

# Graceless and Graceful

No cannons went off in New York recently to celebrate National Historic Preservation Week; all that could be heard was the familiar sound of rubble sliding down chutes to the dump truck.

In Lower Manhattan, the scaffolding is up for the demolition of two buildings of the Fraunces Tavern block for a parking lot—an act of historical sabotage. The razing of some of the area's more notable older buildings is going ahead over protest of the Landmarks Commission. Two of particular quality are to be sacrificed to the futility of street widening.

One Liberty Street, designed by Hill and Stout in 1907, has boasted New York's most singular, sweeping, copper-edged cantilevered cornice, a stunning monumental rebuke and irreplaceable foil to its dull, flat-topped neighbors. Eighty William Street is, or was, a Henry Hardenbergh building with that famous architect's equally well-known French chateau flavor.

A third building, 7 Hanover Square, a handsome, palazzo-type structure of 1913 with a particularly fine ground-floor interior, is being demolished by the W. R. Grace Company to create an empty lot that will be more attractive to speculative builders.

The news is a little better farther uptown. Grace Church, prodded by conscience and the Landmarks Commission, has agreed to resubmit its Fourth Avenue houses to its architect for a scheme that will save, rather than destroy, the Gothic facades. This admirable act of faith in response to concerned community and civic groups now hangs on raising the additional necessary funds by fall.

The downtown damage, particularly the mutilation of the nineteenth-century Fraunces Tavern block for conventional real estate economics, constitutes an irreplaceable environmental loss. In the unending game of New York change, avarice and insensitivity never go out of style.