Landmarks Preservation Commission
June 15, 1993; Designation List 251
LP-1861

409 EDGECOMBE AVENUE APARTMENTS
(Colonial Parkway Apartments),
409 Edgecombe Avenue, Borough of Manhattan.
Built 1916-17; Schwartz & Gross, architects.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 2054, Lot 62.

On July 15, 1991, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Colonial Parkway Apartments and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 28). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. A total of fifteen speakers testified in favor of the proposed designation; seven of those speakers were in favor of the designation of this as well as other items on the calendar at the hearing but urged the Commission to continue its work in Harlem. Numerous letters have been received expressing the same sentiments. Six written statements in favor of designation of the 409 Edgecombe Avenue Apartments were submitted at the hearing. The Commission has received several letters expressing support of the designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Summary

Considered Sugar Hill's most prestigious address from the 1930s through the 1950s, the apartment building at 409 Edgecombe Avenue portrays through its illustrious roster of tenants the achievement of African-Americans since the Harlem Renaissance. The building, known simply as "409," was first open to African-Americans in the late 1920s and soon attracted numerous outstanding leaders in the fields of civil rights, politics, law, education, medicine, scholarship, music and the arts. These included W.E.B. DuBois, Walter White, William Stanley Braithwaite, Aaron Douglas, Thurgood Marshall, and Roy Wilkins, among others. Constructed in 1916-17 to the designs of Schwartz & Gross, a prominent firm well-known for its apartment houses, 409 is an imposing thirteen-story structure with a curved, three-part facade, commanding a view of Jackie Robinson Park (originally Colonial Park) and the Harlem River from its prominent hilltop site. The home of New York City's African-American intellectual and cultural elite, 409 was long a center of Sugar Hill society.

Development of Harlem[1]

That part of New York known as Harlem embraces the area of Manhattan north of 110th Street, and joins the narrow northern handle of Manhattan known as Washington Heights. The original village of Harlem was established in 1658 by Dutch Governor Peter Stuyvesant and named Nieuw Haarlem after the Dutch city of Haarlem. Throughout the Dutch, British, and colonial periods, rich farms were located in the region's flat, eastern portion, while some of New York's most illustrious early families, such as the Delanceys, Bleekers, Rikers, Beekmans, and Hamiltons maintained large estates in the high, western portion of the area.

Harlem suffered economic decline in the 1830s when many of the farms, depleted from decades of cultivation, were abandoned and the great estates were sold at public auction. The area became a refuge for those desiring cheap property and housing, including newly-arrived and destitute immigrants who gathered in scattered shantytowns. However, most of the scenic topography and rural character of Harlem was left untouched.

The advent of new and better forms of transportation, as well as the rapidly increasing population of New York following the Civil War brought about the transformation of Harlem into a middle and upper-middle class neighborhood. Although the New York & Harlem Railroad had operated from lower Manhattan to Harlem beginning in 1837, service was poor and unreliable and the trip was long. The impetus for new residential development in this area came with the arrival of three lines of elevated rail service which, by 1881, ran as far north as 129th Street, and by 1886 extended further north.

Beginning in the 1870s Harlem was the site of a massive wave of speculative development which resulted in the construction of numerous new single-family rowhouses, tenements, and luxury apartment houses. Commercial concerns and religious, educational, and cultural institutions, such as the distinguished Harlem Opera House on West 125th Street, were established in Harlem to serve the expanding population. The western half of Harlem, though developed slightly later, became a fashionable and prosperous neighborhood. Luxury elevator apartment buildings with the most modern amenities were constructed, such as the Graham Court Apartments built in 1898-1901 on Seventh Avenue (now 1923-1937 Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. Boulevard), as well as more modest types of multi-family housing. Those who relocated from downtown included recent immigrants from Great Britain and Germany.

Anticipated transportation improvements in the late 1890s, such as the proposed subway routes to west Harlem, ignited another wave of real estate speculation which led to highly inflated market values. Between 1898 and 1904, when the Lenox Avenue subway opened at 145th Street, virtually all the vacant land in Harlem was built upon. This tremendous increase in residential construction led to overbuilding, the result being extensive vacancies and inflated rents as landlords sought to recover their investments. A general collapse of the real estate market hit Harlem in 1904-05, as loans were withheld and mortgages foreclosed, and landlords dropped rents drastically in an effort to attract tenants.

Taking advantage of the deflated market and the housing surplus, a black businessman named Philip Payton and his Afro-American Realty Company, founded in 1904, played a major role in the development of Harlem as an African-American community. In the aftermath of the real estate collapse, Payton acquired five-year leases on white-owned properties, managed them, and rented them to African-Americans at ten percent above the deflated market price. Thus, New York's black middle class -- long denied access to "better" neighborhoods -- began moving to Harlem. This real estate climate offered, for the first time, decent, attractive housing in large quantities to a segment of New York's population which had never had such an opportunity.

The major center of African-American New York in the late nineteenth century had been the section west of Herald and Times Squares, from the West 20s to the 60s, comprising the overcrowded areas known as Hell's Kitchen, the Tenderloin, and San Juan Hill. A dramatic increase in Harlem's African-American community came when hundreds of families living in the Tenderloin were displaced during the construction of Pennsylvania Station in 1906-10.

Harlem was considered an ideal place to live, with its broad tree-lined streets and new, up-to-date housing stock. Quoting an Urban League report of 1914, Gilbert Osofsky notes that Harlem was "a community in which Negroes as a whole are...better housed than in any other part of the country." The author explains, "the creation of a black Harlem was one example of the general development of large, segregated Negro communities within many American cities in the years preceding and following World War I."[2] The migration to Harlem continued during the 1920s as people came to New York in record numbers from the American South and the West Indies. During the "Harlem Renaissance" of the 1920s, Harlem became the urban cultural center of black America, with its center around 135th Street between Lenox and Seventh Avenues.

Rents in Harlem rose drastically after World War I. The deterioration of Harlem housing which began in the 1920s can be attributed in large part to the high cost of living in the community and the increased demands on the neighborhood brought by the rising population. Many have blamed both white and black landlords for the distressing scenario in which rents continued to increase while maintenance and services were neglected.[3] As with so many Harlem properties, 409 Edgecombe Avenue eventually experienced such a decline, but not before its heyday as the most prestigious address on Sugar Hill.

"Sugar Hill" on Harlem Heights

The highland area of west Harlem developed later and more gradually than the low-lying valley of Harlem because of limited transportation connections to the rest of the city. In the nineteenth century, the area was a popular destination for excursions out of town, especially for bicyclists, drivers of trotting horses, and patrons of Manhattan Field and the adjacent Polo Grounds (which opened in the late 1880s).[4] When residential construction reached the area during Harlem's real estate boom, the ridge of the heights (later known as Coogan's Bluff) overlooking the Harlem River was a particularly appealing location for stylish apartment buildings which initially attracted upper-middle class tenants of German, Jewish, and Irish background. Sometimes identified as part of Washington Heights, the neighborhood extending from Edgecombe Avenue to Amsterdam Avenue, and from 145th Street to 155th Street, came to be known as "Sugar Hill" when affluent African-Americans began moving there in the late 1920s. By 1930, the population of this entire area south of 155th Street was over fifty percent black, with certain areas having a population that was between seventy-five and eighty-five percent black.[5]

The African-American elite in Harlem gravitated to certain residential enclaves; some lived in the King Model Houses, later nicknamed Strivers' Row (which was open to black tenants in 1919), while others settled in attractive apartment buildings such as Graham Court and the Dunbar Apartments (1926-28), the first major nonprofit cooperative apartment complex built specifically for African-Americans.[6] Beginning in the late 1920s, Harlem's elite migrated to the "class houses" of Sugar Hill, notably Nos. 409 and 555 Edgecombe Avenue. In 1946, *Ebony* magazine gave one account of the derivation of the name "Sugar Hill," explaining that "some 'shanty' Irish looked across 130th Street to the brick-topped ledge where wealthy, 'lace curtain' Irish lived years ago, [and] dubbed it Sugar Hill. Years later Negroes nudged the title 20 blocks uptown, where Negroes with 'sugar' settled."[7] The appellation came to represent all that was "sweet and expensive," signifying that one had arrived, economically and socially, at the summit of New York's African-American culture. The summit was geographic as well as cultural; people on the "Hill" looked down upon the "valley" of central Harlem where the poorer residents of Harlem lived, many in overcrowded temements and cramped, converted rowhouses. While the valley was truly the heart of Harlem, Sugar Hill was celebrated for its exclusivity and status.

The Hill attracted those with talent, money, education, and social prominence. The *Ebony* article characterized Sugar Hill society and the residents of 409 and 555 with the observation that "Harlem's most talked-about men and women in law, sports, civil liberties, music, medicine, painting, business, and literature live on Sugar Hill." Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. presented a portrait of the Hill's residential grandeur in 1935:

On Sugar Hill...Harlem's would-be 'sassiety' goes to town. 'Midst paneled walls, parquet floors, electric refrigeration, colored tile baths, luxurious lobbies, elevators and doormen resplendent in uniforms, they cavort and disport themselves in what is called the best ofay *manner."*[8]

There were racketeers and gamblers who called the Hill home, living side by side with judges, scholars, and writers. In the 1940s *Ebony* reported that Sugar Hill incomes ranged from $3,000 to $7,000 per annum, most being within the upper half of wages in the United States, yet also estimated that one-quarter of Hill dwellers had to take in boarders and make other sacrifices in order to meet expenses. Rents in Harlem were generally high, but in Sugar Hill they were even higher. At 409, tenants paid from fifty to ninety-eight dollars per month, while at 555 Edgecombe, two-and-one-half rooms rented for sixty-six dollars and five rooms for eighty-seven dollars. As one observer commented, "...Harlem prices leave little for luxurious living. The main difference between those on Sugar Hill and those in the slums is the knowledge of where their next meal is coming from and, at night, a spaciousness which helps erase the memory of a Jim Crow day."[9]

The Residents of 409 Edgecombe Avenue

No. 409 Edgecombe was certainly the most prestigious of addresses on Sugar Hill in the 1930s and '40s. Counted among the residents of this very special enclave were people of national and international significance. As one who grew up at 409, Arnold Braithwaite eloquently explains, "...nowhere in New York City, and perhaps the country, will you find any other apartment building, whose halls and suites echo with the ghosts, as it were, of distinguished men and women, many of international repute, who were forced to overcome the obstacles of poverty, for most; of pernicious racism, for all."[10] As *Ebony* stated in the mid-1940s, "legend, only slightly exaggerated, says bombing 409 would wipe out Negro leadership for the next 20 years."[11] Indeed, residents have included such notable African-American luminaries as scholar and activist W.E.B. DuBois; former N.A.A.C.P. leader Walter White; White's successor, Roy Wilkins; and Thurgood Marshall, who was then special counsel to the same esteemed organization and later became the first African-American Justice on the U.S. Supreme Court. They were joined by New York State Assemblyman William Andrews, Assistant Attorney General of New York State Harry Bragg, and Charles Toney, a municipal judge, as well as others who had crossed the racial barrier into the fields of politics and law. Residents involved in the arts included renowned poet, critic, and literary anthologist William Stanley Braithwaite; Aaron Douglas, the famed painter and illustrator of the Harlem Renaissance and head of the art department of Fisk University; Luckey Roberts and Jimmie Lunceford, popular jazz musicians; actor and singer Jules Bledsoe; and classical composer Clarence Cameron White. Another longtime resident, prominent physician Dr. May Edward Chinn, had an office at the ground story and lived upstairs. (For more information about these and other tenants of 409, see the Appendix.)

Walter White's apartment, 13A, is often remembered as the "White House of Harlem," or the "White House of Negro America," the pun making reference to the notable visitors who were entertained there. The reminiscences of White's daughter, the actress Jane White, who grew up at 409, are recorded by historian Jervis Anderson:

We lived in a wonderful apartment, with five enormous rooms....There were wonderful floors in our building, hard floors. There were moldings and panels on the walls. Really sensational. I used to enjoy going with my parents down the hall to see Judge Charles Toney and his wife, Lily. They had a great, dark apartment with massive mahogany furniture and heavy draperies. I loved to sit back in an enormous armchair and just hear them droning on. It gave me a great feeling of security. It was an enormously safe and comfortable kind of existence. And I remember a Jewish contemporary of mine telling me that her family had lived in that building when it was Jewish....

The parties in Daddy's and Mother's apartment were formidable. The kinds of people who were there included Wendell Wilkie, William Robeson (the CBS executive),

Clarence Darrow, and so on. We had a full-sized grand piano at one time, because almost everybody had a piano at one time.... George Gershwin played 'Rhapsody in Blue' on our piano soon after he wrote it....Another person who was there, at some of our parties, was Sergei Eisenstein, the great Russian director. He was heard to say that my mother was one of the most beautiful women he had ever seen. I saw Claude McKay, Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, Harold Jackman coming to our parties.

It was only by hindsight that I realized I was moving in Harlem society....People like Judge Charles Toney and Thurgood Marshall were always part of our circle....[and]

James Weldon Johnson was a close friend of my parents. ...I knew Langston Hughes more than any of the other young writers of the Harlem Renaissance. He was such a gay, living human being....It was wonderful to have lived among people then. Sometimes you wonder, How was it possible? Because things were not ungrim then. Some of the years we are talking about were during the Depression. I never got any sense of diminished enthusiasm, diminished vigor, diminished hope....But I'm talking about a period when I was just an onlooker.[12]

Even in the heyday of Sugar Hill the general decline of the area was becoming all too apparent, as buildings such as 409 fell victim to mismanagement, rent gouging, and neglect. In 1953 *Jet* lamented the steady deterioration of Harlem's celebrated enclave, noting that "doormen and elevator operators have disappeared almost entirely, as has the social prestige of living on Sugar Hill" and that bars, saloons, and "third-rate diners" had been permitted to move into St. Nicholas Avenue, where once such establishments were restricted. However, the article singles out 409, claiming that "only at 409 today is there anything approaching the high-styled living of yesteryear," for the building retained a "cross-section of America's top-drawer Negroes." Yet, the author adds, while some "old guard" tenants remained, many others had moved to the Riverside Drive area or to St. Albans, Queens, which was developing into an affluent African-American suburb.[13]

Design and Construction of the 409 Edgecombe Avenue Building

Sited dramatically on the rocky ridge known as Coogan's Bluff high above the Harlem River, 409's appeal as a desirable place to live was augmented by both its natural surroundings and by several nearby civic improvements. Colonial (now Jackie Robinson) Park is located just across the street from 409, ensuring an unobstructed river view from Sugar Hill's tallest building. The site also commands a perspective of the Macomb's Dam Bridge, the Harlem Speedway (now Harlem River Drive), and what once was the site of the Polo Grounds (replaced by a housing project).

Designed by the firm of Schwartz & Gross, the building at 409 Edgecombe Avenue, identified as the Colonial Parkway Apartments, was constructed in 1916-17 for the Candler Holding Corporation. Deed restrictions prohibited the owner from erecting "any building other than private dwellings or apartment houses to be at least five stories in height."[14] While the buildings along Edgecombe Avenue south of No. 409 display a rather consistent building height of five to six stories, 409 towers above its neighbors.

Schwartz & Gross[15]

The firm of Schwartz & Gross was among the most productive New York architectural firms in the first half of the twentieth century. Both graduates of the Hebrew Technical Institute, Simon I. Schwartz (1877?-1956) and Arthur Gross (1877-1950) began their lucrative practice in 1902. From the beginning the partners specialized in hotels and apartment buildings, particularly luxury buildings with ample plans and generous proportions. The work of Schwartz & Gross is found throughout the city, but particularly on the Upper East and Upper West Sides and in Morningside Heights.

The firm's typical early buildings, like 409 Edgecombe Avenue, have stone-faced bases and brick upper stories, and display the traditional tripartite composition enlivened with ornamental

overlays. Most of the pre-World War I buildings have facades highlighted by traditional ornament, often reflecting the influence of the French Beaux-Arts or Italian Renaissance styles. The two buildings flanking the intersection of West 116th Street and Riverside Drive, the Colosseum (1910, No. 435 Riverside Drive) and No. 440 Riverside Drive, are particularly interesting comparisons to 409 Edgecombe. Like that of 409, their prominent, curving facades take advantage of a park frontage and a river view. The firm's work in the late 1920s and 1930s takes on a more modernistic image, as is seen at three Art Deco buildings on Central Park West: Nos. 55 (1929-30), 241 (1930), and 336 (1928-29).

It is very likely that Schwartz & Gross, so active in the design of apartment houses in New York, was involved in the financing and development of certain projects. Schwartz, in particular, is known to have been president and director of the Surrey Hotel, the Brunton Realty Corporation, and the 38 East 85th Street Corporation at the time of his death. The New Building Application for 409 Edgecombe Avenue gives Jacob Frankel as the president of the Candler Holding Corporation, and Charles Strauss as secretary.[16] Strauss's business address is listed as 347 Fifth Avenue, which is the same as the architects' offices; thus, it is conceivable the architects were in some way financially linked to the venture.

The large, thirteen-story plus penthouse building was characteristic of apartment buildings constructed for New York's upper-middle class during that period. The apartment units were fitted with dumbwaiters, gas stoves, wood interior finishes, and other amenities. The two passenger elevators and one service elevator were staffed by uniformed operators. The penthouse originally enclosed twenty-one servants' rooms; in 1945, these rooms were converted into five additional apartments, bringing the total number of units in the building to 124. Most of the apartments had three to five large rooms.

Subsequent History

In 1918, the Candler Holding Corporation sold the property to Nicholas Jones, who in turn transferred it to the Colonial Parkway Corporation. African-Americans were first permitted to move into the building in 1928.[17] In 1930, at the onset of the Depression, the property was foreclosed; the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company assumed ownership and took over the leases. In 1942, 409 was purchased by the Antillean Holding Company, whose president, Augustine A. Austin, is said to have been one of the wealthiest black businessmen in New York. It was apparently during Austin's long tenure as the owner of 409 (and the management by his son, Orin) that the building suffered physical neglect, losing its former luster and prestige. In 1976 a white lawyer, Harold Tamarin, acquired 409 from the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, which had taken over the building from Orin Austin after he defaulted on the mortgage. Tamarin had little success in remedying the problems which had originated with the previous management, and the building became an insurmountable financial liability. Some members of the Tenants Association engaged in a rent strike over the lack of building maintenance and decrease in services.[18] In 1979 the building was forfeited to the City for non-payment of taxes, and the Tenants Association entered an interim lease arrangement with the Department of Housing Preservation and Development. Rehabilitation of the building has proceeded under the City's management of the building.

Description

The building at 409 Edgecombe Avenue is E-shaped in plan, with the openings of the "E" oriented to Edgecombe Avenue, and has a convex front which conforms to the avenue's curve. The building has a frontage of approximately 179 feet on the avenue. Faced in red-brown brick, the design is a typical tripartite vertical composition with neo-Georgian and neo-Renaissance terra-cotta detail at the base and top. A stone enframement, topped by a pedimented window surround, marks the main entrance to the building at the center section. The ornamental detail in the lower zone includes spandrel panels with cartouches and decorative, blind arched window heads at the fourth story. Similar arched heads top the windows at the thirteenth story. Small balconettes have been removed from the windows at the fourth and

eleventh stories. The paired, one-over-one aluminum window sash are recent replacements for the original paired, six-over-one wood sash. The light courts formed by the arms of the "E" and rear and side elevations are faced in yellow brick. Within the lightcourts are entrances to ground-level units; the courts are enclosed at the sidewalk by iron fences. The design of 409 is enhanced by its size, its plan, and its highly visible location above the Harlem River.

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NOTES

Sources in the following notes are cited using an abbreviated format. Full citations for these sources are available in the Bibliography.

1. Information on the development of Harlem is compiled from Osofsky, 71-149, and LPC, *Washington Apartments Designation Report*.

2. Osofsky, 111.

3. Ibid., 136.

4. The first Polo Grounds, at 110th Street and Sixth Avenue, was open from 1883 until 1888. The second Polo Grounds at 155th Street and Eighth Avenue was used for baseball in 1889-90 until the grandstand at 157th Street and Eighth Avenue was ready for the 1891 season. The Giants and Yankees shared the Polo Grounds until Yankee Stadium was built in the early 1920s; the Giants remained at the Polo Grounds until the 1957 season, and then the team moved to San Francisco. See Fred Stein and Nick Peters, *Giants Diary: A Century of Giants Baseball in New York and San Francisco* (Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books, 1987), 298.

5. "Chart of Principal Negro Area of Manhattan, 1930," based on the 1930 census for New York City, in Osofsky, plate 3.

6. Anderson, 339. Strivers' Row is located within the St. Nicholas Historic District; Graham Court and the Dunbar Apartments are both designated New York City Landmarks.

7. "Sugar Hill:...," *Ebony* (Nov., 1946), 8.

8. Quoted in Anderson, 342.

9. "Sugar Hill:...," 10.

10. Arnold Braithwaite letter.

11. "Sugar Hill:...," 5.

12. Quoted in Anderson, 343-46.

13. "Has Sugar Hill Gone to the Dogs?" *Jet* (Mar. 19, 1953), 12-15.

14. The Corporation acquired the undeveloped property (consisting of what were then lots 56 to 68) from Alice and Frank Blauvelt in June of 1916. The lots were combined into the following parcels: lots 62 to 68 became lot 62, the site of 409; and lots 56 to 61 were redistributed into two parcels, now known as lots 56 and 61, on which stand the five-story apartment buildings at 401 and 405 Edgecombe Avenue. New York County, Office

of the Register, "Block Index to Conveyances" (Block 2054), and Liber Deeds and Conveyances, Section 7, Liber 181, p. 235 (June 1, 1916). Plans for new construction were filed on June 14, 1916, and the project was completed on Oct. 30, 1917; New York City, Department of Buildings, Plans, Permits and Dockets. Tax Map Block 2054, Lot 62. [NB 232-1916]

15. Simon I. Schwartz obituary, *New York Times*, Apr. 25, 1956; Arthur Gross obituary, *New York Times*, Nov. 7, 1950; Landmarks Preservation Commission, *Upper East Side Historic District Designation Report*; LPC, research files; James Ward, *Architects in Practice in New York City*.

16. NYC, Department of Buildings, NB 232-1916.

17. Wright, "On Top of the Hill:...," 10.

18. This phase of 409's history is documented in Wright, 10-20. A copy of the typescript is in the research files of the LPC.

APPENDIX: NOTABLE RESIDENTS OF 409 EDGECOMBE AVENUE

WILLIAM T. ANDREWS

A New York State Assemblyman, William T. Andrews was a prominent public figure in Harlem. In the 1930s, Andrews had his law practice at 200 West 135th Street, and lived at 405 Edgecombe. In 1947 he first appears in the Manhattan address directories as a resident of 409 Edgecombe Avenue, where he lived at least through the 1960s.

Anderson, 286, 343.
Arnold Braithwaite letter.
Manhattan Address Telephone Directories.

JULIUS C. (JULES) BLEDSOE (1898-1943)

A noted concert singer, actor, and composer, Jules Bledsoe was born in Waco, Texas, and received his B.A. from Bishop College in Dallas in 1918. While a medical student at Columbia University, he was encouraged by his friends and teachers to study music, which he did in New York, Paris, and Rome. Bledsoe's singing debut at New York's Aeolian Hall in 1924 featured the music of Handel, Bach, Purcell, and Brahms. Critics praised "the velvety quality" of the baritone's voice, comparing him to Roland Hayes, and he was admired for his "multilingual prowess." Bledsoe had a leading role in the 1926 performance of the opera, *Deep River*, which had a large, racially mixed cast.

Bledsoe enjoyed an operatic career in Europe and in the United States, where he sang with the Boston Symphony and the Municipal Opera Company of Cleveland. He became best-known as a member of the cast of *Show Boat*, which premiered at the Ziegfield Theater in 1927. Bledsoe created the role of Joe and sang the famous song "Ole Man River." In 1929 he repeated the role in the motion picture version of the story. Bledsoe won acclaim for his April, 1931 recital at Carnegie Hall and for his 1934 performance in the title role of the opera, *Emperor Jones*, performed at the Hippodrome in New York and later throughout this country and Europe. He also composed music, notably "African Suite" for violin and orchestra. James Weldon Johnson said of Bledsoe, "Like Robeson, who has made a national reputation as an athlete, as an actor, and as a singer, Bledsoe is a very versatile man. In *Deep River* he sang a heroic baritone role; in *Abraham's Bosom* he played a dramatic and tragic part; and he was yet to play an entirely different character from either in *Show Boat*." Bledsoe lived at 409 Edgecombe Avenue briefly at the end of the 1920s. He died in Hollywood at the age of 44.

Anderson, 168, 186, 343, 409.
James Weldon Johnson, *Black Manhattan*, 206-208.
Lewis, 163.
Low and Clift, 184.
Manhattan Address Telephone Directories.
New York Times [obituary], July 16, 1943, p. 17.

CARROLL M. BOYD

A pianist and singer popular with the "Cafe Society" crowd, Carroll Boyd lived at 574 St. Nicholas Avenue in the early 1930s and at 409 Edgecombe Avenue from 1938 until at least the late 1960s.

Anderson, 227.
Arnold Braithwaite letter.
Manhattan Address Telephone Directories.

EDWARD BOYD

Edward Boyd, one of first black executives of the Pepsi-Cola Corporation and the founder of the C.A.R.E. program in Egypt, lived at 409 Edgecombe Avenue from 1947 until 1951.

Arnold Braithwaite letter.
Manhattan Address Telephone Directories.

HARRY G. BRAGG (1888-1968)

An assistant attorney general of New York State from 1931 to 1943, Harry Bragg graduated from Lincoln University and Cornell Law School. Before this appointment, he was a clerk of the law department of the New York State Tax Commission. He entered private practice in 1943, with an office located at 225 Broadway. In 1933 he moved his residence from 580 St. Nicholas Avenue to 409 Edgecombe Avenue, where he lived until his death.

Anderson, 286.
Manhattan Address Telephone Directories.
New York Times [obituary], Dec. 12, 1968, p. 43.

WILLIAM STANLEY BRAITHWAITE (1878-1962)

Poet, literary critic, editor, and anthologist, William Stanley Braithwaite was a distinguished fellow of American letters. Braithwaite was born in Boston and largely educated at home. His father was a native of British Guiana and his light-skinned mother was the daughter of a mulatto ex-slave. His passion for literature was fostered in the years he spent as an apprentice for the publisher, Ginn & Company. Braithwaite published his first volume of poetry, *Lyrics of Life and Love*, in 1904, followed four years later by *The House of Falling Leaves*. He was the literary editor of the Boston *Evening Transcript* between 1908 and 1929, and achieved a national reputation as the editor of the annual *Anthology of Magazine Verse and Year Book of American Poetry*, published from 1913 to 1939. His criticism and poetry also appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly*, the *North American Review*, and *Scribner's Magazine*. In addition to several anthologies of British literature, other works by Braithwaite include *Our Essayists and Critics of Today*; *A Fragment Wrenched from the Life of Titus Jabson* (1924), a novel; *Frost on the Green Leaf* (1928), a collection of short stories; *Selected Poems* (1948); and an autobiography, *The House Under Arcturus* (1941).

In 1918 Braithwaite became the fourth recipient of the Spingarn Medal, endowed by Joel E. Spingarn, the board chairman of the N.A.A.C.P., and awarded annually to an African-American for outstanding achievement. In that same year, he received honorary degrees from Atlanta University and Talledega College. He was a professor of literature at Atlanta University from 1935 until 1945.

Historian Jervis Anderson refers to Braithwaite as "a leader of the older black literary generation," a "patriarch" who once advised Claude McKay, then an emerging young writer of the Harlem Renaissance, to write in a manner that would not disclose his racial identity. However, despite such differences of opinion between the old and new generations of African-American writers, Braithwaite did much to encourage the literary movement of the 1920s.

The Braithwaite family took up residence at 409 Edgecombe Avenue in 1941; following Braithwaite's death, his widow and childen remained at 409.

Anderson, 196, 212.
Arnold Braithwaite letter.
Low and Clift, 189-90.
Manhattan Address Telephone Directories.
New York Times [obituary], June 9, 1962, p. 25.

ELMER A. CARTER (1890/91-1973)

Elmer Carter, a prominent Republican, was the first chairman of the New York State Commission Against Discrimination (the predecessor of the State Division of Human Rights) and first director of the State Human Rights Division until his resignation in 1961. He then served for two years as special assistant to Governor Nelson A. Rockefeller on issues of race relations. In 1937, while editor of *Opportunity*, a journal published by the Urban League, Carter was appointed by Governor Herbert Lehman to the Unemployment Insurance Appeal Board, and thus began a career in public service devoted to eliminating racial bias in housing, employment, and public accommodation. Carter's wife, the former Thelma Johnson, died just a few weeks before her husband. The Carters lived at 409 Edgecombe Avenue from the 1940s until their deaths.

Anderson, 343.
Manhattan Address Telephone Directories.
New York Times [obituary, Elmer Carter], Jan. 17, 1973, p. 42; [obituary, Thelma Carter], Jan. 2, 1973, p. 38.

EUNICE HUNTON CARTER

As a member of Governor Thomas Dewey's staff, Eunice Hunton Carter investigated crime and racketeering in New York City and was later appointed an assistant district attorney. She was one of the first African-American women in New York to become a judge. Her father, William Hunton, was an organizer of the Y.M.C.A. and her husband was Dr. Lisle C. Carter. Lisle Carter, Jr., served as executive director of the Urban League in Washington and of the National Urban Leaque headquartered in New York, before being appointed by Lyndon Johnson to a high post in the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. Eunice Hunton and Lisle C. Carter lived at 409 Edgecombe Avenue for most of the 1940s.

Arnold Braithwaite letter.
Christmas, 292-293.
Manhattan Address Telephone Directories.

ELIZABETH CATLETT (b. 1915)

Born in Washington, D.C., artist Elizabeth Catlett received her B.A. from Howard University (1935) and her M.F.A. from the State University of Iowa (1940), where she studied under Grant Wood. One year later she attended the Art Institute of Chicago and moved to New York to attend the Art Students League in 1943. In the late 1940s she moved to Mexico City to work at the Escuela de Pintura y Escultura, and headed the art department at the University of Mexico. Catlett is best known as a sculptor in marble, wood, and terra cotta of monumental works "charged with social realism and emotion." Her work has been in exhibitions at Atlanta University, the Museum of Modern Art in Mexico City, National Center of Afro-American Artists in Boston, the Baltimore Museum, and the Studio Museum in Harlem. She lived for a time at 409 Edgecombe Avenue.

Arnold Braithwaite letter.
Low and Clift, 221.
Who's Who Among Black Americans, 1992-93.

MAY EDWARD CHINN (1895/96-1980)

Born in Great Barrington, Mass., Dr. May Edward Chinn was the first African-American woman to graduate from Bellevue Hospital Medical School (1926), the first black female intern at Harlem Hospital, and for many years the only black female physician in Harlem. Her father had been a slave who escaped from the Chinn plantation in Virginia in 1864, and her mother was born on a Chickahominy Indian reservation near Norfolk, Va. May Chinn attended Columbia University Teachers' College, majoring in music, and for a period in the 1920s was a piano accompanist for singer Paul Robeson. In the 1940s she gained professional recognition as a pioneer in early cancer detection and was invited to work at the Strang Clinic, where she stayed for almost thirty years. In the last few years of her life she was a consultant to the Phelps-Stokes Fund, an educational foundation which was headed by her nephew, Franklin Williams. She received honorary Doctor of Science degrees from Columbia University and New York University.

Dr. Chinn lived at 409 Edgecombe Avenue from 1942 to 1957 and maintained a professional office in the building. At the time of her death, she lived in Morningside Gardens.

Manhattan Address Telephone Directories.
New York Times [obituary], Dec 3. 1980, sect. II, p. 11.

MARVEL COOKE

Journalist and activist Marvel Cooke worked as an assistant to W.E.B. DuBois at *Crisis* magazine, the journal of the N.A.A.C.P., and was the first African-American woman reporter for a white newspaper, the *Compass*. She was a leader in the Angela Davis Defense Committee in the 1970s and was active in the American-Soviet Friendship Society. She also worked with Paul Robeson in his protest mission for peace, once delivering a speech in Berlin on his behalf after his passport had been confiscated by the U.S. State Department. Cooke was a longtime resident of 409 Edgecombe Avenue.

Arnold Braithwaite letter.
Timothy V. Johnson, "409 -- the house at the top of Sugar Hill."
Manhattan Address Telephone Directories.

LEONARD DE PAUR

Choral conductor Leonard De Paur trained at the Julliard School of Music and Columbia University, and studied privately with Henry Cowell, Hall Johnson, Sergei Radamsky, and Pierre Monteux. In his distinguished performing arts career, he has conducted various orchestras at Lincoln Center, the Cincinnati Symphony, the Miami Beach Symphony, and Buffalo Phiharmonic, and the Symphony of the New World. He is a recipient of the Mayor's Award of Honor for Arts and Culture.

Arnold Braithwaite letter.
Who's Who Among Black Americans, 1992-93.

AARON DOUGLAS (1899-1979)

The leading painter and illustrator of the Harlem Renaissance, Aaron Douglas was born in Topeka, Kansas. He received B.A. degrees from the University of Nebraska in 1922 and from the University of Kansas in 1923. After working briefly as a high school teacher in Kansas City,

Douglas moved to New York and earned an M.F.A. from Columbia University Teachers College. In 1928-29, he studied in Paris on a grant from the Barnes Foundation. In 1937 Douglas founded the art department of Fisk University in Nashville, Tenn., and served as its chair until 1966.

Encouraged by Winold Reiss, with whom he studied in New York, Douglas explored African themes and sought to make his cultural heritage relevant to contemporary African-American experience. For this, he won critical praise and attention, and was dubbed the "father of black American art." His illustrations appeared with Reiss's in the 1925 book, *The New Negro*; this volume is said to have played an important role in giving an identity to the literary circle of the Harlem Renaissance. As a member of the Renaissance circle, Douglas illustrated books by Countee Cullen, Langston Hughes, and James Weldon Johnson. His illustrations also appeared in *Vanity Fair*, *Theatre Arts*, and *American Mercury*. His other well-known works include murals at Fisk University, the Harlem branch of the Y.M.C.A. at 180 West 135th Street, and Harlem Hospital, and canvases for the Countee Cullen branch of the New York Public Library on West 136th Street: *Africa*, *Slavery*, *Reconstruction*, and *Metropolis*.

Douglas and his wife, Alta, lived on Strivers' Row at 227 West 139th Street in the 1920s but moved to 409 Edgecombe Avenue in 1932, where they were popular hosts to Harlem's cultural elite. Said Arna Bontemps, "Everybody dropped in; this was really a meeting place for all the artists and intellectuals in Harlem....The apartment was decorated with Douglas's own paintings. It almost became a hallmark of the Harlem period in literature to have a book jacket by him." Alta Douglas died in 1958. Aaron Douglas lived in Nashville full-time after his retirement from Fisk University in 1966.

Anderson, 202.
Edmiston and Cirino, 290-291.
James Weldon Johnson, *Black Manhattan*, 279.
Lewis, 96-97, 117, 129, 195, 228.
Low and Clift, 319.
Manhattan Address Telephone Directories.
New York Times [obituary], Feb. 22, 1979, sect. II, p. 9.

WILLIAM EDWARD BURGHARDT DU BOIS (1868-1963)

W.E.B. DuBois, world renowned scholar and a foremost African-American sociologist, was born in Great Barrington, Mass. He received a B.A. from Fisk University in Nashville in 1888, and went on to earn a second B.A. (1890), an M.A. (1891), and a Ph.D. (1895) from Harvard. He began his career teaching Greek and Latin at Wilberforce University (1894-96), and sociology at University of Pennsylvania (1896-97) and Atlanta University (1897-1910), where he returned later to chair the department of sociology (1933-44).

In 1905, DuBois was one of the founders of the progressive Niagara Movement, the group which spawned the N.A.A.C.P. four years later. As the director of publications for the N.A.A.C.P., he served as editor of *Crisis* magazine from 1910 until 1934 when he resigned from the organization over matters of policy.

DuBois was a critic of the American social order and the suppression of African-Americans, and an advocate for the social leadership of an African-American intellectual and cultural elite, the so-called "Talented Tenth." He believed in egalitarian democracy, pan-Africanism, economic and social self-determinism, and socialism. His controversial views sometimes brought him in conflict with his contemporaries, notably, Booker T. Washington, Marcus Garvey, and Walter White, the director of the N.A.A.C.P. (and a longtime resident of 409 Edgecombe Avenue). Following World War I (he supported African-Americans fighting in the war), DuBois became increasingly involved in pan-Africanism and Marxism. He set up international congresses for the exploration of these ideas, and in 1926 was invited to the Soviet Union, the first of several trips he would make to communist countries. His growing interest in Marxist ideology is evident in his most controversial book, *Black Reconstruction* (1935).

DuBois served as consultant to the United Nations when it was formed in 1945, as head of the Council on African Affairs, and, in 1949, as chair of the Peace Information Center in New York. In the late 1940s and 1950s he was linked more and more with Communist groups, leading to his indictment by the U.S. Justice Department for failure to register as a foreign agent; he was later acquitted. In 1961, at the age of 93, he joined the Communist Party.

With his second wife, Shirley Graham DuBois (see "Graham"), whom he had married in 1951, DuBois took exile in Ghana in 1961 and worked the last two years of his life on the *Encyclopedia Africana*, sponsored by the government of Ghana. He wrote numerous books, including: *The Suppression of the African Slave Trade* (1896); *The Philadelphia Negro* (1899); *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903); *John Brown* (1904); *Quest of the Silver Fleece* (1911); *The Negro* (1915); *Darkwater* (1920); *The Gift of Black Folk* (1924); *Dark Princess* (1928); *Black Reconstruction* (1935); *Black Folk: Then and Now* (1939); *Dusk of Dawn* (1940); *Color and Democracy* (1945); *The World and Africa* (1946). He was the first African-American to be elected to the National Institute of Arts and Letters and was also a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

In the 1920s, DuBois lived at 606 St. Nicholas Avenue, and in the 1930s his address was 226 West 150th Street (the Dunbar Apartments). From 1945 to 1950 DuBois lived at 409 Edgecombe Avenue. He died in Ghana.

Anderson, 22, 105, 200
Arnold Braithwaite letter.
Lewis, 5-11.
Logan and Wilson, 193-199.
Low and Clift, 326-328.
Manhattan Address Telephone Directories.
New York Times [obituary], Aug. 28, 1963, p. 33.

DENNIS EDWARDS, JR. (b. 1922)

Born in New York City, Judge Dennis Edwards graduated from New York University in 1941 and Harvard Law School in 1944. He worked as a law clerk in the New York State Supreme Court (1948-65), and in 1965 was appointed a judge in Criminal Court of New York City and the State Court of Claims. Edwards served as the director of the New York County Lawyers Association from 1961 to 1965, and has been a member of the Harlem Lawyers Association, the N.A.A.C.P., the Urban League, and the Y.M.C.A. He lived at 409 Edgecombe Avenue from 1957 through at least the 1960s.

Low and Clift, 352.
Manhattan Address Telephone Directories.
Who's Who Among Black Americans, 1992-93.

SHIRLEY LOLA GRAHAM DU BOIS (1907-1977)

Author, composer, and stage director Shirley Lola Graham was born in Indianapolis. She received advanced musical training in Paris (1926-28) and earned a French certificate from the Sorbonne (1929), and a B.A. (1934)

and M.A. (1935) from Oberlin College. She served as chair of the fine arts deparment at Tennessee State College (1935-36), as director of the Negro unit of the Chicago Federal Theater (1936-38), and as a director of the U.S.O. A Rosenwald Fellow in 1938 and a Guggenheim Fellow in 1945, she was the founding editor of *Freedomways*. Her published work also includes several biographies, including *There Once Was a Slave*, the story of Frederick Douglass; *Paul Robeson: City of the World* (1946); *Booker T. Washington* (1955); and *His Day is Marching On: A Memoir of W.E.B. DuBois* (1973).

In 1951, she married W.E.B. DuBois (see) and accompanied him to Ghana in 1961. After her husband's death, Graham stayed in Ghana, founding Ghana Television in 1964. She fled to Cairo in 1967 during a military coup, and spent the next ten years traveling.

Low and Clift, 326.
New York Times [obituary], Apr. 5, 1977, p. 36.

JIMMIE LUNCEFORD (1902-1947)

One of the most popular Harlem bandleaders in the 1930s, Jimmie Lunceford was born in Fulton, Miss., and joined his first band at the age of sixteen. He played the saxophone, flute, and piano, and began his professional career as a student at Fisk University. While teaching music at a Memphis High School, he arranged a nine-piece band which later became the core of his larger jazz orchestra, organized in 1928. Advertised as "the perfect swing band," in large part due to the leader's discipline and showmanship, Lunceford's orchestra competed for public favor with the leading "big bands" of Duke Ellington, Count Basie, and Benny Goodman. Lunceford replaced Cab Calloway as leader of the Cotton Club's house band in 1934. The "Lunceford Style" influenced many bandleaders and arrangers through the 1950s, including Tommy Dorsey, Sonny Dunham, and Sonny Burke. Lunceford resided at 409 Edgecombe Avenue from 1936 until 1942. At the time of his death he was living in White Plains, N.Y.

Charters and Kunstadt, 250.
Manhattan Adddress Telephone Directories.
New York Times [obituary], July 14, 1947, p. 21.

THURGOOD MARSHALL (1908-1993)

As the first African-American to be appointed a Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, Thurgood Marshall was a major public figure in American history and a leading force in the civil rights movement. Marshall was born in Baltimore; he was named for his paternal grandfather who took the name "Thoroughgood" when he enlisted in the Union Army during the Civil War. His mother, Norma, taught in a segregated school and his father, William, was a steward at an all-white country club. After receiving a B.A. from Lincoln University in 1930, Marshall attended Howard University Law School, graduating first in his class in 1933.

He began his law career in a private practice built upon civil rights issues. He worked for the Baltimore branch of the N.A.A.C.P. and then became an assistant to his mentor, the N.A.A.C.P.'s special counsel Charles Hamilton Houston, succeeding him in that post in 1938. During the next phase of his career as director-counsel of the N.A.A.C.P. Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Marshall was involved in several landmark cases, using the courts to combat racial inequality and to fight for full citzenship rights for African-Americans: in 1938 he wrote the brief in the case which led to admission of a black student into University of Missouri Law School; In 1944 he fought for the right of blacks to vote in primary elections in Texas; in 1948 he was successful in getting restrictive housing covenants overturned as unconstitutional; in 1950 he won for black students the right to admission in the law school of the University of Texas; and in 1954, in Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas, Marshall won his greatest legal victory, ending unfair "separate but equal" racial segregation in public education and beginning the process of school desegregation in 21 states. The N.A.A.C.P. awarded him the Spingarn Medal in 1946.

In 1961 President John F. Kennedy appointed Marshall judge of U.S. District Court for the Second Judicial Circuit. After spending four years on District Court, Marshall was named U.S. Solicitor-General. In 1967 he was appointed to the U.S. Supreme Court by President Lyndon Johnson. His record was outstanding; before his own appointment to the Supreme Court, he had argued thirty-two cases before the High Court and won twenty-nine of them. As a Supreme Court Justice, Marshall, as his *New York Times* obituary points out, often found that "his most powerful voice was in dissent." One of his strongest stances was opposition to the death penalty in all cases. He retired from the Supreme Court in 1991.

Marshall maintained a residence at 409 Edgecombe Avenue from about 1940 until 1957. He married his first wife, the former Vivian Burey, in 1929; she died in 1955. Later that year he married Cecilia Suyat, with whom he had two sons: Thurgood Jr., the legislative affairs coordinator for the Office of the Vice President (Albert Gore), and John, a member of the Virigina State Police.

Anderson, 343-344.
Low and Clift, 546-547.
Manhattan Address Telephone Directories.
New York Times [obituary], Jan. 25, 1993, p. 1 & sect. B, pp. 8-9.

WILLIAM L. PATTERSON (1890-1980)

William Patterson was a civil rights attorney, political activist, and longtime leader in the American Communist Party. He was born in San Francisco, earned a law degree from the University of California in 1919, and then studied in Moscow. Returning to the United States in 1923, he opened a law office in Harlem with two friends. After joining the Communist Party a few years later, he became a regular contributor to the *Communist Daily Worker*, and later oversaw the publication of *The Worker* and *The Daily World*. He became involved in such controversial legal battles as the Sacco-Vanzetti case of 1927 in which the two alleged anarchists were executed, and that of the Scottsboro Boys in which seven African-American youths were charged with raping two young women in Alabama. He was the national executive secretary of the International Labor Defense and of the Civil Rights Congress, both leftist organizations. With Paul Robeson, Patterson originated and delivered "We Charge Genocide," the 1951 petition to the United Nations which charged the U.S. government with genocide around the world. In the 1960s, he published his autobiography, *The Man Who Cried Genocide*. Patterson and his wife, Louise, lived at 409 Edgecombe Avenue during the 1950s.

Low and Clift, 666.
Manhattan Address Telephone Directories.
New York Times [obituary], Mar. 7, 1980, sect. IV, p. 14.

C. LUCKEYTH (LUCKEY) ROBERTS (1893/94-1968)

Born in Philadelphia, musician Luckey Roberts started his career in vaudeville at the age of five. A pianist, singer, and composer, he is perhaps best known for his scores for the stage and as the leader of his own orchestra. Roberts was among the early Harlem pianists who played in the "stride" piano style, transforming the characteristics of ragtime (syncopated melody and strong bass) with a stronger jazz rhythm. Stride piano of the 1920s was associated with Roberts, James P. Johnson, and Thomas "Fats" Waller, among others. Roberts played in clubs of the Tenderloin and San Juan Hill, and on the "rent party" circuit before moving up to the Harlem clubs, such as the Apollo Theater. Ethel Waters, who sang with various bands, once said "[certain bandleaders] could make you sing until your tonsils fell out. Because you wanted to sing. ...And you'd do anything and work till you dropped for such musicians. The master of them all, though, was Luckey Roberts." The bandleader made three European tours with his own orchestra and played at Town Hall in New York in 1941.

In the 1930s, Roberts and his wife, Lena, a musical comedy actress, lived at 745 St. Nicholas Avenue and then moved to 409 Edgecombe Avenue.

Anderson, 128, 131, 154.
Charters and Kunstadt, 94, 274.
Fox, 40.
New York Times [obituary], Feb. 7, 1968, p. 47.

JAMES H. ROBINSON (1906/07-1972)

The Reverend Dr. James H. Robinson, a Presbyterian clergyman, was the pastor of the Church of the Master at Morningside Avenue and 122nd Street from 1938 until 1962 and the founder in 1957 of Operation Crossroads-Africa, an organization giving American youth the opportunity to live and work in Africa. Born in Knoxville, Tenn., Robinson was the 1935 valedictorian of Lincoln University and attended Union Theological Seminary in New York. Under the leadership of Dr. Robinson, Church of the Master became a large and active congregation involved with the Manhattan Community Center, a credit union, a cooperative store, a day nursery, and a counseling center. In 1951, he was sent by the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions on a six-month speaking tour of Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. In 1954, while visiting 11 African countries, he conceived of the interfaith youth group that he went on to found and direct. Because of his efforts and experience, Robinson was named to the advisory board of the Peace Corps and served as a State Department advisor on Africa. His books include his autobiography, *Road Without Turning*, *Adventurous Preaching*, *Love of This Land*, and *Africa at the Crossroads*. Robinson lived at 409 Edgecombe Avenue from 1945 until 1957.

Manhattan Address Telephone Directories.
New York Times [obituary], Nov. 7, 1972, p. 38.

CHARLES E. TONEY (1880/81-1951)

One of the first African-American jurists in New York, Judge Charles Toney was elected to the Municipal Court of the Tenth Manhattan District in 1930 and maintained his seat until 1950. He was born in Alabama and studied at Syracuse University. He began practicing law in New York in 1905. Active in community affairs in Harlem, he also served on the board of directors of the N.A.A.C.P. From 1931 until his death, Toney lived with his wife, Lily, in apartment 13E at 409 Edgecombe Avenue.

Anderson, 335, 344.
Manhattan Address Telephone Directories.
New York Times [obituary], Mar. 23, 1951, p. 21.

M. MORAN WESTON (b. 1910)

The rector of St. Philip's Church from 1957 until 1982, M. Moran Weston has played a prominent role in serving the Harlem community. Born in Tarboro, N.C., Weston graduated from Columbia University in 1930 and earned his M.Div. from Union Theological Seminary in 1934. He received his Ph.D from Columbia in 1954 before ministering at St. Philip's. A social worker, he was president of the Community Service Council during his tenure at St. Philip's Church, founded the Upper Manhattan Day Care and Child Development Center, and served in the Red Cross. His commitment to community service found other outlets, as well. He was the founding chairman of Carver Federal Savings Bank in 1948 and in the early 1980s became the president of a non-profit corporation which constructed affordable housing in Harlem. In addition, he was professor of Social History at S.U.N.Y. - Albany, from 1969 until 1977. Weston was one of a group of clergymen who officiated at the funeral service for Roy Wilkins (see) on Sept. 11, 1981, at the Community Church of New York. Weston lived for some time at 409 Edgecombe Avenue and now resides in New Rochelle, N.Y.

Who's Who Among Black Americans, 1992-93.

CLARENCE CAMERON WHITE (1879-1960)

Violinist and classical composer Clarence Cameron White was born in Clarksville, Tenn., and spent his childhood in Oberlin, Ohio, Chattanooga, Tenn., and Washington, D.C. He began studying the violin at the age of eight and wrote his first composition for violin and piano at age fourteen. After graduating from Howard University, White entered the Oberlin Conservatory in 1896 and graduated in 1901. He continued his studies and performed in Boston, New Haven, and New York where he drew the attention of Paul Laurence Dunbar, Harry T. Burleigh, and Booker T. Washington. In 1903 he was invited to join the Washington [D.C.] Conservatory, and he also later taught in public schools there. In the following year he met African-British composer Samuel Coleridge-Taylor with whom he studied in London in 1906 and again in 1908-11. After performing throughout Europe he established a studio in Boston where he conducted the Victoria Concert Orchestra from 1914 until 1924. As the director of music at West Virginia State College from 1924 to 1931 he first became interested in Haitian music and history through his friend, Professor John F. Matheus. The two men traveled to Haiti and together composed an opera based on the life of Jean-Jacques Dessalines, a slave who led a revolution and became the first emperor of Haiti in the early nineteenth century; the opera was titled *Ouanga,* which means "voodoo charm." The work was performed in Chicago, where it won an award from the American Opera Society of Chicago. It was first produced for the stage in 1949 in South Bend, Ind., by the Burleigh Musical Associaton. Later the opera was performed in Philadelphia (1950) and in New York at Carnegie Hall and the Metropolitan Opera House (1956). Strongly influenced by folk music, White composed violin and orchestral work, and arranged African-American spirituals. Notable are his *Symphony in*

D Minor, an orchestral piece entitled *Elegy*, the ballet score *A Night in Sans Souci*, and a cantata, *Heritage*, which was performed at the Church of the Master shortly before his death.

After living in Chicago and Elizabeth, N.J., where his first wife died, White moved to New York City in 1943, and married his second wife, Pura Belpre. In 1948 the Whites moved to 409 Edgecombe Avenue where the composer died twelve years later.

Manhattan Address Telephone Directories.
Logan and Winston, 644-645.
Low and Clift, 853.
New York Times [obituary], July 2, 1960, p. 17.

WALTER FRANCIS WHITE (1893-1955)

Civil rights leader Walter White served as chief executive of the N.A.A.C.P. from 1929 until his death. Born the son of a mailman in Atlanta, Ga., he was fair-skinned and blue-eyed, and according to his *New York Times* obituary, "only five-thirty-seconds of his ancestry was Negro." Indeed, he could have led his life comfortably within the white establishment, but chose rather to devote himself to gaining equality for African-Americans.

White graduated from Atlanta University in 1916 and went to work for the Standard Life Insurance Company. Angered by the plan of the city's Board of Education to end public schooling for blacks after the sixth grade, he became active in efforts to form an Atlanta branch of the N.A.A.C.P., which impressed James Weldon Johnson, then the organization's field secretary. In 1918, at Johnson's recommendation, White was invited to join the national organization in New York as assistant secretary. Some of White's early duties included investigating race riots and lynchings, a dangerous assignment for which he exploited his ability to pass as white. When Johnson became the first African-American executive secretary of the N.A.A.C.P. in 1920, he and White together firmly established leadership and expanded the branch system of the organization. In 1929, while Johnson was on leave, White served as acting secretary of the organization. During that time he directed the efforts to block the confirmation of John J. Parker, a segregationist judge from North Carolina, to the U.S. Supreme Court. In 1931, his appointment to succeed Johnson as executive secretary of the N.A.A.C.P. was made official.

By strengthening the legal arm of the N.A.A.C.P., White was able to direct campaigns for federal civil rights legislation in the form of anti-lynching laws, voting rights, laws banning poll taxes and discrimination in the U.S. armed forces, and laws in favor of desegregation and the equalization of schools. In 1937 White received the Spingarn Medal for his investigations of lynchings and lobbying for the anti-lynching bill (defeated by a narrow margin in 1938). He was instrumental in the formation of the Joint Committee on National Recovery to fight discrimination in the New Deal programs, advised President Roosevelt on the executive order for Fair Employment Practices during World War II, and forged a relationship with labor unions. In 1945 and 1948, White served as a consultant to the U.S. delegations to the newly formed United Nations.

In addition to numerous articles and two syndicated newspaper columns, White wrote several books, including two novels, the *Fire in the Flint* (1924) and *Flight* (1926); works of nonfiction, *Rope and Faggot* (1929) and *How Far the Promised Land?* (1955); and an autobiography, *A Man Called White* (1948).

White married his first wife, Gladys Powell, in 1922. The Whites' apartment at 409 Edgecombe Avenue, to which they moved in 1929, was known as "The White House of Harlem" because of the prominent and important figures who were guests there. The Whites, who divorced, resided at 409 until 1947, and their daughter, the actress Jane White, lived there until 1961. Walter White married his second wife, Poppy Cannon, in 1949, with whom he was living at 242 East 68th Street at the time of his death.

Anderson, 343-346.
Logan and Winston, 646-650.
Low and Clift, 853-654.
Manhattan Address Telephone Directories.
New York Times [obituary], Mar. 22, 1955, p. 31; [funeral plans], Mar. 23, 1955, p. 31; [funeral] Mar. 25, 1955, p. 21.

ROY WILKINS (1901-1981)

Civil rights leader Roy Wilkins headed the N.A.A.C.P. for twenty-two years following the death of Walter White (see) in 1955. Born in St. Louis, Mo., Wilkins went to live at the age of four with his uncle and aunt in St. Paul, Minn., after the death of his mother. He lived in a low-income, racially integrated community and attended Mechanic Arts High School. In 1923 he graduated from the University of Minnesota, where he edited the school newpaper, and found work as a redcap, a Pullman car waiter, and a stockyard worker. Wilkins soon joined the staff of a leading African-American weekly, the Kansas City *Call*, and in Kansas City witnessed widespread segregation and discrimination for the first time. He became secretary of the Kansas City branch of the N.A.A.C.P.

As an editor at the *Call*, Wilkins waged a campaign to defeat racist Senator Henry J. Allen. This effort caught the attention of Walter White (see), executive secretary of the N.A.A.C.P., who urged Wilkins to move to New York and become his chief assistant in 1931. As White had done, Wilkins went on assignment to investigate lynchings and working conditions for African-Americans in the South. His 1932 report, "Mississippi Slave Labor," is credited with bringing Congressional action to improve the working conditions for blacks in levee labor camps. In 1934, Wilkins replaced W.E.B. DuBois (see) as editor of *Crisis* magazine, while continuing as a lecturer and organizer. In 1949 Wilkins chaired the National Emergency Civil Rights Mobilization and became acting executive secretary while White was on leave; on White's return, Wilkins was made head of internal affairs, and eventually succeeded White in 1955.

In the turbulent years of his leadership at the N.A.A.C.P., Wilkins followed the philosophy of Walter White, using legislation and the court system as weapons to fight for equality and constitutional justice. Among his most ardent causes were anti-lynching laws, fair housing laws, equal opportunity employment, and integration; he worked with Thurgood Marshall (see) on the 1954 Supreme Court school desegregation case and continued to be involved in its controversial aftermath during his tenure as head of the organization. Wilkins was criticized by more militant black groups who sought racial separatism, but he remained loyal to his convictions.

In 1929 Wilkins married Aminda (Minnie) Badeau, a social worker in St. Louis. In 1936, Mr. and Mrs. Wilkins moved from 307 West 136th Street to 409 Edgecombe Avenue, where they stayed until 1951. Wilkins lived in Queens Village at the time of his death.

Manhattan Address Telephone Directories.
Low and Clift, 856.
New York Times, [obituary] Sept. 9, 1981, p. 1; [funeral] Sept. 12, 1981, pp. 1, 16.

FINDINGS AND DESIGNATION

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture, and the other features of this building, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the 409 Edgecombe Avenue Apartments has a special character, special historic and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, heritage, and cultural characteristics of New York City.

The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, the 409 Edgecombe Avenue Apartments, considered Sugar Hill's most prestigious address from the 1930s through the 1950s, portrays through its illustrious roster of tenants the achievement of African-Americans since the Harlem Renaissance; that the building, known simply as "409," was first opened to blacks in the late 1920s and soon attracted numerous outstanding leaders in the fields of civil rights, politics, law, education, medicine, scholarship, music and the arts, including W.E.B. DuBois, Walter White, William Stanley Braithwaite, Aaron Douglas, Thurgood Marshall, and Roy Wilkins, among others; that, constructed in 1916-17 to the designs of Schwartz & Gross, a prominent firm well-known for its apartment houses, 409 is an imposing thirteen-story structure with a curved, three-part facade, commanding a view of Colonial (Jackie Robinson) Park and the Harlem River from its prominent hilltop site; and that, as the home of New York City's African-American intellectual and cultural elite, 409 was long a center of Sugar Hill society.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 74, Section 3020 of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 3 of Title 25 of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as a Landmark the 409 Edgecombe Avenue Apartments, 409 Edgecombe Avenue, Borough of Manhattan, and designates Tax Map Block 2054, Lot 62, Borough of Manhattan, as its related Landmark Site.

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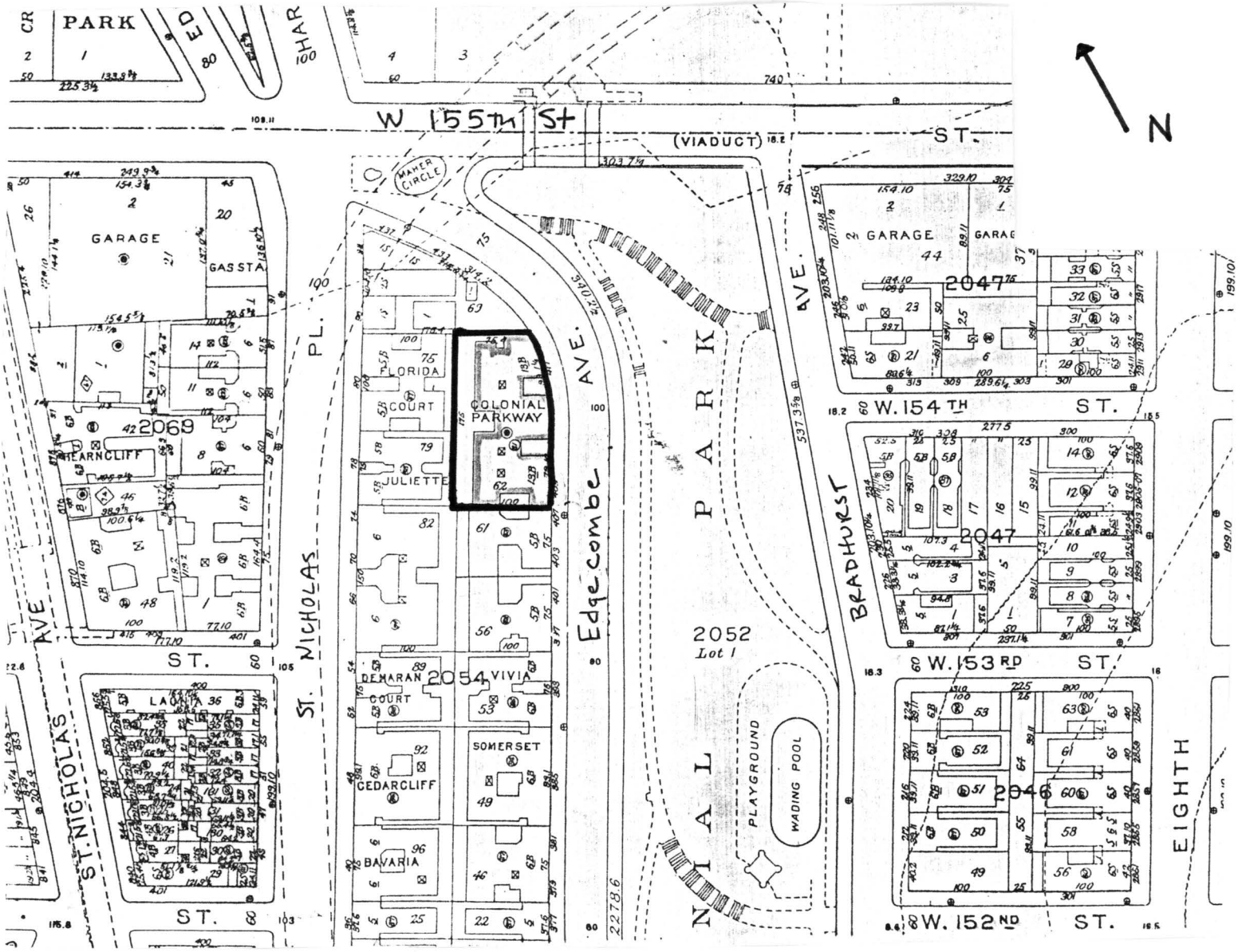

409 Edgecombe Avenue Apartments (Colonial Parkway Apartments)
409 Edgecombe Avenue, Manhattan

Landmark Site: Manhattan Tax Map Block 2054, Lot 62

Graphic Source: *Sanborn Manhattan Land Book*, 1988-89.

409 Edgecombe Avenue Apartments (Colonial Parkway Apartments)
409 Edgecombe Avenue, Manhattan

(Photo: LPC, Elisa Urbanelli)

409 Edgecombe Avenue Apartments (Colonial Parkway Apartments)
Detail of entrance (Photo: EU)

409 Edgecombe Avenue Apartments (Colonial Parkway Apartments)
Detail of windows at lower stories (Photo: EU)