

# HISTORIC PRESERVATION



BRYANT PARK PUBLIC REST ROOM

**Joan Kaplan Davidson has set the pace for philanthropy in historic preservation.**

When asked what might have been her favorite projects or proudest accomplishments, Davidson replies, "perhaps that we got the public toilets going." The project began when Daniel Bie-

derman, the head of the group that restored Bryant Park, asked Davidson for money to fix a statue of William Cullen Bryant. In view of the city's sanitation crisis, Davidson instead offered funds for a public toilet. The result was the renovation of an abandoned freestanding public rest room built in 1911, a Beaux-Arts confection designed by Carrère and Hastings, architects of the New York Public Library, which borders the park.

More far-reaching, however, was the fund's subsequent campaign to install well-designed, self-cleaning public toilets all over New York City. After delay and difficulty the project is likely to come to fruition in the late 1990s. Meanwhile the idea is catching on elsewhere. The manufacturer, JC Decaux, began placing its equipment in San Francisco this summer and is responding to expressed interest by city administrators in Seattle and Philadelphia. Suzanne Davis, who served as the director of the J.M. Kaplan Fund from 1970 until 1992 when she left to open a United States subsidiary of the Decaux Company, stresses that Davidson is "an intellectual person