and other perquisites of a free government.” His out-of-touch assessment was highly biased and he

Old News

The first Blacks arrived in New Amsterdam in 1626, imported from Africa as slaves by the Dutch West India Company. By 1780 there were more than 10,000 Blacks living in New York. In 1827, slavery was abolished in New York. The city was tasked with the education of all children; but integrated classrooms was not conceivable. “Colored schools” were established, staffed by Blacks. They were an offshoot of the first African Free School, established in 1787 on Mulberry Street. Seven Colored Schools were organized in 1834.

In 1853 Primary Schools No. 27 and 29 shared the new 25-foot wide building at 98 West 17th Street (renumbered 128 in 1868). Three stories tall and faced in brick, it had two entrances – one for boys and the other for girls – as expected in Victorian school build-

insisted "The negro in this city is not debarred or hindered in any way...Their children are allowed to enter public schools all over the city, besides having separate ones, taught by their own teachers."

At the time of the article the prospects for the school were dim. The Board of Education had already proposed closing the school. The teachers were permitted to continue to teach "in other premises than the school building, but without incurring any expense on the part of the Board." But there was obviously a change of heart. The facility continued, now known as Grammar School No. 81. **Sarah J. S. Garnet** was still principal and **Joan Imogen Howard** was still teaching here in 1892. Another inspection that year reflected the poor sanitary conditions. It said "the sinks are defective and cannot be cleaned and flushed regularly. The closets [i.e. toilet rooms] are not ventilated, but are filled with sewer gas and foul air."

The push to discontinue the school continued. In December 1894 **Mayor William L. Strong** received a resolution from the Board of Education "requesting the sale of property No. 128 West Seventeenth street." By the following year the building was unoccupied. Finally on March 24, 1896 the City signed a deal with the Civil War veterans of the 73rd Regiment to lease the ground floor as its clubhouse. Four months later renovations had been completed and on July 6, 1896 the *New-York Daily Tribune* reported "The members of the Veteran Association of the 73rd New-York Volunteers—2nd Fire Zouaves—held a celebration in honor of the opening of their new headquarters, 128 West 17th St. — the old school-house." Among the entertainment that

night was **John J. Moloney**, who "gave his bone solo, which elicited much applause."

The club rooms were decorated with war relics, perhaps the most significant of which was the first Confederate war flag captured by the North. On March 11, 1907 *The Yonkers Statesman* explained that it had been taken by **Corporal Daniel Boone** on May 2, 1862 at Yorktown, Virginia.

Interestingly, the city retained possession of the old school house property. On January 19, 1921 *The City Record* announced that renovations would be made

"to properly place the premises...in a state of occupancy for the Veteran Fire Association." The 73rd Regiment Veterans remained in the ground floor. The two organizations remained in the building at least into the 1930's. A renovation in 1931 made "general repairs to the toilets, urinals and all the fixtures." The building was later acquired by the New York City Department of Sanitation, which utilizes it today. At some point a veneer of yellow brick was applied. Remarkably, the small paned windows survive. The little building with its remarkable history is easily passed by today with little notice.



photo from 1941

abridged from *Daytonian in Manhattan*



Happy St. Patrick's Day from the BBC.
Do you recognize the stars featured in this cover by Robert O. Reed?