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Inside the Aphthorp: After two years of controversy, Upper West Side icon shows signs of hope

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BY JASON SHEFTELL
DAILY NEWS REAL ESTATE CORRESPONDENT
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With vaulted hand-carved limestone entrances leading to a 12,000-square-foot courtyard as pretty Roman aqueduct, the Aphthorp has always fallen into that category of real estate that says, "If you to live there, then you should."

That has held true an entire century, with the wealthiest families in America living there through the and celebrities such as Nora Ephron and Cyndi Lauper in modern times.

Last year, arguably the most recognizable apartment building on the upper West Side celebrated of giving New Yorkers a one-of-a-kind place to live. Built in 1908 by the Astor family as New York's luxurious apartment house, the 103 dwellings, as large as 12 and 13 rooms, rented for more than back then.

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But the building received no formal 100-year party. There was no "Aphthorp Day." No fireworks were the courtyard, no schoolkids ran around with Aphthorp balloons.

The ownership was mired in controversy over the building's direction. The salespeople from Prudential Douglas Elliman were planning a marketing strategy. The tenants, those who had not yet accepted offers to vacate their apartments or had their rent raised to prices they could not afford, saved their

Demonstrating that any conversion from a tenant-full rental to a luxury condominium will see soap scenarios, the real estate blog Curbed.com followed the happenings at the full-block structure at Broadway in a serial called "As the Aphthorp Turns."

"The more the owners did here, the more they got stuck in it," says Ronald Blumer, a co-chair of Tenant Association and documentary filmmaker who co-wrote an episode of Ric Burns' "New York." "We hope things get better."

That may happen soon. Lawsuits between tenants and owners have slowed. Sales prices have been and improvements to the building's elevators and foyers should begin soon.

Most important, a resolution of the ownership was announced this past Wednesday. The Feil Org known for amicable relationships with rent-stabilized tenants, will take over the management of the transition.

Since the building's purchase for \$426 million in 2006 at the height of the real estate boom, approximately 32 units are vacant, with 32 ready to be sold. Some are perfectly restored; others available "as is," a new owner to update these monstrous pieces of living history themselves.

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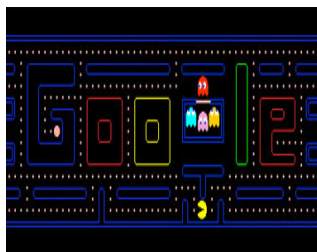
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