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THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NEW YORK APARTMENT: 1860-1905

City University of New York

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NEW YORK
APARTMENT 1860-1905

by

Elizabeth C. Cromley

A dissertation submitted to
the Graduate Faculty in Art
History in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy,
The City University of New York.

1982

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1982

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Art History in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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ABSTRACT

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NEW YORK APARTMENT 1860-1905

by

Elizabeth C. Cromley

Adviser: Professor Eugene Santomaso.

At the time of Richard Morris Hunt's 1869 Stuyvesant Apartments, so often called the first New York middle class apartment house, there were already years of multi-family living in the city. Subdivided and boarding houses, hotels, tenements and second class dwellings with flats had provided housing for a great range of income levels including families of the middle class. Apartment houses grew in both size and reputation in 1870s New York, and included residential hotels, bachelor flats and French Flats. There was a surge of such building beginning in the 1870s and rising during the 80s and 90s to almost totally supplant new construction of private houses as a middle class dwelling type in New York.

New York apartments were designed at first hesitantly since tenants' needs were not very clear and architects lacked experience with the problems of multi-family middle class housing. During this period, European models provided a useful reference point for both architects and tenants

who saw the potentials and picked out the faults in apartment life through looking at Paris, Vienna and London dwelling types. As architects gained experience through the 1880s and 90s and shared information, so too did tenants whose needs became clearer as their expectations became more realistic.

Questions of physical design and social mores combined in the development of acceptable apartment buildings, leading, by 1905, to an articulated set of 'proper' planning practices for buildings as a whole and for individual family units. Modern equipment such as central heating, elevators, bath and kitchen equipment combined with telephone, refrigeration and laundry systems to create a fully serviced dwelling in which the economies of collective use made modern life a reality.

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Insights into the possibilities of a new kind of architectural history came from Betsy Blackmar, whose thesis on early New York housing provided much of the background for this work, and who introduced me to new directions in social history; and from Dell Upton whose synthesis of architectural history, anthropology and social history is

an always challenging model.

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INTRODUCTION

Everybody knows that New Yorkers live in apartment buildings. New York is famous as the city of 'cliff dwellers', piled high on an island, anomalous among American cities. Its crowds, its culture, its high prices and strange habits have long made New York seem not quite properly American to the rest of the country.

New York's mode of apartment living is especially foreign to American myths of private house ownership. Everybody is supposed to want a private house; it is the only way to bring up a family; a house of one's own on one's own piece of land is the 'correct' mode for family life.¹ This belief was held no less dear in the mid-19th century than it is today. And yet, beginning in the mid-19th century when New Yorkers began talking about, building and living in "purpose-built" multiple dwellings instead of private houses, they started a trend that now includes 98% of Manhattan's population.²

The following study is an attempt to construct a comprehensive picture of the rise and development of middle class apartment design in Manhattan from the 1860's to about 1905. Because there are so many middle class apartment buildings in New York, constituting the major dwelling type in the city, it might seem surprising that architectural

historians have not already covered the subject. This, however, is the first extensive study of middle class apartments in New York, and, given the traditions of our discipline, the reasons why it is the first are not hard to find.

Until recently, architectural history has been preoccupied with aesthetic issues. Nineteenth century apartment buildings, short on stylistic innovation, have not, therefore, received much attention. History's focus on illustrious architects and expensive and prominent buildings ensured that a class of ordinary buildings designed by builders, developers and lesser known architects, would get little attention. Furthermore, questions of social and historical context must be posed about apartment design, but historians trained in architecture's artistic values were both ill-prepared for, and uninterested in, that kind of building analysis.

"Multiple dwellings" is a useful term for a building type that includes apartments for middle class tenants and tenements for the working class. It is at the working class end that multiple dwellings have come in for a thorough examination--not from architectural historians, but from social historians seeking connections between social life and dwelling space. The classic comprehensive study by James Ford, Slums and Housing of 1936,³ and Catherine Bauer's Modern Housing of 1934⁴ were both concerned with reforming housing in the 30's, but both included historical research

showing how workers' housing developed. Recent histories of tenement development include Roy Lubove's The Progressives and the Slums: Tenement House Reform in New York City of 1962;⁵ Edward Lubitz's New York University dissertation The Tenement Problem in New York City and the Movement for its Reform, 1856-1867 of 1970;⁶ and Anthony Jackson's 1976 A Place Called Home; a History of Low Cost Housing in Manhattan.⁷

All of these writers have focused on the political and social framework of tenement buildings and tenement dwellers. While not specifically histories of architecture, books like these provide models for enlarging the scope of an architectural discussion. Dwellings, to be understood, must be studied in the social context of their period.⁸

In the last few years, architectural historians, learning from this contextual approach, have begun to look anew at the architecture of ordinary dwellings. David Handlin's 1979 book The American Home, 1815-1915⁹ provides a comprehensive cross-country view of dwelling space which enlarges our understanding of single and multiple family dwellings. He incorporates issues of social life, trends in American culture and politics, and meanings assigned to the concept of home, into a discussion of architectural design. Gwendolyn Wright's 1980 Moralism and the Model Home studies the architecture of single family dwellings in and around Chicago from 1873 to 1913.¹⁰ She traces changes in the social life of the period that affected homeowners, architects and developers, and shows how architectural form responded to

changing ideas about the value and function of home. In Wright's 1981 Building the Dream, A History of American Housing, she extends this approach to a broader time period and includes a useful chapter on the development of apartment houses in the United States.¹¹ Dolores Hayden's 1980 A Grand Domestic Revolution,¹² approaches housing through the work of turn of the century feminists who believe that women's liberation could be effected in part by the redesign of dwelling space. These writers all bring social context into their analysis of architectural form.

For recent histories of apartment design, there are few sources. The only book to cover New York apartments is Andrew Alpern's 1975 Apartments for the Affluent,¹³ and while it supplies a very useful overview, through large plans and photographs of exteriors, of what was built in New York from 1869 to 1970, it does not attempt a social or historical analysis. A short article by Amy Epstein, "Multifamily Dwellings and the Search for Respectability: Origins of the New York Apartment House," does make useful connections between working class and middle class design, but does not consider New York multiple dwellings in any depth.¹⁴ Robert A. M. Stern's 1980 article "With Rhetoric: The New York Apartment House" focuses on French sources and courtyard forms, but is not sensitive to 19th century opinions of these building types.¹⁵

My work follows the new tradition of Handlin, Wright and Hayden in asserting that architectural forms develop in

conjunction with social ideas. Especially in the case of dwellings, it is only by broadening our context from a focus on style and aesthetics that we can hope to understand middle class apartment buildings.

My subject is New York apartments, and so while many of the 19th century ideas discussed here had national scope, the building forms themselves responded to the peculiar real estate constraints of Manhattan; Chicago's or Washington's apartment history would take a somewhat different form than this one.¹⁶ Because this is a study of the development and change of a building type, in which developers and clients played at least as large a part as designers, I have placed little stress on individual architects and their styles.

Before I explain the organization of this history, I will illustrate some of the problems the historian encounters, by looking at one actual building and its hypothetical tenants.

Imagine a well-to-do family arriving in New York in 1883. Parents, several children, and their servants, all accustomed to a house of their own, need suitable living quarters, and decide to look into the new "Navarro Apartments", also called the "Central Park".¹⁷ They take public transportation up to the neighborhood of Central Park--now over 20 years old--and stop, somewhat taken aback, at the corner of Seventh Avenue and 59th Street (Figure 1). Rising before them is an apartment complex of eight, ten-story towers linked by flying bridges, disposed around its own three-part courtyard. Three

stories of rustication at ground level give it a formidable appearance, but corner turrets and dormers break through above the cornice line and hint at domestic scale spaces inside. Fearful of getting lost in such a mammoth block, the family is reassured when they find that each of the eight towers has its own identity--Granada, Valencia, Tolosa and so on--giving the building its nickname "Spanish Flats" (Figure 2).

The apartment hunters enter through an imposing two story high front entrance, to look at a one floor apartment in the Tolosa, a corner tower. They agree that architects Hubert, Pirsson and Hoddick made the right choice in keeping lobbies, halls and stairs simple. Some architects treated their lobbies like ornate parlors and created an awkward situation for families who felt they had to be friendly in such spaces with tenants they didn't even know. For privacy-loving people, the Navarro was perfect: only thirteen families lived in each tower--not like those "caravansaries where 50 or 60 families are crowded together without the least regard for social adaptability".¹⁸

Our would-be tenants take the elevator up to the seventh floor and find that theirs is the only apartment on the floor. They will be as private and independent as if in their old private home. Coming out from the public hall into the private reception hall, they see the parlor in front of them, the library on their right, connected to the parlor

by sliding doors, and a large billiard room (Figure 3). From the billiard room they walk through more sliding doors into the dining room, remarking at the convenience that this suite offers for entertaining--just like apartments in Paris--and at the wonderful views of Central Park through the bay windows. Walking back through the reception hall, they discover four large chambers, spacious and well-lit, each with its own closet. They only regret that one of the chambers opens right into the library, offending the parents' sense of propriety.

Passing along a narrower private hall, they see three more small chambers, private enough for the servants' bedrooms, big enough for a baby and its nurse, and all these rooms look over the interior court where the family are delighted to see a landscaped garden and fountain (Figure 4). From the servants' room it's a short hop to the kitchen with its own store room and pantry, which gives immediate access to the dining room. Furthermore they have two bathrooms with bathtubs--one for the servants and one for themselves.

Upon reading the realtor's prospectus for the building, they find two unexpected things. First, this apartment, at 3,018 square feet, is bigger than their old eight bedroom house which only had 2,867 square feet.¹⁹ Second, they can feel just as stable and secure at the Navarro as they did as house owners before, because tenants don't just rent their apartments--they actually buy shares in a joint stock

company called the "Hubert Home Club."²⁰ The family would own a perpetual lease to their apartment, and better yet, would be able to approve, along with the other lease-owners, any new tenants wanting to join the Club in their particular tower. Good neighbors were assured.

The newcomers make up their minds on two other issues. They had always heard that apartments were terrible for children because they'd be deprived of a front yard, but at the Navarro permanent open space was guaranteed in the expanses of Central Park unfolding under their windows. They also had heard things about New York neighborhoods--how you might find a stable or a factory under construction next door when you woke up in the morning--, but this neighborhood was full of other fine apartment buildings under construction or already tenanted, assuring them of a respectable street and neighborhood as well as a socially homogeneous building. The shares are purchased and another middle class family tries apartment life.

A quick list of the issues raised by this portrait of the Navarro will show how complicated middle class apartment design was for both architects and tenants. These issues are: class and income level, family structure, numbers of occupants, accustomed dwelling types, building location, access by transportation, size of building, appearance of exterior, building identity, entrance and public spaces, numbers of units in the building, quality

of fellow tenants, vertical circulation, interior planning, room uses and room relations, foreign precedents, ventilation and light, provisions for servants, financial terms of rental or purchase, and the character of the neighborhood. These and other issues occupied tenants and designers from the middle to the end of the 19th century.

In order to organize such diverse issues, I will develop this history in seven chapters. The first chapter discusses the earlier 19th century housing situation before specifically designed--or "purpose-built"--middle class apartment buildings, and suggests that an extensive period of living in ad hoc multi-family dwellings prepared tenants for apartment life, but gave them various negative models. In the second chapter I consider the question of a "first" such building in the context of real estate practice of the 1860s and 70s. My study of the New York City Buildings Department Dockets from 1866 on, shows an extraordinary diversity of multiple dwelling types for all classes, and poses difficulties in assigning a date to the first middle class apartment. At the same time, European traditions of middle class apartment living provided various models for New York tenants and designers in their efforts to formulate an appropriate New York apartment. The ways that New Yorkers received and interpreted European models is the subject of my third chapter.

In the fourth section, New York apartment designs are analyzed in their overall relation to site, and layout on

the building lots available in New York. Here I consider how the overall building disposition affected circulation, light and ventilation within the building, and issues of scale, style and identity. Section five looks at the interior designs for individual family units, and planning variants found in bachelor flats and apartment hotels. Room use and furnishings complete the view of interior spaces.

The social meanings of middle class apartments are taken up in chapter six, where I will discuss how everything from contemporary meanings of homelife to housekeeping issues fed into the ongoing process of designing suitable middle class apartments. In the final chapter, these various threads will be gathered up and set in perspective by comparing middle class apartment design of the 1970s with 19th century aims and results.

FOOTNOTES

¹Constance Perrin, Everything in its Place: Social Order and Land Use In America (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1977), provides a sociological study of contemporary attitudes towards renting and owning a home. Gwendolyn Wright, Moralism and the Model Home... in Chicago 1873-1913 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), traces attitudes towards home owning in turn of the century Chicago.

²Andrew Alpern, Apartments for the Affluent: A Historical Survey of Buildings in New York (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1975) foreword, n.p.

³James Ford et al., Slums and Housing (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1936).

⁴Catherine Bauer, Modern Housing (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1934); See also Edith Elmer Wood, The Homes the Public Builds (New York: Public Affairs Committee Inc., 1940).

⁵Roy Lubove, The Progressives and the Slums: Tenement House Reform in New York City 1890-1917 (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1962).

⁶Edward Lubitz, "The Tenement Problem in New York City and the Movement for its Reform 1856-1867" (New York University Dissertation, 1970).

⁷Anthony Jackson, A Place Called Home; a History of Low Cost Housing in Manhattan (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1976).

⁸For other useful perspectives on the social context of housing see Kenneth Jackson and Stanley Schultz, eds, Cities in American History (New York: Alfred A. Knopf (Borzoi Book) 1972).

⁹David Handlin, The American Home - Architecture and Society, 1815-1915 (Boston, Little Brown and Co., 1979).

¹⁰Cited in footnote 1.

¹¹Gwendolyn Wright, Building the Dream: A History of American Housing (New York: Pantheon, 1981).

¹²Delores Hayden, A Grand Domestic Revolution: American Visions of Household Liberation (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1980).

¹³Cited in Note 2; See also Richard Plunz, "The Institutionalization of Housing Form in New York City, 1850-1950" (Manuscript, September, 1980).

¹⁴Amy Epstein, "Multi-family Dwellings and the Search for Respectability: Origins of the New York Apartment House," Urbanism Past and Present 5 (Summer 1980): 29-39.

¹⁵Robert A. M. Stern, "With Rhetoric: The New York Apartment House," Via 4 (1980): 78-111.

¹⁶James Goode at the Smithsonian is currently working on a history of Washington D.C. apartment houses; William Westphall at the University of Chicago is working on a history of Chicago apartments; Rebecca Zurier has written a 1982 Master's paper at Yale on apartments in Boston by John Pickering Putnam.

¹⁷Hubert, Pirsson and Hoddick, The Central Park Apartments (New York: n.p., 1881; 2nd edition 1882).

¹⁸Ibid., 1881, n.p. Hubert et al. argued that plainly decorated public spaces did not imply that "parlor" sociability was required.

¹⁹Ibid., n.p.

²⁰The operation of the Hubert Home Clubs is explained in The Central Park Apartments prospectus. Alpern, Apartments, p. 1, notes that the Club idea was short-lived and by 1885 was replaced by rental units. See Chapter VI for further discussion of cooperatives.

CHAPTER I

AD HOC MULTI-FAMILY HOUSING AND TENEMENTS

While the creation of a specific apartment form for middle class use occurred largely after the mid-century, the history of middle class apartments begins in the housing forms of the early 19th century. Throughout the first half of the century, New Yorkers tested out multi-family arrangements, adapting single-family houses and other building types to contain a growing population. Surveys conducted in 1859-60 showed that 12,717 families lived in single-family houses, 7,147 families lived two families to a house, and 16,561 families lived in dwellings housing three families or more. That is, by 1860 nearly two thirds of New York families lived in shared quarters or multiple dwellings.¹

This chapter will examine multi-family solutions to the housing problem before the 1870s when apartments specifically designed for the middle class began to appear as a significant new residential type. Two kinds of solutions began to emerge during this period: first, ad hoc conversions and adaptations to already existing buildings; then, tenements specifically designed to house an ever increasing population of largely immigrant workers. This is the period, starting at the turn of the 19th century, during which types of housing and the

quality of housing began to be identified with increasingly well-defined classes--classes, in the modern sense, "created" by the new wage system. Subdivided houses, boarding houses and hotels provided homes for the various levels within the middle class, while tenements evolved for a wage-earning working class. Critics found faults in all these arrangements because none were planned for the requirements of proper family life. By about 1870 tenants of all classes had had years of experience in ad hoc multi-family living spaces, and recognized an urgent need for housing designed from scratch to suit their family dwelling needs.

Houses in colonial New York had served as combined work and dwelling spaces. The "families" who lived in them included not just the nuclear family, but servants and apprentice workers all living and working together in one household. If a family were involved in furniture manufacture, for example, the dwelling would include a business office or counting room sleeping rooms for nuclear family members, apprentices and household servants, and outbuildings on the site for furniture production. "Workplace" was not separated from "dwelling", nor were workers separated from nuclear family members. Apprentices received room and board and training in exchange for their labor.²

In the early years of the 19th century, however, this changed in two ways. Owners of such businesses increasingly built houses for family use only, and moved their families into new neighborhoods away from the old business district

of downtown Manhattan. New residential neighborhoods like St. John's Park, developed on Hudson Street north of Trinity Church in the 1810s, or Gramercy Park, going up in the 1830s north of 14th Street at Fourth Avenue, were organized for purely residential use. At the same time, a wage system replaced the old apprentice system. Instead of receiving training and room and board for their labor, workers received wages and had to find room and board outside the master's home.³

This separation of workers' housing from the housing of business owners led for the first time in New York to a clear association of dwelling type with class--an association that played a prominent part in the history of apartments. Those families of the 1810s and 20s with houses of their own comprised the emerging middle class. Wealthy merchants could build substantial three and four story brick structures, while independent artisans, such as the furniture maker mentioned above, could afford wood frame houses on the lower east and west sides of Manhattan. The wage-earners, on the lowest end of the emerging class ladder, could not afford their own houses and had to find rental housing near the business districts that had fallen out of favor as residential areas for middle class families.

The houses left behind by upwardly mobile families moving to new purely residential neighborhoods were ripe for subdivision. Many poorer families could each rent a fraction of a formerly single family house, creating an ad

hoc multiple dwelling. Some of the houses that "filtered down" to workers were solid, well-built houses, but most were of cheaper wood frame construction. The poorer the quality of the original house, of course, the less likely it could withstand heavy use by many families. Quickly falling into disrepair, these ad hoc multi-family dwellings become New York's first slums.⁴

As New Yorkers of the 1830s looked around the city, they could see that different neighborhoods and dwelling types were occupied by distinct classes. Class stratification was beginning to take on its modern form. Multi-family arrangement seemed immediately connected to poverty, while a place in the middle class was signified by a single family house--a link between class and dwelling that has never left us. For later 19th century middle class families it became increasingly difficult to achieve that sign of middle class status, a single family house.

Immigration swelled New York's population in the 1840s and 50s, putting even greater pressure on scarce land and housing stock. Not just the poor, but most of the middle class began to feel the effects of inadequate housing, and by the mid-century only well-to-do families could afford houses of their own. Artisans and mechanics, small shopkeepers and clerks--those who called themselves the "middling" classes--were forced to accept some forms of multi-family dwelling, although it was inconsistent with their own assessment of their social status. From this point on, I will consider the

dwellings and attitudes of the middle class in ad hoc multiple dwellings. The poorest were already moving into purpose-built tenements, and these will be examined at the end of this chapter.

New York's private house architecture in the 1840s, 50s and later, was increasingly turned into multi-family dwelling space as the middle class searched for housing. Ad hoc subdivisions affected the interior spaces allocated to individual families, but made little change in the building's exterior. Such subdivided houses can be traced from contemporary newspaper advertisements offering parts of houses or whole floors for rent, sometimes with their own cooking facilities. An 1869 article in the New York Times was headlined "Palaces of Last Generation thehovels of Today", lamenting the trend among wealthy families to move ever northward along the spine of Manhattan, leaving behind whole neighborhoods of single family homes to be converted to multi-family use.⁵ The houses selected for conversion were everything from single-lot houses and bigger double-lot houses to groups of "old style narrow houses" thrown together to make a multi-family dwelling.⁶ Thus, while middle class New Yorkers identified private house ownership as the major significant mark of membership in that class, they had to make their homes in dwellings shared with other families.

Prosperous middle class families too found living quarters in these ad hoc buildings, as William Dean Howells recounted in his 1890 novel A Hazard of New Fortunes. His

protagonists Basil and Isabel March, house owners in Boston who had come to New York apartment hunting, went to see an apartment in a formerly one family house. "It was a large old mansion cut up into five or six dwellings; but it kept some traits of its former dignity...The dark mahogany trim, of sufficiently ugly design, gave a rich gloom to the hallway, which was wide and paved with marble."⁷ Perhaps the leftover glamour of this mansion's decoration compensated tenants for having to live in subdivided quarters.

Families of the mid-century still aspired to a private home, as they had in the 1810s, but the evidence along the street proved they couldn't have it. Hundreds of houses around town with signs in the windows saying "floors to let" or "apartments to let" offered dwelling space to middle class people whose budgets were smaller than their dreams.

Boarding Houses and Hotels

A special case of converting single family houses to multi-family use was the system of boarding. Boarding houses--that is, rental quarters that provided both lodging and meals--had been common in New York since Colonial days. Artisans, journeymen and laborers with modest incomes had found boarding houses a comfortable and economical housing solution in the early years of the 19th century. But towards the mid-century this solution was also serving clerks, doctors, lawyers, professors and even merchants, who thought boarding beneath their social position. The range of boarding house

accommodations in New York during the Civil War went from fancy places on Madison and Fifth Avenues where rates of \$20 to \$40 a week would buy a room and five course meals, to poorer establishments on the lower east side where one could be fed and lodged for \$2.50 a week.⁸

Boarding houses as a home for middle class families were looked upon with scorn and some fear as places that threatened family life by depriving the family of its privacy. The fears for family life that boarding houses engendered can be understood in the light of recent feminist history. Historians Kathryn Sklar, Nancy Cott and Ann Douglas have all shown that 19th century industrialization increasingly excluded middle class women from the workplace and drew a firm line between the world of paid work and the world of home.⁹ The work world, identified with male activities, was the place for aggressive competition. Home, the world of women, gathered into itself all the values of affection, peace and morality which were defined as opposites to workplace values. Women became guardians of these precious values, and their charge was to protect the home and maintain its sanctity. This role for women was prescribed in Catherine Beecher's 1841 Treatise on Domestic Economy where she defined women as rightly subservient to their husbands in political affairs, but "In matters pertaining to the education of their children...in all benevolent enterprises, and in all questions relating to morals and manners, they have superior influence."¹⁰ Genteel families defined themselves

within this ethic of homelife (discussed below in Chapter VI) and yearned for a private home where tender moral influences would protect family members from the heartless industrializing city.

Contemporary comments on the experience of boarding must be understood within this ethic of homelife. Progressive architect Calvert Vaux, who interested himself in everything from Central Park to urban tenement reform, criticized boarding house living. "The ceaseless publicity [that is, the absence of privacy] that ensues, the constant change, and the entire absence of all individuality in the everyday domestic arrangements, will always render this method of living distasteful as a permanent thing to heads of families who have any taste for genuine home comforts."¹¹ Vaux's themes identify middle class reactions to living in multi-family arrangements: "publicity" had to be avoided, change destroyed the stability of family life, and individuality could not be stamped on the household that had to share housing with others.

Tenants shared these worries with architects. A "man of moderate income" wrote a letter published in an 1869 New York Times complaining that the housing market had deprived him of a choice of dwelling place. He aspired to "the dignity of housekeeping", but couldn't afford his own independent home and feared he would be forced into a boarding house. Thousands like this man seemed to agree that the "boarding house, at its best, is but a miserable mockery of a home."¹²

The shared meals taken in boarding houses were a focus for the unease of critics. The integrity of the family was reiterated in the ritual of taking meals together, prepared in the family kitchen and served in the family dining room. But boarding houses, along with restaurants, "threaten at no distant date to usurp the place of the family dinner table as well as the family mansion." warned an 1871 article in the New York Times.¹³ If private family dinners should give way to eating in public, family values might be diminished if not lost. By 1869 there were already over 10,000 boarding houses in New York; on the outside they looked just like private houses, but inside were the seeds of destruction of family life.¹⁴

For families concerned with instilling moral virtues in their children, boarding houses brought unwelcome contact with strangers who might not share their values. An 1869 guidebook to New York described a boarding house clientele as a mixed group of single men and women and married couples all staying together--a mixture offensive to the writer.¹⁵ Conversation, and even flirtation, among strangers was common and broke down the rules of propriety. Certainly this was no environment in which to bring up a family.

Economic conditions forced house owners as well as tenants into the boarding system. Few families could afford the full rent on a four or five story house, so all but the wealthiest had to take in boarders to cover expenses.¹⁶ For the families who did take in boarders, it was a mixed

blessing: they lost their own family privacy and saw their home "degenerate" into a multi-family dwelling. But with the extra income from boarders, families could afford to pay servants and get relief from some of the care of keeping a home, and a boarding house, in order.¹⁷

Houses subdivided into apartments or made into boarding houses of the middle class of the 1850s and 60s did not show the signs of deterioration that had marked workers' subdivided houses of the 1820s and 30s. Those earlier houses were insubstantially constructed to begin with; they suffered and decayed under very crowded conditions and lack of upkeep. Mid-century converted houses of middle class tenants were usually brick, some with typical brownstone fronts, and were never so overcrowded as workers' housing. Thus the principal changes that turned a middle class private house into apartments or boarding took place only on the interior. From the street they still appeared to be solid private homes. This divergence between interior use and street facade, however, seemed to play a wicked joke on genteel city dwellers: the architecture deceptively promised a single family stronghold, but contained an unknown mixture of strangers within.

At the same time that struggling middle class families were finding converted houses the only feasible places to live, wealthier families demonstrated their fondness for hotel life. In the years before the Civil War it seemed to some reporters that living in hotels could be a reasonable answer

to housing shortages and expenses. "Society is rapidly tending towards hotel life," reported Putnam's magazine in 1853, "and the advantages of a cluster of families living together under one roof, are everyday more apparent."¹⁸ Expensive house rents, a scarcity of servants, and the problem of upkeep and management that house owners endured were "strong inducements to take rooms at a hotel."¹⁹ Putnam's hoped that a range of new hotels would go up in the next few years providing homes to families of moderate incomes, since, in 1853, the hotels available to New Yorkers were all luxury places.

As anticipated, the Civil War years saw a boom in hotel building as travellers moved through the city. By 1869 there were 700 to 800 hotels in town according to a contemporary guidebook. Of these, only 50 or 60 were well known, and only 25 or 30 really "first class".²⁰ The best were located near the fashionable shopping and residential enclaves of lower Broadway and around Madison Square. The elaborate Grand Central Hotel on Broadway opposite Bond Street, opened in 1870, provides an example of the quarters available to wealthier families and single gentlemen, as well as travellers.²¹

The Grand Central was then the largest hotel in the country with a capacity of 1500 guests in 650 rooms. The ten story building offered its permanent boarders suites of a parlor, bedroom and a closet; families could rent contiguous suites and make themselves bigger apartments. Each floor had

bathrooms for shared use with hot and cold water. Single rooms for permanent gentlemen boarders on the 6th and 7th floors had superb view of the city. Public rooms included six parlors and six dining rooms richly decorated with lace, Axminster carpets and walnut furniture. Brick and marble sculpted details on the facade signalled the luxury appointments within.

Such costly decorations lured many a family from out of town to set themselves up like merchant princes, meanwhile escaping the demands of building, decorating, paying for and maintaining a private house. Novelist Edith Wharton mocked such families in her novel The Custom of the Country, in which a newly rich family from the provinces, hoping to launch their pretty daughter in New York society, took permanent quarters at the "Hotel Stentorian" on West 72nd Street. They imagined that the elaborate decor would make a better impression on their daughter's suitors.²² Hotels thus made it easy for people to deceive each other: surrounded by rented luxury, families pretended to a social status they had not really achieved.

With the increasing numbers of hotels after the Civil War came more and more families willing to try them out as a permanent housing solution. However, critics raised doubts about their suitability as family residences. While hotels may have offered the economies of a shared roof and services unavailable to any but the wealthiest private house owners, the publicity of hotel life was pointed to again as

a threat to family integrity. Hotel living suggested instability, and families who had no other home were "like civilized Bedouin".²³ Women, who were supposed to manifest, through skilled housekeeping, their protection of family morality, drifted away from their proper roles. "Little by little a certain class of lazy and fashionable women, discovering that their delicate organizations could no longer withstand what they called the drudgery of housekeeping, gravitated towards the new hotels," reported an 1879 New York Times.²⁴ Imagine calling housekeeping drudgery; it was meant to be the keeping of the sacred flame. But many a wife was accused of losing her housekeeping skills--and thus her very mission in life--because living in hotels gave her nothing to do but gossip and visit other wives in their rooms.

If only visiting other wives were all she did! Hotel life might be "agreeable and desirable for masculine celibates" but the man who took his wife and family to live in a hotel was asking for trouble. "How many women", asked an 1869 writer, "can trace their first infidelity to the necessarily demoralizing influences of public houses--to loneliness, leisure, need of society, interesting companions, abundance of opportunity, and potent temptation!"²⁵ Attitudes like these show that hotel life, just like living in subdivided or boarding houses, threatened middle class family ideology. All these choices for middle class housing shared the problems of too much exposure to public observation and too little family privacy. They were all multi-family solutions in

settings that had not been designed to accommodate the most valued qualities of family life.

What families needed was a housing type that took into account the values of family privacy and sanctity of the home--not an ad hoc housing solution, but one designed for the purpose. As early as the mid-1850s, articles began to appear in the architectural and popular press encouraging middle class designers and tenants to think about the potentials of purpose-built multiple dwellings--that is, apartment houses. The arguments advanced in these articles took several points of view in recommending apartments.

One of the early arguments for building middle class multiple dwellings focused on their potential for the architectural embellishment of the city. Analyzing New York's residential architecture in 1854, Putnam's Magazine asserted that the city had no fine house architecture, and indeed no impressive buildings at all except for railroad bridges and aqueducts.²⁶ If people could be persuaded that the values of a home did not depend on being physically isolated from their neighbors, each family on a separate plot of ground, they could share a roof and live in a virtual palace. Twenty or thirty families together in a grand building, many such buildings around New York--if that could happen, New York would have a large scale and splendid domestic architecture and would be spared all those boring and plain little private houses that made for such dull street facades.

Hotel architecture, Putnam's said, gave an idea of the large scale and architectural potential of the future apartment building.

A more pragmatic argument for apartment buildings was outlined by architect Calvert Vaux in his 1857 speech to the American Institute of Architects.²⁷ He cited the high demand on New York land and the intolerable crowding of lower Manhattan as obvious reasons why New Yorkers would be more comfortable in multiple dwellings. Vaux realized that housing shortages affected all classes in New York and that multi-family dwellings would have to be devised in a range of costs and sizes to suit mechanics as well as millionaires.

The excessive costs of building and maintaining individual houses provided another reason for adopting multiple dwellings. Purpose-built middle class apartments would allow a young couple with a small income who could not afford a house to still find the "delights of home".²⁸ The costs of land, construction, circulation space and maintenance, all of which had to be borne individually by house owners, were shared expenses in an apartment building. By 1874, the popular magazine Century declared that "multiple tenancy alone can make large houses economical, and home possible to the multitude in a city like this."²⁹

Middle class readers perused articles like these in the morning papers as they sipped their coffee at hotel and

boarding house tables. They wanted private homes of their own, but apartment buildings with suitably private units were only just beginning to appear in the early 1870s. The vast majority of purpose-built multi-family dwellings erected in New York were not for the middle class but for the working class. Tenements by the thousands surrounded worried middle class families and gave them a frightening image of multiple dwelling life.

Tenements: Purpose-built Multiple
Dwellings for the Working Class

As we have seen, housing shortages in New York since the early years of the 19th century caused all but the wealthiest to seek homes in some kind of multiple dwellings, but although all classes were affected, the poor were always left with fewest choices. When housing filtered down to workers, it was always the poorest housing. Workers and their families had had to make do with subdivided houses, one family to a room, as early as 1795.³⁰ With the population doubling every decade, creating ever more crowded conditions in Manhattan, subdivided houses could not come near to supplying the housing needed by working class families.³¹

Perhaps as early as the 1820s, purpose-built tenements started to go up in lower Manhattan especially to hold workers and their families. The first such building is hard to pin down but may have been built in 1824.³² Early

tenements were wooden barracks-like structures, shabbily built, with no regard for the comfort and safety of tenants. Outdoor privies in the rear yards, and a pump for water at street level were their only conveniences. Dark halls and stairs and windowless rooms were commonplace. The term "model tenement" came into use to describe buildings that attempted to alleviate the extremes of the early crowded buildings. The first of these model buildings, identified by housing reformers deForest and Veiller, was the "Workmen's Home" for black tenants, built on Elizabeth Street in 1855.³³ However, it was not until the late 1870s that model tenements actually offered much in the way of improved architecture for workers' housing.

Before the mid-century, it was widely acknowledged that New York had a "tenement problem". Board of Health inspector Gerrit Forbes published a report on overcrowded and unhealthy housing conditions among the New York poor in 1834, and the first proposals for model tenement plans were presented by the Association for the Improvement of the Conditions of the Poor in 1846.³⁴ At the urging of that Association, the state legislature began to investigate housing conditions and proposed a law in 1856 that would set standards for worker's housing. Sidetracked for several years by the Civil War, the legislature did not act until 1867 when they passed the first tenement law.³⁵

During those years without regulation, tenement buildings were erected in huge numbers. By 1863 there were

15,369 tenement houses in New York, over 9,000 of them below 14th Street and most on the lower east side, housing about 500,000 people.³⁶ Immigrants had been pouring into New York over the previous decade--156,844 arrivals in 1863 alone.³⁷ Some examples of tenement plans from the mid-19th century, published by Marcus Reynolds in his 1892 The Housing of the Poor in American Cities, show some common problems in this pre-legislation era of tenement design.³⁸ The buildings were laid out on 25' wide lots, adequate for single family private houses but hopelessly constricted for the typically 20 families in a tenement (Figures 5, 6). Many rooms had no windows nor any access except through an adjoining room. The only light and air for interior rooms was provided by an air shaft which itself became a source of foul odors since it had no fresh air intake, nor any way to be cleaned.

Reform of workers' housing in the mid and later 19th century took three directions: improved private management, improved public regulation, and improved architectural design. Improved management was recommended by English reformer Octavia Hill, whose Homes of the London Poor was published in New York in 1875.³⁹ She felt that a set of strongly enforced house rules and a housemother to set a good example could improve living conditions for the poor by teaching them how to keep substandard housing clean and how to fix up their humble quarters. In New York, a Mrs. Miles salvaged the tenement building at 41 Park Street

"by means of simply rules, sympathy and advice to residents."⁴⁰ But this of course was an apolitical solution and a cruel one because it put the responsibility for poor housing on its victims. Obviously such measures could not make a dent in 15,000 bad buildings without indoor plumbing, light or air.

To make serious improvements in tenements, improved private management needed backing up with legislation. The attention to a housing problem through the 1850s led to the formation of the New York City Buildings Department in 1862, charged with keeping records on all structures erected in New York. The Buildings Department was also to help fire and health officials enforce the then minimal regulations concerning housing safety. The tenement law enacted in 1867 finally required for the first time that tenement builders provide fire escapes, that there be at least one privy for every twenty residents, that no one could live in cellars less than 7' high, and that no animals be kept except dogs and cats. Other provisions required minimum foundation and wall thicknesses according to building height. This law gave the city power to regulate tenement developers, but had less effect than it should have because enforcement was actually very weak.⁴¹

The third way to improve tenements, after house rules and legal means, was improved architectural design. By the later 1870s the physical planning of tenements took two general configurations. One form, the narrow 25' wide building, was determined by typically long and narrow lot

shapes, the implications of which will be taken up again in Chapter IV. These small tenement buildings were most commonly erected by speculative developers who could only afford to construct two or three tenements at a time for purposes of investment. Their investments typically realized up to 25% a year, so tenement development was a popular and profitable form of real estate practice. The other tenement form was a large-lot grouping--either tenement units in big blocks around a courtyard, or rows of narrow individual buildings wrapping around their own open space. Because more land was required to erect a courtyard building, returns on investments were more likely to be about 5%, making the bigger courtyard tenement far less desirable to investors.

The typical narrow tenement on its 25' wide lot gave builders little room to provide for comfortable interior arrangements. Only the front and the rear rooms faced the outside air; all other rooms were somewhere in the darker middle of the building. In order to encourage improved architectural solutions to the tenement problem, the Plumber and Sanitary Engineer, a magazine founded in 1877 to improve sanitary awareness, held a competition in 1878 for better tenement designs. Competitors were to design a 25' wide building following the suggested provisions of a new tenement law (eventually enacted the following year) that would require every room to have direct exposure to outside light and air, outside light in halls and stairs, water closets inside the building and a rear yard.⁴²

The winning design was James Ware's plan, often called the 'dumbbell' type, variations of which have been widely published.⁴³ The center of his plan narrows to allow two small light shafts on either side of a central stairs, making the plan resemble a weightlifter's dumbbell (Figure 6). Other entries show other potential solutions to light well placement and the distribution of stairs. Four alternative schemes to the Ware plan are included here as examples of the variations possible on the narrow tenement lot; these plans and other are preserved in the Chandler scrapbooks in Avery Library, Columbia University.⁴⁴ In these four plans, designers have placed all their courtyard space on one side of the lot, combining the space of Ware's two small light courts. Stairs are placed centrally in one scheme (Figure 7); pulled out of the building and given their own tower in one (Figure 8); and one has three spiral staircases winding in towers up the facade and courtyard walls (Figure 9). In the most inventive plan there are four units per floor, each with its own balcony and water closet (Figure 10); here two courtyards on the same side of the building allow fresh air intake from the street and rear yard with access to the court for ease of cleaning.

Improved architectural solutions suggested by the entries in the Plumber and Sanitary Engineer competition still did not go far to improve housing for the poor. Even under the new regulations of the 1879 law, public halls remained dark and narrow, stairs too steep and yards too small. Air

shafts 28" wide meant that a neighbor's windows were within easy reach and privacy hard to maintain. While indoor plumbing was a great improvement over the shared backyard privy, still there were normally only two water closets on a floor shared by four families. Rooms had to have at least 60 square feet of floor space--too small for normal use--and there was no requirement for at least one sizable living room per unit. Ten out of the typical fourteen rooms on a floor still remained dark and poorly ventilated. Building heights were allowed up to eight stories for non-fireproof, walk-up tenements, with no height restrictions for narrow streets.⁴⁵

Thousands of these tenements were erected under the 1879 law. By 1900 there were 13,600 tenement buildings in the area below 14th Street and nearly 28,000 north of there. Terrible overcrowding, dirt and disease made tenement neighborhoods into fearful slums.⁴⁶ Furthermore their occupation by immigrants incited a xenophobic panic in middle class observers to whom tenements became a symbol of all that was opposite to a proper home.

Large courtyard tenement buildings were far better places to live, but the greater expense in assembling land to build them and the smaller return on investment meant that not many were erected before 1901 when a new tenement law encouraged their construction. In the 1870s it took philanthropists to undertake tenement reform; for developers there was not enough profit.

Alfred Tredway White, a philanthropist and partner in his family's importing firm, was responsible for the first successful large model tenements to be erected in New York--actually in the City of Brooklyn--in 1877.⁴⁷ White worked with the Brooklyn architectural firm of the Field Brothers to adapt ideas he had seen in English model tenements. His immediate inspiration was Sir Sidney Waterlow's 1863 "Langbourne Buildings" in London, 80 flats with external stair and balcony access, which White called the first successful tenement buildings.⁴⁸ On these precedents he based three major Brooklyn tenement buildings: the Home Buildings (1877-78), the Tower Buildings (1878-79), and the Riverside Buildings (1890), all three of which are still standing although modified over the years.

The Tower Buildings of 1878-79 may be taken as an example of White's reform tenement design principles. The building is six stories high with 146 units, broken down into three large blocks which enclose three sides of a large courtyard space (Figures 11, 12). On the fourth side small workers cottages stand in a double row. Each block has several vertical access stairs on the exterior which rise in open towers and give onto balconies. From the balcony, tenants entered their own front doors (Figure 13). The exterior access system, modelled on Waterlow's London tenements, had several advantages: the stairs and balconies themselves were fireproof so they served as both access and fire escape; they were exposed to the fresh air and the rain,

and so were self-cleaning; and the individual front doors opening from outdoors were supposed to give tenants a greater sense of independence than rows of anonymous doors opening from dreary internal corridors.

Family units were two rooms deep facing both the street and the court sides and assuring cross ventilation. Units were modestly sized with three or four rooms per family, but each had its own water closet and washing sinks, built-in storage shelves, 8'3" ceilings and direct sunlight.

In his 1890 Riverside Buildings, White provided similar features in the apartment units and also gave his tenants a much bigger courtyard planned to hold a fountain, plantings and a bandstand for free concerts (Figure 14). These buildings covered less than 50% of the 24 city lots which comprised the site. Shops, a common reading room on the ground floor, and a bathtub room in the basement with hot water courtesy of the management were part of White's efforts to expand communal facilities and encourage the cultural growth of his tenants.

Another way to give tenements the benefit of a courtyard was to wrap a series of standard narrow tenement buildings around a common courtyard, as in Vaux and Radford's plan of 1879-81.⁴⁹ Erected by the Improved Dwellings Association on First Avenue between 71st and 72nd Streets, these were the first tenements designed on courtyard principles in Manhattan (Figure 15). The individual buildings resemble

dumbbell tenements, six stories high, with accommodations for 220 families in 638 rooms. Unlike dumbbell tenements built by developers however, these wrap around three sides of the site filling the block of First Avenue and extending into 71st Street and 72nd Street, with a very large courtyard for tenants to share in the center.

Buildings like A. T. White's or Vaux and Radford's offered a reasonable model for improved tenement design, but it was rarely imitated until the new tenement law of 1901 made the old 25' wide type unacceptable; then new light shaft and courtyard requirements simply could not fit on the old narrow sites and a courtyard type became the norm.⁵⁰ But throughout the 19th century, almost no other model tenements were built, and the tenements that people did see were proof enough that tenement buildings led immediately to disgraceful slums.

The preceding history of New York's experience with multi-family dwellings has shown that multi-family housing was, from the first, associated with some kind of deprivation if not serious hardship. Filtered down housing in the first decades of the 19th century provided subdivided quarters for working people, sometimes only able to afford a single room for a whole family. Even aspiring clerks and professionals in the mid-century who felt a private house their right, could not afford house rents and purchase prices and had to make do by renting a floor in a house, becoming a boarder in some one else's home, or turning their own houses into boarding

houses to meet expenses. Wealthier families trying hotel life as a multi-family alternative found themselves stigmatized as irresponsible, and lost the home values of privacy and family unity so prized by the middle class.

If these ad hoc multi-family arrangements failed to give families the environment they wanted, then perhaps purpose-built multi-family dwellings could accommodate their wants. But the only model in New York for such purpose-built multiple dwellings were tenements--a frightening example. Even though built for the purpose, tenements were crowded, disease-ridden and lacked privacy. Tenement buildings seemed to be the very architectural embodiment of poverty, suitable perhaps for immigrants who "knew no better", but never for the middle class.

Because of this strong association of multiple dwellings with deprivation and poverty, the middle class of the 1860s and 70s were not too enthusiastic about living in apartments. But what were they to do? Being American meant having one's own home, but being middle class in New York meant that that was beyond most people's financial means. Tenants needed, and the real estate situation required, that architects find some solution to this dilemma and develop a multi-family housing type that the middle class could comfortably live in.

FOOTNOTES

¹E. Lubitz, "The Tenement Problem in New York City and the Movement for its Reform, 1856-1867" (New York University, Ph.D. Dissertation, 1970) Table VI, p. 542.

²Betsy Blackmar, "Housing and Property Relations in New York City, 1785-1850" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Harvard University, 1980) gives an extensive documentation of changes in this period. Her arguments are summarized in Blackmar, "Rewalking the 'Walking City'", Radical History Review 21 (Fall 1979): 131-148.

³Betsy Blackmar, "Housing and Property Relations", p. 260-261.

⁴James Ford, Slums and Housing (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1936) p. 868: bad fires in 1835 and 1845 wiped out hundreds of houses that would have filtered down to the working class. Blackmar, "Housing and Property Relations", p. 435, shows that it was common to subdivide houses in the 1830s within one decade of construction.

⁵New York Times (August 2, 1869) p. 1. See also Charles Lockwood, Manhattan Moves Uptown: An Illustrated History (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1976) and Christine Boyer, "Development and Boundaries of Luxury Neighborhoods in New York, 1625-1890" (Manuscript, Columbia University Center for Preservation Planning, 1980). The conversion of private house to multi-family use is recorded in H. C. Bunner, Story of a New York House (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1887). The protagonist's house in St. John's Park goes through all the stages from private home to boarding house to tenement. He dies upon finding it demolished.

⁶James Richardson, "The New Homes of New York" (The Century /Scribner's Monthly 8, 1874): 70.

⁷William Dean Howells, A Hazard of New Fortunes (New York: Harper and Bros., 1890; paperback edition, New York: New American Library, Signet Classic, 1965) p. 42.

⁸New York Times (November 21, 1865): 2.

⁹Kathryn Sklar, Catharine Beecher: A Study in American Domesticity (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973); Ann Douglas, The Feminization of American Culture (New York: Avon, 1977); Nancy Cott, The Bonds of Womanhood (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976).

¹⁰Catharine Beecher, A Treatise on Domestic Economy (New York: Marsh, Capen, Lyon and Webb, 1841; paperback edition, New York: Schocken Books, 1977).

¹¹Calvert Vaux, "A.I.A. Address", The Crayon (July 1857): 218; See also Vaux, "Parisian Buildings for City Residents", Harpers Weekly 1 (19 December 1857): 809-810.

¹²New York Times, "letter" (September 25, 1869): 4; New York Times (October 31, 1875): 5.

¹³New York Times (August 6, 1871): 5. Men who had formerly eaten mid-day dinner at home had to use restaurants as their workplaces grew ever more distant from home in the expanding city.

¹⁴New York Times (August 2, 1869): 1.

¹⁵Junius Browne, The Great Metropolis: A Mirror of New York (Hartford: American Publishing Co., 1869) p. 208.

¹⁶Richardson, "New Homes of New York", p.67.

¹⁷Ibid. Richardson uses the strong term "degenerate". Howells, Hazard, p. 103. His characters Mrs. Leighton and her daughter Alma, forced to take in boarders, are "glad to be afflicted with a cook."

¹⁸"New York Daguerrotyped--Private Residences", Putnam's Magazine 1 (April 1853): 367.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Browne, The Great Metropolis, p. 391.

²¹Detailed description in the New York Times (August 6, 1870): 5.

²²Edith Wharton, The Custom of the Country (New York: Scribner, 1976).

²³Browne, Great Metropolis, p. 86-92, chapter on the practices of moving day.

²⁴New York Times (June 22, 1879): 10.

²⁵Browne, Great Metropolis, p. 398.

²⁶"New York Daguerrotyped", Putnam's Magazine 3 (1854): 233.

²⁷Vaux, "A.I.A. address", p. 218.

²⁸New York Times (Aug. 2, 1869): 1.

²⁹Richardson, "New Homes of New York", p. 65.

³⁰James Ford, Slums and Housing, p. 867. Other major works on tenement problems cited in my Introduction.

³¹Lubitz, "The Tenement Problem in New York", Table III, p. 539, shows that in 1855 the population of New York City was 622,924 people, of whom over 52% were foreign-born. In 1820, the population had been 123,706.

³²The Plumber and Sanitary Engineer mentions a tenement built in 1824 and still in use in 1879 (Dec. 15, 1879, p. 26); Andrew Alpern, Apartments for the Affluent (New York: McGraw Hill, 1975) p. 12, gives 1833 as the earliest tenement, located on Water Street; A. T. White names a building on Cherry Street of 1838 as the first tenement (Better Homes for Working Men, New York, n.p., 1875) p. 1. Robert de Forest and Lawrence Veiller discuss the first 'model' tenements in Tenement House Problem (New York: Macmillan, 1903) v. 1, p. 71. See also Jacob Riis, A Ten Years' War (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1900) for views of turn of the century slum life.

³³It should be noted here that the name "tenement" was used in New York law to cover all multiple dwellings having three or more independent units, so tenement law applied to all multiple dwellings (except hotels) of all classes. See Chapter II for further discussion of this term.

³⁴Gerrit Forbes, Report of the New York City Board of Health (New York: 1834); deForest and Veiller, The Tenement House Problem (New York: 1903) v. 1, pp 69-118 "Tenement House Reform in New York City 1834-1900". Richard Plunz, "The Institutionalization of Housing Form in New York City 1850-1950" (New York: manuscript, 1980), p.5-6: Dr. John Griscom cited as the first serious housing reformer in New York with his book of 1842.

³⁵Lubitz, "The Tenement Problem in New York", gives an account of this period in exhaustive detail.

³⁶William F. Thoms, M.D., Tenant Houses: Their Ground Area, Cubic Feet of Air Space and Ventilation (Albany, N.Y.: 1867) p. 3. Cf. Lubitz, "Tenement Problem in New York", Table VIII, p. 543 for the slightly lower figure of 15,309 tenement houses.

³⁷Lubitz, "The Tenement Problem in New York", Table IX, p. 546.

³⁸Marcus Reynolds, The Housing of the Poor in American Cities (London: Publications of the American Economic Assoc., v. 8, Nos. 2 and 3 [1892]) p. 69.

³⁹Octavia Hill, Homes of the London Poor (New York: New York State Charities Aid Association, 1875); see also E. Moberly Bell, Octavia Hill (London: Constable and Co., Ltd., 1943).

⁴⁰A. T. White, Improved Dwellings for the Laboring Classes (New York: Putnam's, 1879) n.p.

⁴¹This history is given in detail in Ford, Slums and Housing; Jackson, A Place Called Home (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1976); and Lubitz, "Tenement Problem", Part IV, pp. 466-531.

⁴²The Plumber and Sanitary Engineer 2 published entries and winners in March, 1879, pp 103-106; April, 1879, pp. 131-132; May, 1879, pp. 158-159.

⁴³Variants of the winning Ware plan were published for example in Reynolds, Housing, p. 71, figures 6 and 7; and Edgar Kaufmann, ed., Rise of an American Architecture (New York: Praeger, 1970) p. 176. Apparently Ware himself made some improvements to the plans he originally submitted to the competition, accounting for the variations in published plans.

⁴⁴Scrapbooks compiled by Charles F. Chandler, Commissioner of the New York Board of Health, 1873-83, who was one of the judges of the competition.

⁴⁵First Report of the Tenement House Department of the City of New York 1902-03 (New York: 1903) pp 137-39, gives comparative features of the 1879 "Old Law" and the 1901 "New Law".

⁴⁶Jackson, A Place Called Home, p. 77.

⁴⁷A. T. White published several books on his reform principles and the buildings he sponsored: Improved Dwellings for the Laboring Classes (New York, Putnam's, 1879), Better Homes for Working Men (New York: n.p., 1885), Riverside Buildings (Brooklyn, N.Y.: n.p., 1890), and Sunlighted Tenements (New York: National Housing Association Publication, No. 12, 1912).

⁴⁸Further discussion of English working class buildings occurs in my Chapter III below. See also Anthony Sutcliffe, ed., Multi-Storey Living, the British Working Class Experience (London: Croom, Helm; New York: Barnes and Noble, 1974); and John Tarn, Five Per Cent Philanthropy, an Account of Housing in Urban Areas between 1840 and 1914 (London and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1973).

⁴⁹ Illustrated in Ford, Slums and Housing, Pl. 5H; description given in his "Appendix: Notes on Plans", p. 882. Ford gives an elevation, Fig. 116D and a view of the buildings still in use in 1938, Fig. 38. See also reference to Vaux and Radford's buildings in my Chapter II below.

⁵⁰ Courtyard buildings were encouraged by the 1901 "New Law" that required bigger light courts than could fit on a 25' wide lot. New tenement types fitting these requirements are given in T. M. Clark, "Apartment Houses", American Architect and Building News 91 (Jan. 1907): 3-11, figs. 18 and 19. Thomas Short's winning design of the 1900 tenement house competition published in deForest and Veiller, Tenement House Problem, p. 116; also in Ford, Slums and Housing, Pls. 7 and 8.

CHAPTER II

THE EMERGENCE OF THE "FRENCH FLAT"

Introduction

In 1866 the New York City Buildings Department started to keep a record of all buildings erected in the city, following a decade of agitation for housing reform. This record, called the "New Buildings Docket", at first classified dwellings as "first class", "second class", and "third class". At the beginning of 1875, the Dockets replaced that classification with "first class", "second class", "French Flat", "Hotel and Boarding House" and "Tenement". The Docket books for these years record a growing number of middle class apartment buildings that at first had no category among traditional dwellings classifications. Building inspectors entered the first such buildings in their records by adding handwritten explanations to an entry under first or third class buildings. As numbers of these buildings increased, the Buildings Department finally settled on the name "French Flats" to described them.

In this chapter I will trace the record in the New Buildings Dockets. The evidence suggests a reinterpretation of the "first" apartment building, a status most often

awarded to Richard Morris Hunt's 1869 Stuyvesant Apartments on 18th Street, and points to a new picture of multiple dwelling development in the 1860s and 70s. This picture is full of confusion as designers, developers and the Buildings Department struggled to define new kinds of multi-family buildings. While the numbers of apartments grew incredibly fast in the 1880s and 90s, private house construction nearly halted, reducing tenants' chances to own a house of their own even if they could afford one. My analysis of these records leads to a completely new view of the complex real estate development in late 19th century New York.

Questions of terminology arise in this chapter which I want to clarify before surveying the New Building Dockets. Contemporary writers in the 1860s and 70s, the early years of middle class multi-family dwellings, often called these buildings "French Flats", because they were familiar with apartment living mainly through French middle class buildings. However, as multi-family dwellings went up by the hundreds in New York, writers began to distinguish them along class lines, and to talk about the best quality, expensive buildings as "apartment houses", the smaller and less expensive middle class apartment buildings as "French Flats", and the clearly working class buildings as "tenements".¹ At the same time, New York law called all classes of buildings housing three or more families in independent units "tenement buildings", and the New Buildings Docket used the

term "French Flats" to name all multiple dwellings that were not obviously working class tenements. In my discussion, I will use the modern term "apartment" to indicate all middle class buildings. The following chart will clarify the use of these items.

Use of Terms for Multiple Dwellings
In the Later 19th Century

	Tenement	French Flat	Apartment
N. Y. Law	All multiple dwellings for 3 or more families	Not used in Law	Not used in Law
N. Y. Dept. of Buildings	All 3rd class (= multi-family) dwellings up to 1875; Post 1875: tenements signify working class dwellings	Denoted better quality multi-family dwelling from 1874 on	Not used by Buildings Dept.
Writers - Popular and Architectural	Poorest type of working class, multi-family dwelling	Modest multi-family dwelling for non-working class	Better-class multi-family dwelling

Residential Diversity, 1866-1873

In 1866, the year that the Buildings Department started its Docket Book records, residential development in New York

was surprisingly diverse. Architectural historians in documenting buildings for wealthy patrons by well-known architects, and social historians in presenting the story of tenements, have looked at only the two poles of a continuum in residential architecture. In fact, investments in varied kinds of housing were taking place all over the city. There were many kinds of residential buildings available, many with mixed uses. The prices of both land and buildings north of 59th Street were not especially predictable since neighborhoods of residential buildings had not stabilized enough to guarantee that a certain level of building quality ought to go in a certain spot. While there were, throughout the city's history, fairly well-defined luxury neighborhoods,² other classes might find a variety of locations and residential buildings to suite their incomes. The following survey of residential building types in New York City of the late 1860s, the 1870s and early 80s is derived from a study of the New Buildings Docket books held in the New York City Municipal Archives, which record all the new construction filed with the Buildings Department.

Building inspectors recorded residential plans from 1866 to 1874 under the categories "first class dwellings", "second class dwellings", and "third class dwellings or tenements".³ The first class dwelling type is almost always a one family private house--significant exceptions will be noted later. This type provided the most expensive kind of

residential space per occupant, and was usually a three, four or five story building on a narrow lot of no more than 25' by 100'; further discussion of lot sizes will be found in Chapter IV. Under this category fell the familiar New York Brownstone row houses of the middle and later 19th century.

The second class dwelling was usually a four story, three family dwelling with a ground floor store, and a floor for each family above. Variant second class types had two or three floors with fewer family units. These were clearly multi-family dwellings, and thus might be expected to come under the category "tenement", but in fact were given their own category by the Buildings Department. A typical example from the 1869 docket book is a plan for ten houses filed for the east side of Second Avenue, filling the block between 42nd and 43rd Streets. All the houses had four stories, and were 43' high. Each house measured 20' by 54' on a lot of 20' by 81'. Each building, of brick construction with a brownstone facade and a metal cornice, held three families above a ground level store.⁴

There are hundreds of these kinds of buildings listed in the Docket books. Their average value of \$10,000 apiece, places them at the lower end of housing construction costs, so they must have been intended for renters whose monthly payments had to be low. Nevertheless, it seems to me that these tenants must have been a class above tenement dwellers because each family could afford a full 20' by 54' floor,

which was much more generous space than the usual quarter of a floor rented by tenement families.

While tenants in second class buildings had a reasonable amount of space, they still lived over stores which was not quite respectable. In earlier centuries, Roman, Medieval, Renaissance and Colonial American merchants and artisans had lived above their own street-level workplaces. But as we have seen, the separation of home from workplace in early 19th century New York gave a bad name to houses that combined domestic and commercial functions. When expensive apartment buildings caught on in the 1880s, they rarely included shops on the ground floor. Middle class notions about the sanctity of home did not admit this common mixture of uses seen in second class dwellings.

The third class dwelling category was the tenement class. This type has been represented as fairly standard: endless instances of 25' by 100' dumbbell plan buildings, five stories high with four families per floor. But there is a surprising amount of variety of size and numbers of families in 1860s and 70s tenements. The docket books record many tenement class buildings of four stories containing units for only four families. There are at the same time many tenements of the same dimensions that were built to house eight, nine or ten families. An example of the most famous, crowded kind of tenement filed with the Buildings Department in 1872 is a building on Chrystie Street of five stories with a basement, built to hold 22

families on a 25' by 100' lot. The plan called for two stores and two family units in the basement, with four units on each of the five upper floors.⁵

Sometimes the differences between a second class and a third class dwelling are obscure. Second class dwellings usually had three family units over a store, but there are tenements listed in the Docket books with exactly the same arrangement. One wonders whether there is always a substantive difference between these categories. An attempt to cross over the line between tenement and second class dwellings is preserved in an 1869 Docket book entry. The owner filed plans for a second class, three story brick structure, intended for three families, on a 25' by 100' lot, but the inspector noted, "This plan in my opinion is laid out for two families on each floor."⁶ The building was planned for a neighborhood not far from fashionable Madison Square, and perhaps the owner wanted to advertise it as something better than it really was.

The tenement category could also contain boarding houses, although this is rare. One 1870 instance was planned for the north side of 41st Street between Eighth and Ninth Avenues. A four story structure of 25' by 30' on a 90' deep lot, the dwelling was designed to hold eight families.⁷ The designation "boarding house" was rarely made in the Buildings Departments records, however, because boarding was a service a householder could offer when times were hard, as a way to earn some extra income from his

house, and could turn his house back into a private home in better times. For the most part people did not file plans for specific boarding uses, because it was a mode that could come into existence without structural or formal changes in the dwelling.

Exceptions and Confusions

These three categories of dwelling types were intended to contain all the housing variety in New York of the 1860s. There are, however, some kinds of dwellings that slipped through category boundaries. One type is dwelling units built over stables. The building type is listed as "stable" in the Docket books, but stables were most often built with one or two dwelling units above. These were, like second class dwellings, mixed use residential buildings, but only if the building inspector noted the existence of apartments in an entry under "stable" can we tell that these were dwellings too.

The most significant exceptions in these categories occur in the case of first class dwellings. While almost all first class dwellings were private one family houses, one is surprised to see an 1869 "first class" entry listed as housing four families.⁸ This turns out to be Richard Morris Hunt's Stuyvesant Apartments which actually had apartments for four families per floor on four floors, with additional units for artists' studios on the fifth floor (Figures 16, 17). But the striking thing is that

the building inspector listed a multi-family building under "first class" dwellings, breaking the pattern of single family designations in that category. The next first class anomaly that I found in the Docket Books was another apartment building by Hunt, the Stevens Apartments, built for owner Paran Stevens. Plans were filed in 1870 for this 8 story brick building with a Nova Scotia freestone front, a slate roof, and apartments for 18 families. The Stevens Apartments were located on the south side of 27th Street, filling the 247' long block between Fifth Avenue and Broadway. After recording the building under the "first class dwelling" category, the building inspector noted that it was a "Parisian Dwelling Building."⁹ Another nearby example on Madison Avenue and 27th, was filed by architect Detlef Lienau in 1871. This was a mixed use building with offices in the basement, club rooms on the first and second floors, and two families on the third and fourth.¹⁰ As we can see from these three examples, neither multiple families nor mixed use kept building inspectors from calling a building "first class" if they thought it was first quality.

In this period of the early Buildings Department records, 1866-73, we have seen a variety of residential building sizes, multiple uses, varying costs and locations. These have included the tight quarters known as tenements and the generous single family town houses that are familiar parts of New York residential architecture. We have also seen

many second class building with apartments, one to a floor, similar to the sort later called "French Flats". Not only these small scale, moderately priced buildings, but also the first larger, even grand, buildings have made an appearance. But they had not yet appeared in enough numbers to need a specific name that would give them a category of their own.

The First Apartment Building

My readers will have gathered by now that there is no clearly identifiable "first apartment building", although many historians have named one building or another as that historic first. Alexander Jackson Davis's 1855 "House of Mansions" was named by Andrew Alpern in Apartments for the Affluent as one of the precedents for multiple dwellings. This row of houses on Fifth Avenue from 41st to 42nd Streets was articulated as a single unit on the exterior and was said to "resemble an arsenal", but while it looked like a single large building, it did not have apartments within.¹¹ Another contemporary candidate for first apartment, mentioned by David Handlin in a note in The American Home, was "Stuyvesant House", built by Dr. Valentine Mott in the mid-50s, and often confused with Hunt's Stuyvesant Apartments, Handlin says, because of the similarity in name.¹²

Two more early first apartment buildings erected in the mid 1850s were identified in an 1874 article on New York residential architecture. One of these was on Wooster Street,

attributed to Richard Morris Hunt, and described as a "small but handsome apartment house". The other on Hudson Street also offered "complete facilities for modest housekeeping on separate floors."¹³

Several historians have identified Hunt's 1869 Stuyvesant Apartments on East 18th Street between Third and Fourth Avenues as the first apartment house. The Real Estate Record's 1898 History of Real Estate, Buildings and Architecture in New York City called The Stuyvesant "the first flats in New York City...they were the first embodiment of new ideas".¹⁴ Architectural critic Montgomery Schuyler wrote in the 1890s that Hunt's building was the "first of the elevator apartment houses", a peculiar assessment since the building had only dumbwaiters.¹⁵ I think Schuyler meant to designate the building as a first in the development of middle class apartments, and by the later 90s when he wrote, most middle class buildings were using elevators. The Stuyvesant Apartments were called "the first modern apartment house in New York" by Isaac Newton Phelps Stokes in his Iconography of Manhattan Island, and are listed in his "Chronology" for 1869.¹⁶ Following this trend, Alpern in Apartments for the Affluent, grants Hunt's Stuyvesant the status of the first apartment building, stating that New Yorkers of even modest aspirations would never have lived in anything but a private house until Hunt imported the apartment house concept from Paris--an uninformed comment as we have seen from Chapter I.¹⁷

I have found another "first" apartment house, also of 1869, in Brooklyn. This was a group of three apartment blocks with six room units and a courtyard, called a "French tenement house" in a New York Times report of that year. In this building, the Times speculated, a family of nine could find better quarters than they could in a whole 25' wide house.¹⁸ To round out the list of contenders for first apartment building, the Real Estate Record's History claimed that Hunt's Stuyvesant Apartments were really reconstructions of older houses, and therefore the first apartment house built from scratch and for the purpose was the Jardine on West 56th Street.¹⁹ Designed by the firm of Jardine, Kent and Jardine, it was opened in the fall of 1872.

This interesting confusion about the first apartment building for middle class tenants may be traced to various sources. One reason why historians have thought Hunt's building was the first apartment is because they looking at well-known architects' work, and among that group Hunt probably was the first to have designed a full-blown apartment building. The others who were erecting various kinds of apartments through the late 60s as recorded in the Docket books were developers and builders without reputations. Another source of confusion of course, is the definition of "middle class apartment"--a problem discussed in the introduction to this chapter. If apartments are all those buildings that are not working class tenements, then

we have to include all the first and second class dwellings with family rental units as apartments. A second class building may very well have been the type of the mid-50s apartments mentioned as "firsts" above. If, on the other hand, we place the stress on "middle class" and not on "apartment", then those second class flats may not qualify as sufficiently middle class. And if we insist on our first apartment building as necessarily built from scratch, then Hunt's Stuyvesant may have to move over and let the Stevens, begun in 1870, or the Jardine, begun in 1871, take the "first" prize. But then again, was the first apartment building that which first opened to tenants, or that which was first filed with the buildings department...? Confusion multiplies.

What matters is not whether this or that building was the first of its type, but that a new non-working class type was emerging in greater numbers all the time, and that this new form of apartment building represents a trend in purpose-built housing that was to change middle class dwelling space permanently.

A New Name for a New Building Type

In 1874 for the first time, Buildings Department records show the name "French Flat" as way to make distinctions between kinds of multi-family dwellings previously classified as third class. This is not a formal category in the Docket books, but appears in "Remarks" written in after a

docket entry, as Buildings Department inspectors began to realize that they had a new building type on their hands.

The first French Flat plan, for a building on West 61st Street west of the Boulevard (now Broadway), was filed in January of 1874.²⁰ The plan included four buildings housing four families per building. Each was 25' by 80' on a lot 100' deep. The buildings were 60' high, making higher ceilinged rooms than contemporary second or third class buildings usually had. Their brownstone fronts made them look more like single family row houses than cheaper brickfaced tenements. The cost of each was estimated at \$20,000 implying better materials and craftsmanship than comparably sized tenement buildings. But these flats were still listed under the "third class or tenement" category, and so the inspector had to make a note after the entry calling the buildings "French Flats".

Plans for another French Flat building were filed in February, 1874.²¹ This one was again entered under the third class category and was to house four families over a ground floor store, like most second class dwellings and some tenements before it. Located at 88th Street and Third Avenue, and valued at \$15,000, this building was probably not very different from second class dwellings in previous years, but inspectors were now alert to quality differences among multiple dwellings so they chose to categorize it under third class, indicating a multiple dwelling, and to note by "French Flat" after the entry

that it was better than the usual tenements found in the third class category.

Paging through the 1874 docket book, one comes upon more and more entries with "French Flat" written into the record. In various locations--on 58th Street between Second and Third Avenues, on 50th Street between First and Second, on West 47th and 48th Streets--third class buildings were going up which inspectors called French Flats. Inspectors' names are recorded with the entries, so we can see that many inspectors were using this new term "French Flat"; it wasn't a personal quirk of one of them. Most of these flat buildings had three or four families in four stories, some with a shop on the ground floor. They often had brownstone fronts instead of cheaper brick, though that is not a determining factor for a French Flat designation. An average size for a "French Flat" building in 1874 is 20' to 30' wide and 60' to 75' deep.

It is hard to find consistent differences between tenement and French Flat entries in the docket books. One might expect that estimated cost, number of floors, number of separate units within the building, height or materials would be significantly different from tenements to French Flats, but some or all of these features are often the same. Bathroom facilities may have been a deciding factor in making distinctions between them--privies in the rear yard or water closets in the common halls for tenements, and bathrooms within the unit for French Flats--but this

information is not recorded in the docket books. It does seem possible that building inspectors themselves made quality judgements about individual buildings and decided, to elevate a building to French Flat status or demote it to a lower rent tenement. Specific guidelines for the Building Inspectors' classification of multiple dwellings must have existed, but have not been found.

Throughout 1874 the need for a new category of building was making itself obvious. Inspectors needed a formal designation that was neither first class with its usual implication of single family, nor third class with its usual meaning of tenement. "First Class" could be useful as a quality designation, but was wrong for the size; "tenement" pointed to the size, but misled on quality. In 1875 the New Buildings Docket came out with a new set of printed categories that tried to resolve the problem of how to classify the new apartment buildings going up in greater numbers every month.

The new categories that inspectors began to use in January of 1875 were "first class dwelling", "second class dwelling", "French Flats", "Hotels and Boarding Houses", and "Tenements". Three new categories replaced the old "third class"; French Flats and tenements expanded the formerly single type of multiple dwelling, while hotels were brought into the multiple dwelling class from their former designation as public buildings.

These new categories, however, brought with them other confusions. First class dwellings could now be the category for purely single family houses. Second class dwellings remained two, three, or four family units over a store; the difference between these and small French Flats is thus obscured. "French Flat" was now a category to take in all multiple dwellings of a quality above tenements, a quality claimed by the owners and attested to by buildings inspectors. But also, "French Flat" contains all the entries for the large and glamorous apartment buildings starting to appear in the 1880s.

A set of plans filed in 1880 shows the difficulty of maintaining the distinction between "tenement" and "French Flat" classifications. Architects Vaux and Radford filed plans for a series of 13 buildings, mentioned in Chapter I (Figure 15) as an example of a reform tenement, wrapped around three sides of a courtyard.²² The buildings were each six stories high and were planned to hold 24 families each. This was the same four-unit per floor arrangement used in the typical dumbbell tenement. The buildings' sponsorship by the Improved Dwellings Association, and their generous common outdoor spaces put them in the class of "model" tenements, and yet buildings inspectors listed the project as "French Flats". This seems to me to indicate that inspectors were making personal assessments of building quality not necessarily based on building sizes, numbers of units, interior space or intended class of tenants.

But most French Flat buildings were designed for a middle class clientele. A representative example of the hundreds of French Flat buildings erected in New York during the last half of the 1870s is architect Bruce Price's 1878 design for a small flat building at 21 East 21st Street (Figure 18).²³ It had five floors of flats, one complete unit to a floor, with a mansarded top floor for servants and a basement for the janitor. The building was on a house-sized 25' wide lot, and fitted in rather inconspicuously with its neighboring five story houses on the block. Each floor was somewhat lower than the floors in the house next door, so its six-story height did not make the building as a whole appreciably taller than others nearby. The front was brick with freestone trim, terra cotta foliated ornament and tiles; the plan was called "essentially that of the French Flat" by the American Architect and Building News when they published Price's scheme in 1878. Price gave each of his flats a dining room and a parlor, four bedrooms, a kitchen, pantry and bathroom (Figure 19). The principal stair opened into an anteroom towards the front of the building, while at the rear, servants had their own separate stairway. Further analysis of this and other planning ideas will be found in Chapter V.

While Bruce Price's design for a French Flat on 21st Street is typical of late 1870s buildings in its modest size and house-like appearance, larger French Flats start

to appear in the 1880 records. Built on bigger plots of land with 50', 100', and larger frontages, these buildings would have made a strong impression on streets of smaller houses. Their heights grew to eight, nine and ten stories. An example of this new scale of French Flat, filed by architect Henry Hardenbergh in 1880, is the well-known Dakota Apartments at 72nd Street and Central Park West.²⁴ The original design was to house 42 families in an eight story quadrangular block with a private courtyard (Figures 20, 21). It rose an impressive 163' into the air, had modern features like elevators, steam heat and its own generator for electricity, and was initially budgeted for \$1,000,000.

From 1880 to 1883 a remarkable number of plans were filed for expensive large scale buildings under the French Flat category. Many were erected but it struck me that a large proportion of these ambitious projects were marked "abandoned" in the Docket books. Many of the abandoned projects were tall buildings--one even had 11 stories--and most must have been elevator buildings, which was adventurous for an 1880 dwelling.²⁵ Were elaborate French Flats too risky an investment in 1880 before their popularity was proven? Did developers doubt that an appropriate clientele was ready for high rentals? It was certain that a developer could get a safe return on investment in tenement buildings, and must have thought twice about taking a chance with his capital in the relatively untested middle class apartment market.

While there were some grand plans abandoned, there were a remarkable number of other French Flat buildings in 1881, '82, and '83 which were completed, and which cost over \$100,000. This was the new wave of apartment buildings for middle class tenants--renters, or sometimes shareholders in a co-operative--built on sizeable lots, impressively high, often with elevators, and located in several different neighborhoods. The apartment movement was at last seriously underway.

One popular neighborhood for flat buildings at this moment was around Seventh Avenue and 59th Street adjoining Central Park. At this location one finds Hubert, Pirsson & Co.'s flat building for 18 families, on the south side of 59th Street, 400' west of Seventh Avenue;²⁶ John G. Prague's design for french flats containing 24 families on 57th Street at the south west corner of Seventh Avenue;²⁷ Hubert, Pirsson & Co.'s well known "Navarro" buildings on Seventh Avenue between 58th and 59th Streets--eight buildings holding 13 families in each;²⁸ and Prague's flats for 28 families on the south side of 58th Street, 100' east of Ninth Avenue.²⁹ In the same area were Thom & Wilson's 20-family flat building at the north side of 57th Street, 100' east of Ninth Avenue,³⁰ backing up to John Prague's building above; William Schickel's design for the south west corner of Broadway and 57th Street³¹ and a nine family flat built at the south west corner of Eighth Avenue and 57th Street to designs by William Baker.³² All of these

were over \$100,000 buildings on lots that were double, triple or more the single lot 25' street frontage.

Another active neighborhood for expensive French Flat buildings was streets in the 20s, both east and west of Fifth Avenue. Hubert, Pirsson & Co. designed a 12 family building for Madison Avenue on the north west corner of 28th Street;³³ August Hatfield designed the flats at 39-45 west 27th Street--a ten story building;³⁴ on Fifth Avenue and the south east corner of 28th Street, the Knickerbocker Apartment Co. erected a 23 family flat building to designs by Charles W. Clinton.³⁵

Down on 23rd Street between Seventh and Eighth Avenues, Hubert, Pirsson & Co.'s 40-family flat building was going up--now known as the Chelsea Hotel;³⁶ Thomas Osborne's 14-family flat block was being built on the north side of 17th Street, 281' west of Second Avenue;³⁷ and down on West 9th Street at nos. 46, 48 and 50, Ralph Townsend erected his 16 family flats.³⁸ All these were built in 1881-83 and all cost over \$100,000. There were many more french flats of this scope and cost being built along Park Avenue, at 125th Street and elsewhere around the growing city.³⁹

Besides "French Flats", the other new dwellings category in the New Buildings Dockets was "Hotels and Boarding Houses". A curious thing happened in this category: it remained almost empty from 1875, when first established, on through the early 80s. I believe the reason for this

is that developers who would once have built for a wealthy hotel clientele were now building apartments for the same clients.

As we have seen in Chapter I, it was not unusual for well-to-do families to take up permanent residence in a hotel during the 1850s and 60s. This trend continued into the 1870s, despite critics who warned that domestic virtue would be lost by the constant public exposure of hotel life. The New Windsor Hotel is an example of a post civil war residential hotel, nearing completion in August, 1873. It was located away from the bustling business centers, uptown on Fifth Avenue and 46th Street. This hotel promised to become "a favorite place for family residence", said an article in the New York Times.⁴⁰ Families still liked the luxuries of decoration and service available in hotels, and the freedom from the care and expense of maintaining a private house.

But the new large apartment houses appearing in 1880, '81 and '82 offered many of the same luxuries and freedoms, without the stigma attached to hotel life. In an apartment, a family had its own completely private quarters, as well as all the conveniences like central heating and elevators, and services such as hotel-like dining rooms. In fact, many large apartment buildings had almost the same features as contemporary hotels, and differed principally in reputation.

Hotels like the 1873 New Windsor offered their permanent residents suites of private rooms entered off a public internal corridor just like apartment buildings. The major difference between hotel and apartment seems to have been the central kitchen in a hotel in contrast to a private kitchen in each unit of an apartment building. But this difference was not consistent. Many large apartment buildings such as the Dakota had both private kitchens in the units, and a central kitchen and dining room. And some buildings called hotels also had small kitchens within the suite of rooms, as well as the typical hotel kitchen and dining room on a public level. As family hotels became more prevalent, advertising stressed the privacy and exclusiveness of dining rooms and parlors for permanent hotel residents. The possibility of having prepared meals served in tenants' private rooms was offered by both larger apartment buildings and hotels. The principal remaining difference was that hotels were decorated by the management while apartment units were usually decorated by the tenants themselves; and even there one could rent an already furnished apartment for about 25% more than an unfurnished one, or could add to or change furnishings supplied in a hotel suite.

If we see hotels as a kind of multiple dwelling, then plenty of well-to-do New Yorkers had had experience of expensive multi-family housing before the upsurge of expensive apartment buildings around 1880, and could make

the switch from a hotel address to an apartment address with very little change in their style of living. Apartments, like hotels, were multi-family dwellings. The advantage for tenants was in the better connotations of apartment life.

This survey gives a much more complex picture of apartment buildings than has been presented before. While there were dismal, purpose-built tenements around since before 1830, there were also thousands of multiple dwellings containing independent family units to house people neither very poor, nor able to buy a house of their own. The middle class--from skilled workers to young professionals just starting out--could have chosen a flat in a variety of non-tenement buildings during the years before Hunt built the Stuyvesant Apartments. These flats may not have yet been named "flat" or "apartment", but they gave people some kind of experience of multiple dwelling life. The success of apartment buildings of grander scale in the 1880s is no surprise since a population with multiple dwelling experience existed, and is documented by the Buildings Department records since 1866.

There was still, however, the dream of "correct" American life with one family to a house. Some who found themselves in better class apartment buildings may have begun life in a subdivided house, a boarding house, a hotel or a flat in a second class dwelling of the 1860s; others may have come from a family owned private house. Those

same people, as they prospered and moved up in the world, may have continued to cherish the dream of a house of their own, but in actuality had to find improved dwelling space in larger multiple dwellings. As the 19th century progressed, it seems that fewer and fewer could have had their own house, and wanting one became much more a dream than an expectation.

The Private House Dream

The middle class, during all their years of boarding and hotel life, still clung to the expectation of having a separate house. "Every good Knickerbocker," wrote architect Charles Israels, "considered it his duty to house his family within four walls where he would be the sole lord and master; and the highest reach of his ambition was a 'brownstone front'".⁴¹ Never mind if that brownstone were in a block-long row of similar structures, packed "like books on a shelf"; as long as people had their own houses, even narrow, inconvenient places didn't shake people's impressions that things were as they should be.⁴² Apartments, no matter how spacious or lavishly decorated, were by definition not one's own.

While New Yorkers coveted their own separate houses, however, actual house ownership became less and less possible for middle income families. Several factors contributed to the problem of inadequate housing supply, among them the exceptional mobility of New Yorkers,

American patterns of inheritance, and rising costs of land and construction. In addition, the houses that were available were criticised as inconvenient, poorly designed inside and out, and better abandoned in favor of apartments.

The tendency of New Yorkers to move frequently affected the supply of moderately priced housing. Fashionable New York migrated uptown every couple of decades, leaving behind houses that could have served middle income tenants. However, such was the fervor for improving the city, that such formerly fashionable houses were either immediately subdivided, or torn down to make way for new stores and offices, or sometimes more expensive houses.⁴³ Well-to-do families moved on to uptown areas where inexpensive wooden structures had served to house some of the lower income residents. Those "poor" uses could be swept away for upper income houses and such neighborhood improvements as street paving and grading the uneven terrain. Thus both poor and middle class families saw the houses they might have used disappearing from New York.

The preference for moving around was in part encouraged by year long leases ending on the last day of April. May 1st was famous as everybody's moving day, and New Yorkers kept hoping that they could reduce their rents by taking new quarters. As a result, most New Yorkers lived "like hermit crabs" in houses built for no one in

particular, and not occupied for long by the class for whom they were originally intended.⁴⁴

Local inheritance patterns combined with mobility to discourage even the wealthy from investing too much in a family home. Unlike the English system of primogeniture, the American system prevented leaving everything to the oldest son. When all the children inherited the family home, they tended to sell it so the proceeds could be shared among them. To invest a lot of money in the erection of a family home built for "all time" was folly in New York, when the house would only remain in the family during the life of its builder.⁴⁵ Thus, even the well-to-do were not certain of private houses in the city, and sometimes took to hotel life instead, with a country house for more permanent residence.

The sizes, numbers and costs of a single family house in New York changed radically over the decades. In the 1830s and 40s, New Yorkers who could afford their own houses might have had a typical 25' by 40' three story high house. But as land prices increased, builders of the 1850s and 60s cut costs by making narrower houses-- 20', 18', 15' or even 13' wide. To make up for the lost room, they built deeper on the lot, cutting down on interior light, and added a story, making yet more stairs to climb inside.⁴⁶

Some thought that the houses of the 1850s were especially desirable. The fact that the old standard

width of 25' was replaced by narrower widths was charitably interpreted as a way to satisfy different sized families and different family needs. New houses above 14th Street appeared to a writer of 1854 as miracles of modern heating, lighting, water fixtures and drainage; indeed "it seems hardly possible that anything more compact, cozy, comfortable and elegant in the shape of a dwelling house will ever be invented."⁴⁷

But even if that were true, in 1860 there were only 12,717 single family houses to serve a population of 813,699 making for serious competition and rising prices.⁴⁸

Private house construction declined radically in the 1880s and 1890s as more apartment buildings of all sorts went up. From 1889 to 1892, about 700 plans for private houses were filed annually with the Buildings Department, costing an average of \$15,000 to \$17,000 to build. After 1892 the number of plans filed for private houses diminished fairly regularly reaching a low in 1899; that year only 338 single family dwelling plans were filed, and the average construction cost had jumped to \$24,600. Then a sudden decline came in 1900 with only 112 residential plans filed, and average costs rising to \$35,000. In 1901 only 99 private house plans were filed with the Buildings Department, and cost per house leapt to \$59,800. By 1902 accelerating costs reached an average of \$66,000 per house.⁴⁹

Private house forms changed in these late years. Houses built on ever more expensive land went up to five, six and even seven stories and were rarely less than 60' deep. The most expensive ones had private elevators, several bathrooms and an internal telephone system because of the great interior distances. But such houses were very few and available only to the wealthiest. Middle class families had to look elsewhere.⁵⁰

While houses for moderate income families were getting smaller and scarcer, they were also coming in for criticism of their basic design. Architectural critic Montgomery Schuyler condemned houses of the 1850s and 60s as a failure of mass market thinking. "Everybody, whether he bought his house or rented it," said Schuyler, "lived in a house built for somebody else, or rather for nobody else, but for 'the average man'".⁵¹ Houses of that period were designed with such uniformity that one would never think New York was full of diverse personalities. Only on the backs of houses was there any visible individuation where owners had added various kinds of extensions.

When the West Side of Manhattan developed in the 1880s and 90s, individuality in house facades finally broke the mold of conformity. A great variety of styles were employed for the fronts of single family houses. Even in the work of a single developer, diverse styles made these newly developed blocks look very different from the repetitive brownstone fronts of mid-century.⁵²

In the 1890s the same variety in town house facades came to the wealthier East Side. As new houses were built in Italian and French influenced styles, older house facades were renovated to be in keeping with the new insistence on individuality.

It is surely no coincidence that this trend developed at the same time apartment buildings were enjoying their first surge of popularity. One can see this as an effort on the part of those who could afford private houses to acquire stamps of individuality that apartment blocks, could not supply to individual families. (See Chapter V for further discussion on individuation in apartments.)

Although middle class families regretted their inability to afford houses of their own, those houses themselves often seemed unsatisfactory places for family life. Some critics denigrated the New York row house as a place where residents "live, as it were, on a ladder."⁵³ Tall and narrow, row houses used up far too much of their space on interior circulation. The average house was characterized by an 1874 writer as "a string of stairs with more or less extended landings", in which the kitchen was underground and an "uninhabited parlor floor is sandwiched between the dining room and the family living room."⁵⁴ That convention of saving the parlor floor for guests made for excessive stair-climbing from the basement level kitchen and family dining room to the second floor family bed and sitting rooms, an arrangement

which Catharine Beecher had criticized in the 1840s as a great waste of the housekeeper's energy.⁵⁵

Appleton's Home Books advised house builders that a city row house was always hard to design, because the needs for vertical circulation and internal hallways cut down on rooms sizes to the degree that one could never have a parlor of sufficient width to furnish properly.⁵⁶ These parlors were described by a country couple, house hunting in New York in 1890, as looking "like steamboat saloons" because of their narrow proportions.⁵⁷ The same couple also pointed to the steep stairs as making New York houses impossible places to live, and Appleton's suggested that, whenever possible, non-city people should consider building one-floor bungalows to eliminate stairs entirely and make housekeeping that much easier.

Disappointment with the design of houses still would not have kept middle class families from choosing a row house if they could have afforded one, but testimony of the 1860s and 70s shows that houses were out of reach for middle class budgets. In the 1860s, no different from the 1980s, middle income families could find no affordable housing in Manhattan, as a father explained in his letter to the New York Times in 1869. "The love of a decent home," he wrote, "is implanted in the heart of a man earning only 30 or 40 dollars a week quite as strongly as in that of a millionaire," but to buy a house one needed \$10,000 to \$80,000--clearly out of his reach.⁵⁸ This man made about

\$2,000 a year, and was better off than mechanics whose wages came to about \$1,000 a year in 1869. Such income ranges were not those of the very poor, but "those tenderly nurtured and educated", reported the New York Times.

Even for those who could afford a rent of \$1,500 a year, the housing situation was bleak. A young couple described their troubles in finding a house in 1871, having saved their money by living in a boarding house. As moving day (May 1) approached they read all the advertisements for houses and found several in their price range. However, when they went to the first one, it was next to a noisy machine shop; their second choice turned out to be surrounded by barnyard animals in the neighbors' backyards. They finally advertised for apartments.⁵⁹

What with the scarcity of houses, their planning problems and inconvenient spaces, and their expensive rents, middle class tenants were probably somewhat relieved to choose apartments and give up the private house. The dream of one's own home was a dream of permanence in an inviolate family sanctuary, and that dream had hardly been fulfilled by the "hermit crabs" ever seeking a cheaper houses every May first. For those who could not give up the dream, suburban New Jersey, the Bronx and Brooklyn were waiting; families could have the dream and give up city life.⁶⁰ For those who chose a life in town, apartments were the answer.

FOOTNOTES

¹See for example J. G. Speed, "Naming Apartment Houses", Harpers Weekly 38 (March 1894): 283, who mentions "crowded tenements that even the greatest stretch of courtesy would not permit one even to call flats" and nice looking houses where "tenants insisted they lived in apartments, not flats." "The Building Transactions of the Past Year," American Architect and Building News 7 (Feb. 7, 1880): 47 notes that first class dwellings are for one family and second class for more than one, but that the distinction in third class dwellings between French Flats and tenements is a "very meagre" one: French Flat tenants usually have a private water supply and tenement tenants do not.

²Christine Boyer, "The Development and Boundaries of Luxury Neighborhoods in New York:1625-1890", Draft Working Paper #1 (New York: Columbia University Center for Preservation Planning, July 1980).

³These were the categories printed on the pages of the Docket Books under which handwritten entries recorded all new building plans filed with the department.

⁴"New Buildings Docket" 1869, Plan #69, n.p. Henry J. Burchill was listed as owner/architect/builder. Cf. this type of flats over a store described as early as the 1830s by J. Disturnell, New York as it is in 1837 (New York: 1837) pp. 20-22.

⁵*Ibid.*, 1872, Plan #95, n.p. Plan marked "abandoned" in Docket Book, but typical of hundreds of buildings that were executed.

⁶*Ibid.*, 1869, Plan #170, n.p.

⁷*Ibid.*, 1870, Plan #882, n.p.

⁸*Ibid.*, 1869, Plan #562, n.p.

⁹*Ibid.*, 1870, Plan #811, n.p.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 1871, Plan #602, n.p.

¹¹Andrew Alpern, Apartments for the Affluent (New York: McGraw Hill, 1875) p. 12. For Alpern, the significant aspect of this building is exterior articulation, not interior use. The House of Mansions is described in I.N.P.Stokes, Iconography of Manhattan Island (New York: R. H. Dodd) v. 3, p. 721, and illustrated in Pl. 148-b.

¹²David Handlin, American Home (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1979) note 67, p. 520.

¹³James Richardson, "New Homes of New York" (The Century 8, 1874): 67. Paul Baker, Richard Morris Hunt (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1980) p. 499, note 2, notes this mention of an early apartment by Hunt but does not verify this reference of explain the building any further.

¹⁴Real Estate Record, History of Real Estate, Buildings and Architecture in New York (New York: 1898)p.600.

¹⁵Montgomery Schuyler, American Architecture and Other Writings, Wm. Jordy and Ralph Coe, eds. (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1961) 2 vols., v. 2, p. 519.

¹⁶I. N. P. Stokes, Iconography of Manhattan Island, v. 5, p. 1933. Rentals were from \$1000. to \$1800. per annum for each suite, \$920. for each studio.

¹⁷Alpern, Apartments, p. 1

¹⁸New York Times (Aug. 2, 1869): 1. I have not seen this building illustrated anywhere.

¹⁹Real Estate Record, History, p. 600. Since Hunt's Stuyvesant apartments were listed in the "New Buildings Docket", I assume that the building was newly erected; otherwise it should have been recorded in the Docket book for renovations. However, since the Stuyvesant's plan does look like four houses, it suggests the idea of renovated existing buildings which may explain the Real Estate Record's statement.

²⁰"New Buildings Docket", 1874, Plan #8, n.p. Architect F. S. Barus, whose firm is listed in D. S. Francis, Architects in Practice in New York City 1840-1900 (New York: Committee for the Preservation of Architectural Records, 1979, p. 14)p. 14. Owner: Mr. Crowforth.

²¹"New Buildings Docket", 1874, Plan #107, n.p. Architect F. S. Barus.

²²Ibid., 1880, Plan #720, n.p. Vaux and Radford listed in D. S. Francis, Architects, p. 78.

²³Published in American Architect and Building News 3 (May 4, 1878) plate following p, 156.

²⁴"New Buildings Docket", 1880, Plan #829. The Dakota's history is recounted in Stephen Birmingham, Life at the Dakota (New York: Random House, 1979).

²⁵For example, George da Cunha's apartments at 23rd Street between Sixth and Seventh Avenues, "New Buildings Docket", 1880, Plan #848, n.p.; and Charles Romeyn's apartments at 344-346 West 57th Street, Docket, 1880, Plan #1046, n.p., among others.

²⁶"New Buildings Docket", 1881, Plan #296, n.p., identical to the "Hubert", Real Estate Record, History, p. 681, attributed to designer A. O. Hoddick.

²⁷"New Buildings Docket", 1881, Plan #355, n.p.

²⁸Ibid., 1882, Plan #640, n.p. also known as the "Central Park Apartments". Real Estate Record, History, p. 681, attributes the design to A. O. Hoddick.

²⁹"New Buildings Docket", 1882, Plan #1009, n.p.

³⁰Ibid., 1882, Plan #1046, n.p.

³¹Ibid., 1882, Plan #1139, n.p.

³²Ibid., 1883, Plan #62, n.p.

³³Ibid., 1881, Plan #271, n.p. This neighborhood was the location of the well known Fifth Avenue Hotel, first elevator hotel in the city, at 23-24th Streets between Fifth Avenue and Broadway. Built in 1856-59, it lasted until 1908. See Stokes, Iconography, v. 5, "Chronology" entry for Aug. 23, 1859, p. 1881.

³⁴"New Buildings Docket", 1882, Plan #703, n.p.

³⁵Ibid., 1882, Plan #761, n.p., called "The Knickerbocker".

³⁶Ibid., 1883, Plan #34, n.p.

³⁷Ibid., 1882, Plan #1284, n.p.

³⁸Ibid., 1883, Plan #164, n.p.

³⁹For example, "New Buildings Docket", 1881, Plan #1; 1882, Plans #604 and #852; 1883, Plan #4.

⁴⁰New York Times (Aug. 13, 1873):2; cf. continuing obscurity of the boundary between residential hotels and apartments in Lydia Long, "Residential Hotel Dispute Builds", New York Times (Aug. 2, 1981) Section 8, pp. 1, 8.

⁴¹Charles Israels, "New York Apartment Houses", Architectural Record 11 (July 1901): 477.

⁴²Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "Passing of the Home", Cosmopolitan 38 (Dec. 1904): 138.

⁴³For neighborhood migration, see C. Boyer, "Development and Boundaries"; R. Plunz, "The Institutionalization of Housing Form in New York 1850-1950" (Columbia University, N. Y.: manuscript, 1980) chap. 1, discusses the destruction of older housing stock.

⁴⁴Richardson, "New Homes of New York", p. 64. J. Browne, The Great Metropolis (New York: 1869) p. 91, asserts that Americans lack any attachment to place.

⁴⁵"New York Daguerrotyped--Private Residences", Putnam's 3 (1854): 245.

⁴⁶For a survey of house design developments see Charles Lockwood, Bricks and Brownstone, the New York Row House (New York: McGraw Hill, 1972); and H. Croly, "The Contemporary New York Residence", Architectural Record 12 (Dec. 1902): 716.

⁴⁷"New York....Residences", Putnam's 3, p. 245.

⁴⁸Lubitz, "The Tenement Problem in New York" (New York University: Ph.D. Dissertation, 1970) p. 542.

⁴⁹Figures are from Croly, "The Contemporary New York Residence", p. 705. They were compiled for the Architectural Record article from the New York City Buildings Department Dockets.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 716, 718.

⁵¹Schuyler, Architectural Record 19 (Feb. 1906): 83-103, pp 83-4.

⁵²Ibid.; also Sarah Landau, "The Row Houses of New York's West Side", Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians 34 (March 1975): 19-36.

⁵³C. Vaux, "A.I.A. Address", The Crayon (July 1857): 218.

⁵⁴Richardson, "New Homes", p. 67.

⁵⁵C. Beecher, Treatise on Domestic Economy, pp 337-38.

⁵⁶Ella Rodman Church, "How to Furnish a Home", in Appleton's Home Books, v. 1 (New York:D. Appleton and Co., 1884) p. 10.

⁵⁷Christine Herrick, "Their Experience in a Flat", Harper's Weekly 34 (Jan. 11, 1890): 30-31.

⁵⁸New York Times (Sept. 25, 1869): 4.

⁵⁹"Looking for a House", New York Times (April 9, 1871): 5.

⁶⁰Richardson, "New Homes", p. 64: "Thousands who would live in the city could they find suitable homes here, ...are driven to the surrounding country to build up Jersey and all the regions round about."

CHAPTER III

EUROPEANS PRECEDENTS

New York clients and architects, faced with a shortage of affordable middle class housing, and disappointed with ad hoc solutions, turned to Europe for ideas about appropriate multiple dwelling forms. The Parisian and Viennese middle classes had been living in apartment buildings of various kinds for generations, and in both those cities the mid-19th century had seen a tremendous growth in newly constructed apartments. Traveling architects and social critics, and Americans who chose to live abroad, published reports in American magazines and newspapers describing the quality of European apartment life. Both the architectural forms and the styles of living were the subject of numerous articles, and gave New Yorkers models--both positive and negative--against which they could test their own emerging apartment design. At the same time, English middle class styles of living were examined for both a justification and a critique of single family house design which remained the prevalent middle class housing form. Unlike their Continental counterparts, English families were slow to adopt apartment living and preferred single family residences, much like their New York cousins.

In this chapter I will consider some representative articles from the American press to illustrate the kinds of information and evaluations of European multi-family dwellings that were available from c. 1850-1900. I will also consider some European sources where both general readers and architects could find ideas about apartment planning and design. This influx of ideas from Paris, Vienna and London during the early years of New York apartment development helped designers and clients to clarify their wants and expectations of apartment life, and continually made plain the intimate link between building forms and the mores of domestic life. Designs for New York apartments will be analyzed in Chapters IV and V; Chapter VI considers the role of American domestic mores in these designs.

Parisian Apartments

By far the most intriguing city for American readers was Paris, judging by the preponderance of articles in American magazines on Parisian apartments and French domestic life.¹ Paris seems to have provided at first an obverse image of New York, and French family life was seen as the fascinating opposite of American ideals. This view was captured in Edith Wharton's 1920 novel The Age of Innocence, when she described the 1870s living arrangements of an elderly lady who could no longer navigate the stairs in her New York house. This woman,

with characteristic independence...had... established herself (in flagrant violation of all the New York proprieties) on the ground floor of her house, so that, as you sat in her sitting room...you caught...the unexpected vista of a bedroom...

Her visitors were started and fascinated by the foreignness of this arrangement which recalled scenes in French fiction...and architectural incentives to immorality such as the simple American had never dreamed of. That was how women with lovers lived in wicked old societies, in apartments with all the rooms on one floor, and all the indecent propinquities that their novels described.²

Apartments, because they were on one floor, suggested the "indecent propinquities" common in France. Paris was seen as a center of sensuality, and its foreign living habits could only represent dangers to New York morality. For proper New Yorkers of the 1870s, accustomed to the separation of public from private functions on the separate floors of a house, one floor living with vistas of the bedroom conjured up visions of unacceptable license.

Nevertheless, Paris also had a very large number of apparently successful apartment buildings, both old and new, which seemed to satisfy a French middle class clientele. No matter how questionable they felt Parisian morals to be, New Yorkers could not afford to overlook the lessons that Parisian experience in middle class apartment design offered.

Apartment developments in Paris can be seen in two stages--early 19th century modes of apartment life, and new apartment designs after Baron Haussmann's reorganization of Paris beginning in the late 1850s. Both these phases

involve the structure of neighborhoods or quartiers as well as the form of individual buildings.

In the early 19th century, increases in population forced Paris to come up with housing for thousands, on restricted land bounded by city walls. The containment of Paris led to building upward and filling in the already existing city within the walls, rather than extending the city outwards. This tendency to increase the numbers of buildings and density of occupation meant that few single family houses could be accommodated and more and more old buildings were subdivided into apartments.³

However, Parisians had been living in apartment-like quarters since the Renaissance, and in the context of dense European urban life, apartments had none of the stigma attached to them that they had in American and English cities. Already by the 18th century the majority of Parisian middle class families lived in flats.⁴ Thus, middle class families were perfectly at home in a one-floor dwelling, whether it was subdivided from some former large house, or built from the start as an apartment building.

Neighborhoods in pre-Haussmann Paris contained a mixture of uses and social classes. Wealthy families had their homes, and their favorite expensive shops and restaurants, mixed among dwellings and services for much more modest-income residents. Within a few square blocks, one could find all the social levels of the city. Multi-family dwellings in Paris shared this characteristic of

containing a microcosm of society. An often described typical dwelling of this era had shops on the ground floor and a mezzanine level with small manufacturers, such as seamstresses.⁵ On the next level, a fine apartment would take up the entire floor, and provide its residents with gilt, plate glass, carvings, marble fireplaces and other luxuries. Ascending the stairs, one would find two more floors of well-to-do family apartments. At the top of such a building, there were one or two floors of small quarters for night lodgers, poor tenants and servants. Sometimes the garret floor was reached by its own stairway to keep some separation between richer and poorer, but these buildings were usually unsegregated and have been seen as democratic mixtures in which varied classes lived comfortably under the same roof.

Baron Haussmann's reorganization of the city involved a new clarification of districts as homogeneous class quarters. He advanced a process of segmenting the city into specialized social "molecules" so that the city became more homogenized in small "turfs" and more differentiated from turf to turf. Parallels are evident in this process to the growing division of labor and specialization in the industrial economy.⁶ Evidence of the exclusion of lower class tenants from their former districts is preserved in the testimony of residents in the Halles district. Forced to relocate while Haussmann's new streets and buildings were being constructed, they found they could not move back into

the old quarter, because the new buildings were designed to exclude working class inhabitants.⁷

In the same way as neighborhoods, new Parisian apartment buildings such as those designed by Haussmann's architect Hittorff were intended for a more consistent middle class occupancy. While upper floors and courtyard exposures still rented for less money, there were no poor tenants except for the servants who typically had their own quarters in the garret. Shops still took their places at street level, but in the new homogeneous neighborhoods, shops in a given district would cater to a particular class level. This new homogeneity was welcomed by tenants and developers alike. The bourgeoisie was pleased by a consistent and respectable neighborhood quality while investors felt that their capital was safest in housing whose tenancy could be expected to flourish.⁸

For American observers, the traditional apartment building in Paris with its mixture of classes stirred fears of strangers. Middle class New Yorkers, uncertain of their social status, needed to assure themselves that they were, in fact, rising up the American social ladder, and could not afford to risk their new sense of social worth by mixing with people less prosperous--at attitude examined below in Chapter VI. The old Parisian neighborhoods with their mixture of all kinds of residents and services were close to conditions in early New York, but these conditions also represented threats to middle class sensibilities.

Hausmann's clarification of districts and of individual buildings, so that social classes could be kept apart from each other, seems to present an ideal solution to such American middle class doubts. However, commentators writing for the American press did not pick up this theme of social zoning as a special virtue of the Parisian model. Perhaps the results of Hausmann's work were not yet evident to visitors, or perhaps their minds were on yet more bothersome aspects of the ways they believed French families lived.

The early reports reaching Americans in the 1850s and 60s tended to place Parisian apartment living in a bad light. In 1853, a correspondent for Putnam's Magazine published his report on Paris, condemning apartment living. He felt that rented apartments--maisons meublées--existed in order to give Frenchmen as many spectators as possible: the French acted out their parts in this life and sought the attention of others as they ate and drank in public cafés and restaurants, and then went home to "glass houses". Apartments were called glass houses because this writer thought domestic life was completely open to observation there. Parisian apartments were watched over by a concierge, who viewed every move through his glass door, watched the stairs, the mail, and gossiped with servants. In his apartment, the Frenchman and his family lived on a single floor with others above and below who listened to every family sound. Putnam's writer concluded that such a dwelling was "no home".⁹

For this 1853 writer, social habits outside the home contaminated the very idea of home as they crept inside the dwelling. Frenchmen liked to spend time in public, seeing and being seen, and this habit destroyed an Anglo-Saxon notion of privacy. However, the life lived by Frenchmen in the mid-century was in fact not very sociable as sociologist Richard Sennett has shown through his interpretations of the art and literature of the period. Individuals in the cafés and restaurants rarely engaged each other in conversation; they wrapped themselves in a cocoon of silence, observing but not mixing with all the others similarly out in public.¹⁰ For the French, being under the public gaze was not the same as having personal privacy violated by strangers: they maintained their privacy under the scrutiny of others. To English or American sensibilities, however, this kind of observation was intolerable and was felt as a deliberate invasion of privacy.

According to this view, apartments were intimately connected to a life lived under public observation. Walls, ceilings and floors transmitted personal signals to the strangers who lived above and below; the concierge spied, pried and knew too much. If Americans were to take up apartment living according to the French model, Putnam's warned, they too could lose their privacy, the very keystone of family life.

In 1869 another condemnation of Parisian apartments appeared in journalist James McCabe's Paris by Sunlight

and Gaslight. Apartments in Paris were characterized as nothing but "magnificent tenements", with no features of the proper Anglo-Saxon home. McCabe reported that, except for the nobility and the very rich, everyone lived in just a few rooms on one floor with other families above and below them. The buildings might be an impressive six, seven, or more stories high, with carved stone ornament, handsome roofs and imposing gateways--but inside one had to face the predatory concierge. Furthermore, Parisian buildings rarely had any of the conveniences Americans expected in a home such as central heating, gas lighting, and indoor plumbing. It was clear to McCabe that Parisian apartments failed as a model for a decent dwelling in being so behind the times with modern conveniences. But more important, Parisian buildings deprived their tenants "of the privacy and tender influences which surround a home organized on the English or American plan."¹¹ McCabe, too, felt that privacy was the heart of Anglo-Saxon home life.

While reports such as these in the 1850s and 60s outlined causes for alarm, New York's need for multiple-family dwellings increased. Surely some good ideas could also come from a study of Parisian apartments that might help New Yorkers think more clearly about their own apartment design problems. In 1872 a champion of apartment living, Sarah Gilman Young, published a full analysis of Parisian apartments, giving Americans a positive point of view of multi-family living.

Young, a social and literary critic, had lived abroad for several years and knew both American traditions and foreign living styles. She took her readers on a leisurely tour through a typical French building, focusing on pragmatic issues of housekeeping.¹² Although well aware of American objections to the loss of privacy in apartment buildings, Young was even more aware of the difficulties of keeping a house in the city, the exceptional amount of work involved in cleaning, cooking, and maintaining a family home, and the ways that improved dwelling design could ease these burdens on women. She felt that apartment living solved many of the housekeeping problems built into four or five story houses, and that the French had developed support services in urban neighborhoods such as laundry and baking facilities that Americans would do well to consider.

A French apartment house, in Young's description, is a pleasant place to come home to. One entered off the street into a paved carriageway and walked towards a courtyard at the rear, which often had flowers and a fountain. At the point where the carriageway entered the courtyard was the concierge's office and the main staircase giving access to family apartments above. The staircase was elegant, glazed at the top and gas-lit at night, with a divan and a large mirror on each landing. Each story had only two or three separate residential units.

Each apartment unit was described as complete unto itself, a crucial feature for readers to whom privacy was

all-important. Young led her readers through the hall, drawing room, kitchen and sleeping quarters, pointing out how the waxed wood floors needed only simply dusting, unlike American houses where carpeted floors required major cleaning efforts. Heating was taken care of with a fireplace, since the French believed central heating to be unhealthy--a belief in which Young concurred. Cleanliness and health were again stressed in Young's description of the kitchen where tile floors made cleaning simple, coal stoves made cooking economical, and a ventilation hood above the range kept cooking smells out of the apartment.¹³

As Young describes the French apartment, several advantages to apartment living are made apparent. First, living on one floor and making use of simple furnishings meant that the household was far easier to keep in order than the several floors of a typical urban row-house. Second, living under the protective eye of a concierge made it safe to leave one's apartment for holidays, knowing it would be looked after--although Young admits that perhaps the concierge does know too much about private family affairs. The third advantage to French apartment life that Young found was the way that Paris provided services to supplement domestic work in the home, making housekeeping easier. Commercial laundries with recently invented machines did the family wash, so that individual apartments had no need for laundry equipment nor for the space that washing and drying clothes required.¹⁴ Cooking establishments out-

side the home included not just bakeries for bread, but also shops that sold all kinds of prepared foods, saving on individual family cooking. Numerous cafés and restaurants, which had dismayed earlier American reporters, were, to Young, additional aids to the housekeeper.

Sarah Gilman Young's 1872 article was expanded into a book in 1881 called European Modes of Living or the Question of Apartment Houses. By this time, New Yorkers had begun to erect large scale apartment buildings for the middle class and to make some progress towards improved working class housing. Young, however, felt that American architects still failed to grasp the real advantages of apartments and did not understand the principles of good design. She lamented American tendencies to build apartments with dark rooms on meager air shafts, and commented that "to pack people in at night, like herrings in a cask, in dark unventilated sleeping rooms, may suit the idea of a soul-less New York landlord, but it would not be tolerated in European cities..."¹⁵ For American readers willing to get beyond their prejudices about apartment living, Young's book demonstrated many of the practical advantages of housekeeping on one floor, and also showed that individual dwellings existed within the network of urban services. Cooking or laundry done outside the home had implications for design inside the family unit, which would be examined by apartment designers in New York in the 1880s and 90s.

The courtyard system used by Parisian designers interested American reporters. As we have seen from Young's description, the typical Paris apartment had a sizable courtyard, or several courtyards, reached from the street by a paved carriageway. The court was big enough to give ample light to rear apartments, and the carriageway and door from the street gave a constant supply of fresh air to the court. This was in stark contrast to typical American French Flat buildings of the 1870s where narrow courts made all but the front and back rooms of apartments dark and stuffy. The New York architectural firm of Hubert, Pirsson and Hoddick, in planning their 1881-83 Navarro Apartments, had studied Parisian models and declared them wasteful of land. They admitted, however, that these "wasteful" practices resulted in apartments which had far better light, air and space than most New York buildings.¹⁶

The Parisian courtyard plan also afforded the choice of apartments facing entirely on the courtyard, available at very modest rents. An apartment facing the boulevard in a very comfortable neighborhood of "educated and tasteful" people, right near a Metro stop on a tree-lined street, would rent for around \$1000 a year in 1903. But in the same building on the court side, one could get a family unit for only \$400. The large courtyards of Paris made these back apartments just as comfortable as, although less fashionable than, their front-facing counterparts, and gave the architect more flexibility in planning since every unit did not have to have a street view.¹⁷

The interior planning principles of Paris apartments were explained to American readers in an 1893 Architectural Record article by architect Franz Marcou, who found the French plan to be broken down into three parts according to their importance. The most important zone of the household to French residents was that part reserved for the heads of the household and their family; then came rooms for the reception of friends; last were the service areas.¹⁸ It is interesting to note that American designers, as will be seen in Chapter V, always put the reception rooms first in importance, but this is due in part to differences in room use.

Within the family stronghold, the most important room in a Paris apartment was the bedroom of the mistress of the household. Marcou called this "the home of the home", and "the very cella of the temple". Madame's room had the best position, fronting on the Avenue; was relatively large--22' by 17', for example--and much bigger than her husband's room which adjoined it; it was the room in which a French woman would spend most of her time. Next to it was the dressing room where her hairdresser or dressmaker would come to work on her, and the boudoir--actually a little reception room for madame's most intimate friends. Her boudoir formed a link between the drawing room, a public reception space, and her bedroom, a private space; she could move easily from one realm to the next.¹⁹

Parisian planners thus established not a sharp line between public and private space as Americans did, but a

continuum of public to private space organized for more and less intimate friends. This system placed bedrooms in relation to public reception rooms, as illustrated in the plans below, and caused shocked Americans to comment on the "indecent propinquities" mentioned by Edith Wharton's characters earlier in this chapter.

Paris apartments offered a choice of more public reception spaces--from a small salon to a large vestibule that served as an additional reception room when parties were given. For gala evenings, the salon, the billiard room and the dining room could all be opened into each other giving the hostess a space some 90' long. These rooms for evening use were positioned along a side street with the least impressive view, since they were to be used at night with artificial light. Occasionally an apartment house in Paris had a grand room available for parties, decorated by the management. Such rooms however were not popular since the success of parties depended at least in part on the atmosphere the hostess established herself through the decoration of her own rooms.²⁰

The third or service zone described by Marcou's 1893 article contained the kitchen, which was very important and given as much space as the mistress's bedroom, and, adjoining it, servants' spaces. The servants had their own stairs and were separated as much as possible from the life of the family. Additional servants' bedrooms were on the fifth floor of the building. Also considered as services,

plumbing, central heating and gas lighting had improved greatly by the 1890s and were by then common features of the Paris apartment house.

In addition to articles in the popular and architectural presses, New York architects also had access to French architectural treatises which laid out principles for apartment design or documented the recent apartment buildings of Paris. One of these is J. I. Hittorff's Architecture de Paris of 1871 with a chapter on new Parisian housing.²¹

The following two examples of Parisian apartment design published by Hittorff in his 1871 Architecture de Paris show characteristic lot shapes, relations to the street, courtyard layouts and room relations. The first example is an apartment house located on the Place de l'Etoile with its "garden front" facing the Arc de Triomphe in the center of the Place, and its street front facing onto a ring road concentric with the Place (Figures 22, 23). Architect M. Rohault de Fleury designed an apartment house with two units per floor to conform to this concentric and radial street pattern. The building's angled walls and gently curved facade conform to the wedge-shaped building lot, resulting in an envelope with a non-rectilinear form.²²

The site for Rohault de Fleury's apartment house afforded much more light and air than could usually be expected in older Paris streets. Even so, the architect retained the characteristic Parisian courtyard as an indentation on the

ring road facade. Here carriages can turn in and passengers disembark at entrance doors in each corner of the courtyard.

Interior planning is based on the idea of a suite of public rooms linked to an antechamber and the entrance, and two groups of private or sleeping rooms at either end of the public suite, each with its own water closet. The kitchen and servants room must have been on the floor below, a not unusual arrangement in Paris apartments, and common in private houses. Every room has a fireplace and usually several windows; most rooms are four-sided but somewhat warped off the rectangular; some are five sided and the anteroom is eight-sided. The principal staircase follows an oval shape with windows to the exterior.

While Rohault de Fleury's design fit a symmetrical site on the radial street plan of the Etoile, M. J. Lobrot's design for an apartment house at No. 37 Avenue des Champs Elysees is typical of the irregular and assymmetrical lots of Paris (Figures 24, 25).²³ Regardless of the site, however, similar features appear in the designs of both architects. The lot for No. 37 Avenue des Champs Elysees wraps around the corner where Elysees meets Rue Marbeuf at an oblique angle, and extends back in an irregular five sided shape. The architect has filled the front of the lot, and like the Etoile building, the facade and envelope take their shape from the street layout. At the back of the lot, a large courtyard is left open to give light to rear rooms, and contains stables and a sheltered delivery bay or coach house (remise).

Lobrot's apartment house conforms closely to the description given by Sarah Gilman Young to her American readers in 1872: shops on the ground floor, a street door leading into a carriageway which opens into the rear court, and a public stair at the end of the carriageway where the concierge sits. In Lobrot's building only one apartment occupies each floor, and is complete on that floor.

Room planning in the Champs Elysees apartment, similar to Rohault de Fleury's, is organized around a central public zone of antechamber, petit salon, grand salon and dining room. At each end of this group is a set of bedrooms, although apparently there is only one water closet for the whole apartment. Lobrot makes use of semi-circular walls in his main stair, grand salon and service stair; remaining rooms are all rectilinear except for the antechamber and some small storage and private hall spaces. Again every room has a fireplace and generous windows. Only the private hall and water closet are lit from a small air and light shaft in the interior of the building; all other rooms look onto the street and courtyard.

These two Parisian apartment buildings show characteristic French planning features. The site plan always includes a sizable courtyard; lot shapes are typically irregular which may lead to non-rectilinear room shapes; good light and air are achieved by using air shafts, if at all, for only a few spaces: all principal rooms including bedrooms look onto open light and air.

The planning of interior spaces is also characterized in these two examples. Social or public spaces are grouped in the center of the apartment next to the entrance. These rooms have many openings into each other either in the form of wide pairs of doors, or two doors--one on either side of the fireplace--leading into the adjoining space. In this way the antechamber, large and small salons and dining room can easily be used as a grand suite for entertaining, as we have seen at the Navarro.

The typical pair of bedrooms accessible from this public zone of the house were apparently those of the master and mistress of the house. In Lobrot's building one of the bedrooms has two doors opening into the dining room and another to the hall: it was meant to be a social room too. The other bedroom at the social end of the house opens directly into the antechamber and the passage so it too could operate as a social space. The remaining bedrooms, clustered at the other end of the apartment, each have two doors also--two bedrooms have a communicating door plus a door to the passage, while the third has both a door to the passage and one directly to the main stair. Thus, while there are, in both apartments, separate circulation paths through halls and corridors, the architects have also made rooms 'permeable' by numerous communicating doors between rooms.

French designs for exterior elevations may be represented by Lobrot's No. 37 Avenue des Champs Elysees (Figure 24). Typically, Parisian apartment houses of this era were walk-up

buildings of five stories with a mansard roof and servants' space at the top. City ordinances limited the cornice height to 60 feet, making for relatively uniform street walls, characteristically in grey stone. Stories were marked off by balconies, a feature recommended by some American designers especially for summer comfort. Regularity of fenestration and window groupings gave compositional clarity to the exterior, although sometimes offered misleading clues about interior spaces, as in Lobrot's major facade window that lights only a closet. Shops on the ground floor as seen in Lobrot's building were common although do not appear, for example, in Rohault de Fleury's Etoile apartments. American buildings would tend at first to eschew shops as not high class enough for a fine middle class apartment house.

American readers could easily become familiar with French apartments through publications such as these. In the 1850s and 60s they would have gotten a bad impression of apartment life as a system seemingly geared to destroy the privacy they held dear. But by the 1870s articles such as Sarah Gilman Young's showed advantages to apartment life, illustrating that housekeeping on one floor could make life easier and more economical. Further reports of the 1880s and 90s showed some of the advantages of courtyard planning, and ideas of interior space conceived of in private, social and service zones.

American observers noted both the advantages and the drawbacks of Paris apartment designs. For many, the large courtyards were an appealing feature guaranteeing good light and fresh air, and far superior to the American tendency to light shafts and cramped side or rear courts. Critics recognized, however, that Parisian lot sizes and odd shapes made this court system work, and did not suit New York conditions.²⁴

Room planning was received with less than enthusiasm, as critics pointed out the distances between kitchen and dining room in some plans, and the too easy access from bedroom to public social spaces, and the tendency of French designers to set up circulation routes through rooms, rather than make each room a discrete entity to be entered only from a corridor.²⁵ In Lobrot's building above, for example, the dining room has six openings into it from adjoining rooms and the passage; to Americans this destroyed privacy while to the French it ensured flexibility. Contemporary New York designers, also working out courtyard plans and interior zoning, could compare their results with their Parisian counterparts. These American solutions to the problem of building layout and interior planning will be explored below in Chapter IV and V.

In reports from Paris in the 1890s the advantages of apartment living were stressed more than the drawbacks. By then it was clear that New Yorkers were both committed to and restricted to apartment life, pressured by high land

values and spiralling population to nearly stop the construction of individual private houses as we have seen in Chapter II. Positive views of apartment life in Paris could give valuable lessons to New York designers, and negative views were beside the point.

The Apartment in Vienna

In 19th century Vienna, apartment buildings were also the most common kind of residence chosen by the middle class.²⁶ Vienna's growth was similar to Paris' in that the city had been walled, and new dwelling space had to be developed within the limited spaces contained by the old fortifications. Former palaces and large barracks-like buildings were subdivided to provide middle class families with small apartments of three or four rooms each. In 1858 when the city developed the area of its demolished walls into the new Ringstrasse and expanded its boundaries to encompass former suburbs outside the walls, apartment life continued as the favored mode of the middle classes, including nine tenths of middle class families as apartment dwellers.²⁷

Vienna's old and new apartment houses were examined by architect John Niernsee who published a report in 1875; his findings were reviewed in the American Architect and Building News in 1876. Niernsee showed that, like Paris, Viennese apartment houses were typically organized around a courtyard and on irregular sites among the winding streets

and oblique intersections of the old city. Very high rents and shortages of space made small apartments necessary, but these seemed to satisfy middle class inhabitants.

The pre-1858 apartments that Niernsee discussed were usually ad hoc subdivisions of existing larger buildings, and their small size precluded any subtlety of room relations. The entrance to an apartment was often through the kitchen where the cook also slept, and into two or three family rooms serving all the family's needs. There was no separate corridor circulation, and water closets were sometimes in the public hall. Stone construction made for solid, soundproof buildings where families were not bothered by the sounds of their neighbors. One building of this pre-Ringstrasse era, Count Stahremburg's mansion, held over 1500 inhabitants in ranges of rooms around a dozen inner courtyards.²⁸

In the new apartment houses constructed after 1858, courtyard layouts continued in buildings now purpose-built, and more comfortable and convenient than their predecessors (Figures 26, 27). Niernsee praised these designs as economical and "devoid of much care and responsibility", comfortable and even luxurious, and offering advantages over the separate individual houses of America. In modern Viennese apartments each unit was separated from the common stair by a vestibule or anteroom which opened into the kitchen and into at least one living room. From the kitchen, one

entered the servant's room which communicated with a chamber and the nursery--similar to the American idea of a service zone.²⁹

In a large building, the ground floor might be occupied by office and reception rooms, the first floor by the living rooms of the owner, and the third floor by separate tenants. Niernsee's Plate VI illustrates a "first class apartment building" which has a ground floor containing stables and offices. The building owner on the first floor has a huge apartment including servants rooms, four wc.s, bath and dressing rooms, an anteroom, teachers' rooms, nursery, library, boudoir, reception and card rooms, parlors, dining room and billiard room. The second and third floors each have three apartments with 4, 8, and 12 rooms respectively. Even in a private palace, not only does the wealthy owner occupy much of the space, but there is almost always a tenant or two on one or two upper floors. Servants occupy both the mezzanine level and up under the roof.

It was not unusual in Vienna to have three or four separately owned buildings erected with a unified facade for a grander effect; all would group around a common light courtyard which could thereby be bigger and enhance the light and air available to all residents.³⁰

In the newer apartment houses, Vienna's masonry building tradition continued, making construction expensive but also fire- and soundproof. Exteriors were often of brick with sandstone facings and door and window frames, or

surfaced in stucco with cast or trowelled ornament. Italian Gothic and Renaissance styles gained popularity with the Ringstrasse public buildings, and apartment designers often followed suit in exterior styles. However, the richness of ornament on the exteriors of apartment houses, Niernsee thought, sometimes made the interiors look mean by comparison.³¹

Keeping house in a Viennese apartment was simpler than in a private house, as Sarah Gilman Young pointed out. As in Paris, Viennese housekeepers cut down on the work of maintaining a home with simplified furnishings and plain painted floors. A hausmeister took care of simple maintenance and cleaning, so the Viennese were not bothered by a concierge's intrusions on privacy. Housekeeping was also simplified by the availability of support services outside the home in the form of professional laundries, bakers and cooking establishments, as well as cafés and restaurants, parks and promenades.³²

From these descriptions, American readers would get an impression of Viennese apartments not too different from what they could read about Parisian ones. Prominent in Niernsee's report is the mixed class and use of buildings. Offices, a very lavish and large owner's apartment, and many small cheaper units of different sizes would be combined in one building. The inclusion of different sized units in a building was something Americans often asked for; family size differs and incomes vary at different periods in the family's life cycle, necessitating

more or less space. However, American apartment buildings, concerned with the construction economies of standardized plans, offered little variety in room numbers in the early years. Small apartments were in tenement and second class dwellings; respectable apartment buildings were designed for larger spatial needs; and flexibility and choice were diminished.

Viennese families accustomed to high demands on limited residential space were satisfied with smaller spaces than Americans thought their right. It must have been difficult for New Yorkers to imagine, in this vast country, and in a city whose northern part was barely developed, that space should be economized. Since the turn of the 19th century, middle class families had made increased spatial consumption a mark of rising social status, and expected to continue. For that reason, the tight Viennese apartment of three or four rooms for a whole family was an unacceptable model. Furthermore, such small family quarters presupposed a full life out of doors: the city was the parlor. Parks and cafes, promenades, restaurants--these public spaces in part made up for a shortage of indoor private space. American cities had few of these public amenities within immediate reach of residential blocks, nor could American manners accommodate easy appearances in public.

Although living spaces in Vienna were different from American expectations, attitudes toward family sanctity were

apparently much the same. "Stability had a high place in the list of virtues," report Janik and Toulmin about late 19th century middle class family life in Wittgenstein's Vienna. Their statement that the "concrete embodiment of these ideas was a man's home...a refuge from the world outside, a place where the tedious details of the workaday world were not permitted entry" could serve just as well to describe 19th century American home values as it does to describe Viennese ideas.³³ If the family in Vienna could find this sense of refuge and privacy in an apartment, then it was not apartments per se that prevented the middle class in Paris, for example, from establishing the privacy that Americans sought.

The British Apartment Experience

The British tradition of domestic life always seemed most sympathetic and familiar to Americans, and in England that was a tradition of single family houses. As Americans looked across the Atlantic for solutions to their need for dwelling space, they would have found English non-working class modes of living reinforcing their desires for individual private houses, not apartment buildings.³⁴

It was in Scotland that an apartment tradition had taken hold, begun by Royal retainers in Edinburgh who had lived in flats near the Castle. The Scottish word "flett" is apparently the source for the English "flat" and originally meant the interior accommodations of a house.

The word shifted to gain the implication of a one-floor dwelling space in a building of two or more floors, in which households lived in separate quarters above and below each other, and is still the common British term for an apartment.³⁵

In England there were two possible sources for living in flats: the colleges at universities and the Inns of Court where, since the 16th century, lawyers had living apartments combined with their offices.³⁶ However, neither of these gave sufficient impetus to the development of apartments in England. Instead, London, for example, expanded in the early 19th century by incorporating more and more land at the fringes of the older city. Because walls did not keep London to a restricted land area, development could take the form of low density private houses rather than the apartments of Paris or Vienna. The British put their trust in vertical walls, not floors or ceilings, as the only effective guarantors of family privacy. Americans identified with this method of dividing space and concurred with the Englishman who "feels his privacy invaded the moment there is anyone above him or below him."³⁷

English private houses were not perfect for family life, and criticisms of them pointed up the virtues of apartments as an alternative. Blackwood's magazine, published in Edinburgh, ran a series of articles in 1846-7 mocking the average English house with its back door in the

front and all its services on view. Separate houses could only afford small interior dimensions, no sound insulation, flimsy construction, and mean ornament. How much better, Blackwood's wrote, were the apartment houses of Paris with their solid construction, broad staircases, and street fronts big enough to be architecturally imposing. The articles contrasted the "vertical" independence of Continental dwellings with the "horizontal" independence of English houses and concluded that apartments on the Continent afforded just as much privacy, and many more advantages. As bachelors joined together to live in clubs, so families should join together, Blackwood's argued, for the benefits of "mutual support" and for the general improvement of a city's appearance. As we have seen in Chapter I, similar arguments were advanced by American writers in the 1850s to encourage the adoption of apartment houses.³⁸

While Blackwood's ideas may have seemed acceptable in Edinburgh, they were not welcomed in London where the middle class was unquestioningly attached to private houses. It was rather in the working class dwelling that English architects thought about multiple dwelling problems and worked out their first solutions. Britain was hit hardest and earliest of all the European countries by industrialization. Her cities felt the effects of new demographic patterns and the social dislocations that accompanied factory production, and the English set up early commissions of inquiry to try to

alleviate the worst miseries of urban workers. New multiple dwelling ideas for the working class in America came from the British, and were very influential on reformers trying to produce better housing for American and immigrant workers in the 1870s, as we have seen in Chapter I.

The first regulations governing working class British housing date from 1840 and governed the sizes of courts and entrances and the location of sewers. In the later 1840s two types of "model dwellings" set the standard for later developments: the self-contained dwelling in which each unit had its own kitchen and water closet as well as one big room partitioned off into sleeping alcoves; and the "associated dwelling" where living and sleeping spaces constituted the family unit, and sculleries and lavatories were shared by all. The development of working class housing may be traced in J. M. Tarn's useful book Five Per Cent Philanthropy which illustrates many early designs in England and Scotland.³⁹

In the 1850s architect Henry Roberts designed workers dwellings, examples of which were erected at the 1851 Great Exhibition in London. Roberts is credited with inventing the system of stairs that, located in recesses in the bearing wall, acted as both regular vertical access and fire escapes.⁴⁰ This was the system adopted by Sir Sidney Waterlow whose model dwellings in London using self-contained units were the inspiration for A. T. White's

Brooklyn model tenements in the late 1870s and 80s. The Peabody Trust, a philanthropic organization devoted to producing improved working class housing, was founded in 1862, and built many London dwelling houses of the "associated" type in the next decade.

While English reform housing was not very comfortable or generous, it did improve conditions for working class tenants, and introduced issues of multiple dwelling design that had implications for middle class apartments as well. These issues included the question of what should be shared and public, and what should be private in a multiple dwelling.

The first English upper class flat building has been identified by Tarn as an 1853 flat building on Victoria Street, London, designed by its builder, a Mr. Mackenzie.⁴¹ Few buildings followed, however, and flats did not seem to catch on with those who could still afford single family houses. The Grosvenor Mansions, for upper class tenants, opened in 1868 in London, seemed to herald the acceptance of flat living for the well-to-do. The English periodical Building News encouraged its readers to notice the Grosvenor's "comforts, privacy and convenience" and the advantages of a one floor dwelling for watching over servants. The writers noted that, with Grosvenor Mansions, the upper classes were taking to flat life just as the laboring classes had in the 1840s.⁴²

The development of working class dwellings had given architects experience on multiple dwelling problems that benefited their designs for wealthier clients. First of all, as Tarn notes, working class designs showed a high level of competence and professional standards in building long before the same standards and care were applied to middle class apartments.⁴³ Secondly, the decision about private versus shared facilities had given rise to two types of working class dwellings--the self-contained and the associated--and middle class apartments had to make similar decisions about the line between public and private. For example, the Palatinate Buildings, New Kent Road, London, built in the 1870s, were intended for middle class residents but took a cue from working class dwellings in having a playground and laundry drying areas on the roof.⁴⁴ These shared areas may have seemed acceptable to residents because they would have actually been used by maids, children and their nursemaids.

Another model for British middle class apartment houses was the hotel. The Albert Mansions in Victoria Street, Westminster, was designed by architect J. T. Knowles in 1870, as a set of suites comprising three rooms and a bath each. Depending upon the tenants' household size, the suites could be expanded by opening up doors to connect another one or several adjacent suites in the manner of a hotel. The Albert Mansions impressed writers for The Architect as one of the largest buildings of its kind, with a

frontage of 500', 60' deep and 60' high. They suggested that flats were forcing themselves into the awareness of house-oriented people as the logical way to find housing in an era of expanding population and rising ground rents.⁴⁵

A London building designed for "cooperative housekeeping", the subject of a New York Times article in 1875, also took its model from hotels in offering a common kitchen and dining room. The upper floors held suites of rooms that included only sleeping and reception rooms, cutting down on the work and number of servants needed to run a household.⁴⁶ As we will see, proposals for such cooperative kitchen and dining rooms were relatively common in American apartment house literature of the 1870s and later.

Through the 1880s there were many large middle class apartment houses built in London, but they never engaged the full interest of architects or their clientele, who still treasured the idea of a private house with its little garden plot. Unlike the French, the English retained a feeling that while party walls were expected, "party floors" were taboo. "The saga of the flat during the nineteenth century," Tarn reports, "remains a passing fascination with a foreign way of life."⁴⁷ Nevertheless, while the British continued to prefer private houses, apartment houses grew in numbers, and by 1907 were very common for all classes (Figures 28, 29).⁴⁸

In 1907, editor W. Shaw Sparrow collected a series of essays in Flats, Urban Houses and Cottage Homes, describing

the growth of apartment design in England and suggesting good design principles for upper class and middle class apartments. For moderate income tenants, apartments with built-in furniture and simple painted walls seemed most economical. A central kitchen with a catering system could send food up to individual apartments, saving the residents labor and also saving them from dining in a public setting where they would "feel that they were brought too much into each others' company."⁴⁹ While these principles are very similar to American ideas, they perhaps reflect British architects learning from American precedents at the point where apartment houses were necessitated in crowded London. By this time, New Yorkers had taken to apartment life, architects had understood the problems confronting them in multiple dwelling design and had worked out usable solutions. Their published designs in American magazines could have influenced the slower developing apartment houses of England.

The examples of Paris, Vienna and London provided Americans with several approaches to apartment design. Parisian apartments of the early 19th century with their mixed classes pointed up American fears of strangers and crystallized the need for family privacy. Post-Haussmann designs with their well-worked out interior plans made it clear to American commentators that family space had to be organized along the lines suitable to local cultural

expectations; wholesale borrowing of Paris apartment plans was never suitable to New York designers.

The experience of Viennese middle class families showed that apartment life with even hundreds of families living under one roof could be perfectly acceptable within a historical tradition of multi-family living. Apartment houses with solid soundproof construction, and a city support system that offered space for sociability outside the home, seemed to give privacy loving families a satisfying dwelling space even in small quarters. But Americans expected larger spaces and linked them with their sense of social success. Furthermore, few neighborhoods in New York had the kind of pleasant outdoor spaces, cafes or promenades that European families used to expand their domestic territory, even if Americans had found such a life in public acceptable.

London, with its longstanding commitment to a private house tradition, could only have reinforced American desires to individual house ownership, and offered little direction for working out middle class multiple dwelling designs. Only in the realm of working class housing did the British take the lead, and the solutions developed there, while they pointed up some of the issues of privacy and shared spaces inherent in all multiple dwellings, did not arrive at appropriate forms for middle class domestic spaces until very late in the century.

FOOTNOTES

¹"Sketches in a Paris Cafe", Putnam's Monthly 2 (Oct. 1853): 439-444; James McCabe, Paris by Sunlight and Gaslight (Philadelphia: National Publishing Co., 1869); Sarah Gilman Young, "Foreign Modes of Living", Galaxy 14 (1872): 474-482; Sarah Gilman Young, European Modes of Living or the Question of Apartment Houses (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1881); Hubert, Pirsson & Hoddick, "New York Flats and French Flats", Architectural Record 2 (July-Sept. 1892): 55-64; Paul Franz Marcou, "The Modern House in Paris", Architectural Record 2 (Jan.-March 1893): 324-331; Fernand Mazade, "Living in Paris on an Income of \$3000. a Year", Architectural Record 13, Part I (April 1903): 349-57; Part II (May 1903): 423-32; Part III (June 1903): 548-54. See also Helene Lipstadt, "Housing the Bourgeoisie", Oppositions 8 (Spring 1977): 33-47, for a modern view of the period.

²Edith Wharton, The Age of Innocence (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1968), pp 28-29; the setting of the novel is dated in the early 1870s, p. 3. Also cited in Stephen Birmingham, Life at the Dakota (New York: Random House, 1979) p. 15; Andrew Alpern, Apartments for the Affluent (New York: McGraw Hill, 1975): foreward, n.p.

³Richard Sennett, The Fall of Public Man (New York: Random House, Vintage Books, 1978) pp. 134-135; Norma Evenson, Paris: A Century of Change (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979) pp. 201-203.

⁴Anthony Sutcliffe, Multi-Storey Living--the British Working Class Experience (London: Croom, Helm; New York: Barnes and Noble, 1974) p. 6.

⁵Siegfried Giedion, Space, Time and Architecture (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956) 3rd ed., pp. 670-672. Paul Goodman and Percival Goodman, Communitas: Means of Livelihood and Ways of Life (New York: Random House, Vintage Books, 1947, 1960) pp. 244-245. The Goodmans suggest the mixed use and mixed class buildings of Paris as an alternative to the over-specialized single uses of the modern city. Evenson, Paris, p. 201; McCabe, Paris by Sunlight, p. 655.

- ⁶Sennett, Fall, pp. 134-135.
- ⁷Evenson, Paris, p. 203.
- ⁸Sennett, Fall, p. 136.
- ⁹"Sketches in a Paris Cafe", p. 441.
- ¹⁰Sennett, Fall, pp. 212-3, 217.
- ¹¹McCabe, Paris by Sunlight, p. 653.
- ¹²Young, "Foreign Modes", pp. 475-6.
- ¹³Ibid., p. 476.
- ¹⁴Ibid., p. 477.
- ¹⁵Young, European Modes, p. 3; such "dark rooms" in American apartments will be examined in Chapter V.
- ¹⁶Hubert et al., "New York Flats", p. 58.
- ¹⁷Mazade, "Living in Paris", p. 349.
- ¹⁸Marcou, "Modern House in Paris", p. 325.
- ¹⁹Ibid.; this seems to preserve an old aristocratic tradition of receiving guests from the bed.
- ²⁰Ibid., p. 330.
- ²¹J. I. Hittorff, Architecture de Paris (Londres: Asher, 1871); D. D. Schneider, "The Work of J. I. Hittorff", (Princeton University: Ph.D. Dissertation, 1971).
- ²²Hittorff, Architecture, Pl. 5.
- ²³Ibid., Pl. 62.
- ²⁴Ernest Flagg, "Planning Apartment Houses and Tenement Houses", Architectural Review 10 (1903): 85-90, pp. 87-88. Hubert et al., "New York Flats", p. 55; Israels, "New York Apartment Houses", Architectural Record (1901): 492.
- ²⁵Flagg, "Planning", p. 87.
- ²⁶John R. Niernsee, Report on the Construction and Enbellishment of Private Dwellings in Vienna (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1875). A report on Niernsee's work appeared in American Architect and Building News (Sept. 9, 1876): 291.

- 27 Niernsee, Report, pp. 7-8.
- 28 Ibid., pp. 3-4.
- 29 Ibid., pp. 7-8. Niernsee attributes the modern type of Viennese apartment to architects Vandernull and Siccardsburg, who promoted, if they did not invent, it.
- 30 Ibid., Pl. VIII.
- 31 Ibid., p. 10.
- 32 Young, "Foreign Modes", pp. 479-481.
- 33 Allan Janik and Stephen Toulmin, Wittgenstein's Vienna (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973) pp. 42-43; quoted in Sennett, Fall, p. 178 and note 64, p. 354.
- 34 Sutcliffe, Multi-Storey Living, pp. 1-2; W. Shaw Sparrow, Flats, Urban Houses and Cottage Homes (London: Hodder and Stoughton, [1907]) p. 81.
- 35 Sparrow, "A Flat Dweller's Point of View", in Sparrow, ed., Flats, p. 15. Sydney Perks, Residential Flats of All Classes (London: P. T. Batsford, 1905) pp. 2-15, discusses flats in Scotland going back to the 12th century. In the 18th century Scottish flat buildings had mixed classes under one roof like Parisian buildings.
- 36 "How to Build a House and Live in It", Blackwoods (Edinburgh) 59 (1846): 758-765; 60 (1846): 349-357; 61 (1847): 727-734. S. Perks, Residential Flats, pp. 16-18. For the one exceptional London flat building, The Albany of 1804, see Chapter V below, and Perks, pp. 18-20.
- 37 James Richardson, "New Homes of New York", Century [Scribner's Monthly] 8 (1874) p. 66.
- 38 "How to Build a House", Blackwood's, 59, p 764.
- 39 John Tarn, Five Per Cent Philanthropy, An Account of Housing in Urban Areas Between 1840 and 1914 (London: Cambridge University Press, 1973).
- 40 Ibid., p. 20; Henry Roberts Dwellings of the Labouring Classes (London: Seeley's, [1855]); Roberts, Home Reform: or What the Working Classes May Do To Improve Their Dwellings (London: Society for Improving the Condition of the Laboring Classes, 1852).

⁴¹John N. Tarn, "French Flats for the English in Nineteenth Century London", in Sutcliffe, Multi-Storey Living, p. 25. Tarn cites The Builder 11 (Dec. 3, 1853) p. 721. See also Perks, Residential Flats, pp. 21-22; plan illustrated p. 22.

⁴²Tarn, "French Flats", p. 25; Tarn cites Building News 15 (May 1868) p. 323. The Grosvenor Buildings, also called Grosvenor Gardens, are mentioned in Andrew Saint, Richard Norman Shaw (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976) p. 195 as a precedent for Shaw's 1877 Albert Hall Mansions in London.

⁴³Tarn, "French Flats", p. 33.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 27.

⁴⁵The Architect 3 (Feb. 12, 1870): 83.

⁴⁶"Co-operative Housekeeping", New York Times (Nov. 9, 1875): 5.

⁴⁷Tarn, "French Flats", pp. 32-33.

⁴⁸Edwin Hall, "Flats British and Foreign", in Sparrow, ed., Flats, p. 81. Also see S. Perks, Residential Flats, p. 205: "In America flats are apparently as popular as in London; in New York during 1903 only fifty six dwelling-houses were built for the occupancy of single families."

⁴⁹Sparrow, "A Flat Dweller's Point of View", in Sparrow, ed., Flats, p. 20.

CHAPTER IV

AMERICAN APARTMENT BUILDINGS: BUILDING-WIDE PLANNING AND DESIGN

By the late 1850s, it was clear that middle class families in New York needed dwellings that would suit their budgets and family needs, and that ad hoc housing was increasingly unable to serve the purpose. Both designers and tenants continued to look to Europe for ideas about apartment design, but, as we have seen, they came up with equivocal models at best. The specific forms for apartments needed by New York clients had to be developed on home ground. I will look at the apartment building designs developed for New Yorkers from the late 1860s to just after the turn of the century to see how they emerged from their local historical context and how they responded to European precedents.

This chapter will focus on the set of planning and design issues relating to the building as an entirety. The shape of the building envelope was affected by New York real estate tradition in the way lots were divided and sold; by the street edge configuration resulting from New York's street map; and by the need to shape the building's perimeter

wall to get adequate light and air. I will examine the interior planning of the building for major circulation to show typical vertical and horizontal circulation systems. Finally I will consider those aspects of the design that gave character and identity to an apartment and helped tenants identify it as home. These aspects of over-all planning and design are, of course, closely linked with planning issues in the individual apartment units, but I have separated this discussion into building-wide problems and individual unit problems for the sake of clarity. The planning of individual family apartment units will be taken up in Chapter V.

An Example: The Albany

An apartment building called The Albany (Figures 30, 31), begun in 1874, provides an interesting example of the building-wide planning issues that confronted designers in the early years of New York apartment design.¹ The site chosen for The Albany was between 51st and 52nd Streets, near Central Park and just two blocks from a new Metropolitan Elevated Railway station; it filled a whole block along Broadway. Initially the architect, John C. Babcock, had filed plans for a set of ten French Flat buildings on the same site, but plans were changed to make a large apartment block instead.²

The Albany filled its site out to the edge of the sidewalk along Broadway, 51st and 52nd Streets. Broadway

does not meet the side streets at right angles, so the Albany's facade did not meet its side walls at right angles. The street configuration had been allowed to determine the configuration of The Albany's perimeter walls. Filling the lot in this way was, of course, common practice for both apartment and private house designers. In the early 19th century, restrictive covenants on real estate required house builders to make their houses fill the front of the site and meet a standard set-back line to ensure an orderly and attractive street wall in residential neighborhoods.³ European designers, too, were especially concerned to enhance urban space by bringing the facades of their apartment houses out to the street edge. In Paris this concern was amplified by regulations controlling cornice height as well, making for a regular appearance even on the most odd-shaped lots. In Vienna, as Niernsee explained, several developers might join together to build a uniform facade enclosing three or four apartment houses, in order to develop a clear and beautiful public face for the city. In New York, individual designers, while not willing to subsume their apartment houses within a Vienna style larger envelope, nonetheless followed the tradition of bringing their buildings up to the lot line on the street side and reinforcing the street wall, until post-World War II developments encouraged setting apartment towers back from the street in a park or a parking lot.

A further determinant of The Albany's shape was the need for light and air. The Albany got its light and air in three ways, all common devices of the period. First, the street fronts provided guaranteed access to light and air; streets would never be built on, so all the windows that opened onto streets would never be blocked by future construction. Second, a major light court was incorporated in the center rear of the building by an indentation measuring about 30' on each side. The third way to bring in ventilation was through light wells or air shafts which penetrated the body of the building from cellar to roof in several locations. At The Albany, the smallest of these were called "air and light shafts" and measured about 8' on a side, while the larger ones were called "open courts" and were 12' by 41'.

Circulation at The Albany included stairs but no passenger elevators, as was typical at the time for buildings up to five or six stories in New York and in European cities. Because the apartment house was large, with ten units on each upper floor, circulation economies were possible by centralizing access to the floors in two main stairways, one for each end of the building. Each main stair was reached through a side street entrance and led to five apartments on each floor. From the stair landing, a public corridor led to each individual front door.

Tenants arriving at their floors moved along the public corridor which wrapped around the open court adjoining the

stairs. To get to the center apartment, tenants had to walk about 80' of hall. This was a long distance for a corridor, but windows opening onto both the open court and the rear indentation provided light and changing 'views'. At one point The Albany's corridor even had windows on both sides looking into both courtyards, rather like an internal bridge, and would not have seemed nearly so grim as many windowless modern apartment corridors. This corridor with its light on two sides seems to be an unusual feature, not repeated in later New York apartment plans. While older Viennese buildings sometimes had the public corridor placed along a courtyard wall with light all along its length, New York designers generally preferred to save all exterior wall windows for the rooms themselves, and did not worry too much about good light for circulation spaces. Parisian designers avoided long corridors altogether by using skylit stairway access limited to only two or three apartments on a floor.

A service stair was also provided for every one or two apartments at The Albany. This stair led directly from an individual unit to both basement and roof, so servants could accept deliveries, hang the laundry, or get to their own attic rooms without using the main stairs. The service stairways, buried within the building, were lit only from the air and light shafts. Dumbwaiters or "lifts" were also provided to The Albany's tenants, opening onto the service stair landings.

The Albany's identity as an apartment building was assured in two ways on the exterior. First the entire site's ten building lots were occupied by a single mass. Along the Broadway facade, a series of eight shop-fronts at ground level made the building fit into neighboring blocks of commercial development, and around the corners on 51st and 52nd Streets each entrance facade, four stories high gave the building a strong presence. It would have made an impression among the small french flat or tenement buildings and private houses nearby.

At the same time, tenants would have found The Albany easy to identify as home: its brick facade with sandstone trim had numerous ornamental details to give it character, and over the raised center of the Broadway facade its own name was carved, giving the place an aura of exclusivity and fashion. Its name probably preserves the name of a unique early 19th century apartment house, The Albany in Picadilly, London, where Lord Byron rented rooms after the building was converted to flats in 1804.⁴

Building Lots

Building-wide planning issues are always related to the size and shape of the lot. In New York, the typical size for a plot of land was 25' along the street and 100' deep, the standard size established for single family houses in earlier New York. Lots were advertised in the newspapers of the 1870s either singly, or in groups of a few or a

dozen or more contiguous lots. Landowners could erect buildings of pretty much any size desired, and were only constrained after 1867 to leave a certain number of feet free between the rear of the building and the lot line for ventilation. Other later regulations controlled the percentage of the lot a building could cover. However, developers were free to purchase, for example, two lots and erect on them three houses, or one house, and so on.

While this 25' by 100' lot is an average or typical size, it was not universally used; the matter of lot sizes for New York real estate is more complicated than is generally reported. Most histories of tenements, for example, say that the standard New York lot is 25' by 100', and that this uniformly long and narrow plot made the typically long narrow tenement building more or less unavoidable.⁵ The restricted frontage, lengthy party walls and indentations for light shafts, which combined to make cramped interior spaces that were poorly lit and ventilated, all arose from or were reinforced by the standard lot size.

However, while the Buildings Department Docket books show that there were 25' by 100' lots being built on in the 1860s, 70s and 80s, they are by no means the predominant size.⁶ For example, on a randomly chosen page for part of August, 1874 (there are consecutive date entries for 16 plans on each page of the Dockets), there are four 25' by 100' lots; other measure 16'8" by 102', 20' by 68', 24'9" by 125', 26'9" by 125', 23' by 98'9" and 40' by 100'. On a

comparable page for December, 1877, there is only one 25' by 100' lot; others are 50' by 100', 25' by 63', 10' by 100', 26' by 68', 20' by 10', 43' by 100', 32' by 77' and 21' by 96'. The proportions of these lots vary considerably, although they are almost always deeper than they are wide. These varied dimensions suggest that at least through the 1870s, a single repeatable plan such as the well-known dumbbell tenement, was not so easy to impose on every lot.⁷

Yet to a great extent the standard lot proportions exercised their influence on planning. Large lots were subdivided into small narrow proportions as we can see from the example of developer Benjamin Weber's plans, filed with the Buildings Department in 1869.⁸ Weber's property was 54' wide, along West 55th Street between 8th and 9th Avenues. He chose to erect on his 54' of frontage, buildings of 14', 13', 14' and 13' frontages, fitting four buildings on a lot that could have held one of a different design. It was not the lot size that forced him to build deep and narrow buildings, but he himself who put such buildings up following the long narrow proportions of local tradition.

Published plans for many French Flat buildings used the standard house-sized 25' by 100' dimensions as a basic starting point. As we have seen in Chapter I, this was also the assumed lot size for the Plumber and Sanitary Engineer's 1878 competition for an improved tenement plan.

Because of this tradition in New York, long narrow lots were the rule through the 1870s and 80s for smaller apartment houses and for the lower end of the rental market.

Developers with greater resources could assemble several small lots and erect a large apartment house, such as The Albany where ten lots were put together and the apartment house filled a whole block front. Such larger sites first became marketable in the 1870s, and gradually replaced 25' wide building lots as the preferred size. As we have seen above in the discussion of tenements, after the new tenement law of 1901 (which applied to all multiple dwellings), it became next to impossible to erect a multiple dwelling on the old 25' narrow lot and still provide the legal requirements of light and air to each unit.⁹ Required courtyard sizes were too wide to fit into a single-lot-sized building. Both the growing popularity of large apartment houses and the legal constraints combined to make the 25' wide apartment building obsolete by the end of the century.

However, from the 1860s through the 90s, single-lot sized buildings and large-lot buildings co-existed. Each size involved particular problems in light and ventilation, circulation and external identity. The following analysis will consider first the 25' by 100' type, and then the larger apartment house.

Light and Air in the Small
Apartment House

Concern for light and air was a serious issue by the 1840s, as we have noted in Chapter I. Observers of crowded city neighborhoods reported close links between disease and death rates, and lack of fresh air and sunlight.¹⁰ Even in free-standing houses, adequate air circulation had to be planned for, as Catharine Beecher explained in her 1841 Treatise on Domestic Economy.¹¹ She recommended a fireplace flue in each bedroom through which fresh air could circulate while residents were sleeping with the doors and windows closed. Of course, urban row houses had a much more urgent need of fresh air and more difficulty in getting it.

Designers of apartment buildings on the typical narrow lot adopted a fairly standard configuration, with the building filling the lot at the street side and narrowing towards the rear. Rooms at the front were lit from windows facing onto the street, but party walls prohibited any light along the side walls of the building, unless those side walls were moved away from their neighbors. Usually one side wall would continue to the back of the site against the neighboring wall; the other side wall would step in behind the front two rooms of the apartment, forming a long narrow light court. Rear rooms could face both the back garden, if there were one, and the side light court, while rooms in the middle of the apartment looked out only onto the court.

In the 1869 Stuyvesant Apartments (Figure 16), Richard Morris Hunt used this narrow rear light court in each of the four sections of his building.¹² Hunt treated his apartment house as if it were four narrow buildings like row houses with party walls, rather than one large building on a bigger site. He broke down that division by giving the center pair of buildings a shared light court twice the size that a single building could have on a narrow lot.

When such narrow apartments were erected one by one, only the single light court was possible, such as we see in the plans for a "cheap flat" (Figure 32) published in 1874.¹³ This building was "cheap" because it had three family units per floor, yet it was not a tenement. The cheap flat has the same configuration as one of Hunt's four Stuyvesant units: the front rooms fill the width of the lot while the rear rooms are against the party wall on one side, and face a long narrow light court on the other. In this design, the building is so deep on its lot that it has no back garden, and one rear corner is angled off to allow a window in a rear bedroom.

Similar planning was used by Bruce Price for his 1878 design of a French Flat for prosperous families on East 21st Street (Figure 19), which we have seen in Chapter II.¹⁴ Price gave his floors the same shape--wide at the street side, narrow in the rear--with the light court lighting all the central rooms. He too extended the building as far back on

the lot as it could go, and gave light to his rear corner room with a small indentation for a pair of windows. In addition, Price added a small light shaft towards the front of the apartment for additional light in the anteroom and private hall.

From these examples it is evident that both cheap and expensive apartments on narrow lots exhibited similar perimeter wall configurations to get light and air. The lot itself prevented other building shapes: it was simply too narrow for experiment. While the light and air that were obtained were clearly better than what tenements got, because budgets were higher and numbers of units per floor lower, still such plans were not satisfactory.

This kind of single-lot-sized apartment building was described by Mr. March, house-hunting with his wife, in Howell's 1890 novel A Hazard of New Fortunes: "The New York ideal of a flat...was inflexibly seven rooms and a bath. One or two rooms might be at the front, the rest crooked and cornered backward through increasing and then decreasing darkness til they reached a light bedroom or kitchen at the rear."¹⁵ A disbelieving March demanded of the janitor why such apartments were advertised as having "all light rooms", and found that that only meant all rooms had windows to the open air--no matter if that open air were merely a light well or air shaft.

Light and Air in Bigger Buildings

Larger apartment buildings had more latitude when it came to light and air provisions, but even on a large site, designers did not find easy solutions to these problems. One common way to get sunshine and ventilation was to use and "H" or "U" shaped plan, both of which gave a substantial amount of perimeter wall open to the air. This form can be seen as the opposite to Viennese or Parisian courtyard types: the large apartment blocks of Europe were conceived of as long bars of rooms wrapped around inner courtyard spaces, while American designers imagined the building as a solid body with extensions out into space. Sometimes the H or U plan would be elaborated with further "peninsulas" of rooms projecting off the basic shape, forming a series of indentations in the wall for extra windows. An example of this idea is the 1902-04 Chatsworth (Figures 33, 34) by architect John Scharsmith.¹⁶ It is a double building on a single site; that is, two separate apartment blocks were designed and erected at the same time on one large site, apparently to maximize external wall. The section facing 72nd Street is laid out in a U plan, with projections off the U on the east side to gain extra window wall, as well as interior space. Its companion, the section facing 71st Street is laid out in an H with a small indentation and projection on the west side for the same purposes. On several floors of these buildings there are only three

apartment units per floor, so a single family occupied, for example, a full arm of the H, and would face fresh air in two directions, getting good cross ventilation. Such a design preserves the good cross ventilation afforded by earlier New York row houses that were only two rooms deep on the lot.

The U and H plans allowed a straight wall to meet the street edge, with the indentations for the light courts set to the rear or sides. If desired, however, a developer could turn the plan on the site to place a court facing the street; this had the advantage of expanding the number of "front" rooms, thereby increasing the rent.¹⁷ The higher value of front rooms maintains the high valuation of the parlor floor and relation of parlor to street in the older row house tradition, and has parallels in the higher rents commanded by street-facing apartments in Paris.

Another example of the basic H plan with projections is the Ansonia (Figure 35), an apartment hotel discussed further in Chapter V.¹⁸ Here the public corridor traces the H, and separate apartments open off each side of each arm. Many projections in the perimeter walls give additional space for windows to the outside. At the Ansonia, additional air shafts are sprinkled throughout the body of the building, necessary because the apartment house is so large that, for all its indentations, there are still many rooms without exposure to the outdoors. In contrast, a building of this size in Vienna would have been organized around large courtyards and would not have needed these air shafts.

Although these peninsular designs gave better light and air than their narrow lot contemporaries, they were not without problems. The U and H shapes did not allow very much distance between wings of the buildings, and tenants could look across the court, as they could in tenements, to see into their neighbors' rooms. However, since light and air were much better than in tenements, contemporary critics did not perceive this as a problem. But when buildings were tall, they cast shadows and blocked their own sunlight, which critics did identify as an issue.

Concerns for light and air prompted a committee to press for legislation limiting the height of apartment buildings as early as 1883. In their Report on Elevated Dwellings in New York City they called for an immediate halt to high apartment houses.¹⁹ Between 11 July 1881 and 15 March 1883 the New York City Department of Buildings had granted permits for 103 buildings over 80 feet high. These included 44 buildings between 80 and 90 feet, 15 buildings between 90 and 100 feet, 20 of 100 to 110 feet, 9 buildings of 140 to 150 feet, and two of 150 to 160 feet. Of these, there were 36 buildings above 14th Street, the dividing line between business (below) and residential (above), that were over 100 feet high. The committee recorded with outraged disbelief that they had just heard of plans submitted to the Buildings Department for a fifteen story apartment building, 182 feet to the cornice line with an additional 40 foot high cupola--which they believed to be an absurd and dangerous proposal.

According to this 1883 report, tall buildings blocked the sunlight from their own lower floors, and from neighboring structures, and constituted a health hazard to occupants of lower floors. Shadows from overly tall buildings also kept sunlight from the streets, resulting in miasma and disease-breeding germs such as were found in the "dark streets of Italian cities." Further, tall buildings were seen as a threat to property values: they overshadowed regular houses, and offended good taste with their ragged outlines and jumbled variety. The writers saw the 60' cornice line limit in Paris as a good solution both to give regularity to streets and to guarantee the light and air needed for health.

Of design solutions for light and air in large apartment buildings, the quadrangular courtyard block seems to have been the most successful. The Dakota of 1884 (Figures 20, 21) was a rare, though much admired, example of the type, which filled its plot of land out to the lot line and reserved the center for its light and air supply.²⁰ We can see this kind of "square doughnut" scheme as consolidating all the small indentations and light wells, seen in other apartment buildings, into one broad, continuous space. The center courtyard provided much better sunshine and air circulation than little light shafts, and made for a simpler layout. The building as a whole had a much clearer external configuration than the more common peninsular plans.

Of course, in order to build out to the lot line on four sides, one needed a whole city block or the end of a

block to guarantee light by the interposition of streets between the building and its neighbors. However, there were often very large lots available to the early apartment builders. It is odd that most developers shied away from the quadrangular block until after 1900. The reason for the rarity of a quadrangular block plan in early New York apartments, aside from economics, may come from the private house tradition. The little house sitting in the middle of its own piece of land, solid and self contained, with light and air coming from the outer sides is the standard American type, in contrast to patio or atrium house forms traditional in Mediterranean history. An American way of thinking saw the house as a solid volume standing in a field of light and air, not wrapping around its own light and air. This conception of the house as outward turning seemed to carry over into an urban setting in the late 19th century where the contiguity of massed buildings made the idea less than efficient on a functional level--but perhaps still ingrained on a symbolic level.

Quadrangular courtyard apartment blocks became more popular in New York after 1900; Graham Court by Clinton and Russell of 1901 (Figures 36, 37), the Belnord Apartments by H. Hobart Weekes of 1908, and the Apthorp Apartments by Clinton and Russell of the same year are good examples. These large size courtyards parallel the courtyard forms described by Niernsee in the 1870s buildings of Vienna. At the same time, however, New York designers persisted in

using peninsular plans--a choice reinforced by the idea that breaking up the exterior of the building into bays and projections gave residents a more intimate fragment of the whole to identify as home. This idea will be explored further below.

Circulation in Smaller Apartment Buildings

Problems of circulation in apartment buildings involved the arrangement of public stairways and elevators, service stairways and elevators, and public lobbies and corridors. The smaller building on narrow lots that we have considered above may be looked at again for examples of how circulation was handled. In such small buildings there were rarely elevators for passenger use, so the only vertical circulation for tenants and their guests was the public stairs. Hunt's Stuyvesant Apartments (Figure 16) made use of a public stair and tenants walking up would reach their own front doors from either end of the public landing. Only two family units opened off each landing, but the tenants from all four floors, plus the tenants of the attic studios, shared the stair. Back to back with this main stair was a service stairway that opened into the private hall of each unit. Adjoining that doorway was a dumbwaiter for each apartment. Thus Hunt clustered all his vertical circulation together in one core, away from the apartments' windows. Stairs like these often had skylights as they did in Paris.

In the 1874 "cheap flat" mentioned above, three apartments per floor necessitated two stairways--one to serve the front and the middle apartment, and one for the rear unit (Figure 32). Spatial constraints did not allow for a central stair and public corridor. Because this flat was not for well-to-do families there were no service stairs, nor was there a dumbwaiter. Both of the stairways were placed against the party wall so as not to use up precious windows; these too may have been skylit.

Bruce Price's 1878 French Flat design (Figure 19) mentioned above included a kitchen dumbwaiter, and a main stair and a service stair, both circular. The main stair towards the front of the apartment rose around a circular open well in the center, while the service stair at the rear was a tight spiral. These curved stair wells were typical features of Parisian apartment design as seen on the two Paris buildings illustrated in Chapter III.

In small buildings like these, the entrance off the street and public lobby were usually at the side rather than in the center, allowing a somewhat curtailed apartment on the ground floor front to be fitted in beside the entrance. The public entrance lobby or hall, however, would not be any larger than necessary and was not expected to serve as anything more than access.

Circulation in Large Apartment Buildings

Larger apartment buildings from the 1870s on often had elevators for passenger use as well as a main staircase for the tenants. Service elevators were also common. At the 1902-04 Chatsworth, the 72nd Street section had a public stair, a passenger elevator and a service elevator all grouped together at the base of the U plan and opening into a small public hallway, which had a window to the outside (Figure 34). From this hall, tenants had access to three individual units. In the 71st Street section, a main stair and two elevators were centered in the bar of the H plan, again giving access to three units from a relatively short public hall.

When buildings were even bigger as at the Ansonia (Figure 35), a central core of elevators and stairs brought tenants to their floors, but from that center point they often had to traverse very long hallways to get to their own quarters. These public hallways usually had only a window at the end, required by law, but no other views out. In this, the Albany was unusual with its several corridor windows. The convenience of a U or H plan, with its economical central location for vertical circulation, was somewhat undermined by the necessity of walking so far from the central core to distant apartments. Service elevators at the Ansonia were dispersed through the building in order to keep service functions out of view of tenants and guests using the public halls.

In a courtyard building like the Dakota, a lavish budget made it possible to provide vertical circulation at each corner of the court (Figure 21). Tenants would walk through the court to their particular corner and go up by elevator to their floors. Because there were so many elevators, there was little need for public hallways on each floor: where there were two apartments to be reached from the elevator, a small foyer would give access to both, and in many cases at the Dakota, the elevator stopped on a floor giving onto only one apartment. In that case, the elevator might open directly into the private foyer, with no public hall at all. This solution of an elevator in each corner was the ideal circulation system for a courtyard building, which, because of its shape, had no central point at which to cluster circulation.

There were some courtyard buildings, however, that chose one corner as the vertical circulation "center", and from that core tenants had to walk through public corridors around half the courtyard to reach their own doors. Such lengthy public corridors were condemned strongly by contemporary critics.²¹ While the courtyard building had advantages for light and air, it is easy to see how difficult vertical circulation could become in such a plan unless a large budget made several stairs and elevators possible.

In modest French Flat buildings, elevators became common by the later 1890s when electric power was supplied under the streets of New York.²² The Dakota and other grand

buildings of the 1880s had had to supply their own steam or electricity to run the elevators, and that made for expensive construction.

One effect of the elevator was to make for a more homogeneous tenancy in apartment buildings.²³ When walking up stairs was the rule, the highest floors might be reserved for servants, the next highest to poorer tenants who would be willing to pay less rent in exchange for walking up more steps, and the lowest floors were always the most expensive. When the elevator was introduced, suddenly landlords could raise the rents on the upper floors, more than compensating them for the expense of installing an elevator. Moreover, apartment buildings were more desirable when tenants felt that all their fellow residents were of the same income bracket as they were--a point taken up in Chapter VI. By 1898, with easily available electric power, the earlier small walk-up type of French Flat was replaced in new construction by at least a double-lot sized flat building of typically seven stories, made profitable to developers through the appeal of elevators.

In contrast to the circulation through small utilitarian lobbies in single lot buildings, the public lobbies in large apartment buildings were often fairly grand spaces. They had to allow room for many tenants to reach the stairs and elevators, and for door attendants to receive and direct guests, and perhaps to accept deliveries or the mail. Many larger buildings had waiting rooms for guests and many also

had restaurant-like dining rooms for tenants and for the public on the ground floor. Grandeur in public lobbies was a feature that hotels had found attractive, and was a point of pride in some apartment buildings, as we shall see in Chapter VI.

While most middle class apartment buildings used internal stairs and elevators for vertical circulation, there is one interesting example of external stairs and balconies for public access in a Brooklyn firm's proposal for a middle class building. In 1876, the Brooklyn architectural firm of Parfitt Bros. designed "A New System of Apartment Houses" (Figure 38), borrowing from a tenement tradition the idea of external vertical circulation.²⁴ Both the front, principal stairs, and the service stairs were outside the building wall, inside a stair tower that was open to the air.

As we have seen in Chapter I, some reform tenements such as A. T. White's Riverside Buildings used stairs on the outside of the building for access to each floor, using an idea from English reform housing. From this external stair, tenants would move across a balcony or external gallery to their own front doors. This had the advantage of making public halls and stairs both well lighted and self-cleaning. Balcony access allowed individual front doors from the outside to every family which was felt to be more healthful, because stale air and germs were not trapped in an unventilated corridor. It also gave separate

access to each family, enhancing their sense of having an individual home, as well as keeping down somewhat the contact among families, felt to be hazardous. Not just germs but also ideas could be spread if tenement tenants had too close contact with each other.²⁵

In the Parfitt's projected middle class apartment design, two family units on a floor shared a front stair and each unit had its own service stair, as well as a service lift shared by every two units which opened onto a balcony in the central light shaft. Each unit had exposures front and back and good through ventilation. An interior public corridor that normally cuts apart the front from the back of a building, as at the Ansonia, is never needed with an external circulation system.

Although balcony access had been recommended in the 1850s by Octavia Hill, the British housing reformer,²⁶ and had been used successfully by A. T. White in three Brooklyn buildings between 1879 and 1890, their use in tenements made balconies seem too closely associated with buildings for the poor and, therefore, undesirable from a middle class point of view. Gallery entrances, according to an 1879 article in the American Architect and Building News, were embarrassing because of their "publicity".²⁷ The same journal praised recent tenement proposals in 1880 for avoiding the balconies used by A. T. White, "which are pleasant in theory, but being in practice liable to be

hung with clothes and bedding, to say nothing of the promenading of tenants, are apt to give a frowzy look to the front, not inviting the better class of applicants for rooms."²⁸

For the Parfitt Brothers, then, to propose balcony access for middle class apartments was to take a serious risk of making their building socially unacceptable because of its association with working class housing. Balcony access does not seem to have been a feature of executed middle class apartments in the later 19th century, and only reappeared as a successful device in the years after World War II. Such buildings as Moshe Safdie's 1967 Habitat apartment building in Montreal make use of external corridors and stairs for public circulation, but by that time the "publicity" and social interchange among neighbors that takes place on these circulation paths was seen not as a problem, but as their great virtue.²⁹

Apartment Building Identity

When middle class tenants moved into apartments, they left behind, at least temporarily, their dreams of a private house. Since developers and architects wanted to satisfy their clients, they had to incorporate into apartment design some features to make their buildings look like a place to come home to, even if that home were not precisely what their clients would have desired. If the

private house provided New Yorkers with the image of home, designers were faced with serious problems in making large buildings fit that image. Smaller apartment houses might be more in scale with a private house idea, but even there the building was clearly no longer private. The following discussion considers some characteristics of the private house and speculates on how they could be transferred to apartment buildings to help tenants identify these new dwellings as home.

Private houses declared themselves separate from their neighbors and stood as a sign to the world of the individual family within. Even when in rows in an urban setting, the individual house was so detailed that it could be read as a unit distinct from its neighbors. Mid-century New York row houses had strong stoops and front doorways, and cornices cut short of the party walls, marking each separate building. Although in style the mid-century brownstones were criticized for being too uniform, they were still individual houses, and not detailed as a unified large building along the lines of an English terrace; the New York examples of A. J. Davis' House of Mansions of 1855, or Town & Davis' Collonade Row, of 1833, were notable as rare exceptions to this rule.

The tendency to individuate private houses through their architectural detailing expressed an individual family's separate ownership of the home, or, in many cases, a family's aspirations to individual ownership. Transferring

signs of individuation to an apartment building was full of difficulties. For small single-lot buildings such as Bruce Price's French Flat (Figure 18), the architect relied upon the house-like scale of the building to give tenants a feeling that these flats were homelike. The building sits comfortably with neighboring houses on 21st Street. It had some discreet brick and stone ornament around the windows and a cornice above the fourth floor, a story lower than its neighbors. Its roof began at the same height as its neighbors' cornices, and while the roof rose above adjoining houses, its mansard shape, gable end and dormer kept it within domestic imagery. In a French Flat building such as Price's where a full floor belonged to each individual family, identification of that family's quarters from the exterior was easy for every tenant.

Even the standard 25' wide tenement house tended to follow the model of private row-house facades with a side or center stoop, and a strong cornice cut short of the party walls on each side. Often these tenement buildings further emphasized their individual nature with a central decorative feature on the cornice carrying the name of the building, such as we have seen in the illustrations for Chapter I (Figures 7-10). Tenement designers and reformers, like the tenants and designers of middle class apartment buildings, came from the same middle class and held the same values. They believed that individuation was good for tenants and would give them a sense of self-worth. To

many writers, a large tenement block represented dangerous communal tendencies, but a house-sized building maintained the proper image of home.³⁰

Designers of larger apartment buildings could look to a distinctive style for the exteriors of their buildings as a way of substituting for the individuality of private houses. The 1870s and 80s favored various eclectic styles and broken surfaces that served as identifying markers in the case of apartment buildings. The Dakota, for example (Figure 20), is loosely based on northern Renaissance sources for its window forms, tall roofs and multitudes of dormers. Contrasting colors for the walls and decorative details give it a rather jumpy surface. The Navarro is also broken into eight towers with projecting bays and corner turrets (Figure 1). But while the overall exterior detailing lacks repose, it seems to me that it might have served another purpose. Tenants in such large buildings could point to the large block as their house standing out from others through its style. They they could further point to their own particular set of windows, towered corner, bay window or bit of decoration on the exterior and say "that's my part". The disjunctive exterior treatments of 70s and 80s buildings, I believe, allowed tenants to identify as their own individual parts of an uncomfortably large whole--an identification that a more peaceful and unified style would have defeated.

By the turn of the century, a general trend in American architecture towards a more unified Italian Renaissance or classicising style coincided with a tenant clientele already used to apartment living. When tenants had come to accept the idea of living in large apartment buildings with many other families, it seems to me that their need for individualising details to mark out their own part of a big building gradually faded into the background. A building like Israels & Harder's 78 Irving Place, published in 1901 (Figures 39, 40), with its smoother detailing and single color could satisfy tenants who had come to accept group living.³¹ By that time, the wild and disjunctive forms of Janes & Leo's Dorilton Apartments of 1902 were ridiculed as irrational trappings that had nothing to do with the structure and use of the building.³² While critics may have been justified in attacking the Dorilton's design, I believe that those very irrational trappings would have provided useful markers of individual dwelling place to an earlier generation of apartment dwellers and designers. And if some tenants felt comfortable by 1900 in apartments of a more homogeneous exterior style, others still chose buildings with elaborated peninsular plans and ornament, such as the Ansonia, and such designs continued to be built during the next decade.

Other house-like signs of individuation were hard to achieve in the design of larger apartment blocks. The

separate stoop and entrance that a single family house enjoyed was replaced by one main entrance for all tenants in most buildings. An elaborate frame for that entrance, often detailed as a two-story element, could give grandeur to the facade but could not be more than everybody's shared grandeur.³³ When it came to individual front doors, tenants generally had to accept an anonymous door along an interior public corridor, not particularly marked out from any other. Like a hotel corridor with undifferentiated doors to separate suites, apartments settled for an anonymous entrance experience to individual units rather than following the private house model. These bland front doors can be explained by the need for economy, but it may also have been the case that tenants, once inside a collective space, preferred to maintain neutrality in public areas, and would not have liked to assert family identity through an individuated front door in the public corridor.

Another device for giving apartment houses a special identity was to give them exotic names. Apparently Europeans were happy to identify their apartment houses by street address, as seen in Hittorff's illustrations in Chapter III. The much longer tradition of middle class apartment living in European cities made tenants comfortable with the large, undifferentiated building, and they did not feel the same need that Americans had to mark their homes out from the rest through a special name. Instead,

the British may provide the precedent for naming buildings, as we have seen in the name of The Albany, borrowed from a London building, and the trend to give London apartment houses names like Grosvenor Gardens or Albert Mansions.

The "Palermo" on East 57th, the "Evelyn" on West 78th, and the "Dundonald" on West 83rd Street are three examples of this trend in New York, all designed by the firm of Jardine, Kent and Jardine in 1882.³⁴ The "Navarro" took the idea of special names to its extreme by having a name for the entire complex, and then giving each of the eight sections of the building a further name. One lived at the "Navarro" and also in the "Barcelona" or the "Cordova"; each of the towers was thus further individuated from the whole building. When owner Edward Clark named his apartment building the "Dakota", reportedly because of its distance from the center of town, a rash of western-named buildings followed suit. In the nearby neighborhoods one could find the "Wyoming," the "Yosemite," the "Nevada" and the "Montana".³⁵

These names were sometimes ridiculed by contemporaries for being both pretentious and non-functional. Buildings that were clearly tenements had names like Pembroke, Warwick and Bayard, bestowed by developers who wanted to upgrade the building's image.³⁶ Even better quality French Flat buildings got stuck with names like Amy or Lulu. Howells, in the 1890 novel A Hazard of New Fortunes, made fun of apartment names when he sent the March family looking for

the superintendent of an apartment called the "Xenophon". The man could not be found and the Marches were told that he must be in the "Herodotus" or the "Thucydides" next door.³⁷

The original reason for giving a house a name can be found in English tradition, where the name identified a house in locations where there were no street numbers. In New York, of course, the streets did have numbers and every apartment building had a perfectly good address: the name was beside the point from a functional point of view. Furthermore, there were popular building names that recurred; if someone gave his address as the "Florence", one would not know which "Florence".³⁸

Given the situation of tenants learning to live in these new apartment buildings, however, the practice of naming eased the way. It was more comfortable to come home to the "Evelyn" than to a mere street number; the name gave the building a little more personality, a little more to identify as home, and remains an identifying device for high priced apartment towers today.³⁹

Building-wide planning issues in New York's first apartment houses led designers to some typical resolutions. At first the New York tradition of building on long narrow lots affected the design of buildings such as Hunt's Stuyvesant, conceived as four narrow house-sized units, but later designers began to imagine larger envelopes and plans not influenced by the narrow lot tradition.

The shape of the building wall to admit light and air took on typical forms in small lot buildings of a wide front with narrow rear to create a side light court. Larger buildings made use of H and U plans with peninsulas extending the basic plan out into space. Quadrangular plans with an interior courtyard did not become popular until after the turn of the century. Facades were brought out to the street edge and tended to reinforce a street wall, even where indentations in the H or U plan were turned towards the street.

Vertical circulation in early buildings was limited to stairs; where the tenants were expected to have servants, service stairs and dumbwaiters gave additional vertical circulation. In some cases all vertical circulation was grouped together, but increasingly designers preferred to remove service circulation from the main stair. Elevator buildings followed suit in grouping central stairs and elevators for tenants use, and separating the service circulation where possible. Horizontal circulation required internal public corridors, and while designers tried to limit the length of such hallways, they were not always successful, given the demands of access to larger numbers of units per floor. Finally, apartment designers established their building's identity through the use of characteristic styles of the era which had the additional potential of breaking up the surface and allowing tenants to identify their part as home. This process of identification was

aided by the use of names for individual buildings and even sometimes for each tower in an apartment complex. Through these devices, designers began to establish standard forms for the apartment house as a whole.

FOOTNOTES

¹The Albany was published in American Architect and Building News 1 (Dec. 23, 1876). Rental units were advertised in the New York Times (April 30, 1879): 11-12.

²Babcock filed plans for the Albany's site originally as "New Buildings Docket" 1874, Plan #99, for 10 third class "French Flat" buildings estimated at \$35,000. each with a store on the ground floor.

³Blackmar, "Housing and Property Relations in New York City, 1785-1850" (Harvard University: Ph.D. Dissertation, 1980)pp. 260-261, describes, for example, restrictive covenants imposed by Trinity Church on developers of their land at St. John's Park to ensure quality houses.

⁴The Albany in London is described by Sydney Perks, Residential Flats of All Classes (London, P. T. Batsford, 1905)pp. 18-20; illus. p. 19.

⁵The Plumber and Sanitary Engineer, in announcing their 1878 competition for an improved tenement design, admitted the drawbacks for the 25' by 100' lot; "Urban Housing in New York--1", American Architect and Building News 3 (March 1878): 90-91, explains the drawbacks of the narrow lot tradition. Hubert et al., "New York Flats and French Flats", Architectural Record 2 (1902): 57, cite the need for land division reform in New York City.

⁶The New York City Buildings Department "New Buildings Dockets" were consulted to develop the real estate analysis in this chapter; Docket books are held at the New York City Municipal Archives.

⁷In the 1860s and 70s, buildings going up on the lower, more irregular, streets of the city may account for wider variation in lot sizes. Uptown lots which tended to more regularity were built up in the 1880s and 90s.

⁸New York City Department of Buildings, "New Buildings Docket", 1869, Plan #45, n.p.

⁹C. Israels, "New York Apartment Houses", Architectural Record 11 (1901): 480. "The Passing of the 25' by 100' lot in New York City", Architectural Record 11 (Oct. 1901): 712.

¹⁰Gerrit Forbes, Report of the New York City Board of Health (New York: 1834); F. Thoms, Tenant Houses: Their Ground Area, Cubic Feet of Air Space and Ventilation (Albany, N.Y.: 1867) compares death rate tables for London, England and New York in crowded districts. New York Department of Buildings, Report (New York: 1862) p. 13.

¹¹Catharine Beecher, A Treatise on Domestic Economy (New York: Schocken Books, 1977; reprint of 1841 ed.) pp. 219-220.

¹²Plans published for Hunt's Stuyvesant Apartments differ in their room names; Montgomery Schuyler, American Architecture and Other Writings, Jordy and Coe, eds. (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1961) p. 519, shows a parlor and library as the front rooms. Andrew Alpern, Apartments for the Affluent (New York: McGraw Hill, 1975) p. 12, shows a parlor and a chamber as the front rooms.

¹³James Richardson, "New Homes of New York, The Century [Scribner's] 8 (1874), plans on pp 65-66; text on pp. 71-72. This is a suggested plan for low budget buildings.

¹⁴Price's plan published in American Architect and Building News 3 (May 1878) following p. 156.

¹⁵William Dean Howells, A Hazard of New Fortunes (New York: New American Library, 1965) p. 52.

¹⁶The Chatsworth was published by Hesselgren, Apartments of the Metropolis (New York: Hesselgren, 1908) p. 7-8; also in Alpern, Apartments, pp. 36-37.

¹⁷Israels, "New York Apartment Houses", p. 488.

¹⁸The Ansonia by architects Graves and Duboy opened in 1902; plans published by Alpern, Apartments, pp. 30-31, and Flagg, "Planning of Apartments", Architectural Review 10 ([Aug.] 1903): 86.

¹⁹Report on Elevated Dwellings (New York: New York Evening Post Job Printing Office, 1883) pamphlet.

²⁰The Dakota published by Alpern, Apartments, pp 20-21. Stephen Birmingham, Life at the Dakota (New York: Random House, 1979) has detailed descriptions of the building.

- 21 E. T. Littell, "Club Chambers", American Architect and Building News 1 (1876): 60; William Tuthill, The City Residence (New York: Comstock, 1890) p. 40; T. J. van der Bent, Planning of Apartment Houses (New York: Brentano's, 1917) p. 248. For an example of extended hallways, see the Prasada Apartments, 50 Central Park West, architects Romeyn and Wynne, 1907, illustrated in Alpern, Apartments, pp. 46-47.
- 22 Herbert Croly, "The Contemporary New York Residence", Architectural Record (Dec. 1902): 707.
- 23 George Andrews, Twelve Letters on the Future of New York (New York: 1877) p. 11.
- 24 "A New System of Apartment Houses", American Architect and Building News 1 (Oct. 21, 1879)
- 25 Tenement Houses in Philadelphia (Philadelphia: 1895) p. 5.
- 26 Tarn, Five Per Cent Philanthropy (London: Cambridge University Press, 1973) pp. 100-102.
- 27 "Urban Housing, Part V", American Architect and Building News 4 (1879): 99.
- 28 American Architect and Building News 6 (April 1880): 138.
- 29 Moshe Safdie, For Everyone a Garden (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1974) pp. 72-73, illustration of pedestrian street-balconies. Such galleries appeared on many examples of English housing; e.g. James Stirling and Michael Wilford's Southgate, Runcorn New Town, since 1967. See David Mackay, Multiple Family Housing (New York: Architectural Book Publishing Co., 1977) pp 138-139.
- 30 American Architect and Building News (July 31, 1880): 53.
- 31 C. Israels, "New York Apartment Houses", pp. 507-508. "The designs ...of the better class are therefore stamped by a general similarity of treatment" with a two story stylobate, unified facade and strong cornice which gives them "more dignity than was the case in the restless fenestration so characteristic of the earlier work."
- 32 "Architectural Aberrations: The Dorilton", Architectural Record 12 (June 1902): 221-226.

³³Two story entrance porticoes were criticised for darkening the windows of the second story apartments that looked out through their elaborate mouldings.

³⁴Real Estate Record, History, 1898, lists all the apartment buildings they thought worth recording and allows an overview of naming New York buildings.

³⁵Stephen Birmingham, Dakota, p. 48.

³⁶Jno. Gilmore Speed, "Naming Apartment Houses", Harper's Weekly 38 (March 24, 1894): 283.

³⁷William Dean Howells, A Hazard of New Fortunes, p. 42.

³⁸One Florence was located at 18th Street and Fourth Avenue; another at the northwest corner of Fifth Avenue and 42nd Street.

³⁹Edward Deitch, "A Long Huddle, And 'I've got it!' Thus Do Buildings Get Their Names", New York Times (Nov. 15, 1981): section 8, pp. 1, 14.

CHAPTER V

INTERIORS IN THE MIDDLE CLASS APARTMENT

Introduction

Lot sizes and building layouts determined the overall shape of an apartment block, but the tenants' special concern was the individual unit, for there a home had to be created. The contents of that unit were a set of rooms that had to be related to each other along circulation paths in a way that could satisfy contemporary values. For the middle class family, values of privacy and the sanctity of homelife influenced plans for individual units. Gradually over the years from the late 1860s to about 1900, these values took concrete form in room types and room groupings, and at the same time evolved with changes in middle class desires for efficiency.

Not all apartment tenants wanted plans based on the values of a nuclear family, so plan variations developed for special clients like bachelors, a large tenant category in New York, and for families willing to trade some privacy and stability for more hotel-like services.

In this section, I will consider first the kinds of rooms that were used in middle class apartment plans. These rooms were ordered in different ways for private

family units, bachelor apartments and apartment-hotel units, according to the basic planning principles developed for middle class apartments. Finally, after tenants moved into constructed buildings, they adapted their apartments to fit their own requirements through specific room uses and furnishings. The final form of an apartment unit developed out of this complex set of middle class spatial requirements, designers' ideas and tenants adaptations in use.

Room Names

The names of rooms and the choices among possible rooms in any multiple dwelling unit indicated the class of building and the class of occupants.¹ Just as the names "apartment", "french flat", and "tenement" designated three classes within the multiple dwelling type, so too the names "parlor", "library" or "living room" could all be used to designate the room used by families of different classes for their common social activities and entertainment of guests. Current definitions in Webster's Dictionary still capture some of the differences of meaning important to late 19th century designers and tenants. A "living room" is a room in a residence used for the common social activities of the occupants; a "parlor" is a room in a private dwelling kept chiefly for the reception of visitors rather than for family use, and is usually better furnished than the other rooms in the dwelling; a "library" is a room

given over to literary and sometimes artistic materials.² Published plans of the later 19th century made use of these different room designations to distinguish between classes of potential tenants.

The principal room in tenement units was called a "living room", as seen, for example, in Alfred Tredway White's 1890 model tenement, the Riverside Buildings (Figure 14), discussed in Chapter II. An illustration of the living room there showed a woman cooking at the range.³ An activity such as cooking may seem out of place to modern observers who are used to living rooms as non-work spaces. But for tenements of the period, the living room was the place for cooking, eating, family socializing, washing the clothes, and anything else that needed to be done. Tenement living rooms even became on occasion sweat shops for families doing piece-work at home for the garment trades or preparing tobacco for cigar makers.⁴

For tenants aspiring to middle class status, a plan published in 1874 (Figure 32) for the "ground floor of a cheap flat" showed the combination of a "living room" and a "parlor" as the names of the two principal rooms.⁵ We can see this plan as representing a bridge between tenement and middle class room designations, keeping the living room as the common family/kitchen/work room, and they trying to rise above the tenement with a purely social parlor. The parlor, of course, was a certificate of gentility where guests would be saved from glimpsing the inner workings of the household.

In better middle class apartments a planner would choose the names "parlor" and "library" for the principal reception rooms, usually providing at least two such purely social spaces for receiving guests.⁶ Sometimes "parlor" and "music room" are the name of this pair. Middle class tenants expected work to be completely removed from social spaces like the parlor and allocated to the kitchen and other separate service rooms. When the social room is given the name "sitting room", it is usually in a hotel or bachelor flat and not in a family unit.

Sleeping rooms also have names associated with social rank. Tenement dwellers slept in bedrooms while the middle class usually slept in chambers. Even circulation spaces had socially determined names: tenement occupants moved through halls, servants used passages, but middle class tenants and their guests entered through a foyer or anteroom.

Bathrooms were usual in middle class apartment buildings from the first, and in tenements they were required by law after 1879.⁷ However, such facilities were distributed on different principles than we use today. Our toilet was named "water closet" for all classes of buildings. Tenement dwellers could typically find the water closet outside the family unit in the hall, and would have shared it with at least one other family. Middle class tenants had their water closet inside the unit, but one such fixture was considered adequate for even such large units as the 12 to 20 room apartments at the 1884 Dakota.⁸

Bathtubs for all classes at first took the form of movable washing containers--anything from a large basin to a full sized tub--filled with water from a separate source. Fixed bathtubs with their own water supply seem to have become common in the 1870s and were normally supplied in middle class apartment houses. Tenement buildings did not have regular bathing facilities at first; A. T. White's model tenements were especially progressive in that they included a basement room with fixed bathtubs and hot and cold water. Towards the end of the century bathtubs began to appear in speculatively built tenements as a kitchen fixture. The tub had migrated to inside the family unit, but did not have its own space; it was covered by a kitchen counter when not in use. For those without a bathtub, public baths were an alternative. As late as 1917, one writer stated that bathtubs were still a luxury and other ways of keeping clean should be found by tenants who had to economize on housing.⁹

Middle class tenants would have had their bathtubs, water closets and lavatory basins all in one room by the 1880s, but one also find sinks installed in bedrooms--a common replacement for the traditional ewer and basin supplied to sleeping rooms in the era before fixed plumbing. Our modern usage has kept to the combined water closet, tub and sink of the 1880 apartment, and eliminated the separated sinks and tubs of earlier usage.

Planning the One-Floor Family Unit

The several rooms that we have just considered had to be put together to make a middle class apartment unit, a planning job that proved difficult for designers. Rooms had to find their places within the building envelope where space was always restricted by lot size, circulation requirements, and exposures. How rooms should be grouped and related to each other was a not easily answered question.

The first logical model for planning a domestic unit was the private house, the ideal for middle class tenants who wanted, but could not afford, a house of their own. Architects saw a useful planning logic in the way houses had their various functions grouped or zoned. In a typical New York single family row house of the 1850s and 60s, service rooms had their place in the basement, half below ground.¹⁰ Work was thus kept separate from the first floor where one or two parlors and a dining room provided a full-floor social zone for entertaining guests. On the second and third floors, family bedrooms had their own zone of quiet and privacy, always out of view of guests. Servants lived in the garret where sewing and other household work might also take place. It was evident to architects that such social and functional zoning should be retained for the single-floor plans of middle class apartments, but how could that be accomplished?

Because zoning problems arose when considering a one-floor arrangement for family dwellings, it should have been useful to look to other one-floor precedents. In New York, designers could learn from hotel design, but there too many domestic functions such as dining and receiving guests were carried on in public spaces. Besides, the people who took permanent living quarters in hotels were too fashionable or too irresponsible to give hotels a good domestic reputation. Hotels, therefore, failed as a model for one-floor private family units which had to be both self-contained and respectable. The other one-floor dwelling unit established in New York was the tenement unit, built by the thousands since the 1830s. But of course that was completely unacceptable for a middle class clientele, because it was for the poor whose culture and income marked them out as representing the opposite of decent family life. Second class flats over shops did not provide a satisfactory model either, perhaps because their budgets were always too low to afford the spatial zoning that middle class families desired.

A well established tradition of middle class apartment living in Paris offered models for American architects to study as we have seen in Chapter III, but there too characteristics of family life and social conduct made Parisian apartments less than perfect precedents. American commentators noted that French apartment plans seemed irrational: kitchens were located a long distance from

dining rooms, while bedrooms actually opened onto the parlor--the "indecent propinquity" that shocked Edith Wharton's characters.¹¹ The French understanding of privacy was markedly different from American ideas; where Americans thought of public and private zones as clear and distinct, the French conceived of a continuum from public to private space. Americans preserved their sense of privacy by insisting on independent corridor access to each room, while the French were content to use the rooms themselves as circulation spaces from one to the next. American designers did learn from French organization of entertainment spaces, however. The Parisian grouping of parlor, library, reception room and foyer en suite gave advantages for impressive entertaining that American designers found very suitable.

American designers developed planning strategies during the 1870s, 80s and 90s by using these sources as reference points to help define what was wanted in American apartments. Tenement plans could be useful as negative models: a good middle class apartment unit had to avoid anything reminiscent of tenements. Hotel suites had plans that were inadequate to contain all the diverse functions desired in a family unit, and so had to be expanded to encompass more domestic variety. Private houses gave architects a good model of domestic zoning according to public and private uses--"public" meaning reception rooms for guests, "private" for family only--and

service spaces. And French apartments realized the needs of family life in a one-floor space, but since they were not developed for American family life, they needed reorganization and improvement to satisfy New Yorkers.

From these various dwelling precedents, architects began to define their requirements for a one-floor family unit. Experiments with room groupings, functional zoning and various circulation patterns crystallized into an articulate series of requirements which can be defined as follows:

1) Public, reception rooms should be located to have a view of the street, should be grouped together en suite, and should be near the entrance to the unit.¹²

2) Private, sleeping rooms should have complete separation from public rooms, should be grouped together, should each have discrete access by corridor, and should have good fresh air.¹³

3) Service rooms should include the servant's room, the kitchen and the pantry as a proper grouping; servants should have separate circulation paths in this zone; and the kitchen should be both next to the dining room and well-ventilated.¹⁴

To designers at the turn of the century, these requirements were accepted as ideal, but they had not seemed like clear-cut rules in the first decades of apartment design. By the late 1860s, some principles were already in place, such as ventilating the kitchen, or giving

the parlor a street view. Other principles were not generally agreed upon: some planners preferred the dining room in the back, while others placed it near the front of the apartment. Experiment on the part of designers and experience on the part of tenants gradually led to a consensus that the principles listed above were in fact correct for middle class apartments. Yet by the turn of the century when agreement was reached, the apartment that incorporated all those principles was already priced beyond the reach of most of the apartment market.

In the next few pages I will examine apartment plans from 1869 to 1903, illustrating how designers thought about internal planning problems. For the placement of public rooms in the family apartment, Richard Morris Hunt's Stuyvesant Apartments on 18th St. (Figure 16) is a good early example.¹⁵ Visitors entered from the main stair hall into a private hall that gave onto the parlor, adjoining library and contiguous bedroom. Instead of grouping all the social rooms together as later practice would recommend, Hunt placed a bedroom adjacent to one of his public rooms; this was in keeping with French precedents and not surprising since Hunt was trained in France. The dining room, another reception space for entertaining guests, was located towards the middle of the floor, and was reached by a hall which continued back to the bedrooms. Hunt's design fulfilled the requirement for a parlor with a street view and near to the entrance, but failed to

satisfy another requirement for full separation between public and private space. Hunt's public room grouping only included the library and parlor, but later practitioners would agree that the dining room ought to be properly part of the public group.

A plan for a c. 1900 apartment house on 55th Street by G. A. Schellenger (Figure 41) shows the long-standing difficulty with meeting all the requirements for public rooms.¹⁶ This building has its dining room and parlor grouped together with good exposures to the outside air, either overlooking the street or facing the rear court--a compromise in location necessitated by the conflicting requirement of fitting four independent units on each floor. In order to get the best exposures for his reception rooms, Schellenger was forced to bring visitors down a corridor past the bedrooms from a front door located near the middle of the building and the public stairs. He thus violated two requirements--separation of guests from bedrooms, and location of public rooms immediate to the entrance--in order to satisfy two other principles of grouping public rooms and giving them the best views.

The private, bedroom zone of the household also went through an evolution and presented problems to designers. When Hunt, at the Stuyvesant, interspersed bedrooms with public rooms, he violated American beliefs that guests should never be able to glimpse such a private

space. Madame might receive guests in her Paris boudoir but Mrs. Knickerbocker would never consider it.

An idea for a one-floor middle class apartment plan, published by William Tuthill in his 1890 The City Residence (Figure 42), shows some of the conflict between grouping bedrooms, separating them from reception spaces, and getting adequate fresh air circulation.¹⁷ Tuthill's flat was on a narrow 25' by 100' lot, and thus had to make use of air shafts. While the bedrooms are grouped together, they are all ventilated on these air shafts. His plan also has not succeeded in separating bedrooms from reception rooms, since the dining room at the rear can only be reached by an internal corridor which passes all the bedrooms. In an alternative plan for the same lot (Figure 43), Tuthill showed bedrooms all grouped at the rear, two of which looked out into the better light and air of the yard; in this variant only one of the bedrooms has to make do with an air shaft.¹⁸ This placement also guaranteed the bedrooms complete separation from dining room, parlor and library, all grouped at the front. To achieve this success, however, Tuthill sacrificed some of the kitchen requirements, as we shall see.

The requirements of the service zone were complicated, since they included a work place--the kitchen and pantry--, a place for the servant, contiguity to the dining room and good ventilation. It is no surprise to find architects unable to fulfill all these needs all the time. Tuthill's

second apartment plan, mentioned above, shows how hard it was to plan the service core in a narrow 25' by 100' building. When public rooms were grouped facing the street and bedrooms grouped facing the rear, the center, always the darkest and least well ventilated, had to take the rest. Tuthill grouped the kitchen with the dining room and a little service pantry. The servant's room across the hall from the kitchen is not too far distant for convenience. However, the servant must use the same hall as the family, which violated preferred principles of discrete service circulation--a refinement that could only be achieved in larger and more expensive apartment buildings. Tuthill's main problem, as he admitted, was the poor ventilation of the kitchen, which looks out onto an air shaft.¹⁹ Kitchen odors traveled up and down those air shafts so that one's neighbors always knew the family menu.

A scheme for a two-apartment-per-floor, 50' wide apartment building by Tuthill (Figure 44) has a very successful service room grouping at the rear of the apartment.²⁰ Dining room, kitchen and servant's room cluster at the back, giving both dining room and kitchen a free flow of air and perhaps a view. But this advantage can only be achieved by pulling the dining room away from its rightful companions, the parlor and library. Trade-offs like this were common in most of the buildings of the 70s, 80s and 90s, and sometimes their resolution lay

in tenants accepting the fact that they could not have all they wanted.

But architects did try to devise plans to satisfy as many of these family requirements as possible, and given generous sites and budgets they could come close. A good example of a rather complete resolution is Israels & Harder's design for a seven story corner building at 78 Irving Place (Figure 40), published in 1901.²¹ With only one apartment per floor and a corner lot providing excellent light and air, Israels & Harder had fewer problems than many architects. Visitors entered the apartment from a stair and elevator landing, a choice of vertical circulation, into the front hall which widened towards the reception rooms into a little foyer. From this point, guests could enter the parlor and adjoining music room. From the parlor a wide opening led into the spacious dining room. These three front rooms, all with street views, gave tenants a suite of reception rooms appropriate for entertaining, akin to Parisian social spaces en suite.

Family members entering the apartment could turn away from the reception rooms and follow an angled hall to the bedrooms, which were grouped together, separated as much as possible at the opposite end of the apartment from the reception rooms. Each bedroom had its own door from a private hall, with good ventilation available to all from the street or end walls of the building.

Grouped in the center were the kitchen, pantry, bathroom and servant's room (not so labeled on the plan, but properly located for a servant); only the servant's bedroom is ventilated from a light court. The kitchen had windows onto the street and was linked to the dining room through a pantry, a favored arrangement which made serving meals more efficient. Of all the requirements for "good" family unit planning that we have laid out, only the principle of separate circulation for servants does not come into play at 78 Irving Place.

Complete service zone separation was expensive, and only tenants who could afford more than one servant could afford the extra space required. Architects Horgan & Slattery designed a 1902 apartment house at 667 Madison Avenue (Figure 45) that shows a well integrated service suite combined with all the other family zones seen at 78 Irving Place.²² The kitchen at the core opens on one side through a pantry into a small reception room so servants could answer the door without passing through family spaces. On the other side of the kitchen, a door leads to a service elevator and stairs, two servants' bedrooms and their own complete bathroom. For dining room service a second pantry is located just across the hall from the kitchen. The servants could do their work discreetly, rarely having to use the same paths of circulation that the family used.

These social, sleeping and service zones should be understood as ideals for designers. Only if budgets and sites were generous, could most or all of these principles be realized. But aiming at such ideals helped even lesser designers and lower budget buildings achieve some clarity and convenience in planning.

By about 1905, writers on apartment design could say "it goes without saying" that the proper way to lay out an apartment unit is with differentiated functional zones.²³ While this zoned system was not the clear intent of experiments in apartment design of the first decades, by the turn of the century it appeared to comprise the correct set of rules that allowed apartments to come close to the zoning of space previously available only in private houses.

Duplex Variations on Family Unit Planning

If one floor apartment plans posed certain problems in satisfying all the requirements for middle class family space, two floor apartments could accomplish spatial zoning more easily. Apartments on two floors, called duplexes by writers of the period, and even on three floors, called triplexes, offered a direct, if expensive solution.²⁴ Public and private life could be separated by placing bedrooms on a different level from reception rooms. Two levels also allowed two ceiling heights, so designers could recapture

the higher ceilings of private house parlor floors and the lower ceilings of house bedrooms.

Duplex designs emerged early in the development of American apartments. Calvert Vaux suggested in 1857 an apartment whose bedrooms were dropped a few steps below the level of the reception rooms for privacy.²⁵ A full-blown if clumsy duplex "cooperative residence" was Henry Hudson Holly's Family Hotel (Figures 46-48), published in 1874.²⁶ There each family unit occupied two interior levels, the parlor reaching up to full double height and the remaining rooms stacked behind it. Behind the tall parlor, low ceilinged rooms on the parlor floor level included a dining room and butler's pantry where hotel-prepared meals would be privately served, the nursery, bathroom and bedrooms. On the second level were further bedrooms. The exterior elevation, however, conceals this sandwich of interior spaces.

Another duplex type where each apartment was "like a two-story house" was Charles W. Clinton's 1882 Knickerbocker at 28th St. and Fifth Avenue.²⁷ The house image was emphasized by designing the whole building with alternating high-ceilinged and low-ceilinged floors--high for parlor, library, dining, kitchen and pantry; low for bedrooms. Space-consuming private staircases connected upper and lower levels.

A staggered duplex design gave some of the Navarro apartment units front rooms with 15' ceilings and rear

rooms with 10' ceilings.²⁸ The street facade of the building thus had two floors for every three floors facing the court. A diagrammatic section for this type in Tuthill's City Residence (Figure 49) shows how the resulting bedroom spaces would be either dropped or raised a few steps from the reception rooms.²⁹ Tuthill cautioned designers that such a scheme was only wise on an interior lot, since the staggered window patterns on the exterior could not be handled aesthetically. Navarro architects Hubert, Pirsson & Hoddick solved that problem by having their shorter floors face onto a private court.

Duplex schemes such as these were experiments to preserve both the room proportions and the zoning found in middle class private houses. Architects tried variants from the double height parlor with two floors of single height rooms, to whole buildings of alternating high and low floors, to staggered split-level plans. But these solutions obviously took up more space than a one floor family apartment and were only suitable for upper income tenants. Architect Charles Israels stated in 1901 that duplexes were "an interesting experiment" but not a successful one, because they "neutralized one of the principal advantages claimed by the apartment dweller, namely economy in house-keeping arrangement and service due to dwelling entirely upon one level."³⁰ The great majority of designers and tenants apparently agreed, and relatively few middle class duplexes were actually constructed.³¹

Alternatives to the Family Apartment

Both one floor and duplex apartment plans offered solutions to the problem of zoning family space for public and private lives. But not all middle class tenants wanted that close and private family life so often held up as the ideal. Bachelors and families less oriented to privacy and stability constituted two groups looking for other kinds of apartments. The needs of both groups suggested relocating services and entertainment spaces outside the family unit and redefining somewhat the spaces and functions that a residence should contain.

Bachelor flats gained attention in the 1870s as a particular kind of apartment building problem. Single men in New York seemed to have a serious problem in finding suitable housing, according to several articles that dealt with the question.³² Hotels were available to bachelors but only the wealthy could afford them; boarding houses were an awful alternative for those who valued privacy; lodging houses with meals taken in restaurants were often used in Europe, but writers claimed that American ones were too depressing.

What bachelors needed was a building with many small suites of rooms scaled to the needs of a single person, consisting of a parlor, a bedroom, a bath and closets. Some suites could be made to interconnect so two friends

could share quarters if desired. Kitchens were typically not part of bachelor flat designs, since bachelors usually took their meals in clubs and restaurants, or with friends. Some suggested that a bachelor flat building be run like a club, with membership fees and dues, where the bachelor could find good food as well as privacy.³³

Bachelor flat design can be represented by The Century (Figure 50), located at 119 West 45th St.³⁴ The Century bears remarkable similarities to the standard dumbbell tenement plan, because it occupies a 25' by 100' lot and fits four units on each floor. Like the dumbbell tenement, stairs and plumbing are fitted into the center along with light wells. Unlike the tenement plan, The Century's units are intended for single people, not whole families.

Each unit has two rooms, a parlor and a bedroom, measuring about 12' by 15' and 10' by 12'. Each unit also has a full bathroom and closets. Two front units overlook the street; the two rear ones have a view of the yard. The individual unit plan is quite like a tenement in the size of rooms, although bachelors had their bathrooms within the unit rather than shared in the public hall.

Planning problems in designing a bachelor unit are reduced to the minimum. Since only one person lives there, privacy and separate circulation are not an issue. The

bachelor walked directly into his parlor from the front door, and from there directly into his bedroom, and thence to his bathroom. No separate circulation meant a savings of space. At the same time the numbers and kinds of rooms were reduced so issues of room relations also disappeared.

Non-housekeeping units such as these at The Century fell between legal jurisdictions: the law governing apartments defined an apartment as "a home...for three or more families, living independently of each other, and in which every such family or household shall have provided for it a kitchen..." A hotel, on the other hand, is a building that must have "a general public dining room or cafe or both."³⁵ The bachelor flat, because it was a home without a kitchen, did not qualify as a proper apartment, but finally the Buildings Department ruled c. 1900 that bachelor flats could be excused from the kitchen requirement and still be called apartments. This ruling recognized that non-housekeeping tenants still wanted a permanent home, and should not be stigmatized by the associations that lodging house or hotel designations might imply.

Another group looking for apartment designs different from the nuclear family norm comprised families who were less settled. Harder to define, this group included travellers, "bohemians" (families without a more permanent home), and poorer families who couldn't afford all the rent and services

for full-scale housekeeping.³⁶ For tenants like these, the apartment-hotel became a distinct variant of the middle class apartment house.

As we have seen well-to-do families sometimes chose the luxury and freedom of permanent hotel residence in the mid-19th century. The decline in new hotel construction and upsurge in apartment building of the late 1870s and 80s reveals middle class clients gravitating from hotel life to the more stable and homelike apartment buildings.³⁷ In several cases in the 1870s and 80s, middle class multiple dwellings have names that include the word "hotel", but are apartment houses according to the buildings department. As apartments grew in popularity they became more and more clearly distinguished from hotels as the respectable place for family life.

However, the privacy of families in apartments involved all the burdens and expenses of housekeeping and servants which hotel life obviated. Tenants apparently still wanted those services, but also wanted to avoid associations of irresponsibility that hotel living had ascribed to them. The answer was a newly clarified combination called the apartment-hotel.

Two articles of 1903 served to define this new type and distinguish it from the family apartment building. The Architectural Record described the many apartment-hotels going up in New York as a newly popular type, and one which

was often located near the center of the city and its amusements.³⁸ The British magazine, Cassier's, described one example, Graves & Duboy's Ansonia Apartment Hotel (Figure 35) on Broadway and 74th St.³⁹ These articles defined the apartment-hotel as a building that offered the choice of more privacy than hotels did in the way of meals and entertainment of guests, but provided all the services of hotels in cleaning and upkeep so tenants did not need their own servants.

The Ansonia, opened in 1904, is a good example of the apartment-hotel's flexibility.⁴⁰ Planned for 1200 to 1400 tenants, the building had 340 suites of rooms, but only 120 of them had kitchens. The other suites were of varying sizes from "bachelor" size with only a parlor, chamber and bathroom, to units with four or five rooms but still lacking kitchens, dining rooms or servants rooms. Some suites even had an optional extra room which could be rented and opened for direct access from one's other rooms; or could become a completely separate one-room apartment with access from the public hall.

This apartment-hotel also provided great numbers of conveniences for its tenants: the basement had a fully staffed laundry, automobile garage and turkish bath; the lobby had a bank, bookstall, cigar shop, telegraph office, doctor and dentist. The building had a staff of cooks and and a dining room, but would also serve meals in the private

suites. Apartment-hotels like the Ansonia attracted hundreds of families who found the hotel services more economical than keeping their own servants and full household's worth of rooms.

Bachelor flats and apartment-hotels represent two variants from the middle class nuclear family plan. In these cases the tenants respected middle class values, but had different spatial needs. In bachelor flats, planning problems were greatly simplified because each flat had only a single occupant who lived his social life largely outside the unit. No separate internal circulation, and radically reduced assortment of rooms meant that a bachelor's privacy could be assured with no planning worries. Planning family units in the apartment-hotel was based on the same principles of room distribution and privacy as we have seen in typical middle class apartment houses, but the service, cooking and dining rooms could be omitted. These service and entertainment functions would be taken care of by the building management and the building-wide plan, rather than in individual units.

Room Uses and Decoration

While architects struggled to achieve functional zoning in middle class units, they were of necessity working for anonymous clients and idealized family forms. The arrangement of interior space for actual use depended

upon specific tenants' needs and economic ability. Tenants who respected the ideal standards represented in spatial zoning still could only live in rental spaces they could afford, and real life economies often compromised planning abstractions.

The ways that rooms were used is difficult to discover from plans. Historian David Handlin suggested that two ideas were at work in planning the rooms of later 19th century houses.⁴¹ People wanted rooms with specific identities. "Just as the division of labor separated the contemporary economy from its predecessor, so the identification and parcelling out of specific household functions distinguished the modern from the primitive home."⁴² This primitive home is the equivalent of James Marston Fitch's term "pre-industrial" for houses with generalized and similar spaces for all rooms.⁴³ Later 19th century house plans with clear-cut room designations and different room shapes and equipment satisfied the desire for specificity. At the same time, Handlin believes that builders' guides of the later 19th century promoted room plans that were larger than their designated function and furniture required.⁴⁴ Such rooms were ready to accept additional unpredicted functions in their extra space.

While a modern 19th century family would find specificity in room use a mark of cultural progress, the fact is that in small dwelling spaces specificity couldn't

fit. Highly specific circulation spaces for example, such as separate paths for servants and for family, were too expensive; spatial luxury was a mark of conspicuous consumption reserved for wealthy house owners or apartment tenants. Smaller middle class apartments required kinds of economy in spatial expenditure, kinds of overlapping in use of spaces, that were more in keeping with Handlin's second notion of the room with extra uses. Indeed it is in apartments that multi-use rooms first became a widespread middle class necessity, and later a modern 'innovation'. The family-room, the all-purpose room, the eat-in kitchen, the living-dining room--these combined function rooms that were specifically designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, for example, in his Usonian houses, or in suburban houses of the post-World War II era, reach back to the ad hoc sharing of functions in apartments.

Of course, even before apartments, people with cramped domestic quarters and large families had to make adaptations in room use. A well-known example is Catharine Beecher's 1841 design for a house whose parlor turns into a bedroom. Upon opening imitation "parlor doors" one finds not another parlor, but a bed in a closet.⁴⁵ In the same spirit of spatial economy, a reader of the 1884 Appleton's Home Books would find that "in a small house,...bedrooms are more than places to sleep in; they are dressing-rooms, private sitting-rooms, sewing rooms, and nurseries."⁴⁶ In

a small house it was impossible to buy the space needed to give each function in this list its own specific room. But the home builder could accomplish a room with all these functions, if that room were designed with only one door. Appleton's stressed the importance of making each room in a house accessible from a passage, without passing through any other rooms.⁴⁷ Isolating a room from others guaranteed its privacy and uninterrupted quiet, which in turn allowed other potential uses.

The least expensive apartments, those called model tenements, had the greatest need for shared room uses. The "living room" was indeed an all-purpose family space in which cooking and eating, leisure and work activities, and even sleeping boarders or extra family members took place. Designs for model tenements usually show all the other rooms marked "bedroom" except for that living room; who can tell what other activities took place in those bedrooms? We do know that many of the activities that higher income tenants would have incorporated into the dwelling unit, the poor carried on in public shared spaces. Public reading rooms, bath-tub rooms, courtyard and rooftop laundry and recreation spaces compensated in a small way for the more generous spatial allocations of middle class apartments.

Middle class expectations for the use of space in apartments sometimes clashed with the actual rooms provided, as we can see from an 1890 Harpers Weekly article.⁴⁸ The

writer, Mrs. Herrick, her husband, one baby, a nurse and a cook came to live in New York. The apartment they rented had a parlor, a sitting-room or library, two bedrooms, a dining room, a small kitchen and a maid's room.

Then the Herricks moved in: the sitting room was given to the baby and its nurse for sleeping and nursery functions; one of the bedrooms which they had planned to use for guests had to be given to the cook because the maid's room, adjoining the kitchen, had to become a kitchen storage room since the kitchen was so small! The parlor, meanwhile, had to serve as 'best' room and at the same time a family room; it was impossible to keep a tidy parlor for entertaining as Mrs. Herrick had expected to do when that room was constantly in use. The family stayed in their apartment for 18 months, bearing in mind "that amusing account of a flat where every piece of furniture was something else than it pretended to be."⁴⁹ But they longed to go upstairs to bed and downstairs to breakfast, so they finally moved back into a house where furniture did not have to do double-duty and rooms were what they seemed.

Another example of how tenants changed room uses is recorded in a 1902 House Beautiful article.⁵⁰ Two young women shared a four room apartment with a kitchen, a dining room, a sitting room and a bedroom. Their kitchen did double duty as a dining room; their dining room, because it had two large windows, became a painting studio for one

of them; their sitting room was furnished with a cot so it could also become the guest bedroom; and the two women shared the remaining bedroom.

Even the fashionable interior decorator Elsie deWolfe Mendl recognized the problem less prosperous tenants had in small apartments. "The living room is the nucleus of the modern apartment," she wrote in 1913. Sometimes it is a studio, living room and dining room in one. Sometimes living room, library and guest room."⁵¹ She found apartments with a dining room entirely separated from the living room to be very unusual. By this time it was clear that the early goal of completely separated and zoned functions in apartments was simply too expensive to accomplish except for the rich.

An interesting progression can be traced in room uses from the houses of the early 19th century with their undifferentiated volumes, to rooms differentiated for specific purposes with specialized equipment on the model of factory specialization of function, back to apartment rooms whose function had again to be flexible to accommodate several uses in one space. I have not found that apartment designers kept this flexibility in mind, but tenants had to. Apartments designed for 'average' tenants had to suit, in reality, tenants with very specific needs. The average tenants found themselves to be architects after the fact, designing their rooms to fit the uses they themselves needed.

Interior decoration also affected the identity and usefulness of apartments to tenants. Decoration in public spaces could be used to indicate the class of tenants that developers wanted, while the decor of individual units involved more fundamental questions of use for the occupants.

Apartment buildings frequently had elaborate decorative schemes in the entrance, lobby and main staircase--enough to knock out a first-time visitor with impressions of luxury. Based on the precedent of hotels with their elaborately decorated public spaces, apartment decorations could entice not-yet-well-to-do tenants with promises of luxury. The 1911 New York American Renting Guide defined the social level of apartments in its listings by, among other features, the decor of the lobby.⁵² In a "high class apartment house" the lobby would be richly decorated in marbles, mosaics, stained glass, rugs and tapestries, handsome chairs and even palm trees. However, many writers condemned this gloss of luxury applied to apartment lobbies. Architects Hubert, Pirsson & Hoddick wrote in favor of simple, functional entrances, lobbies and hallways.⁵³ They felt that money was very badly spent on elements of useless show, and should go into solid construction instead of fancy draperies.

Probably those who supported luxurious decor in apartment public spaces were thinking of the hotel model for what apartments ought to be; perhaps those who argued for simplicity aimed to arrive at a new and appropriate form for apartment buildings, distinct from hotels, and

closer to a model of grouped houses along a sidewalk. When lobbies and halls were decorated and showy, the tenant was inside a parlor-like interior environment immediately upon entering the building, even though still in public space. The more austere lobby and hall type may be interpreted as postponing an interior experience until the tenant reached his own front door and clearly private space.

Interior decoration of apartments always varied according to income, but there was a general trend toward simplifying the decor away from the elaborate taste of Victorian houses. Although the wealthy may have preferred richer fabrics and colors in their homes, simpler country houses of the 1840s offered a taste for plain walls and light colors that apartments at the lower income range continued to use. In 1841 Catharine Beecher had recommended that "light and sober" colors of paint should be used for interior walls--gray, stone color, light lemon or pale olive were her recommendations.⁵⁴ Beecher felt that white walls should be avoided because they looked bare and cold. But, in his Brooklyn model tenements of 1879-1890, A. T. White had all the walls painted white to make the rooms seem light and clean.⁵⁵ By 1900 the color white was widely recommended to middle class home decorators because it represented a new sanitary awareness.⁵⁶ White paint in the living room and dining room, white tile in the kitchen and bathroom, showed that tenants were aware of the need for

wholesome surroundings. Clean white walls gave immediate evidence of the housekeeper's attention to cleanliness. Even where cleanliness could be taken for granted, "neutral" colors were recommended to give the necessarily small rooms of apartments a sense of repose, a quality highly valued in decorators' advice from the 1890s through the teens.⁵⁷

Wealthier tenants in large apartment buildings had the bigger spaces and budgets to afford interior decor more like private houses of the rich. Often apartment buildings would be offered for rent and leases signed before construction was completed. Tenants could then specify their preferences in wall treatments, cabinet work and even room location, which the builder would satisfy. Busy decorators in the 1890s combed Europe for suitable decorative paneling, rugs and furniture for this high income clientele.⁵⁸ Yet even high quality decorations using rich color and heavy fabrics were seen to have their flaws. The wealthier the house, said Sarah Gilman Young, the more likely it was to harbor germs.⁵⁹ Rich upholstery was hard to keep clean, heavy draperies blocked the fresh air and sunshine from reaching rooms, and double beds--possessions of the rich--gave only used air to breathe. The simpler the decorations were, the more likely inhabitants would remain healthy.

It was generally agreed that furnishing an apartment, large or small, was cheaper than furnishing a house, because smaller rooms meant fewer pieces of furniture, and generally

smaller pieces as well.⁶⁰ The reduced cost of furnishing a home was frequently mentioned as one of the economic advantages of apartment living. Apartment furniture also could be double-duty furniture, just as apartment rooms served more than one function. Catharine Beecher has described space-saving devices such as a bed that folds up into a closet, a storage unit on wheels that could act as a movable wall, or a kitchen counter that could be removed to reveal storage bins or laundry tubs beneath.⁶¹ Similarly one could buy sewing machines that folded into their own tables and seemed to be ordinary tables when closed. It is this kind of dual purpose furniture that Christine Herrick referred to as furniture that never was what it seemed to be. Besides the need to conserve space, apartments also had to be comfortable as "home", and, as we have seen, there was an increasingly strong separation drawn between the home world and the paid work world as the 19th century drew to a close. Thus any furniture involved in work ought to be concealed so that home could be a place of repose.⁶² These two impulses--to save space and to conceal work-related equipment--met in the possibilities of furniture design.

Apartments had special needs for well-thought out storage spaces, for there were no cellars and attics to store unused possessions.⁶³ Built-in storage systems, such as Beecher had planned for her 1841 and 1869 kitchens and living rooms, were especially needed in small apartments, although not always provided. In here 1913 book on decorating,

Elsie deWolfe Mendl told her readers to have built-in furniture made when they moved into an apartment. It could not be expected to be supplied, but it was the only way to keep a small apartment in order and well worth the expense, even though tenants would have to leave it behind when they moved.⁶⁴

Through the teens, apartments got smaller and more space conscious, encouraging further inventiveness in furniture design. Compressed designs like a combination breakfast room and "buffet-kitchen" were illustrated in a 1917 pamphlet, in which a drop table, hinged to the wall, and a combination sink and laundry tub made two and three room apartments workable.⁶⁵ Bedrooms in such small apartments were eliminated entirely by the use of fold-up wall-beds. The bed, hinged and folded up into an archway between the living rooms and dressing room or into a large closet, folded down at night to transform the living room into a bedroom. The idea is the same as Beecher's proposed folding bed of 1841, only now mass produced and sold nation-wide. In combination with built-in furniture, tenants could also learn to group their regular furniture tightly, making the most of available space. Advice in a 1917 House Beautiful showed how furniture groupings not used in houses could make apartment rooms into satisfying multi-purpose spaces.⁶⁶ One could have bookcases (a library), a piano (a music room), and a couch (a parlor) in one room.

Kitchens were the last place to get the aesthetic attentions of a decorator, and apartment kitchens with their restricted spaces hardly had room for such touches as were recommended for houses. The kitchen as the place of "Bridget or Dinah" was not quite part of the house proper when it came to decorating, although some writers realized that better meals might come from the cook who had a chair and a window, a shelf of books and a few prints on the wall.⁶⁷ For apartment kitchens, however, improvements had to wait for more streamlined 20th century equipment to create visual harmony, although, as mentioned above, kitchens were early sites of rational built-in storage and double use furniture.

Although there is not nearly as much attention paid in the apartment literature to furnishing as there is to planning, furniture was obviously important in making small apartment rooms comfortable. Built-in furniture, closets and specialized storage units for kitchen needs advanced the idea of streamlined and simplified household interiors, an idea fundamental to modernist design of the teens and 20s. Plain painted interiors replaced paneling and wainscoting for all classes to the point that a 1980 apartment could be expected to have all white plain interior walls and built-in storage, just like a model tenement of 1880.

FOOTNOTES

¹Jno. Gilmore Speed, "Naming Apartment Houses", Harper's Weekly 38 (March 24, 1894): 283; see note 1, Chapter II.

²Webster's Third New International Dictionary, 1963, s.v. "living room", "parlor", "library".

³Alfred Tredway White, Sunlighted Tenements (New York: National Housing Association, 1912), illustration p. 13.

⁴Anthony Jackson, A Place Called Home (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1976) pp. 88-89. Cf. Kouwenhoven, Columbia Historical Portrait of New York (New York: Doubleday, 1953), illustration p. 460 shows a tenement family doing piecework in their living room; illustration p. 384 shows a tenement being used as a factory.

⁵Richardson, "New Homes of New York", The Century [Scribner's] 8 (1874): 65.

⁶W. Tuthill, The City Residence (New York: Comstock, 1890) shows several middle class plans, so labelled, for 25' and 50' wide lots. See also Hesselgren, Apartments of the Metropolis (New York: Hesselgren, 1908) for plans labelled with middle class room names.

⁷James Ford, Slums and Housing (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1936) v. 2, p. 868. Privies were usual for all classes in Manhattan until Croton Water was brought into the city in 1842. May Stone, "Plumbing Paradox", Winterthur Portfolio 14 (Autumn 1979): 283-304, gives a survey of plumbing from both a technological and an ideological point of view. The 1870 Agriculturist for the Farm, Garden and Household, eds. Stephen J. Rakeman and Donald Berg (Rockville Centre, N.Y.: Antiquity Reprint, 1980) pp. 38-9, 51, 68, 77 illustrates plans for rural house bathrooms in 1870.

⁸S. Birmingham, Life at the Dakota (New York: Random House, 1979) p. 37.

⁹T. J. van der Bent, Planning of Apartment Houses (New York: Brentano's, 1917) p. 299.

¹⁰Charles Lockwood, Bricks and Brownstone (New York: McGraw Hill, 1972) pp. 16, 68, 158, 160, 166 illustrates typical row house plans.

¹¹Ernest Flagg, "Planning of Apartment Houses and Tenements", Architectural Review 10 ([Aug.] 1903): 85-90.

¹²Recommendations for the grouping of public rooms can be found, for example, in E. Littell, "Club Chambers and Apartment Houses", American Architect and Building News 1 (1876): 60; T. J. van der Bent, Planning of Apartment Houses, p. 291; C. Israels, "New York Apartment Houses", Architectural Record 11 (July 1901): 496-497.

¹³Recommendations for private room grouping can be found in T. van der Bent, Planning, p. 291; Tuthill, City Residence, pp. 21-22; Prospectus of the Fifth Avenue Plaza Apartments (New York: 1883) pp. 10-11.

¹⁴Recommendations for service room groupings can be found in Prospectus of the Fifth Avenue Plaza Apartments, p. 11; Israels, "New York Apartment Houses", pp 496-497.

¹⁵See note 12, Chapter IV. Some plans for Hunt's Stuyvesant show a parlor and a library as the front rooms while others show a parlor and a chamber.

¹⁶Published in C. Israels, "New York Apartment Houses".

¹⁷Tuthill, The City Residence, p. 38.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 39.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 41.

²⁰Ibid., p. 44.

²¹Israels, "New York Apartment Houses", pp. 495, 507-508. This building was mentioned above in Chapter IV as an example of unified exterior style.

²²Plans published in Alpern, Apartments for the Affluent (New York: McGraw Hill, 1975) p. 32.

²³Said, for example by Myron Hunt, "Suburban Apartments", Architectural Review 11 (1903): 101.

²⁴Hesselgren, Apartments of the Metropolis (New York: C. G. Hesselgren, 1908) p. 5, says that duplex apartments are a New York invention. E. H. Janes, "The Development of Duplex Apartments", Brickbuilder 21 (1912): 159-61, 183-86, 203-206. Triplexes were planned for the building described in Prospectus for the Fifth Avenue Plaza Apartments, p. 10.

²⁵Vaux's project "Parisian Buildings" published in Harper's Weekly 1 (Dec. 19, 1857): 809-810.

²⁶Richardson, "New Homes of New York", The Century 8 (1874): 75; illus. pp. 64, 72, 74.

²⁷E. Flagg, "Planning of Apartments and Tenements", p. 90. Duplex units were sometimes included in second class row-house-sized dwellings, e.g. "New Buildings Docket" 1869, Plan #2 had a duplex unit on the ground and second floors with two single family units on the third and fourth.

²⁸Janes, "Development of Duplex", pp. 203-206.

²⁹Tuthill, City Residence, pp. 44-45. In another proposal Hubert, Pirsson & Hoddick planned a mammoth 13 story duplex building for a full block of Madison Ave. to Fourth Ave., 26th to 27th Streets, in 1890. See Handlin, American Home, p. 226, fig. 82 and Hubert et al., Architectural Record (1892): 61.

³⁰Israels, "New York Apartment Houses", p. 498. By 1917, T. van der Bent said that placing bedrooms on a level above living rooms gave only a "sentimental advantage"; Planning, p. 248.

³¹Some examples of duplex apartments for well-to-do families are illustrated in Alpern, Apartments, pp. 44-45, 68-69, 72-73, and 90-91, all built after the turn of the century.

³²E. T. Littell, "Club Chambers and Apartment Houses", p. 59; Israels, "New York Apartment Houses", p. 481. pp. 506-507; American Architect and Building News (1879): 98-99 published plans for a bachelor flat building including kitchens in the units, and bathrooms arranged "as on a yacht". In Edith Wharton's House of Mirth (1905) bachelor flats are represented as places unfit for young ladies to visit.

³³Littell, "Club Chambers", p. 59.

- ³⁴Israels, "New York Apartment Houses", p. 507.
- ³⁵*Ibid.*, p. 481, citing the 1899 Building Code for New York City, Section 9.
- ³⁶"Apartment Hotels in New York City", Architectural Record 13 (Jan. 1903): 85-91.
- ³⁷New York City Buildings Department "New Buildings Docket" records very few new hotels between 1875 and 1883.
- ³⁸"Apartment Hotels in New York City", p. 85.
- ³⁹Reginald Bolton, "The Apartment Hotel in New York", Cassier's 25 (Nov. 1903): 27-32.
- ⁴⁰Plans for the Ansonia published in Alpern, Apartments, p. 30; Bolton, "Apartment Hotel", p. 29.
- ⁴¹David Handlin, American Home (Boston: Little, Brown, 1979) p. 352.
- ⁴²*Ibid.*
- ⁴³James M. Fitch, American Building: The Historical Forces that Shaped It (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1966) 2nd ed., 2 vols., v. 1, pp. 118, 120.
- ⁴⁴Handlin, American Home, pp. 343-345.
- ⁴⁵Catharine Beecher, A Treatise on Domestic Economy, (New York: Schocken Books, 1977) pp. 276-277, figs. 11, 12.
- ⁴⁶Appleton's Home Books (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1884) v. 1, p. 40.
- ⁴⁷*Ibid.*, p. 20.
- ⁴⁸Christine Herrick, "Their Experience in a Flat", Harper's Weekly 34 (Jan. 11, 1890): 30-31.
- ⁴⁹*Ibid.*, p. 31.
- ⁵⁰Ella Louise Taylor, "Rose and Elizabeth in a Flat", House Beautiful 11 (Feb. 1902): 163-165.
- ⁵¹Elsie deWolfe [Mendl], The House in Good Taste (New York: The Century Co., 1913) p. 244.
- ⁵²New York American Renting Guide (New York: 1911) n.p.
- ⁵³Hubert et al., The Central Park Apartments (New York: 1881) n.p.

⁵⁴Beecher, Treatise, p. 338.

⁵⁵A. T. White, Sunlighted Tenements (New York: National Housing Assoc. Publication No. 12, 1912).

⁵⁶G. Wright, Moralism and the Model Home (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980) p. 120.

⁵⁷Helen Campbell, "Household Furnishings", Architectural Record 6 (Oct.-Dec. 1896): 97-104, p. 102. Elsie deWolfe Mendl, House in Good Taste, p. 241. Cf. Elizabeth Cohen, "Embellishing a Life of Labor: An Interpretation of the Material Culture of American Working Class Homes, 1885-1915", Journal of American Culture 3 (Winter 1980): 752-775.

⁵⁸See Croly. "The Contemporary New York Residence", Architectural Record 12 (Dec. 1902): 720, for decoration in private houses.

⁵⁹Sarah Gilman Young, European Modes of Living or the Question of Apartment Houses (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1881) p. 27.

⁶⁰Campbell, "Household Furnishings", pp 99-100. Edward S. Holloway. "Apartments and How to Live in Them", House Beautiful 42 (Nov. 1917): 339.

⁶¹Catharine Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe, The American Woman's Home (New York, 1869) cited in Giedion, Mechanization Takes Command (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1969) pp. 515-517. See also Diane Douglas, "The Machine in the Parlor, a Dialectical Analysis of the Sewing Machine", Journal of American Culture 5 (Spring 1982): 20-29, p. 26.

⁶²Campbell, "Household Furnishings", p. 102.

⁶³Handlin, American Home, p. 385; Israels, "New York Apartment Houses", p. 499, felt that people needed more storage space in apartments than in houses, because they had fewer rooms in which to distribute their personal effects; Holloway, "Apartments and How to Live in Them", p. 337, argued that lack of storage space in apartment houses made people more selective about their possessions leading to "freedom from care, and a general simplicity and happiness in life".

⁶⁴deWolfe Mendl, House in Good Taste, p. 242.

⁶⁵Van Dame Co., Building for the Future (Chicago: Ryan and Hart, 1918) p. 2.

⁶⁶Holloway, "Apartments and How to Live in Them", p. 341.

⁶⁷Appleton's Home Books, v. 1, Book 2: "How to Furnish a Home"; see also excerpt from Art and Architecture reprinted in House Beautiful 11 (Jan. 1902): 70.

CHAPTER VI

SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF DESIGN

Introduction

The social acceptability of apartments depended upon more than working out siting, planning and elevations. The last two chapters have described the kinds of exterior and interior forms developed during the early decades of apartment design. Physical constraints such as lot size, street orientation, number of units and circulation influenced how buildings as a whole, and individual units, could be laid out, while expectations about room use based on tradition as well as practical need led designers to increasingly well thought out plans. But tenants still had to come to terms with their unease over buildings that implied threats to the privacy of homelife.¹

In this chapter I will identify some important and intertwined issues in the symbolic realm of "home" meanings and in the practical realm of housekeeping, and show how these values and needs influenced the design of apartments and helped determine their social acceptability.

Homelife

The first set of values that affected the acceptance of apartment life includes notions of family privacy and

unity, the role of women as nurturers of the family and guardians of principled behavior, and the 'cult of domesticity' which grew as the 19th century advanced, urging more importance on homelife.² The private home was seen in opposition to the larger society with its threats of heartless industrialization, waves of immigrants and native strangers of unknown social rank and origin. Thus the private home was set up against the public world where dangers lay, and whose dangers could be avoided, not by banding together for strength, but by avoiding public problems in the privacy of the home.

In writing about apartment buildings and apartment life, 19th century reporters repeatedly used the words "home" and "homelife".³ I will try to define what people meant by those words and the ideas they represented, because they were obviously uneasy about losing their control over "home" in the new multiple dwellings. The meanings I will isolate may not seem particularly surprising, because we ourselves have been brought up with some of the same expectations. However, I think these meanings should be made specific, because, after all, there are other ways of thinking about domestic life. Comparisons with the experience of apartment life in other countries show that among middle class tenants of the same era there were different emphases placed on the meaning of home, and that American culture had selected a rather narrow set of criteria for defining homelife.

As we have seen, the tradition of middle class families living in single city houses was breaking up before mid-century

through the combined effects of overcrowding, rising rents and purchase prices, work patterns involving travel, and the beginning practice of bringing the children up in the suburbs and spending only social seasons in town. Replacing that single house were many alternative dwelling types: residential hotels, french flats, apartment buildings, boarding houses, parts of houses, tenements, and specialized buildings for bachelors or working people. This array of choices testifies to a newly perceived diversity in the social and economic make-up of the city: not just rich and poor but all degrees of economic success and choices of living style were potentially taken into account by the available dwelling types. But each of these types represented a changed image and a potential new definition of what "homelife" must mean.

The ideal of family privacy lay at the center of a definition of home, and made a problem in accepting apartment living. The family, consisting of husband and wife, children and servants, was felt to require complete privacy for its own family activities. The home was the place where an individuality could be established.⁴ The married couple would decide upon their rules of decorum, and bring up their children to follow their principles. In the home they could also surround themselves with the furniture, books and pictures which asserted their individual taste. These capacities of the home for attesting to the individuality of a family seemed all the more important in an era of mass journalism

and mass production in which the vast scale of urban surroundings threatened to swamp the individual.⁵

The private home was specifically the province of a woman whose job it was to guard family values and instill them in her children. It was she who set the atmosphere of the home with her cultured tastes, her accomplishments in entertaining, her choices in food and furnishing and her skill in bringing up her children.⁶ Her good management assured that the home would be a center of peace and rest for the husband to return to after doing battle with the paid work world all day. The tempo of urban life increased as the century went on, making such a peaceful haven more and more important to middle class families.

Even for families just emerging from the working class, the home values of privacy were appealed to by developers. Aimed at that class, an advertisement for houses of 1900 stated: "Your own home means room, air, health / Your own bath tub / Your own yard / Your own door step."⁷ Although these houses sometimes contained rental units above, the message for purchasers stressed privacy as something to be especially valued.

Families who fell into domestic circumstances where privacy was not guaranteed, risked losing all that made "homelife" possible. Women were warned that if they went to live in hotels, they would see "an utter upsetting of all home habits, an entire disregard of old-fashioned domesticity and comfort,"⁸ Should they live in a boarding

house, they would be "forced into a manner of living which violates the very first requirements of the life we most affect, namely, individual privacy and family seclusion."⁹ When several families lived together in a boarding house, the "privacy of the home is invaded", the house "degenerates" as if stricken by a fatal disease, and "home /becomes/ an empty name."¹⁰ These were strong warnings against the dangers of lack of privacy in multiple dwelling situations, and naturally were not encouraging to those forced by economics to live in apartment buildings.

As a site for such ideally focused family life, apartments seemed inappropriate. Novelist Howells' protagonists Mr. and Mrs. March discussed their feelings about "family consciousness" as they reflected on apartment buildings. They condemned the show that went into fancy lobbies and was reiterated in the social pretences of drawing rooms where middle class apartment dwellers were expected to entertain and impress their guests. Such pretensions were absurd when apartments didn't have a single family room for quiet togetherness, nowhere "where the family can all come together and feel the sweetness of being a family."¹¹ Mr. March felt that even tenement dwellers had a better family life in their rental quarters because at least there, there was a true living room. "There the whole family lives in the kitchen and has its consciousness of being; but the flat abolishes the family consciousness."¹²

The idea of the home as a valued family center has been characterized by cultural geographer David Sopher as

the "domicentric" view.¹³ This view poses home values as good, in opposition to "rootlessness" which is bad. Sopher quotes both 19th and 20th century sources to show the associations between homelessness or rootlessness and criminal behavior. This domicentric myth has been central to American family life, but so has a "domifugal", or home-leaving myth, as Sopher points out. Pioneers and frontiersmen as well as upwardly mobile middle class families in the 19th century city left home to change their circumstances,

If Americans held domicentric and domifugal myths at the same time, then apartment buildings would provide the ideal home, a home both permanent and transient. Once settled in, a family could easily move; rented quarters are perfect for departures and quick landings. However, the literature on apartment life always supports domicentric aims, and families who lived more transient lives were castigated as frivolous. Nonetheless, New Yorkers remained notorious for their May 1st moving day when, due to the demands of economy and taste, thousands of city residents changed addresses.

Social Rank and Strangers

A domicentric view that held privacy so dear to American families was, in part, a defense against outside forces which American families felt were threatening and beyond their control.¹⁴ These forces operated to destabilize the social order of the middle class, throwing into uncertainty the family's social standing. Middle class families were

vulnerable to their fears in this regard first because there were no clear cut classes in America, and second, because the urban world was filled with strangers. Apparently desiring the clarity of social relations that well-defined classes implied, they also wanted the fluidity that allowed potential rising on the social ladder. But in a city full of strangers, no one's social rank was clear, and people feared to be brought down in rank by associating with others who might be "below" them.

In America "there are no distinct classes," Catharine Beecher had written in 1841, but "all are thrown into promiscuous masses."¹⁵ Americans were thus constantly comparing themselves to others and were prey to the temptation to imitate those with large means. People became envious, Beecher wrote, and, because there was no natural limit to their ascent in social status, they tried to outspend their neighbors to get ahead. The result was a pervasive feeling that people's "true" social rank was always hidden, that people were passing themselves off as better than they really were, and that social intercourse was fraught with risk.

While Beecher's "promiscuous masses" might be avoided in the haven of a private house, apartment buildings threw people together who did not know each other. American writers looked to Europe for a way to deal with this social mixture, but found that there, apartment dwellers got along without the same anxieties. Europeans were oblivious to who lived over or under them in an apartment building, because social

standing in Europe was perfectly clear to all, so no one's status was threatened by contiguous living arrangements.¹⁶ Parisians lived happily with the well to do on the lower floors and the poor in the garret, but mixing classes in one building in America was thought to be impossible because of jealousy from the bottom and exclusivity from the top.¹⁷

Codified social hierarchies gave each European family a sure sense of its social rank, but in America rank had to be secured by conspicuous expenditure. The desire for a fine house with a showy exterior was particularly American, Sarah Gilman Young asserted in 1881.¹⁸ Europeans knew where they belonged socially, and were therefore content with modest dwellings, but Americans had to purchase their distinction through material display, and looked upon a fine house as a mark of social success. Apartment houses, of course, offered a limited field for such display.

Social rank could be irremediably compromised by choosing the wrong apartment building, as a letter writer to the New York Times explained in 1873.¹⁹ He and his wife had many church and community acquaintances who were friendly to them while they lived in a boarding house. However, their family budget would only allow them to afford their own apartment in a tenement building. Even though such a move would give him the privacy he valued, he could not make it because his friends would "cut" him socially for living in the wrong kind of building. Many middle class families resisted the move to apartments for such reasons of social

rank, and it was not until a few successful buildings for the rich "demonstrated to those of moderate means the possibility of multiple tenancy without the risk of social debasement"²⁰ that large numbers of middle class families felt comfortable in apartment buildings.

Closely linked to the issue of social rank was the problem of meeting strangers. Respectable New Yorkers viewed their relations to strangers as a major problem in the early years of apartment development. In a large building one lived one's life in "publicity"--the opposite of privacy--which exposed the family to view and to gossip. Contact with strangers in such a setting was sure to breed dangerous familiarity and, by cutting down on privacy, could destroy the family.

A useful perspective on this fear of strangers is given by Catharine Beecher's analysis of the place of strangers in American culture.²¹ She recommended that Americans should feel it a special duty to be kind to strangers because "reverses of fortune are, in this land, so frequent and sudden, and the habits of people are so migratory, that there are strangers in every part of the country, many of whom have been suddenly bereft of wonted comforts."²² The ways to become a stranger in America were to move geographically ("migratory habits") or to move socially ("reverses of fortune"); either move would plunge families among people they did not know. But if you did not know these strangers, you could not trust them to be

the people they said they were. And if you could not trust them, surely you could not live in the same apartment building with them and still feel at home.

European apartments, of course, had the same mixture of people who were strangers, yet given their clearer sense of social rank, strangers did not seem a problem. "It may be urged as an objection to living on floors," wrote Sarah Gilman Young, "that it is not pleasant to meet people one does not know in the halls."²³ But she felt it not particularly different from meeting such people on the street. In any case one did not often meet one's neighbors on the stairs, and if one did, "courteous salutations, which give no right to recognition elsewhere"²⁴ were exchanged and that was the end of it. Parisians were used to regarding the halls and stairs of apartment houses "as a continuation of the public street...used for generations by all manner of people,"²⁵ but to Americans such contact was entirely unwelcome.

To middle class American families just getting accustomed to new multi-family dwellings, the hazards of meeting strangers seemed to make apartments difficult to accept. Private houses allowed residents to shut the street door, "excluding all strangers from the building, while in the apartment house there are always some portions of the interior...which are open, if not to all the world, at least to all the tenants of the building and to their visitors."²⁶ A view that defined the other tenants and

their visitors as strangers could not help but find apartment living fraught with the dangers of unsolicited encounters with inappropriate people.

Because Americans held such ideas about the tenuousness of social rank and fear of strangers, any structures that were organized on collective principles were suspect. The more people acted in common, the more social rank would be obliterated; any communal situation put one in potentially unacceptable company.

Communality

Apartment buildings had, by definition, certain spaces used in common by all the tenants. Usually there was one front door shared by all, one main lobby, shared staircases and elevators, and on the upper floors, shared public corridors. While the numbers of tenants sharing these public spaces could be limited by planning decisions, there always remained some common public space. Tenants could not help but meet their fellow tenants whether they liked it or not.

Public stairs and corridors might be the location for unexpected uses. An 1892 report described a family who were disappointed to find some tenants in their apartment building who were not as refined as they were.²⁷ They discovered a new family "on the stairs and landings which they used as a regular part of their holding, and where they appeared with a painful disregard as to their toilet."²⁸

In the summer, this report continued, the better class of tenants moved to the country so they were not bothered by the population density on their own front stoop, because in good weather the stoops were treated like parlors. In this building, the boundaries between public and private, so carefully observed by some, were not clear to all. Some tenants might easily assume that halls, stairs and front stoops were "part of their holding", since they were communal spaces. But this kind of communal use was horrifying to others who treasured firm boundaries between public and private life.

It seemed to many that permanence and stability were called into question in settings that emphasized sharing. Communality seemed allied to temporariness, while individuality and privacy were linked to permanence.

Living quarters that emphasized sharing and cooperation of groups were often seen as transient places, across a wide range of time, location and class. The early workers' quarters in the industrial town of Lowell, Massachusetts, had shared bedrooms and common dining with no provisions for privacy, and were thought of by residents as temporary--they would put in a couple of years at the factory and then go back home, get married and have a permanent, private home of their own.²⁹ Hotels, which had shared dining and lounge facilities among other services, were obviously transient, and even residential hotels of the late 19th century were intended for transient families. Ernest Flagg

noted in 1903 that stringent legal requirements governing apartment houses could be circumvented by calling one's building a hotel which had to meet fewer building code restraints.³⁰ "It would seem that the true interest of the law should be to foster the type of building that best conduces to the preservation of the family and of home life", wrote Flagg, "and this type can hardly be said to be the hotel."³¹ In this view the idea of "home" and the idea of transience cannot coexist.

This equation of transience with communality was ingrained enough to present an obstacle to the acceptance of apartment living. A moral taint attached to the apartment building for its collective aspects, much as hippies living in communes in the 1960's threatened middle class family ideology. The late 19th century public felt that if the shared abode was for transients, then the new apartment building must be for those too flighty to settle into a permanent private residence. In his 1928 history of American architecture, architect Edgell wrote that a generation or two ago apartments were "abhorrent"; they recalled the tenement.³² They were all right for the bachelor or the "unstable family", but not for solid respectable folks. Apartment buildings were associated with lack of privacy and a "too marked gregariousness".

Perhaps this is why the early try in the 1880's at co-operatively owned apartment buildings like the Navarro (the Hubert Home Clubs) failed: sufficient individuation was

not possible; communality suggested transience, not ownership and permanence. Montgomery Schuyler, reviewing recent local architecture in New York in 1894, noted that the early 1880's was the era of "associated dwellings".³³ "Enthusiastic architects and promoters went about to persuade people, and really succeeded in persuading a great many people that an undivided tenth or twentieth or fiftieth of a vast building might be not only a home but a safe and judicious form of investment in real estate."³⁴ The sarcastic tone reveals the common assumption that a home is something that you own by yourself. Part of a multiple dwelling is neither a home nor something a sound man would purchase. Both symbol and economics were held against the idea. The term 'associated dwellings' suggests the persistence of the separate house idea, with its feeling of individual houses clustered together rather than a large building subdivided, but the name alone was not enough to inspire continued confidence in cooperatively owned apartments.

While few members in the middle class had had a positive experience of communal living, those who went to live at colleges would have spent some years in a collective living arrangement. Shared dining rooms, reading rooms and services found in colleges could have provided a positive model for later living in a collective setting.³⁵

But this experience of communal residential life is not what education taught. Instead, while in a communal setting, students learned to take to heart cultural themes

of the sanctity and separateness of family, the need for a single home per family, and the idea that cultural survival of 'home ideals' required privacy as opposed to sharing. This lesson was reinforced by the fact that young men away at college were still flighty; they hadn't settled down and were transients in their housing. The experience of shared residential space and communal activities could have lead to a taste for sociability, warmth and fellowship in future home-life. But because of being attached to a youthful time of life, and a time of bachelorhood, the communal model was too closely associated with immaturity. How could the man of the family continue that comradeship that communal life offered when the family was, by definition, a private organism, and his role as husband was to protect its integrity? To re-enter shared residential space was to presume ideals that outlawed or ignored privacy as the centerpiece of mythic American family life.

Because of these feelings about communality, apartment designers had to control their public spaces to minimize the social unease of prospective tenants. This could be done by curtailing shared spaces to the minimum circulation requirements, as we have seen in small buildings like Price's French Flat building on 21st Street; by limiting the opportunities of meeting others in the public corridors by offering several vertical access routes, as at Hardenbergh's Dakota, thereby cutting down on the numbers of tenants who

used any given public corridor and elevator; or by trying to improve the public experience by making such spaces glamorous to suggest "exclusive" drawing rooms, clubs or hotels.

Apartment designers who provided fairly extensive spaces for shared use were probably keeping in mind some aspects of contemporary hotel design that they thought their tenants would enjoy. Hotels had elaborate lobbys, parlors, card rooms, ballrooms--all kinds of shared public spaces. And hotels had been chosen as permanent living quarters by many mid-19th century New York families who preferred the lavish hospitality and conviviality of hotel life to the more private life of an individual house. Based on this model, elaborate decorations in apartment lobbies and grand staircases helped to further the image of exclusivity and glamour, as we have seen in Chapter V.

Many of the expensive buildings and projects of the 1880s provided their tenants with restaurant-like dining rooms, which will be discussed later in this chapter. When these were carefully decorated, or placed on a high floor to take in spectacular views as in Flagg's project for the Fifth Avenue Plaza apartments in 1883, they could make sharing palatable by making it elegant.³⁶

Designers added gardens and roof pergolas to the possibilities for collective use in apartment buildings--acceptable if they were stylish. Courtyard gardens at the Dakota and the Navarro, both of the early 1880s, were

ornamented with plantings and fountains, and were meant to be admired on the way to one's private apartment--not lingered in for recreation. Roof pergolas were built into the 1908 Apthorpe by Clinton and Russell, as they were at the Dakota, for tenants to take in the view.³⁷ This was another exclusive feature, for these large apartment blocks were higher than neighboring buildings. Occasionally middle class buildings had waiting rooms off the lobby, meeting rooms, or party rooms that tenants could hire for a bash, but generally shared spaces were limited to circulation, dining room, and courtyard.³⁸

In contrast, model tenement buildings had many more shared facilities. Gardens and playgrounds for active recreation, a bandstand, reading rooms, common laundry facilities and shared bath-tub rooms were provided in A. T. White's 1890 Riverside Buildings, and were described as generous benefits offered to the tenants.³⁹ While the middle class found shared facilities and spaces suspect in their own dwellings they could recommend them for poorer tenants. This might seem like a contradiction, but fits well with the attitudes outlined above: shared facilities were linked with transience, immaturity and irresponsibility--all characteristics ascribed to poor immigrants, in the literature of the 1880s and 90s.⁴⁰ In addition, communal facilities in tenements encouraged residents to conduct their social lives within the building rather than on the streets where a boisterous immigrant social life was seen by the middle class as unseemly or dangerous.⁴¹

The Virtues of Shared Space

Balancing these uneasy reactions to apartment buildings with their shared spaces and problematic strangers were some other attitudes towards shared space that were more positive. I will examine two of these points of view: one is the idea of neighborhood as a safe shared space, arising early in the 19th century; the other is the idea of communality as representative of modernity, appearing in the literature after 1870.

An idea that helped apartment buildings become acceptable was the notion of seeing an apartment building as a neighborhood unto itself, and partaking of the safety and comfort that the idea of neighborhood implied. The word "neighbor" has its origins in the Old English "neah", near, and "gebur", dweller. Two meanings for "neighborhood" are especially useful in this discussion: one meaning is "the quality or state of being immediately adjacent or relatively near to something: proximity"; the second is "a number of people forming a loosely cohesive community... living close or fairly close together...and usually having some common or fairly common identifying feature (as approximate equality of economic condition, similar social status, similar national origins or religion...)".⁴²

The first meaning of proximity and the second meaning of community preserve an historical change in the meaning of neighborhood. If we go back to c. 1800 in New York, we find the word "neighborhood" used to indicate proximity

alone; for example, people would advertise a house for sale "in the neighborhood of the docks". Elizabeth Bleeker, whose diary records New York life from 1799 to 1806, used the word neighborhood in the same way--it implied no social dimension, just a location.⁴³

The social homogeneity suggested by the second definition of neighborhood, above, developed during the early 19th century when real estate practice began to create districts of contiguous new houses for middle class clients of a purely residential nature, discussed in Chapter I. The neighborhoods created by developers between 1800 and 1840 could be counted on to contain only residential usages and the church that such usage required in the neighborhood. Both proximity and social homogeneity get absorbed into the meaning of neighborhood in this new residential context, and such a neighborhood could be relied upon as a safe and predictable place. People of similar circumstances and incomes could feel assured of familiar neighbors; the turmoil of the city streets could be kept at a distance. Further control over the social homogeneity of such neighborhoods as Gramercy Park and Hudson Square was provided by limiting access to their central green squares, gated and locked, to which only residents of the neighborhood could have keys.⁴⁴

While the well-to-do could afford to take care of their desire for social homogeneity, less established middle class people were caught in the tumultuous real estate

development of the post Civil War years. The piecemeal, even chaotic, development of New York blocks preserved in the Docket Book records strikes us as resulting in the very opposite of neighborhood comfort and safety. Developer Benjamin Weber's 1869 plans for five adjoining lots on the north side of 55th Street between 8th and 9th Avenues provide an example of non-homogeneous development.⁴⁵ On the first lot east of 9th Avenue, Weber filed plans for a stable with one dwelling unit on the second floor. The next lot was to have a four story dwelling for three families--the first and second floors were to be a single family duplex unit. Next to that he planned a two story stable and storehouse building. Adjoining that was a six story building with basement to be used as a warehouse. Finally he finished his row with a five story building with residential units for five families and a store in the basement. The mixture of warehouses, stables and family dwellings is just the kind of thing that contemporary house hunters complained of as not encouraging to home life. Widespread unease about such mixed uses eventually led to the 1916 Zoning Law in New York restricting specific uses to their own specific neighborhoods.

In the face of such mixed urban development, a large apartment building offered itself as constituting its own neighborhood. For those who could not afford the expensive social homogeneity of Gramercy Park, apartments could be a refuge from the chaotic developments on normal mixed use

streets. Thus if tenants could be persuaded to view each other not as strangers but as neighbors, many desired qualities of social comfort would result from apartment living. This sense of comfort became ever more possible as elevator apartment buildings replaced earlier walk-ups. Upper floors with low rental units, lower floors with higher rents had brought in a mixed tenancy to 1870s and 1880s apartments, as we have seen in Chapter IV, but the late 1890s practically all new middle class apartment construction included an elevator, and as a consequence, equalized rents for upper and lower floors.⁴⁶ When rents were equal, tenants could count on an apartment house filled with a similar social class (or at least income). Thus the apartment house became its own neighborhood, and helped alleviate the worries of urban middle class families in the face of the city's disturbing growth.

The quality of homogeneity was recognized by contemporary writers as a positive feature in the early years of apartment development. For example the Haight House, a fashionable apartment hotel at 15th Street and Fifth Avenue, was described in 1874 as an example of a New York trend towards "the clustering of particular social sets about particular centers."⁴⁷ The writer felt that apartment houses had the capacity to encourage such groupings of like-minded people. In the case of Haight House, these were "artistic and literary people who are able to find home, society, recreation,--everything almost which goes to distinguish civilized life,--without passing

from under their own roof."⁴⁸ While most New York apartment houses did not develop such extensive community service as are hinted at here, they did, I think, try for the social cohesiveness that at least a controlled income-range of tenants could give. For any class with rising social expectations, an apartment building could have offered some welcome limits on the random pollution of a big city with a diverse population.

Not only did tenants need a building that was itself a neighborhood, but they also wanted apartment houses located within safe--that is, like-class--neighborhoods of the city. "A careful study of the requirements of the class of tenants making their homes in the vicinity where the apartment is to be erected," cautioned architect Charles Israels in 1901, "is also absolutely essential to the successful plan."⁴⁹ One could get such information through local realtors, and carefully fit the social status of the building and its projected tenants to that of the existing neighborhood. Even so, such conditions could never be guaranteed as permanent, and "degeneration from the better to the poorer type of house is always possible with the ever changing conditions in a large city."⁵⁰ Builders showed a propensity to build similar class apartment houses near each other, such as we have seen along the south side of Central Park around the Navarro.⁵¹ The same clustering went on along the west side of Central Park, which was seen in the late 1890s as a particular kind of middle class apartment house

neighborhood.⁵² Later other like-class neighborhoods of apartments would develop on West End Avenue and again on Riverside Drive. Apartments, therefore, did not have to be viewed as a collection of strangers; they could be seen through the lens of neighborliness as a means to combat exposure to strangers and live in social safety.

Likewise, apartments did not have to be seen as dangerously communal places where shared public spaces threatened the sanctity of private family life; instead, communality could be viewed through the lens of modernity. "The modern and up-to-date apartment," explained a 1901 article, "offers to its tenants a measure of luxury and convenience totally beyond the reach of a man of average income living under his own 'vine and fig tree'."⁵³ Private houses might be very nice, but should be weighed against the modern conveniences available when living quarters were combined for the added convenience of all. A 1901 apartment could offer telephone service, central heating, gas for cooking, filtered water, hot water, refrigeration, storage, and laundry machines. Tenants need never be bothered by the coal or ice bill. This cooperative mode of living offered "the most economical and convenient living at the lowest cost."⁵⁴ Modern advantages in equipment mentioned above were rarely available to private house owners except for the wealthiest, but apartments made modern life accessible to all the middle class.

A British observer in 1874 had pointed to America as the inventor of such collective modernity.⁵⁵ Americans banded

together to get things done: a postal service replaced the individual messenger hired by the sender to carry a letter; central heating systems replaced the individual fire lit in each room and saved the individual labor involved in that task. Modern life was clearly heading towards collective effort which would save costs and labor. Apartment buildings were the ideal way to collect and centralize labor and costs, making life better for all. The cooperative character of apartment living "follows a distinct tendency of this age of concentrated effort," wrote architect Charles Israels in 1901. "It eliminates the individual for the common good."⁵⁶ Thus if tenants could see collective dwellings not as hazards to privacy, but as enhancements to modernity, they could enjoy the shared aspects of apartment life and feel very up-to-date.

Housekeeping

Although apartment buildings held difficult and ambivalent meanings for the private middle class family, there was one advantage to apartments that all were agreed upon: ease of housekeeping. New designs of household space in apartment buildings allowed for improved efficiency in basic household work; work could be easier and more effective, and the comfort and ease of the family enhanced. In the following pages, I will consider the ways that apartment designers and clients defined the work of the household and the place of servants, the role of domestic

work done outside the home, and the place of architectural planning and newly available equipment in making housekeeping easier. From the 1860s to 1900 changes occurred in housekeeping that would change the planning of apartments.

"Housekeeping isn't fun," wrote Nora to the New York Times in 1874. "Already we young woman do in one day work indoors that would have killed our grandmothers. We want flats..."⁵⁷ Nora's preference for a home on one floor echoed reports from apartment dwellers and designers who agreed that one-floor living was always easier for the housekeeper. A private house of four stories required constant climbing up and down stairs to cook, clean, oversee children and entertain. Even where households had enough servants to do the hard work, the mistress of the house acted as manager and overseer, climbing just as many stairs to direct the work as she would if she were doing the work herself.

An apartment on one floor eliminated much of the effort involved in carrying things and moving from room to room. Indeed, one writer claimed in 1901 that New Yorkers would never have taken to apartment life had they not "tasted the sweets of easy housekeeping."⁵⁸ This advantage of apartment life was so widely accepted that convenient housekeeping became a favorite realtor's selling point. By 1911, advertisers promoting small apartments explained that their flats had "the conveniences of the home without the burdens, expenses, discomforts and the servant problems of

the large apartments (italics mine)."⁵⁹ The flat's simple, one-floor arrangements were very welcome substitutes for the complications of running a house, or even a large apartment.

It is hard for us to realize the extent of the burdens of housekeeping when we live in houses with running water and electrical equipment, but 19th century writers have recorded how hard housekeeping really was. "Our system of living in America makes life a tyranny to every woman," wrote Sarah Gilman Young in 1872, "so that, as John Stuart Mill justly remarks, 'there remain no legal slaves except the mistress of every house'."⁶⁰ Young stated that American women lost "their bloom and youth" before their European counterparts specifically because American houses were so badly designed and managed. Intelligent layout of the house could save women time, energy, and health. Young, as we have seen in Chapter III, based her recommendations for improved housekeeping in her experiences of living in European flats, where one-floor living made all the difference.

For a portrait of household work, one can look again to Catharine Beecher's 1841 Treatise on Domestic Economy. Beecher assumed that every housekeeper--that is, usually, wife--would have at least one servant and more often several servants working under her direction. Beecher's intention was to make household work as efficient and effective as possible, and she cautioned her readers to keep in mind

when building a new house that the "first object of attention should be, economy of labor" in running the household.⁶¹ She also commented on the servant shortage, which was to be a continuing theme throughout the rest of the 19th century, and warned her readers not to consider building a large house unless they were certain that an adequate supply of servants could be assured to run the place.⁶²

In the years before indoor plumbing and central heating, the housekeeper and her servants had to carry fuel to every room that needed heat, light and maintain the fires, carry water whenever it was needed, probably from an outdoor source, and heat the water if hot water were required. They used outhouses during the day and emptied chamber pots in the morning. Non-urban households continued to weave and sew, make their own soap, dyes, starches and other cleaning products, and their own bread. They did all their own cleaning--not just of clothing but also of upholstery and drapes and bedding. They also grew their own food, or at least some of it. All these skills were described in Beecher's advice to housekeepers. If urban life had its drawbacks, at least city dwellers had easier access to manufactured products such as soap and bread and clothing, to save housekeepers some of their efforts.

Since household work encompassed both production of needed goods and maintenance, servants' labor was essential. However, in New York during the era of apartment building

development, having servants came to be a problem.⁶³ People complained that servants were hard to find, that they were incompetent or dishonest, and that they "took over" the household and ended up bossing around the mistress of the house.⁶⁴ These attitudes, of course, must be balanced by an understanding of the social context of the time. Most servants were recent arrivals to the city--either country girls who had few urban skills, or European immigrants whose cultures had different standards of both family privacy and housekeeping methods. New Yorkers, as we have seen, were especially conscious of privacy as a requirement for good family life, and therefore resented having strangers in the household, even when their work was essential. Furthermore, there was often fear and contempt for immigrants who were "lower" than the native born, and who came in for at least verbal abuse from xenophobic employers.

In America, there was another problem in finding and keeping servants because everyone, at least in theory, was free to rise in the world. As Beecher pointed out in 1841, the richer people got in general, the fewer there would be to go into service.⁶⁵ Only so long as poverty stricken foreigners kept arriving, would there be enough servants to go around. Others pointed out the internal conflict between a democratic society and the need for servants. Some menial class was necessary to do the drudgery, "but the tendency of civilization, culture and education, though

good and beautiful, is to advance and elevate so much that we are in danger of being left without any class of persons whose intellect and capacity render them efficient in the humbler duties of life."⁶⁶ People who had hopes of rising economically, educationally and culturally could not be expected to be happy as servants or stick to their low-status jobs for any longer than they had to.

Middle class households still expected to have servants when New York got its first apartment houses. No matter what the problems with servants, every household needed their help, and indeed it sometimes seemed that everyone who wasn't a servant had a servant. This requirement, of course, had an impact on planning. Servants' rooms were common in middle class apartments and usually were labelled as such in plans. They were the smallest rooms, and when they had bathrooms of their own they had the smallest bathrooms. The servant's room was often placed so its window overlooked the light shaft, and was usually linked to, or close to, the kitchen, as we have seen in Chapter V.

While servants had always been around to help with household work in colonial times, they simply shared one of the rooms in the house, as did apprentices. After 1810 or so, however, it became common to build middle class houses in which specific rooms were set aside for servants. The servants became less like part of the family and more divided off by specialized spaces within the house. Advertisements of the period make a point to mention such

specific rooms for servants, and this became one of the new badges of gentility in middle class houses.⁶⁷ This early movement to make servants rooms specific and no longer interchangeable with other rooms in a house is a forerunner of the much more separated service systems--the secondary service stairs and elevators and corridors--of later 19th century houses and apartments.

More and more after 1880 servants who did work in the household would live in their own homes. Historian Gwendolyn Wright believes that the preponderance of "servant's rooms" in architectural plans of the late 19th century were there mainly for status reasons.⁶⁸ It seemed to be a mark of class to possess a servant's room even if one didn't have a servant. From letters to the newspapers written by apartment dwellers in New York, however, it seems to me that even moderate income families did employ a servant and had to house her--especially where there were children.

Because of family insistence on privacy, a servant's presence in the household had undesirable aspects. If budgets were big enough, designers included a separate circulation system for servants in the household, so the family members never had to meet these intrusive presences: the best servants were invisible ones. Better apartment houses always had separate stairways for servants to use--narrower than the stairs for tenants--and later separate elevators were provided for deliveries to a separate service

door near the kitchen. In many early apartment buildings, the roof was the servants' territory; the roof itself had places for drying the laundry, and sometimes garret rooms housed servants. Although family privacy demanded that servants be as invisible as possible, American families also mistrusted their servants enough to want to keep an eye on them. Therefore, the European idea of housing servants together in dormitory-like rooms under the roof was a questionable idea in New York apartment buildings. People feared that their servants, crowded together with other families' servants, would both misbehave and gossip, spreading the family secrets to neighboring households.

Apartment buildings helped to solve this "servant problem" in several ways. First, because apartments were usually on one floor, housework was simpler and fewer servants were needed.⁶⁹ Because space in apartment buildings was always less generous than in private houses, there were fewer rooms for servants, coinciding happily with the fewer numbers required. Just as important, apartment houses provided from the beginning some centralized services that eliminated in-house work. Central heating, plumbing, hot water, bells and speaking tubes, and later telephone systems replaced lighting fires, carrying water and running downstairs to answer the door. Deliveries could be made to the building's superintendent or door attendant and not to the individual household, once again saving the servant's efforts.

This new conception of centralized work took its most interesting form in the idea of centralized food preparation, which many writers agreed was an ideal way to combine the efforts of many individual households for a savings of time, labor and money. Considering the advantages of collective efforts in household work, E. T. Littell, writing in 1876, asked just what should a family apartment unit contain?⁷⁰

He cited the Stuyvesant Apartments as a negative model where "each suite constitutes a perfect house" and, therefore, there is no savings of space, running expenses or effort from the costs of running a private house. Instead, an apartment ought to offer some advantages in these areas, which are obtainable if services are run communally. In the Stuyvesant and other apartments on the private house model, "each family has a kitchen and laundry arrangements, must market, have milk and ice men, supplies and coal... several servants." But,

to accommodate those who are willing to sacrifice a sentiment for substantial advantage, another form of apartment should be constructed; each suite to consist merely of hall, parlor, dining room, bedrooms and bathroom, with possibly a five by eight cooking closet furnished with a gas range. A restaurant should be provided...from which meals should be forwarded, in felt-lined boxes, to the private dining rooms of the tenants.⁷¹

This idea of centralized cooking and private dining was appealing to a number of contemporary writers. A cook hired by the house could buy in bulk, prepare food to order, and save individual families the expense of hiring their own cooks. An apartment dweller writing to the New York Times

in 1876 reported that she loved apartment living except for her private kitchen.⁷² Kitchens attracted bugs, she said, and spread cooking odors through the apartment. Her recommendation was a central kitchen and cook who could send up prepared meals in the dumbwaiter. This system had the added advantage of keeping the maid free from cooking chores and always presentable to answer the door.

Both of these writers favored the idea of centralized cooking, but eating in private. The family members gathered together around their meals and did not want to share their dinners under public scrutiny. However, many large apartment houses did have public dining rooms where meals were taken among other tenants and guests, much as they were in hotels. Ernest Flagg's 1883 proposal for a cooperative apartment, the Fifth Avenue Plaza, mentioned above, included a dining room-restaurant on an upper floor of the building where tenants could take their meals and a view over Central Park at the same time.⁷³ He claimed that not only did a house dining room and centralized kitchen save the tenants work and money, but the profits from this restaurant also could pay many of the expenses of running the building.

In the 1890s, communal services took on a more political aspect through the writings of feminist reformers such as Helen Campbell and Charlotte Perkins Gilman.⁷⁴ In a program to free women from domestic slavery, they wanted to introduce professionalism into housework. Gilman claimed

that the modern family was no longer a self-contained production unit as it had been in the earlier 19th century, but an outgoing group whose needs ought to be served by professionals.⁷⁵ Campbell wanted to professionalize household work along the lines of efficient industrial production, introducing the concept of "domestic science", a rational and skilled pursuit.⁷⁶ For these reformers, improved household design could lead to more freedom for women, and they looked to communal cooking and cleaning services as ways to make housework more economical of time and effort. Campbell put forward a proposal for suburban houses that would, like apartments, share a common kitchen and laundry, and envisioned a domestic environment of "great clustering palaces; when the private houses ray out in wings and ells of lawn-ringed separateness, all its industries subservient and reduced to order, and the whole great building expressing the thought of human living at its best."⁷⁷ Her suggestion seems to fuse the apartment house idea of collective services with the suburban ideal of a house in its own lawn--an idea that was tried but never caught on.⁷⁸

Although apartment buildings seem to have been ideally organized for an experiment in communal cooking, it was not an idea that had a long life. One reason is that hotels and other kinds of alternative residential arrangements had provided communal cooking, and those places had the wrong associations. For example, the "Working Woman's Home"

on Elizabeth Street in New York provided meals in common.⁷⁹ This was a sort of dormitory for single working women, in which the basement and ground floors held communal facilities including bath-tub rooms, parlors, reading room, laundry and dining room. On the upper floors up to 500 women shared "sleeping apartments". Meals were prepared by the management in the basement kitchen and served to subscribers at \$1.75 to \$3.25 a week. While this practical system saved underpaid women from unnecessary living expenses, it also associated communal cooking with an unpleasant residential form which middle class apartment tenants did not like to think of. To many, the preservation of a private home-life was more pressing than saving effort, space and expense by sacrificing any of that privacy.

It is also the case that food preparation and service has always been tightly bound up with the role of women as homemakers. Both husbands and wives, then, may not have been very enthusiastic about replacing home-made cooking with centralized meal preparation. Cooking was a test of the good housewife's skills, not to be given up to professionals easily.

If the potentials for collective housework went unfulfilled, it was for practical as well as ideological reasons. Housework was beginning to benefit from 19th century mechanical inventions, many first developed for large-scale applications. Mechanical household aids rapidly improved from their first introduction in the

mid-19th century to their electrified form in the early 20th. The availability of such equipment made it easier for each household to do its own work. Balanced against the ideologically suspect alternative of collective housework, privately owned vacuum cleaners and ranges were more appealing. These devices also grew as the supply of servants diminished, leading to smaller, more tightly organized servantless households in both private houses and apartments by the early 20th century.

The era of apartment development coincides with the era of mechanical conveniences and services for the house. While 1840s householders would have had to make everything--from bread to soap to bedspreads--households of the 1870s could have had quite an array of labor-saving household aids. Siegfried Giedion, in his 1948 book Mechanization Takes Command, gave a summary of the appliances developed in the especially inventive decades of the 1850s and 60s in the United States.⁸⁰ Carpet sweepers had mechanical brushes patented in 1858 and '59; the same year a patent was taken out on a vacuum cleaner. A dishwasher was invented in 1865; several washing machine patents were taken out between 1850 and 1869; paring and coring machines made home food preserving easier; a gas heated clothes iron was for sale in the 1850s; even a small artificial ice machine was patented in France in 1860. For the most part, these machines were hand-powered using cranks and gears, and were not truly modern until the wide

availability of electric motors of household size in the second decade of the 20th century.

These machines were often developed and sold first for large-scale commercial use. Laundry machines that washed and ironed first appeared for commercial laundering establishments and did not receive their small household form until quite a bit later. In 1869 Catharine Beecher recommended that every dozen families ought to band together and establish a community laundry for themselves with one of these machines, recognizing that they were not yet effective on the small scale of an individual household.⁸¹ Refrigeration equipment developed in the same way for large scale commercial application first. Electrically powered vacuum cleaning equipment also first appeared as centralized machinery with a central suction source and outlets throughout the building.

The importance of these dates and comparisons between commercial machines and household scaled ones is this: apartment buildings were in a position to take advantage of mechanical aids available at a commercial scale, and could offer services representative of modern life to tenants several years earlier, if not decades earlier, than they could hope to have them in individual private houses. Apartments may thus have provided a kind of testing ground where residents first got used to, then came to expect, the kinds of household services and modern equipment mentioned above.

Planning in apartments took these new inventions into consideration. Many such conveniences like laundry machines were commonly included in the basement of an apartment house where either the building's staff or the tenants and their servants could do their laundry. House refrigeration units were also commonly advertised as one of the advantages of apartment life. Telephones and electric lighting were available early to apartment dwellers, and the wise placement of electrical outlets and lighting fixtures was added to the list of planning concerns on the part of architects.⁸²

As this array of household machinery took on more compact forms it moved into individual households, making each more self-sufficient.⁸³ The early thought about collective work faded away, and mechanical equipment made it easy to restore privacy to each family. The multiple dwelling could have provided an innovative way to look at household work with a ready pool of cooperative members, but the ideology of family privacy was too strong to take such alternatives seriously. Today, as then, housework may get more streamlined and efficient with new technological contributions, but it still stays largely at home.

While tenants worried about the effects of apartments on their home life, and on their social rank, they began to find many virtues in apartment life as well. One floor housekeeping made for greater efficiency and the predictable tenancy of larger buildings enhanced feelings of social safety. If privacy was the main principle guiding the

formation of family space in the 1870s, by 1900, efficiency was equally important, and argued in favor of apartments as suitable family dwellings.

FOOTNOTES

¹C. Perrin, Everything In Its Place (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977) Chapter 2, pp 32-80.

²John Demos, "The American Family in Past Time", American Scholar (Summer 1974): 422-446, summarizes women's roles in the home from the 17th through the 19th centuries.

³For use of the terms "home" and "homelife" see, for example, Calvert Vaux, "A.I.A.Address", The Crayon (July 1857): 218; "House and Lodging Hunting", New York Times (Sept. 25, 1869): 4; James McCabe, Paris by Sunlight and Gaslight (Philadelphia: National Publishing Co., 1869) p. 653; Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "The Passing of the Home", Cosmopolitan (1904): 138-140.

⁴"Apartment Hotels", Architectural Record 13 (Jan. 1903): 89-90.

⁵Henry Nash Smith, Popular Culture and Industrialism (New York: Doubleday, Anchor Books, 1967) p. vi.

⁶New York Times (Nov. 21, 1865): 2.

⁷New York Land and Warehouse Co. (New York: 1900) pamphlet., p. 32.

⁸New York Times (Nov. 21, 1865): 2.

⁹James Richardson, "New Homes of New York", The Century [Scribner's] 8 (1874): 64.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 67.

¹¹William Dean Howells, A Hazard of New Fortunes (New York: New American Library, 1965) p. 58.

¹²Ibid., p. 59.

¹³"The Landscape of Home", in Meinig, ed., The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979) p. 134.

¹⁴Perspective on the situation comes through Catharine Beecher, Treatise on Domestic Economy (New York: Schocken Books, 1977, reprint of 1841 ed.). Numerous etiquette books of the late 19th century taught social rules to newcomers; for example, Longstreet, Social Etiquette of New York (New York, Appleton's, 1879).

¹⁵Beecher, Treatise, p. 17

¹⁶Hubert et al., "New York Flats and French Flats", Architectural Record 2 (July 1892): 55.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Sarah Gilman Young, European Modes of Living (New York: G. Putnam's Sons, 1881) pp 26-27.

¹⁹New York Times (Feb. 14, 1873): 4.

²⁰Richardson, "New Homes", p. 68.

²¹Beecher, Treatise, p. 264.

²²Ibid.

²³Sarah Gilman Young, "Foreign Modes of Living", Galaxy 14 (1872): 474.

²⁴James McCabe, Paris by Sunlight, p. 655.

²⁵Hubert et al., "New York Flats", p. 57.

²⁶"Apartment Houses", American Architect and Building News 29 (Sept. 27, 1890): 194.

²⁷Hubert et al., "New York Flats", p. 57.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹John Coolidge, Mill and Mansion (New York: Columbia University Press, 1942) pp. 128-134.

³⁰Ernest Flagg, "Planning of Apartment Houses and Tenements", Architectural Review 10 (1903): 89.

³¹Ibid.

³²George Edgell, The American Architecture of Today (New York: C. Scribner's, 1928) pp 144-146.

³³M[ontgomery] S[chuyler]. Real Estate Record Supplement (25th Anniversary Issue, 1894): 81.

³⁴Ibid., p. 81.

³⁵D. Sopher, "Landscape of Home", p. 133, makes this suggestion about rituals marking adulthood in primitive societies and in the British Empire of the 19th and early 20th centuries.

³⁶Prospectus of the Fifth Avenue Plaza Apartments (New York, 1883).

³⁷Stephen Birmingham, Life at the Dakota (New York: Random House, 1979) p. 35. Proposals for apartment roof gardens illustrated in O. B. Bunce, "The City of the Future", Appleton's Journal 7 (1872): 156-158; and Bunce, "The City of the Future Once More", Appleton's Journal 7 (1872): 495-496.

³⁸Handlin, American Home (Boston: Little, Brown, 1979) p. 221.

³⁹A. T. White, Sunlighted Tenements (New York: National Housing Association Publication No. 12, 1912).

⁴⁰This attitude can be found, for example, in Blackall, "Housing of the Poor", American Architect and Building News (May 1896): 68.

⁴¹Suggested by Betsy Blackmar's lecture "Housing in New York, 1800-1850" at State University of New York at Buffalo, School of Architecture, Nov. 1981.

⁴²Webster's Third New International Dictionary, s.v. "Neighbor", "Neighborhood".

⁴³Elizabeth Bleecker's Diary in the New York Public Library Manuscript Collection. Her use of the word "neighborhood" confirmed in conversation with Blackmar, July, 1981.

⁴⁴Christine Boyer, "The Development and Boundaries of Luxury Neighborhoods in New York: 1625-1890", Draft Working Paper No. 1, Center for Preservation Planning, Columbia University, July, 1980. She traces the location and character of New York's luxury neighborhoods, using the anthropological concepts of taboo and pollution to discuss the relation of luxury to non-luxury uses of land.

⁴⁵New York City Buildings Department, "New Buildings Docket" 1869, Plan #45, n.p.

⁴⁶Andrews, Twelve Letters on the Future of New York (New York: Martin Brown, 1877) p. 11 "...two or three years [ago] the third story was as near the sky as it was possible to induce the better class of tenants to go, but the steam elevator makes the fifth and even the sixth accessible and habitable and the difference in rents where this vehicle is in use, is surprisingly small."

⁴⁷Richardson, "New Homes", pp 68-69.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 69.

⁴⁹C. Israels, "New York Apartment Houses", Architectural Record 11 (July 1901): 492.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 481.

⁵¹C. Boyer, "Luxury Neighborhoods", p. 93.

⁵²Just after the turn of the century, several articles mention geographically specific neighborhoods of similar quality apartment houses; for example "Architectural Aberrations No. 17: The New York Family Hotel", Architectural Record 11 (Oct. 1901) p. 700; "Architectural Aberrations No. 20: The Hotel Somerset", Architectural Record 13 (March 1903); Winkler, "Recent Apartment House Design", Architectural Record 11 (Jan. 1902): 99-109.

⁵³Israels, "New York Apartment Houses", p. 502.

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵"Housekeeping", Cornhill (London) 29, p. 69.

⁵⁶Israels, "New York Apartment Houses", p. 502. Cf. Handlin, American Home, pp. 216-222. He notes that for some observers, apartment buildings offered the hope of a democratising influence. G. Wright, Moralism and the Model Home (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980) p. 125, says that some critics found apartments "communistic".

⁵⁷New York Times (Nov. 19, 1874): 5.

⁵⁸Israels, "New York Apartment Houses", p. 508.

⁵⁹New York American, Renting Guide (New York: 1911)n.p.

⁶⁰S. G. Young, "Foreign Modes", p. 474.

⁶¹Beecher, Treatise, p. 275.

⁶²Ibid., p. 269.

⁶³David M. Katzman, Seven Days a Week (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), discusses the work world of servants.

⁶⁴S. G. Young, "Foreign Modes", p. 482.

⁶⁵Beecher, Treatise, p. 17.

⁶⁶Grace Ellis, "Our Household Servants", Galaxy 14 (Sept. 1872): 354.

⁶⁷B. Blackmar, Lecture at Columbia University Cities Seminar, Dec. 1979.

⁶⁸G. Wright, Moralism, p. 36.

⁶⁹The assertion that apartments required fewer servants can be found, for example, in "French Apartment Houses", New York Times (April 16, 1871): 3; Richardson, "New Homes", pp. 67-69; Gilman, "Passing of the Home", Cosmopolitan 38 (Dec. 1904): 139-140.

⁷⁰E. T. Littell, "Club Chambers", American Architect and Building News 1 (1876): 60.

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²New York Times (Sept. 3, 1876): 5.

⁷³Prospectus for the Fifth Avenue Plaza Apartments (New York: 1883) pp. 6-7.

⁷⁴Dolores Hayden, Grand Domestic Revolution (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1980) passim; Hayden, "Charlotte Perkins Gilman and the Kitchenless House", Radical History Review 21 (Fall 1979): 225-247.

⁷⁵Gilman, "Passing of the Home", p. 140.

⁷⁶Helen Campbell, Household Economics (New York: Putnam's, 1896) p. 58.

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 59.

⁷⁸Hayden, Grand Domestic Revolution, describes several attempts and eventual failures of collective housekeeping.

⁷⁹J. Browne, Great Metropolis: A Mirror of New York (Hartford: American Publishing Co., 1869) p. 548.

⁸⁰S. Giedion, Mechanization Takes Command, pp 534-603.

⁸¹C. Beecher and H. B. Stowe, The American Woman's Home, 1869, cited by Giedion, Mechanization, p. 566.

⁸²Apartment rents included vacuum cleaner and refrigeration in, for example, Harperly Hall, World Looseleaf, 1910, p. 14x; Israels, "New York Apartment Houses", p. 496, mentions the need for sensitive placement of electrical outlets and lighting fixtures in 1901.

⁸³G. Wright, Moralism, p. 237, describes parallel developments in Chicago area private houses at the turn of the century. She also reports that health reformers encouraged middle class households to do their own sewing, cooking, washing and ironing because sending out for such services meant exposing the family to germs from the outside, p. 118.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

At the time of Richard Morris Hunt's 1869 Stuyvesant Apartments, so often called the first middle class apartment building, we have seen that there were already years of multi-family living in subdivided houses, boarding houses, hotels, tenements, and second class dwellings with flats, providing housing in New York for a great range of income levels including families of the middle class. Multiple dwellings grew in both size and reputation in the 1870s, and included residential hotels, bachelor flats and French Flats. With this variety, it seems wise to conclude that there was no "first" middle class apartment building, but there was a surge of such buildings beginning in the 1870s and rising into the 1880s and 90s to almost totally supplant new construction of private houses as a middle class dwelling type in New York. During this period, European models provided a useful reference point for both architects and tenants who saw the potentials and picked out the faults in apartment life through looking at Paris, Vienna and London dwelling types.

New York apartments were designed at first hesitantly since tenants' needs were not very clear and architects lacked experience with the problems of multi-family middle

class housing. Planning was sometimes awkward, circulation clumsy and rooms not well related to each other. As architects gained experience through the 1870s, 80s and 90s and shared information, so too did tenants whose needs became clearer as their expectations became more realistic. Specialized buildings continued to be erected for specific clienteles like bachelors, families who desired hotel services, differing sizes of family units and varied income levels. At the same time, 'proper' planning practices of grouping rooms and economical circulation patterns were better articulated both in plans and in print. Better equipment such as central heating, elevators, plumbing, bath and kitchen equipment combined with telephone, refrigeration and laundry systems to create a fully serviced dwelling house by c. 1900 in which the economies of collective use made modern life a reality.

Shared room uses forced themselves into prominence as land values rose in the city and only the most expensive buildings could afford spatial specialization. The trend begun in the 1880s towards economy of space and multiple uses continues with modern equipment and flexible furniture making such uses feasible if not absolutely trouble free.

The social acceptability of apartments has now become unquestionable for Manhattanites. As elevator buildings became popular in the 1890s for a wider clientele, and buildings got bigger, it was easier to predict a fairly homogeneous class of occupants, and social misgivings gave

way to feelings of greater safety indoors. A fear of strangers seems endemic to New York, but the fear has shifted from parvenues to muggers in more pragmatic modern times. Our social standing may still depend on conspicuous expenditure, but we have had to settle for decorating our own interior spaces, being deprived of the private house exterior as a field of display.

Our 19th century fears of loss of "homelife" proved well founded: only a very small percentage of American households in 1980 fit the 19th century middle class, nuclear family model--but architecture was never the culprit. Neither could satisfactory design for family space keep the family from disintegrating as it seems to be doing at present. However, apartment designers can take credit for permanently simplifying housework (along with some useful inventions, coupled with electric power) by spreading the house out horizontally into the flat; and perhaps gave us our first taste for a horizontal aesthetic later given its full due in Frank Lloyd Wright's Prairie and Usonian houses, and suburban houses ever since.

For a contemporary update, let us see what has happened to the middle class apartment in modern times. It is interesting to discover which assumptions and principles of middle class dwelling space remain with us from the 19th century, and which were discarded.

The subdivided private houses that seemed so inappropriate to mid-19th century New Yorkers have been revived as a way to

preserve older housing stock. As in the 19th century, owners have found themselves unable to support the costs of keeping a single family house, but the recent awareness of the value of historical buildings argues for preservation of older structures rather than their replacement with new buildings. Single family houses in the suburbs of New York have now come in for subdivision into rental units and even garages have been turned into rental apartments in areas that were once single family residential enclaves.¹ Complaints from residents echo the complaints of 19th century observers who feared that new kinds of strangers would move into previously homogeneous districts of one-family houses and disturb the quality of the neighborhood.

Even mansions have been subdivided to produce residential condominium units. Great houses such as the Morgan family's Constitution Hill in Princeton, New Jersey, Shadow Farm in Wakefield, Rhode Island, or the Breeze Merrill estate in Southampton, New York have been subdivided to contain several family units, since the former owners and their grand scale of living have disappeared.² Conversions such as these require zoning changes because many towns have codified into law their preferences for single family houses as the "correct" residential form.

Another kind of conversion goes on in the transformation of former tenements to middle class residential units. In Brooklyn, five contiguous tenement houses of pre-1900 were converted to middle class apartments by treating them as one

long building and providing a longitudinal corridor through the length of all five.³ Unlike the plans of the original tenements, the converted buildings have a variety of plans including studios, one-bedroom apartments, two-bedroom apartments, and three-bedroom duplexes with backyards. This kind of "gentrifying" conversion does not require zoning changes because the neighborhood in which the buildings are located was already a multi-family block. However, the conversion would have the effect of bringing in higher income tenants and "upgrading" the neighborhood--the opposite effect that suburban residents fear when houses become apartments.

Perhaps the most remarkable upgrading is that done to A. T. White's Home and Tower Buildings in Brooklyn.⁴ Built to house low-income working class tenants, as discussed in Chapter I, the buildings have been renovated for middle-class residents, in keeping with the general trend of their Brooklyn neighborhood of Cobble Hill and contiguous Brooklyn Heights towards ever-rising-income residents. The stigma of living in a "barracks-like" tenement, so disturbing to 19th century commentators, has apparently vanished leaving the buildings with Victorian charm, 8'3" ceilings and balconies--all desired in today's apartment market.

Analogous shifts have occurred in the design of individual buildings. In the 1880s, apartment houses were sited in relation to the street. Building facades met the sidewalk and conformed to the shape of the street on which they were located. Typical Central Park West buildings

followed a straight street, while a Broadway building had an angled facade. Interruptions in the facade such as bay windows or light and air indentations may have broken this line but the major effect of the facade was to reinforce the street wall.

In keeping with a modernist aesthetic in architecture, and encouraged by the 1961 New York zoning law rewarding builders for setting towers back from the street in plazas, recent apartment designers pulled their buildings off the street edge. In I. M. Pei's University Plaza Apartments (Figures 51, 52), for example, three towers are offset from one another in a paved and planted plaza which gives good light and air to all the apartments, prevents views from one unit into another's windows, but removes the close relation to the street and its activity that was so much a part of the 19th century design.⁵ Those tenants of the 1880s who paid premium rents for 'front' apartments that gave them an intimate link with street life would be disappointed to find no front apartments here, and a real retreat from the street. Many East Side Manhattan apartment towers of the 1960s and 70s are pulled back from the street with a landscaped drive leading off the street to the front door--a favorite device of architect Philip Birnbaum, who believes that landscaping gives a sense of serenity in the city, and gives the drive to the front door a sense of glamour.⁶ His reasoning is not too much different from Hardenbergh's at the Dakota, or Hubert, Pirsson & Hoddick's at the Navarro

where carriage entrances, fountains and plantings enhanced the courtyards of large scale 1880s buildings.

In the later 1970s as critics became wary of the effect that proliferating plazas had on the city's streetscape, some designers returned to the street edge facade for apartment buildings. The Olympic Tower and 800 Fifth Avenue are two such designs that conceive of the apartment facade as appropriately meeting the street edge and helping to define street space for pedestrians.⁷ However, in these buildings while the exterior effect has returned, the interior idea of tenants living in close connection to street life has not. Olympic Tower (Figures 53, 54), for example, has shops and offices on its lower floors and tenants' residential units high above the street.⁸ In any case the increasing height of modern apartment towers makes the possibility of front parlors and intimate views of the street too rare to constitute a good marketing point. Instead, panoramic views from higher floors are stressed as advantages and command higher prices than their lower neighboring units near the street.

The lobbies of new apartment houses generally follow the trend of the lavish hotel-like lobbies in 19th century apartments. The lobby at 800 Fifth Avenue for example has a travertine marble floor, an antique tapestry hanging on the wall, a two-story entrance door (with "motorized handles") and a marble concierge's desk.⁹ Philip Birnbaum emphasizes lavish lobbies in his designs, often using two-story lobby

spaces with marble, chandeliers, and fountains to drown out the noise of traffic.¹⁰ His Connaught Tower at Second Avenue and 54th St. has mirrored walls and a mylar ceiling, activating the lobby with a kaleidoscope of reflections.

The concierge, so despised as a busybody in the 19th century, has returned as a feature of the most expensive apartment buildings.¹¹ As in the 19th century, the concierge monitors who comes and goes in the building, collects and distributes mail and packages. But in the international clientele of expensive New York buildings, concierges are also called upon to translate requests into several languages, and to order theatre tickets, flowers, make dinner reservations, and oversee the house service staff. When tenants had their own servants in the 19th century, such a centralized service was unnecessary and seemed to intrude on a family's privacy. However, when most tenants do not have servants living with them, services are more and more taken care of by the building management, following the trend of apartment-hotels at the turn of the century. Concierges, such as work at the Connaught, Olympic Tower, the Galleria, and 800 Fifth Avenue, have become symbols of lavish services once performed by servants within the family unit.

The interior plan of a family unit has changed in general from a group of separate rooms to a more open plan in the public zone. Where the Navarro apartments had a separate library, parlor, dining room and reception room, the Olympic Tower two-bedroom unit has only one large space

which serves as a "gallery" or entrance foyer, living room and dining room with no divisions among them. Another two-bedroom example, The Terrace in Fort Lee, New Jersey overlooking the Hudson River (Figure 55), also has as its public zone one long living room with an ell at the end marked dining room, rather than separate rooms with divisions between them.¹² Here, even the kitchen flows from the dining room, with a change of floor surface and ceiling height but no wall or door.

The most striking change in interior plans from the late 19th century is in the area of private space. The bedrooms of middle class apartments were usually equipped with minimal storage spaces and the bathrooms were few--sometimes only one bathroom for a very large apartment, as at the Dakota or the Navarro. Today's apartments have gained tremendously in bathrooms, closets, dressing rooms and private special purpose, differentiated space. In an Olympic Tower two-bedroom apartment, for example, the living-dining area has about 600 square feet while the dressing room/closet/bathroom zone has about 400 square feet. In comparison, a two-bedroom apartment at the Navarro with 1091 square feet of space in its public rooms has only 80 square feet of bath/closet space. The bedrooms themselves have gotten only a little large: at the Navarro the bedrooms had 209 and 253 square feet, while at the Olympic Tower they have 247 and 288 square feet. Similarly, The Terrace two-bedroom apartment gives about half its square footage over to the private zone--

bedroom, bathroom, dressing room and closet space. The other half of the floor space is divided between the service zone and the public zone. Within the bathroom allocations at The Terrace are a small guest lavatory, a full bathroom with tub, toilet and sink for one bedroom, and another bathroom that includes double sink, toilet, bidet, whirlpool bathtub, separate circular shower, and a sauna/tanning chamber.

Expanding on the idea of such private zone luxury, some recent designers have extended the realm of the bath into the living zone.¹³ Sunken hot tubs and whirlpools take their places in the public realm of some coop apartments, or take up very large spaces within the bedroom zone. In the typically open plan of Manhattan loft apartments, whirlpool baths become a "living room" element. As architect Alan Buchsbaum said, if you live with someone, you will probably bathe in front of them, and his design for a sunken tub in a recent loft apartment "seats three comfortably".¹⁴ Of course, such breakdowns in the distinction between private and public living zones are still an exception.

The 19th century conception of a service zone in apartments has also undergone vast changes. The space of the kitchen has changed first of all due to technological improvements in kitchen and ventilating equipment. The old clumsy kitchen fixtures have long been replaced with smaller, cleaner and aesthetically designed ranges, sinks, refrigerators and cabinets, supplemented by dishwashers,

blenders and numerous other electric gadgets. Combined with already prepared foods that are widely available, this equipment has cut down on the space and time needed in food preparation. The smaller kitchen has also been relocated within the apartment to an interior wall, made possible by exhaust fans. The 19th century's concern to have a well ventilated kitchen has not been abandoned; but ventilation can now be accomplished mechanically instead of by direct open air ventilation. Now only luxury apartment houses offer kitchens with windows as a unique feature, although complaints are still heard, as they were in the 19th century, that kitchen smells can spread throughout the building, even at top rents.¹⁵

The servants' rooms, circulation, service entrances, stairs and elevators that were so much a part of expensive 19th century buildings have mostly disappeared. While the two bedroom apartment at United Nations Plaza does have a maid's room and a service entrance, the maid shares the main public corridor with other tenants on the way to the service elevator, centrally located with the passenger elevators.¹⁶ A tenant at 800 Fifth Avenue complained that there was no service entrance in her apartment at all, nor any maids' rooms in the building. At the Galleria, too, designers decided not to include maids' rooms because most maids have their own homes elsewhere.¹⁷ At Olympic Tower, only five of the 200 apartments have maids' rooms, as compared to the one or two maids' rooms in every apartment,

plus extra servants' rooms under the roof, that were common in earlier middle class apartments.

Because servants rarely live in the places where they work, and because equipment has replaced the need for servants in many cases, older apartment buildings have found new uses for their unused maids' rooms. When located under the roof, with sloping ceilings, maids' rooms have provided interesting spaces for conversion to penthouse apartments, as has been done at the Dakota,¹⁸ at 470 Park Avenue and at 907 Fifth Avenue. Although these originally small and not very well-built rooms require extensive renovation to turn them into apartment units, their position at the tops of buildings with spectacular views have made them desirable to renovators. Living in an ex-maid's room, just like living in an ex-tenement, has become perfectly acceptable in the competitive New York real estate market.

The sloping roofs and lower ceilings of maids rooms may seem normal to residents who are used to modern ceiling heights, but would have not appealed to earlier middle class tenants who expected 12' to 15' ceilings in early apartment parlors, especially those organized on a duplex plan like the Navarro's. There, 15' ceilings were used in the public rooms, and 10' low-ceilinged rooms at the rear served for the bathroom, servants rooms, and sometimes bedrooms. Surely those tenants would be dismayed to see the 8'2" ceiling heights at 800 Fifth Avenue or even the 9' ceilings at the Olympic Tower. They would also be confused by the lack of

differentiation in modern apartment room shapes. At the Navarro each room was given a special character through the use of projecting bay windows, towers or balconies, fireplaces, chamfered corners, elaborated door and window frames and mouldings. The new apartment's naked white rooms with their flat plain surfaces and repeated boxy shapes might cause some 19th century observers to think they were looking at a tenement-- and but for the dimensions of the floor area, these modern rooms are very similar to the all white, unpannelled, unmoulded walls of reform tenements in the 1880s and 90s, although tenement ceilings were slightly higher than those at 800 Fifth Avenue.

Modern designers have thus made serious changes in the planning of interior spaces, expanding the personal private zone of bathroom, closet and dressing room spaces to take up far greater areas within the apartment than 19th century designers ever dreamed of. At the same time the highly differentiated social spaces of large 19th century buildings have given way to an open plan, undifferentiated social space in modern apartments which occupies a much smaller percentage of the apartment. This change is paralleled by the retreat from the street. Nineteenth century designers tried hard to give apartment tenants a parlor in communication with the street and public life, while many modern designers, in spite of the arguments of Jane Jacobs or Oscar Newman,¹⁹ prefer to allow a panoramic view of the city from windows pulled back from the street or raised high above it. The

focus on private space within the unit supports the detachment from public space in the siting of new apartment buildings.

Still, privacy and social safety remain strong themes in new apartment design. It is striking to see that, through all the changes in modern life over the last century, so many of the same desires for a self-contained family space still pertain strongly today.

FOOTNOTES

¹Andree Brooks, "Legal or Not, Single-Family Homes Adding Apartments", New York Times (June 3, 1979) section 8, p. 1, 5; Brooks, "Wide Appeal for 'Accessory Apartments'", New York Times (Jan. 3, 1982) section 8, p. 6.

²Andree Brooks, "More Lords of the Manor As Mansions Are Converted", New York Times (May 18, 1980) section 8, pp. 1, 4.

³Alan S. Oser, "Investing in Park Slope Revival", New York Times (March 25, 1979) section 8, pp. 1, 5.

⁴Patricia Leigh Brown, "Preservation Movement Comes of Age", New York Times (Oct. 14, 1979) section 8, pp. 1, 8.

⁵Illustrated in Andrew Alpern, Apartments for the Affluent (New York: McGraw Hill, 1975) p. 150-151.

⁶Dee Wedemeyer, "The World of Birnbaum: One Version of Luxury", New York Times (June 18, 1978) section 8, pp. 1, 6. An example at 49 East 89th Street illustrated in Alpern, Apartments, p. 155.

⁷Dee Wedemeyer, "Luxury Languishes in Era of Cost Cutting", New York Times (Dec. 17, 1978) section 8, pp. 1-2.

⁸Olympic Tower by Skidmore, Owings and Merrill of 1974 illustrated in Alpern, Apartments, pp 158-159. "Olympic Tower Penthouse", Airlines (Winter, 1980-81) n.p., illustrates the interior.

⁹Wedemeyer, "Luxury Languishes", p. 1.

¹⁰Wedemeyer, "The World of Birnbaum", p. 6.

¹¹Edward Deitch. "Where Concierges Make All the Difference", New York Times (Apr. 22, 1979) section 8, p. 1.

¹²Plan published in New York Times (May 17, 1981): R5, advertisement; no architect or developer listed.

¹³Norma Skurka, "The Spa Bathroom: A Luxury for the 80s", New York Times (April 9, 1981): C1, C6.

¹⁴Ibid., p. C6.

¹⁵Wedemeyer, "Luxury Languishes, p. 2.

¹⁶U. N. Plaza apartments by Harrison and Abramovitz, 1965; illustrated in Alpern, Apartments, p. 148-149.

¹⁷Susan Bendheim. "When Maids' Rooms Begin to Look Like Penthouses", New York Times (April 29, 1979) section 8, pp. 1, 4.

¹⁸Paul Goldberger, "Lean Yet Lush", New York Times Magazine (May 6, 1979): 94-97, 116. Illustrates Dakota maids' rooms converted to an apartment by Ward Bennett.

¹⁹Jane Jacobs, The Death and Life of Great American Cities (New York: Modern Library, 1969); Oscar Newman, Defensible Space (New York: Macmillan Co., 1972).

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ILLUSTRATIONS

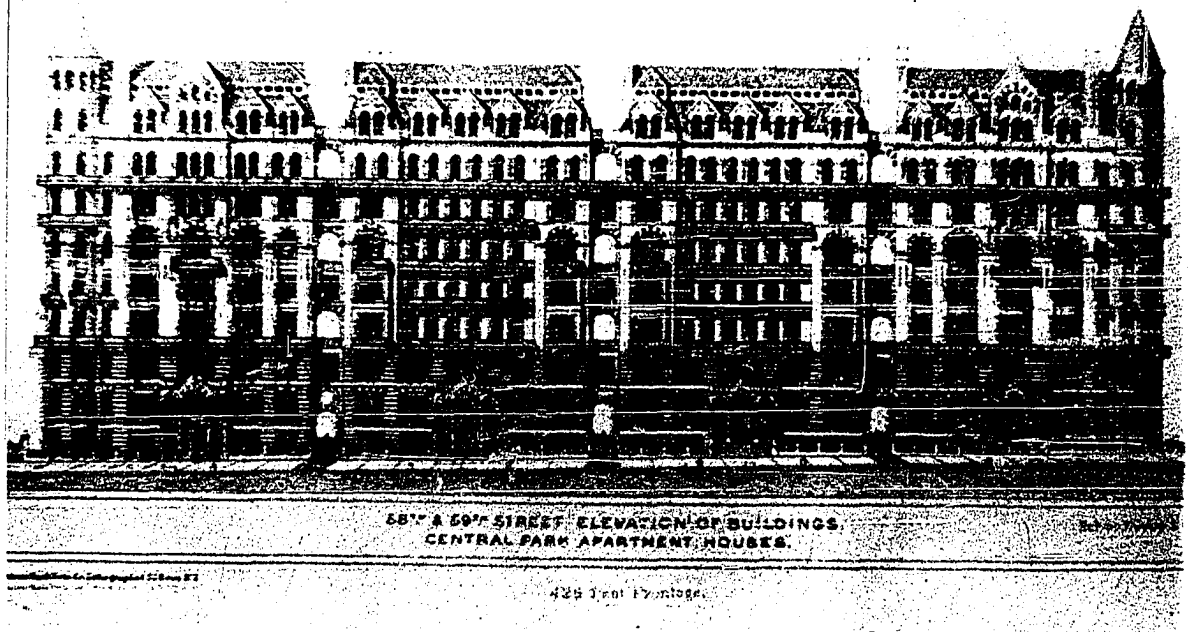


Fig. 1 The Navarro or Central Park Apartments.
Seventh Avenue elevation. Hubert, Pirsson & Hoddick,
architects. The Central Park Apartments, 1881.

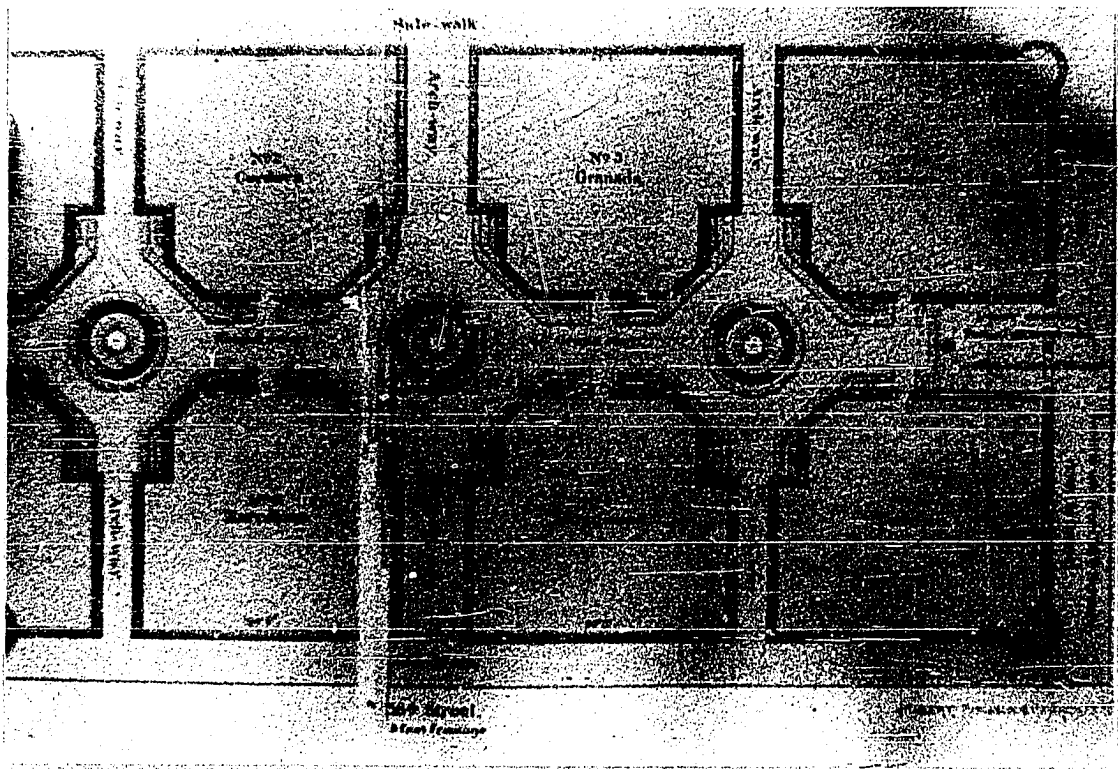


Fig. 2 The Navarro Apartments. Site Plan of courtyards and towers.

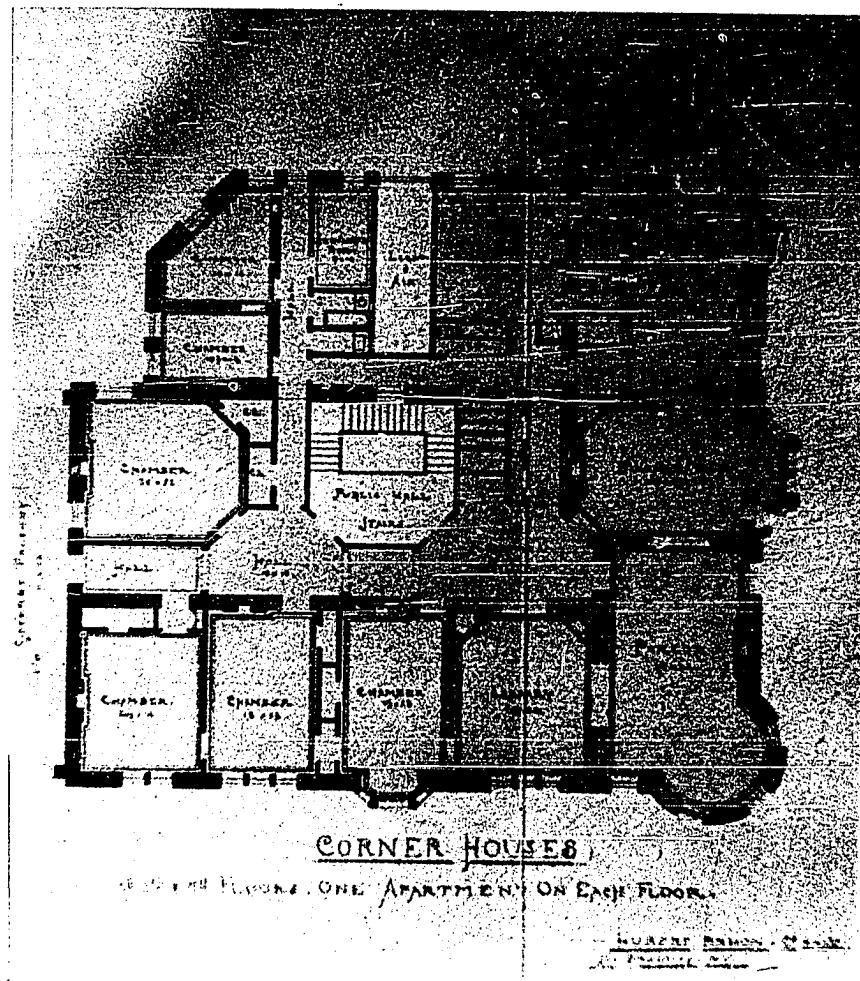


Fig. 3 The Navarro Apartments. Plan of a corner apartment unit.



Fig. 4 The Navarro Apartments. Sketch of an interior courtyard and fountain.

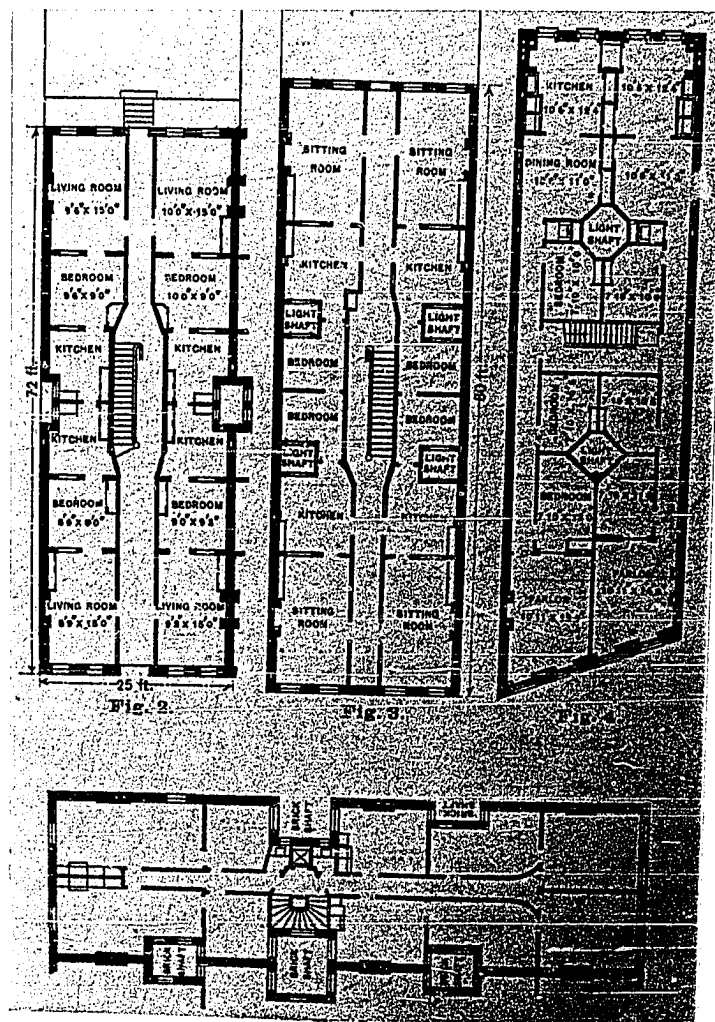


Fig. 5 Development of the 25' wide tenement plan showing variations in light shafts in the mid-19th century. Marcus Reynolds, Housing the Poor in American Cities, 1882, p. 69.

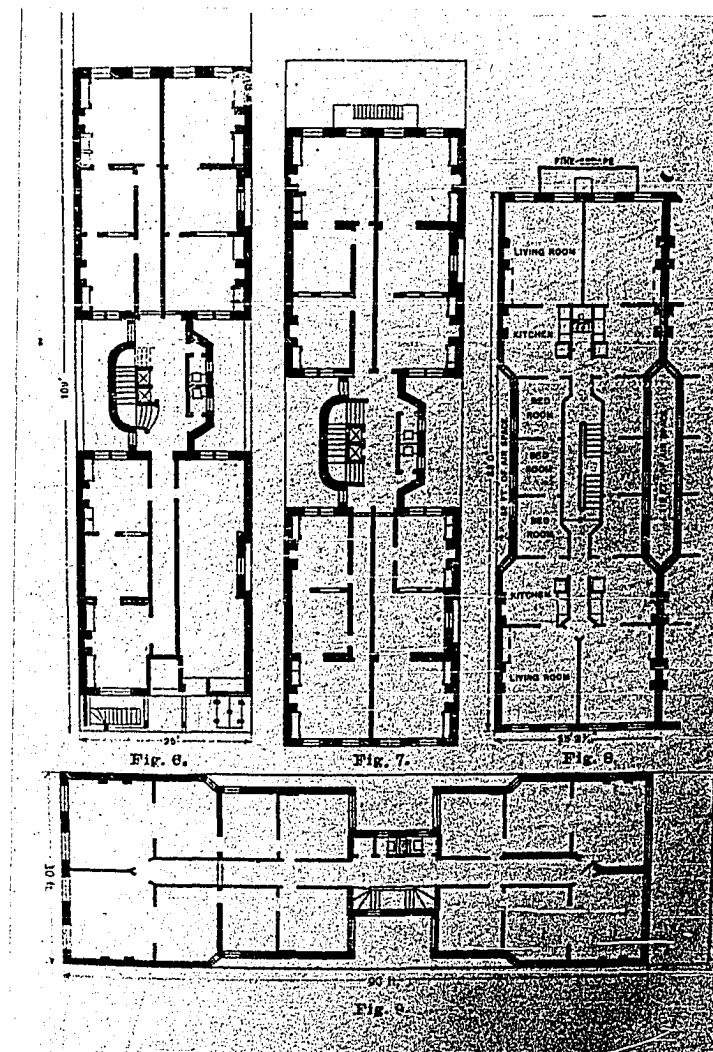


Fig. 6 Variations on the Dumbbell plan for tenements. Top left and center plans show winning design in the Plumber and Sanitary Engineer's 1878 competition. Reynolds, p. 71.

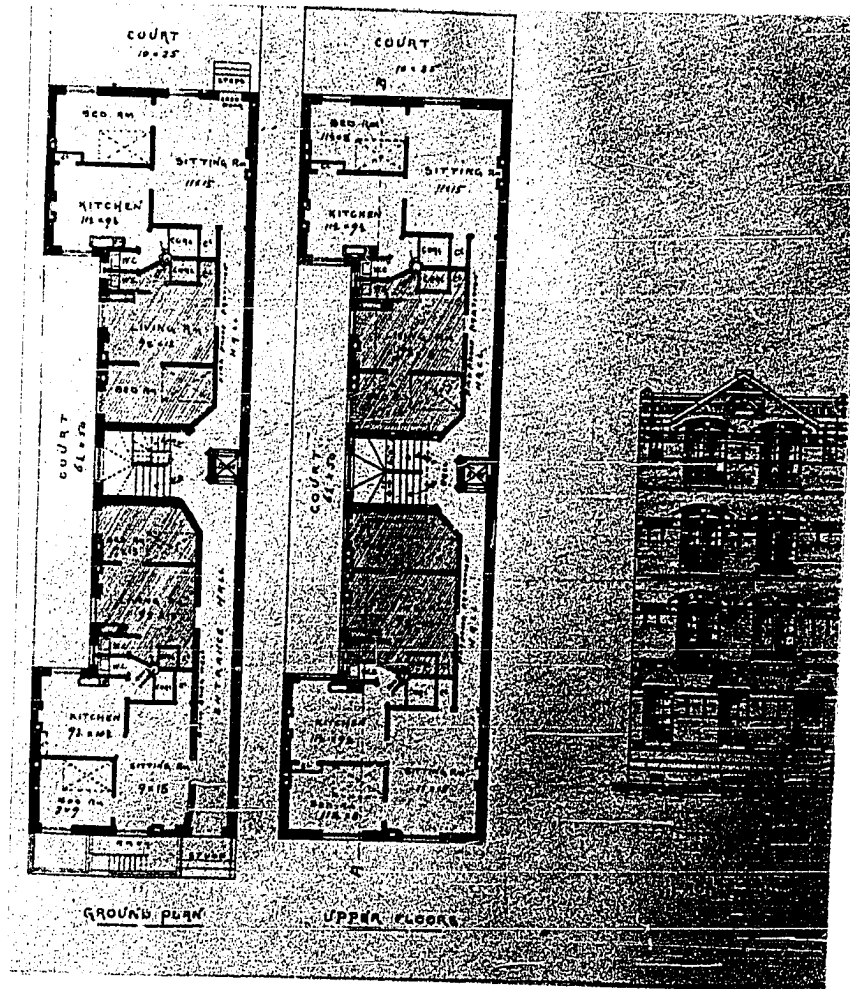


Fig. 7 25' wide tenement design with light court on one side, central stairs. "Chandler Scrapbooks". v. 1, No. 133

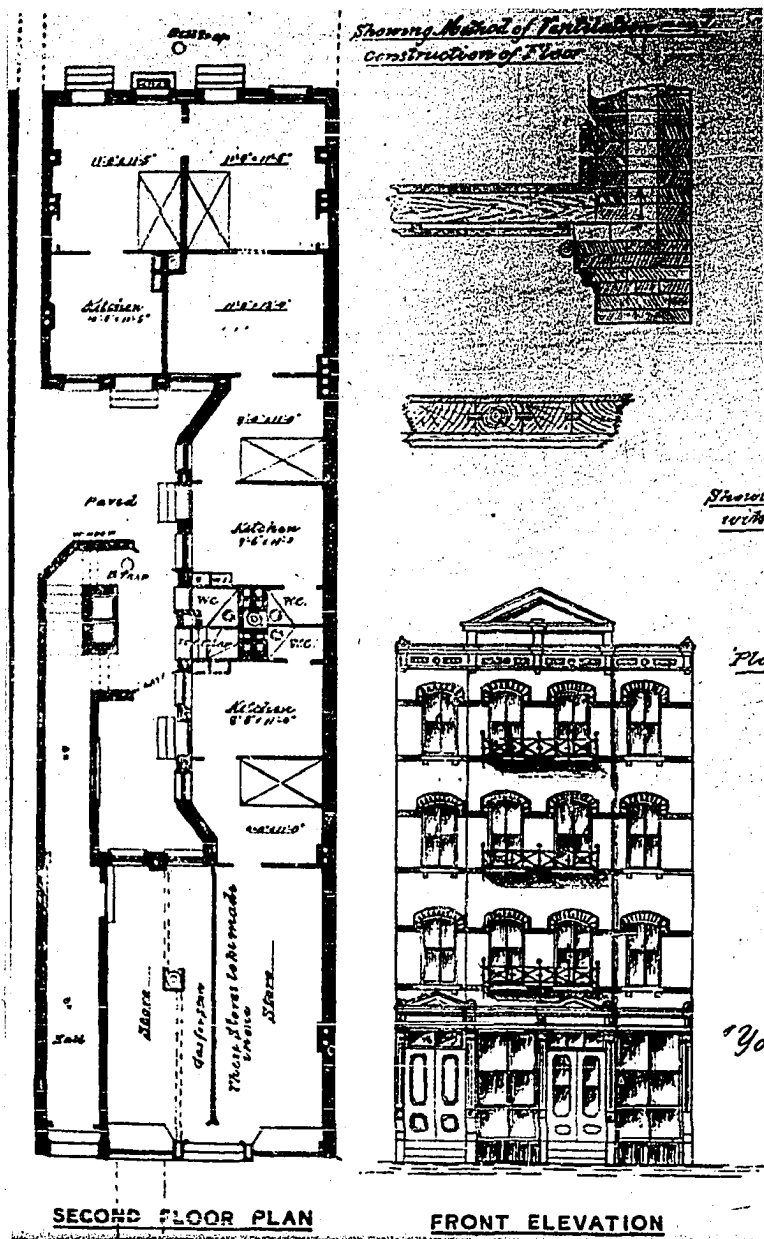


Fig. 8 25' wide tenement with stair tower in the light court. "Chandler Scrapbooks", v. 1.

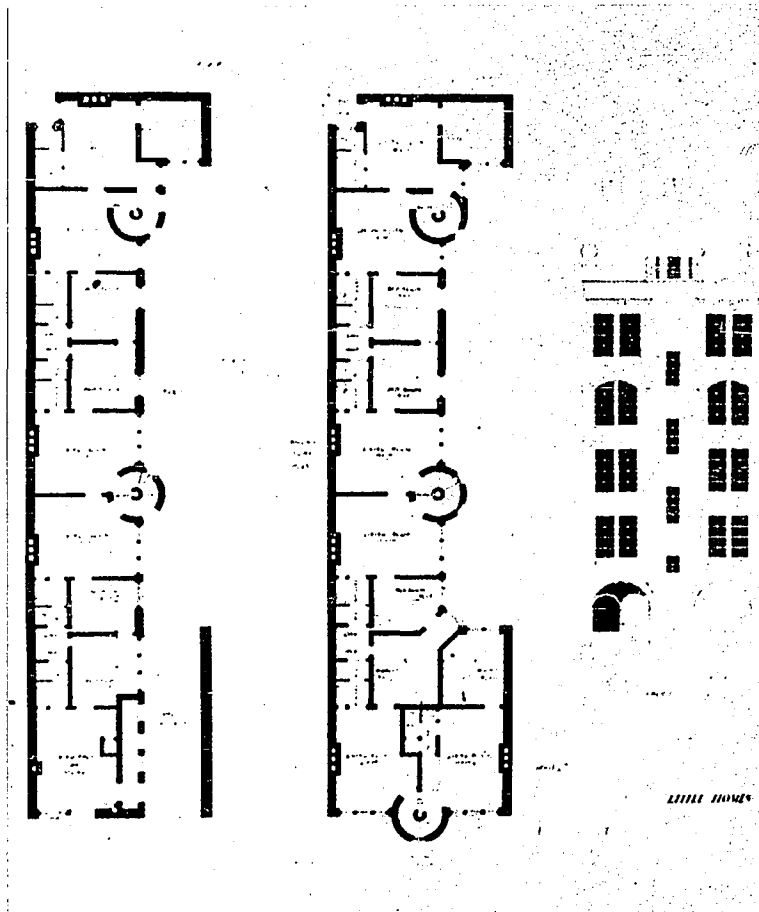


Fig. 9 25' wide tenement "Little Homes" with three exterior stair towers. "Chandler Scrapbooks", v. 1, No. 61.

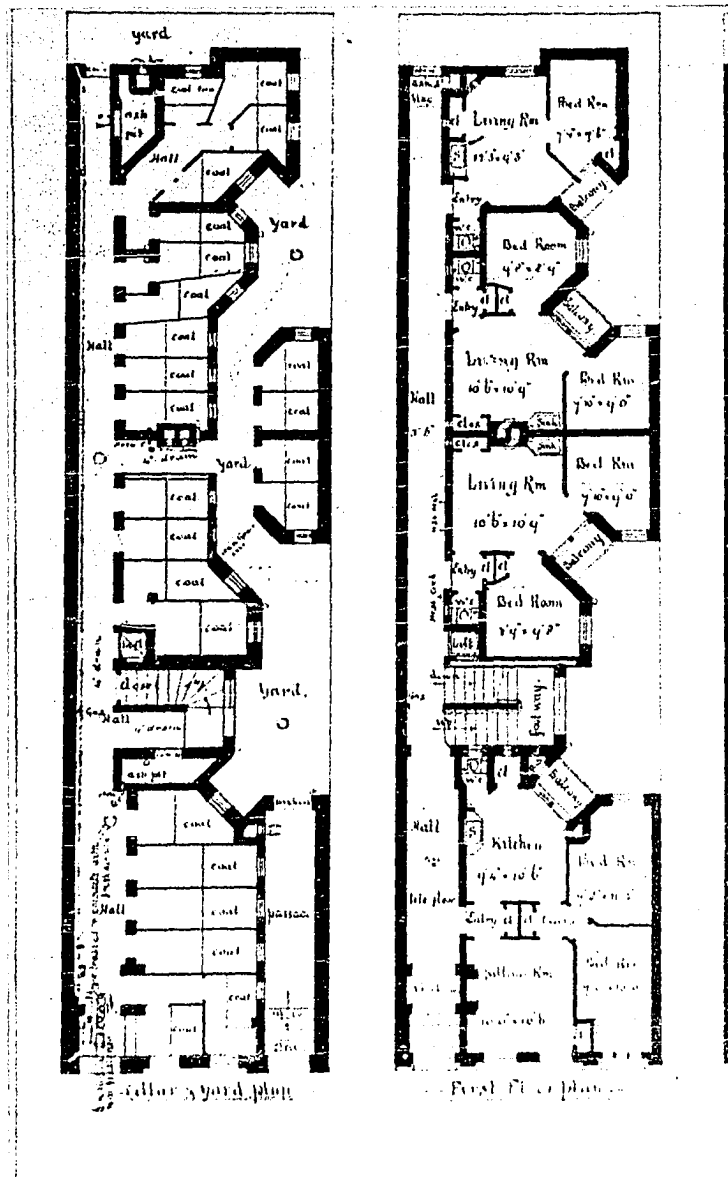


Fig. 10. 25' wide tenement with two light courts on one side, balcony for each unit. "Chandler Scrapbooks", v. 1, No. 71.



Fig. 11 Tower Buildings, Brooklyn, N.Y. Sponsored by Alfred Tredway White; Field Bros., architects. 1878-9
Photo: Cromley

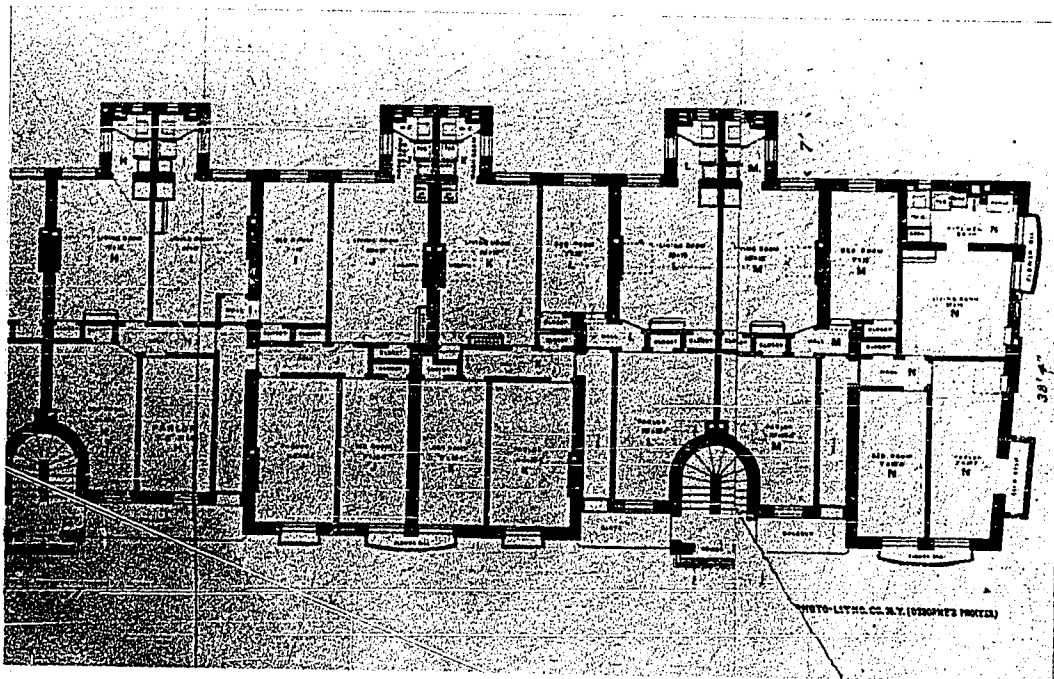


Fig. 12 Tower Buildings. Plan detail of Hicks Street section. A. T. White, Improved Dwellings for the Laboring Classes, 1879.



Fig. 13 Tower Buildings. View of the access balcony.
Photo: Cromley.

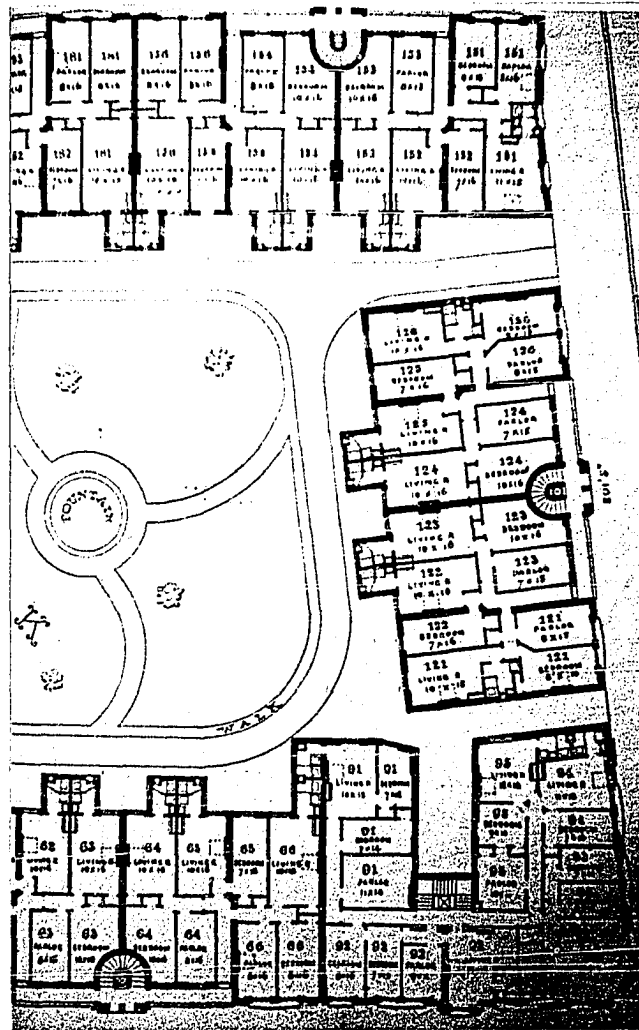


Fig. 14 Riverside Buildings, Brooklyn, N.Y. Sponsored by Alfred Tredway White; Field Bros., architects. 1890. Plan of half the complex and courtyard. A. T. White, Riverside Apartments, 1890.

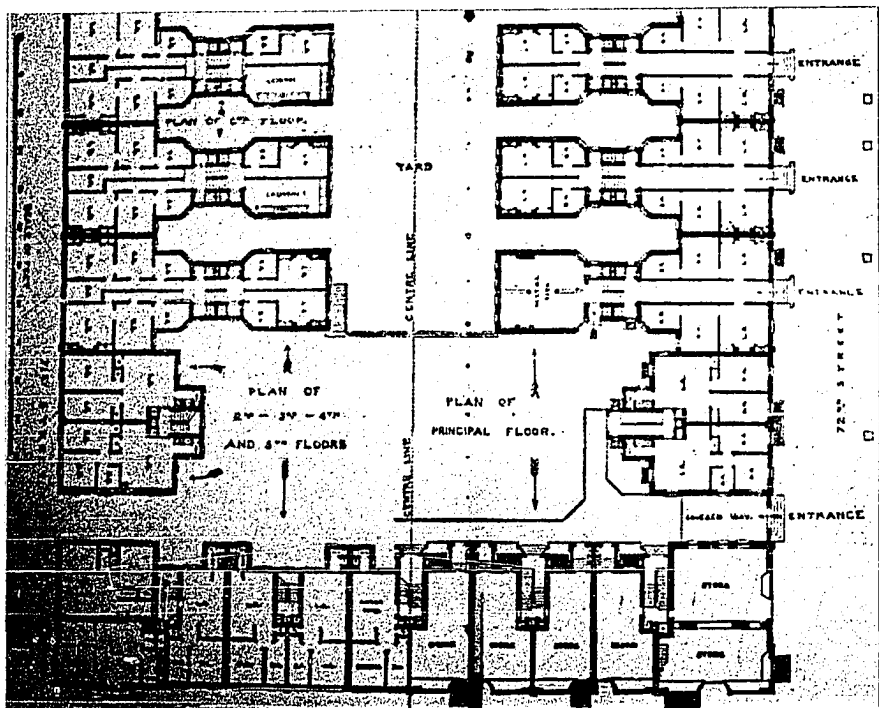


Fig. 15 Model Dwellings on First Avenue between 71st and 72nd Streets. Vaux and Radford, architects. 1880. Partial Plan. Gallatin, Tenement Reform, 1881.

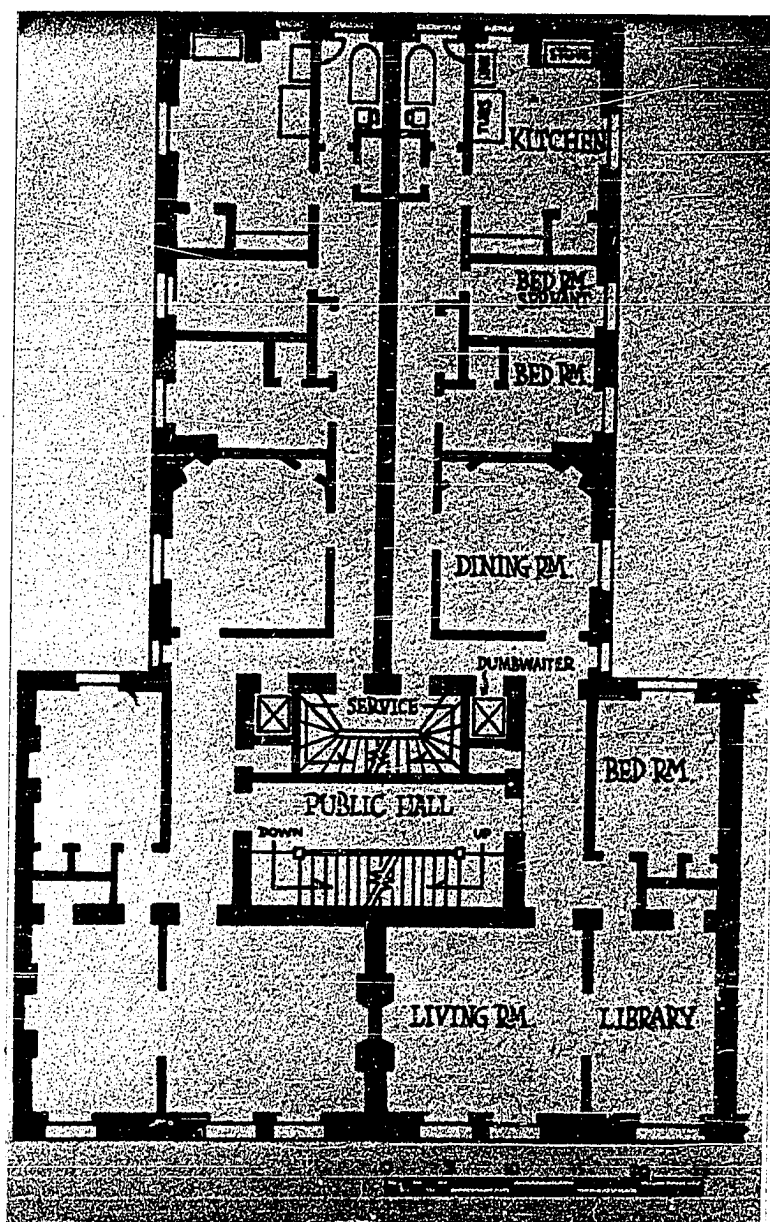


Fig. 16 Stuyvesant Apartments, plan. Richard Morris Hunt, architect. 1869. Montgomery Schuyler, American Architecture and Other Writings, 1961, v. 2, p. 519, fig. 143.

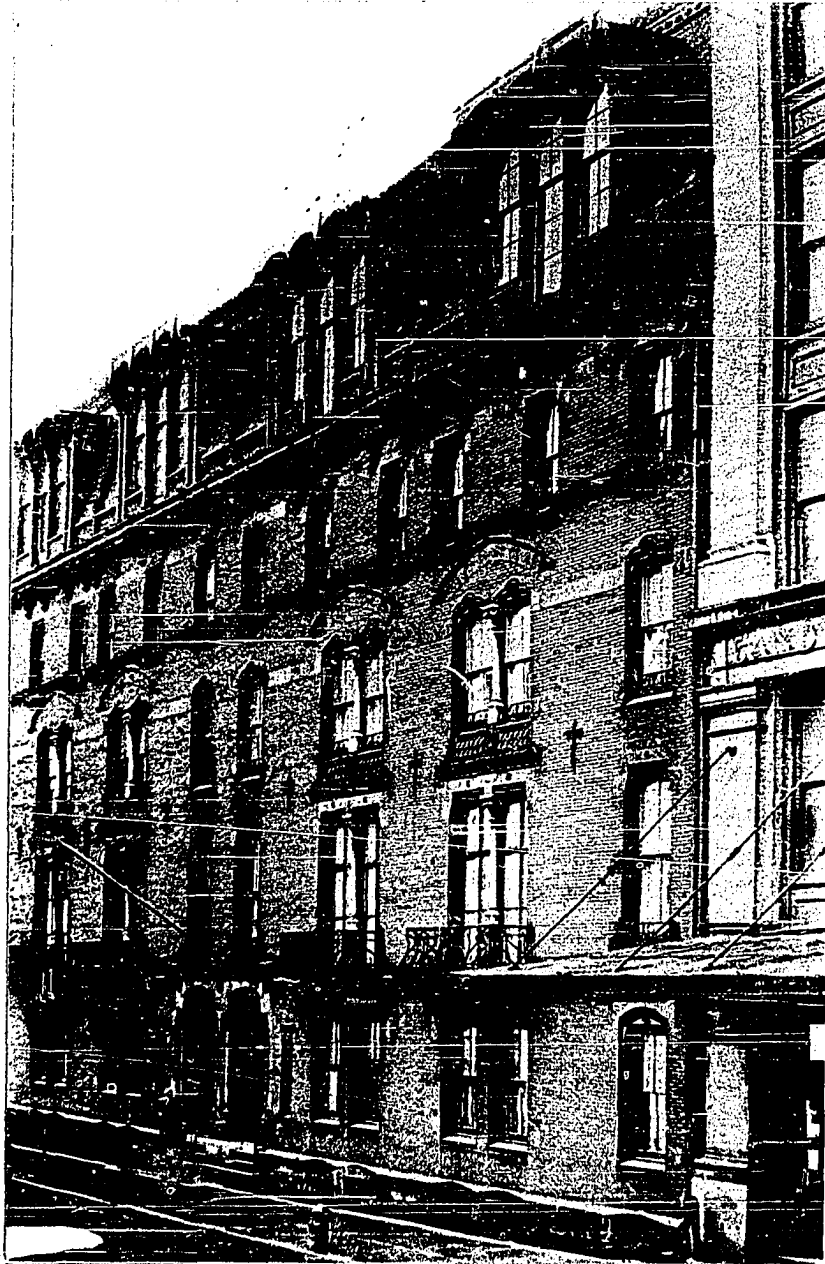


Fig. 17 Stuyvesant Apartments. View of facade.
Andrew Alpern, Apartments for the Affluent, p. 13.

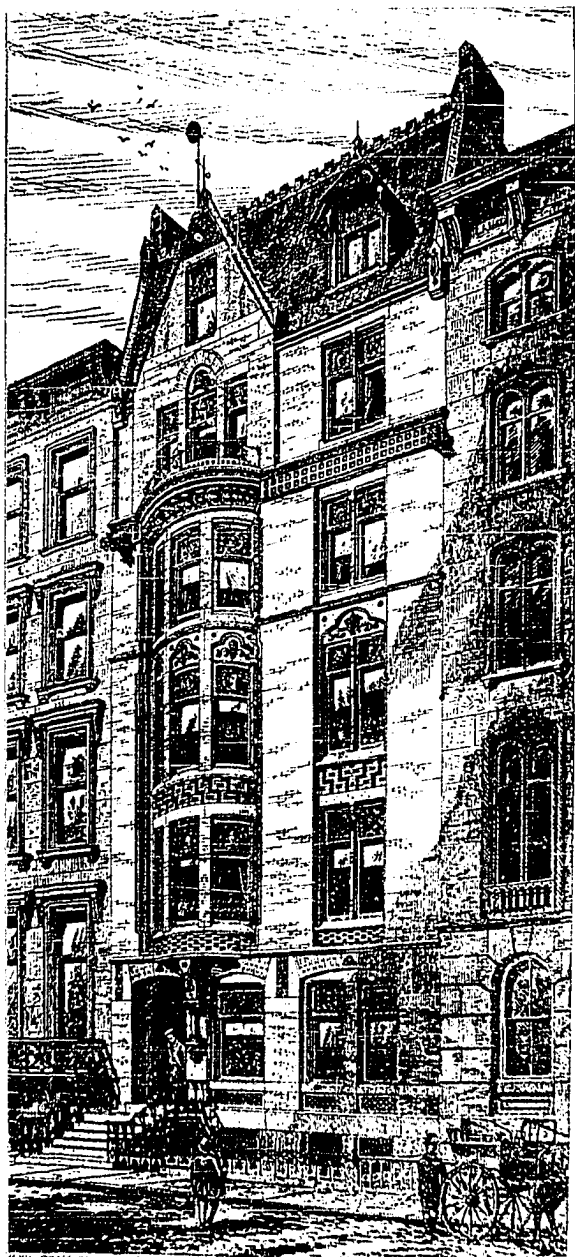


Fig. 18 French Flats on East 21st Street. Bruce Price, architect. View of facade. American Architect and Building News 3 (May 1878): 156.

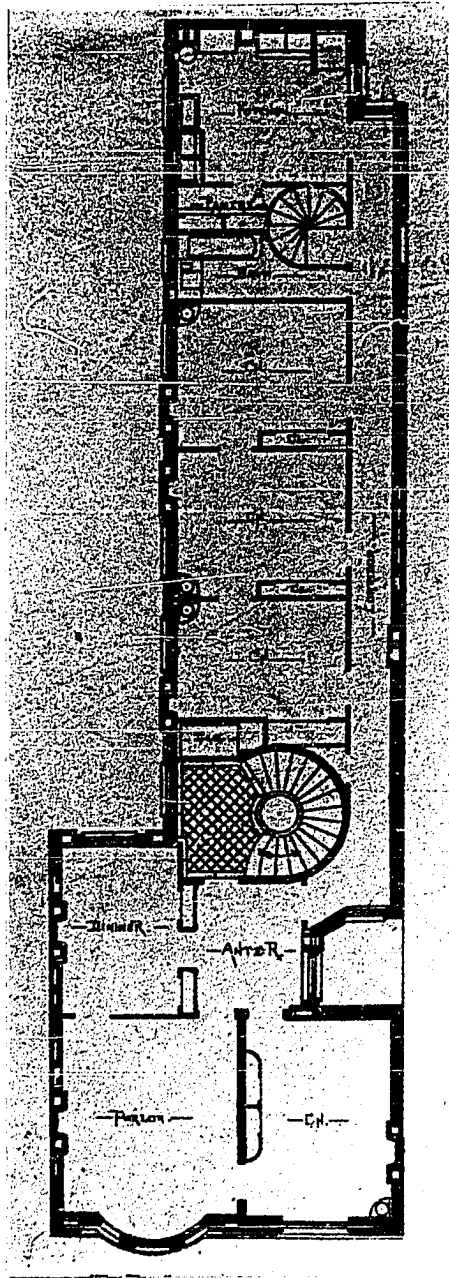


Fig. 19 French Flats on East 21st Street. Plan.

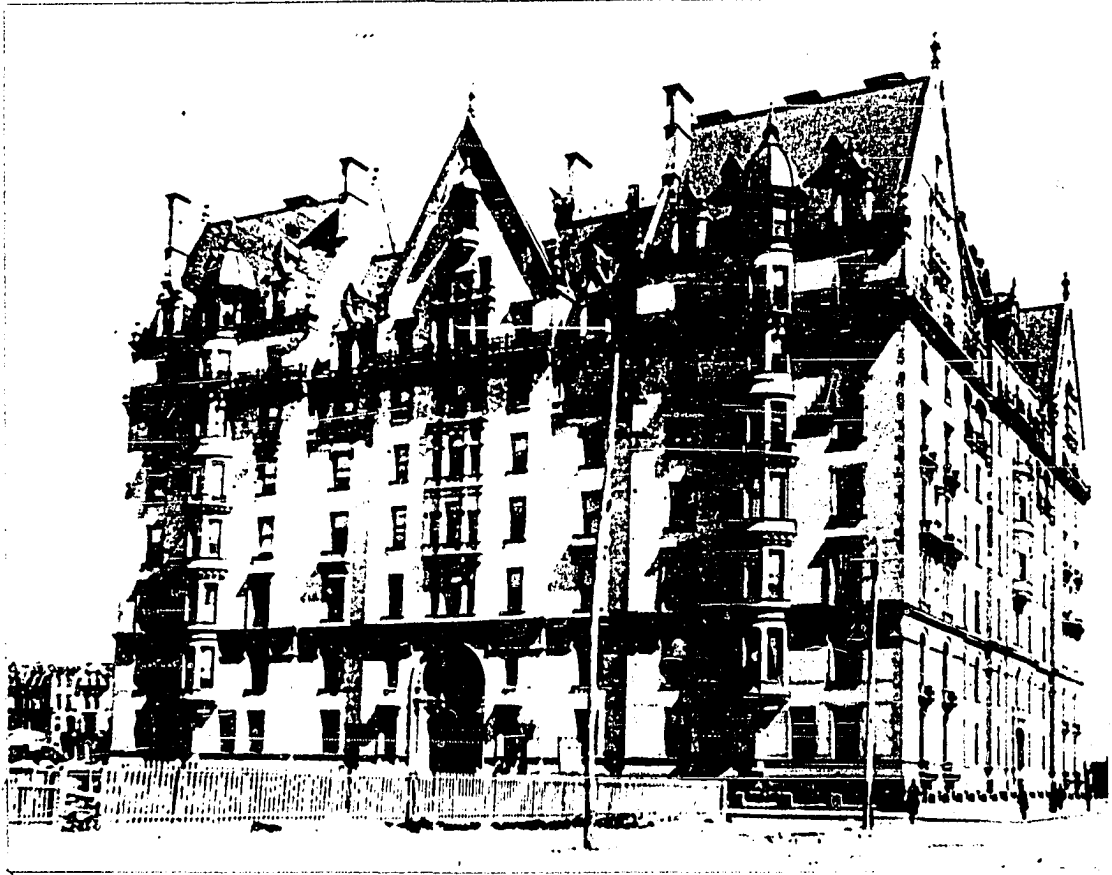


Fig. 20 Dakota Apartments, 72nd Street and Central Park West. Henry Hardenbergh, architect. 1884. Alpern, Apartments for the Affluent, p. 21.

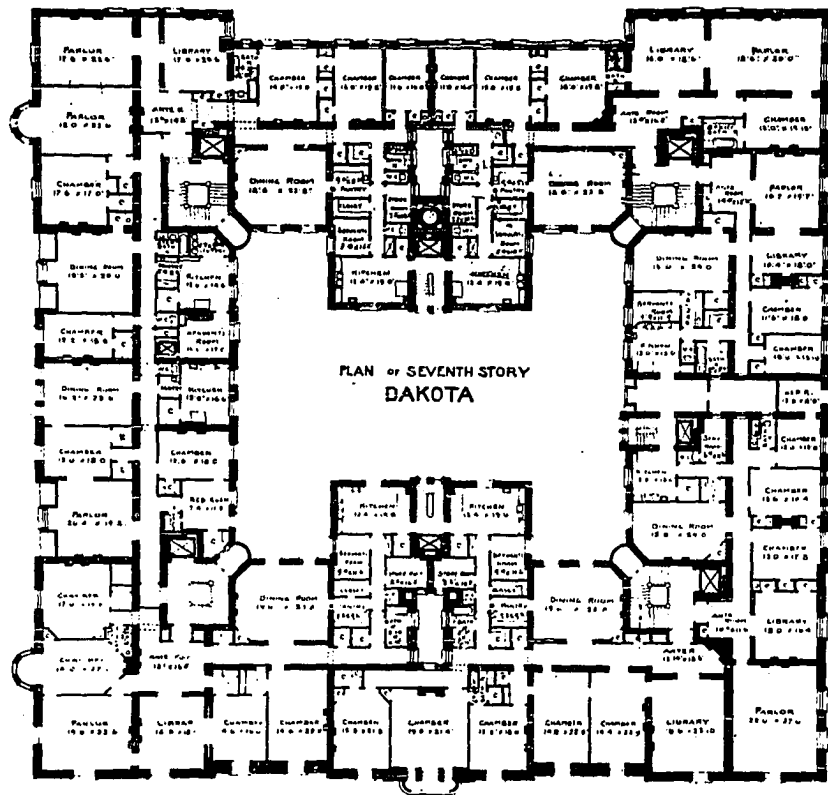


Fig. 21 Dakota Apartments, plan. Alpern, p. 21.

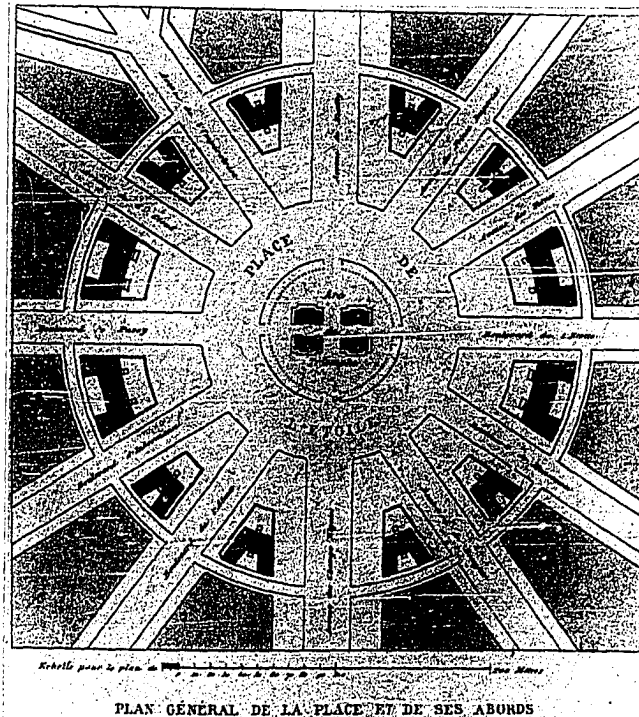


Fig. 22 Plan of the Place de L'Etoile, Paris, showing location of new apartment buildings. Hittorff, Architecture de Paris, 1871, Pl. 4.

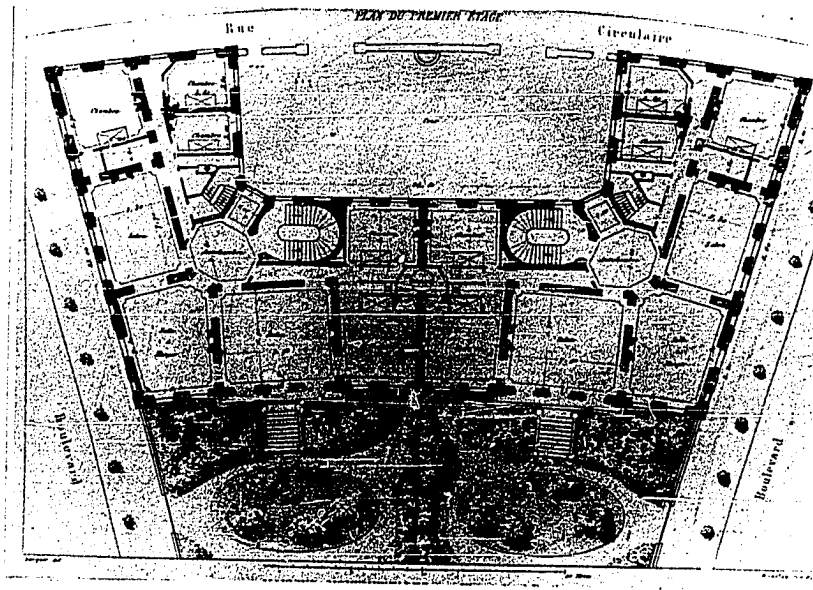


Fig. 23 Apartment building on the Place de L'Etoile, Paris. M. Rohault de Fleury, architect. Hittorff, Pl. 5.

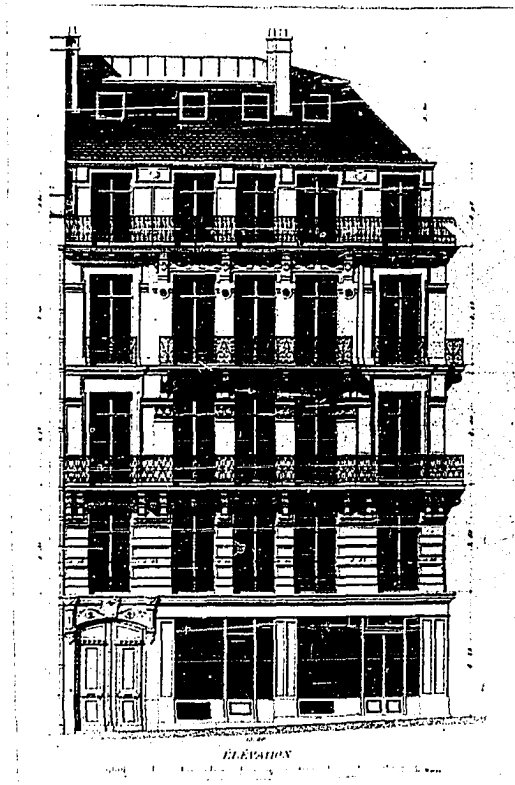


Fig. 24 Apartment building at No. 27, Ave. des Champs Elysees. Hittorff, Pl. 63.

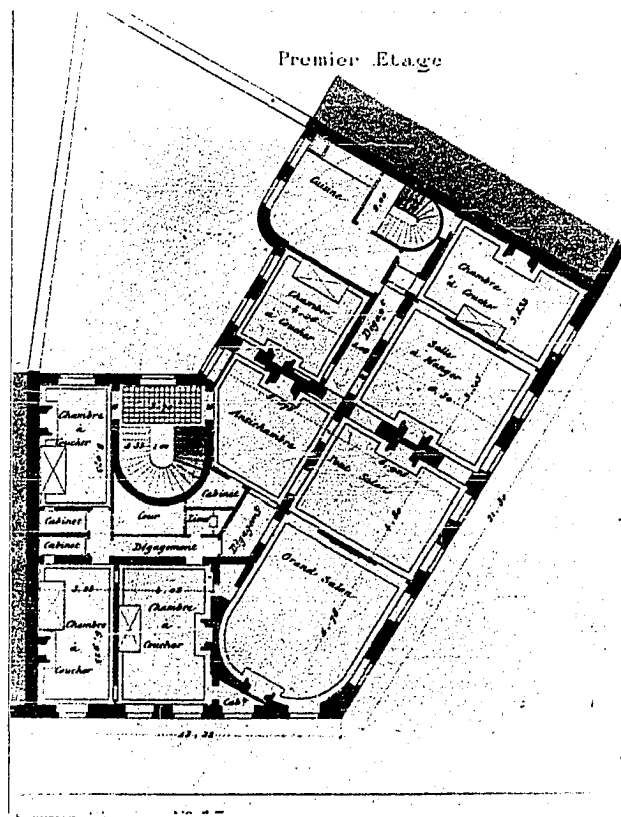


Fig. 25 Apartment Building at No. 37, Ave. des Champs
Elysees, plan. Hittorff, Pl. 62.

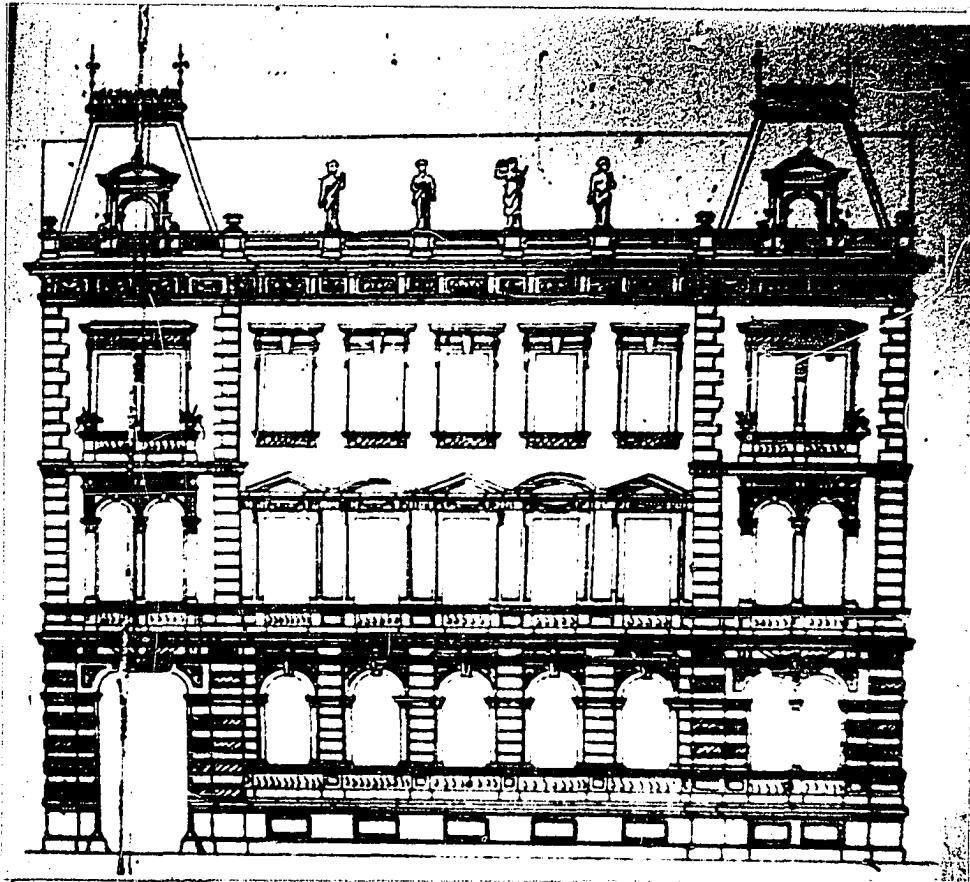


Fig. 26 Apartment house in Vienna, elevation. Niernsee, Report on the Construction and Embellishment of Private Dwellings in Vienna, 1875, Pl. IV.

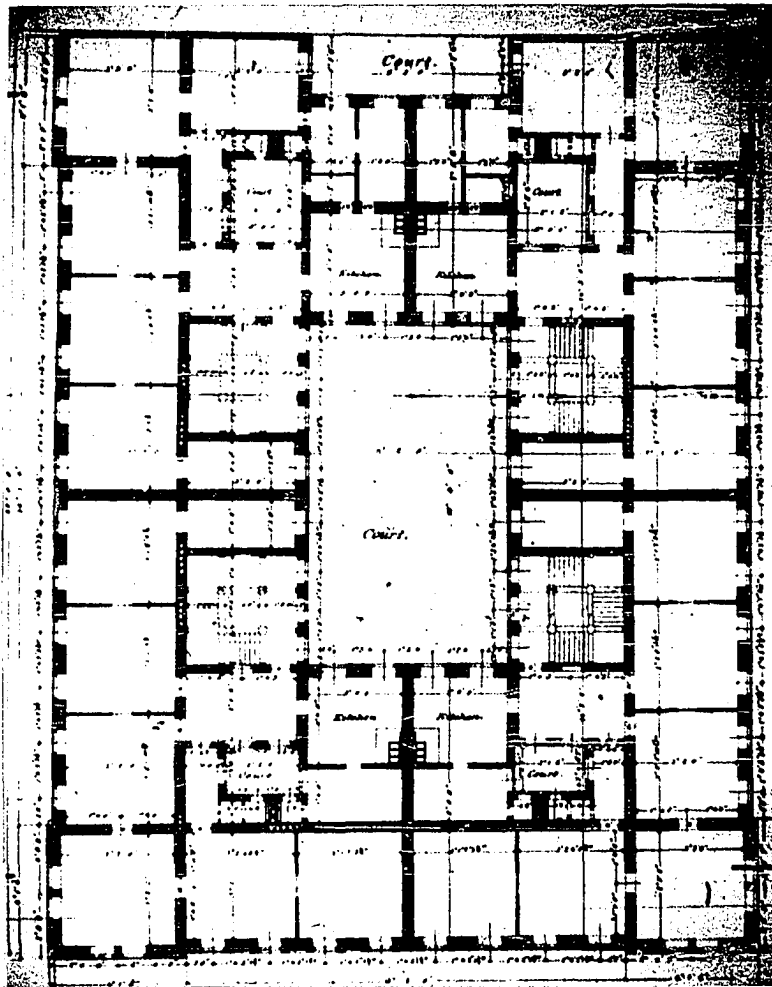


Fig. 27 Apartment house in Vienna, plan. Niernsee, Pl. IV.



Fig. 28 St. George's Terrace, London. Paul Hoffmann, architect. c. 1906. Shaw Sparrow, ed., Flats, Urban Houses and Cottage Homes. 1907, p. 40-41.

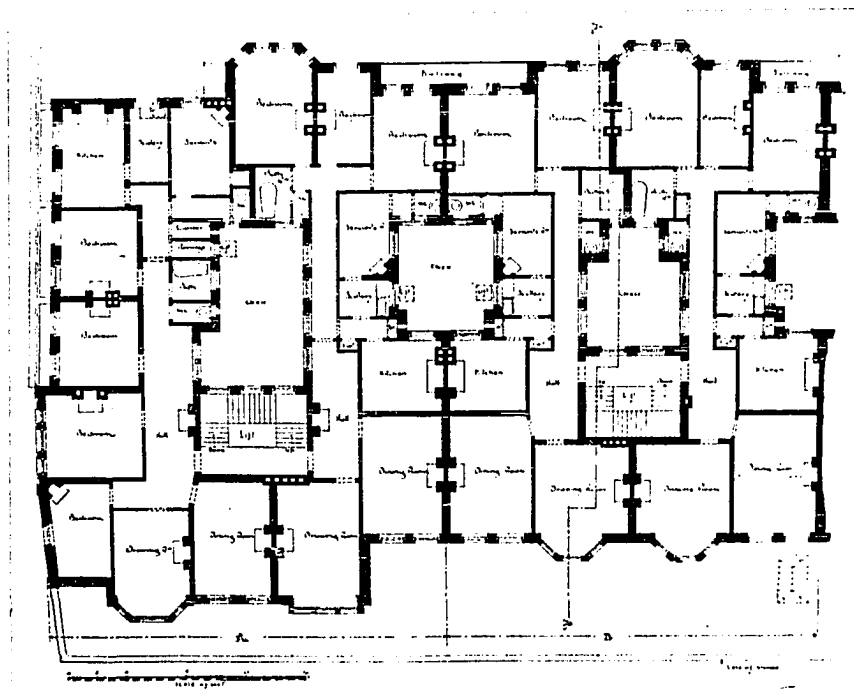


Fig. 29 St. George's Terrace, London. Partial plan.
Shaw Sparrow, p. 39.

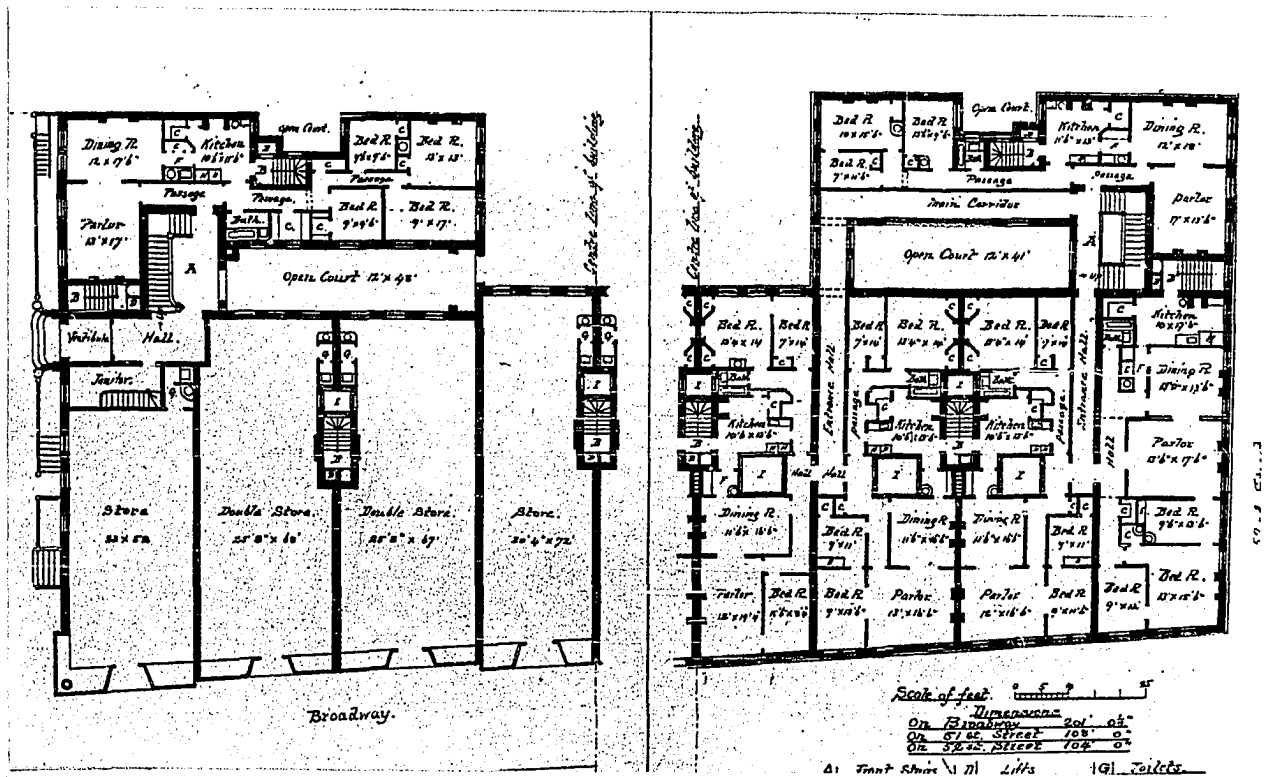


Fig. 30 The Albany Apartments, Broadway and 52nd Street. Plans. John C. Babcock, architect. American Architect and Building News 1 (Dec. 23, 1876).

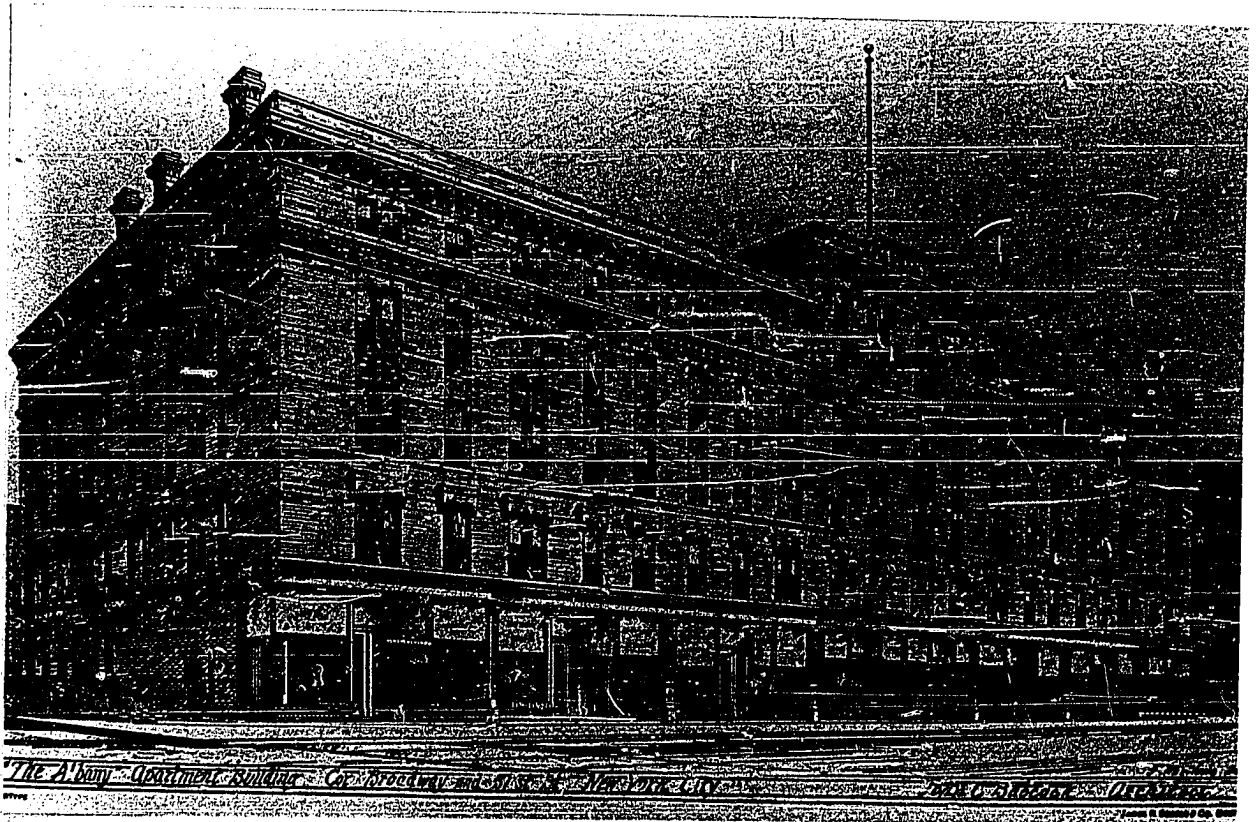


Fig. 31 The Albany. View of Broadway facade.
American Architect and Building News I (Dec. 23, 1876).

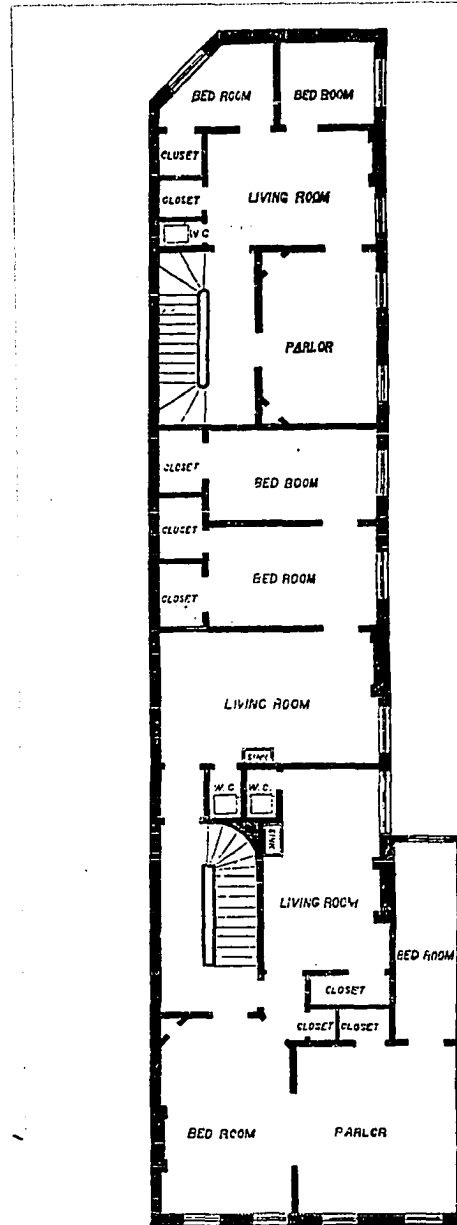


Fig. 32. A "Cheap flat", Plan. The Century, 1874, p. 66



Fig. 33. The Chatsworth Apartments, 72nd Street and Riverside Drive. John Scharsmith, architect. 1902-04. Hesselgren, Apartments of the Metropolis, 1908, p. 7.

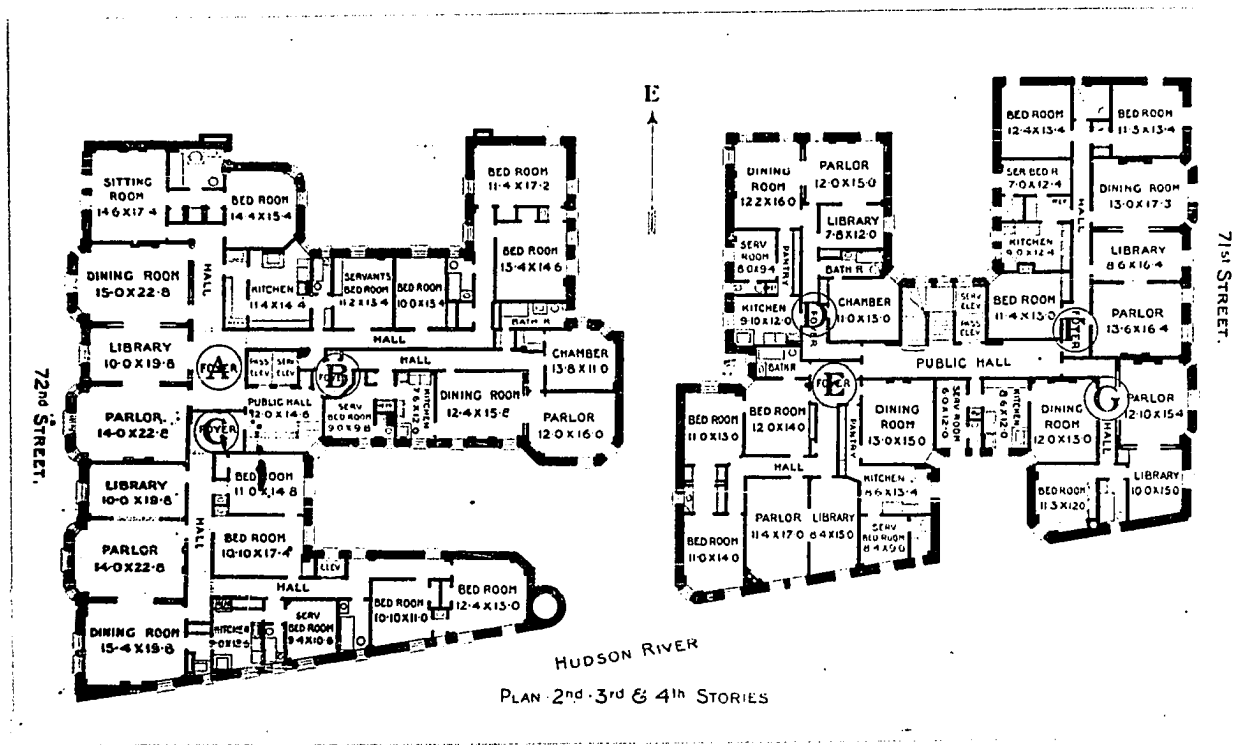


Fig. 34 The Chatsworth, Plans. Hesselgren, p. 8.

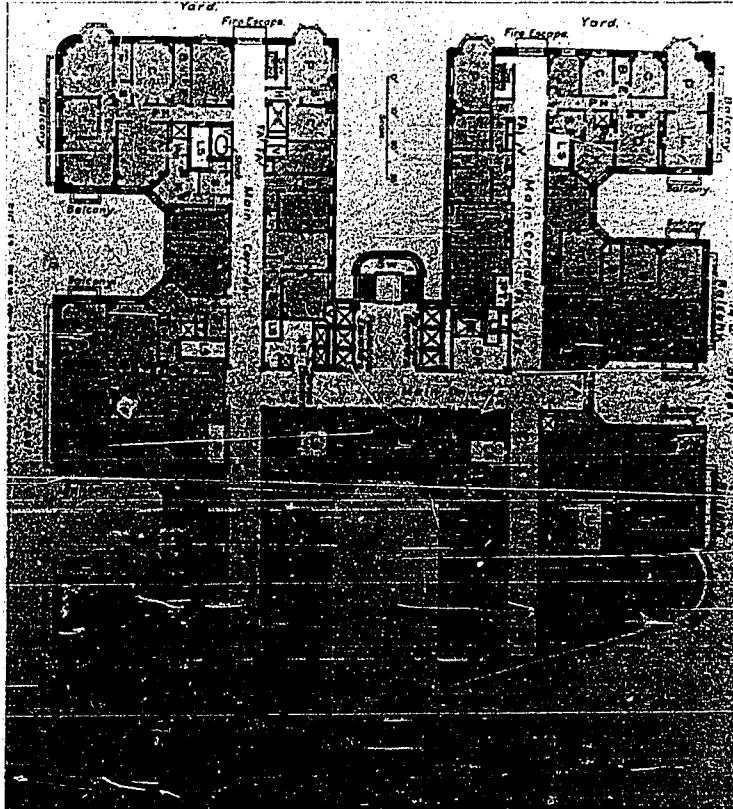


Fig. 35 The Ansonia Apartment Hotel, 74th Street and Broadway. Stokes and Duboy, architects. Clark, American Architect and Building News (1903): 7, fig. 13.



Fig. 36 Graham Court. View of facade. 1901. Clinton & Russell, architects. Alpern, Apartments for the Affluent, p 27

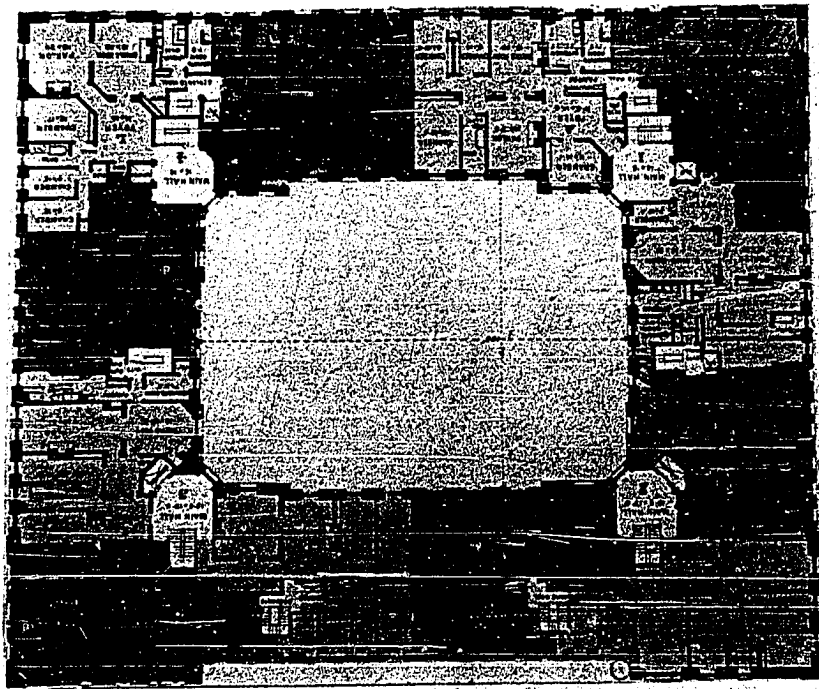


Fig. 37 Graham Court. Plan. Alpern, p. 26.

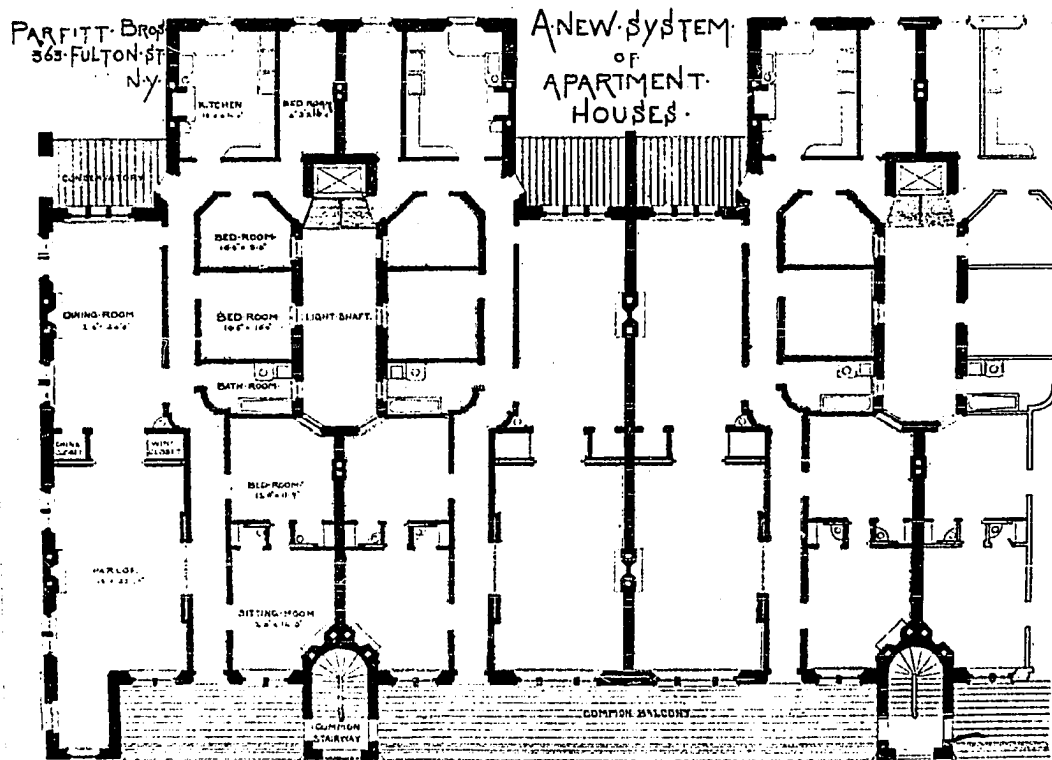


Fig. 38 "A New System of Apartment Houses" using balcony access. Parfitt Bros., architects. American Architect and Building News 1 (October 21, 1876).

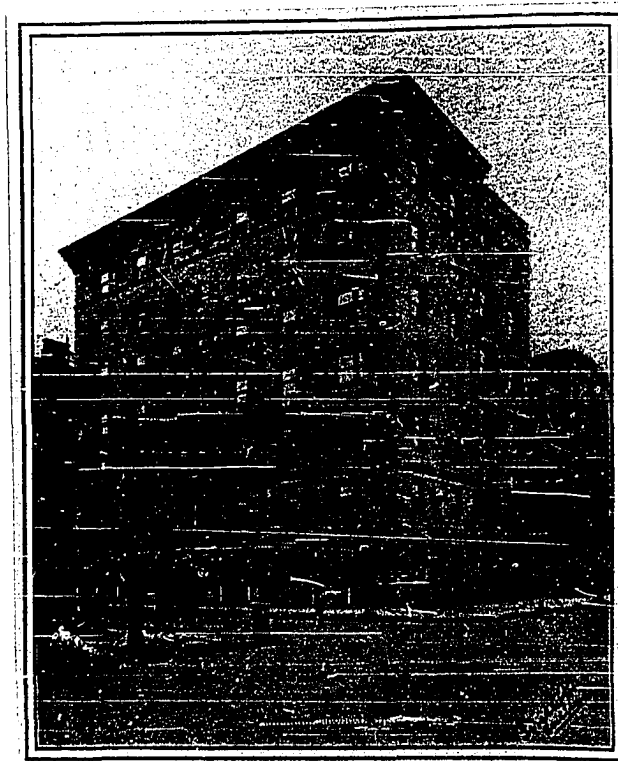


Fig. 39 78 Irving Place. View of facade. Israels and Harder, architects. Israels, Architectural Record 11 (1901): 494.

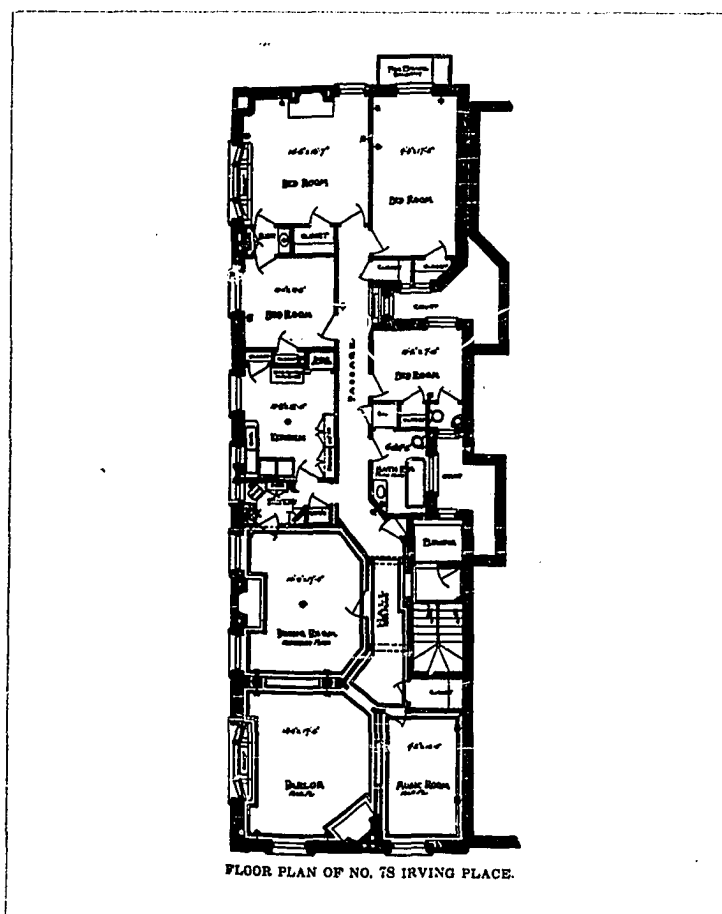
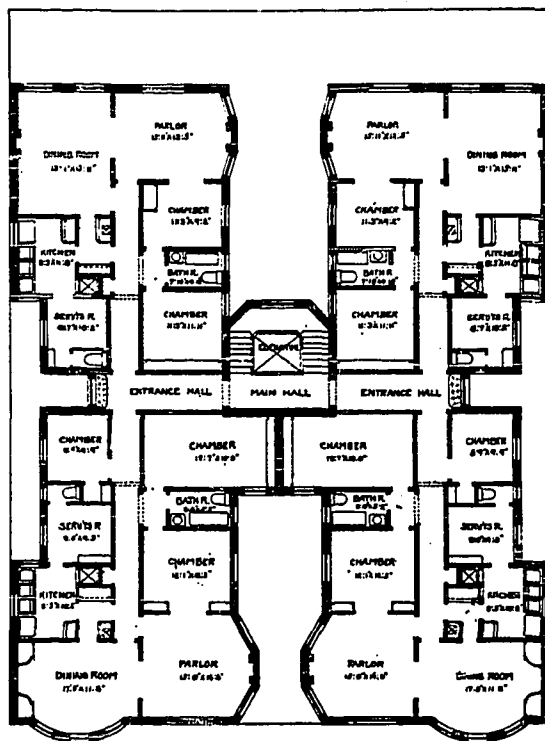


Fig. 40 78 Irving Place. Plan. Israels, p. 495.



FLOOR PLAN OF APARTMENT HOUSE.

Fig. 41 Apartment house on 55th Street west of Seventh Avenue. Plan. G. A. Schellenger, architect. Israels, Architectural Record 11 (1901): 499.

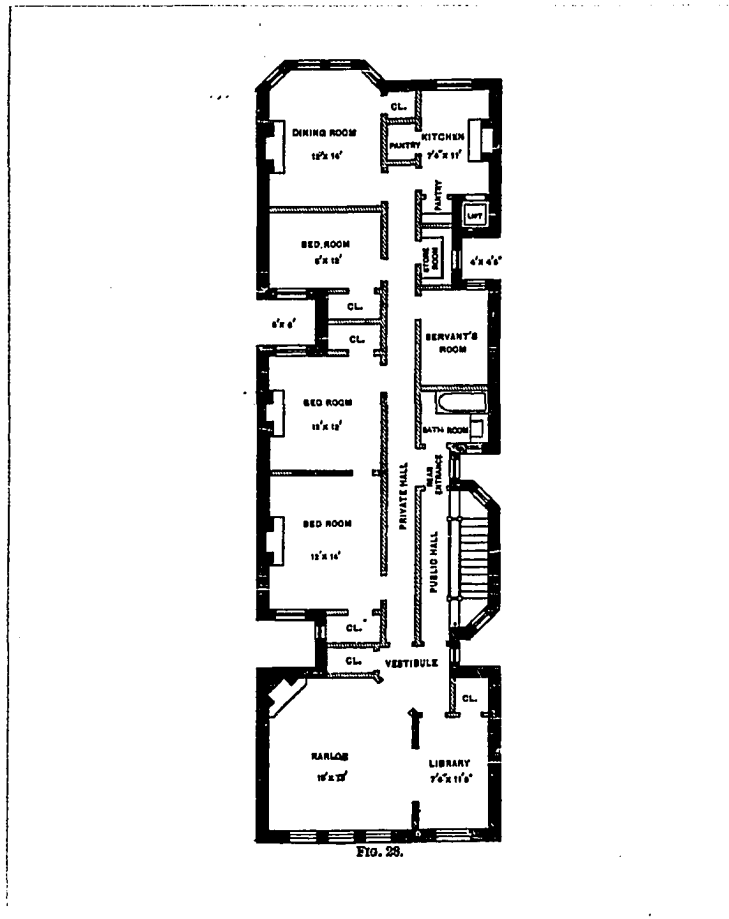


Fig. 42 25' wide apartment plan with dining room and kitchen at the rear. Tuthill, The City Residence, 1890, p. 38.

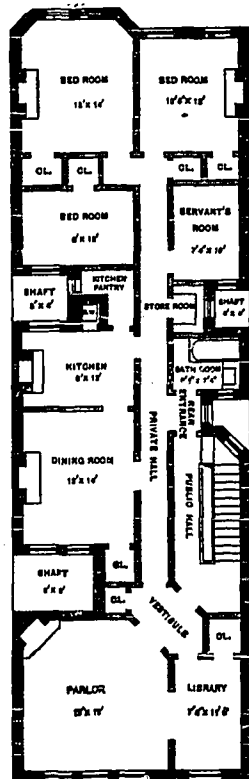


FIG. 43.

Fig. 43 25' wide apartment plan with dining room and kitchen in the middle. Tuthill, The City Residence, p. 39.

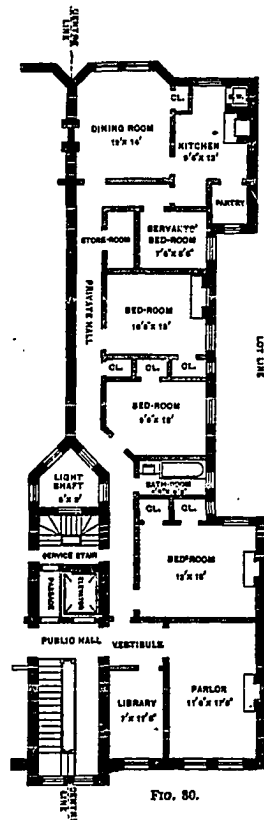


FIG. 80.

Fig. 44. 50' wide apartment house with two apartments per floor; plan of one unit. Tuthill, The City Residence, p. 44.

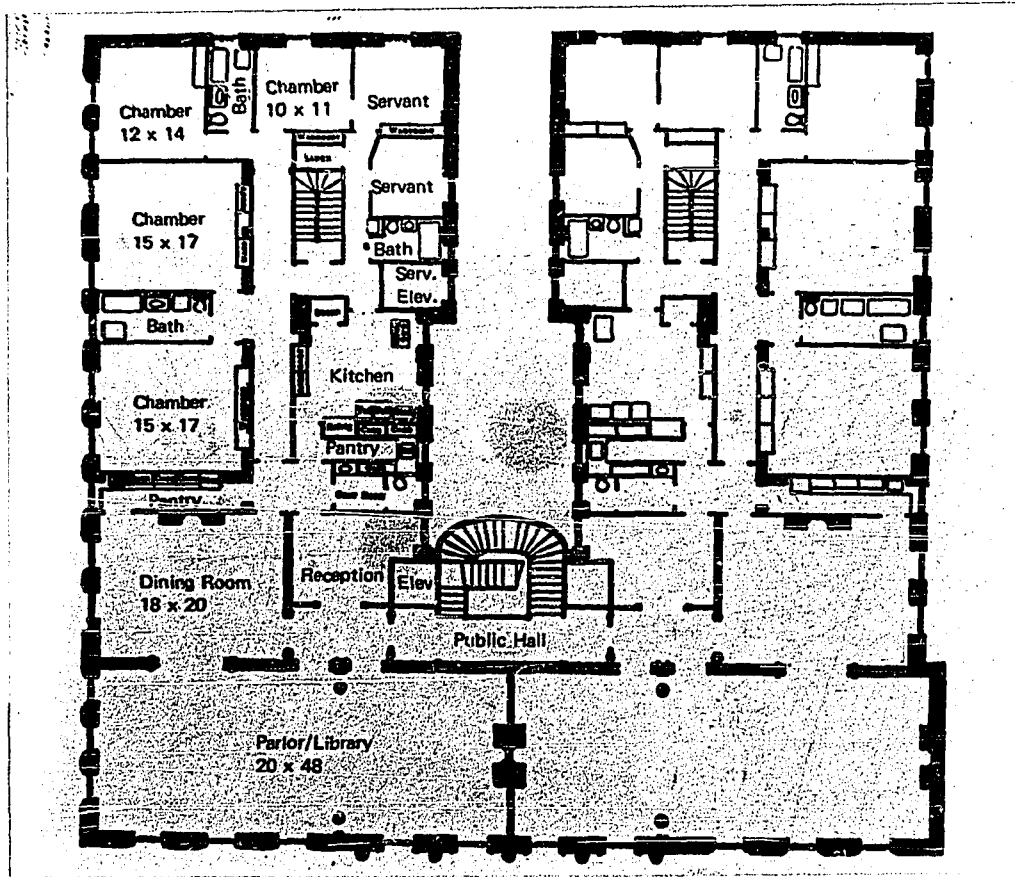


Fig. 45 667 Madison Avenue. Plan. 1902. Horgan and Slattery, architects. Alpern, Apartments for the Affluent, p. 32.

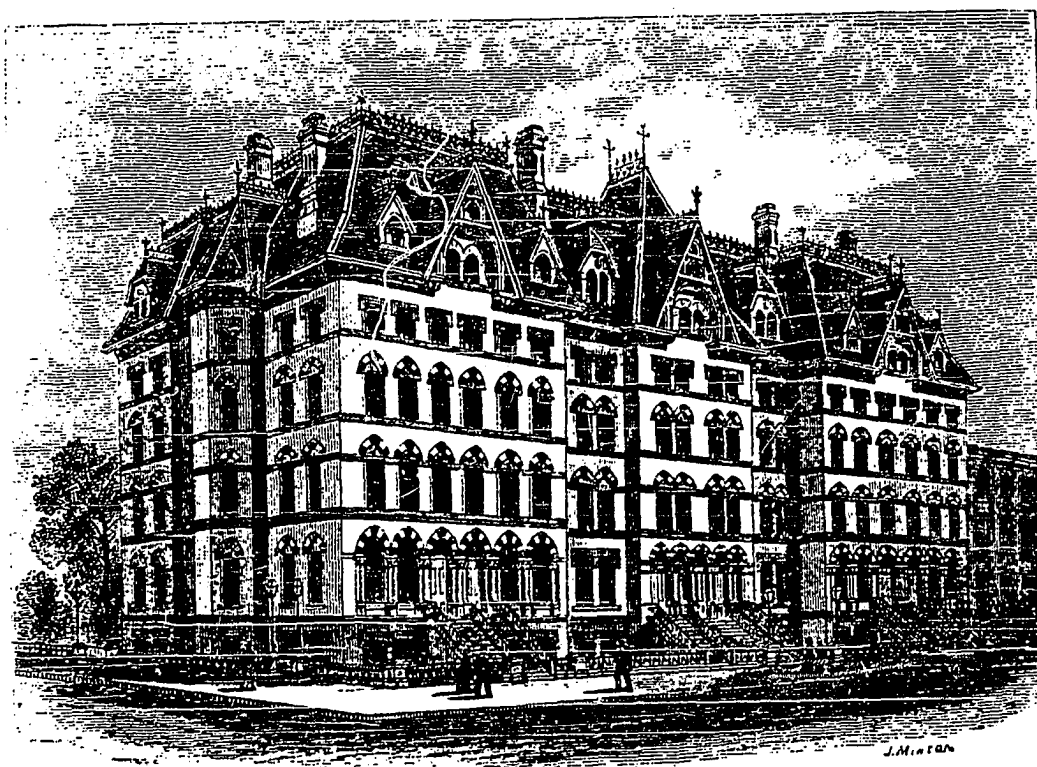


Fig. 46 Proposed Family Hotel. Henry Hudson Holly, architect. Richardson, The Century, 1874, p. 64.

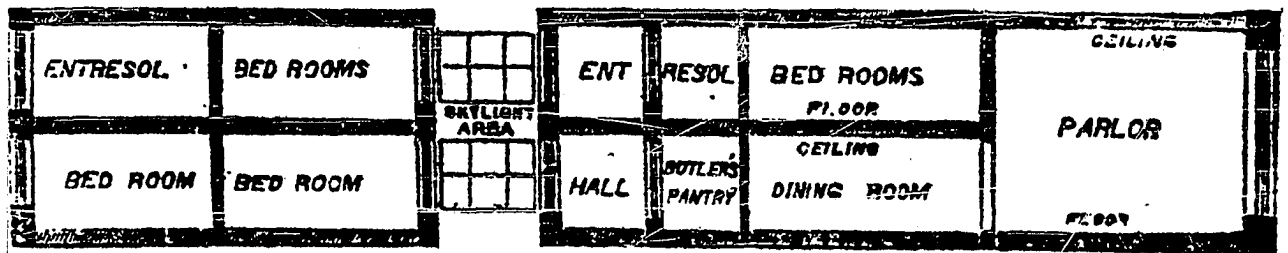


Fig. 47 Proposed Family Hotel. Section. The Century, 1874.

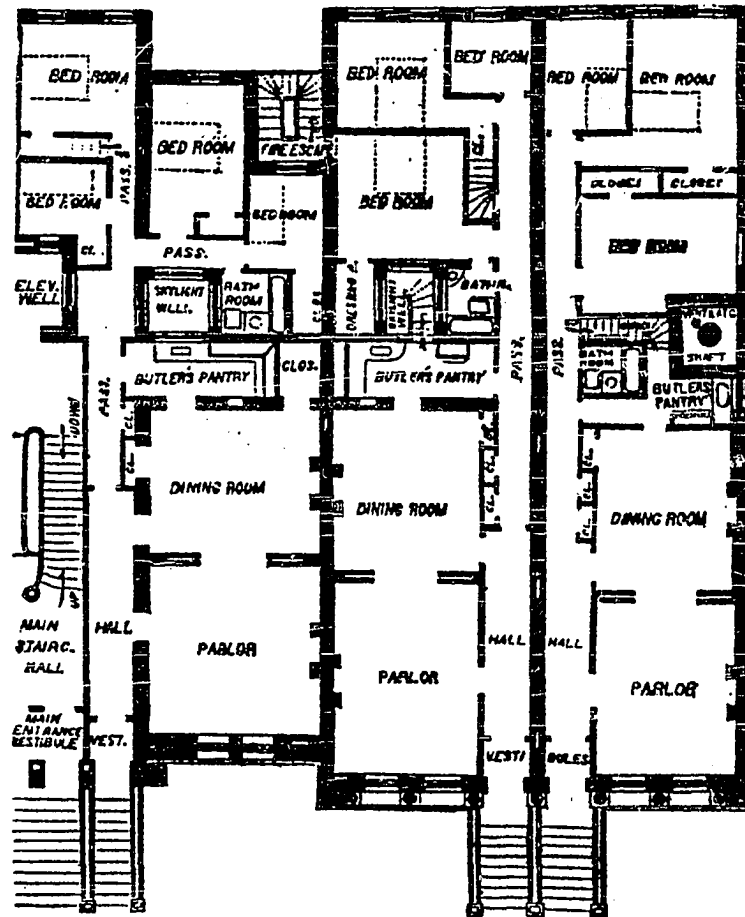


Fig. 48 Proposed Family Hotel. Plan. The Century, 1874, p. 73.

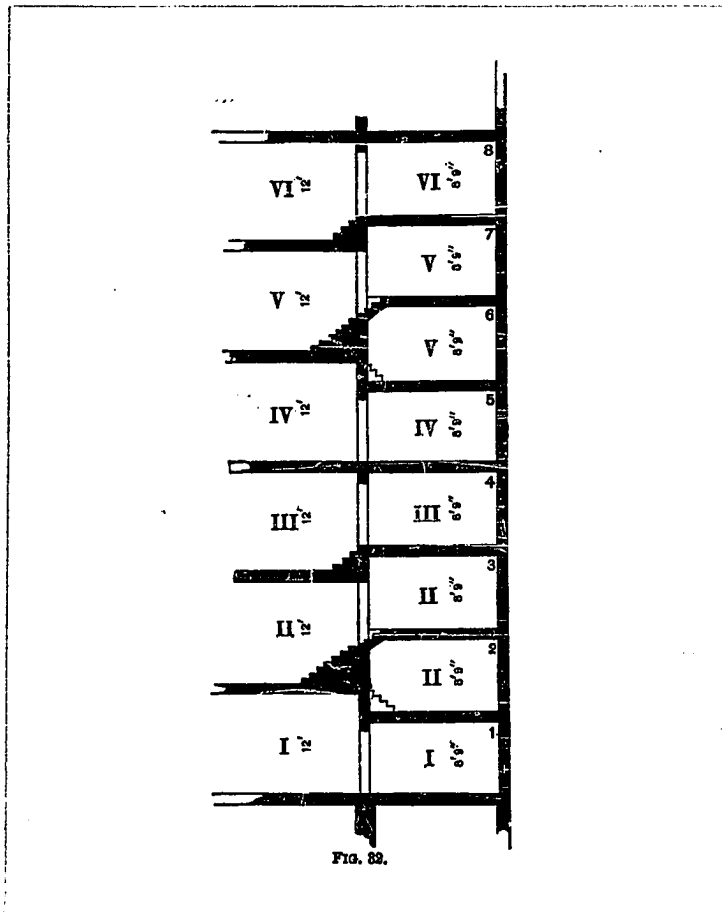
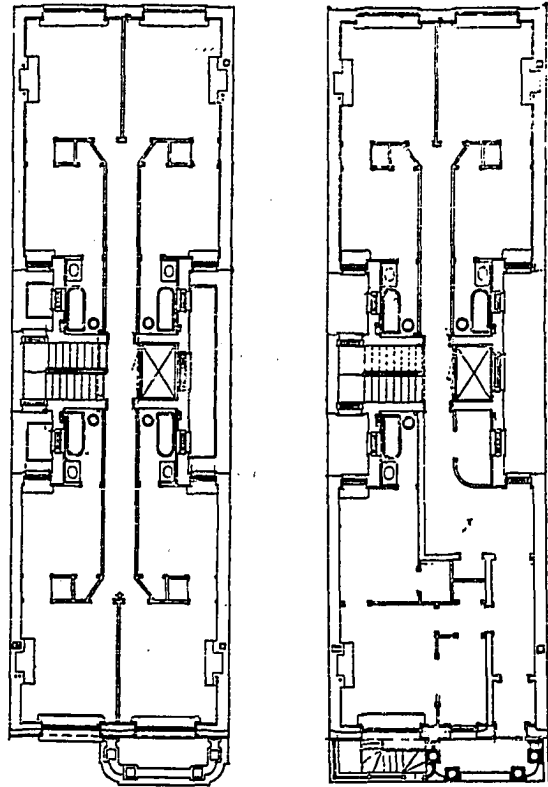


Fig. 49. Diagrammatic section through a duplex apartment. Tuthill, The City Residence, 1890, p. 44, fig. 32.



FLOOR PLAN OF THE CENTURY, A BACHELOR APARTMENT
HOUSE AT 119 W. 45TH ST.

Fig. 50. The Century, a bachelor apartment at 119 West 45th Street. Plan. Israels, Architectural Record 11, 1901, p. 507.



Fig. 51. University Plaza Apartments. View. I. M. Pei, architect. Alpern, Apartments for the Affluent, p. 151.

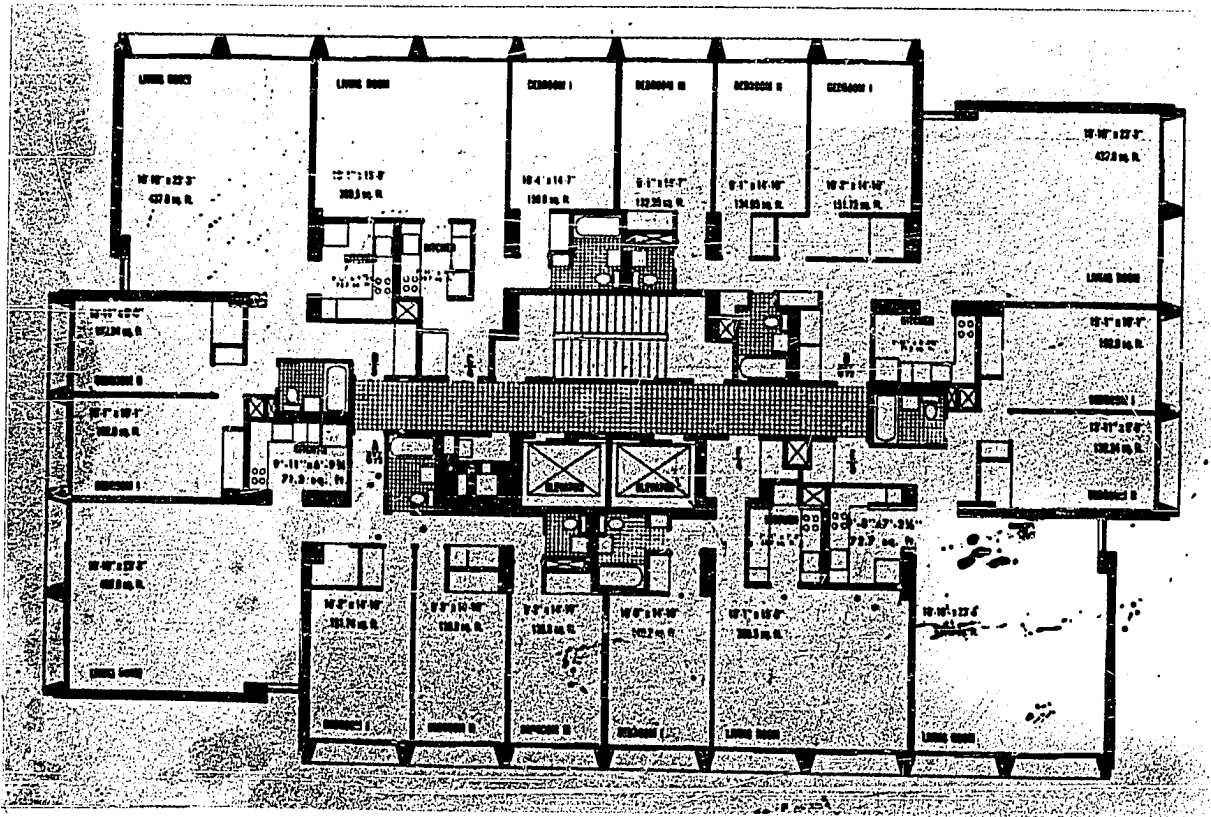


Fig. 52 University Plaza Apartments. Plan. Alpern, p. 150.



Fig. 53 . Olympic Tower, Fifth Avenue and 52nd Street.
Skidmore, Owings and Merrill, architects. Alpern,
Apartments for the Affluent, p. 159.

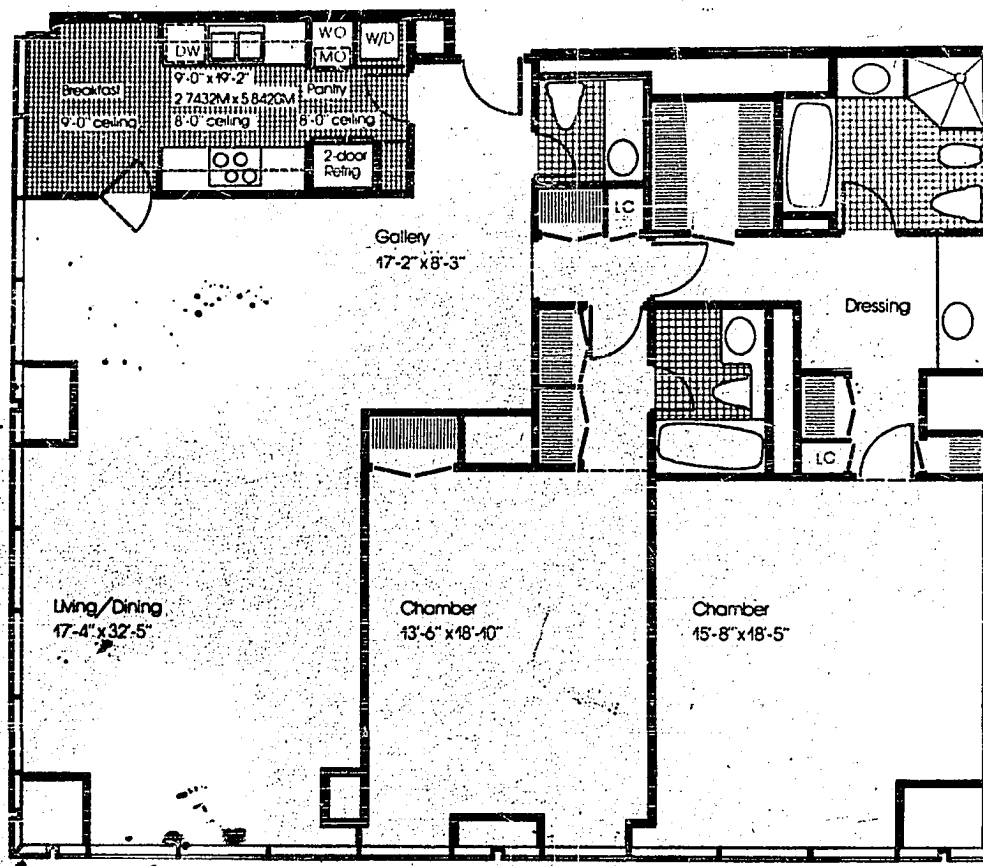


Fig. 54 Olympic Tower. Plan of one apartment.
Alpern, p. 158.

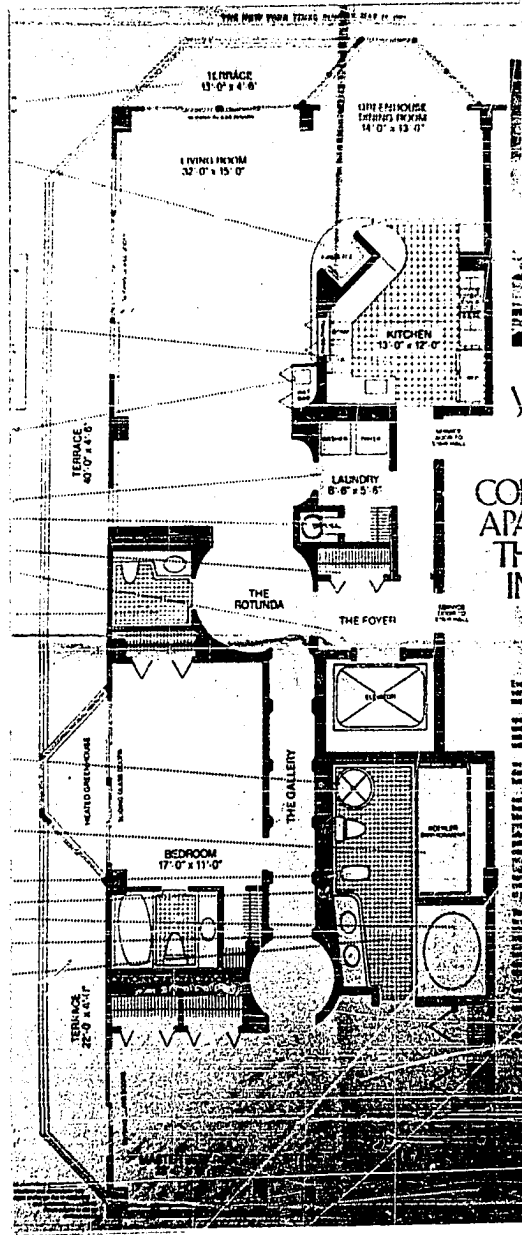


Fig. 55 . The Terrace Apartments, Fort Lee, New Jersey.
New York Times, May 17, 1981, R5.