

"I took one look at the Archive and thought, 'Wouldn't it be great to have an apartment on top of that building'"

Continued from page 48

Teitelbaum is a man with the right vision at the right time. He has tapped straight into the zeitgeist, offering just the kind of old/new housing that is most in demand now—and for a lot less time, and therefore money, than they would have taken to build new. Teitelbaum's buildings, with their formidable exteriors, feature the attractive combination of high ceilings and mellowed wood floors—along with contemporary amenities like quarry-tiled kitchens and sleek, pine cabinets—that are currently so in vogue. For Teitelbaum, preservation has been as profitable as it has been satisfying.

Despite his shrewdness in the marketplace, on a one-to-one basis, David Teitelbaum is strictly soft sell. He prances around his serviceable offices in the construction-torn Barbizon like an overgrown adolescent. "His enthusiasm is contagious," says an attorney who has dealt with him. "He wants to be loved," says Weinshall, who negotiated on behalf of New York State at the transfer of the Archive. "When you're through yelling at each other, he'll come over and tell you a joke or nibble on your ear." On the phone, he rolls his eyes, grimaces, charms, whether he's flattering film producer Dino De Laurentiis (a tenant in one of the midtown office buildings Teitelbaum owns and manages), or whether he's rejecting the advances of the estimable Perigord East. The owners wanted to open in the Barbizon Hotel. "Your restaurant is good," said Teitelbaum sweetly,



Teitelbaum (always in the middle) and team: Steven Maun and Peter Loiacono in the front row, and, in the back, Lou Marquet; Al Piazza, Frank Barbaro, Wilbur Dial.

"but it's not Lutece."

A consummate showman, Teitelbaum's projects are his spectaculars. The Barbizon, after a \$20-million renovation, will reopen later this fall as a European spa-in-the-city meant to appeal particularly to women travelers. Using dusty pastels, sensuous lighting and rich textures, Teitelbaum and his team—marketing whiz Jivan Tabibian, graphic designer Milton Glaser and interior designer Judith Stockman (Café des Artistes, American Charcuterie)—have evoked the Barbizon region in France so dear to Postimpressionist painters. A 15,000-square-foot health and beauty facility will encourage guests to indulge their penchant for fitness, pampering, or both. "I wanted to blend the California lifestyle with European sophistication right here in New York," says Teitelbaum, himself a former competitive swimmer.

The hotel's three dining areas—

a bistro, a French seafood restaurant and a formal dining room in an adjacent brownstone—will be designed by Milton Glaser. For the latter—which Teitelbaum and company hope will rival New York's finest eateries—Glaser traveled to Monet's house in Giverny, France, for inspiration.

Teitelbaum's other current project, the red-brick Federal Archive Building, a ten-story, block-square monument designed by prominent "Chicago School" architect Wiloughby J. Edbrooke in the late nineteenth century, promises to be equally spectacular. Completion

for the first half of the Archive is scheduled for January 1984, the second half, a year later. The West Village building plans call for seven floors of multilevel luxury co-ops, a 20,000-square-foot, rooftop health center, and a glass-covered atrium downstairs with shops, cafes and a farmer's market-type supermarket. An off-Broadway theater has its eye on the basement.

Ten years ago, when Teitelbaum was new to the city and looking for a place to live, the Archive building became his "inspiration for adaptive reuse." The city was in the midst of a housing squeeze, but there was no shortage of vacant office buildings. "I took one look at the Archive and thought, 'Wouldn't it be great to have an apartment on top of that building,'" he recalls. But the doughnut-shaped edifice was tied up in so many layers of red tape that it took the federal, state and city govern-

Continued on page 56

Continued from page 53

ments—plus the Landmarks Conservancy—eight years to unravel it all. And Teitelbaum, who'd come to New York City to break into real estate, had to go into the business first.

A marketing man by training, as well as by personality, Teitelbaum had packaged and sold everything from raw land to La Costa Resort and Spa during his California days. "In each case, it was property that was changing in use," he says. "And in each case, it was increasing in value." There was no raw land in New York City, but there were old buildings. Teitelbaum applied the same principles. In order to give his buildings "a sense of place—a definite personality"—he adapted the philosophies he'd learned as part of the team that designed the planned community, Beckett, N.J., for W.R. Grace's New Town project.

Not surprisingly, when it came to converting his first building, Teitel-

baum also looked for people whose skills were translatable. His architect had done hotels and had experience with small spaces. His lawyer had zoning expertise, and the builder, with no renovation know-how, was willing to learn. Spurred by his vision for the Archive, Teitelbaum established himself as an old-building specialist. He converted two handsome, failing, downtown commercial structures into attractive apartment buildings, renovated several midtown office buildings and began work on the Barbizon.

By all appearances, everyone seems to have benefited by the Archive's unique marriage of public and private enterprise. Teitelbaum eventually got his building and the chance to realize a dream. The city and state are getting a lively public space in a neighborhood with few services. And the community is getting \$600,000 in public purpose payments to be divided among sixteen Greenwich Village community programs. In ad-

dition, the New York Landmarks Conservancy receives \$3.5 million for a revolving fund. The latter is a much-needed shot in the arm for the subsidy-starved preservation movement.

As Teitelbaum sees it, his major weakness—and strength, for that matter—is his romantic nature. His insistence on "falling in love" with any building before he becomes involved has cost him potential business. Colleagues, however, say his staff is the real Achilles' heel. "David Teitelbaum is the Muhammad Ali of the development world," said one longtime associate. "He has an entourage of useless people that surround him." Others say that he tends to be sloppy in his business deals—ignoring important details, assuming he'll get by on charm.

For his part, Teitelbaum takes pride in his young, enthusiastic team, including college interns. They make up in energy what they lack in experience. Or, as Steve Maun, a former

medical student who is executive vice president of Teitelbaum Holdings, Ltd., puts it, "We don't know what we don't know."

Teitelbaum and his 36-year-old wife, Joanne, a resident in psychiatry at St. Vincent's Hospital (and consultant in employee and guest relations at the Barbizon Hotel), live on the top floor of Teitelbaum's second conversion—a former sewing factory with 10-foot windows on the fringe of the East Village. Two of three children by a previous marriage, Wendy, 22, and Mitchell, 20, are working at Teitelbaum Holdings.

As for his unconventional style, Teitelbaum, ever the marketing man, says candidly, "I tend to be outrageous. It makes me feel more comfortable. I try to communicate who I am all the time." And while he may wear a tuxedo to a closing or blue jeans to his lawyers', the preservation developer is no fool. When he visits the bankers, David Teitelbaum puts on a suit. **MH**