

BIG DEAL

## Family Row

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**JOHN STEINBECK** earned his place in the American literary pantheon back in [the Great Depression](#), and died in 1968. But his study and library in [New York City](#), including the wooden desk where he worked, along with notes and papers pinned to the wall, were preserved for another generation in an Upper East Side apartment tower.



Ruby Washington/The New York Times

**AN EAST SIDER** John Steinbeck, below, lived in an apartment, now for sale, at 190 East 72nd Street.



Associated Press

Steinbeck shared the apartment with his third wife, Elaine Anderson Steinbeck, a former stage manager who died in 2003 at age 88.

Her death triggered a bitter family feud over his estate and the rights to his work and literary legacy, and so the co-op that he owned in the last years of his life is just now going on the market. The apartment is at Tower East, at 190 East 72nd Street near Third Avenue.

Robert Dankner, the president of Prime [Manhattan Residential](#), who is selling the apartment on behalf of one family faction, said that over the last few weeks, Steinbeck's papers and belongings, including rows of annotated first-edition books, shelved in the same order he left them, have been cataloged, photographed and appraised in preparation for possible sale.

Although Steinbeck once lived and wrote in a cottage on the Monterey Peninsula in California, his final home was on the 34th floor of a modern post-war high-rise designed by Richard Roth Jr. There, he had a study facing south with views of the Chrysler Building (1930) and the Empire State Building (1931), enduring symbols of capitalism during the Depression era — a period he critiqued in works like "The Grapes of Wrath."

The apartment has three bedrooms as well as Mr. Steinbeck's study, which is listed as a maid's room, an L-shaped living room and dining room with large windows facing south and east. It has 2,200 square feet of space and an asking price of \$2.1 million, with the requirement that at least 50 percent be paid in cash.

Mr. Dankner said that the apartment was priced "for today's market" and that the price reflects its outdated condition. It needs a complete renovation of the kitchen and four bathrooms, which could cost \$250,000 and up. "It will be a palace for the person who buys it," he said. "It is an extraordinary renovation waiting to happen."

He said the first prospective buyers who came through the apartment, while Mr. Steinbeck's study was still intact, indicated that they were inclined to preserve the room as is, but renovate the rest of the apartment.

The apartment is being sold by the heirs of Elaine Steinbeck, who include a daughter from a previous marriage. In 2004, after [Elaine's](#) death, Mr. Steinbeck's heirs from his second marriage, to Gwyndolyn Conger — a son, Thomas Steinbeck, a writer; and a granddaughter, Blake Smyle — sued the estate and accused Elaine and a literary agency of a "30-year hidden conspiracy to deprive John Steinbeck's blood heirs of their rights." They sought \$18 million in damages.

Last March, Judge George B. Daniels of Federal District Court in Manhattan rejected the challenge, and in July the heirs from the second marriage agreed to drop their plans to appeal, at least temporarily. This cleared the way for the sale of the apartment, Mr. Dankner said.

Thomas Steinbeck's wife, Gail, said in an interview that she was unaware of the impending sale and expected some legal action to continue. She said that while she and her husband were not concerned about the apartment itself, they were distressed that the contents were being removed without consultation with them. She said that personal items, like her husband's childhood drawings, were included.

"It is very disappointing," she said.

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