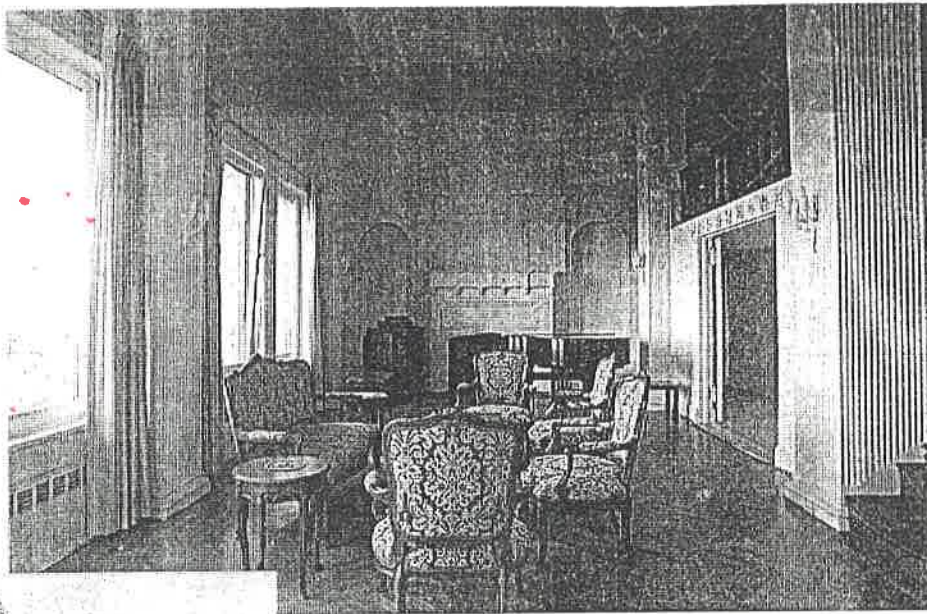
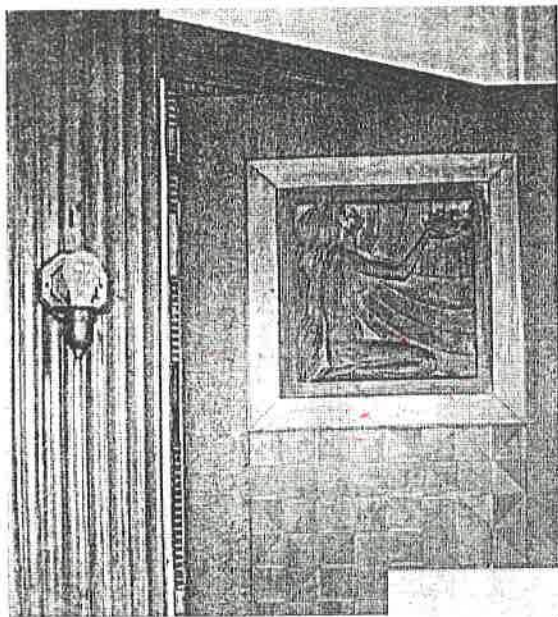


FINEST PROPERTIES, FINEST BROKERS SINCE 1896

BIG DEAL

THE NEW YORK TIMES, THURSDAY, AUGUST 24, 2000

It's \$15 Million, but Great for a Party



Photographs by Frances Roberts for The New York Times

By TRACIE ROZHON

THE tiny lady with the gray bun and the slight Russian accent shook her head, remembering that day, 46 years ago, when she first saw the 16-room rental apartment with the heart-stopping panoramic view of Central Park.

"I actually hesitated," she said, then laughed. "I hesitated for three weeks, and then finally my husband asked me why I wasn't sure and I realized it was all the dark paneling. 'But you can paint it white!' he said. And so we did."

Thus began a love affair with a rambling space at the top of the Prasada, an elegant prewar Beaux Arts apartment house at 50 Central Park West, at 65th Street, in Manhattan. It was a love affair during which she and her husband, a businessman, gave hundreds of receptions and parties and benefits. A place where courtesans and princes and ambassadors were entertained. It was a place where one of her daughters took flamenco lessons from José Greco. A place with its own penthouse studio, where Russian artist-friends came to create their sculptures and paintings.

Yet now, after all those years, the lady — she requested that her well-known name not be used — has de-



cided to sell her apartment, which is actually two separate but adjoining apartments, both bought after the building went co-op in the early 70's. (Her grandson called the mostly vacant second apartment, overlooking the Hudson River and Lincoln Center, "the fanciest mini-storage in town," said Alexander Peters of Ashforth Warburg Real Estate, the listing agent.)

The price is \$15 million. It includes 4,000 square feet of terrace, or about two-thirds of the building's roof, Mr. Peters said. Altogether, there are six and a half baths — most in original condition, complete with pedestal sinks and deep tubs. There are two kitchens — one with its original wood and glass cabinets and the other newly redone with white au courant appliances and Formica counters.

The owner is moving to a smaller

apartment with many of the same spectacular views, just one floor down. Her husband died in January, she explained, "and the 10,000 square feet was getting a little too much — I had to shrink, but I don't like it."

She paused. "I wish I weren't going," she said, gazing around. She hopes the eventual buyer will entertain as enthusiastically as she and her husband did.

"It was all so international," she continued. "I especially remember the Hungarian women, so beautiful, so well mannered, and they always kissed the hostess! They were about double my height."

"It was a salon, but we did not plan it that way," she said. "People said, 'Where could these wonderful people come to talk?' and we said, 'Oh, they can come here.' I never did ask why; I just asked when."

A VIEW WITH A

VIEW The drawing room, above, holds 54 chairs and two pianos; above left, a detail of a door; left, Central Park from the terrace.

The couple raised two daughters in the vast apartment; they had moved from a grand villa overlooking Repulse Bay in Hong Kong because they wanted the girls to attend Barnard College. The daughters are shown in the leather photo albums: playing the two grand pianos in the 30-by-15-foot drawing room, studying at small desks in one of the six bedrooms.

Generally, the whole family participated in the postwar social whirl. "But once, one of my daughters said she thought we were overdoing it," the owner said, smiling. "Why? Because after a party one of the men she knew had asked where should he send the check — I guess he thought it was another benefit!"

Although she and her husband regularly entertained 200, the building was so solid, neighbors never complained, she said, adding, "It is like a fortress; even people rehearsing Spanish dances, no one hears them."

The room has more space than meets the eye, she added, standing at one end of the drawing room, with its 14-foot ceilings and baronial fireplace. "You can fit 54 chairs and two pianos in here," she said, and pulled out the photo albums to prove it.

"The roof had a Greek temple on it," she said. "It's gone now, but people with imagination could put it back."