



## *If These Walls Could Talk*

### **The Chelsea Tenants' Association Historic Preservation Charitable Trust Program**

As it has become public record the tenants of the Chelsea Hotel went through a terrible fight for maintaining their tenancies' rights, protecting their health and well being against an extremely abusive Landlord. We fought hard, and we won.

During this terrible fight some of us got involved in advocacy regarding the preservation of our Landmark building as well as fighting the "strange" filings with the Department of Buildings.

This idea evolved, and changed into a charitable trust for historic preservation, which I'm proud to say I am the founder of. This idea emerged because our attorneys, who were retained to represent the Chelsea Tenants' Association, got involved above and beyond the services they were hired for.

Their advocacy expressed itself by going in front of our Community Board 4, Landmark Commission, and writing briefs to the Department of Buildings, bringing the issues to these entities that needed to be re-visited. Their involvement meant time spent to advocate our cause, therefore, in fairness, they needed to be paid, and the Trust could do it and did it.

The Trust was founded in January 2012, and registered with The State of New York, and granted 501(c)(3) status by IRS in September 30, 2013 retroactively to the date of our creation.

Between January 2012 and July 2012 we organized two fund raisers. As the IRS gave us their first response in August 2012 that more documentations were needed for their decision, we decided to defer organizing any more fundraisers until the status of non-profit was granted.

The first fund raiser was called "This is my Home", and it was a live, interactive sound walk that celebrated The Chelsea's Hotel past and present as an unparalleled and historic home of writers, musicians, painters, performers, visual artists and creative people of all types. It was organized as a tour starting at 16<sup>th</sup> street, where the participants received in advance either an mp3 file to be loaded onto their own personal music device, or given a device to use, and, of course, to return at the end and finished at El Quixote Restaurant with a reception. As the participants

strolled along the High Line, they were listening to an audio collage of stories, songs and poetry from current, past and present residents. Gerald Busby, our composer resident, had graciously offered to compose original music for the journey. The participants also had the chance to interact with the residents both along the walk as well as El Quixote.

The second fundraiser was organized at The Players Club which is also a landmark building on Gramercy Park South. This event was attended by approximately 65 people and raised close to twenty thousand dollars. The building was the house of Edwin Booth, and he bequeathed it as a private club in 1889. It is a homage for the actors, play writers, architects and for the people who are supporters of the Arts and Culture.

The fundraiser offered for auction Art created by our Chelsea Hotel artists as well as some donations such as antique decorative china, musical instruments from well recognized artists from all over the world. Our auctioneer was from Bohnams, and we were very grateful for the pro-bono contribution of his time and knowledge. We also presented a medley of theater excerpts written by some of the authors who lived in the Chelsea Hotel together with music composed in the Chelsea Hotel by rock stars or pop stars.

The event raised money and enabled us to contribute towards the advocacy of our attorneys, and also to bring together numerous of elements of culture and creativity that have given the Chelsea Hotel status as an "Iconic Building" of the American Culture, that once hosted such illuminaries as Arthur Miller, Arthur C. Clarke, Arnold Weinstein, Brendan Behan, George Kleinsinger, Herbert Gentry, Bernard Childs, Ching Ho Cheng, Doris Chase, and so many more.

In the fall of 2012 I felt extremely honored when "The Avenues World School" approached me for a tour for the 9<sup>th</sup> graders. They came in two groups at different times. I offered them a tour of the Chelsea, but in an interactive and interesting way. I daresay I stimulated the ninth graders to think about why it's important to preserve Architecture and Culture, and how this wonderful landmark building had become such an Oasis for Creativity for all genres of the Arts.

I also had the pleasure of a "mini" tour with six students from P.S. 11 ranging from 6 to 8 years old. It was also an interactive conversation to stimulate the very young to look around and recognize the beauty of buildings. It was a very fulfilling experience.

The program/mission of "The Chelsea Tenants' Association Historic Preservation Charitable Trust", which we are ready to implement and develop is comprised from:

#### **I. Protect and Restore Quality of the Environment:**

1. We filed form 5768, Election/revocation of Election by an Eligible Section 501(c)(3) organization To Make Expenditure to Influence Legislation. This permit's the Charitable Trust to contribute up to 20% of its receipts for this purpose.
2. We are currently striving to change Mold laws. Mold is not only in buildings, it is also in schools, and is generator of asthma, and all the other medical conditions derived due to it.
3. Meeting with our Elected Officials and asking our support for making living conditions healthy and respectful to the individuals and their pets.
4. We have already met with the new Council Member Corey Johnson, State Senator Brad Hoylman, as well as shared our intentions with Representative Richard Gottfried.
5. Ed Olmsted of our Advisory Board wrote the guidance for Mold, and he has been an active part in this progressive battle.
6. Essays written to emphasize the medical effect (asthma, respiratory diseases, poisoning),

upon children, adults, and pets of all the toxic materials within unmaintained buildings, schools.

## **II. Tenant Advocacy:**

1. Strategy to be used for protecting the rent stabilized status through legal means, community boards involvement, elected officials support.
2. Discussions with other Tenants Associations. We already did this for Windermere Apartment Hotel as well as another Association at 72nd Street and Riverside Drive.

## **III. Cultural, Preservation and Educational and Advocacy:**

1. Keeping the awareness of the importance of Arts, Culture through Education.
2. Involving schools in our programs by organizing tours, symposiums with various themes based upon an interactive approach. The approach will be a "Renaissance" one, as one cannot cut the Architecture of a Landmark Edifice from what is performed/ created within its walls. See Chelsea Hotel, Metropolitan Opera, St. Patrick Cathedral, Opera Garnier in Paris, Musikverein in Vienna, and so on. This will open the door for introducing Music, Fine Arts Architecture and knowledge to the students in a connected way.
3. Essays written on the web site of The Trust that will be launched shortly. These pieces written by personalities/connoisseurs in the field will share interesting and appealing thoughts about music, composers, architects, traveling for Arts and Architecture and being under their spell.

## **IV. Raising Money for Landmarking:**

1. Involving World Monument Fund as well as other organizations to help find the Landmarks that are under non-profit status, that need support.
2. Involving Universities with Art curriculum to share their experience in Landmark projects.
3. Raising money for the above, but based upon a cultural understanding.

Our essential proposal and legacy is to promote the Arts and to create an environment in which the Culture is offered in an interesting way.

As everything has a beginning, and always this is the most difficult part we hope that you all who love the Arts, Culture through education and awareness will support our efforts to spread the word, and offer exposure to our Endeavour.

Once we start having our events we do hope that money will be raised as the small "drop" feels the glass.

Thank you for your time and, in advance, for your support.

Yours sincerely,

Zoe H. Pappas  
Founder & Co-Trustee