

# BOOKISH GOOD LOOKS

Built to honor our third president, the Jefferson Market Library endures as an iconic landmark in the heart of Greenwich Village.

Entering through a tall iron gate, I'm immediately struck by the tranquility of the space I have just entered. The brick-lined path guides me through endless variations of green foliage and past alcoves where large trees loom over partially hidden benches. I come to a wooden bench and take a seat.

Across from me is a small stone waterfall that flows into a koi pond. As I watch the brilliant red and orange leaves navigate their way between lily pads growing from the depths of the pool, I feel my body shift into a state of total relaxation. Just as I begin to wonder if I am still in New York, my attention is caught by the slow and steady sound of a tolling bell. It pulls my gaze upward to meet a magnificent, spiraling clock tower. Where am I? Why, right in the middle of the garden of Greenwich Village's High Victorian-Gothic gem, Jefferson Market Library.

Named for the nation's third president, the former courthouse was erected between 1875 and 1877 by British architects Frederick Clark Withers and Calvert Vaux, who modeled the building's design after Germany's Neuschwanstein Castle. Its red-brick façade, trimmed in limestone and featuring large stained-glass windows and multiple gabled roofs, is equally matched by the Venetian-Gothic interior.

Built to house the Third Judicial District Courthouse of New York, Jefferson Market originally played host to a civil court, a police court and a basement holding area for prisoners awaiting trial. Stephen Crane, Mae West and Harry K. Thaw, who was tried for the murder of architect Stanford White, are among the many New Yorkers—both famous and infamous—known to have passed through its imposing doors. The original site also included a masonry market building and women's house of detention.

Referred to as "Old Jeff," the courthouse was out of use by 1945 and was scheduled for demolition. However, prominent Greenwich Villagers, including Lewis Mumford, E.E. Cummings and preservationist Margot Gayle, successfully rallied to save this icon of the finest colonial architecture, and by 1967, the courthouse was restored to its former glory and reopened as a branch of the New York Public Library.

Now a National Historic Landmark, Jefferson Market Library and its adjacent garden are two Greenwich Village treasures that shouldn't be missed.

—STACY SEILER

