

## South of Brooklyn Bridge

Along the East River from the Battery to Brooklyn Bridge, where sailing ships, spice and coffee merchants, importers and chandlers once engaged in the trade that made the city rich and great, there is an amazing concentration of Manhattan's early buildings. Small, simple, harmonious, and delicate in detail, they have survived miraculously and often still serve their original purposes.

All of these buildings are doomed, or in danger. The Brooklyn Bridge South urban renewal projects are meant to save the older parts of the city, but ironically they will save nothing: the southwest area is slated for buildings for Pace College, the southeast sector will see a Tishman housing and business combination.

This is a historic loss that could have been avoided with the exercise of a little more sensitivity to the past and concern for the future. Some of the old buildings could have been combined with the new ones, for the sake of architectural quality and historic continuity, much as is being done in Washington with Lafayette Square. :

When will New York learn its lesson? What will happen to the one last remaining neighborhood of these handsome Greek Revival buildings of the 1830's on Front Street from Coenties Slip to John Streets; the even earlier buildings on Fulton Street? Hemmed in by the new Stock Exchange on the south and the Brooklyn Bridge project to the north, the area will now be ripe for speculative purchase and destructive "upgrading."

We have learned, painfully, that a city needs buildings of a human scale along with the new behemoths; even the gargantuan World Trade Center has applied this lesson to its design. The small-scale historic buildings can do the job as a useful part of the commercial community at the same time that they preserve the city's historic character and traditions. The true purpose of redevelopment is to make something better than a "renewed" wasteland. New York is being irremediably short-changed.