

# THE APARTMENT HOUSES OF ~ FOREST HILLS GARDENS ~

by Jeff Gottlieb and William E. Coleman

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Were the apartment houses of Forest Hills Gardens an afterthought or an integral part of the community envisioned by Margaret Olivia Slocum Sage, brought to economic reality by Robert de Forest, and designed by Grosvenor Atterbury and Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr.? This question is an important consideration since the apartment buildings — 1 Station Square (1912), 10 Station Square (1912), 2 Dartmouth Street (1912), 4 Dartmouth Street (1917), 6 Burns Street (1920), 1 Ascan Avenue (1922), 150 Burns Street (1931), 20 Continental Avenue (1931), 10 Holder Place (1934), 150 Greenway Terrace (1943), and 25 Burns Street (1961) — form such a large block of housing units in Forest Hills Gardens. Of the 1600 units of total housing in the Gardens, 650 are in the eleven apartment buildings.

## ORIGINAL PLAN:

### ONE APARTMENT HOUSE

The original plan for Forest Hills Gardens included a single apartment house: a twelve unit building in Station Square which extended along the Continental Avenue side of Station Square and had an entrance at 2 Dartmouth Street. Eventually, when other, larger apartment houses were built, these were limited to the Station Square area and to the Burns Street land strip that borders the Long Island Railroad tracks. The only exception was The Leslie, at the head of Flagpole Green, but that apart-

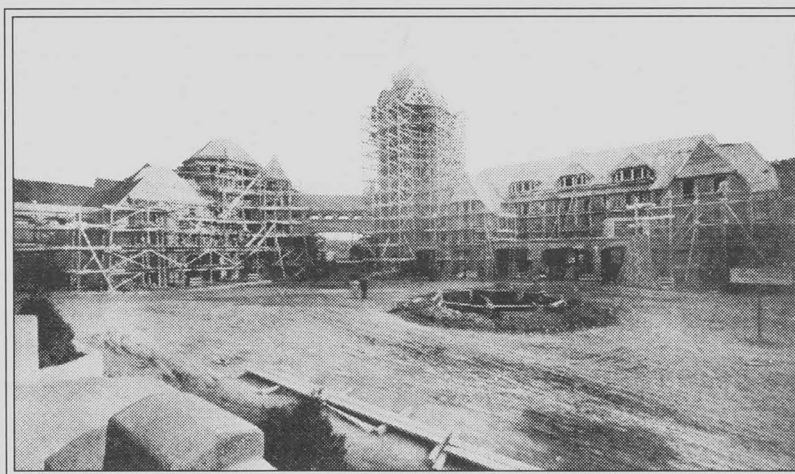
ment house was built only after a protracted dispute and legal battle that lasted more than a decade.

## APARTMENT HOUSES AS A BUFFER

The question remains, however, why the apartment houses were built in their present locations. One theory is that the apartment structures in Station Square and along Burns Street were meant as a "screen" or buffer to protect the heart of the Gardens from the Long Island Railroad and the outside world. Certainly, the almost uninterrupted line of apartment house blocks and attached housing that progresses along Burns Street from Tennis Place to Union Turnpike does serve as both a wall and a screen for Forest Hills Gardens.

## APARTMENT HOUSES AND MRS. SAGE'S IDEAL

Besides serving this practical purpose, the apartments and the two-family housing along Burns Street serve an important purpose connected with the creation of Forest Hills Gardens. The denser housing makes it possible to realize one of the goals of Margaret Olivia Sage in underwriting the development of Forest Hills Gardens: the creation of a community with housing for people of various financial means.



FOREST HILLS INN AND STATION SQUARE UNDER CONSTRUCTION, JUNE 1911. SAGE FOUNDATION HOMES CO. PROSPECTUS, 1912.

The "idea" for Forest Hills Gardens was based on English planned communities such as Port Sunlight (which dated from the 1880s) and the "garden cities" of Letchworth, New Earswick, and Hampstead Garden Suburb (which were created in the first decade of this century).<sup>1</sup> Each of these communities combined a mix of attached and detached housing for residents from various economic groups. Mrs. Sage and the directors of the Russell Sage Foundation had originally hoped to achieve the same thing in Forest Hills Gardens. But soaring land prices in Queens County in the 'teens and '20s plus the cost of constructing the infrastructure of the community made it clear that Forest Hills Gardens would not be able to provide the same kind of single-family houses for people of modest means as had been done in England. The development of the apartment houses provided a solution to that problem, however; for the apartment houses opened the community to hundreds of renters who might not otherwise be able to enjoy the amenities which Forest Hills Gardens offers.

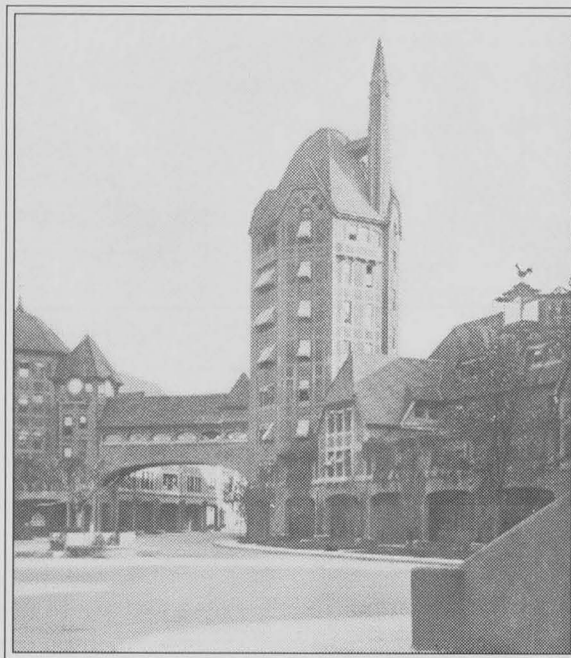
With the completion of the last of the apartment houses, 25 Burns Street, in 1961, this brought the number of apartment units in the community to 650 — or 40% of the total housing in Forest Hills Gardens. Since the apartment houses themselves occupy only 15% of the (expensive) land area, this has been a means of providing relatively inexpensive housing to those who might not otherwise have been able to afford it.

During the past two decades, ten of the eleven apartment houses in the Gardens have been reorganized as co-operatives. Under these co-oper-

ative arrangements, the apartments have been sold from about \$70,000 to about \$350,000. Thus, even with the erection of the apartment houses, Forest Hills Gardens is still not a community which can provide housing to every economic group. But the apartment houses at least serve to ensure that a greater variety of residents can live in the community.

## ~ THE ~ APARTMENT HOUSES

What follows is a history of the eleven apartment houses that were erected in Forest Hills Gardens between 1912 and 1961. Our history discusses the architecture of each building and the redesign of several of the buildings in the intervening years. We also present some of the notable residents of the apartment houses during the past 80 years.



THE FOREST HILLS INN, 1912. MAIN BUILDING AND ANNEX, WITH PEDESTRIAN OVERPASS. NOTE OPEN ARCADE ALONG FRONT OF MAIN BUILDING. SAGE FOUNDATION HOMES CO. PROSPECTUS, 1912.

### **Forest Hills Inn. (1912) 1 Station Square** **The Raleigh. (1912) 10 Station Square**

Architect: Grosvenor Atterbury

Builder: Sage Foundation Homes Co.

Any history of the apartment buildings of the Gardens, should begin with the Inn. Work on the construction of the Inn began in August 1910. Opened on May 1, 1912, the Forest Hills Inn was built for \$120,000. It was designed by Grosvenor Atterbury, the Supervising Architect of Forest Hills Gardens. Among Atterbury's accomplishments at the time were two projects in Manhattan: the Russell Sage Foundation building at 4 Lexington Avenue, corner of 22nd Street (now the Gramercy Towers Apartments) and the restoration of the interior of City Hall, from 1901 to 1920.

A total of nine stories, the Inn was a hotel for transient and permanent residents, typical of

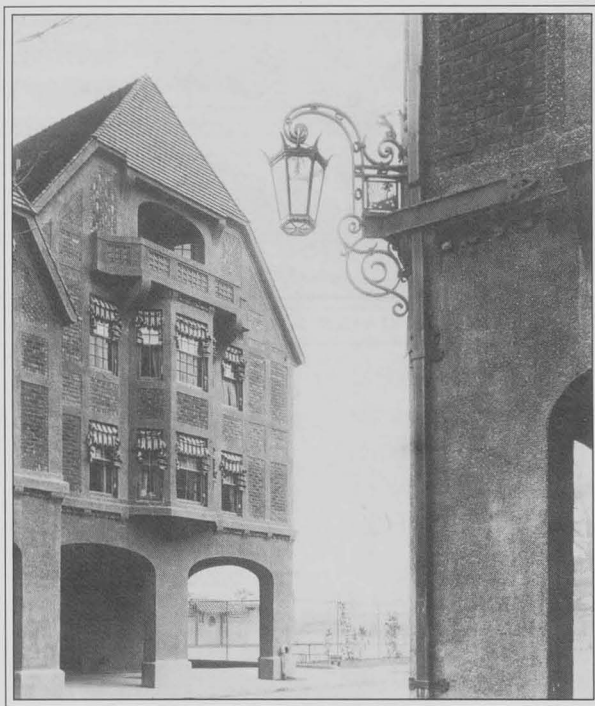
<sup>1</sup> For a discussion of the European origins of our community, see the article "Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., the Garden City Movement, and the Design of Forest Hills Gardens" in this issue of *Forest Hills Gardens* magazine.

such accommodations near railroad stations. (The Homestead — now a nursing home — next to the Kew Gardens Long Island Railroad station comes to mind.) Capped by a Bavarian-style tower, the Forest Hills Inn combines half-timber, Tudor touches, orange-tile pitched roofs, solid masonry, and stucco and pebble/concrete surfacing in the lower stories. The complex serves as an example for the rest of the Gardens, which it serves as gateway.

### TWO-BUILDING HOTEL

The Inn originally consisted of two structures: a main building with a large tower at 1 Station Square and a second building (now called the Raleigh) at 10 Station Square. The enclosed pedestrian bridge at the beginning of Greenway Terrace joined the two buildings. These, in turn, were linked to the Long Island Railroad platform by a similar bridge that spans Burns St. The two-building complex contained a total of 150 outside rooms.

An early brochure, which the Sage Homes Company published shortly after the construction of the Inn complex, emphasized that the 150 rooms, which were arranged singly or in suites, had “running water, electric light, and telephone.” Not all had baths, however, and none had kitchens; both these limitations were to require elaborate and sometimes awkward solutions when the complex was later converted into apartment houses. The same early brochure also notes that the furniture in the rooms at the Inn “avoids the stereotyped style of hotel equipment, and is simple in design, attractive, and serviceable.”



THE FOREST HILLS INN AND THE MARLBORO, C. 1917. PRIOR TO THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE CONTINENTAL AVENUE PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE. IN THE REAR, ON THE PRESENT SITE OF THE INN APARTMENTS, CAN BE SEEN TENNIS COURTS AND AN ENTRANCE TO THE FOREST HILLS INN'S TEA GARDEN.

### HOTEL FACILITIES

In addition to reception rooms and smoking rooms, which opened “on a vine-screened loggia overlooking the Square,” the Inn had a dining room on its ground floor, plus a billiard room and a squash court. Adjacent to the Inn, at the beginning of Greenway Terrace, was a Tea Garden with grass, shrubbery, and a fountain. “The Tea Garden,” stated the early brochure, “is most attractive and popular for afternoon tea or for coffee and cigars after dinner.” Adjoining the Tea Garden were tennis courts. The courts, which were on the site of the present Inn Apartments (20 Continental Avenue), were accessible from Continental Avenue and also via a rear entrance to the Tea Garden.

In addition to its own amenities, the Inn included a row of shops under a covered arcade on Station Square that connected the arcade along the Greenway Terrace side of the building with the one that runs along its Continental Avenue side. The arcade and shops, which are evident in the earliest views of the Forest Hills Inn, were later incorporated into the structure of the Inn.

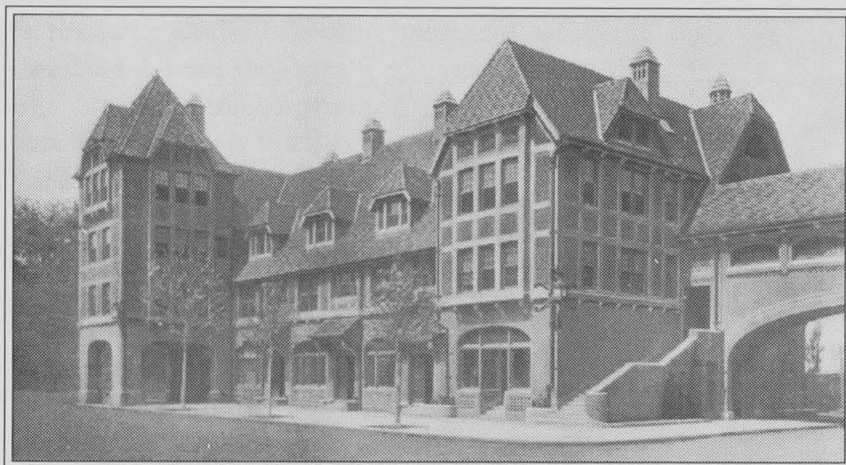
### FULL-TIME STAFF

A full-time staff of 40 to 50 worked — and lived — at the Forest Hills Inn. Most were maids, but others worked in the laundry, kitchen, dining room, and other parts of the service establishment. The Inn served a roster of a hundred or more temporary and permanent residents. The New York State census of June 1915, for example, lists 109 guests at the Inn and a staff of 44 to care for their needs.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> For more information on the demography of our community in its first decade, see William Coleman, “Forest Hills Gardens in 1915: A Profile” in the 1992 issue of *Forest Hills Gardens* magazine.

## ROOM AND BOARD RATES

The cost for all these services, in 1912 prices, was not inexpensive: \$11 to \$18 a week for room and board. By the mid 1920s, room rates at the Forest Hills Inn had risen to reflect the general increase of prices during that decade. In 1924, for instance, single rooms, all meals inclusive, cost \$30 to \$35 weekly (\$45 with private bath). The most expensive arrangement in 1924, a suite consisting of a parlor, bath, and two bedrooms, cost between \$110 and \$135 weekly, including meals for two persons.



HOUSEKEEPING APARTMENTS (MARLBORO APARTMENT) IN STATION SQUARE, 1912.  
SAGE FOUNDATION HOMES CO. PROSPECTUS, 1912.

## CONVERSION OF 10 STATION SQUARE

By the mid 1920s, when the home construction boom was transforming the topography of Queens County, fewer people viewed Forest Hills Gardens as a semi-rural area where one could spend a weekend or a vacation. As a result, the Forest Hills Inn was attracting fewer short-term visitors. It was therefore decided to convert the 10 Station Square building to an apartment house while retaining the 1 Station Square building as a hotel, restaurant, and reception center. In this conversion, the 40 rooms in the building at 10 Station Square were reconfigured into 27 apartment units and renamed the Raleigh apartments.

## FOREST HILLS INN AT MID-CENTURY

In the late 1940s and the 1950s, the Forest Hills Inn was under the management of the Knott Hotels organization. Among its amenities was the Fountain Room, which overlooked the Tea Garden

and which was used for weddings, receptions, and dinner parties. Two of the Inn's other reception and dining rooms were the Terrace Room and the Green Foyer. The main dining area was the Windsor Room on the Inn's ground floor, with the adjacent Unicorn Lounge and Bar decorated in the style of an English tap room. (This is the area which until recently was occupied by one of the Beefsteak Charlie's restaurants.)

By the mid 1960s, when an enormously popular series of open air concerts was held in the West Side Tennis Club stadium, the Unicorn Lounge taproom had changed its name to The Three Swans. A brochure of the period described it as "an authentic English pub, adorned with British antiques, in an atmosphere of saddle leather, pewter, copper, and oak beams. Hearty English fare." Among the entertainers at the piano bar in The Three Swans was a young pianist named Barry Manilow.

In warm months, the Sidewalk Cafe was set up along the front of the Inn on Station Square. Below street level was the Tournament Grille, a cocktail, luncheon, and dinner space. The Grille was often frequented by personalities of the tennis world such as Pancho Segura, Pancho Gonzalez, Jack Kramer, Margaret Osborne du Pont, and Maureen Connolly, who stayed at the Inn during the late summer tennis championships at the nearby West Side Tennis Club. The old Grille still serves its old functions as a dining space and bar. Its names have been Annie's and, most recently, Keegan's.

## CONVERSION INTO APARTMENT UNITS

After 55 years as a hotel, the Forest Hills Inn became an apartment building in 1967. This change required an extensive interior remodeling of the structure. Since many of the original hotel rooms in the 1 Station Square building did not have baths and since none of them had kitchens, these essential services had to be installed. During this conversion, most of the smaller single rooms were combined to make larger apartment units, while the

kitchens and bathrooms were placed in whatever spaces were available. In the present reconfiguration, the Forest Hills Inn at 1 Station Square contains 50 apartments.

In 1981, the Forest Hills Inn, the Raleigh, and the third apartment building in Station Square, the Marlboro, were converted into co-operative apartments.

### **The Marlboro. (1912) 2 Dartmouth Street**

Architect: Grosvenor Atterbury

Builder: Sage Foundation Homes Co.

The Marlboro, on Station Square and Continental Avenue, was originally designed as so-called "housekeeping apartments" — what we would today call apartment units. The Apartment House, as it was called in the early brochures, contained twelve units of three, five, or six rooms plus bath. Three of these apartments were duplexes with private hallways and stairways. The building, which was under the management of the Inn, can rightly be called the first apartment house in Forest Hills Gardens. Since the building was designed as residence units, each of the apartments had essential services such as a bath and a kitchen. When the Forest Hills Inn was converted to apartment units and later to an apartment co-operative it was not necessary to re-engineer the systems of the 2 Dartmouth Street building in order to install these services.

That the Apartment House was a different kind of building from the Inn was apparent in the original design of the bridges in Station Square. As previously mentioned, a covered pedestrian bridge linked the railroad platform and 10 Station Square, while a second one linked 10 Station Square and 1 Station Square. However, the pedestrian bridge did not originally continue around Station Square and link the Forest Hills Inn with the Apartment House. The apartment building did

have its own link to the railroad platform — a pedestrian bridge and waiting room that was constructed shortly after the building was completed in 1912 — but the Inn and the Apartment House were not connected by a bridge. The bridge that now spans Continental Avenue, linking the Forest Hills Inn and 2 Dartmouth Street, was constructed almost a decade later in 1921.

The housekeeping apartments at 2 Dartmouth Street, some of which were duplexes, have also been internally reconfigured. The original 12 units have been subdivided into 20 apartments.

### **CONVERSION INTO CO-OPERATIVE**

In 1981, the owners of the three apartment buildings in Station Square, a corporation headed by Warren Reiner and Raymond Kaiser, sponsored a conversion of the properties into co-operatives. The three buildings are organized as parts of a cooperative unit: Station Square Inn Apartments.

Reiner and Kaiser retained a long-term lease of the commercial properties in the Station Square, however. One hopes that the Reiner-Kaiser group will strive to attract businesses that will complement and enhance the character of Station Square. One also hopes that they might one day restore the Tea Garden which has languished during the past few decades, a sad remnant of its splendid former self.



GARDENS APARTMENT, (4 DARTMOUTH STREET), C. 1920, WITH WOODED TRACT ALONG TENNIS PLACE.

MILLER ART CO. POSTCARD

## Gardens Apartment. (1917)

(Tennis View Apartments) 4 Dartmouth Street.

Developer: Guyon Locke Crocheron Earle

Builder: Fred F. French Co.

The Dartmouth Street building was the first large apartment house project approved in Forest Hills Gardens. Built adjacent to the 1912 "house-keeping apartments" in Station Square, the Gardens Apartment occupies a plot at the corner of Dartmouth Street and Tennis Place. The Gardens Apartment was also the beginning of the wall of apartment buildings and attached one- and two-family homes that would eventually stretch along the boundary between Forest Hills Gardens and the Long Island Railroad. When that wall was finally completed in 1961 (with the construction of 25 Burns Street), it served to shield the Forest Hills Gardens community along its border with the Long Island Railroad between Union Turnpike and Tennis Place.

### ANCHOR OF "RAILROAD WALL"

John Demarest, vice president of the Sage Homes Company, had resolved that the block bounded by Burns Street, Continental Avenue, Dartmouth Street, and Tennis Place was to be the anchor for this stately wall of buildings. In order to secure the "railroad wall," Demarest determined that the Burns-Continental-Dartmouth-Tennis block would be entirely occupied by apartment

buildings. Nowhere else in Forest Hills Gardens is there massed such a concentration of large-volume buildings.

When Guyon L. C. Earle, a Gardens resident and developer, approached him in 1916 about erecting an apartment house in the Gardens, Demarest offered him the Dartmouth Street property for the building. The apartment house which Earle erected on the 190 x 120 foot plot contained 64 apartments, 12 of them studio apartments and 52 of them apartments of between three and six rooms.

### AN APARTMENT HOUSE FOR THE COMMON MAN

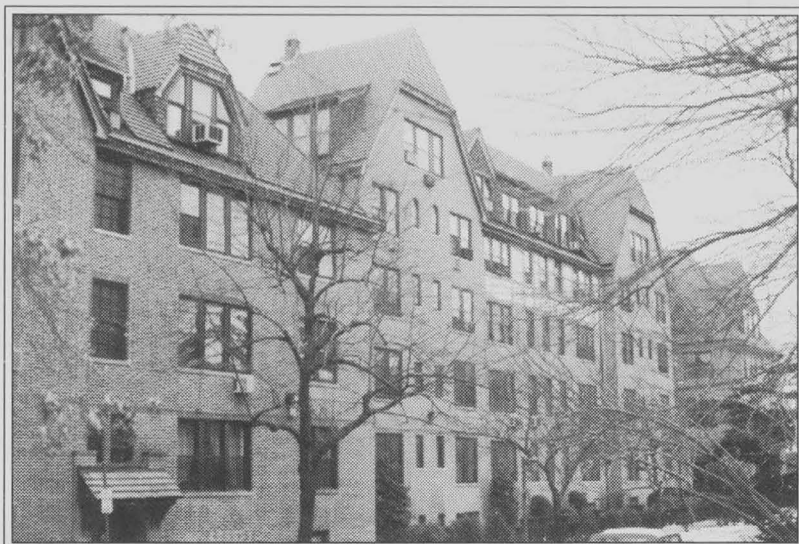
The earliest brochures for the property emphasized that the apartments would not have dining rooms, libraries, and maids' rooms but would have a larger number of bedrooms than most apartments contain. The *Forest Hills Gardens Bulletin* (July 28, 1917) contained a drawing of the "Dutch kitchen" that each apartment would have. This kitchen had "a cozy breakfast alcove . . . in one corner and a working alcove in the other."

The "message" in this advertisement was that the Gardens Apartment was not intended as a luxury living space. It was not for families who expected libraries and formal dining areas as part of their housing requirements. Nor was it for families with live-in servants. Instead, the Gardens

Apartment would house families often with several children — families which prepared their own breakfasts and ate them in the kitchen.

An important feature of the Gardens Apartment was its location. Adjacent to the transportation hub at Station Square, it was a few minutes' walk to the railroad station and to the trolley line (and later, the subway station) on Queens Boulevard. It also overlooked the West Side Tennis Club and a wooded section bounded by Dartmouth Street and Tennis Place.

In recent years, the 4 Dartmouth Street apartment has become a co-opera-



TENNIS PLACE APARTMENT, (6 BURNS STREET), 1993.

tive development. It is managed in a unit scheme with its neighbor, the Tennis Place Apartment at 6 Burns Street. The corporate name of the two apartment houses is the Tennis View Apartments.

#### ALRICK MAN

A well-known resident of 4 Dartmouth Street was Alrick Man, Jr. Man was a member of an eminent local family — his grandfather Albon Man founded Richmond Hill and his father Alrick Man developed Kew Gardens. Alrick Man, Jr., labored unsuccessfully to bring the West Side Tennis Club to the family's development, Kew Gardens, in 1912. After moving to Forest Hills Gardens, Man spent much of his life being affiliated with the United States Tennis Association. He was the non-playing Captain on the Association's Davis Cup Committee, from 1947 to 1955.

#### Tennis Place Apartment. (1920)

(Tennis View Apartments)

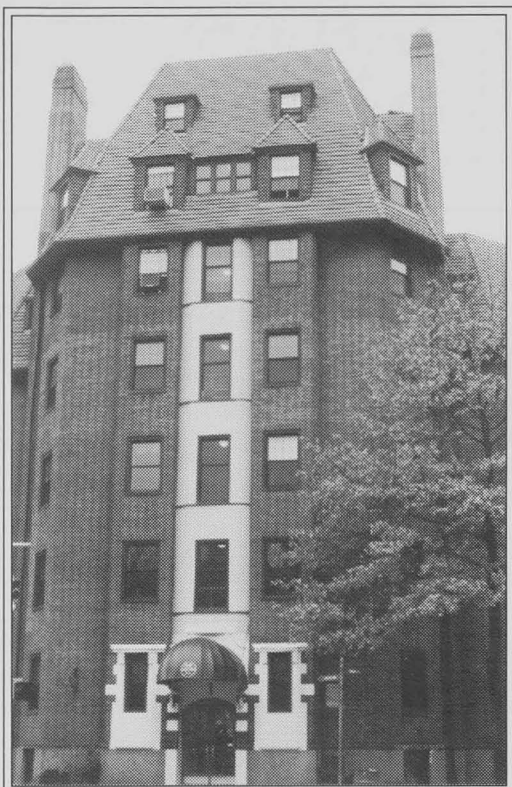
6 Burns Street

Architects: Timmons and Chapman

Developer: Guyon Locke Crocheron Earle

The remaining plot in the block bound by Continental Avenue, Dartmouth Street, Tennis Place, and Burns Street would eventually be occupied by another apartment house. The Tennis Place Apartment was built in 1920. (When it was joined with the 4 Dartmouth street building, the corporate name of the two apartments was changed to the Tennis View Apartments.) The 6 Burns Street apartment, which Guyon L. C. Earle erected adjacent to his Garden Apartment, completed the block.

The 111 apartments in the building enjoy the same sort of "common man" design — without libraries and maids' rooms — that characterizes Earle's adjacent apartment house at 4 Dartmouth



1 ASCAN AVENUE, 1993.

Street. Among Earle's investment partners in this project were Robert Mallory Harriss and William Leslie Harriss. The Harriss brothers were later involved in more than a decade-long lawsuit against the Gardens Corporation concerning the construction of The Leslie apartment at 150 Greenway Terrace. (For details of this, see the discussion of The Leslie, below.) The two adjacent apartments which Earle erected are now managed as a joint cooperative, with 164 apartments.

#### PHILIP BOUVIER HAWK

One prominent resident of 6 Burns Street was Philip Bouvier Hawk, a well-known research food chemist. Hawk

was a three-time (1921, 1922, 1923) winner of the National Veterans Tennis Championship. He was also President of the West Side Tennis Club (1931-1932) and as a member of the Davis Cup Committee.

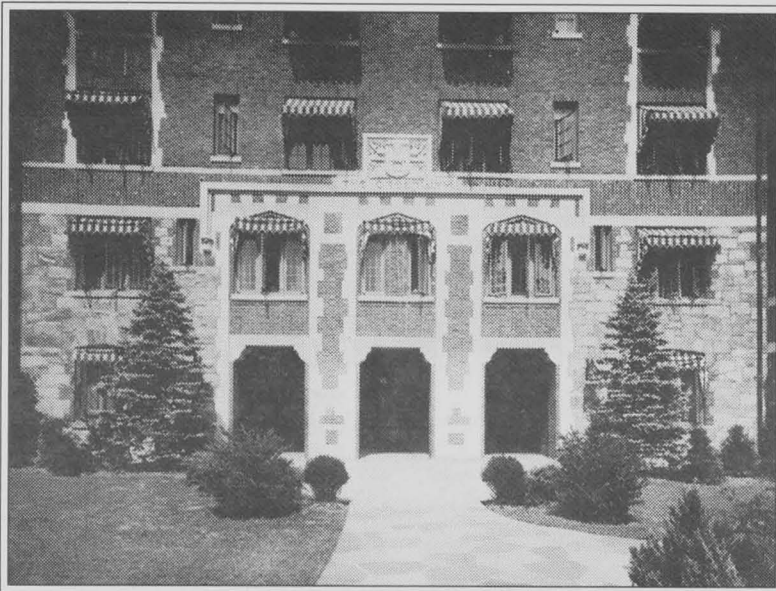
#### Forest Arms Apartments. (1922)

1 Ascan Avenue

Architect: Douglass Fitch

The original plan for the Forest Arms Apartments was for an apartment building surrounding a large garden courtyard with an entrance on Burns Street. Later revisions of the building plans removed the courtyard. When the building was completed in 1922, it was the fifth apartment house in Forest Hills Gardens. Three apartment buildings occupied the block bounded by Burns Street, Continental Avenue, Dartmouth Street, and Tennis Place. Two other apartment houses were positioned at either end of Burns Street between Station Square Ascan Avenue: the 10 Station Square building (which had been converted to apartments in the 1920s) at one end and the Forest Arms Apartments at the other.

WILLIAM COLEMAN



THE GREENWAY, (10 HOLDER PLACE), MID 1930s.

The 51-unit Forest Arms consisted of two five-story wings along Ascan Avenue and Burns Street and a central seven-story tower at the intersection of the streets. The building had 4, 5, and 6 room apartments, including maid's rooms. The larger apartments had three baths. It is clear that the Forest Arms was designed as a luxury building. In recent years, it has become a co-operative apartment house.

#### FAMOUS RESIDENTS

Among the better-known residents of the Forest Arms were John Bull, Buckminster Fuller, and Robert Tappan. Bull, a commercial artist, was born in Oslo, Norway, in 1893. Arriving in the United States in 1925, he became a citizen in 1931 and did work at the *New Yorker*, *Life*, *McCalls*, *Colliers* and other magazines. Bull had exhibitions in Norway, Denmark, New York, and Los Angeles.

R. Buckminster Fuller, who invented the geodesic dome and coined the term "spaceship Earth," was a Harvard College dropout, but a fine urban planner and a worker for the technological perfection of humankind. Robert Tappan, an MIT graduate, was the architect of St. Luke's Church, Forest Hills Gardens. He designed the Pilgrim Street (67th Road, between 108th and 110th Streets) houses, the Arbor and Forest Close developments off Austin Street, and private homes for the Queens-

boro Corporation, which developed Jackson Heights. Tappan was also head architect at the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine.

#### The Greenway. (1930)

10 Holder Place/72-11 Burns Street

Architect: Benjamin Braunstein

Builder: Kresse Holding Corp.

Built in 1930, The Greenway is an excellent example of tudor architecture. The stone facing of the building has abundant seam-face granite and limestone detail. The main lobby walls are paneled in oak, with marble base, and the stairways and upper hallways are floored with hand-made tiles in a range of colors.

The five floor apartment house is divided into suites of from three to six rooms. In addition, the building has two six-room penthouse apartments each with three baths, an extra lavatory, and tiled outdoor garden space. The early brochures for The Greenway emphasized that its windows were "of plate glass of the finest quality, set in steel casement sash."

When the building was completed in 1930, the Queens Chamber of Commerce awarded it a first prize citation, noting the "excellence in design" and the "civic value" of the building. Today the 43-unit building is organized as a cooperative apartment.

#### ARCHITECT: BENJAMIN BRAUNSTEIN

The Greenway was designed by Benjamin Braunstein. Born in Turkey and educated at the Hebrew Technical Institute and at the Beaux Arts Society, Braunstein was noted for tudor styling and for art deco flourishes on his buildings. Among the buildings which he designed in Forest Hills are The Portsmouth (72-22 Austin Street), Sutton Hall (109-14 Ascan Avenue), Tilden Arms (73-20 Austin Street), New Hampshire (110-31 73rd Road), and Holland House (73-37 Austin Street). Elsewhere in Queens he designed the Kew Mowbray (82-67 Austin Street, Kew Gardens), the Bayside Tudor Hawthorne Court (215-37 43rd Avenue), Glen Oaks Village in Bellerose, and Mitchell Gardens in Flushing.

## **Inn Apartments. (1931) 20 Continental Avenue**

Architects: Robert T. Lyons (interior design)

Grosvenor Atterbury (consultant; exterior design)

Associate: John Almy Tompkins

Until the Inn Apartments (20 Continental Avenue) were constructed in 1931, that area along Continental Avenue adjacent to Station Square was used as a tennis court in warmer months. In winter, it was flooded and it served as an ice skating rink.

The Inn Apartments and the Grosvenor Square at 150 Burns Street, which was also completed in 1931, were the last large commissions which Grosvenor Atterbury completed in Forest Hills Gardens. Although Atterbury continued as Supervising Architect in Forest Hills Gardens for another decade until his retirement, this work required him merely to review and approve new construction. The two apartment houses were, in effect, Atterbury's swan song in Forest Hills.

In designing the "housekeeping apartments" in Station Square, Atterbury had to conform to the brick and pebble-finish masonry that characterized the other buildings in the Square. The apartment block in the Square was also designed with the "garden-city" housing styles in mind. Atterbury's design for his first apartment building in Forest Hills Gardens combined high quality craftsmanship without expensive detailing.

In designing the Inn Apartments, however, Atterbury was free to create a building for a wealthier clientele. The architect of record for the building was Robert T. Lyons, who designed the structure and its interior spaces. Atterbury provided the exterior design and served as a consulting architect for the project. Atterbury specified a brick exterior

with a good deal of rough granite fieldstone detailing. The detailing continues in the entrance and the public areas of the building.

Among the luxuries which Lyons specified for the 110 two- and three-unit apartment units themselves were drop living rooms with galleries, wood burning fireplaces, casement windows, cedar-lined closets, built-in cabinets, and built-in linen closets. All of the bathrooms were furnished (as the advertising brochure stated) "with colorful, modern appointments."

Although the Inn Apartments were a separate structure, they were operated in conjunction with the Forest Hills Inn. The same group, Knott Hotels, managed both buildings and provided dining, maid, and linen services for the Inn and the Inn Apartments.

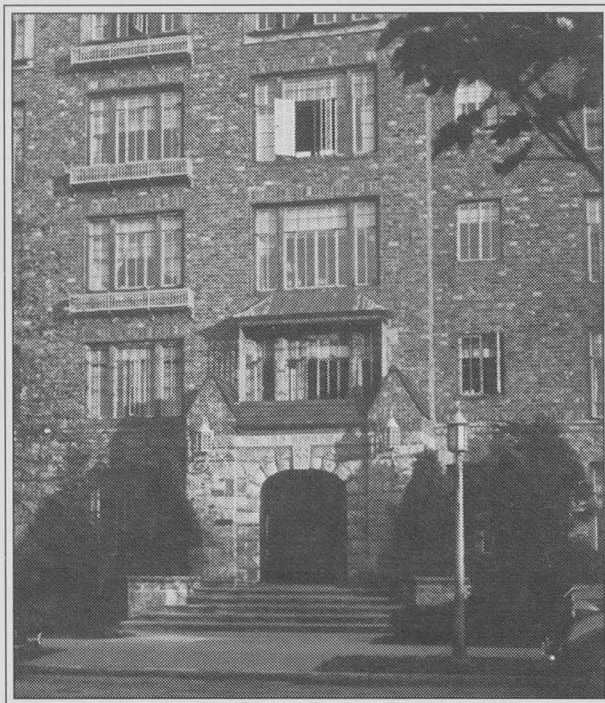
### **CO-OPERATIVE APARTMENT**

Like all the other Forest Hills Gardens apartment houses except The Leslie, the Inn Apartments is a co-operative. The resident-owners have spent much time and money landscaping the planted areas that front the building along Continental Avenue and the building's rear gardens off Archway Place.

#### **LUCY ALLEN SMART**

One of the best known residents of the Inn Apartments was Lucy Allen Smart (1877-1960). Mrs. Smart was the editor of the bi-weekly *Forest Hills Gardens Bulletin* for the Sage Homes Company until it ceased publication in December 1924. (The

last issue of the *Bulletin* contained her 16-page "History of Forest Hills from the Time of the Indians," which was reprinted and distributed to Gardens residents in 1990.) By profession, Mrs. Smart was a librarian; in 1937 Mayor LaGuardia appointed her to the Board of Trustees of the Queensboro Public



INN APARTMENTS, (20 CONTINENTAL AVENUE), C. 1955.



LUCY A. SMART

Library — one of the first women to be placed on the Board. Lucy Allen Smart is best remembered for her association with Kew-Forest School, where she served first as

Assistant to the Headmaster, then as librarian, Dean of Girls, and, beginning in 1941, Dean of the School. She held this position until her retirement in 1956. After her retirement, Mrs. Smart moved from her home at 45 Deepdene Road to the Inn Apartments (#6A), where she lived until her death four years later.

### The Grosvenor Square (1931) 150 Burns Street

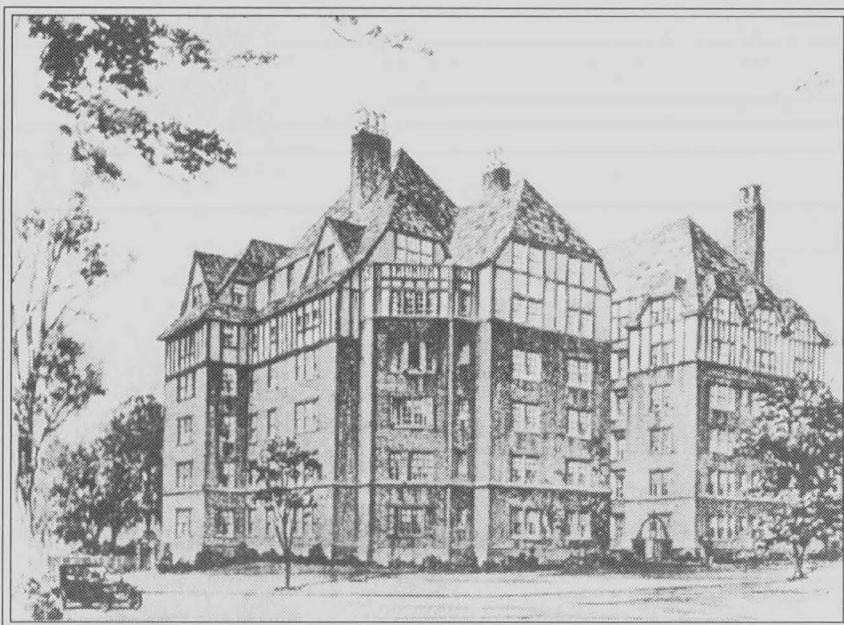
Architects: C. F. and D. E. McAvoy (interior design)

Associate: A. H. Eccles

Grosvenor Atterbury (consultant; exterior design)

Associate: John Almy Tompkins

Builder: Schimmenti and Terranova



THE GROSVENOR SQUARE, (150 BURNS STREET), 1931. FROM THE FIRST ADVERTISING BROCHURE.

The Grosvenor Square apartments were, with the Inn Apartment, the second apartment building erected in Forest Hills Gardens in 1931. The Grosvenor Square and its neighbor, One Ascan Avenue, frame and stand guard over the Ascan Avenue entrance to Forest Hills Gardens. The early brochures for the apartment make prominent notice of the fact that Grosvenor Atterbury served as consultant to the project and designed the exterior

of the building. He served the same function that year for the Inn Apartments at 20 Continental Avenue. When the apartment was completed it, fittingly, was named for the Supervising Architect of Forest Hills Gardens.

The building offered several other luxury touches. It was built around a central garden court which facilitated cross ventilation. The building also had a 25 x 50 foot "Tudor Entertainment Gallery" which residents could reserve for dinner, bridge, or dance parties.

When it was built, The Grosvenor Square contained 22 apartment units. The simplest of these was a one bedroom, one bath apartment with kitchenette. The most luxurious apartment occupied an entire floor in the west wing. This consisted of 12 1/2 rooms plus six baths and a dining alcove. In the intervening years, the apartment

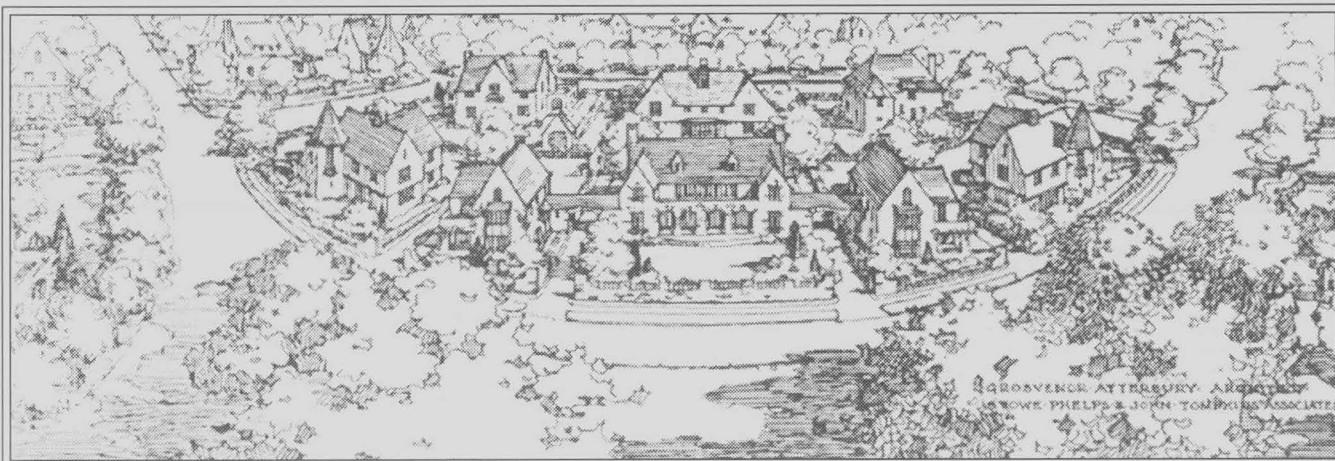
house has been reconfigured and the larger apartments subdivided, so that the building now contains 43 units which are organized as a co-operative apartment.

### NOTABLE RESIDENTS

Bert Bacharach, the award-winning composer, lived at the 150 Burns Street apartment in the 1940s. A 1946 graduate of Forest Hills High School and president of his senior class, Bachrach wrote the scores for the film *Alfie* and the Broadway musical *Promises, Promises*. His Oscar, in 1970, was for the song "Raindrops Keep Fallin' on My Head."

Mortimer Dewey Gold, born on the day Admiral Dewey defeated the Spanish fleet in the Spanish-

American War, lived at 150 Burns in the late 1930s. Gold's father began the family fortune by developing William Gold and Company Cemetery and Monument Works, at Bayside Cemetery, Ozone Park, Queens. The elder Gold also founded Temple Israel, Jamaica, in 1918. Mortimer, an old hand at charitable fund raising, discovered Jackie Gleason in 1940, bringing him on stage for a benefit.



"BLOCK TWELVE CORPORATION" PROPOSAL FOR THE SITE, 1923. ARCHITECTS, GROSVENOR ATTERBURY, STOWE PHELPS, AND JOHN ALMY TOMPKINS. *THE FOREST HILLS BULLETIN*, AUGUST 25, 1923.

**The Leslie.** (1943) 150 Greenway Terrace  
Architects: Alfred Fellheimer and Steward Wagner  
Builder: Edmund J. Naughton

The Leslie was opened in 1943 after a decade and a half of proposals and counter proposals, lawsuits, appeals, and further litigation. These various proposals and disputes pitted the community and the Gardens Corporation against the developers, Robert Mallory Harriss and his brother William Leslie Harriss. Both of the Harrisses were Gardens residents: Robert lived at 160 Greenway North and William lived at 25 Ingram Street.

The story of the struggle that culminated in the creation of The Leslie is a fascinating chapter in the history of Forest Hills Gardens. The site of The Leslie — called Block 12 in the Sage Company maps — was originally designated for single-family homes. In fact, a home was built at 101 Slocum Crescent in the mid 'teens. The rest of Block 12 was not developed, however, and the Sage Homes Company constructed a temporary wooden sales office there. In 1922, when the Sage Company announced its intention to withdraw from Forest Hills Gardens, the Company's stock was purchased by John Demarest. Demarest was the vice president of the Sage Homes Company who had been in charge of the development of Forest Hills Gardens. Along with his purchase, Demarest secured approval from

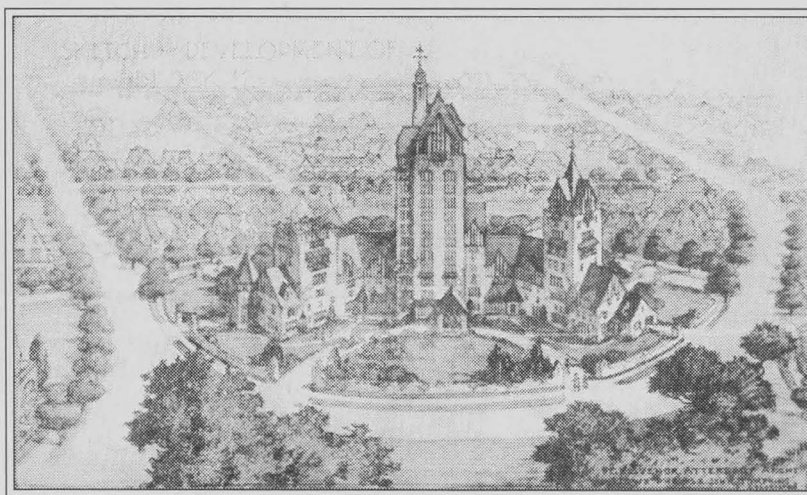
the Sage Foundation and the Sage Homes Company to develop an apartment house on Block 12.

#### BLOCK 12 PROPOSAL

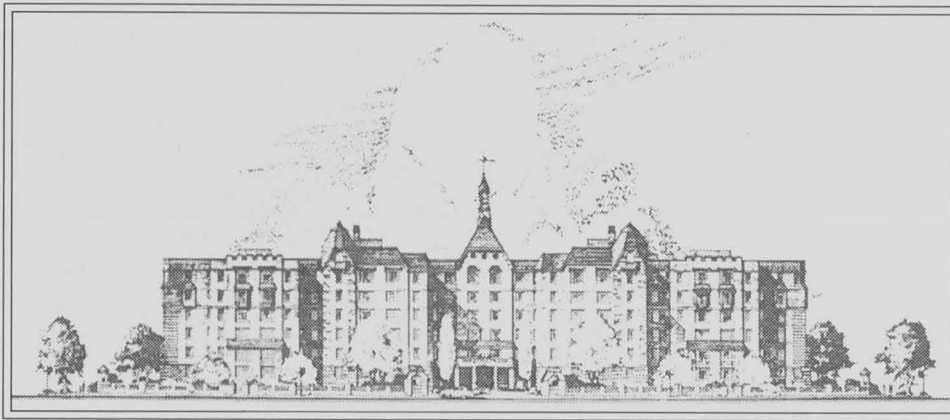
In the summer of 1923, Austin Hanks, the owner of the house at 101 Slocum Crescent, organized a group of Gardens residents, the "Block 12 Corporation," with the hope of raising the funds necessary to purchase the block and to develop it for single family homes. The Block 12 group had Grosvenor Atterbury prepare a sketch of the development they hoped to sponsor. (See illustration.)

#### FIRST HARRISS PROPOSAL

The Block 12 Corporation was not successful in purchasing the property, however. In January 1924, Demarest sold the property to Robert and



FIRST HARRISS PLAN FOR BLOCK 12: THREE-TOWER COMPLEX FACING A CIRCULAR DRIVEWAY. 1925. ARCHITECTS: GROSVENOR ATTERBURY, STOWE PHELPS, AND JOHN ALMY TOMPKINS.



THE LESLIE. ARCHITECTS' DRAWING, FEBRUARY 1941.

William Harriss. In June 1925, the Harriss brothers had Grosvenor Atterbury prepare a plan for an apartment block. This combined a large central tower, two smaller flanking towers and two- and three-story attached houses. (See illustration.) The complex would be organized as a cooperative and would house about 39 families. The community and the new Gardens Corporation did not approve the Harris proposal, however.

In November 1926, the Harriss brothers were able to purchase the Hanks home at 101 Slocum Crescent. Citing the 1922 designation of Block 12 for an apartment development, the Sage Homes Company and the Sage Foundation subsequently declared that the former Hanks property could be part of an apartment house development.

In 1929, the Harriss brothers filed plans for a 59-apartment structure on Block 12. This was to have two fifty-foot high wings and a central tower 150 feet tall. The Gardens Corporation was still unwilling that an apartment house be built on Block 12. Late in 1929 the Harriss brothers sued the Corporation in New York State Supreme Court, but lost the first round of the case.

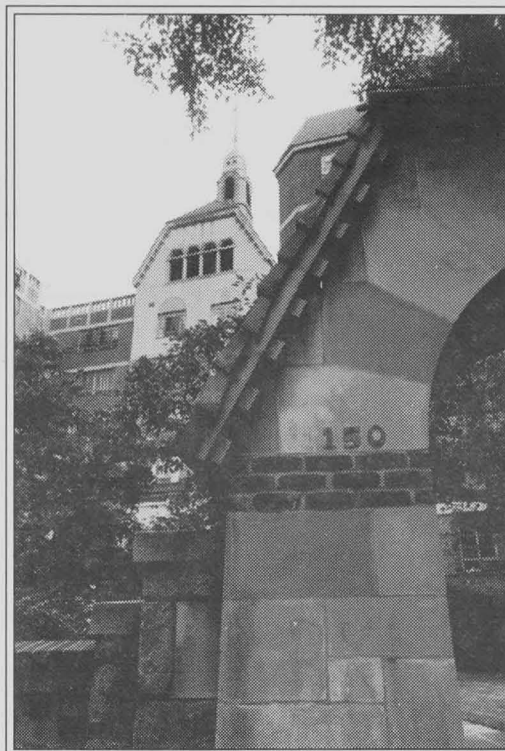
## THE LESLIE

The lawsuits continued through the 1930s. In the meantime, the old Hanks house at 101 Slocum Crescent stood vacant, becoming known as the "haunted house" to a generation of local children. The Hanks house was eventually demolished and the Harriss interests prevailed. The final Harriss proposal, in 1941,

was for a 96-unit apartment house. This was considerably larger than the 39-apartment complex that had been proposed in 1925.

The architects for the building were Alfred Fellheimer and Steward Wagner. Wagner had done some previous work in Forest Hills Gardens, having produced the "official" 1939 map of the community for the Forest Hills Gardens Corporation. (Wagner's map is one of the four maps of the community which are being distributed with this issue of *Forest Hills Gardens*.)

With its deep setbacks and terraces and large open garden spaces, The Leslie occupies only about 30% of its plot. The building is faced with a combination of brick, rough-hewn granite, and limestone. Three towers, with Bavarian-style roofs reminiscent of Station Square, dominate the facade. The central tower is capped by ornamental ironwork that is similar to the ironwork atop the tower at the Church-in-the-Gardens. The earliest Sage Homes Company layout for Block 12 featured a central semi-circular driveway. In the final design for The Leslie, this appears as a wide, semi-circular flagstone pathway. The entrance gates to



THE LESLIE, (150 GREENWAY TERRACE), 1975.

GIUGIELMO NARDELLI FOR THE FOREST HILLS VILLAGE IMPROVEMENT SOCIETY

the pathway are set in the building's low stone and brick fence along Greenway Terrace. The stone gates with their tile-roofs and the stone fences resemble similar gates and fences along the Terrace.

#### ROBERT MALLORY HARRISS

Robert Mallory Harriss was the chief developer of the property, since his brother William Leslie Harriss died during the period that the project was under litigation. (When the building was erected, Robert Harriss named it for his brother.) Robert Harriss was a political conservative who backed Rev. Charles E. Coughlin, the anti-New Deal "radio priest," in the 1930s. He was head of "Queens Democrats for Wilkie" in 1940 and supported Douglas MacArthur for president in 1948.

When The Leslie was completed, Harriss was awarded a first prize citation by the Queens Chamber of Commerce. The citation praised Harriss "for excellence in design and civic value" of The Leslie. Today the 96-unit building is owned by the Helmsley management interests, who do an exemplary job of maintaining the property. The Leslie is the only one of the apartment houses in Forest Hills Gardens which still operates on a rental basis.

#### Garden Arms. (1961) 25 Burns Street

Architect: Thomas Galvin

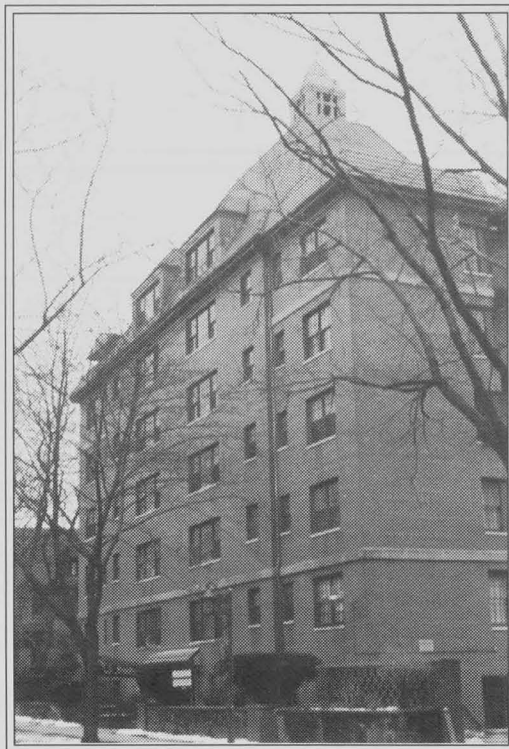
Developers: Serge Tarenzi and Victor Bocchino

The Garden Arms stands on what was a large Victory Garden during the Second World

War. After the war, it was a vacant lot until Victor Bocchino and Serge Tarenzi bought the property with the intention of constructing the present building.

Thomas Galvin was architect of the property, which opened in 1961. In later years Galvin served as head of the New York City Board of Standards and Appeals and as Operating Officer of the Battery Park City authority. In 1983, at the request of Gov. Mario Cuomo, Galvin assumed control of the development of the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center; the project was completed successfully in 1986. Galvin later chaired the Gardens Corporation's Architectural Committee.

The 26-unit Garden Arms is organized as a co-operative. With its construction, the era of apartment-house building in Forest Hills Gardens came to a close. The Garden Arms is the last of the eleven apartment buildings which, with the exception of The Leslie, stretch in a long chain along the Burns Street boundary of Forest Hills Gardens.



THE GARDEN ARMS, (25 BURNS STREET), 1993.

WILLIAM COLEMAN

#### CONCLUSION

The eleven buildings and the hundreds of lives within them represent a desire for good living. Rising land values in the 'teens prevented the realization of Mrs. Sage's ideal of a mixed community with private homes for people of all economic circumstances. That ideal has never been fully realized in Forest Hills Gardens, but the apartment houses have been a means of creating a more varied community than would otherwise have ever been possible.

Acknowledgements: Our thanks to Leonard Lombard (Forest Hills Gardens), who provided copies of materials about the Forest Hills Inn, and to Ronald Marzlock (Central Queens Historical Association), who provided copies of early advertising brochures for the Forest Hills Gardens apartment houses. Martha Keehn (Forest Hills Gardens) supplied a photograph of the Gardens Apartment. Paul and Isobel Shanley (Forest Hills Gardens) supplied the Guglielmo Nardelli photographs from the Forest Hills Village Improvement Society.

Note: This issue of *Forest Hills Gardens* magazine uses typefaces designed by the typographer Frederic Goudy, who operated the Village Press in Forest Hills Gardens between 1913 and 1923. The cover for this issue is set in Trajan Title type, which Frederic Goudy designed in 1930 for the dedication memorial at the Community House of the Church-in-the-Gardens. The magazine is set in two types which he designed in 1911 for use together: Kennerley Old Style for the text and titles and Forum Title for the initials, captions, and subtitles.

The magazine was designed by Miriam Weinberg Dustin, Hillsboro, NH, and printed by Excel Mimeo and Printing, Forest Hills, NY.