

HAWTHORNE COURT APARTMENTS, 215-37 to 215-43 43rd Avenue and 42-22 to 42-38 216th Street, Queens.

Built 1930-31; Benjamin Braunstein, architect

Landmark Site: Borough of Queens Tax Map Block 6306, Lot 15

On March 22, 2011, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Hawthorne Court Apartments and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 5). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provision of law. Five people spoke in favor of designation, including representatives of the Historic Districts Council, Queens Preservation Council, Central Queens Historical Association, and Bayside Historical Society. A letter in favor of designation from Paul Graziano, Principal, Associated Cultural Resource Consultants was read (in part) into the record. The Commission received a letter from Assemblymember Edward C. Braunstein and an e-mail from Michael Perlman, Rego-Forest Preservation Council, in favor of designation. The owner spoke against designation. The first hearing having been left open for additional comments, a second hearing was duly advertised and held on October 28, 2014 (Item No. 1). Representatives of the Bayside Historical Society and Historic Districts Council reiterated their support of designation. The owner and her representative spoke in opposition to designation. The Commission received a letter from Councilmember Paul A. Vallone and an e-mail from the Rego-Forest Preservation Council both in favor of designation.

Summary

Originally farmland, Bayside became a commuter suburb with the completion of the railroad tunnel to Manhattan in 1910. By the late 1920s and early 1930s, low-rise, suburban garden apartments appeared. Incorporating ideas drawn from the British garden city movement with those of the model tenement movement in New York, particularly the incorporation of substantial green space, this type of garden apartment was well suited to suburban Bayside. The Tudor Revival



style Hawthorne Court Apartments is a significant example of this type. The respected architect Benjamin Braunstein arranged the units in two groups of varying size around a courtyard with meandering paths and set back from the streets. The buildings with their complex massing of roof lines, dormers, and entrances as well as the proportion of facade materials create a highly scenographic environment. The Hawthorne Court Apartments was awarded for its design by the Queens Chamber of Commerce in 1931.

BUILDING DESCRIPTION

Description

The Hawthorne Court Apartments is a 2½- to 3-story, Tudor Revival style garden apartment complex on a nearly square corner lot with historically designed facades of brick laid in monk bond, stucco, half-timbering, and clapboard (now largely replaced with vinyl or aluminum siding) in various combinations, and slate roofs of different types with copper-flashed ridge lines. The units facing 216th Street have high stoops, those facing 43rd Avenue or the courtyard have a single step. The secondary facades (west and north) of the larger structure are identical, concrete at the basement, brick at the first story, stucco at the second story, and vinyl or aluminum siding at the third. Both have exaggerated jerkinhead roofs. The historic steel casement windows have been replaced with four-over-four, six-over-six, and/or eight-over-eight sash windows with snap in muntins; many of those on the first story have multi-light transoms. Additionally, each of the replaced windows has a storm window. The wood trim and stucco have been repainted.

Unit 1:

Front (south) Facade: brick, stone quoins; steeply-pitched end gable; entrance (embedded in facade of Unit 2) with carved lintel and possibly historic metal standing seam door hood with scalloped valance; brick sills; decorative wood shutters with hardware.

Alterations: stoop replaced; door replaced; vinyl or aluminum siding in peak of gable.

East Facade: similar to front facade; brick sills and lintels at first and second stories; slate roof with metal snow guards; half-timbered, shed roof dormer with decorative wood shutters (one in poor condition); possibly historic lantern on south east corner.

Alterations: glass of lantern replaced; leaders.

North Facade: brick (with stone quoins on east) and stucco separated by a wood band; brick sills; jerkinhead gable.

Alterations: wall behind leader and at basement painted; two non-historic doors and light fixture at basement (shared with unit 3).

Unit 2:

Front (south) Facade: brick and half-timbering; gabled brick portico, side openings with possibly historic metal railings, round-arched entrance with stone voussoirs, slate roof, and historic lantern; wood door with single light and mail slot; brick sills at first story; decorative wood shutters with hardware at second story; side gable slate roof with snow guards; stuccoed hipped dormers.

Alterations: one shutter dog missing; stoop replaced; wires; leaders; doorbells.

West Facade (common to units 2-5): brick at the first story with buttress at corner; stucco at the second story with wood at corners; wood band between stories; brick sills at first and second stories; jerkinhead roof.

Alterations: third story resided with vinyl or aluminum; new window enframements at third story; vent on roof and at second story; basement windows partially infilled; wires.

Unit 3:

Front (east) Facade: brick and half timbering; battered wall and stone quoins at entrance; wood single-light door; carved lintel; brick sill at first story; peaked end gable; stuccoed chimney with incised design above a brick band.

Alterations: stoop replaced; peak of gable resided with vinyl or aluminum siding; light of door covered in “stained-glass” contact paper; non-historic light fixture; sills at second and third stories possibly covered; leaders, one relocated; alterations to basement see Unit 1.

West Facade: see Unit 2.

Unit 4:

Front (east) Facade: brick and half-timbering; wood single-light door; wood lintel; possibly historic light fixture; brick sills at first story; decorative wood shutters with hardware; stuccoed, segmental-arched wall dormers; side gable roof with snow guards and copper flashing at ridge.

Alterations: stoop/patio (shared with Unit 5) replaced; light in door replaced with clear glass; leader; one shutter dog missing; sills at second and third stories possibly covered; basement painted; non-historic door at basement.

West Facade: see Unit 2.

Unit 5:

Front (south) Facade (including part of the south facade of Unit 6): brick and half-timbering; carved wood lintel; wood door with leaded-glass light; brick sill at first story; stuccoed, double shed dormer; side gable with snow guards and copper flashing at ridge.

Alterations: stoop/patio (shared with Unit 4) replaced; sills at second and third stories possibly covered; non-historic light fixture; metal plate added to door.

West Facade: see Unit 2.

North Facade (partially visible; common to Units 5 and 6): brick at the first story; stucco at the second story with wood at corners; wood band between stories; brick sills at first and second story; brick chimney at corner with Unit 7; jerkinhead or hipped roof.

Alterations: third story resided with vinyl or aluminum; wires; cables.

Units 6 and 7:

Front (east) Facade: brick; angular wood entrance portico with stuccoed spandrels, turned spindle grilles, arched entry, and slate roof; wood doors with stained-glass lights; wood screen door (Unit 7); brick sills and lintels; two stuccoed, shed roof dormers; side gable roof with snow guards and copper flashing at the ridge; possibly historic hanging light.

Alterations: stoop replaced; new panning at first and second stories; leader; light fixture missing glass; adhesive lettering on door to Unit 6.

South Facade (Unit 6): brick and half-timbering; steeply peaked gable; angular bay with stuccoed spandrels and slate roof; brick sill and lintel, and decorative wood shutters with hardware at second story.

Alterations: sill at third story possibly covered.

West Facade (partially visible, common to Unit 7 and 8): brick at first story, stucco at second story with wood at corners; wood band between stories; brick sills at first and second stories; brick chimney in corner with Unit 6; jerkinhead or hipped roof.

Alterations: third story resided with vinyl or aluminum; wires; cables.

Unit 8

Front (east) Facade: brick and stucco; recessed entrance (shared with Unit 9) with brick lintel and quoins (left side only); wood doors with stained- or leaded-glass lights (one for each apartment); possibly historic hanging light; wrought-iron balconette; stuccoed, circular turret with slate conical roof and weather vane.

Alterations: stoop (shared with Unit 9) replaced; non-historic doorbell and mailbox attached to door of apartment 8A; light in door to apartment 8B replaced with textured glass; door off balconette altered; base of balconette repaired.

North Facade (common to Units 8-11): brick at first story, stucco at second story with wood at corners; wood band between stories; brick sills at first and second stories; exaggerated jerkinhead slate roof.

Alterations: third story resided with vinyl or aluminum; new window enframements at third story; basement windows partially infilled.

West Façade: see Unit 7.

Unit 9

Front (south) Facade (including part of Unit 10): brick; recessed entrance (shared with Unit 8); wood doors with stained-glass lights (one for each apartment); brick sills; side gable roof with snow guards; continuous, stuccoed shed dormer.

Alterations: light in door of apartment 9B replaced with non-historic stained-glass.

North Facade: see Unit 8.

Unit 10:

Front (west) Facade: brick, half-timbering; wood door; stuccoed chimney with brick band and incised design on south side; steeply pitched roof.

Alterations: stoop replaced; light in door replaced; non-historic light fixture at entrance.

South Facade (shared with Unit 11): brick on first story; half-timbering on second story; brick sills at first story; exaggerated jerkinhead roof.

Alterations: basement painted; third story resided with aluminum or vinyl; new window enframements at third story; non-historic light fixtures at basement and corner; non-historic door at basement

North Facade: see Unit 8.

Unit 11:

Front (east) Facade: brick and half-timbering; cross gable brick with stone quoins; second story corner projection with hipped roof; metal stoop railings; entrance on south side of cross gable; stone door lintel; wood single-light door; brick sills at first story and second story of gable; decorative wood shutters with hardware at second story; stuccoed hipped dormer; snow guards on roof.

Alterations: stoop replaced; peak of gable resided with vinyl or aluminum; light in door replaced with plain glass; non-historic light fixture; leader; basement window replaced; remote utility meter.

South Facade: See Unit 10

North Facade: See Unit 8

Unit 12:

Front (east) Facade: brick and half-timbering; cross gable; one story shed roof extension with stone detailing; possibly historic stoop railings; segmental-arched entrance with stone voussoirs; wood door with single light; brick sills at basement and first story; metal snow guards.

Alterations: stoop replaced; non-historic pole attached to railing; light in door replaced with reinforced glass; sills at second and third stories possibly covered; non-historic light fixture and mailbox; cables; leaders and gutters; vinyl pipe at basement; window at basement replaced.

North Facade: brick on first story and half-timbering on second story; brick sills on first story; small window in extension; jerkinhead roof.

Alterations: third story resided with vinyl or aluminum; cable box and wires.

West Facade: brick and half-timbering; decorative wood shutters with hardware at second story; side gable roof; stuccoed shed roof dormer; snow guards.

Alterations: cables; leader; gutter.

Unit 14:

Front (west) Facade: cross gable; brick, with stone detailing, and half-timbering, wood clapboarding in peak; one-story, shed roof extension; entrance facing north; wood door with leaded-glass light; brick sill; historic light fixture; turned spindle grille; angular bay with wood panels and slate roof; stuccoed chimney with incised design and brick band; window on south side of gable

Alterations: stoop replaced; cables and wires; leader and gutter.

East Facade: brick and stucco with wood bands; brick sills at first and second stories; side gable roof; stuccoed shed roof dormer with asymmetrical fenestration; snow guards.

Alterations: leader and gutter.

Unit 15:

Front (east) Facade: cross gable; brick, with stone quoins, and half-timbering; brick sills at basement and first story; possibly historic grille at basement; decorative wood shutters with hardware at second story; window and stuccoed chimney with brick bands on south side of gable; snow guards.

Alterations: peak of gable resided with vinyl or aluminum; new panning at first and second stories; basement window replaced; leader and gutter; cables; additional snow guards on both sides of gable

North Facade: brick and stucco with wood band; entrance with stone lintel and quoins; possibly historic stoop railings; wood single-light door; possibly historic light fixture; brick sills at first and second story; two-story segmental-arched projection.

Alterations: stoop replaced; light in door replaced.

West Facade: brick and stucco with wood band; brick sills at first and second stories; side gable roof; stuccoed shed roof dormer with asymmetrical fenestration; one-story shed roof extension.

Alterations: basement (shared with Units 14 and 17) painted; non-historic doors in basement; basement window replaced; leader and gutter; wires.

Unit 16:

Front (south) Facade: brick and half-timbering; gabled brick portico extending into a buttress on the west, side openings with possibly historic metal railings, round-arched entrance with stone voussoirs, slate roof, and historic lantern; two wood doors with leaded- and stained-glass lights; decorative wood shutters with hardware at second story; segmental wood and stucco wall dormer; stuccoed hipped dormer.

Alterations: stoop replaced; one shutter missing; leader and gutter.

East Facade: brick and half-timbering; buttress at corner; decorative wood shutters with hardware; side gable; stuccoed hipped dormers.

Alterations: leader and gutter; wires.

Unit 17:

Front (west) Facade: brick with stone quoins; projecting brick and stone entrance with peaked and hipped roof; wood lintel; brick sill; wood door with single light; possibly historic stained-glass lantern on southwest corner; side gable roof; stucco and wood dormer with shed and peaked roof; snow guards.

Alterations: stoop replaced; non-historic light fixture at entrance; leaders and gutter.

South Facade: brick with stone quoins; angular oriel; brick sills at first and third stories; end gable.

Alterations: peak of gable resided with aluminum or vinyl; mullions of oriel possibly resurfaced; standing seam roof of oriel tarred over.

North Facade: brick with stone quoins and stucco with wood band; brick sills; jerkinhead gable.

Alterations: basement wall painted; non-historic door at basement; cables

Site Features: deep lawn with planting beds on 43rd Avenue; grass and planting beds in court; stairs and main paths replaced; non-historic railings at steps; historic brick posts (repointed), with bronze plaque, and metal fence and archway on 43rd Avenue; historic brick walls at entrance on 216th Street; basement window wells with flush grilles at Units 1, 3, 11, 12, 14, 16, 17 (grille at 12 replaced); basement entrances behind Units 1 (shared with Unit 3), 4 (north and west), 10, and 17 (shared with Units 14 and 15) with possibly historic metal railings on concrete curbs, metal handrails, and concrete steps (steps at Unit 17 altered); possibly historic slate and concrete path to basement behind Unit 17; concrete perimeter walkway on west and north; metal pipes on west; gooseneck pipe at Unit 14; concrete block and brick storage unit on north.

SITE HISTORY

Bayside, Queens¹

Bayside's growth was closely tied to transportation. Railroad service began in 1866 and by the 1870s there was daily service to Bayside, via ferry to Long Island City, from East 34th Street in Manhattan.²

In 1871 John Straiton and George Storm, successful New York businessmen, purchased a large parcel of land east of Bell Boulevard from Effingham Lawrence.³ The roughly 53 acre parcel between the railroad tracks and Northern Boulevard was surveyed into 591 building lots, including the site of the Hawthorne Court Apartments.⁴

Queens became part of New York City in 1898 and in the decades that followed, several East River links were created making vast tracts of inexpensive land readily available for

development. Once home to farms and mansions for well-to-do families and movie stars drawn to its rural atmosphere and recreational offerings, Bayside became a commuter suburb with direct access to Manhattan via the new railroad tunnel constructed in 1910.⁵ Although largely developed with single-family homes, by the end of the 1920s beginning of the 1930s low-rise, low-density garden apartments were being constructed in Bayside. Area realtor J. Wilson Dayton told an interviewer from the *New York Times* in October 1931:

Within the last five years Bayside has gained new impetus in apartment house construction due primarily to the origination of its own distinctive type of design. First introduced in Bayside by George L. Bousequet, architect, the English courtyard, three-story type of apartment is particularly adapted for suburban living and met with success.⁶

Benjamin and Harry Neisloss of Jamaica were early developers of multi-family dwellings in Bayside. They purchased the corner property at 43rd Avenue and 216th Street from Frederic and Annie Storm in 1928 and two years later hired Benjamin Braunstein to design a garden apartment complex of 16 two-family units.⁷

Housing and the Development of the Garden Apartment⁸

The garden apartment complex, with its series of buildings forming a perimeter around a common landscaped area, reached its apex in the 1920s⁹ as cheaper land in the outer boroughs became available for middle-class residential development. This new type of apartment house, of moderate size with modern amenities, was an outgrowth of two factors that influenced the design of housing in New York City in the late 19th and early 20th centuries: the “model tenement,” or improved housing movement and the “Garden City” movement.

By the middle of the 19th century, New York had developed from a small city to a world metropolis. Restricted by geography and by the lack of affordable public transit, the growing working-class population was crowded into a few wards in Lower Manhattan near their places of employment. At first, the need for low-cost housing was met by partitioning existing row houses into one- and two-room units. By the 1840s, as the population swelled, builders began erecting the city’s first tenements. Built on the same long narrow lots as the earlier row houses, the new four- and five-story dwellings covered from 50 to 90 percent of the lot and offered little in the way of sanitary facilities, air, and light to the apartments within.

Reformers began attacking the problems of the slums almost immediately, lobbying for the enactment of housing and sanitary codes and building model tenements which they hoped would demonstrate the feasibility of providing hygienic, comfortable housing for the working poor at market rates.

Several model tenement projects were undertaken between 1877 and 1905. The architects of these projects created various plans to achieve improved light and ventilation to apartments while still maintaining an economically feasible density. Among the most successful projects of the 1870s were the two open stair tenements in Cobble Hill designed in 1876 and 1878 by William S. Field for Alfred T. White.¹⁰ In 1878, architect James E. Ware won a competition sponsored by *The Plumber and Sanitary Engineer* with his design for what would become known as the dumbbell tenement. Ware narrowed the building in the center creating substantial side shafts intended to provide light and air to interior rooms. The Tenement House Law of 1879 (“Old Law”) favored Ware’s “dumbbell plan” and further mandated that buildings could not

cover more than 65 percent of the lot although, like its predecessor, it was not properly enforced.¹¹ In the following decade, a number of model tenements were built incorporating either light courts or center courtyards, both features found in contemporary apartment buildings for the wealthy and middle classes.¹² However, it was not until after the publication of an article in *Scribner's Magazine* in 1894 by the Beaux-Arts trained architect Ernest Flagg that the concept of the open court was seriously adopted into tenement house design. Flagg's proposal combined four standard lots into a single 100-foot by 100-foot lot large enough for a single, roughly square building with a central courtyard. Derived from French apartment house and tenement design, Flagg's plan provided for more air, light, and open space than the dumbbell plan.¹³

The Tenement House Act of 1901 that created the "New Law Tenement" was extremely influential on the design of housing, both in Manhattan and the outer boroughs. It mandated 70 percent lot coverage, with a minimum size for air shafts or courtyards and a building height based on the width of the street it faced. This law essentially made it necessary to assemble more than one lot in order to build apartments in New York. By the turn of the century, the idea of perimeter block design of apartments had become acceptable for both luxury and philanthropic houses and Flagg-type plans influenced middle-class multiple dwellings through the 1920s.¹⁴

As the struggle for decent housing for the poor was being waged in the 19th century, the middle-class faced their own housing problems. To the middle-class the "individual private house [was] the protector of family privacy, morality, and identity,"¹⁵ but by 1866, many within the middle class were unable to afford their own homes. Flats and apartment buildings, with fully self-contained suites of rooms, offered an alternative. By 1880, "the French flat, catering to the middle class, was a fixture of the city's architecture"¹⁶ and by the middle of the decade a larger percentage of the city's population was living in apartments than in single-family brownstones.¹⁷

The end of the 19th century saw the rise of the garden city movement in Britain which played an important role in early 20th century planning in the United States, as well as, Britain. In 1898 the reformer Ebenezer Howard published *To-morrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform* (later re-titled *Garden Cities of To-Morrow*) in which he promulgated his theory of new town planning. Howard's concept of the autonomous "garden city," tied only to large cities by railroad and open to all classes, included institutions, parks, shops, homes, and the factories to support the residents surrounded by agricultural land.¹⁸

In 1901 Raymond Unwin (1863-1940) laid out his concept of town planning in *The Art of Building a Home*, including two ideas which would later become important elements of garden city planning: the urban quadrangle and the village green in which the houses were laid out facing a green space or garden.¹⁹ Between 1902 and 1905 Unwin and his brother-in-law Barry Parker (1867-1947) designed three seminal low-density garden city developments in England: New Earswick, Letchworth, and Hampstead Garden Suburb.²⁰ In Letchworth which was designed as a prototype of Howard's garden city, the partners included picturesque rooflines with multiple gables and dormers²¹ that gave "Howard's radical ideas an expression that was totally unthreatening, and that had been artfully designed to evoke traditional English villages."²² The plan implemented at Hampstead Garden Suburb²³ was more maturely developed than that of Letchworth and incorporated a hierarchy of roads (for pedestrians and traffic).²⁴ Unwin's planning approach continued to develop and in 1912 he published *Nothing Gained by Overcrowding* in which he made the case for expanding the quadrangle plan to an entire block.

During World War I, the United States government initiated a building program to house workers in war-related industries. The most influential was the Emergency Fleet Corporation which constructed 31 housing projects for the workers in the wartime shipyards. In several of the

projects, the architects experimented with grouping houses into discreet units within a suburban setting based on the garden city design principles.

The 1920s were a period of significance in the development of middle-class housing in New York City. The availability of large quantities of cheap land in the outer boroughs reversed the conventional wisdom among developers regarding the unprofitability of reduced lot coverage which led to the development of the “garden apartment.” As housing historian Richard Plunz notes:

[The] “garden apartment” comprised many possible approaches and contexts, all involved the fundamental premise of building coverage reduced to the point of opening up a possibility of integrating “garden” courtyards within the mass of the housing, so that the design conventions associated with the tenement air shaft were altered beyond recognition.²⁵

Unlike the Sage Foundation’s development at Forest Hills Gardens, the large developments at Jackson Heights and Sunnyside Gardens located in western Queens were restricted in their layout by the pre-existing grid. Adapting the garden city principles to their needs, the developers of Jackson Heights from the late 1910s to 1920s designed block-plan complexes of medium-height garden apartments. Arranged along the block fronts, either continuously or in groups, the buildings had landscaped gardens along the street facades and the common rear yards. Toward the end of the 1920s this block-plan was adapted to rows of attached and semi-detached single- and convertible two-family houses designed in historically-based styles.²⁶ For Sunnyside Gardens, the designers believed that more “human scale” buildings would further their goals of community. There they chose to combine different types of dwellings within the courts, including single-, double- and triple-family homes with low scale apartment buildings. By combining buildings with several types of layouts, roof outlines and heights, detailing, and sizes they created visual variety and interest. To provide open space, houses on many blocks were arranged in perimeter rows close to the street with large open rear yard areas combining private gardens and shared open courtyards while others were arranged as mews, perpendicular to the streets with their courtyards enclosed by the houses.²⁷

As noted above, Bayside developed its own version of the garden apartment that shared aspects of both apartment and row house design, adapting them to Bayside’s lower density, suburban environment.

Benjamin Braunstein

Architect Benjamin Braunstein (1892-1972) was born in Constantinople (Istanbul), Turkey and, as an infant, was brought to the United States by his parents. He graduated from the Hebrew Technical Institute, a vocational school established in 1883, where he had studied from 1905-08. He followed this with six years of study with the Beaux Arts Society where he won several medals. After serving in the army during World War I, he opened his own practice in 1921. Braunstein designed a wide variety of buildings, including an elaborate proposal for a Queens civic center, but he was best known for his multi-family residential designs. During the 1920s and 1930s he designed numerous apartments in the Tudor and Colonial Revival styles throughout Queens particularly in Forest Hills, Rego Park, Kew Gardens, and Bayside several of which, including the Hawthorne Court Apartments, won design awards from the Chamber of Commerce. From 1934 to 1935 Braunstein served as Queens reconditioning supervisor of the

Home Owners Loan Corporation, a government agency established in 1933 to refinance home mortgages in default to prevent foreclosure. Beginning in the 1940s and continuing into the 1950s, Braunstein designed many large-scale apartment complexes in Queens, Brooklyn, Long Island, and New Jersey often in collaboration with the developers Benjamin (1893-1960) and Harry (1891-1971) Neisloss for whom he had designed the Hawthorne Court Apartments. Typical of his work during this period were two-story garden apartment complexes in the neo-Colonial style with plans that provided ample open space for recreation and amenities such as garages. Beginning with two projects for war workers in Somerville, New Jersey he expanded this concept to a vast scale in his postwar housing designs throughout Queens such as Glen Oaks Village, Oakland Gardens, Clearview Gardens, and Lindenwood. During this period Braunstein also designed complexes of larger buildings such as Electchester, Mitchell Gardens, and Linden Hill in Queens and University Towers and Concord Village in Brooklyn.²⁸

Subsequent History

The character of Bayside was altered as the construction of major arterial highways like the Cross Island Parkway (c. 1940) and Clearview Expressway (1961-63) bound it on the east and west. While the Bayside of private homes and smaller apartment houses survived, new communities with their own shopping malls and facilities like Bay Terrace and Oakland Gardens were created as developers, including the Neisloss brothers, turned large tracts of land in northern Queens into middle-income rental and cooperative garden apartment housing in the post-war era. In the last 30 years Bayside has seen an increase in its Asian population, particularly residents of Chinese and Korean descent.²⁹

Design of the Hawthorne Court Apartments

During the late 1920s and early 1930s several Tudor Revival style garden apartments were constructed within walking distance of the Bayside railroad station. Located in a largely suburban area, these complexes, set back from the street on landscaped sites, were designed to relate in size and scale to the neighboring single family houses. Smaller and mid-block complexes were designed with symmetrical facades of brick, stone, half-timbering, and clapboard along with an admixture of gables and dormers; each of the units arranged in a u-shaped plan around a courtyard. Buildings on corner sites which included some units accessed from the street often featured a more elaborately designed secondary street facade such as 212-16 38th Avenue and 215-02 to 215-04 43rd Avenue (aka 43-05 215th Street). While there were some variations such as Surrey Court, which is laid out in the style of a quadrangle, the u-shaped court formed the basic plan (though multiplied) for larger complexes such as that at 42nd Avenue between 204th and 205th Streets.

The Hawthorne Court Apartments is an exceptional example of this low-rise Tudor Revival garden apartment. Sited on a large corner lot the 16 two-family units³⁰ are arranged in two groups, a large building of 11 units and a smaller one of five units with the majority of the entrances facing the courtyard.³¹ While ultimately part of a whole, Braunstein gave each unit an individual appearance by varying roof lines, dormers, and entrances, as well as the proportion of facade materials. This complex massing creates a highly scenographic environment that elevates the interior courtyard, in particular, to a new aesthetic level. On 43rd Avenue, set back behind deep lawns, the nearly identical end units (no. 1 and 2 on the west, 16 and 17 on the east) give the appearance of large single-family dwellings. The units (nos. 11, 12, and 15) fronting 216th Street are built closer to the street and read as Tudor Revival row houses. Two paths, one with a

wrought-iron archway, lead into the court from the streets. It is little wonder that at the time of its construction, advertisements boasted that “a famous architect” deemed it the “most beautiful apartment group I have ever seen” and the Queens Chamber of Commerce awarded it for its design.³²

Researched and written by
Marianne S. Percival
Research Department

NOTES

¹ This section based in part on New York City, Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC), *35-34 Bell Boulevard Designation Report (LP-2154)* prepared by Matthew A. Postal (New York: City of New York, 2004), 2.

² Abraham Bell, a successful shipping and commission merchant in Manhattan, purchased a parcel of 246 acres in the area from Timothy Matlock in 1824. His descendants, who are responsible for the layout of the town, donated the land for the station. Alison McKay, *Images of America: Bayside* (Charlestown, S. C.: Arcadia Publishing Co, 2008), 7-8.

³ Queens County, Office of the Register, Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 364, p. 78 (October 16, 1871) and Liber 365, p. 434 (December 30, 1871).

⁴ “Map of 591 Building Lots Belonging to Mess. Straiton & Storm at Bayside Queens Co., LI” surveyed by L. F. Graether, Whitestone, November 1871, filed October 30, 1872. A conveyance transferring ownership of part of the property, including the Hawthorne Court site, to Maria, wife of John Straiton, prohibits use of the land for manufacturing or other nuisance, and establishes the size of dwelling houses and their placement on the property. Queens County, Office of the Register, file maps, vol. 20, p. 14-15; Queens County, Office of the Register, Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 465, p. 123 (May 13, 1875). The site of Hawthorne Court remained undeveloped until 1907-08 when a house designed by Frederick E. Hill was built for Frederick A. Storm, Jr. It was demolished in 1928 by the Neisloss Brothers developers of the Hawthorne Court Apartments. New York City, Department of Buildings, Queens County, New Building (NB) Permit 924-1907 and Demolition (DM) Permit 1796-1928.

⁵ A proposed extension of the Flushing IRT to Bayside was contemplated but never built.

⁶ “Bayside Shows Growth: New Homes and Apartment Houses under Construction,” *New York Times (NYT)*, October 18, 1931, 156. The Linwood Studios which was located at 206th Street and 42nd Avenue was demolished for construction of the Clearview Expressway. *Insurance Maps of Borough of Queens New York City*, vol. 12 (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1934, updated to 1992), pl.29.

⁷ The Neisloss brothers demolished the Frederick A. Storm house before they sold the property in early 1929. They regained title in December of that year. Queens County, Office of the Register, Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 3219, p. 120 (September 10, 1928), Liber 3271, p. 476 (February 19, 1929); Liber 3362, serial no. 91924 (December 21, 1929); Department of Buildings, Queens County, DM 1796-1928 and NB 6632-1930.

⁸ The information in this section is based in part on LPC, *City and Suburban Homes Company, First Avenue Estate Designation Report (LP-1692)* (New York: City of New York, 1990), prepared by Gale Harris; LPC, *Jackson Heights Historic District Designation Report (LP-1831)* (New York: City of New York, 1993), prepared by the Research Department; LPC, *Sunnyside Gardens Historic District Designation Report (LP-2258)* (New York: City of New York, 2007) prepared by Virginia Kurshan.

⁹ Richard Plunz, *A History of Housing in New York City* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 164.

¹⁰ Known as the Tower Building (1876-77) and Home Building (1878-79) these projects were based on the Sir Sidney Waterlow's Industrial Dwellings in London. They are included in the Cobble Hill Historic District.

¹¹ Most of the dumbbell tenements covered closer to 80% of the lot. Plunz, 24.

¹² The light court, a space enclosed on three sides by the building with the fourth side opening onto the street or a rear yard, had been a seminal feature of Richard Morris Hunt's Stuyvesant Apartments (1869-70, demolished) on East 18th Street. The large central courtyard, first used in 1834 in the construction of the Astor House hotel on Broadway opposite City Hall Park and in Hunt's 1857 Studio Building on West 10th Street (both demolished) was later a feature of upscale apartment houses such as the Dakota, Belnord, and Aphorp (all designated New York City Landmarks) on the Upper West Side. Nelson Derby was the first to incorporate the central courtyard into a tenement design in 1877.

¹³ Plunz, 41.

¹⁴ Ibid, 101, 108.

¹⁵ Elizabeth Collins Cromley, *Alone Together: A History of New York's Early Apartments* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1990), 3.

¹⁶ Robert A. M. Stern, Thomas Mellins, and David Fishman, *New York 1880: Architecture and Urbanism in the Gilded Age* (New York: Monacelli Press, 1999), 539.

¹⁷ This paragraph in part based on LPC, *The Windermere Designation Report (LP-2171)* (New York: City of New York, 1999), prepared by Michael D. Caratzas.

¹⁸ Jonathan Barnett, *The Elusive City: Five Centuries of Design, Ambition and Miscalculation* (New York: Icon Editions, Harper & Row, 1986), 64-65, 67.

¹⁹ Unwin had been influenced by William Morris who specified that the good life required what he called "decency of surrounding" which included good homes, ample space, order and beauty. Mervyn Miller, "Raymond Unwin 1863-1940," in Gordon E. Cherry, ed. *Pioneers in British Planning* (London, The Architectural Press, 1981), 73, 76.

²⁰ Ibid, 77.

²¹ Ibid, 81.

²² Barnett, 73. Françoise Choay notes that Unwin borrowed heavily from the Austrian planner Camillo Sitte in his "layouts for paths, intimacy in space, [and] diversified buildings made to interrelate three-dimensionally." Françoise Choay, *The Modern City: Planning in the 19th Century* (New York: George Braziller, 1969), 108.

²³ Hampstead Garden Suburb was designed for Henrietta Barnett, a social reformer and wife of Conan S. A. Barnett, pioneer in the settlement house movement. Unlike Letchworth, it was a suburb of London, built on a site made accessible by the completion of a transit line. Barnett, 73.

²⁴ Barnett, 84-85. The separation of pedestrian and automobile traffic was applied at Stein and Wright's development at Radburn, New Jersey.

²⁵ Plunz, 122.

²⁶ Garden apartments in the early period were five stories tall. By the 1930s, the block-plan complexes were abandoned for individual six-story courtyard apartments. *Jackson Heights Historic District Designation Report*, 21, 23, 25, 29, 32.

²⁷ *Sunnyside Historic District Designation Report*, 27.

²⁸ "Benjamin Braunstein, 79, Dead; Architect of Garden Apartments," *NYT*, January 22, 1972, p. 32; American Institute of Architects, *American Architects Directory*, 2nd ed. (New York: Bowker, 1962), 76; "Home Owners' Loan Corporation," *Wikipedia* (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Home_Owners'_Loan_Corporation, accessed March 18, 2011); LPC Architect's Files.

²⁹ “Table PL-P2 CD: Total Population, Under 18 and 18 Years and Over by Mutually Exclusive Race and Hispanic Original and Total Housing Units: New York City Community Districts, 1990 to 2010,” New York City, Department of City Planning, *Queens Community District 11* (accessed March 2014).

³⁰ There is no unit 13, units are numbered 1-12, 14-17.

³¹ It is likely that Braunstein was familiar with the planning theories of Camillo Sitte and adapted them on a small scale to his plan for this project. As Francoise Choay points out Sitte felt that “In the distribution of solids and voids, the only criteria should be irregularity, imagination, and asymmetry.” Choay, 105.

³² Classified Advertisement: Apartments-Queens & Long Island. *NYT*, September 16, 1931, 44.

FINDINGS AND DESIGNATION

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

The Commission further finds that the Tudor Revival style Hawthorne Court Apartments is a significant example of the low-rise, suburban garden apartments found in Bayside in the 1920s and 30s; that this apartment type incorporated ideas drawn from the British garden city movement with those of the model tenement movement in New York; that a significant feature of this type of apartment is the incorporation of substantial green space; that in his design for the Hawthorne Court Apartments, the respected architect Benjamin Braunstein arranged the units in two groups of varying size around a courtyard with meandering paths and set back from the streets; that he created a highly scenographic environment through a complex massing of roof lines, dormers, and entrances as well as the proportion of facade materials; that the Hawthorne Court Apartments was awarded for its design by the Queens Chamber of Commerce in 1931.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provision of Chapter 74, Section 3020 of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 3 of Title 25 of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as a Landmark the Hawthorne Court Apartments, 215-37 to 215-43 43rd Avenue and 42-22 to 42-38 216th Street, Borough of Queens and designates Borough of Queens Tax Map Block 6306, Lot 15 as its Landmark Site.

Meenakshi Srinivasan, Chair

Adi Shamir Baron, Frederick Bland, Michael Goldblum,

John Gustafsson, Christopher Moore, Roberta Washington, Commissioners



Hawthorne Court Apartments, 215-37 to 215-43 43rd Avenue and 42-22 to 42-38 216th Street, Bayside, Queens
Block 6306, Lot 15

Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, 2014



Hawthorne Court Apartments, units 1 and 2 (top) and 16 and 17 (bottom)
Photos: Christopher D. Brazee, 2014





Hawthorne Court Apartments, units 16, 15, 12
Photos: Christopher D. Brazee, 2014





Hawthorne Court Apartments unit 11 (top) and 17 (bottom)
Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, 2014





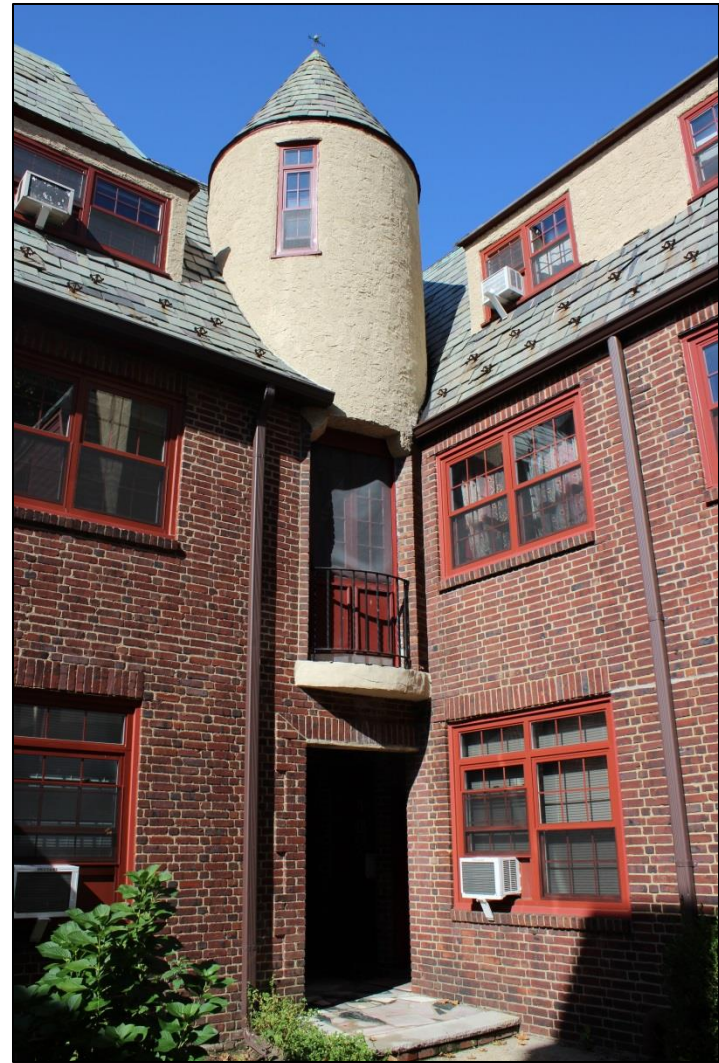
Hawthorne Court Apartments entrance and courtyard from 43rd Avenue
Photos: Marianne S. Percival, 2014





Hawthorne Court Apartments unit 3 (left) and 4 and 5 (right)

Photos: Marianne S. Percival, 2014



Hawthorne Court Apartments units 6-7 (left) and 8-9 (right)
Photos: Marianne S. Percival, 2014



Hawthorne Court Apartments units 10 (left) and 14 (right)

Photos: Marianne S. Percival, 2014

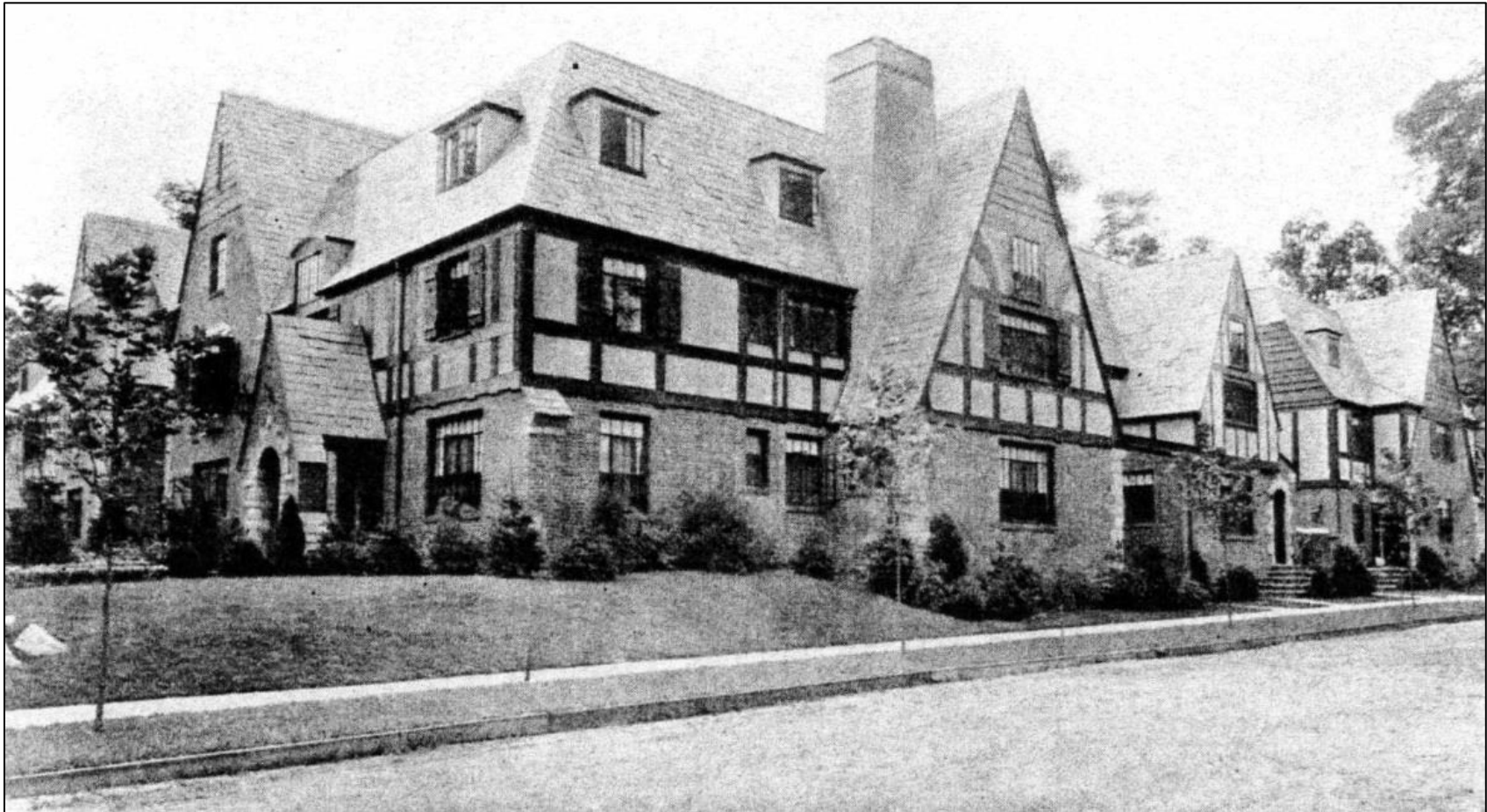


Hawthorne Court Apartments entrance and courtyard from 216th Street
Photos: Marianne S. Percival, 2014



Hawthorne Court Apartments north (top) and west (bottom) elevations
Photos: Christopher D. Brazee (top) and Marianne S. Percival (bottom), 2014





Hawthorne Court Apartments, Courtesy of the Queens Borough Public Library, Archives, *Queensborough*, January 18, 1932



Hawthorne Court Apartments (LP-2461)

215-37 to 215-43 43rd Avenue and 42-22 to 42-38 216th Street. Landmark Site: Borough of Queens Tax Map Block 6306, Lot 15
Designated: November 25, 2014