

HERITAGE RECOGNITION PROGRAM

To Identify and Honor Great Neck's Most Notable Homes

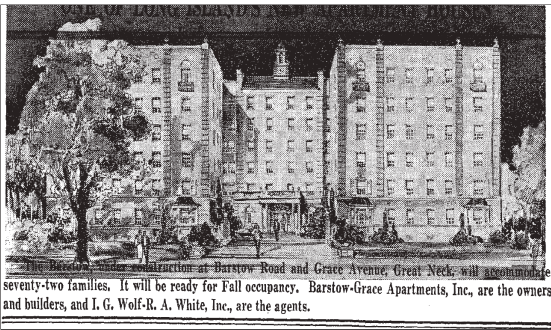


21 BARSTOW ROAD, GREAT NECK, NY

The Windsor was constructed in 1937 as a residential apartment building with professional suites on the street level. Along with Westminster Hall and the Wychwood Apartments, just a few years older, the Windsor was at the forefront of the housing transformation that occurred in mid-twentieth century Great Neck Plaza. This was the time when the Plaza was changing from a quiet village into a vibrant suburb with a diverse population and a strong connection to New York City.

The six-story red brick building at 21 Barstow Road was built on an elevated plot of land once occupied by a frame house belonging to members of the prominent Grace family. At that time, the Windsor was one of the tallest buildings on the Great Neck peninsula.

Architect George W. Springsteen, from New York City, designed the building in Colonial Revival style, following a modified "H"-shaped plan with a central wing flanked by two perpendicular wings. The building has retained many of its distinctive decorative features, including the formal front entry's fanlight with scalloped molding and sidelights framing the symmetrically balanced center door. Still on view are the elegant recessed entry porch with fluted columns, arched lobby windows with keystone lintels, decorative terracotta floors, decorative brickwork, stone medallions and distinctive secondary entrances to the professional suites. The wood-paneled elevator on the architectural plan remains, but the basement-level garage in the original design was omitted when permission to build it was denied by the Plaza, which claimed it would be a fire hazard.



Front page, Real Estate section,
The New York Times, May 30, 1937

Ironically, on March 26, 1938, an intense fire broke out that required the Vigilant Fire Company's Engine 6 to pump water from a hydrant located on the corner of Grace and Barstow Avenues. The fire was so extensive that the company needed assistance from the Glen Cove and Hempstead companies. In

addition, a ladder truck was summoned from the city to help reach the upper floors. The *Brooklyn Eagle*, April 8, 1938 reported: "the four-story high ladders of the local departments were unable to reach the flaming roof of the building...there are five other six-story apartments in the Vigilant territory." As a result of this fire, the community that had previously resisted the purchase of an aerial ladder truck recognized the need for the apparatus now that the predominant housing type in the neighborhood was the high-rise apartment, rather than the traditional single-family home that had prevailed.

For nearly twenty-five years residents enjoyed the formal garden and recreation area to the north of the building. (It is unclear whether the tennis court and playground in the plans were actually built.) But in 1960, when residents increasingly relied on automobiles, that adjacent area was replaced by a parking lot. After the building became a co-op in 1986, residents worked to restore the land around the building and successfully improved the gardens. Today the building is home to seventy-two families.