

EXCLUSIVE

Long on Horsepower



The second-floor living room of a building that once housed horses, carriages and cars for a nearby mansion. Marilynn K. Yee/The New York Times

By **Robin Finn**

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A historic Beaux-Arts-style Upper East Side carriage house that has remained in the same family for its entire 110-year existence — morphing from a repository for horses and carriages belonging to the owner of a Fifth Avenue mansion, to a garage and chauffeur's digs, to a single-family home, to a quaint rental — is about to enter the market at \$14.5 million.

The annual property taxes on the 5,058-square-foot property at 165 East 73rd Street, part of a landmark district between Lexington and Third Avenues, are \$54,696.43.

The collection of 5,000 antique toy soldiers displayed in vitrine cases in the first-floor living room are not included. The sellers, Antoinette Weiser and her husband, the Rev. Ivan Weiser, plan to donate the collection to a museum unless kismet strikes and a buyer who happens to be a toy-soldier fanatic comes along.

Arcane carry-overs from the building's era as a stable, like arched doorways, the oak balustrade on the lengthy staircase, and a hand-carved hitching post on the wall in the bedroom of the first-floor apartment, will transfer with the house. Ceiling heights are 15 feet downstairs, 10 feet upstairs.

Livable but in need of a significant renovation to bring it up to 21st-century speed, the property is divided into two living areas: The first floor has a 21-by-58-foot garage and an in-laws' apartment, which has a 19-by-24-foot living room, a rear bedroom, a bathroom, and an 8-by-11-foot kitchen that was originally a box stall.

The main living area, on the second floor, is configured as eight rooms, most of them enhanced by crown moldings and parquet floors that date to 1939. The residence, a rental for the last 15 years, has skylights in all three bathrooms and a fireplace in the 23-by-15-foot living room, which faces south on East 73rd Street. A 15-by-10-foot dining room with an antique crystal chandelier opens into the kitchen, which the Weisers, who left the carriage house and moved to New Mexico in 1993, renovated for tenants several years ago.

The two most spacious bedrooms are at the back of the house and overlook the neighboring gardens. The master is 12 by 18 feet, with an en-suite bath and a walk-in closet. The crystal chandelier in the master is another antique, Mrs. Weiser said.

The two-story 25-foot-wide carriage house, built from yellow Roman brick and limestone along with its identical twin next door at 167 East 73rd, was designed by George L. Amoroux in 1903-04 and was owned by Henry Harper Benedict, the president of the Remington Typewriter Company. Mr. Benedict, a great-uncle of Mrs. Weiser's, lived in a limestone mansion at 5 East 75th Street and required two carriage houses to stable his herd of horses, shelter his coachmen, and store his carriages, as well as hay and grain. He sold the 167 East 73rd Street carriage house in 1909 — it has since been transformed into the headquarters for the Vilcek Foundation — but retained 165 East 73rd for automobiles after horses and carriages went out of vogue.

In 1929, he transferred ownership to his wife, Katherine Geddes Benedict (Mrs. Weiser's great-aunt), and 10 years later the Benedicts sold it for \$15,000 to Robert L. Graham Jr., a lawyer, after he married one of their nieces, Mary. The Grahams were Mrs. Weiser's parents, and she grew up in a modest family residence on the second floor, which had been transformed from a servant's apartment and hayloft. Her father used the downstairs as an office and hobbyist's workplace, and over the decades he assembled his soldier collection there; Mrs. Weiser recalls helping him paint and arrange them.

She said she had come to the conclusion that, with all three of her children grown and living elsewhere, it did not make economic sense to hang onto the carriage house out of sentiment. "It's a time to be grateful that we had it in our lives, but it's also time to sell it," she said, adding she would happily retain possession of the chandeliers should the buyer not want them. "But they are not going to be a deal breaker; I'm prepared to say goodbye."

Vannessa Kaufman of Sotheby's International Realty, the listing agent, sees a new identity for the carriage house. "This could easily become a loft," she said, referring to the second floor. "The possibilities are endless for a buyer looking for this sort of privacy, plus a nice garage." Horses, however, are no longer welcome.