

**Hamilton Heights/Sugar Hill Northeast
Historic District
Designation Report**



New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission
October 23, 2001

**HAMILTON HEIGHTS/SUGAR HILL NORTHEAST
HISTORIC DISTRICT**

Borough of Manhattan
Designation Report

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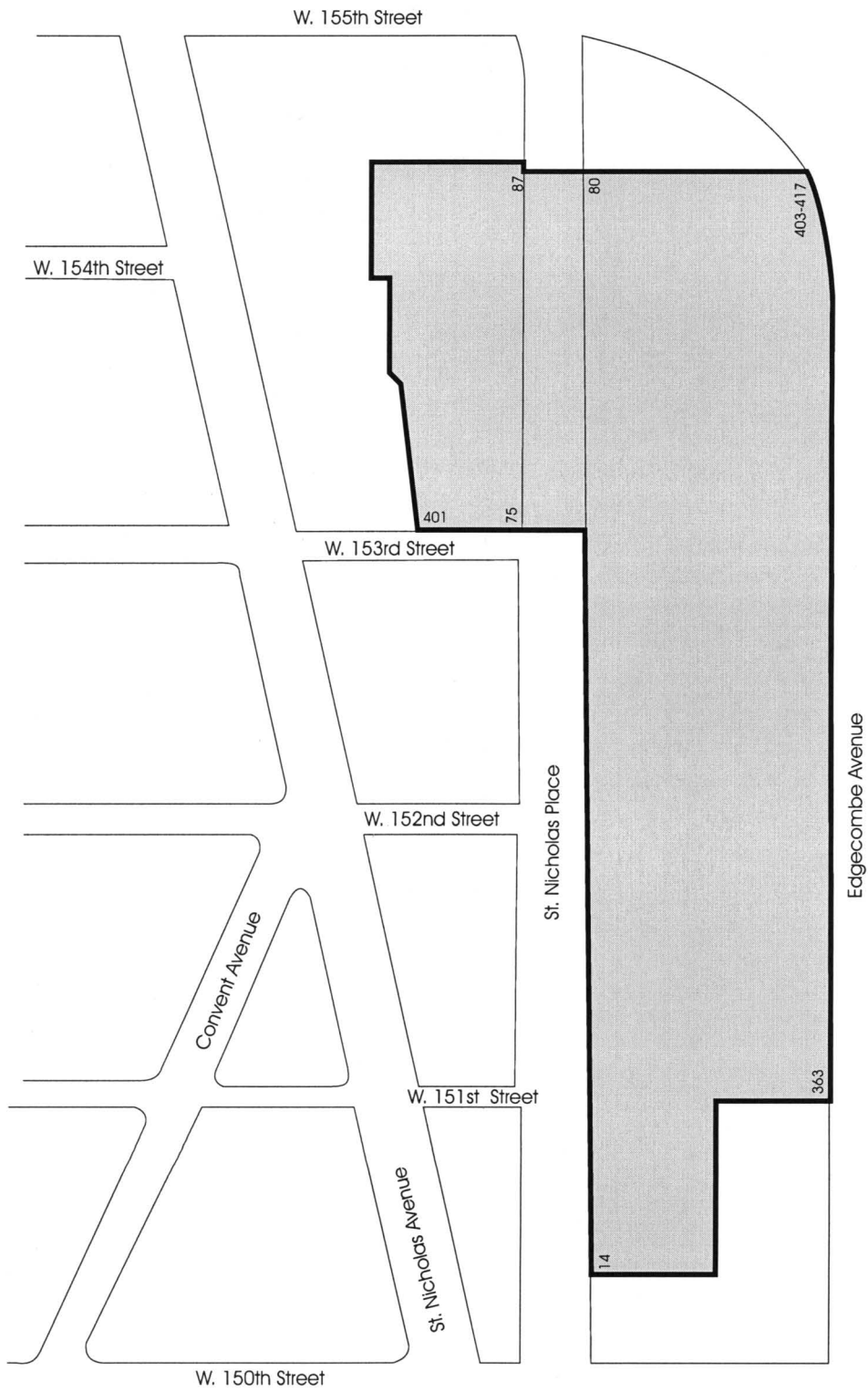
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On the front cover:
66-74 St. Nicholas Place

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**Hamilton Heights / Sugar Hill Northeast
Historic District
Manhattan**

Designated October 23, 2001
Landmarks Preservation Commission



Historic District Boundaries



HAMILTON HEIGHTS/SUGAR HILL NORTHEAST HISTORIC DISTRICT BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The Hamilton Heights/Sugar Hill Northeast Historic District consists of the properties bounded by a line beginning at a point along the eastern curblineline of St. Nicholas Place formed by a line extending easterly from the northern curblineline of West 153rd Street, extending southerly along the eastern curblineline of St. Nicholas Place to a point in said curblineline formed by a line extending westerly from the southern property line of 14 St. Nicholas Place, then easterly along said property line, northerly along the eastern property lines of 14, 16, and 18-20 St. Nicholas Place, easterly along the southern property line of 363 Edgecombe Avenue to the western curblineline of Edgecombe Avenue, northerly along the western curblineline of Edgecombe Avenue to a point in said curblineline formed by a line extending easterly from the northern property line of 409-417 Edgecombe Avenue, westerly along said property line, westerly along the northern property line of 80 St. Nicholas Place to the western curblineline of St. Nicholas Place, northerly along said curblineline to point formed by a line extending easterly from the northern property line of 87 St. Nicholas Place, westerly along said property line, southerly along the western property lines of 87 and 83 St. Nicholas Place, easterly along the southern property line of 83 St. Nicholas Place, southerly along the western property lines of 79-81 and 75 St. Nicholas Place to the northern curblineline of West 153 Street, then extending easterly to the point of the beginning.
boundaries

TESTIMONY AT THE PUBLIC HEARING

On October 16, 2001, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the designation of the Hamilton Heights/Sugar Hill Northeast Historic District (item No. 2). Nine people spoke in favor of designation, including Councilman Stanley E. Michels and representatives of the Borough President of Manhattan C. Virginia Fields, Community Board 9, the 150th to 155th Street Block Association, the Municipal Art Society-Place Matters, the Society for the Preservation of the City, and the Historic Districts Council. No witnesses spoke in opposition to designation. The Commission also received one letter in support of the district, expressing interest in a larger designation effort in the Hamilton Heights/Sugar Hill area.

INTRODUCTION

The Hamilton Heights/Sugar Hill Northeast Historic District is located on Edgecombe Avenue and St. Nicholas Place, from 150th to 155th Streets. The district evokes a specific and cohesive period in the neighborhood's development during the early twentieth-century when speculative developers ceased building single-family houses and started constructing multiple dwellings. Nearly all of the thirty-two buildings are apartment houses constructed between 1905 and 1930. Two attached single-family residences are also included in the district. Clad in granite and shingles, these picturesque residences were built in the mid-1880s, when many freestanding houses were located on St. Nicholas Place. Most of the apartment buildings are five or six stories tall and were designed by New York City architects who specialized in apartment house construction, including Neville & Bagge, Schwartz & Gross, George F. Pelham, and Horace Ginsbern. In several instances, these architects received multiple commissions, fashioning identical designs for as many as eight contiguous lots. These buildings have brick and stone facades, reflecting a range of mostly neo-classical styles, especially Renaissance and Colonial Revival.

During the 1920s, the area became commonly known as Sugar Hill. Visible from central Harlem, where most tenants occupied older tenements and crowded rooming houses, these recently-constructed apartment houses represented a world of domestic comfort and personal success. Many black professionals were attracted to the area, including jazz composer and big band leader Duke Ellington whose family occupied a five-room apartment at 381 Edgecombe Avenue, from 1929 to 1939. He and his frequent collaborator Billy Strayhorn celebrated the neighborhood in song, urging listeners to "Take the A Train . . . to go to Sugar Hill." Other important residents were the composer and music publisher W. C. Handy and the poet and playwright Langston Hughes. During the 1930s and 1940s, the most prestigious address in the district was 409 Edgecombe Avenue, near West 155th Street. Notable for its conspicuous height and illustrious tenants, the curving thirteen-story apartment house attracted such luminaries as Thurgood Marshall, Aaron Douglass, and W.E.B. Dubois. Virtually unchanged since this era, these long blocks of well-preserved multiple dwellings recall, not only the neighborhood's architecture and physical origins, but also its vibrant social and cultural heyday.

THE HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE HAMILTON HEIGHTS/SUGAR HILL NORTHEAST HISTORIC DISTRICT¹

Early History

Throughout the first half of the seventeenth century, the West India Company encouraged the development of New Netherland through generous land grants to settlers.² These grants helped shape settlement patterns throughout the colony, including the area that would later become known as Hamilton Heights/Sugar Hill. While many early citizens preferred the security and convenience of New Amsterdam at Manhattan's fortified southern tip, a small number chose to establish farms in the island's wooded north. In 1658, the town of Nieuw Haarlem was officially created by the colony's governor Peter Stuyvesant, incorporating "the land of Jochem Pietersen, deceased, and those which are adjoining it."³ Grants were offered to prospective residents, who soon included "eleven Frenchmen, four Walloons, four Danes, three Swedes, three Germans, and seven Dutchmen."⁴ In 1666, the new British government established a fixed boundary between the villages of New York and Harlem, extending diagonally from what is now East 74th Street on the East River to West 129th Street on the Hudson River. In the decades that followed, however, the two villages came to be considered one.⁵

The history of Hamilton Heights/Sugar Hill has been strongly shaped by its elevated topography. During the Revolutionary War, it became the site of an important early victory for the American troops. Following its defeat by British and Hessian soldiers at the Battle of Brooklyn in August 1776, the Continental Army fled across the East River to the hills of northwestern Manhattan. Temporary fortifications were constructed throughout the "Heights of Harlem," as far north as 160th Street. General George Washington set up his headquarters in Mount Morris (known as the Morris-Jumel Mansion), an abandoned summer villa built by the British military officer Roger Morris and his American-born wife, Mary Philipse Morris (1765, remodeling, c. 1810, a designated New York City Landmark). British forces pursued Washington and several violent clashes occurred during late September and early October 1776, between what is now 130th and 145th Streets. Although the American victory was less than decisive, this was the first instance in which the Continental Army equaled their much-better trained adversary.

¹ This essay is based mainly on reports prepared by the Landmarks Preservation Commission, including *Hamilton Heights Historic District* (LP-0872) prepared by the research staff in 1974, *Hamilton Heights Historic District Extension* (LP-2044) prepared by Matthew A. Postal in 2000, and *Hamilton Heights/Sugar Hill Historic District* (LP-2064) prepared by Matthew A. Postal in 2001. Additional sources consulted include Andrew S. Dolkart and Gretchen S. Sorin, *Touring Historic Harlem* (New York: New York Landmarks Conservancy, 1997) and Michael Henry Adams, "Sugar Hill Historic District," a preliminary report, National Register of Historic Places Nomination Sheet, 2001.

² See Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace, *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898* (Oxford University Press, 1999), 20-21.

³ James Riker, *Revised History of Harlem: Its Origins and Early Annals* (New York: New Harlem Publishing Company, 1904), 170.

⁴ Burrows and Wallace, 70.

⁵ Dolkart, 8.

Private residences

Harlem Heights retained its rural character throughout most of the nineteenth century. In contrast to the central Harlem plain, which was developed as productive farmland, wealthy city residents were attracted to this rocky plateau for its expansive views and relative proximity to lower Manhattan. A few families built impressive mansions on their estates, including Alexander Hamilton, whose Grange (John McComb, Jr., 1801-2, a designated New York City Landmark) was located beside the Bloomingdale Road near 143rd Street,⁶ and Samuel Bradhurst, who built a Federal-style mansion named Pinehurst (later the Mt. St. Vincent Hotel, demolished c. 1890) close to the Kingsbridge Road, at what is now Convent Avenue and 148th Street. Three generations of the Bradhurst family lived here, enjoying sweeping views across the Bronx, New Jersey, and Long Island.

These historic roads connected lower Manhattan to Fort Washington (originally called Fort Knyphausen, present day Broadway and 181st Street) and points north. In 1811, the so-called Commissioners' Plan was approved, projecting a gridiron street arrangement for all of Manhattan island. While the blocks and lots of Harlem Heights, would not, for the most part, be laid out until late in the century, construction of the Croton Aqueduct during the 1840s resulted in the opening of Tenth (now Amsterdam) Avenue. Burying the large diameter pipes resulted in the road being raised more than ten feet. These public improvements not only disrupted drainage in the Bradhurst gardens, but the graded road became one of the city's busiest north-south routes.

During the 1860s, the Audubon, van Renessaeler, and Bradhurst estates were divided into lots and sold. These sales anticipated construction of the Ninth Avenue elevated railway which began service to West 145th and 155th Streets in December 1879.⁷ This steeply-inclined east-west street would become a major cross-town thoroughfare, linking the northern blocks of central Harlem to lower Washington Heights. St. Nicholas Avenue was created in 1866, and three years later, extended to 150th Street, where St. Nicholas Place originates. Conceived to improve access to Central Park, the avenue begins near the intersection of Lenox Avenue and 110th Street (Central Park North), heading northwest toward 125th Street, where it follows the east border of St. Nicholas Park.⁸ In contrast to Tenth Avenue, it became popular route for trotters heading to the Harlem Speedway and Jerome Park in the Bronx, where the American Jockey Club built a racecourse with a capacity of eight thousand spectators.⁹ One block east is Edgecombe Avenue. This street, which rises gently as it travels north, derives its name from the Saxon word "combe," meaning crest of a hill. It opened in 1876, providing a

⁶ The Bloomingdale Road ran from what is now 23rd to 147th Streets. It opened in 1703 and roughly followed the route of Broadway. In 1791, it was extended to meet the Kingsbridge Road, near 147th Street and St. Nicholas Avenue.

⁷ Above 110th Street, the Ninth Avenue railway traveled along Eighth Avenue. Fishler, 252.

⁸ Authorized by the New York State Legislature in 1894-95, St. Nicholas Park was not completed until 1909. See Dolkart, 97.

⁹ Jerome Park closed in the 1880s and was replaced by a city reservoir in 1889. *Gotham*, 954; "horse racing," *Encyclopedia of New York City*, 558.

scenic alternative to St. Nicholas Avenue, from 136th to 155th Streets.¹⁰

While north-south streets served mainly to improve transit into and out of Manhattan, the opening of new east-west streets provided a major catalyst to residential development in Hamilton Heights/Sugar Hill. Most streets above 140th Street were in use by the early 1890s, including West 150th Street, which opened from Convent to Edgecombe Avenues in 1887. North of 150th Street, however, the blocks were not cut through to Edgecombe Avenue, creating an uninterrupted street front extending to 155th Street. This rare exception to the grid probably came at the urging of property owners seeking to maximize the number of building lots with views to the east.¹¹

Many custom-built single-family houses were constructed along St. Nicholas Avenue and St. Nicholas Place during the 1880s. Described as the “choicest portion of this region” by the *Real Estate Record and Guide*, builders and buyers were attracted to these streets for their width, altitude, and proximity to the new elevated railroad.¹² Period photographs depict free-standing mansions on wide, tree-lined streets. In keeping with the area’s suburban character, most designs incorporated shingled and stone-faced facades, as well as picturesque roof lines distinguished by turrets, gables, and towers.

Eleven brick or stone houses stood on St. Nicholas Place, between 149th and 155th Streets, by 1890. The earliest built was a pair of attached houses at 14 and 16 St. Nicholas Place in 1883-84. These buildings were designed by William Milne Grinnell who lived in Audubon Park, now the site of the Audubon Terrace Historic District, at Broadway and 155th Street. Various rustic materials were employed in his design, such as rock-faced granite and wood shingles. The projecting domed turret and gable, which are the most notable and picturesque features, was similar to the massing of the more conspicuous James A. and Ruth M. Bailey House (1886-88, Samuel B. Reed, a designated New York City Landmark), built several years later on the adjoining lot at 10 St. Nicholas Place. Residences in the immediate area that survive include: The Jacob P. Baiter House at 6 Nicholas Place (1893-94, Theodore G. Stein, part of the Hamilton Heights/Sugar Hill Historic District Extension), John W. Fink House at 8 St. Nicholas Place (1885, Richard Rosenstock, part of the Hamilton Heights/Sugar Hill Historic District Extension), and the Nicholas C. and Agnes Benziger House at 345 Edgecombe Avenue (1890-91, William Schickel, a designated New York City Landmark).

Apartment Houses, 1905-1916

Improved transit and public amenities attracted new residents to Hamilton Heights. In the late 1880s, a street railway was installed on Tenth Avenue, providing an additional transit link to West 125th Street. In 1890, the Polo Grounds were built in Coogan’s Hollow, between 157th and 159th Streets, Eighth Avenue and the Harlem River Speedway. Originally known as Brotherhood Park, the facility was home to such local baseball

¹⁰ Moscow, 47; Dolkart, 111. With the opening of Colonial Park, the Board of Alderman changed the avenue’s name to Colonial Parkway in 1908, but this decision was rescinded in 1913.

¹¹ See Street Openings Book, Office of the Borough President of Manhattan. 150th Street was first paved with asphalt in 1904, Edgecombe Avenue, between 145th and 155th Streets in 1923, and St. Nicholas Place in 1937. *Street Pavements of All Kinds* (New York: City of New York, 1948).

¹² “Tempting Offers to Home Buyers,” *Real Estate Record and Guide*, October 5, 1895.

teams as the Giants, Yankees, Cuban Giants, and Mets.¹³ That same year, with support from the Washington Heights Taxpayers Association and other civic-minded groups, the city announced plans to construct an iron viaduct at West 155th Street connecting the proposed Central (now Macomb’s Dam) Bridge with St. Nicholas Place (the viaduct and bridge are a designated New York City Landmark). This ambitious scheme, begun in 1890 and completed in 1895, improved vehicular and pedestrian circulation in northern Manhattan, linking the Bronx and central Harlem, as well as the 155th Street elevated station, to the neighborhood. A contemporary reporter wrote:

. . . the new viaduct will make a great change for the better . . . It means almost everything for the future . . . the effect of the new viaduct will certainly be seen in improved values in vacant property and in increased building.¹⁴

As property values increased, developers focused on the construction of multiple dwellings. The earliest multiple dwellings in the Hamilton Heights/Sugar Hill area were situated along commercial corridors, particularly Amsterdam Avenue and 145th Street. Eight apartment houses were constructed on Amsterdam Avenue (part of the Hamilton Heights Historic District Extension) between 1887 and 1900, nearly all with residential entrances on the side streets and commercial spaces facing the avenue. After 1900, St. Nicholas Avenue, between 145th and 150th Streets, attracted a great concentration of seven-story apartment buildings. The St. Nicholas Court at 746 St. Nicholas Avenue (1901-2, Henri Fouchaux), Purling at 768-770 St. Nicholas Avenue (1901-2, John P. Leo), and 772-78 St. Nicholas Avenue (1904-5, Henri Fouchaux) are particularly noteworthy examples in the Hamilton Heights/Sugar Hill Historic District, with secondary facades facing east toward Edgecombe Avenue. By adopting this plan, developers were able to offer tenants both magnificent views and a prestigious St. Nicholas Avenue address.

Plans for the New York subway were approved by popular referendum in 1894 and construction commenced in March 1900. The Interborough Rapid Transit (IRT) system began at City Hall, proceeding north along Manhattan’s east side to Grand Central Terminal and then west through Times Square and up Broadway. As originally planned, the northern terminus was located at 145th Street. Service began in October 1904 with a five cent fare and the promotional slogan “fifteen minutes to Harlem.” The 157th Street station opened in March 1906.

During this era, the neighborhood’s population rapidly increased. To serve these new residents, many public improvements were planned and executed. In addition to public schools and libraries, in 1894 legislation was approved to acquire the land to establish Colonial Park.¹⁵ Samuel Parsons, Jr., the city’s chief landscape

¹³ Following a fire in 1911, a new stadium was erected. It closed in 1964. See www.ballparks.com.

¹⁴ “On Washington Heights,” *Real Estate Record and Guide*, September 6, 1890, 300.

¹⁵ According to the *Real Estate Guide and Record*, one “flat” and a “row of dwellings on the north side of 145th Street” were the only “improvements” on the property. *Real Estate Guide and Record*, October 8, 1898, 488. Also see Harlem research files, New York City Landmark Preservation Commission. The majority of land included in 118-acre Highbridge Park was assembled by condemnation in 1895-1901. In 1907, the New York City Improvement Commission proposed extending Colonial Park south to 137th Street, where it would intersect with St. Nicholas Park. “A Study of

architect, was responsible for the design, which extends north from 145th Street, between Edgecombe and Bradhurst Avenues.¹⁶ Although the 12.9 acre strip of land had been lotted by 1885, the steep and rocky escarpment, rising from east to west, attracted few developers. To the west of the park, a wide, tree-lined promenade was created, alongside Edgecombe Avenue and the lots that would eventually fill with apartment buildings.

Between 1905 and 1930, thirty-one apartment buildings rose within the boundaries of the district. In general, the lots closer to 150th Street were developed prior to those located near 155th Street. To take full advantage of these mid-block sites, several types of “footprints” were adopted by developers. Most buildings were configured in pairs, either on adjoining or back-to-back lots. These modest fireproof buildings were served by elevators and featured light-colored stone and brick facades, reflecting a range of neo-classical styles, especially Renaissance and Colonial Revival. Their scale, style, and coloring complemented the various row houses in the surrounding area.

The earliest -- and most active year -- for developers was 1905, when twelve apartment houses were proposed or completed in the district, designed by architects based mainly in Harlem, including Joseph C. Cocker, Neville & Bagge, and John Hauser.¹⁷ Among them, Cocker was the most prolific; he was responsible for eight buildings: 363, 365, 367 and 369 Edgecombe Avenue, and 22, 24, 26 and 28 St. Nicholas Place. All were designed in the neo-classical style, with symmetrical yellow brick facades decorated with Renaissance Revival-style details, including a central portico with paired columns. To make the most efficient use of each lot, Cocker arranged the T-shaped buildings in mirror-image pairs, creating narrow light courts both between the buildings and in the rear. This solution, which was used by many of his contemporaries, covers approximately seventy percent of the site and as required by law provided an exterior window facing the street or a light court in every room.¹⁸

At the north end of the district, on the west side of St. Nicholas Place, are two identical fifty-foot wide brick-faced buildings at 83 and 87 St. Nicholas Place. Called the Non Pariel and Montvale, they were designed for George and Augustus Schuch by the architect John Hauser in 1905. Advertisements for these buildings promoted St. Nicholas Place as an extremely convenient location, claiming that it was:

Hamilton Heights Section of Upper Manhattan Island,” unpublished manuscript, School of Architecture, Columbia University, May 24, 1935, 12.

¹⁶ Parsons also designed St. Nicholas Park. Land for the park was acquired in part during the late 1860s and by condemnation for the New Croton Aqueduct in 1885-86. The grounds were landscaped and expanded in 1906-9. See Dolkart, City of New York/Parks & Recreation website, and Harlem Research files, New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission.

¹⁷ In the Hamilton Heights/Sugar Hill Historic District, the earliest apartment houses with primary entrances on Edgecombe Avenue were 323-25 and 327-29 Edgcombe Avenue, built in 1905-6. Both were designed by George Frederick Pelham.

¹⁸ For more information on this topic, see Richard Plunz, *A History of Housing in New York City: Dwelling Type and Social Change in the American Metropolis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990); Andrew Dolkart “Planning the Apartment Building,” in *Morningside Heights*, 302ff.

Within one hundred feet of the Speedway entrance and a short distance from the 157th Street Subway express station. The 155th Street elevated station is within a block. Third and Amsterdam surface lines two blocks west.¹⁹

Each six-story Beaux-Arts style facade features a double columnar portico, as well as contrasting quoins, splayed lintels, and projecting scrolled keystones. Apartments had four to seven rooms, and could be expanded into suites with as many as eleven rooms. The interiors featured hardwood trim, paneled walls, and “Dutch plate shelving.” Rents were \$300 to \$1,300 per year.²⁰

Neville & Bagge designed two Beaux-Arts-style apartment houses in the district for developer James Ahearn in 1905. These five-story red brick buildings have rusticated bases, neo-classical style porticoes and terra-cotta window surrounds. 371 Edgecombe Avenue and 30-32 St. Nicholas Place are sited on slightly wider lots than their immediate neighbors and have I-shaped footprints. These slightly grander buildings have unbroken front and rear facades with modest interior light courts. On the adjoining lots, at 375 and 377 Edgecombe Avenue and 34 and 36 St. Nicholas Place, the firm of Schwartz & Gross designed two identical pairs of five-story apartment houses for Cantor, Cooper & Co. Completed in 1905-6, these buildings feature neo-classical style details and materials that are similar to those found on neighboring structures by Neville & Bagge. These aesthetic choices contribute to street’s cohesive character.

The pace of development slowed after 1906. Developers assembled larger lots, altering the previous building pattern and freeing architects to experiment with new floor plans. For instance, the seventy-five foot wide Bavaria, at 40 St. Nicholas Place, combines a T-shaped plan with a central light court -- the first of several examples in the district. This new plan was conceived to provide light to interior rooms. Designed by Charles Ferbusch in 1910, the six-story neo-classical exterior is embellished with splayed lintels and an entrance flanked by Ionic pilasters. On the upper stories the ornamentation is unusual, featuring a pair of stepped brick walls inset with terra-cotta medallions.

In 1913, a pair of twelve-bay brick-faced apartment houses were constructed on adjoining lots, at 385 Edgecombe Avenue and 48 St. Nicholas Place. Designed by George F. Pelham for the Strathcona Construction Company, both buildings incorporate central light courts. This modified O-shaped plan, which Pelham used as early as 1908, was widely imitated by architects working on Manhattan’s Upper West Side, particularly in middle-class neighborhoods. The one hundred-foot long facades feature handsome arched entrances and robust glazed terra-cotta details, located mainly at the south and north edges of the street elevations. It is likely that this ornament was produced by the New York Architectural Terra Company, a firm with whom Pelham often collaborated.²¹ In contrast to their more conventional neo-classical neighbors, the Somerset and Cedarcliff are rare examples of New York City buildings that display the influence of the Europe’s Art Nouveau movement.

Samuel Sass was responsible for two light-colored brick buildings in the district, the Demaran Court at

¹⁹ *Apartment Houses of the Metropolis* (New York, 1908), 251.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ In the same year, Pelham’s firm collaborated on 501 and 505 West 187th Street, a pair of brick apartment houses “with brightly glazed terra cotta ornament” in the Inwood Section of Washington Heights. See Tunick, 149; Plunz, 85-87.

52-54 St. Nicholas Place, which he designed for the Dayton Building Co. in 1914, and the Juliette at 76-78 St. Nicholas Place, designed in partnership with George W. Springsteen for the R-B Realty Co. in 1916. While the buildings are nearly identical in plan, each with a deep recessed entry, the differences in decoration are worth noting. Whereas the facade of the earlier building has a one and a half story limestone base and a richly embellished terra-cotta parapet, the later building is much more simply treated, with a limestone watertable and stepped brick parapet. Completed just before America's entry into the First World War, the Juliette's austere facade may reflect rising property costs or a general tightening of the city's economy.

Sugar Hill since 1920

Construction in the district resumed in 1920. The buildings that resulted were similar to those built before the war, clad in red or light-colored brick, with a minimal amount of mainly neo-classical details. Springsteen & Goldhammer, who formed their partnership in 1919, were responsible for two buildings: 79-81 St. Nicholas Place (1920) and 397-407 Edgecombe Avenue (1922).²² While the earlier project strongly recalls Sass & Springsteen's 1916 design for the Juliette, with an almost featureless brick facade, the later project reflects the current vogue for garden apartments, placing a modest fountain at the center of the T-shaped light court that also serves as the building's entrance. Reached by two sets of stairs, flanking a single center balustrade, the large red brick building is divided into identical north and south sections, each with their own lobbies raised almost a full-story above ground level.²³

Horace Ginsbern adopted a similar plan in his handsome design for 66-74 St. Nicholas Place. It stands directly behind 397-407 Edgecombe Avenue, an apartment building of nearly equal size. This prolific New York-born architect specialized in multiple dwellings and was responsible for numerous projects on or near the Grand Concourse in the Bronx. Most of these Depression-era buildings were designed in the Art Deco or Moderne style, however, it is noteworthy that in Sugar Hill he adopted a more conservative approach, embellishing the six-story facade with neo-Gothic style brickwork. Completed in 1931, familiar decorative features include pointed arches framing the first and sixth story windows, and a rhythmic castellated parapet crowning the facade. Tenants reached the lobby through a landscaped T-shaped light court, set off from the street by neo-classical balustrades.

The Independent (IND) subway had a tremendous impact on Manhattan's West Side. Approved by the Board of Transportation in 1924, the city-owned transit system was conceived to provide faster service to the central commercial district. Express and local lines were planned for Hamilton Heights, with a multi-level station at 145th Street. Entrances were located on either side of St. Nicholas Avenue, at 145th and 147th Streets. From this point north, the lines split, with one route heading toward West 155th Street, via St. Nicholas Avenue, and the other, toward Eighth Avenue and 155th Street, beneath St. Nicholas Place. These new lines would cause a significant decline in ridership on the elevated railways and in June 1940 service to 145th and 155th Streets was

²² Born in Brooklyn, Springsteen studied at the Cooper Union and Pratt Institute.

²³ According to Plunz, developers frequently referred to light courts as "gardens." For instance, at Goldhill Court (1909) in the Bronx, Emery Roth installed a small fountain, thus disguising the court's "utilitarian origins." During the late 1920s, Springsteen and Goldhammer specialized in garden-type apartment houses, designing buildings for such organizations as the United Workers Cooperative and the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America. See Plunz, 133.

discontinued.²⁴

By the mid-1920s, a nearly continuous wall of brick-faced apartment houses extended along the east side of St. Nicholas Place and the west side of Edgecombe Avenue. While these modest buildings were originally targeted to middle-class whites, the buildings completed after this date, 379-381 Edgecombe Avenue and 66-74 St. Nicholas Place, were leased to middle-class blacks who had been living in the area since the early 1920s. *The New York Amsterdam News* carried numerous advertisements during this period promoting the neighborhood as “the Finest and Most Exclusive Section in Harlem.”²⁵ These blocks would become a symbol of the emerging black middle class. Visible from central Harlem, where most tenants occupied older tenements and crowded rooming houses, the ten-block stretch of recently-constructed apartment houses represented a world of domestic comfort and personal success.

James Weldon Johnson was one of the first authors to describe the neighborhood’s changed character. In 1930, he observed:

At any rate, there is no longer any apparent feeling against the occupancy of Harlem by Negroes . . . it has spread to the west and occupies the heights of Coogan’s Bluff, overlooking Colonial Park. And to the east and west of this solid Negro area, there is a fringe where the population is mixed, white and coloured. This expansion over the past five years has taken place without any physical opposition, or even any considerable outbreak of antagonistic public sentiment.²⁶

The phrase “Sugar Hill” entered the popular vocabulary in the 1930s. Henry Allen and his New York Orchestra recorded “Sugar Hill Function” in February 1930, one of the earliest references to the area. A year later, the musical show “Sugar Hill” opened on Broadway. Featuring the comedy team Miller and Lyles, it presented the area as “the cream – or at least the café au lait – of the Harlem residential district.”²⁷ In 1942, a short film, “Sugar Hill Masquerade” showcased Whitey’s Lindy Hoppers, a dance group founded by Herbert White. Subsequent musical references include “Jumpin’ on Sugar Hill” by Helen Humes (1947) and Benny Carter’s “Harlem Renaissance Suite: Sugar Hill Slow Drag”(1992).

Many of Sugar Hill’s best-known residents worked in the city’s music industry. Composer and music publisher W.C. Handy lived in the Vivia Apartments at 393 Edgecombe Avenue (Henry Andersen and Joseph Stevens, 1912) during 1928-29.²⁸ As a leading publisher of music by black artists, he worked with Duke Ellington who produced some of the most memorable pieces of music that refer to the area. Ellington settled in New York during the early 1920s, joining the band the Washingtonians, which he became the leader in 1927.

²⁴ Fishler, 259.

²⁵ *New York Amsterdam News*, April 25, 1922, 15.

²⁶ James Weldon Johnson, *Black Manhattan*, 158-159.

²⁷ “Reunion in Comedy,” *New York Times*, December 26, 1931, 15.

²⁸ *Who is Who in Colored America*, 1928-29, 161. Handy (1873-1958) moved to New York City in 1918. He owned 232 West 139th Street on Striver’s Row (part of the St. Nicholas Historic District) from 1919-22.

He lived at 379-381 Edgecombe Avenue from 1929-1939, a recently-constructed apartment house that was convenient to the Cotton Club at Lenox Avenue and 142nd Street, where he frequently performed.²⁹ He leased a five-room apartment, sharing it with his mother, son Mercer, and sister Ruth, who fondly remembered:

We got to New York, everybody settled down, Mercer went to school, he was in the fifth grade, I went to Wadley [sic] High School . . . he [Duke Ellington] would be playing the piano softly all night long, I would get up in the morning, he would still be up.³⁰

Ellington spent considerable time touring the United States with his orchestra after 1931. Despite such distant engagements, he continued to be inspired by Harlem and Sugar Hill. He and frequent collaborator Billy Strayhorn celebrated the neighborhood in song, urging listeners to “take the A train . . . to go up to Sugar Hill” in 1940-41.³¹ In a later piece, “Black, Brown and Beige,” which debuted at Carnegie Hall in January 1944, Ellington traced the history of the American Negro from slavery to modern times. The optimistic closing section was titled “Sugar Hill Penthouse.” In the program notes he wrote: “If you ever sat on a beautiful magenta cloud overlooking New York City, you were on Sugar Hill.”³²

From the 1930s through the 1950s, the best-known address in Sugar Hill was 409 Edgecombe Avenue, near 155th Street (a designated New York City Landmark). Described in the *New York Amsterdam News* as “a regular skyscraper . . . one of the finest apartment buildings in Harlem, it epitomized the best of life in Sugar Hill. Originally known as the Colonial Apartments, it was designed by Schwartz & Gross in 1916, who were also responsible for four earlier buildings in the district, 34 and 36 St. Nicholas Place and 375 and 377 Edgecombe Avenue (1906). The thirteen-story, E-shaped building dominates the block and the wide facade curves to follow the route of Edgecombe Avenue as it turns west. At the time of completion, it was intended for upper middle class-white tenants, who occupied spacious soundproof apartments with as many as six rooms. Units were fitted with dumbwaiters, gas stoves, and other modern amenities, and the two passenger elevators were staffed by uniformed operators.

A decade after the building’s completion, in 1927, the owners had begun to reduce rents and lease the apartments to black tenants. According to the *New York Amsterdam News*, “the owners of the structure were practically forced to bid for Negro occupancy when the white residents began moving because Negroes completely surrounded the building . . .”³³ The property was foreclosed two years later, yet it soon became the neighborhood’s most prestigious address, attracting Thurgood Marshall, Aaron Douglass, W.E.B. Dubois,

²⁹ Ellington (1899-1974) had extended engagements at the Cotton Club in 1929-31, 1933, and 1937. See *Encyclopedia*, 371.

³⁰ From Stuart Nicholson, *Reminiscing in Tempo* (1999), 102. During this period, Ellington was separated from his wife. On an upper floor of 379-381 Edgecombe Avenue he leased an apartment for Mildred Dixon, a dancer at the Cotton Club. Nicholson, 104.

³¹ From 1939 to 1946, Strayhorn lived at 315 Convent Avenue (part of the Hamilton Heights Historic District).

³² Jack Chambers, *Milestones*, 123.

³³ *The New York Amsterdam News*, December 14, 1927,1.

Jimmie Lunceford and Mercer Ellington.³⁴ In 1942, the building was purchased by a black businessman, Augustine A. Austin, president of the Antillean Holding Company, who converted the twenty-one servants' rooms in the penthouse level into five additional apartments.³⁵

Reverend Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., hailed the neighborhood's transformation, celebrating the superior living conditions, especially in apartment houses. He wrote:

On Sugar Hill . . . Harlem's would be "sassiety" goes to town. 'Midst paneled walls, parqueted 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 of aay manner.³⁶

St. Nicholas Avenue, between 145th and 150th Streets became a lively commercial thoroughfare. Shops and restaurants, as well as nightspots, flourished on the lower floors of converted rowhouses and apartment buildings. The best-known venues were Jimmy's Chicken Shack, a restaurant popular with jazz musicians at 763 St. Nicholas Avenue, and Luckey's Rendezvous (a.k.a. the Rendezvous Club) at 773 St. Nicholas Avenue, near 149th Street (both part of Hamilton Heights Sugar Hill Historic District). Many well-known performers appeared at the later nightclub, including the singer-actress Claudia Moore and the legendary pianist Art Tatum.

Claude McKay, author of *Harlem: Negro Metropolis*, offered a less enthusiastic perspective, calling this era a "pseudo-renaissance." He wrote:

The new expansion . . . was mainly an operation springing from the urge of Aframerican intelligentsia and elite to create an exclusive residential area. Sugar Hill has the reputation of being the romping ground of the fashionable set. But the vast majority are also ordinary Harlemites like those living under the hill.³⁷

Langston Hughes leased a studio apartment at 66-74 St. Nicholas Place from 1937-1941. Born in Missouri in 1902, the poet and playwright once remarked that he "would rather have a kitchenette in Harlem than a mansion in Westchester."³⁸ According to biographer Faith Berry, the small apartment served as his "hideaway," a refuge from "telephone calls, mail, and visitors."³⁹ For several months in 1938, his ailing mother convalesced here. She described it as "very swell," and following her death he subleased it to friends. Hughes

³⁴ Mercer Ellington lived at 409 Edgecombe during the 1940s. By 1951, he relocated to St. Albans, Queens, which "was becoming the suburban Sugar Hill." Jervis Anderson, 348.

³⁵ *409 Edgecombe Avenue Apartments*, 6.

³⁶ Quoted by Jervis Anderson in *This Was Harlem, A Cultural Portrait, 1900-1950*, 342.

³⁷ Claude McKay, *Harlem: Negro Metropolis* (New York, 1940), 26.

³⁸ Arnold Rampersad, *The Life of Langston Hughes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986-88).

³⁹ Berry, 274.

struggled financially during this period, and in 1941 he vacated the apartment.⁴⁰

Sugar Hill received considerable media attention during the late 1940s. *Ebony* magazine described the “tree-shaded blocks between Edgecombe and Amsterdam Avenues” as home to “Harlem’s most talked about men and women.” Photo essays focused on the luxurious living conditions found at 409 Edgecombe Avenue and the racially integrated Cosmopolitan Tennis Club at Convent Avenue and 149th Street (demolished). In a 1949 issue devoted to New York City, *Holiday* magazine emphasized Sugar Hill’s affluent residents:

There is a moneyed class which lives largely in and around the section known as the Hill . . . There is no inherited wealth on the hill. The leisure class is composed of the wives of successful doctors, lawyers, dentists, real-estate operators and businessmen. Their lives refute the picture of Harlem as a poverty-stricken community . . . The Hill suggests that Harlem is simply a pleasant and rather luxurious part of Manhattan.⁴¹

During the early 1950s, Sugar Hill entered a period of decline. *Jet* magazine pronounced that the neighborhood had begun to experience “steady deterioration” by 1953. Doormen and around-the-clock elevator operators had disappeared from the entrances of better apartment buildings and St. Nicholas Avenue had reportedly begun to fill with bars, saloons, and “third-rate diners.” It was during this period that Luckey’s Rendezvous closed, as well as the Polo Grounds. Many famous residents relocated, seeking homes on Riverside Drive, or in St. Albans, Queens.⁴²

Whereas many neighborhoods in central Harlem suffered at the hands of insensitive landowners and urban renewal projects after World War II, Hamilton Heights/Sugar Hill retained much of its original historic fabric. In 1974, the Harlem Task Force, a subsidiary of the New York State Development Corporation, described this section as “one of the most interesting areas of New York City.” The report paid considerable attention to the quality and variety of housing stock, observing that:

The most modern housing to be found is in the elevator apartment buildings lining St. Nicholas and Edgecombe Avenues. The rent levels in these buildings are relatively moderate compared to other areas of the city for the same type of large apartments with spacious rooms, and there is very little turnover.⁴³

Efforts to preserve the Hamilton Heights/Sugar Hill area began soon after the creation of the New York City Landmarks Commission in 1965. The following year, a public hearing was held regarding the creation of an

⁴⁰ In subsequent years, Hughes lived at 634 St. Nicholas Avenue (1942-1947) and on the top floor of 20 East 127th Street (1947-1967, a designated New York City Landmark).

⁴¹ *Holiday* (April 1949), 112, 16. Henry “Hank” Thompson, an outfielder for the New York Giants, lived at 80 St. Nicholas Place in 1950. There is speculation that during that year he shared his apartment with teammate Willie Mays.

⁴² “As Harlem Gone to the Dogs?,” *Jet* (March 19, 1953), 12-15.

⁴³ Harlem Task Force, *A Profile of the Harlem Area* (December 1973), 28-29.

historic district in Hamilton Heights, from 140th to 145th Streets. While no action was taken, several individual landmarks were designated, including the Alexander Hamilton House (1967), the Hamilton Grange branch of the New York Public Library (1970), and the Bailey House (1974). In 1974, the Hamilton Heights Historic District was designated. The Landmarks Preservation Commission designated 409 and 555 Edgecombe Avenue in 1993, the Benziger House in 1999, and the (former) Hamilton Theater in 2000. The boundaries of the Hamilton Heights Historic District were expanded in 2000, incorporating a significant group of multiple dwellings and row houses. In June 2000, the Hamilton Heights/Sugar Historic District was designated, consisting of nearly two hundred buildings, including twenty-three apartment houses on Edgecombe and St. Nicholas Avenues.

This historic district, consisting of mainly apartment houses, represents the last stage in the architectural development of Hamilton Heights/Sugar Hill. Initially built for the white middle-class, by the 1930s the majority of residents were black professionals, active in law, business, and the arts. During this period and in subsequent decades, it became one of Harlem's most desirable and celebrated enclaves, a enduring symbol of mid-twentieth century black culture and society in New York City. Virtually unchanged since this era, these long blocks of well-preserved multiple dwellings recall, not only the neighborhood's architecture and physical origins, but also its vibrant cultural heyday.

EDGECOMBE AVENUE, 363 to 417 (West Side Between West 150th and West 155th Streets)

363 and 365 EDGECOMBE AVENUE

Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 2054, Lots 12 and 14

Date of Construction: 1905-06 (NB 1561-1905)

Architect: Joseph C. Cocker

Original Owner/Developer: Murray & Hill

Type: Apartment houses

Style/Ornament: neo-Classical

Stories: Five and basement

Materials: Brick, limestone, and terra cotta



History

These two neo-Classical style apartment houses were built as part of a group of eight similar buildings including 367 and 369 Edgecombe Avenue and 22 to 28 St. Nicholas Place, located to the west. They were designed by architect Joseph C. Cocker and built for Murray & Hill in 1905-06, at a time when the area was rapidly developing with five- and six-story apartment houses. Typical of apartment buildings of that period, they feature standard floor plans intended to attract middle-class residents and are constructed of inexpensive materials. Their facades are enlivened through the inventive use of mass-produced facade ornament and popular revival styles. Nos. 363 and 365 Edgecombe Avenue, which are distinguished by their columnar porticos, limestone bases, and splayed keystones, remain remarkably intact.

Description

363 Edgecombe Avenue: Six bays above a five bay limestone base, painted, with a molded crown; historic wrought-iron fence at the areaway; central portico featuring an altered concrete stoop with non-historic wrought-iron railings, paired columns, and molded hood; non-historic door; non-historic lighting; brick foundation; non-historic secondary entryway at the basement; areaway enclosed by historic wrought-iron fencing; projecting limestone window sills and splayed terra-cotta lintels with projecting keystones; non-historic, one-over-one metal sash; historic wrought-iron fire escape; bracketed, pressed metal roof cornice.

365 Edgecombe Avenue: Similar to 363 Edgecombe Avenue; historic wrought-iron fence at the areaway; painted limestone base; altered concrete stoop; non-historic door; non-historic, one-over-one metal sash; non-historic wrought-iron window grilles at the first story; non-historic lighting; historic wrought-iron fire escape; roof cornice removed and replaced with cement-stucco fascia.

Significant References

Real Estate Record & Guide (Nov. 4, 1905), 729.

367 and 369 EDGECOMBE AVENUE

Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 2054, Lots 15 and 16

Date of Construction: 1905-06 (NB 1562-1905)

Architect: Joseph C. Cocker

Original Owner/Developer: Alex Cameron

Type: Apartment houses

Style/Ornament: neo-Classical

Stories: Five and basement

Materials: Brick, limestone, and terra cotta



History

These two neo-Classical style apartment houses were built as part of a group of eight similar buildings including 363 and 365 Edgecombe Avenue and 22 to 28 St. Nicholas Place, located to the west. They were designed by architect Joseph C. Cocker and built for Alex Cameron in 1905-06, at a time when the area was rapidly developing with five- and six-story apartment houses. Typical of apartment buildings of that period, they feature standard floor plans intended to attract middle-class residents and are constructed of inexpensive materials. Their facades are enlivened through the inventive use of mass-produced facade ornament and popular revival styles. Nos. 367 and 369 Edgecombe Avenue, which are distinguished by their columnar porticos, limestone bases, and splayed keystones, remain remarkably intact.

Description

367 Edgecombe Avenue: Six bays above a five bay limestone base, painted, with a molded crown; brick foundation; central portico with altered concrete stoop, paired columns, and molded hood; non-historic door; non-historic lighting; historic wrought-iron fence at the areaway; projecting limestone window sills and splayed terra-cotta lintels with projecting keystones; non-historic, one-over-one metal sash; historic wrought-iron fire escape; bracketed, pressed metal roof cornice.

369 Edgecombe Avenue: Similar to 367 Edgecombe Avenue; original portico removed and replaced by cement-stucco surface; historic wrought-iron entry with grilled sidelights and transom; non-historic lighting; altered concrete stoop with non-historic wrought-iron railings; basement and first-story facades painted; historic wrought-iron fire escape; non-historic, one-over-one metal sash.

Significant References

Real Estate Record & Guide (Nov. 4, 1905), 729.

371 EDGECOMBE AVENUE

Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 2054, Lot 18

Date of Construction: 1905 (NB 387-1905)

Architect: Neville & Bagge

Original Owner/Developer: Jas. Ahearn

Type: Apartment house

Style/Ornament: Beaux Arts

Stories: Five and basement

Materials: Brick, limestone, and terra cotta



History

Built as a pair with the similarly-designed apartment house at 30-32 St. Nicholas Place, located on the adjacent lot to the west, this Beaux Arts style building was designed by the architectural firm Neville & Bagge and constructed in 1905 for owner Jas. Ahearn, at a time when the area was rapidly developing with five- and six-story apartment houses. Typical of apartment buildings of that period, they feature standard floor plans intended to attract middle-class residents and are constructed of inexpensive materials. Their facades are enlivened through the inventive use of mass-produced facade ornament and popular revival styles. No. 371 Edgecombe Avenue, which is distinguished by its columnar portico, limestone base, and terra-cotta ornament, remains remarkably intact.

Cambridge University-trained pianist Henry Edward Margetson occupied an apartment here in the late 1920s through the mid 1930s. He won the Harmon Foundation Award for distinguished achievement among negroes in 1927. By 1950, he had moved to 48 St. Nicholas Place.

Description

Six bays; paired fenestration in the end bays; brick foundation; non-historic wrought-iron fence at the areaway; banded base with molded crown; entryway featuring fluted half columns, stoop with non-historic granite cladding, and non-historic door; non-historic lighting; upper stories feature projecting sills, splayed lintels with scrolled keystones, elaborate surrounds, foliated spandrels, and terra-cotta bands; historic wrought-iron fire escape; non-historic, one-over-one metal sash; roof cornice removed and replaced with brick parapet.

Significant References

New York City Directories.

Real Estate Record & Guide (April 15, 1905), 858.

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, National Register of Historic Places, *Sugar Hill Historic District*, A Preliminary Report, 2001.

Who's Who in Colored America (1928-29), 256.

375 and 377 EDGECOMBE AVENUE

Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 2054, Lots 20 and 22

Date of Construction: 1905-06 (NB 1295-1905)

Architect: Schwartz & Gross

Original Owner/Developer: Kantor, Cooper & Co.

Type: Apartment houses

Style/Ornament: Beaux Arts

Stories: Five and basement

Materials Brick, limestone, and terra cotta



History

These two Beaux Arts style apartment houses were constructed as part of a group of four similar buildings including 34 and 36 St. Nicholas Place, located on the adjacent lots to the west. They were designed by the architectural firm Schwartz & Gross, and constructed in 1905-06 for Cantor, Cooper & Co., at a time when the area was rapidly developing with five- and six-story apartment houses. Typical of apartment buildings of that period, they feature standard floor plans intended to attract middle-class residents and are constructed of inexpensive materials. Their facades are enlivened through the inventive use of mass-produced facade ornament and popular revival styles. These buildings, which are distinguished by their columnar porticos, limestone bases, and terra-cotta ornament, remain largely intact.

Child musical prodigy and international competition-winning pianist Roy Felix Eaton lived in No. 375 in c.1950. Born in New York City in 1930, Eaton had won numerous musical awards and had traveled extensively in Europe before the age of twenty. He attended the Manhattan School of Music. Jonelle Allen, star of film, theater, and television, lived in No. 377 in c.1990. Her movie credits included *Cotton Comes to Harlem* (1970) and *The Hotel New Hampshire* (1984); she performed in the Broadway productions of *Hair* (1967-68), *George M* (1968), and *Two Gentlemen of Verona* (1972); and appeared on television in the soap operas *As the World Turns* and *Another World* and as a guest on numerous series.

Description

375 Edgecombe Avenue: Six bays above a three-bay limestone base, painted, featuring paired sash, molded crown, altered stoop, altered entryway, and non-historic doors; non-historic lighting; brick basement, painted; upper stories feature projecting window sills, keyed surrounds, molded architraves, scrolled keystones, and paneled spandrels; historic wrought-iron fire escape; non-historic, one-over one metal sash; altered roof parapet and missing cornice.

377 Edgecombe Avenue: Similar to 375 Edgecombe Avenue; basement facade painted; non-historic wrought-iron areaway fence; non-historic door; non-historic lighting; non-historic wrought-iron window grilles at the first story; non-historic, one-over-one metal sash; roof cornice removed, exposing the backing brick; historic, paneled brick roof parapet; historic wrought-iron fire escape.

Significant References

Dictionary of Blacks in the Performing Arts (1990), 9.

Real Estate Record & Guide (Sept. 16, 1905), 454.

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, National Register of Historic Places, *Sugar Hill Historic District, A Preliminary Report*, 2001.

Who's Who in Colored America (1950), 172.

379 - 381 EDGECOMBE AVENUE

Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 2054, Lot 46

Date of Construction: 1925-26 (NB 330-1925)

Architect: George Frederick Pelham

Original Owner/Developer: Edgecombe & 153rd Corp.

Type: Apartment House

Style/Ornament: neo-Classical

Stories: Six

Materials: Brick



History

This six-story neo-Classical style apartment house was designed by architect George Frederick Pelham, and constructed for the Edgecombe & 153rd Corp. in 1925-26, as one of the last apartment houses in the historic district and one of the first in the area that was built for occupancy by African-Americans. Between 1929 and 1939, jazz composer and big band leader Duke Ellington (1899-1974) occupied a five room apartment in the building, which he shared with his mother, brother Mercer, and sister Ruth. The building, which is distinguished by its ornate entryway, decorative brickwork, and open parapet, remains remarkably intact.

Description

Eleven bays; banded brick base with three-bay central entryway featuring recessed, arched doorway, flanked by brick pilasters and topped by molded hood at the level of the second-story sills; historic wrought ironwork above the hood; historic wood-and-glass paneled doors; non-historic lighting; non-historic fixed awning at the entryway; secondary basement-level entryway with non-historic metal grate; non-historic, metal window grates at the basement; upper stories feature projecting cast-concrete window sills, brick surrounds, and historic wrought-iron fire escapes; non-historic, one-over-one metal sash; brick roof parapet with open arches and central pediment.

Significant References

City of New York, Department of Buildings, Borough of Manhattan, New Building Docket Books.
United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, National Register of Historic Places, *Sugar Hill Historic District*, A Preliminary Report, 2001.

385 EDGECOMBE AVENUE

Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 2054, Lot 49

Date of Construction: 1913 (NB 203-1913)

Architect: George Frederick Pelham

Original Owner/Developer: Strathcona Construction Co.

Type: Apartment house

Style/Ornament: Art Nouveau

Stories: Six and basement

Materials: Brick, limestone, and terra cotta



History

Built as a pair with the neighboring building at 48 St. Nicholas Place, this Art Nouveau style apartment house was designed by architect George Frederick Pelham and constructed for the Strathcona Construction Co. in 1913, at a time when larger apartment houses were being built in the historic district. The building, which features a limestone base, a segmentally-arched entryway, and polychromatic terra-cotta ornament, remains remarkably intact.

Description

Twelve bays above an eleven-bay, banded limestone base, painted, with a molded crown; secondary entryways with non-historic metal gates at the basement; segmentally-arched main entryway featuring a molded surround, flanking brackets, surmounting cartouche, and historic glass doors, sidelights, and transom with wrought-iron grilles; non-historic lighting; upper stories feature projecting window sills, paneled spandrels, molded lintels, paired fenestration, and historic wrought-iron fire escapes; the end bays at the fifth and sixth stories feature elaborate surrounds with festoons, cartouches, and molded panels; non-historic, one-over-one metal sash; roof cornice removed and replaced with cement-stucco fascia; bracketed roof parapet.

Significant References

Real Estate Record & Guide (April 6, 1913), 905.



393 EDGECOMBE AVENUE

Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 2054, Lot 53

Date of Construction: 1912 (NB 208-1912)

Architect: Henry Andersen and Joseph Stevens

Original Owner/Developer: Edgecombe Court Co.

Type: Apartment house

Style/Ornament: neo-Classical

Stories: Six and basement

Materials: Limestone, brick, and terra cotta



History

This neo-Classical style apartment house was designed by Henry Andersen and Joseph Stevens, and was constructed for the Edgecombe Court Co. in 1912 at a time when larger apartment houses were being built in the historic district. Featuring a limestone base, recessed entry court, and terra-cotta ornament, this building remains largely intact.

Musician, composer, and music publisher, William C. Handy, lived here in the late 1920s. A native of Alabama, Handy was a self-taught musician and the composer the *St. Louis Blues*. He founded the Pace & Handy Music Company in Memphis and moved to New York City in 1918, where he became the first African-American member of the Music Publishers Association. Noted clergyman, Eleazar W. Rakestraw lived here in the late 1920s through the mid 1930s.

Description

Nine bays above an eleven-bay, banded limestone base, partially painted, with a molded crown; secondary entryway with non-historic metal grates at the basement; recessed entry court with non-historic concrete steps, door, and lighting; upper stories feature projecting window sills, splayed keystones, and terra-cotta quoins; non-historic, one-over-one metal sash; historic wrought-iron fire escapes; historic roof cornice removed and replaced with cement-stucco surfaces and exposed bricks.

Significant References

New York City Directories.

Real Estate Record & Guide Quarterly (1912), 356.

Who's Who in Colored America (1928-29), 161, 300.

397 - 407 EDGECOMBE AVENUE

Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 2054, Lot 56

Date of Construction: 1922 (NB 16-1922)

Architect: Springsteen & Goldhammer

Original Owner/Developer: Hudson Builders Corp.

Type: Apartment house

Style/Ornament: neo-Classical

Stories: Six

Materials Brick, granite, cement stucco, and terra cotta



History

This neo-Classical style apartment house was designed by the architectural firm Springsteen & Goldhammer, and was constructed for the Hudson Builders Corp. in 1922, at a time when larger apartment buildings were being erected in the historic district. Distinguished by its balustrated fountain court and tile roof, the upper part of the building's facade has been altered.

Attorney and assemblyman William T. Andrews, lived here in the 1930s. Born in Sumter, South Carolina, Andrews received degrees from Howard University and Columbia University Law School, and was elected to the New York State Assembly in 1935.

Description

Sixteen bays; central recessed entry court featuring cast-concrete balustrade and steps, garden enclosed by non-historic wrought-iron fence; non-historic main entryway; secondary entryways with non-historic metal grilles; non-historic wrought-iron window grilles at the first story; cast-concrete base below the first-story window sills; projecting sills; terra-cotta keystones above the second-story windows; projecting bands; repointed brickwork; cement-stucco sixth-story facade; recessed brick panels, painted, above the sixth-story windows; clay-tile mansard roof; historic wrought-iron fire escapes; non-historic, one-over-one metal sash; altered roof parapet.

Significant References

City of New York, Department of Buildings, Borough of Manhattan, New Building Docket Books. *Who's Who in Colored America* (1933-37), 601.

409 - 417 EDGECOMBE AVENUE APARTMENTS
(Colonial Parkway Apartments)
A Designated NYC Landmark
Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 2054, Lot 62

Date of Construction: 1916-17 (NB 232-1916)
Architect: Schwartz & Gross
Original Owner/Developer: Candler Holding Corp.
Type: Apartment house
Style/Ornament: neo-Renaissance
Stories: Thirteen and basement
Materials: Brick, limestone, and terra cotta



History

This neo-Renaissance style apartment house was designed by the architectural firm Schwartz & Gross, and built for the Candler Holding Co. in 1916-17, at a time when larger apartment buildings were being erected in the historic district. It is considered Sugar Hill's most prestigious address from the 1930s through the 1950s with an illustrious roster of accomplished African-American tenants. The building, known simply as "409," was first open to African-Americans in the late 1920s and attracted numerous outstanding leaders in the fields of civil rights, politics, law, education, medicine, scholarship, music, and arts. These included W.E.B DuBois, Walter White, William Stanley Braithwaite, Aaron Douglas, Thurgood Marshall, Jimmie Lunceford, Mercer Ellington, Billie Strayhorn, and Roy Wilkins, among others. The home of New York City's African-American intellectual and cultural elite, 409 was long a center of Sugar Hill society. The building, which is distinguished by its curving facade, recessed light courts, decorative brickwork, and terra-cotta ornament, remains largely intact. It was designated a New York City Landmark in 1993.

Description

Ten bays, two light courts enclosed by non-historic wrought-iron fences, and containing secondary entryways with historic wood-and-glass paneled doors; paired fenestration; granite base below first-story window sills; central entryway featuring granite surround; central second-story window with a pedimented surround, and historic glass doors and transom with decorative wrought-iron grilles; non-historic canvas marquee; upper stories feature spandrel panels with cartouches and blind-arch window heads; small balconettes have been removed from the windows at the fourth and eleventh stories; light courts faced in yellow brick; non-historic, one-over-one metal sash; terra-cotta roof parapet. South elevation: Brick; lot-line windows; non-historic, one-over-one metal sash; light court. West elevation: Brick and cement stucco; lot-line windows; non-historic, one-over-one metal sash; light court. North elevation: Brick and cement stucco; lot-line windows; non-historic, one-over-one metal sash; light court. Roof: One-story penthouse.

Significant References

Landmarks Preservation Commission, *409 Edgecombe Avenue Apartments (Colonial Parkway Apartments)*, (LP-1861), report by Elisa Urbanelli, Landmarks Consultant (New York: 1993).

ST. NICHOLAS PLACE, 14 to 80 (East Side Between West 150th and West 155th Streets)

14 and 16 ST. NICHOLAS PLACE

Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 2054, Lot 42 and 40

Date of Construction: 1883-84 (NB 769-1883)

Architect: William Grinnell

Original Owner/Developer: James Montieth

Type: Semi-detached dwellings for two families

Style/Ornament: Queen Anne

Stories: Two plus basement and attic

Materials: Wood frame with rough-cut schist and wood shingle facing



History

This pair of two-family dwellings were designed by architect William Grinnell, and built by James Pettit for owner James Montieth in 1883-84, at a time when many freestanding houses were located on St. Nicholas Place. Montieth lived on St. Nicholas Avenue at West 154th Street. Their picturesque, Queen Anne-style facades, which feature rock-faced granite bases, projecting turrets, incised floral motifs, onion dome, and roof gables, are unusual in Manhattan. They are the earliest-extant buildings in the historic district and in the neighborhood in general. Both dwellings remain largely intact.

Alma Mary Haskins, who was one of only two woman, and the only African-American woman, practicing podiatry in New York City in the mid-twentieth century, lived in No. 16 in the mid 1940s. Earlier, she had lived at 2374 Seventh Avenue, located in the St. Nicholas Historic District. Born in Newport News, Virginia, she was educated at New York University, established the Department of Podiatry at Okolona Industrial School in 1921-22, and served as the president of the New York County Society of Podiatrists in 1927-29. Noted teacher and author, James Egbert Allen, lived in No. 16 in c.1950. A native of Greenwood, South Carolina, he received degrees from Smith University, City College, and New York University. Allen taught in New York City public schools and published essays in many of Black publications about the lives of African-Americans.



Description

14 St. Nicholas Place: Garden enclosed by non-historic cyclone fence; three-bay curved tower with onion dome; non-historic concrete stoop; non-historic door at entryway; graystone water table; projecting graystone sills and non-historic wrought-iron grilles at the first story windows; molded window surrounds and carved crown at the second story; the tower features windows alternating with carved wood panels; non-historic wood shingles at the second floor; non-historic one-over-one metal sash; the roof features an altered shed dormer, historic brick party wall with terra-cotta coping, and non-historic roofing; historic brick chimney with terra-cotta flue. South facade: Non-historic metal window grilles at the first story; carved crown above the second story; cross-gable on roof; non-historic, one-over-one metal sash; historic shed dormer. Site feature: Non-historic, one-story, cement stucco detached garage at the rear; concrete-paved driveway.

16 St. Nicholas Place: Garden enclosed by non-historic cyclone fence; non-historic brick stoop; non-historic door at the entryway, graystone water table; non-historic brick terrace; grouped fenestration at the first story; curved second-story oriel supported by wood columns and featuring carved panels and sloping roof; non-historic wrought-iron window grilles at the first story; historic and non-historic one-over-one wood sash and metal sash; roof features non-historic covering and altered shed dormer; historic brick chimney with terra-cotta flue; non-historic synthetic shingles at the second story. North facade: Similar to main facade; non-historic, one-over-one metal sash; cross-gable on the roof; non-historic synthetic shingles at the second story.

Significant References

City of New York, Department of Buildings, Borough of Manhattan, New Building Docket Books.
Lain's New York and Brooklyn Elite Directory (New York: Geo. T. Lain, 1882-83), 38.
New York City Directories.
Who's Who in Colored America (1930-32), 163; (1941-44), 236; (1950), 6.

18 - 20 ST. NICHOLAS PLACE

Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 2054, Lot 36

Date of Construction: 1916 (NB 490-1916)

Architect: Sam Katz

Original Owner/Developer: Sonwil Holding Co., Inc.

Type: Apartment house

Style/Ornament: Classical Revival

Stories: Five and basement

Materials: Brick and cast concrete



History

This Classical Revival style apartment house was designed by architect Sam Katz, and built in 1916 for the Sonwil Holding Co., at a time when larger apartment houses were being constructed in the historic district. The building, which features decorative brickwork, a limestone portico, and splayed keystones, remains largely intact. Lillian Galloway, who managed the Clef Club, whose members including many of the leading entertainers and musicians of the day, lived in No. 18 in the early 1930s.

Description

Twelve bays; brick foundation; molded cast-concrete water table, painted; basement has secondary entryways with non-historic metal grates; non-historic wrought-iron window grilles at the basement; central, two-story portico featuring molded surround, decorative brick panel, paired sash at the second story, non-historic door, and denticulated crown; non-historic lighting; first story has header brick window sills in a continuous brick band and surmounting cast-concrete molding; second-story window sills in a continuous cast-concrete band; upper stories feature brick quoins, projecting cast-concrete window sills, and decorative brick surrounds with splayed cast-concrete keystones; non-historic, one-over-one metal sash; historic wrought-iron fire escapes; altered, cement-stucco-covered roof parapet. South elevation: Brick, repointed; non-historic, one-over-one metal sash.

Significant References

Real Estate Record & Guide Quarterly, (Jan.-Dec. 1916), 343.

Who's Who in Colored America (1930-32), 163.

22 and 24 ST. NICHOLAS PLACE

Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 2054, Lots 35 and 33

Date of Construction: 1905 (NB 877-1905)

Architect: Joseph C. Cocker

Original Owner/Developer: Murray & Hill

Type: Apartment houses

Style/Ornament: neo-Classical

Stories: Five and basement

Materials: Brick, limestone, and terra cotta



History

These two neo-Classical style apartment houses were built as part of a group of eight similar buildings including 363 to 369 Edgecombe Avenue, as well as 26 and 28 St. Nicholas Place. They were designed by architect Joseph C. Cocker and built for Murray & Hill in 1905, at a time when the area was rapidly developing with five- and six-story apartment houses. Typical of apartment buildings of that period, they feature standard floor plans intended to attract middle-class residents and are constructed of inexpensive materials. Their facades are enlivened through the inventive use of mass-produced facade ornament and popular revival styles. Nos. 22 and 24 St. Nicholas Place, which are distinguished by their columnar porticos, limestone bases, and splayed keystones, remain remarkably intact. These eight contiguous buildings form a remarkably cohesive streetscape.

Description

22 St. Nicholas Place: Six bays; historic and non-historic wrought-iron fences at the areaway; brick foundation; brownstone water table; historic concrete stoop; central limestone portico and stoop featuring paired columns and molded hood; non-historic wrought-iron and glass door; non-historic lighting; first story features limestone banding, window sills in a continuous band, splayed lintels, and molded crown; upper stories feature projecting window sills and splayed lintels with projecting keystones; non-historic, one-over-one metal sash; historic wrought-iron fire escape; bracketed roof cornice with dentils.

24 St. Nicholas Place: Similar to 22 St. Nicholas Place; historic wrought-iron fence at the areaway; non-historic wrought-iron railings at the stoop; non-historic door; non-historic lighting; basement and first-story facades are painted; non-historic, one-over-one metal sash; historic wrought-iron fire escape.

Significant References

Real Estate Record & Guide Quarterly, (Jan.-Dec. 1905).

26 and 28 ST. NICHOLAS PLACE

Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 2054, Lots 32 & 30

Date of Construction: 1905-06 (NB 946-1905)

Architect: Joseph C. Cocker

Original Owner/Developer: Alexander Cameron

Type: Apartment houses

Style/Ornament: neo-Classical

Stories: Five and basement

Materials: Brick, limestone, and terra cotta



History

These two neo-Classical style apartment houses were built as part of a group of eight similar buildings including 363 to 369 Edgecombe Avenue, as well as 22 and 24 St. Nicholas Place. They were designed by architect Joseph C. Cocker and built for Alexander Cameron in 1905-06, at a time when the area was rapidly developing with five- and six-story apartment houses. Typical of apartment buildings of that period, they feature standard floor plans intended to attract middle-class residents and are constructed of inexpensive materials. Their facades are enlivened through the inventive use of mass-produced facade ornament and popular revival styles. Nos. 26 and 28 St. Nicholas Place, which are distinguished by their columnar porticos, limestone bases, and splayed keystones, remain remarkably intact. These eight contiguous buildings form a remarkably cohesive streetscape.

Description

26 St. Nicholas Place: Similar to 22 St. Nicholas Place; historic wrought-iron fence at the areaway; non-historic wrought-iron railings at the stoop; non-historic door; non-historic lighting; basement and first-story facades are painted; non-historic, one-over-one metal sash; historic wrought-iron fire escape.

28 St. Nicholas Place: Similar to 22 St. Nicholas Place; historic wrought-iron fence at the areaway; non-historic wrought-iron railings at the stoop; non-historic door; non-historic lighting; basement and first-story facades are painted; non-historic, one-over-one metal sash; historic wrought-iron fire escape.

Significant References

Real Estate Record & Guide Quarterly, (Jan.-Dec.1905).

30-32 ST. NICHOLAS PLACE

Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 2054, Lot 28

Date of Construction: 1905 (NB 387-1905)

Architect: Neville & Bagge

Original Owner/Developer: Jas. Ahearn

Type: Apartment house

Style/Ornament: Beaux Arts

Stories: Five and basement

Materials: Brick, limestone, and terra cotta



History

Built as a pair with the similarly-designed apartment house at 371 Edgecombe Avenue, located on the adjacent lot to the east, this Beaux Arts style building was designed by the architectural firm Neville & Bagge and constructed in 1905 for owner Jas. Ahearn, at a time when the area was rapidly developing with five- and six-story apartment houses. Using similar materials and ornament as the adjacent buildings at 34 and 36 St. Nicholas Place, designed by the architectural firm Schwartz & Gross and built

about the same time, the four buildings form a cohesive ensemble. No. 30-32 St. Nicholas Place, which is distinguished by its columnar portico, limestone base, and terra-cotta ornament, remains remarkably intact.

Description

Similar to 371 Edgecombe Avenue; historic wrought-iron fence at the areaway; painted ornament at the basement and first story; non-historic window grilles at the first story; non-historic concrete stoop with historic wrought-iron railings; non-historic door and lighting; non-historic, one-over-one metal sash; historic wrought-iron fire escape; roof cornice removed and replaced with cement-stucco fascia.

Significant References

Real Estate Record & Guide (April 15, 1905), 858.

34 and 36 ST. NICHOLAS PLACE

Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 2054, Lots 27 and 25

Date of Construction: 1905-06 (NB 1295-1905)

Architect: Schwartz & Gross

Original Owner/Developer: Kantor, Cooper & Co.

Type: Apartment houses

Style/Ornament: Beaux Arts

Stories: Five and basement

Materials: Brick, limestone, and terra cotta



History

These two Beaux Arts style apartment houses were constructed as part of a group of four similar buildings including 375 and 377 Edgecombe Avenue, located on the adjacent lots to the east. They were designed by the architectural firm Schwartz & Gross, and constructed in 1905-06 for Cantor, Cooper & Co., at a time when the area was rapidly developing with five- and six-story apartment houses. Using similar materials and ornament as the adjacent buildings at 30-32 St. Nicholas Place, designed by the architectural firm Neville & Bagge and built about the same time, these buildings form a cohesive ensemble. The building had three apartments per floor, each containing four to six rooms and a tiled bathroom, and were equipped with glass-lined refrigerators. The interiors were finished in mahogany and oak with paneled wainscoting and plate shelves. Nos. 34 and 36 St. Nicholas Place, which are distinguished by their columnar porticos, limestone bases, and terra-cotta ornament, remain largely intact.

Description

34 St. Nicholas Place: Six bays above a three-bay limestone base, painted; brick foundation; non-historic wrought-iron fence at the areaway; first story has paired sash, molded crown, projecting entryway and a granite stoop with non-historic wrought-iron railings; non-historic doors and lighting; upper stories feature projecting window sills, keyed surrounds, molded architraves, scrolled keystones, and paneled spandrels; non-historic, one-over-one metal sash; historic wrought-iron fire escape; altered pressed-metal roof cornice and parapet

36 St. Nicholas Place: Similar to 34 St. Nicholas Place; basement and first-story facades are painted; non-historic wrought-iron fence at the areaway; non-historic metal security gate at the entryway; windows sealed with cement blocks; historic wrought-iron fire escape; roof cornice removed and replaced with cement-stucco fascia.

Significant References

Apartment Houses of the Metropolis (New York: G.C. Hesselgren Publishing Co., 1908), 287.
Real Estate Record & Guide (Sept. 6, 1905), 454.

40 ST. NICHOLAS PLACE

Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 2054, Lot 96

Date of Construction: 1910 (NB 183-1910)

Architect: Chas. Ferbusch

Original Owner/Developer: Mica Construction Co,

Type: Apartment house

Style/Ornament: neo-Classical

Stories: Six and basement

Materials: Brick, limestone, and terra cotta



History

This neo-Classical style apartment house, the “Bavaria,” was designed by architect Chas. Ferbusch and built by the Mica Construction Co. in 1910 at a time when larger apartment houses were being erected in the historic district. Employing a donut plan with a central light court, this building is both taller and wider than the earlier buildings to the south, and is detailed with more austere and abstracted ornament. The building features a limestone base, splayed lintels, and geometrical ornamentation at the roofline.

Description

Ten bays; historic cast-iron fence at the areaway; rusticated limestone first-story facade, painted, featuring projecting window sills, splayed lintels, and molded crown with incised letters: "Bavaria;" limestone entryway, painted, featuring non-historic concrete steps, Ionic pilasters, bracketed hood, and non-historic door; non-historic lighting; upper stories feature projecting sills, paneled lintels, molded bands and historic wrought-iron fire escapes; non-historic, one-over-one metal sash; non-historic, cement-stucco-covered roof parapet flanked by historic stepped brick walls featuring terra-cotta targets.

Significant References

Real Estate Record & Guide Quarterly, (1910), 603.

48 ST. NICHOLAS PLACE

Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 2054, Lot 92

Date of Construction: 1913 (NB 202-1913)

Architect: George Frederick Pelham

Original Owner/Developer: Strathcona Construction Co.

Type: Apartment house

Style/Ornament: Art Nouveau

Stories: Six and basement

Materials: Brick, limestone, and terra cotta

History

Built as a pair with the neighboring building at 385 Edgecombe Avenue, this Art Nouveau style apartment house was designed by architect George Frederick Pelham and constructed for the Strathcona Construction Co. in 1913, at a time when larger apartment houses were being built in the historic district. Employing a donut plan with a central light court, this building is both taller and wider than the earlier buildings to the south. Its design was derived from Ernest Flagg's tenement house plan of 1894, which was based on Parisian courtyard apartments. This type was widely used for apartment buildings in expanding middle-class areas of the city in the early twentieth century. No. 48 St. Nicholas Place, which features a limestone base, a segmentally-arched entryway, and unusually elaborate, polychrome terra-cotta ornament, remains remarkably intact. Cambridge University-trained pianist Henry Edward Margetson occupied an apartment here c.1950; in the late 1920s, he had resided at 371 Edgecombe Avenue. He won the Harmon Foundation Award for distinguished achievement among negroes in 1927.



Description

Similar to 385 Edgecombe Avenue; first-story facade is painted; non-historic metal grates at the basement entrances; historic, wrought-iron and glass door, transom, and sidelights; non-historic lighting; non-historic wrought-iron window grilles at the first story; historic wrought-iron fire escapes; non-historic, one-over-one metal sash; historic pressed-metal roof cornice with panels and brackets.

Significant References

Real Estate Record & Guide (April 6, 1913), 905.

Who's Who in Colored America (1950), 353.



52 - 54 ST. NICHOLAS PLACE

Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 2054, Lot 89

Date of Construction: 1914 (NB 53-1914)

Architect: Samuel Sass

Original Owner/Developer: Dayton Building Co., Inc.

Type: Apartment house

Style/Ornament: neo-Classical

Stories: Five and basement

Materials: Brick, limestone, and terra cotta

History

This neo-Classical style apartment house was designed by architect Samuel Sass and constructed for the Dayton Building Co., Inc. in 1914 at a time when larger apartment buildings were being erected in the historic district. The building, which is distinguished by its limestone base, recessed entry court, and stepped roof parapet with elaborate terra-cotta ornamentation, remains remarkably intact.



Description

Eight bays with recessed entry court featuring historic granite stairs; historic wrought-iron window grilles at the basement; banded limestone base, painted, featuring projecting window sills, splayed lintels, and molded crown; historic wrought-iron and glass doors and transom and elaborate limestone surround; upper stories feature bracketed window sills, decorative brick surrounds, and historic wrought-iron fire escapes; non-historic, one-over-one metal sash; decorative brick and terra-cotta roof parapet featuring blind arches, ribbed columns, foliated panels, and molded copings.

Significant References

Real Estate Record & Guide Quarterly, (1914).

66 - 74 ST. NICHOLAS PLACE

Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 2054, Lot 82

Date of Construction: 1930-31 (NB 220-1930)

Architect: Horace Ginsbern

Original Owner/Developer: Jaymar Realty Corp.

Type: Apartment house

Style/Ornament: neo-Gothic

Stories: Six and basement

Materials: Brick and cast concrete

History

This neo-Gothic style apartment house was designed by architect Horace Ginsbern and in 1930-31 for the Jaymar Realty Corp. It was the last building constructed in the historic district, replacing one of the few surviving freestanding houses in the historic district, and one of the first in the area that was built for occupancy by African-Americans. The notable author, poet, and writer, Langston Hughes (1902-1967), leased a studio apartment here from 1937 to 1941. The building, which is distinguished by its balustraded, landscaped entry court and crenellated roofline remains remarkably intact.



Description

Eight bays; recessed entry court with cast-concrete balustrades and projecting entryway with molded surround, central shield, and battlemented roof; non-historic door and lighting; brick foundation; secondary entryways with non-historic metal grates at the basement; basement windows sealed with painted plywood; end bays have paired fenestration; first and sixth stories have arched window heads; projecting piers with corbeled bases; non-historic, one-over-one metal sash; historic wrought-iron fire escapes; brick roof parapet with crenelation and terra-cotta panels.

Significant References

Atlas of the City of New York, Borough of Manhattan (Philadelphia, G.W. Bromley & Sons, 1899-1909), v.5, pl. 5.

City of New York, Department of Buildings, Borough of Manhattan, *New Building Docket Books*.
United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *National Register of Historic Places, Sugar Hill Historic District, A Preliminary Report, 2001.*



76 - 78 ST. NICHOLAS PLACE

Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 2054, Lot 79

Date of Construction: 1916 (NB 96-1916)

Architect: Sass & Springsteen

Original Owner/Developer: R-B Realty Co.

Type: Apartment house

Style/Ornament: neo-Classical

Stories: Five and basement

Materials: Brick and cast concrete



History

This neo-Classical style apartment house was designed by the architectural firm Sass & Springsteen, and constructed by the R-B Realty Co. in 1916, when larger apartment buildings were being erected in the historic district. By the early 1940s, the building had become the property of boxer-turned-real estate magnate, Harry Willis, who lived in this building. He was considered one of the top-flight heavy weights in his time. Between 1911 and 1934, he won 476 of 480 bouts, including thirty-one knock-outs. Later, he owned several apartments in New York City. No. 76-78 St. Nicholas Place, which features a recessed entry court and decorative brickwork, remains largely intact.

Description

Eight bays and recessed entry court with historic terra-cotta paving, historic granite steps, and concrete, arched entryway with molded surround and non-historic door; non-historic lighting; secondary basement-level entryway with non-historic metal grate; granite foundation; molded bands above the first story; projecting window sills; non-historic, one-over-one metal sash; upper part of the facade is repointed; historic wrought-iron fire escapes; stepped brick roof parapet featuring decorative brick panels, central medallions, and terra-cotta coping.

Significant References

Real Estate Record & Guide Quarterly, (1916), 343.

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, National Register of Historic Places, *Sugar Hill Historic District*, A Preliminary Report, 2001.

Who's Who in Colored America (1950), 563.

80 ST. NICHOLAS PLACE

Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 2054, Lot 75

Date of Construction: 1921 (NB 238-1921)

Architect: Jacob M. Felson

Original Owner/Developer: Fay Realty Inc.

Type: Apartment house

Style/Ornament: neo-Classical

Stories: Five and basement

Materials: Brick and cast-concrete



History

This neo-Classical style apartment house was designed by architect Jacob M. Felson, and constructed by Fay Realty Inc. in 1921 at a time when larger apartment buildings were being erected in the historic district. Well-known African American baseball player, Henry “Hank” Thompson, lived here in the 1950s. Previously a star of the Negro League, Thompson gained a spot on the roster of the St. Louis Browns in 1947, and came to the New York Giants in 1951, where, along with Willy Mays and Monte Irvin, he was part of major leagues’ first all-black outfield. The building, which features a recessed entry court and decorative roof parapet, remains largely intact.

Description

Seven bays; secondary basement-level entryways with non-historic metal grates; non-historic wrought-iron window grilles at the basement; recessed entry court featuring historic granite steps, molded cast-concrete surround, and non-historic door; non-historic lighting; first- and fifth-story window sills in a continuous terra-cotta band; projecting window sills at the second, third, and fourth stories; fourth and fifth stories have header brick lintels with flanking terra-cotta blocks; non-historic, one-over-one metal sash; sections of upper facade have been repointed; historic wrought-iron fire escapes; stepped brick and terra-cotta roof parapet featuring decorative panels, molded bands, blind arches, and molding copings. North elevation: Brick and cement stucco.

Significant References

City of New York, Department of Buildings, Borough of Manhattan, New Building Docket Books.
Who's Who in Colored America (1950), 506.

ST. NICHOLAS PLACE, 75 to 87 (West Side Between West 153rd and West 155th Streets)

75 ST. NICHOLAS PLACE

aka 401 West 153rd Street

Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 2069, Lot 1

Date of Construction: c.1915

Architect: Not determined

Original Owner/Developer: M.R.L. Building Co.

Type: Apartment house

Style/Ornament: neo-Classical

Stories: Six and basement

Materials: Brick



History

This neo-Classical apartment house, originally known as the Kinghaven, was built c.1915 for the M.R.L Building Company, at a time when larger apartment houses were being constructed in the historic district. Its architect and original owner have not been determined. Upon its completion, promotional literature for the building touted its convenient location, well-appointed apartments, and reasonable rents. The building, which features decorative brickwork, an arched entryway with a rusticated surround, and a pedimented roof parapet, remains largely intact.

The building was the home of Francis Ellis Rivers in the early 1940s. A native of Kansas City, Kansas, Rivers was the first African-American member of the Bar Association of New York. He was elected to the New York State Assembly in 1930, where he wrote the legislation to allow African Americans to hold judgeships in New York City.

Description

St. Nicholas Place facade: Sixteen bays and two light courts; coursed brick and brick quoins; non-historic storefront with painted facade, security gates, non-historic door, non-historic fixed metal awning, and non-historic lighting; non-historic wrought-iron window grilles at the basement; non-historic wrought-iron fences at the light courts; secondary entryways at the basement with non-historic doors; arched entryway with keyed surround, non-historic door, and non-historic lighting; molded band at the level of the first-story window sills; upper stories feature projecting lintels and historic wrought-iron fire escapes; non-historic one-over-one metal sash; brick roof parapet featuring blind arcades, relieving arches, and curved pediments. West 153rd Street facade: Nine bays; similar detailing as the St. Nicholas Place facade; secondary entryway at basement with non-historic door; non-historic one-over-one metal sash; historic wrought-iron fire escape. West elevation: Brick, repointed; stairwell bulkhead on roof. North elevation: Brick and cement stucco; lot-line windows; non-historic, one-over-one metal sash.

Significant References

New York American Annual Renting Guide to High-Class Apartments (New York: New York American, 1916-17.

Who's Who in Colored America (1941-44), 439.

79 - 81 ST. NICHOLAS PLACE

Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 2069, Lot 8

Date of Construction: 1921 (NB 529-1921)

Architect: Springsteen & Goldhammer

Original Owner/Developer: Parbrooke Realty Corp.

Type: Apartment house

Style/Ornament: neo-Classical

Stories: Six and basement

Materials: Brick



History

This neo-Classical style apartment house was designed by the architectural firm Springsteen & Goldhammer, and constructed for the Parbrooke Realty Corp. in 1921 when this area was being developed with larger apartment buildings. Featuring an arched entryway, decorative brickwork, and a gabled roof parapet, this building remains remarkably intact. Noted piano instructor, Sonoma Carolyn Talley, of the Institute of Musical Arts, lived here in the late 1920s through the mid 1930s.

Description

Eight bays; arched, central entryway with molded architrave, non-historic concrete steps, non-historic door, and non-historic lighting; secondary entryway at basement with non-historic wrought-iron gate; projecting window sills; historic wrought-ironwork at the second-story windows; molded band and patterned brickwork above the second-story; third-story window sills in a continuous band; historic wrought-iron fire escapes; tympani above the sixth-story windows; non-historic, metal one-over-one metal sash; brick roof parapet featuring central gable, patterned panels, central cartouche, and terracotta coping. South elevation: Brick, repointed; recessed light court.

Significant References

City of New York, Department of Buildings, Borough of Manhattan, New Building Docket Books.
New York City Directories.

Who's Who in Colored America (1928-29), 352.

83 & 87 ST. NICHOLAS PLACE

Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 2069, Lot 11 and 14

Date of Construction: 1905 (NB 458-1905)

Architect: John Hauser

Original Owner/Developer: George & Augustus Schuck

Type: Apartment houses

Style/Ornament: Beaux Arts

Stories: Six and basement

Materials: Brick, limestone, and terra cotta



History

This pair of Beaux Arts style apartment houses, the “Montvale” and the “Non Pareil,” were designed by architect John Hauser and were built for George and Augustus Schuck in 1905 at a time when the area was rapidly developing with five- and six-story apartment houses. Typical of apartment buildings of that period, they feature standard floor plans intended to attract middle-class residents and are constructed of inexpensive materials. Their facades are enlivened through the inventive use of mass-produced facade ornament and popular revival styles. According to promotional literature published in 1908, each building originally had apartments of four to six rooms and a bath, which could easily be combined into larger apartments with eleven rooms and two bathrooms. Nos. 83 and 87 St. Nicholas Place, which are distinguished by their limestone bases, columnar porticos with surmounting balustrades, and splayed lintels, remain largely intact.

The composer and arranger, William Grant Still, lived in No. 83 in the 1920s. Born in Mississippi, Still was educated at the Oberlin Conservatory and the New England Conservatory, and was noted for his orchestrations of both Negro spirituals and Broadway shows.

Description

83 St. Nicholas Place: Eight bays; brick foundation; non-historic wrought-iron fence at the areaway; one-story, rusticated limestone base featuring scrolled keystones and molded crown; two-bay portico featuring granite columns with paneled bases, flat pilasters, altered masonry steps, denticulated entablature, “Montvale” incised in the frieze, and surmounting balustrade; historic wrought-iron doors; non-historic lighting; upper stories feature keyed stonework, bracketed window sills, splayed lintels with projecting keystones, molded bands, and historic wrought-iron fire escape; non-historic, one-over-one metal sash; roof cornice removed and replaced with brick parapet.

87 St. Nicholas Place: Similar to 83 St. Nicholas Place, including all alterations; “Non Pareil” incised in the frieze. North elevation: Brick, repointed, and cement stucco.

Significant References

Apartment Houses of the Metropolis (New York: G.C. Hesselgren Publishing Co., 1908), 251.

Real Estate Record & Guide Quarterly (1905), 898.

Who's Who in Colored America (1927), 193.

ARCHITECTS' APPENDIX

HENRY ANDERSEN (dates undetermined)

393 Edgecombe Avenue, with Joseph Stevens (1912) 27

Henry Andersen was a prolific New York City architect. During his early career Andersen was the head draftsman for Simon I. Schwartz (see Schwartz & Gross), but by 1882 he had established his own practice. He was particularly active in the 1890s and 1900s, and his work in Harlem with developers Hogenauer & Wesslau was favorably recognized in at least one architectural publication of the period. Andersen’s work, mostly residential, is represented in the Upper West Side/Central Park West Historic District by several neo-Renaissance style rowhouses, flats, and tenement buildings. An example of his commercial work can be found in what is now known as the Tribeca West Historic District. Andersen designed a warehouse (143-147 Franklin Street, 1897-98) with characteristics of the Renaissance Revival style, including banding and an overscaled window treatment. In the expanded Carnegie Hill Historic District he designed a row of six Renaissance Revival single family houses.

Andersen designed a number of residences in the Hamilton Heights/ Sugar Hill area. In the Hamilton Heights Historic District, he was responsible for eight neo-Renaissance style structures on West 143rd Street (1895) and a row of four brick houses on Hamilton Terrace (1897-98). In the Hamilton Heights Historic District Extension, he designed two attached brick apartment buildings on Amsterdam Avenue (1897). His work is also present in the Hamilton Heights/Sugar Hill Historic District Extension at 2-4 St. Nicholas Place, a brick and terra-cotta apartment building.

One example of Andersen’s apartment house designs can be found in the Hamilton Heights/ Sugar Hill Northeast District. The building at 393 Edgecombe Avenue is a fine example of the neo-Classical style with a limestone base and terra-cotta ornamentation.

Dennis Steadman Francis, *Architects in Practice in New York City, 1840-1900* (New York: Committee for the Preservation of Architectural Records, 1979), 11.

James Ward, *Architects in Practice, New York City, 1900-1940* (New York: Committee for the Preservation of Architectural Records, 1989), 3.

Landmarks Preservation Commission, Research Files.

Landmarks Preservation Commission, "Architects' Appendix," *Tribeca West Historic District Designation Report* (LP-1713), (New York: City of New York, 1991); "Architects' Appendix,"

Upper West Side/ Central Park West Historic District Designation Report (LP-1647), (New York: City of New York, 1990); "Architects; Appendix," *Expanded Carnegie Hill Historic District Designation Report* (LP-1834), (New York: City of New York, 1993); "Architects’s Appendix," *Hamilton Heights Historic District Extension* (LP-2004), (New York: City of New York, 2001).

JOSEPH C. COCKER (dates undetermined)

22 and 24 St. Nicholas Place (1905) 38
26 and 28 St. Nicholas Place (1905-1906) 40
363 and 365 Edgecombe Avenue (1905-1906) 15
367 and 369 Edgecombe Avenue (1905-1906) 17

J.C. Cocker was a prolific architect within the Hamilton Heights/ Sugar Hill Northeast Historic District who specialized in speculative walk-up apartment buildings. He worked primarily within the Harlem area and is listed as a practicing Manhattan architect between the years of 1901 and 1923.

Cocker’s eight apartment buildings are located on contiguous lots and the firm used identical designs, creating a remarkably unified streetscape.

James Ward, *Architects in Practice, New York City, 1840-1940* (New York: Committee for the Preservation of Architectural Records, 1979), 15.

JACOB M. FELSON (1866-1962)

80 St. Nicholas Place (1921) 56

Jacob Felson was brought to New York from Russia by his parents in 1888. He studied at Cooper Union and began to practice architecture in 1910. Felson designed many early movie houses in New York, as well as many apartment houses, including several Art Deco style buildings on the Grand Concourse in the Bronx, ten apartment buildings using various popular styles of the period in the Upper West/Central Park West Historic District, and one neo-Renaissance style apartment building in the Riverside - West End Historic District. In 1938 he became president of Fleetwood Enterprises, Inc., of Bronxville, New York, which specialized in multi-story apartment buildings. He also designed private homes in Westchester County and New Jersey.

Jacob M. Felson obituary, *New York Times*, October 19, 1962
 Landmarks Preservation Commission, “Architects’ Appendix”, *Upper East Side Historic District Designation Report* (LP-1051) (New York: City of New York, 1981); “Architects’ Appendix”, *Riverside - West End Historic District Designation Report* (LP- 1626) (New York: City of New York, 1989); “Architects’ Appendix”, *Upper West Side/ Central Park West Historic District Designation Report*” (LP - 1647) (New York: City of New York, 1990).

CHAS. FERBUSCH (dates undetermined)

40 St. Nicholas Place (1910) 46

Little is known about the career of Charles Ferbusch, who was contracted to design residences in New York during the early 20th century. His design in the Hamilton Heights/ Sugar Hill Northeast Historic District is a neo-Classical apartment house with distinctive geometrical decoration along the roofline.

HORACE GINSBERN (1900-1969)

66-74 St. Nicholas Place (1930-1931) 52

Horace Ginsbern was born as Horace Ginsberg in New York City and graduated from Columbia University in 1919. By 1921 he established his own architectural firm in the city. His expertise was in the design and layout of apartment buildings. Ginsbern joined the American Institute of Architects in 1942 and organized the firm of Horace Ginsbern & Associates in 1944. The firm designed residential, commercial, religious, and educational buildings. Among its principal works are the Harlem River Houses, the first federally funded, federally built and federally owned housing project in New York City (1936-37, a designated New York City landmark, in association with other architects), the Garvin Printing Plant and the Neptune Storage Plant in New Rochelle (1951, 1954), and buildings for the Chock Full of Nuts Chain (1930-60). In the Upper West Side/Central Park West Historic District, Horace Ginsbern designed one apartment building independently (built in 1941), prior to the establishment of Horace Ginsbern & Assocs.

Ginsbern also designed a number of Art Deco apartments in the Bronx. Among these are Norman Plaza (1931) with its elaborately landscaped courtyard, 1150 Grand Concourse (1936-37), and Park Plaza (1929-31), a designated landmark and one of the first and most prominent Art Deco apartment houses in the Bronx. 66-74 St. Nicholas Place is a neo-medieval style apartment building with one of the larger landscaped entry courtyards in the district.

American Architects Directory, (New York: R.R. Bowker Company, 1962), 212, 249.

Horace Ginsbern obituary, *New York Times*, Sep. 22, 1969, p.33:6.

David W. Dunlap, *On Broadway: A Journey Uptown Over Time* (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1990), 290-293.

Landmarks Preservation Commission, Research Files.

James Ward, *Architects in Practice, New York City, 1900-1940* (New York: Committee for the Preservation of Architectural Records, 1989), 3.

Landmarks Preservation Commission, "Architects' Appendix," *Upper West Side/ Central Park West Historic District Designation Report* (LP-1647), (New York, City of New York, 1990); *Park Plaza Apartments Landmark Designation Report* (LP-1077), (New York: City of New York, 1979).

WILLIAM GRINNELL (1858-1920)

14 St. Nicholas Place (1883-1884) 33

16 St. Nicholas Place (1883-1884) 33

Although little is known about William Milne Grinnell, he was listed in city directories as a practicing architect in Manhattan from 1884 to 1901 and was noted as a generous patron of the arts as well as an antique collector who donated \$5,000 to the American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society. He designed the Romanesque Revival Excelsior Power Plant in Manhattan (33-48 Gold Street, 1888). In the Hamilton Heights/ Sugar Hill Northeast Historic District he designed two buildings, Queen Anne style two-family dwellings.

William Milne Grinnell Obituary, *New York Times*, July 1, 1920; 32:2.

Dennis Steadman Francis, *Architects in Practice, New York City, 1840-1900* (New York: Committee for the Preservation of Architectural Records, 1979), 37.

JOHN HAUSER (dates undetermined)

83 St. Nicholas Place(1905) 62
 87 St. Nicholas Place(1905) 62

John Hauser is listed in New York City directories from 1892-1922 as a specialist in private houses and flats. Like many of his contemporaries, he designed in a variety of revival styles. In the Hamilton Heights/Sugar Hill Historic District, he designed twelve Romanesque Revival style rowhouses, a Renaissance Revival and two Northern Renaissance Revival style apartment houses. Other rowhouses and apartment buildings by Hauser are located in the Morris Avenue and Hamilton Heights Historic Districts.

Dennis Steadman Francis, *Architects in Practice, New York City, 1840-1900* (New York: Committee for the Preservation of Architectural Records, 1979), 38.

James Ward, *Architects in Practice, New York City, 1900-1940* (New York: Committee for the Preservation of Architectural Records, 1989), 33.

Landmarks Preservation Commission. *Morris Avenue Historic District Designation Report* (LP-1932), (New York: City of New York, 1986); "Architects' Appendix," *Hamilton Heights/Sugar Hill Historic District Designation Report* (LP-2064) (New York: City of New York, 2001).

SAMUEL KATZ (dates undetermined)

18-20 St. Nicholas Place (1916) 36

Samuel Katz is listed as a practicing architect in Manhattan from 1907 to 1918, and during these years he maintained an office at 218 5th Avenue. His apartment building in the Hamilton Heights/Sugar Hill Northeast Historic District was designed in the Classical Revival style, featuring decorative brickwork and a limestone portico.

James Ward, *Architects in Practice, New York City, 1900-1940* (New York: Committee for the Preservation of Architectural Records, 1979), 41.

Trow's New York City Directory (New York, 1907- 1918).

NEVILLE & BAGGE

Thomas P. Neville (dates undetermined)

George A. Bagge (dates undetermined)

371 Edgecombe Avenue (1905) 19
 30-32 St. Nicholas Avenue (1905) 42

Despite their remarkable productivity throughout New York City, little is known about the individual training and lives of Neville & Bagge. George A. Bagge established his firm during the late 1880s and in 1892 Thomas P. Neville joined him in partnership. That same year they opened an office on West 125th Street, and over the next three decades they became known as residential specialists working in various popular historical revival styles. They designed hundreds of speculative residential buildings for the middle class along the route of the I.R.T. subway in Morningside Heights and in Harlem, as well as occasional hotel and loft buildings. In 1924, Bagge's son joined the firm, continuing until 1936 as George Bagge & Sons [Son].

Neville & Bagge's work includes numerous apartment buildings in the Riverside Drive-West End, Mott Haven East, and Clay Avenue Historic Districts, as well as the Regina Angelorum (1907), a convent and home for working girls connected to Saint Cecilia's Church (R.C.) on East 106th Street (both designated New York City Landmarks), and the Edwin and Elizabeth Shuttleworth House in the Tremont section of the Bronx (1986, a designated New York City Landmark). Along Broadway, between West 140th and 150th Streets, the firm designed eight apartment buildings, including Ellerslie Courts (1907-08, No. 3441-59), 3481-83 Broadway (1905), The Sarsfield (1911, No. 3489-95), The Saguenay, (1906-08, No. 3488-96), The Castleton (1906, No. 3480-86), Washington Court (1906-08, No. 3504-18), The Mecklenberg (1906, No. 3551-59) and the Rudsona (1907, No. 3542). Of 242 multiple dwellings on Morningside Heights, the firm of Neville & Bagge was responsible for 38 designs. The firm also designed four apartment buildings and thirteen rowhouses in the Hamilton Heights Historic District Extension and thirteen rowhouses in various styles in the Hamilton Heights/ Sugar Hill Historic District.

The apartment buildings in Hamilton Heights/ Sugar Hill Northeast are back-to-back and use identical designs on contiguous lots.

Andrew S. Dolkart, *Morningside Heights* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

David W. Dunlap, *On Broadway: A Journey Uptown Over Time* (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1990), 285-289.

Dennis Steadman Francis, *Architects in Practice, New York City, 1840-1900* (New York: Committee for the Preservation of Architectural Records, 1979), 13, 57.

Landmarks Preservation Commission, *Hamilton Heights Historic Extension Designation Report* (LP-2044), (New York: City of New York, 2000), 89; "Architects' Appendix," *Hamilton Heights/Sugar Hill Designation Report* (LP- 2064) (New York: City of New York, 2000); Research Files.

GEORGE FREDERICK PELHAM (1866-1937)

<i>48 St. Nicholas Place (1913)</i>	48
<i>385 Edgecombe Avenue (1913)</i>	35
<i>379-381 Edgecombe Avenue (1925-1926)</i>	23

George Frederick Pelham was born in Ottawa, Canada and was brought to New York as a child. His father, George Brown Pelham (1831-1889), opened an architectural practice in New York in 1875 and served as an architect with the City's Parks Department. After being privately tutored in architecture and serving as a draftsman for a number of years, George F. Pelham opened his own office in 1890. A prolific architect, he specialized in apartment houses designed in the neo-Renaissance, neo-Gothic, and neo-Federal styles during the forty-three years that he practiced. Pelham's work is well-represented in both the Upper

West Side/Central Park West Historic District, the Hamilton Heights/ Sugar Hill Historic District, and the Hamilton Heights/ Sugar Hill Northeast Historic District. He is one of the most prolific architects of the area. Pelham designed rows of houses and flats and numerous apartment buildings in the Renaissance Revival and neo-Renaissance styles.

385 Edgecombe Avenue and 48 St. Nicholas Place are on contiguous lots, and Pelham used the identical design for both. Both buildings have unusually elaborate polychrome and terra-cotta decoration.

Dennis Steadman Francis, *Architects in Practice in New York City, 1840-1900* (New York, 1979), 60.
 Landmarks Preservation Commission, "Architects' Appendix," *Ladies Mile Historic District Designation Report* (LP-1609), (New York: City of New York, 1989); "Architects' Appendix," *Riverside-West End Historic District Designation Report* (LP-1626), (New York: City of New York, 1989); "Architects' Appendix," *Upper East Side Historic District Designation Report* (LP-1051), (New York: City of New York, 1981); "Architects' Appendix," *Upper West Side/ Central Park West Historic District Designation Report* (LP-1647), (New York: City of New York, 1990); "Architects' Appendix," *Hamilton Heights Historic District Extension* (LP-2044) (New York: City of New York, 2000); "Architects' Appendix," *Hamilton Heights/Sugar Hill Historic District* (LP-2064) (New York: City of New York, 2000).

SAMUEL SASS (dates undetermined)

52-54 St. Nicholas Place (1914) 50

Samuel Sass was established in independent architectural practice from 1893 and is listed as a practicing architect in New York City directories through 1916. In 1899 Sass joined Max J. Smallheiser in partnership to form the firm of Sass & Smallheiser. The firm existed until at least 1905, designing numerous apartment buildings in the city, after which time Sass returned to independent practice. Sass designed factories, stores, and at least one office building, but he appears to have specialized in apartment buildings. An example of Sass' architecture is a Romanesque Revival style stable located in the Upper West Side/ Central Park West Historic District.

Dennis Steadman Francis, *Architects in Practice, New York City, 1840-1900* (New York: Committee for the Preservation of Architectural Records, 1979), 67, 70, 95.
Key to the Architects of Greater New York (New York, 1900), 54.
Key to the Architects of Greater New York (New York, 1901), 58.
 Landmarks Preservation Commission, "Architects' Appendix" *Ladies Mile Historic District Designation Report* (LP-1609), (New York: City of New York, 1989); "Architects' Appendix" *Riverside-West End Historic District Designation Report* (LP-1626), (New York: City of New York, 1989).

SASS & SPRINGSTEEN

76-78 St. Nicholas Place (1916) 54

See “Springsteen and Goldhammer” and “Samuel Sass”

SCHWARTZ & GROSS

Simon I. Schwartz (1877?-1956)

Arthur Gross (1877-1950)

34 and 36 St. Nicholas Place (1905-1906) 36
375 and 377 Edgecombe Avenue (1905-1906) 21
409-417 Edgecombe Avenue (1916-1917) 31

Graduates of the Hebrew Technical Institute, Simon I. Schwartz and Arthur Gross were partners for nearly four decades. Schwartz, who began his career as a draftsman in the office of Henry Andersen, first teamed with Gross in 1902. Their partnership, which proved to be extremely successful, specialized in luxury apartment buildings, including the Beaux-Arts style Colosseum at 435 Riverside Drive (1910), the Gothic-inspired 1185 Park Avenue (1929, located in the Expanded Carnegie Hill Historic District), and 55 Central Park West (1929, located in the Upper West Side/ Central Park West Historic District), whose elevations display the influence of the Art Deco style. Much of the firm’s output has survived, particularly in the Upper West Side/ Central Park West, the Riverside Drive-West End Historic Districts, and the Hamilton Heights Historic District and Extension. The firm also designed 409 Edgecombe Avenue, a designated New York City landmark, which was the most prestigious address for African-American New Yorkers from the 1930s through the 1950s.

In the Hamilton Heights/ Sugar Hill Northeast Historic District, Schwartz & Gross’ apartment house designs are in the Beaux-Arts style using brick and limestone with terra-cotta details.

Arthur Gross obituary, *New York Times* (November 7, 1950), 25.

Landmarks Preservation Commission, *Hamilton Heights Historic District Extension Designation Report* (LP-2044), (New York: City of New York, 2000), 89; Research Files.

SPRINGSTEEN & GOLDHAMMER

George W. Springsteen (1879?-1954)
Albert Goldhammer (dates undetermined)

397-407 Edgewcombe Avenue(1922) 29
79 - 81 St. Nicholas Place (1921) 60

Born in Brooklyn, George W. Springsteen studied at Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art and at Pratt Institute. The early years of his architectural career were spent in the office of Rouse & Goldstone. He later formed the partnerships of Mast & Springsteen and Sass & Springsteen. In 1919 the firm of Springsteen & Goldhammer was formed with Albert Goldhammer, of whom little is known. In partnership for fifteen years, the firm was active in the design of apartments for low-cost housing in the city, many examples of which can be found in the Bronx. Their first such project was the Amalgamated Cooperative Apartments which was erected in 1926-27 at Sedgwick, Jackson, and Dickson Avenues in the Bronx. In the Upper West Side/Central Park West Historic District Springsteen & Goldhammer designed a neo-Renaissance/neo-Romanesque style store and loft building in 1922-23. The firm also designed a unique example of an Arts and Crafts style apartment house in the Hamilton Heights/ Sugar Hill Northeast Historic District. Independently, Goldhammer designed a synagogue, school and apartment building for the Society for the Advancement of Judaism in 1938.

George W. Springsteen obituary, *New York Times*, Oct. 6, 1954, p. 25:1.
Landmarks Preservation Commission, *Hamilton Heights Historic District Extension Designation Report* (LP-2044), (New York: City of New York, 2000), 89; Research Files.

FINDINGS AND DESIGNATION

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture, and other features of this area, the Hamilton Heights/Sugar Hill Northeast Historic District contains buildings and other improvements which have a special character and a special historical and aesthetic interest and value and which represent one or more eras in the history of New York City and which cause this area, by reason of these factors, to constitute a distinct section of the city.

The Commission further finds that among its special qualities the Hamilton Heights/Sugar Hill Northeast Historic District contains thirty-two buildings that evoke a specific and cohesive period in the neighborhood's development during the early twentieth century when speculative developers ceased building single-family houses and started constructing multiple dwellings; that the district includes two attached shingle-style dwellings dating from the mid-1880s by William Milne Grinnell, that most of the subsequent apartment buildings were designed by New York City architects who specialized in apartment house construction, including Neville & Bagge, Schwartz & Gross, George F. Pelham, and Horace Ginsbern; that these buildings have brick and stone facades reflecting a range of mostly neo-classical styles, especially Renaissance and Colonial Revival; that the neighborhood achieved its greatest fame during the 1930s and 1940s when a significant number of black professionals, active in business, law and the arts, including W.C. Handy, Duke Ellington, Langston Hughes, and Thurgood Marshall, lived here; and that the cohesive and intact streetscape provides the Hamilton Heights/Sugar Hill Northeast Historic District with a special sense of place.

Accordingly, pursuant to Chapter 21 (formerly Chapter 63) of the Charter of the City of New York, and Chapter 8-A of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as an historic district, the Hamilton Heights/Sugar Hill Northeast Historic District, Borough of Manhattan, consists of the properties bounded by a line beginning at a point along the eastern curblines of St. Nicholas Place formed by a line extending easterly from the northern curblines of West 153rd Street, extending southerly along the eastern curblines of St. Nicholas Place to a point in said curblines formed by a line extending westerly from the southern property line of 14 St. Nicholas Place, then easterly along said property line, northerly along the eastern property lines of 14, 16, and 18-20 St. Nicholas Place, easterly along the southern property line of 363 Edgecombe Avenue to the western curblines of Edgecombe Avenue, northerly along the western curblines of Edgecombe Avenue to a point in said curblines formed by a line extending easterly from the northern property line of 409-417 Edgecombe Avenue, westerly along said property line, westerly along the northern property line of 80 St. Nicholas Place to the western curblines of St. Nicholas Place, northerly along said curblines to point formed by a line extending easterly from the northern property line of 87 St. Nicholas Place, westerly along said property line, southerly along the western property lines of 87 and 83 St. Nicholas Place, easterly along the southern property line of 83 St. Nicholas Place, southerly along the western property lines of 79-81 and 75 St. Nicholas Place to the northern curblines of West 153 Street, then extending easterly to the point of the beginning.

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