

# NOTES



VOLUME 10, NUMBER 3, JUNE 2003

## LIBRARY LECTURE

CHRISTOPHER GRAY

NEW YORK STREETSCAPE STORIES

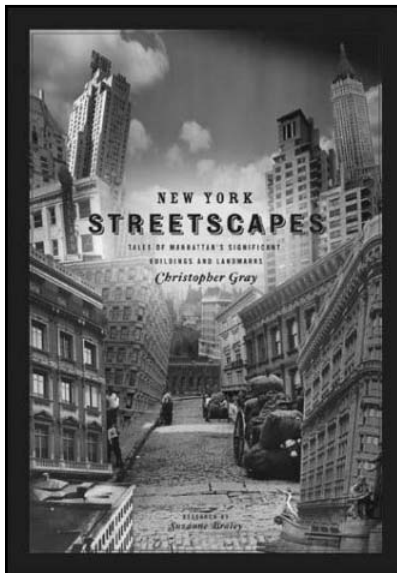
TUESDAY, JUNE 10, 6:00 P.M., MEMBERS' ROOM

The stories can make you laugh or weep: the aviator/writer Antoine de Saint-Exupéry sailing paper airplanes out the window of his modernistic apartment building; the butler at one of Fifth Avenue's last mansions, weeping alone at his employer's funeral; Dr. Louise Robinovitch, who threw away her medical career and disowned her own parents in order to help her swindler brother; Social Register folk flocking to live in a nineteenth-century tenement.

Christopher Gray's book *New York Streetscapes* presents the history of 200 New York buildings, from tenements to towers, in old photographs and previously unknown archival information. Developed from the best of Gray's *New York Times* columns, the book grapples with architecture not as abstruse theory, but as a human condition. Jimmy Breslin says of it "Christopher Gray's work is so fresh, with marvelous little details that you can't get out of your mind... This book will last forever."

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### SOME QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS WITH CHRISTOPHER GRAY



**Q:** Everybody knows everything about New York already - don't they?

**A:** Sure, like the story of how the Dakota was named that because it was so ridiculous to build so far out of town - that's in lots of books....But that, like so many things that 'everybody knows' is so astonishingly way off. The builder named the building the Dakota long before anyone else remarked on it. He liked Western names and even proposed them for the West Side avenues - he thought 'Central Park West' was ridiculous - he preferred Wyoming Place. And the first tenants of the Dakota didn't think it was so far out of town - some even moved south to take their apartments.

**Q:** Big deal, a bunch of local history - isn't all this stuff just in a file somewhere?

**A:** Use the plural: files. Lots and lots of files. Illegible files. Conflicting files. Files that have not been examined in decades. Files that are lost. Files in other cities....To really understand a structure, you have to consult deeds, building permits, tax records, directories, census returns, newspaper articles and magazine coverage.

**Q:** What surprises you about New York?

**A:** How much our favorite ideas cloud a real interest in the city. A block of mansions, everyone agrees, was full of rich people - what idiot would argue otherwise. But it's not - if you look at the census returns, you'll see it's full of working-class people - the servants! Ten or twenty of them in a big house like that of Frick or Carnegie....You also see how helpless the 'ruling class' could be....Think of it - you try to run a 40-room house with the three surly maids who couldn't get work elsewhere - a nightmare!

**Q:** What's your favorite building?

**A:** I don't have a favorite building for New York; I have favorite buildings for every block, sometimes two or three....Buildings don't just get built and sit there; they are living or at least evolving things, changed by economics, weather, geography and, most of all, human agency.

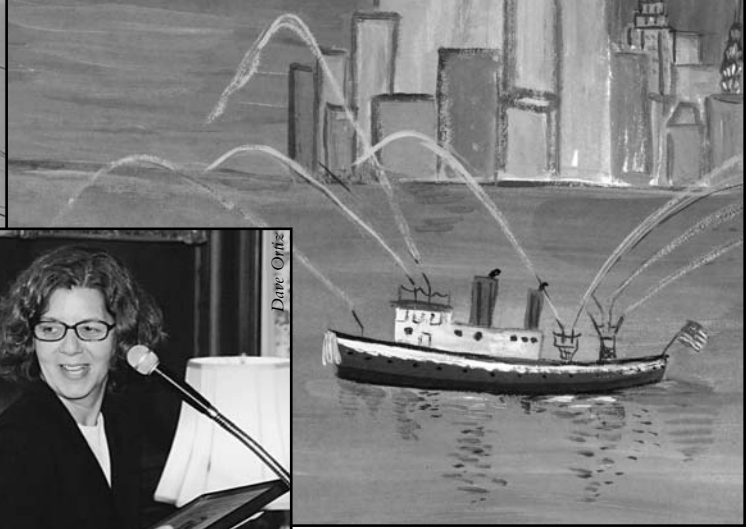
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This lecture is \$10 for members and their guests. Please register by contacting the Events Office at 212-288-6900 x230 or [sholliday@nysoclib.org](mailto:sholliday@nysoclib.org).

THE NEW YORK CITY BOOK AWARDS CEREMONY 2003



Charles Denson



Dave Ortiz



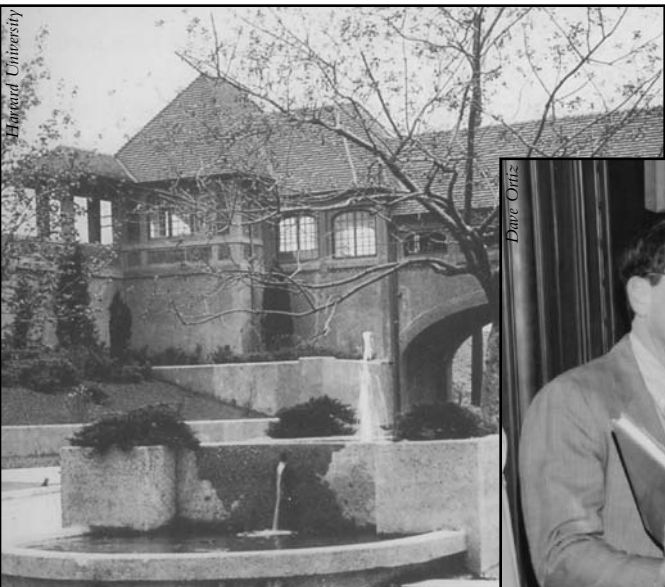
Dave Ortiz



Clockwise from left: winner Charles Denson and the Parachute Jump tower, from his Book of the Year Coney Island Lost and Found; Children's Book Award winner Maira Kalman and a picture from her Fireboat; Architectural History Award winner Michael Henry Adams and the Morris-Jumel mansion, shown in his Harlem Lost and Found; Roger Pasquier describing Landscape History Award winner A Modern Arcadia by Susan Klaus and Station Square fountain in Forest Hills, from A Modern Arcadia.



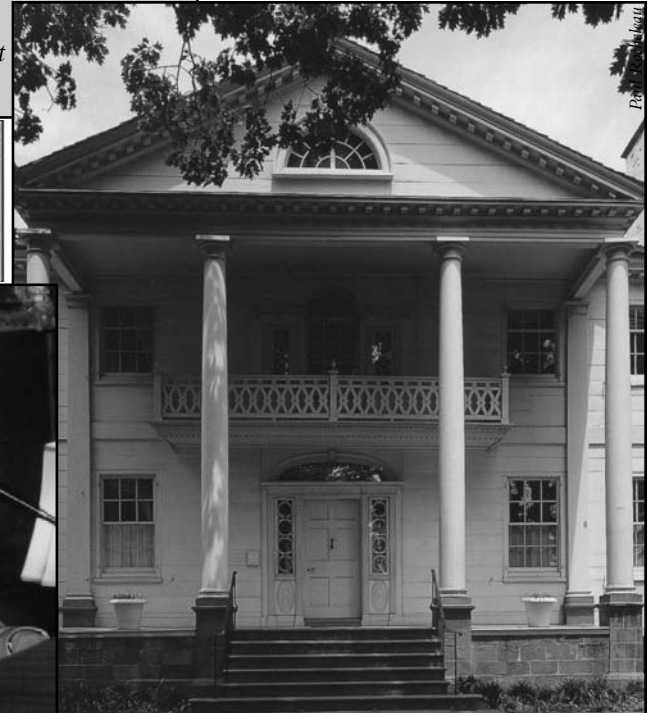
Dave Ortiz



Harvard University



Dave Ortiz



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## CHILDREN'S LIBRARY

### THE FIRST ANNUAL YOUNG WRITERS AWARDS CEREMONY



*Clare Redden with her heroine Rosy, John Morrell, and Kevin Morrell*

In January, the Children's Committee invited members' children and grandchildren to submit short stories or essays about New York City for its first annual Young Writers Awards. The Library is pleased to announce the competition winners: in the Third and Fourth Grade category, Clare Redden for "Rosy the Four-Legged Fund Raiser"; in the Fifth and Sixth Grade category, Kevin Morrell for "The Song"; and in the Seventh through Ninth Grade category, John Morrell for "This Is New York." Redden's story describes a Red Cross fund raiser through the eyes of a girl and her dog, including fund-raising tips from both. Kevin Morrell's "The Song" evokes the wonder of hearing a nightingale's song outside a city apartment. John Morrell's "This Is New York" illustrates the diversity and connections of the city's people through a simple narrative of a trip to school. The stories will be bound into a book for the Children's Library.

On April 24 the Library honored these young writers and all the competition's participants at a reception in the Members' Room. Judges Robert Quackenbush and Elizabeth Winthrop presented the winners with framed awards and bookstore gift certificates and spoke about the importance of writing. The event was attended by more than 60 Library members, family members, and friends.

### PROJECT CICERO 2003

Project Cicero, now in its third year, continues its success. Volunteers collected more than 100,000 new and gently used children's books from over 50 public, private and parochial schools. Adults and children sorted the books at a central location, where they were selected by over 600 teachers from New York City's most under-served schools. Project Cicero also benefited from donations from thirteen publishers. *The New York Post* helped with book collection, and the event was covered by *The New York Times*.

One teacher who received books wrote, "Our library went from being rather bare to being full of wonderful literature....I hope that you realize how much your hard work has paid off, for 20 children have learned truly to love to read."

Project Cicero's next book collection will take place March 1-4, 2004. The Library and the Project Cicero committee thank everyone who donated or volunteered.



*A note from a recipient*

### EVENTS: HARRY POTTER RIDES AGAIN

The Children's Library is getting ready to visit Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry again with J.K. Rowling's fifth book, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*. To register for children's programs, call 212-288-6900 x234 or e-mail [csilberman@nysoclib.org](mailto:csilberman@nysoclib.org).



#### HARRY POTTER PARTY

**GRADES K-3 \* TUESDAY, JUNE 17, 4:00 P.M.**

Celebrate the upcoming book with crafts, games and magical fun.

#### HARRY POTTER TRIVIA

**GRADES 4-6 \* THURSDAY, JUNE 19, 4:00 P.M.**

Put on your thinking cap for fun and prizes.



# INSIDE THE LIBRARY

## WHO ARE THOSE PEOPLE IN THE STAIRWELL?

In 1917, the Library, then located on University Place, received a major bequest from Sarah Parker Goodhue which later allowed the purchase of the current building. The bequest included books, furniture, china (now in the Members' Room) and twelve portraits of the family of Mrs. Goodhue's husband. The portraits, giving us a glimpse of seven generations of New York lives, can be found throughout the building. A sampling:



James Frothingham

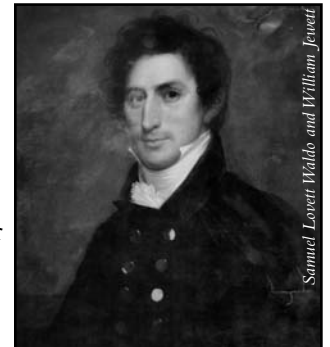
**The Reverend David Clarkson** (1622-1686) born in Yorkshire, England, was a notable Puritan clergyman whose sermons included "The Doctrine of Justification is Dangerously Corrupted by the Roman Church." His son Matthew emigrated to New York, where he served as a patent official in the 1690s. The Reverend's portrait hangs in the main stairwell.

His great-great-grandson, **General Matthew Clarkson** (1758-1825), rose to fame in the Revolution, where he served with Benedict Arnold and Major General Benjamin Lincoln.

Later he was elected to the New York State assembly and the State senate; he also became a successful businessman and president of the Bank of New York. He was noted for his civic and philanthropic endeavors, which included service to the infant Columbia University, New York Hospital, and many other organizations. Clarkson Street in Greenwich Village and the town of Clarkson, New York are both named for him. His portrait is also in the main stairwell.

**Elizabeth Clarkson** (1793-1820) and **Catherine Rutherford Clarkson** (1794-1861) were two of the General's eight children. Elizabeth's portrait is in the Members' Room and Catherine's in the main stairwell. Catherine married **Jonathan Goodhue**, son of U.S. Congressman **Benjamin Goodhue** (1748-1814). One portrait of Jonathan (1783-1848), shown above, hangs with Benjamin's in the stairwell; the one at right is with Elizabeth Clarkson's in the Members' Room.

The Library owns images of four of the children of Catherine Rutherford Clarkson and Jonathan Goodhue, plus two of their spouses. Their son **Charles Clarkson Goodhue** is commemorated with a plaque in the entry hall, and his wife, our benefactor **Sarah Parker Goodhue**, can be seen in charcoal opposite the main elevator on the first floor. Her generous bequest gave the Library not only its beautiful building, but also a look at history through the faces of the Clarksons and the Goodhues.



Samuel Lovell Waldo and William Jewett

Please write or telephone the Library with any comments or suggestions. Visit our website at [www.nysoclib.org](http://www.nysoclib.org).

**THE NEW YORK SOCIETY LIBRARY**

53 East 79th Street  
New York, NY 10021