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Eviction-Happy Landlord Croman Buys 75th Street Building for \$14.5 M.; Should Tenants Fret?

By [Max Abelson](#) • 03/25/08 10:40pm



If you pay very little rent for an apartment in the very coveted real estate holy land off Fifth Avenue in the East 70's, you probably don't want to hear that **Steven Croman** has bought your building.

Mr. Croman, who has been named to *The Village Voice's* 10 Worst Landlords List, made headlines in 2002 when he began to empty a 23-unit apartment building he'd bought for \$5.5 million to make a quadruplex for his family, plus a duplex for his sister-in-law.

Last month, three blocks up at **7 East 75th Street**, Mr. Croman bought another

townhouse, paying **\$14.5 million** to a family that had owned the house for decades. (You may recognize its facade from *The Nanny*, the nasally 90's upper-class sitcom.)

But maybe fear would be unwarranted. “We have no plans to make it into a single-family house,” Mr. Croman said when reached on his cell phone. (He wanted to know how *The Observer* got the number—the answer is, it's printed on construction permits for the \$5.5 million house.)

Later, a spokesperson said there aren't even plans to raise rents for the existing tenants. They're worried anyway: “Particularly the proverbial little old ladies who have rent-stabilized units,” said a renter. “They're very concerned.” That source happens to own a gold-mining company, which makes him harder to sympathize with than the two or three rent-controlled tenants and seven or eight rent-stabilized neighbors that he said are in the building.

Mr. Croman has dealt with their kind before: For the \$5.5 million house nearby, he invoked a law that allows owners to live in their own buildings, even if they

have to evict some rent-stabilized tenants. According to *The Voice*, Mr. Croman is known for “badgering phone calls, endless lawsuits, and leaning on already hard-pressed tenants.”

The house was sold by personal injury lawyer **Bernard Robins** and his wife and four children, plus his brother and his three children. In 1955, their parents bought the place and moved in from Brooklyn. They had some good tenants back then: “Mike Nichols was there for a while,” Mr. Robins said. “John Cassavetes [pictured] and Gena Rowlands, they all had the penthouse.”



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