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The Tightwad's Legacy

By ANDREW RICE

Correction Appended

THE KELLER HOTEL, an old seaman's inn, has seen a few tides come and go. An Irish coal merchant constructed it in the late 1890s along a salty stretch of the Greenwich Village waterfront, at a time when the docks there were some of the busiest in the world. During the Depression, the Keller served as a flophouse for out-of-work sailors, who boozed and brawled in its ground-floor saloon. As the decades passed and economic forces pushed ships toward other ports, the West Side docks rotted, the Village deteriorated and a new clientele moved into the Keller. By the 1980s, the city was housing indigents upstairs, while the downstairs tenant was a gay leather bar, reputedly New York's oldest. Then, in 1985, a real estate investor named William Gottlieb purchased the property for \$1 million. That's when things started to get weird.

Some people pass almost unnoticed through life, only to become legends once they're gone — symbols of New York's mythic past when all the neighborhoods had character, all the rents were low and all the landlords knew their tenants' names. Bill Gottlieb died in 1999, but residents of Greenwich Village talk about him to this day, retelling tales that get more colorful with each passing year. A rumpled, elusive fellow who would walk the streets carrying shopping bags stuffed with cash and documents, Gottlieb spent decades quietly amassing an empire of run-down tenements, abandoned warehouses and weedy vacant lots. The properties cost Gottlieb little, but they could now be worth as much as a billion dollars altogether as the grimy neighborhoods where he shopped for bargains have long since given way to a landscape of luxury lofts and pet-grooming salons. Gottlieb's approach to real estate was to buy a building and hold on to it at minimal expense, instituting a sort of nonaggression pact with his tenants: he wouldn't ask for much rent if they didn't complain about broken doorbells or wheezing boilers. So as the waterfront underwent its own transformation, the Keller Hotel just sat there, a dilapidated Renaissance Revival vestige.

By the time of Gottlieb's death, there were no more indigents residing at the Keller. When the leather bar shut down, the building was boarded up. It became one of those haunted structures surrounded by urban vitality that cause puzzled passers-by to stop and stare. The Keller sits on a stretch of West Street between 1 Morton Square (where the Olsen twins own a penthouse) and three diaphanous buildings designed by the famed architect **Richard Meier**. "It's this horrible eyesore, and yet I have to think that it has to be one of the most valuable pieces of real estate in the neighborhood," says John Attalienti, a financial consultant who lives next door at 130 Barrow Street. "I mean, unobstructed river views."

New York's professional speculators have also noticed. They all want a piece of Gottlieb's portfolio, which amounts to more than 100 buildings spread across a three-mile swath of Manhattan: from Henry Street on the Lower East Side, where his estate owns a six-story tenement with a storefront Pentecostal church, to the velvet-roped environs of the meatpacking district, where it is landlord to numerous nightspots. Some of

Gottlieb's eclectic holdings are architecturally notable, like a few carriage houses along the cobblestone lanes of the West Village and the Northern Dispensary on Waverly Place, a wedge-shaped landmark where Edgar Allan Poe reputedly once received treatment for a head cold. Others, like a tiny corner parking lot on Prince Street, are the sort of blank spaces that make imaginative real estate developers giddy. "What a great treasure trove of undeveloped sites," says Alf Naman, who builds residential projects downtown. "Those are properties I've coveted for years."

Even after Gottlieb's death, however, his heirs wouldn't listen to offers. "They told me that to them, 'sell' is a four-letter word," says Cary Tamarkin, an architect and developer. Historic preservationists have appreciated that intransigence; over the years, they came to see Bill Gottlieb as a sort of cheapskate savior, whose hands-off management style saved many buildings from insensitive renovations or outright demolition. Christine Quinn, the speaker of the City Council, once said that Gottlieb was possibly "the biggest preservationist in the history of the West Side." But he was also a secretive businessman, careful to conceal his true intentions, and that inscrutability seems to run in his family.

In 2004, five years after Gottlieb's death, with no fanfare or public announcement, workmen began showing up at the Keller Hotel. They would come and go at odd hours, sometimes in the middle of the night. Neighbors noticed they spent a lot of time inside a garage adjacent to the hotel. A building permit taped to the Keller's door said it was being renovated as a 20-unit apartment building. At long last, it seemed, the Gottlieb family was getting into development.

One morning, Regina Joseph, another resident of 130 Barrow Street, was startled to hear a loud drilling sound emanating from next door. Then a crack appeared in her ceiling. Joseph called the city buildings department, and the agency's emergency-response team came to inspect. Joseph and the city inspector walked to the garage and peered through a round hole. They could see that, without proper permits, the construction workers had opened an enormous gash in the wall that separated the garage from the hotel. The buildings department issued a stop-work order but ultimately allowed work to continue.

Since then, Greenwich Village has been rife with theories about what was happening at the Keller Hotel and why it has now sputtered to a stop. Some speculate that the Gottlieb family ran out of money for the project. Some doubt that they were really behind it at all. The construction at the Keller has fueled rumors about changes coming to other Gottlieb buildings. Tenants complain that apartments are left empty and that management is refusing to renew leases. In keeping with longstanding custom, no one from the William Gottlieb Management Company responded to many interview requests made for this article. "We've been requested by the Gottliebs not to give out any information about the project," Michael Devonshire, an architect that the family has hired as a consultant, said in a voice mail message. "As you can imagine, they're a little gun-shy."

"It's a huge neighborhood mystery," Regina Joseph says. "It just makes you wonder what is really going on and who's in charge."

THE THREE-STORY town house at 136 Bank Street is covered with ivy vines, and the coat of white paint on its old wooden front door is cracked and peeling. Pasted beneath its buzzer is a large stenciled G, a remnant of the man who bought the place in 1972, for \$37,000, and resided there until he died. The

neighborhood changed all around him — a house two doors down sold last year for \$4.5 million — but Bill Gottlieb remained a local curiosity up to the end. Gottlieb liked to call himself “the Big G.” As with all outsize figures, you have to sort the truth from folklore. “Didn’t he live in his car?” one downtown broker asked me. Posthumously, Gottlieb has been cast as a real estate genius blessed with uncommon prescience and a sentimental investor in a vanishing culture of bohemianism, but it’s far from clear that he ever intended to play either role. Many who knew the man suspect his ramshackle fortune was actually a product of parsimony and plain luck.

“I’m from the island,” Gottlieb used to say when introducing himself. “Coney Island.” He was born at the height of the Great Depression. His father ran a restaurant and didn’t own much of anything. “One of my favorite stories about Billy,” says Don Gabay, a lifelong friend of Gottlieb’s who is a partner in the law firm of Stroock & Stroock & Lavan, “was a meeting at the seller’s attorney’s office, an old-time Wall Street-type firm. We would meet in their mahogany-paneled office, and Billy would come in, in his broken-down clothing and probably a shopping bag carrying his files — that’s typically Billy — and during a lull in the conversation, the two lawyers are talking to each other and one lawyer is saying to the other, ‘his country club’ and ‘his golf club,’ and he’s telling him, ‘Oh, at my club we do this and that.’” Finally, Gabay recalls, Gottlieb silenced them with a stickball reference: “At my club we can hit three sewers.”

Gottlieb’s first job in real estate was as a leasing representative for a brokerage firm belonging to Harry Helmsley, then one of New York’s largest property owners. At night, Gottlieb took classes at Brooklyn Law School. With a little seed money from his sister, Mollie, and her husband, Irving Bender, who owned a bar called Poor Joe’s, Gottlieb started buying buildings.

Working on commission, Gottlieb had struggled as a salesman, but he took note of how Helmsley, a legendary skinflint, made his money — by buying buildings and slashing their operating expenses. Later in life, he liked to say that Helmsley had taught him another important lesson: never sell. When Gottlieb started acquiring buildings in the 1960s, the city was slouching toward bankruptcy. Gottlieb trolled for distressed sellers and reeled in properties at foreclosure auctions.

Often, he’d revive a building’s cash flow by installing a restaurant in its ground-floor commercial space. Many of these he ran himself. A place on Bleecker Street was called Gottlieb’s; a Chinese restaurant was named for an Asian woman he was dating at the time. He and a subsequent girlfriend, a Jamaican, opened a string of Caribbean eateries. Though Gottlieb kept a paper-strewn office on Hudson Street, he preferred to work out of back rooms at the restaurants, serving drinks and inventing dishes when he wasn’t closing deals.

Gottlieb was heavysset and invariably dressed in wrinkled pants and an old golf shirt, which some people suspected he seldom changed. He wore big, black-framed glasses and carried a pendulous chain of keys. During the 1970s, Gottlieb used to outfit his orange Volkswagen Thing with loudspeakers and drive it through the Village, blasting disco music. Later on, he trundled around in a green station wagon with a busted heater and a broken window, sometimes stopping to offer lifts to his tenants.

“A lot of people refer to him as an eccentric,” his friend Gabay says. “I don’t think he was an eccentric. Maybe they call him eccentric because he could afford so much and chose to live simply. To me, that’s not an eccentric. He knew who he was. He didn’t have to pretend or show off.”

Bill Gottlieb never married or had children. Friends say the passion of his life was not money, but ownership. “He was a collector of buildings,” one associate says. Thomas Elghanayan, the president of Rockrose Development Corp., sold an entire block in the meatpacking district to Gottlieb in 1986. “Back in the early, early days, he owned a building on West Street that had a restaurant in it called the Inca,” Elghanayan recalls. “If you wanted to talk to Gottlieb, he was the bartender. Otherwise he was impossible to get ahold of.” The city had imposed development restrictions on an entire block of meat lockers that Rockrose owned along Gansevoort Street, and Elghanayan was willing to unload them at Gottlieb’s \$2.5 million price. Today Gansevoort Street is lined with bistros. A comparably sized building on nearby Washington Street sold for \$28 million six months ago, though it was not encumbered by the same development restrictions.

“If you saw him walking down the street, you would have thought he was a homeless guy, a bum,” Elghanayan says. “He was almost like a comical figure. But a good guy, a straight shooter, smart — and he actually had great foresight.”

In 1999, Bill Gottlieb, still a year short of 65, seemed to be embarking on ambitious plans. He filed for permits with the city buildings department, indicating that he finally intended to refurbish the crumbling Keller Hotel. He also fixed his sights on a large piece of property: a row of warehouses along 10th Avenue between 13th and 14th Streets, adjacent to a derelict elevated railway track known as the High Line. Another bidder, Alf Naman, thought he had a deal for the site, but Gottlieb made a stealthy approach to the sales broker. “He just kind of swooped in,” Naman recalls. The price, several million dollars, was high by Gottlieb’s standards, but he could see how the meatpacking district was gentrifying. He told friends he figured this was his last chance to buy a property like that.

A month after the 10th Avenue deal closed, Gottlieb collapsed at his company’s office on Hudson Street after complaining of dizziness. He died a few days later of complications from a stroke.

For all his canniness when it came to real estate, it soon became evident that when it came to preparing for one future eventuality, Gottlieb had been extremely shortsighted. “I know that he went to several law firms and got advice on a will,” says Earle W. Kazis, a friend of Gottlieb’s from the days when they both worked for Harry Helmsley. “But he never proceeded, because he wasn’t willing to pay the fees.”

There actually was a will, as it turned out — a simple, four-page document prepared in 1972, back when Gottlieb was just starting out, that would become the crucial piece of evidence in a long court battle for his immense fortune. But in the beginning, there was nothing but confusion, an empty space left behind by his death — and into that void rushed a fractious cast of would-be heirs.

Gottlieb’s sudden death left his business in chaos. His older sister, Mollie Bender, had worked in his office for years doing clerical work during the day and cooking Gottlieb’s dinner in the evening. But not even she could make sense of his disorganized office. Mollie was named co-administrator of the estate, along with her brother, Arnold, who lived in Florida. Mollie’s son, Neil, quit his job at a mortgage brokerage and took a desk at Gottlieb’s company. “I went to my mother’s side,” he testified at one of the many court proceedings that ensued. “My uncle was dead.” Her other child, Cheryl Dier, came up from Maryland with her husband, Jerry, a lawyer, who was soon working for the estate as a paid consultant.

Within three weeks of Gottlieb’s death, according to court documents, the family was fighting. Arnold showed

up at the Hudson Street office in the company of his lawyer, and a melee ensued. Mollie claimed that the lawyer punched and kicked Cheryl and struck her husband. (In a New York Observer article at the time, the lawyer disputed that he struck anyone.) Then Mollie filed papers in the city's Surrogate's Court, which handles estate cases, claiming she'd made a discovery in her brother's cluttered office: that musty 1972 will. Mollie stood to inherit everything.

During this period, Mollie began to rely heavily on Neil, according to those who had dealings with the estate. Like his uncle, Neil Bender had a law degree, but he'd never passed the bar. His youthful passion was rock music; he followed bands and shot concert films on his Super 8 camera. Neil worked for Bill Gottlieb for a short time when he was younger, but according to friends and family members, he didn't get along with his uncle. Records show that between the late 1980s and mid-1990s, Neil Bender defaulted on several loans, twice pleaded guilty to drunken-driving charges and had a tax lien placed on him by the I.R.S. Though he got a job at a mortgage brokerage that sometimes did business with Bill Gottlieb, he closed only about two dozen deals in a decade of work for the firm. Earle Kazis told me he urged Gottlieb to rehire his nephew on several occasions, if only to assure that there would be a clear successor within the family, but Gottlieb always refused. "He'd say, 'No, I've had it with Neil,'" recalls Kazis, who has had his own falling out with Gottlieb's heirs.

Because Gottlieb hadn't prepared his estate, his family had little shelter from inheritance taxes. Mollie and Neil Bender held meetings with a half dozen Midtown law firms, hiring and firing several as they worked their way through the probate process. Ultimately, the family was able to work out a settlement with the I.R.S. over the estate-tax bill. The assessment, which stood at \$50 million in 2004, is being paid in installments over 15 years.

The settlement of the tax matter did little to repair the embittered relationships within the Gottlieb clan. Cheryl Dier watched with resentment as her brother, Neil, installed himself in the real estate office. In a court filing related to the subsequent estate dispute, she complained that his growing influence represented a "bold and brazen attempt to steal the identity of William Gottlieb." In other court papers, Dier claimed her brother insisted on situating his desk so that he could maintain eye contact with Mollie Bender, in order to exercise "mind control." Three months after Gottlieb's death, Dier sent an angry letter to her mother, calling Neil a "rude and nasty dictator" and demanding to be paid \$100 an hour for her help around the office.

"Yes, money does strange things to people," Dier wrote, "and if they do not know how to handle it, it can destroy them."

Dier's husband, Jerry, an attorney who specialized in defending indigent criminals in Washington, D.C., had seen a huge increase in his income since he started billing the estate. But in June 2000, his consulting agreement was terminated. A year later, Cheryl Dier filed for divorce. By this time, her parents were sending her tens of thousands of dollars for living expenses. In court papers, Jerry Dier claimed his wife had told him that she was seeking the divorce only because her family was demanding it as a condition of her inheritance. Jerry Dier fought a long court battle to force Neil, Mollie and Irving Bender to give depositions. Then, in November 2004, Cheryl Dier abruptly fired her attorney and turned on her parents. The Diers have since dropped the divorce case. Neither of them would comment for this article.

Then another family member entered the fray: Michael Corbett, Cheryl Dier's son from a previous marriage. He had his own grievances. Corbett was raised by his grandparents at the Bender family town house on Bethune Street. After Bill Gottlieb's death, he claims, his uncle Neil forced him out. In court filings related to the Gottlieb estate, Corbett further claims that his uncle tried to give Mollie and Irving Bender the impression that his wife, a Broadway actress and an astrologer, had a criminal past, and says that Neil Bender instructed his grandparents not to pick up the phone unless it rang a coded number of times.

Last June, Mollie Bender, who was 85, fell and broke her hip. On June 23, while in the hospital, she signed legal papers requesting that her son be appointed administrator of the Gottlieb estate. Shortly afterward, she was brought home to her apartment. When Michael Corbett and Cheryl Dier tried to visit her there on June 30, they were barred from entering by security, according to their signed affidavits. They went back the next day, in the company of the police, but Mollie Bender was sleeping and couldn't be disturbed. She died later that day.

MOLLIE BENDER LEFT a will, which was prepared in 2005. It unambiguously disinherits her daughter, leaving everything to her elderly husband and her son. Nonetheless, Cheryl Dier, who is 58, and her 38-year-old son, Michael Corbett, brought separate challenges to the will in Surrogate's Court and have argued for Neil Bender's disqualification as executor on the grounds of incompetence. (Bender, through Kekst and Company, a public-relations firm specializing in "crisis management," declined to comment for this story.) Neil Bender has hired several of New York's most prominent estate attorneys to defend his claim. None of them responded to requests for comment. In legal filings, however, they claim Dier is "spiteful" over her disinheritance.

Corbett, a personal trainer, previously worked for Bill Gottlieb as a restaurant manager and as a disc jockey at a family-owned roller rink. In the dispute over the Gottlieb fortune, he has tried to cast himself as the champion of the public interest. Corbett and his lawyer, Carl J. Mayer, held a press conference in August in front of the Northern Dispensary and have since been pressing their campaign on a Web site named savegreenwichvillage.com. Citing evidence of more than 500 outstanding housing violations against Gottlieb properties, Mayer calls Neil Bender "derelict in the management of these properties." A spokeswoman for Bender's company says the city's records are out of date, while his attorneys suggest in their court filings that Corbett has a crasser motive for challenging his uncle: money. Corbett, they contend, is merely trying to force his uncle to accept an "extortionist demand" for a settlement.

They point to an e-mail message in which Mayer said his client would drop the lawsuit in return for \$50 million. "If this estate is worth a billion dollars," Mayer responded in an interview, "a \$50 million offer is wholly reasonable. But the other side just won't negotiate."

Whatever Corbett's motives, there is considerable concern among residents in buildings owned by the estate. On February 21, State Senator Thomas Duane's office and the Metropolitan Council on Housing, a tenants' rights organization, held a public meeting for Gottlieb tenants in the basement of a church on Thompson Street. More than 100 worried people bombarded the organizers with complaints about rats, bedbugs, broken front doors and unreturned phone calls. The people sitting next to me had no heat, while the people in front of them were broiling at night. Joe Catron, a Metropolitan Council employee, asked the audience, "How many of you have faced problems with lease renewals?" Almost every hand shot up. Gottlieb tenants say that once

vacated, empty apartments in their buildings are not being filled, while many storefronts have stood vacant for months. (A spokeswoman for William Gottlieb Management said the company “is actively maintaining or improving all of its properties, and we respond to requests for service and other issues in a timely manner.”) After the meeting officially adjourned, Corbett, a slender man in a dark, baggy suit, gave an emotional speech, his voice cracking and the tendons on his neck bulging as he read aloud a letter from an unsettled tenant. “They want everyone out!” he shouted.

Empty buildings would make renovation or sale easier. “A building that’s vacated is worth 30 to 40 percent more than one that isn’t,” says Leonard Steinberg, a broker who works downtown for Prudential Douglas Elliman. Neil Bender’s filings in Surrogate’s Court place the current value of the Gottlieb portfolio at \$135 million — an average of a little more than \$1 million a property, an absurdly low appraisal by the standards of the Manhattan real estate market. Real estate professionals say the true sale price of the estate would surely be much higher, even in a depressed market. According to Steinberg, condos in Greenwich Village are still fetching more than \$1,500 a square foot, and land for new construction is extraordinarily scarce. “There is no property in the Village,” says Vals Osborne, senior vice president at Stribling & Associates. “There is nothing, nothing, nothing.”

On the other hand, some say the estate’s holdings may have lost considerable value in recent years, because zoning changes and historic-district initiatives have put tight use-and-height restrictions in place. Edward Baquero, a managing partner of Coalco, a development firm, looked into purchasing the estate back in 2000. “It was interesting at first,” he says. “But when I drove around and looked at some of the sites, I realized that only a handful of them were desirable. But today, you know, those properties may look very different.” Taking all the portfolio’s warts into consideration, Baquero still says that he believes an investor would pay \$700 million for all the properties. “And I wouldn’t fall off my chair if it’s a billion,” he adds.

The most valuable properties are probably the meatpacking district warehouses Gottlieb bought just before his death. One of them burned down a few years ago, and the others are in a state of disrepair, but the site sits next to the High Line — now being turned into a park — and across the street from a gargantuan half-built hotel called the Standard, New York. (Four years ago, the group developing the Standard, led by hotelier André Balazs, paid \$25 million for the land on which it sits.) There are other interesting pieces: a charming riverfront building on West Street that once held a gay bar called the Ramrod; an assemblage of deserted structures between Downing Street and West Houston, right across from the Film Forum; and a number of properties on the Lower East Side, where gentrification and lax height restrictions have given rise to condominium skyscrapers.

Some smallish Gottlieb parcels would be precious to builders who are trying to assemble large blocks of land for development. Building around the Gottlieb family is notoriously frustrating. Michael Romanoff, a meatpacking district developer, says that for years he has been trying to talk Neil Bender into selling a building the estate owns adjacent to some of his property on West 13th Street. “He doesn’t respond, he doesn’t answer phones, he doesn’t communicate,” Romanoff says. Peter Moore, an architect who recently spent \$34 million for three properties surrounding a Gottlieb tenement on West Street, described a similar experience. “We would like to buy the Gottlieb site, but that doesn’t seem to be possible,” Moore says. “I guess when I pass from this earth and I’m hopefully in heaven, maybe I’ll run into Bill and we can do a deal up there.”

Despite Bender's reputation for intransigence among developers, he does seem to want a seat in the clubby world of New York real estate. He attended the Real Estate Board of New York's annual banquet, a \$900-a-plate networking event, in January. "I think his attitude is going to be businesslike," says a friend of Bill Gottlieb's who still talks with Neil Bender and who declined to be identified because he wanted to preserve the relationship. "Everybody thinks they should be doing something. Everyone thought that Bill should have been doing something 20 years ago. Now something is happening, but it's a surprise. They've got us lulled, those Gottliebs."

IF NEIL BENDER has big plans for the properties, he's not talking. At least not now. But there are hints lurking in public places. The Gottlieb estate for years waged a fight in the City Council and the courts seeking to have the development restrictions removed from its properties on Gansevoort Street, a change that would have allowed a developer to build office space. (A court ruled against it in 2006.) Recently, Neil Bender hired a Williamsburg architectural firm with a background in green development. He has been meeting with the architects about the stop-and-start renovations at the Keller Hotel. They're also designing a building for a smidgen of waterfront land at West 12th and West Streets. The architects would not comment, but evidence filed in connection with a 2006 lawsuit between the estate and John Chen, a structural engineer who once worked on the project, reveals plans for a six-story luxury residential building named the Inca, after the restaurant Bill Gottlieb once ran on the property.

Earlier this year, demolition crews began taking down the old Inca building, only to inexplicably stop halfway. Cary Tamarkin, who is putting up a residential building next door, has watched the progress, such as it is. "They take out a couple of bricks every couple of days," he says. "They're bizarre."

A recent ruling by the Surrogate's Court judge Renee R. Roth could begin to resolve the disputes. In mid-January, she heard arguments over Neil Bender's petition to be named administrator of his uncle's estate. Cheryl Dier, a slim, dark-haired woman, stepped forward to accuse her brother, who was not present, of mounting a "hostile takeover." But in February, Roth issued a ruling that gave Neil and Irving Bender control of the estate. In a statement released by his public-relations firm, Neil Bender said he hoped the favorable ruling would allow him "to continue focusing on the business." Michael Corbett, however, has pledged to appeal. "This will go on for a very long time," says Carl J. Mayer, Corbett's lawyer. "If anybody is thinking of developing this area, bulldozing it over with another high-rise in the Village, I don't think they're properly analyzing the litigation."

ON BARROW STREET, people still wonder about the Keller Hotel. "It was totally, totally mysterious," said Katy Bordonaro, a neighborhood activist, as we stood across the street from the partially renovated flophouse one recent afternoon. Local preservationists were somewhat comforted when the city designated the building a landmark last March. A death announcement for Mollie Bender, published in The New York Times, said the project is supposed to be completed by the end of this year. Yet Bordonaro told me that there had been only sporadic activity.

"There's still a lot of us who remember it when it was the Keller Hotel," says the Barrow Street resident Regina Joseph. "When the West Village actually had pockets of seediness." Joseph, one of the founders of Blender, the music magazine, used to buy cigarettes at the Keller's downstairs bar. She is now a part-time writer, art curator, branding consultant and diet guru. "If it wasn't for William Gottlieb, the West Village

would all be covered in ugly glass Meier towers,” she continues. Scuzzy as the Village sometimes was, Joseph misses the time when it was a place of oddity and transgression and a little danger. “It was not this shiny, glossy, hedge-fundy neighborhood back then,” she told me. “That building is one of the last remnants of that world.”

Andrew Rice is a contributing writer to The New York Times Magazine.

This article has been revised to reflect the following correction:

Correction: April 13, 2008

An article last Sunday about the Greenwich Village real estate investor William Gottlieb misspelled the middle name of a poet who was treated in a dispensary that Gottlieb came to own more than a century later. He was Edgar Allan Poe, not Allen.

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