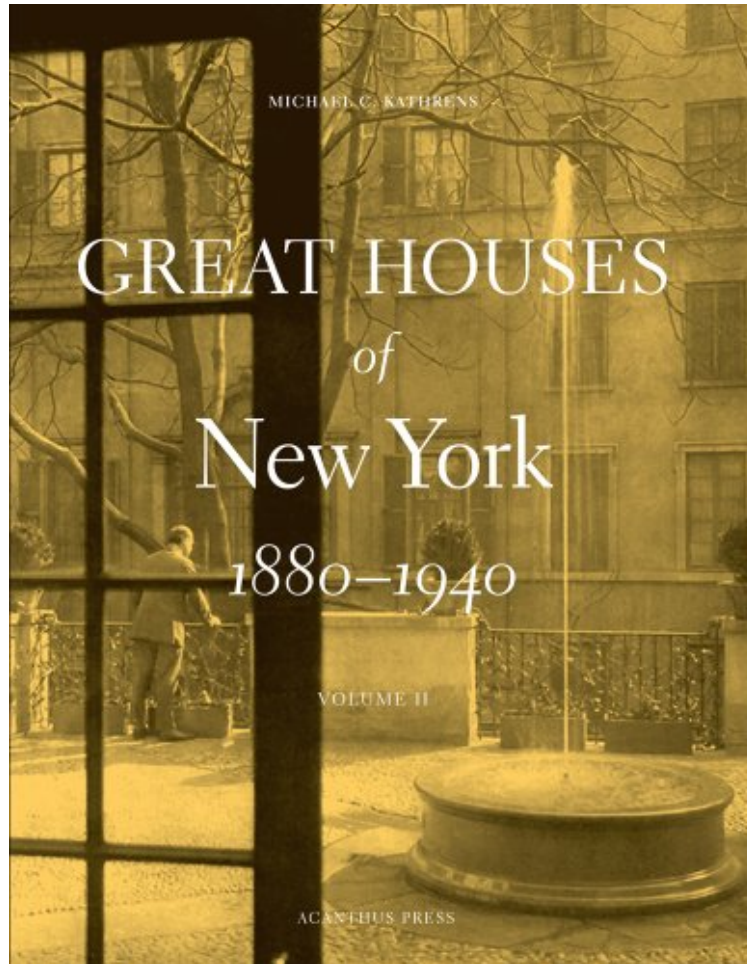


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## Great Houses of New York, 1880-1940: v. 2

*Michael C. Kathrens*

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**Michael C. Kathrens : Great Houses of New York, 1880-1940: v. 2** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Great Houses of New York, 1880-1940: v. 2:

11 of 11 people found the following review helpful. Another treasure by Acanthus!By R. MacI have purchased all the books in the Acanthus architectural series.This volume is another treasure. It is a thrill to be invited inside these many fine houses, particularly, and poignantly, for the houses long gone. For these latter homes, the author offers an invaluable service: resurrection.Other reviewers have noted an issue with the image quality. Well, I agree about the uneven quality, but do not agree that this is an issue. I would rather have grainy images than no images! Such critiques imply that the author did not, you know, work hard enough to find images of perfection. However, this criticism overlooks an annoying thing called reality.For example, with the fabulous Tiffany mansion I have exhaustively researched this long-lost house, only to be saddened by an inescapable conclusion: for so famous a structure there is scant archival information available. There is but a single floor plan (reproduced in the book) and only a handful of

interior images - all of poor quality, and originally published in a magazine. The glass plate negatives of these rare images simply do not exist so one has no choice but to reproduce from the poor quality magazine images. However, even these less-than-ideal images reveal the extraordinary nature of the Louis Tiffany apartment under the titanic-sized roof. Luckily, there are many exterior images of the Tiffany mansion. The author has chosen a particularly fine one, and splashed large across two pages. Yummy. The same is true for the even more fabulous (and also long lost) Havemeyer mansion. There are no plans extant (which is why none are in the book) and the interior images of this impossibly luscious, dazzling, and unique interior are reproduced from the ONLY source: another old magazine. The glass negatives? They do not exist. So, should the author have simply ignored these two extraordinary houses (and others) just because pristine images taken directly from glass plate negatives were not an option? Well, I am quite delighted that he did not. In addition, the author has admirably included not only information about the houses but also informs the readers about the original owners (and sometimes subsequent owners). Critically, the author lets the reader know the fate of each house. Extant and cherished? Extant but brutalized? Destroyed? This is an admirable gift to each reader as one is not left with that lingering, painful question: what happened to this fine house? It is amazing how many authors are not as considerate. To me, anybody interested in the architecture of New York City's great houses would, without question, want to own Volume I and this second volume. Both are fine additions to a fine collection by a fine publisher.

13 of 13 people found the following review helpful. does not measure up to volume one  
By billy  
Beware of glowing reviews that appear to come indirectly from the publisher. While this book is just as fascinating as the first volume, it fails badly in one area: the photos. Many of them are downright poor and most of the others are barely acceptable. I don't think it is a printing problem, I think the original photos are too poor to reproduce successfully. If you liked the first volume, then buy this one, just be aware that you won't see good, clear photos of the houses. If you don't have either one, get the first one, as it is much better.

8 of 8 people found the following review helpful. Great Houses of NY, V. 2  
By Lilly Ford  
This is another beautiful addition to Acanthus spectacular series on fine historical architecture. The book serves as a sequel to Great Houses of New York published in 2005. In this volume the author details 37 historical residential structures scattered across New York. The book contains a comprehensive introduction to put the various buildings into a wider historical and architectural context. The text is accessible to both professionals and casual readers. This is followed by a detailed tour of the houses where each structure's significance and history are briefly explained along with clear and large archival photographs. Each house has a clear detailed floor plan. All the photos are b/w except the last two houses which are presented in glorious contemporary color shots. The book ends with brief biographies of the architects documented in the text. Like all Acanthus publications, the book is very well-made, printed on high quality paper and the photos are really attractive given their age. This is a highly recommended addition to all those interested in fine architecture.

New York has never been a place to hide one's wealth. As the city grew in power and affluence during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, so did the houses of its richest citizens. The best architectural firms filled avenues and side streets with fluid Venetian palazzos, elegant French hôtels particuliers, and dignified Georgian mansions with private galleries and exhibition halls created to house their patrons growing art collections. In this, the second volume of Great Houses of New York, Michael Kathrens continues to explore the most elegant New York City town houses, built for the city's business and social elite between 1880 and 1940. Released in 2005, the first volume profiled 43 important houses, offering a rare and captivating glimpse into a time of unprecedented architectural and social development of the city. Great Houses of New York, Volume II, documents another 37 structures both celebrated and less well-known completing the survey of the city's most exclusive addresses of the Gilded Age. Illustrated with a wealth of period photos of buildings exteriors, interiors, and decor the exotic 45-foot-high studio of Louis Comfort Tiffany, the art-and-treasure-filled residences of Henry O. Havemeyer and Jeanette Dwight Bliss, the magnificent country estate of C.K.G. Billings on the former site of Fort Tryon (now the site of The Cloisters Museum and Gardens), and architect Ernest Flagg's own house that once stood at 109 E. 40th Street Great Houses of New York parades the sumptuous facades and the riches within. A visual delight and an absorbing social history, Great Houses of New York chronicles 60 years of the city's culture, commerce, sophisticated lifestyle, and the rich architectural and cultural legacy they established.

About the Author Michael Kathrens is an independent scholar specialising in American residential architecture and interior decoration of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. He is the author of *American Splendor: the Residential Architecture of Horace Trumbauer* (Acanthus Press, 2002, 2012), *Great Houses of New York, 1880 -1930* (Acanthus Press, 2005) and *Newport Villas: The Revival Styles, 1885-1935* (W.W. Norton, 2009). Mr. Kathrens leads walking tours and lectures extensively on American domestic architecture of the Great House era.