



HERITAGE RECOGNITION PROGRAM

To Identify and Honor Great Neck's Most Notable Homes & Buildings



KENWOOD GARDENS APARTMENTS, GREAT NECK, NY

This charming seven-story apartment building is the oldest cooperative apartment on Long Island, where all the residents own shares. Kenwood Gardens began in 1925 as the vision of real estate moguls Charles E. Finlay and R.J. Rickert, who had developed property across Middle Neck Road, in Kensington. The partners proclaimed that Kenwood Gardens would be the most luxurious multiple-unit dwelling available, and promoted it as the place “Where Town and Country Meet.” They chose architect Leroy P. Ward, considered by many to be the finest architect since Stanford White, to design the building. Ward had created many mansions on Long Island’s



Gold Coast as well as the Dime Savings Bank Building and Kings County Hospital in Brooklyn. He laid out Kenwood Gardens in the shape of an “H” so that each apartment would face at least two different directions. After the completion of the Kenwood, Ward occupied the penthouse, allegedly with actress Gloria Swanson. The building was constructed by Cauldwell-Wingate, a New York City firm still active today. Kenwood Gardens is made of brick, completely fireproof, and has eight entrances. The most prestigious landscape engineering and design firm, Lewis and Valentine, created the beautiful formal gardens surrounding the building.

Kenwood Gardens had many of the refinements of a modern hotel. Residents enjoyed the independence of living in their own home, with services that relieved them from doing housework and chores. The high status of their fellow residents gave them access to valuable social and business connections.

The original 66 units, each with three to eight huge rooms, were later reduced in size to produce the present count of 69 apartments, including several penthouses with 1,000-foot terraces. Each quadrant of the building has its own dedicated elevator, with no more than four apartments on each floor. Some apartments have ceilings close to twelve feet in height. All floors were of solid red oak, with the common hallway flooring of imported Portuguese tile. In addition to providing luxurious, oversize rooms, extra large closets, woodburning fireplaces in the living rooms, and one to three bathrooms per apartment, every kitchen had an electric refrigerator and a dumbwaiter, which made it simple to dispose of refuse. Additional amenities included separate living quarters for maids and chauffeurs located on the main floor. Every resident was issued a storage unit, and a large laundry room had permanently-mounted ironing boards and heated drying racks. They are still there, as if time had stood still. A parking garage was never considered as most residents had chauffeurs or used street parking.

Originally, the building contained a beauty salon, barber shop, drug store, valet service, ladies’ dress shop, roof garden, and a fine dining restaurant, “The Coligny,” which featured music and dancing. It also offered room service. At one time the Village of Great Neck Estates had its offices in the Kenwood Gardens.

