

Monday Night at the Master

Riverside Lobby

March 31, 2014 7:30pm

George Gershwin, Our Neighbor

Joyce Burcham will recount George Gershwin's years right here on West 103rd Street. He lived across from our front door for four years between 1925 and 1929. On September 22nd, 1925, just four days short of his 27th birthday, he closed on 316 West 103rd Street. With two mortgages totalling \$20,500, George owned 50%, his brother and lyricist Ira 25%, and their mother contributed the remaining 25%. He was investing his new wealth, the estimated \$250,000 proceeds from his copyright on Rhapsody in Blue, which he had finished early the previous year, then performed at Carnegie Hall and recorded. George Gershwin was the most eligible bachelor in New York at that time, and found time to father a child by a chorus girl.

During the noisy renovation of 316 West 103rd, he rented two rooms at the Whitehall Hotel on Broadway. Finally, when the work finished, he had a five story home with an elevator, a novelty which his father enjoyed. The ground floor was a billiards room and small bedroom; the first floor was the dining and living areas with two twin Steinways. George had the top floor rooms; his brother Ira occupied the fourth floor; the younger siblings shared the third floor; leaving their parents the more convenient second floor bedroom and sitting room. The following year, 1926, Ira married and brought his new wife to the large, bustling home.

George lived across the street during the entire construction of the Master building, spending much of the summer of 1929 at the country home of the most significant woman in his life, Kay Swift, then married to banking magnate James Warburg. Shortly after our building was completed in October 1929, George and Ira bought adjacent townhouses at 33 Riverside Drive and moved to the seventies.

For much more about Gershwin's life, come along to Monday at the Masters, March 31.

RSVP: MondayNightattheMasters@gmail.com or sign up at the Front Desk.