

# LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT



## **ROSENWALD COURT APARTMENTS (ORIGINALLY MICHIGAN BOULEVARD GARDEN APARTMENTS)**

**4600-58 S. Michigan Ave., 4601-59 S. Wabash Ave., 45-77 E. 46th St.,  
46-78 E. 47th St.**

**Preliminary and Final Landmark Recommendation adopted by the Commission  
on Chicago Landmarks, September 7, 2017**



**CITY OF CHICAGO  
Rahm Emanuel, Mayor**

**Department of Planning and Development  
David Reifman, Commissioner**

*The Commission on Chicago Landmarks, whose nine members are appointed by the Mayor and City Council, was established in 1968 by city ordinance. The Commission is responsible for recommending to the City Council which individual buildings, sites, objects, or districts should be designated as Chicago Landmarks, which protects them by law.*

*The landmark designation process begins with a staff study and a preliminary summary of information related to the potential designation criteria. The next step is a preliminary vote by the landmarks commission as to whether the proposed landmark is worthy of consideration. This vote not only initiates the formal designation process, but it places the review of city permits for the property under the jurisdiction of the Commission until a final landmark recommendation is acted on by the City Council.*

*This Landmark Designation Report is subject to possible revision and amendment during the designation process. Only language contained within a designation ordinance adopted by the City Council should be regarded as final.*

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# **ROSENWALD COURT APARTMENTS**

**(ORIGINALLY MICHIGAN BOULEVARD GARDEN APARTMENTS)**

**4600-4658 S. MICHIGAN AVENUE, 4601-4659 S. WABASH AVENUE,  
45-77 E. 46TH STREET, 46-78 E. 47TH STREET**

**BUILT: 1907, 1908, 1929-1930**

**ARCHITECTS: KLABER & GRUNSFELD (1929-1930); BISHOP & CO.  
(1907); HENRY L. NEWHOUSE (1908)**

Rosenwald Court Apartments (originally known as the Michigan Boulevard Garden Apartments) are an architecturally and historically significant building in the Grand Boulevard community area. Most commonly known as Bronzeville, the neighborhood was the historic center of African American life in the period before and after World War II. Built at the end of the 1920s, Rosenwald Court Apartments were intended to be affordable housing for African Americans, who were often limited in their housing choices due to the era's housing discrimination practices. As such, the complex of buildings exemplifies the important effort to provide housing for low- and moderate-income African American Chicagoans during the early twentieth century.

The Rosenwald Court Apartments were commissioned by businessman and philanthropist Julius Rosenwald, president of the mail-order giant Sears, Roebuck & Co. Born to German-Jewish immigrant parents, Rosenwald was keenly aware of the effects of discrimination based on religion and race. He channeled his efforts into funding philanthropic endeavors on behalf of African American communities nationwide during the 1910s and 1920s, including the construction of schools and YMCAs. Rosenwald Court Apartments were his largest contribution to the creation of modern, affordable housing for a Chicago community in need of both.

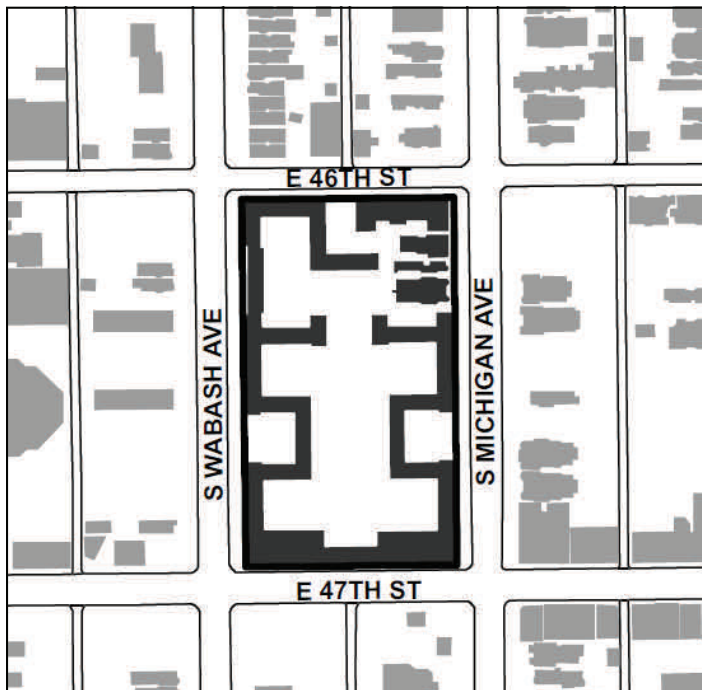
The buildings exemplify the larger history of the "garden apartment," a large-scale building type comprised of affordable rental units that were commonly constructed during 1920s. Typically, 4- to 6- stories in height, the buildings feature landscaped courtyards. Garden apartments were constructed in cities as far-flung as New York and Vienna, and Rosenwald was influenced by such buildings when he conceived this South Side complex.

The Rosenwald Court Apartments were constructed between 1929 and 1930 and consist of two existing buildings that dated from 1907 and 1908, and the large-scale, purpose-built garden apart-





The Rosenwald Court Apartments are located on the block between S. Michigan Ave., Wabash Ave., S. 46th St., and S. 47th St. The 1929-30 portion of the building shown above, was commissioned by Julius Rosenwald. This garden apartment building dominates the block with its combination of Arts and Crafts brickwork with Art Moderne terra cotta detailing.



The Rosenwald Court Apartments encompass an entire city block. The complex includes smaller buildings at the northeast corner that date from 1907 and 1908 and the purpose-built garden apartment buildings with interior courtyards. The 47th Street elevation, shown above, contains the building's storefronts.

ments that cover almost an entire city block. The 1929-30 portion was designed by architects Klaber & Grunsfeld, who were specialists in housing design.

Early in his career, Eugene Klaber had worked on affordable housing schemes while practicing in New York and later became a leading housing expert while working for the United States government in the 1930s and 1940s. Ernest A. Grunsfeld, Jr., who was Rosenwald's nephew, had experience with garden apartment design on the scale of the Rosenwald Court Apartments while previously working as a draftsman for New York architect Andrew J. Thomas. Beyond his work for Rosenwald, Grunsfeld designed a number of significant Chicago buildings, including the Jewish People's Institute Building (designed with Klaber; a designated Chicago Landmark) and the Adler Planetarium.

The architects for the two earlier buildings on the site were Henry L. Newhouse, who designed the building on the corner of E. 46th St. and S. Michigan Ave., and Bishop & Co., who designed the building just to the south along Michigan Ave. Newhouse was a Jewish architect who, today, is best known for his small residential buildings in the Washington Park Court Chicago Landmark District as well as the Melissa Ann Elam House at 4726 S. King Dr. and the (Former) Anshe Shalom Synagogue Building at 754 S. Independence Blvd., both individually designated Chicago Landmarks. Thomas Bishop specialized in apartment design in the early twentieth century in middle- and upper middle-class neighborhoods along the lakefront.

Upon their completion in 1930, the Rosenwald Court Apartments were embraced by African Americans. Although originally intended for residents of modest means, the building complex soon attracted lawyers, school teachers, and others who appreciated the buildings' modernity and amenities, including landscaped public space, playgrounds, and stores. Soon, the buildings became a prestigious address in Bronzeville, a cachet that has lingered through the decades despite physical decline in the 1960s and later.

The Rosenwald Court Apartments were listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1981. Today, the buildings have recently been rehabilitated as affordable housing utilizing a variety of funding sources, including federal historic rehabilitation tax credits and they are once again a source of pride and a visual "landmark" in the Bronzeville community.

## **THE EARLY HISTORY OF THE BRONZEVILLE NEIGHBORHOOD**

In the early twentieth century, a burgeoning and culturally-vibrant African American community came into being on Chicago's South Side. By the 1930s, this community included portions of the Douglas, Grand Boulevard, and Washington Park community areas and was commonly known as "Bronzeville." Due to racial prejudice, African Americans formed in Bronzeville a complete community of homes, businesses, and institutions that were their own, but the community also faced great difficulties in finding modern, affordable housing.

African Americans resided in Chicago since at least the 1830s, but they had remained a relatively small percentage of the city's population until the early 1900s. World War I and the subsequent opening of job opportunities in the North for African American workers encouraged a "Great Migration" of southern African Americans to northern cities, including Chicago. By 1920, African





**The Rosenwald Court Apartments are located on the block bound by S. Michigan Ave., Wabash Ave., S. 46th St., and S. 47th St. The 1929-30 portion of the building shown above, was commissioned by Julius Rosenwald. (Top) The garden apartment features a combination of Arts and Crafts brickwork with Art Moderne terra cotta detailing. (Bottom) The red brick apartment buildings were constructed in 1907 and 1908 and display elements of the Classical Revival style of architecture.**





A group of African American men gathered outside of a Walgreens Drugs store at 35th and State streets, during the race riots of 1919. State Street was one of the thriving commercial areas within the “Black Belt.” (Photo Source: Chicago History Museum)



This image from 1941, shows the Regal Theater on S. Grand Avenue one of the thriving commercial corridors within the “Black Metropolis.” (Photo Source: Library of Congress)

Americans in Chicago numbered 108,000 – at least double the number that lived in the city before the start of the Great Migration.

Because of housing segregation practices, Chicago's African American population at the beginning of the Great Migration years largely lived in a restricted district dubbed the "Black Belt"– a long, relatively narrow strip of land on the South Side that was centered along Federal and State Streets and extended south from roughly 16<sup>th</sup> Street to 39<sup>th</sup> Street, and along neighboring blocks to the east and west. Chicago's white business and social establishment was largely indifferent to the African American community.

Consequently, what gradually evolved in the Black Belt was a complete and independent commercial, social, and political community. A thriving "city-within-a-city" known as the "Black Metropolis" gained nationwide publicity in the early 1920s as a model of African American achievement and the center of the city's African American social, economic, and cultural life. (Eight buildings and a public monument, considered to be some of the most significant surviving commercial and institutional properties of "Black Metropolis-Bronzeville," were designated as Chicago Landmarks in 1997.)

Separated from working-class immigrant neighborhoods to the west by rail embankments and rail yards, the burgeoning Black Belt expanded south to 55<sup>th</sup> Street and beyond in the years after World War I. African Americans also increasingly looked east to affluent and middle-class white residential neighborhoods in the Douglas, Grand Boulevard, and Washington Park neighborhoods to meet their housing needs. During these years, the efforts by African Americans to expand the Black Belt were often met with vigorous resistance from white neighborhoods. Racial tension escalated to violence during the Chicago Race Riot of July 1919, when a African American youngster drowned at the 27<sup>th</sup> Street beach on Lake Michigan after being pelted with rocks thrown by white beachgoers. Five days of rioting resulted in the deaths of 15 whites and 23 African Americans with an additional 537 injured.

After the riot, racial tensions hardened as white residents of the city's South Side became increasingly determined to exclude African Americans from their neighborhoods. In the then-predominately white Washington Park neighborhood, opposition to African American settlement took the form of a mass meeting on October 20, 1919. According to the *Chicago Tribune*, nearly 1,200 white protestors unified by the slogan, "They Shall Not Pass," gathered to demonstrate their opposition to African Americans relocating to the area. Organizations such as the Hyde Park-Kenwood Property Owners' Association were established to reinforce the boundaries of segregation through the promotion of discriminatory housing practices and restrictive covenants that made it nearly impossible for African Americans to acquire mortgages and insurance. Also at this time, a smaller group known as the Washington Park Court Improvement Association vowed not to sell or rent property to African Americans.

Undeterred, African Americans continued to expand the boundaries of the Black Belt throughout the Grand Boulevard and Washington Park community areas, as well as solidify their presence in the Douglas neighborhood. By the early 1930s, the majority of Chicago's African American population resided in these three community areas, collectively known today as "Bronzeville." Another large-scale wave of African American migration to Chicago occurred during and following World War II. This rise in population was not matched by a corresponding increase in housing units in the increasingly dilapidated and already densely-populated Bronzeville community. In addition to creating even more overcrowded conditions, the segregated housing market also allowed landlords to





**View looking from a fifth floor apartment onto the rehabilitated courtyard., 2017. (Photo Credit: Chris Moe Photography)**



**View from the street looking into the rehabilitated courtyard, 2017.**



**View looking across the courtyard, 2017. (Photo Credit: Chris Moe Photography)**





**View from 46th Street and Michigan Avenue of the fully rehabilitated Rosenwald Court Apartments, 2017.**



**View of the building's rehabilitated storefronts.**



**View of one of the building's Michigan Avenue residential entrances, which features Arts and Crafts style brickwork and "reeded" terra cotta Art Moderne entry surrounds.**

inflate rents in Bronzeville, where African Americans were forced to pay higher rents for the same or lesser amount of space than did other ethnic groups because they did not have the choice to move elsewhere.

With these changes, and because of this lack of space, many landlords in Bronzeville profited by shoddily subdividing their buildings to house the highest number of tenants possible. Larger-scale houses and mansions that had once accommodated well-to-do families and their servants were converted to multiple “kitchenette” units that often housed entire families in a single room, with inadequate plumbing and sub-standard sanitary conditions. The need for modern, affordable housing in the Bronzeville community was strong, coming to the attention of Chicago businessman Julius Rosenwald, who commissioned the Rosenwald Court Apartments.

## **BUSINESSMAN AND PHILANTHROPIST JULIUS ROSENWALD**

Although he was not a founder of the company, **Julius Rosenwald (1862-1932)** guided Sears, Roebuck & Co., the leading mail-order retailer in the United States, through a period of great expansion in the early twentieth century. Rosenwald was also an important philanthropist, dedicated to a variety of causes, including many involving African Americans. The Rosenwald Court Apartments are one of his most prominent efforts to improve the lives of African American Chicagoans.

In 1893, Alvah Roebuck, partner to Richard Sears, resigned his position with Sears, Roebuck & Co. due to poor health. His one-quarter share in the business was bought by Julius Rosenwald, who had been introduced to Sears by his brother-in-law. Rosenwald became a long-time and prominent Sears executive who helped the company negotiate a period of tremendous growth.

Rosenwald was born in Springfield, Illinois, into a middle-class German Jewish immigrant household. After apprenticing in men’s ready-to-wear suit manufacturing in New York, he established his own wholesale clothing company in Chicago in 1885, and began supplying clothing to Sears. In 1896, Rosenwald became vice president of Sears, Roebuck and Co., a position in which he remained until 1908, when he became company president. Based on their respective talents, Sears remained primarily responsible for advertising and sales promotion, while Rosenwald brought much-needed organizational and logistical skills.

Under Rosenwald’s lead, Sears, Roebuck & Co. in 1904 began planning a new company headquarters and mail order plant that would centralize all of its operations. Forty-one acres of land were assembled in the North Lawndale neighborhood on Chicago's far West Side. Rosenwald commissioned the Chicago architectural firm of Nimmons and Fellows to design the new headquarters campus and mail order plant. Ground was broken on January 24, 1905, and the construction firm of Thompson-Starrett began the immense project of building over 4 million square feet of new facilities. Seven thousand construction workers were needed to complete the project, with 60 freight-car loads of building materials brought to the site each day. On January 22, 1906, roughly one year later, all of Sears’ operations were transferred to the new plant. The new Sears headquarters and mail order plant fulfilled Rosenwald’s goals of better company organization, greater efficiency in filling orders and a more sound financial footing. Surviving buildings now comprise the Sears, Roebuck & Co. District, designated as a Chicago Landmark in 2015.





(Top) The Wabash Avenue YMCA at right (built 1914 and a designated Chicago Landmark) was one of several YMCAs that Rosenwald supported in African American neighborhoods within large cities. Rosenwald used his fortune to fund a number of causes focused on improving living conditions for African Americans.

(Left) As President of the Sears, Roebuck and Co. from 1908-1928 and Chairman of the Board until 1932, Rosenwald's business insights led to the company's rapid development.



Booker T. Washington approached Rosenwald about his concept to build rural schools for African American children across the segregated South. Their partnership eventually created more than 5,300 schools, vocational shops, and teachers' homes across 15 states between 1912-1932. The Pee Dee Colored School in Marion County, South Carolina was one such "Rosenwald School." (Photo Source: South Carolina Department of Archives and History)

Rosenwald also encouraged and implemented programs for improved employee relations and benefits at Sears, Roebuck & Co. The company's personnel policy stressed self-improvement and individual initiative. General manager Elmer Scott instituted early employee welfare efforts and initiated a plan to provide a training school for employees. As early as 1899, the Seroco Club was formed to improve department managers' relations with their staffs. In 1901 an employee publication, "The Skylight," first appeared, and in 1902 the Seroco Mutual Benefit Association was organized to provide employee insurance. In 1919 health services for employees were provided by an 18-room hospital in the Merchandise Building. The company made arrangements with the Chicago Public Library to circulate books among employees. The Employees Savings Department offered a savings plan with five percent interest, and in 1916, Rosenwald set up "The Savings and Profit-Sharing Pension Fund of Sears Roebuck and Co Employees," whereby Sears contributed a percentage of profits to the fund.

Outside his role at Sears, Rosenwald gave generously of his time and money in areas of philanthropy. His Jewish faith inspired his charitable giving, with his rabbi at Chicago Sinai Congregation, Emil Hirsch, teaching that "property entails duties." It was through Hirsch that Rosenwald met and was influenced by a number of local progressive activists such as settlement house leader Jane Addams.

Inspired by reading *Up From Slavery* in 1910 and then meeting the author, Booker T. Washington, Rosenwald supported many programs to benefit the quality of life for African Americans, including the establishment of approximately 5,000 public schools in the rural South. Such so-called "Rosenwald schools" brought education to Southern African Americans previously without adequate schools. The Chicago businessman's requirement that localities provide matching funds to his own forced many Southern local and state governments to increase their financial support of majority-African American schools in order to accept Rosenwald's grants.

In 1911, Rosenwald offered \$25,000 toward the construction of individual YMCA buildings in communities that raised a \$75,000 match. Over twelve cities qualified, including Chicago, where the Wabash Avenue YMCA opened its doors to African American men in 1914. (The building is a designated Chicago Landmark as part of the Black Metropolis-Bronzeville District.)

On his 50th birthday in 1912, Rosenwald made charitable contributions of \$700,000, including funds to the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, where he served as a trustee. Rosenwald made many donations to the University of Chicago during his lifetime, including funds for the construction of Rosenwald Hall in 1915. In 1917, he established the Julius Rosenwald Fund, which gave over \$17 million to his causes. He is also regarded as an important Chicago civic leader, being the principal founder and financial supporter of the Museum of Science and Industry, as well as serving on a number of local institutional boards. Rosenwald died in 1932, two years after the completion of the Rosenwald Court Apartments.

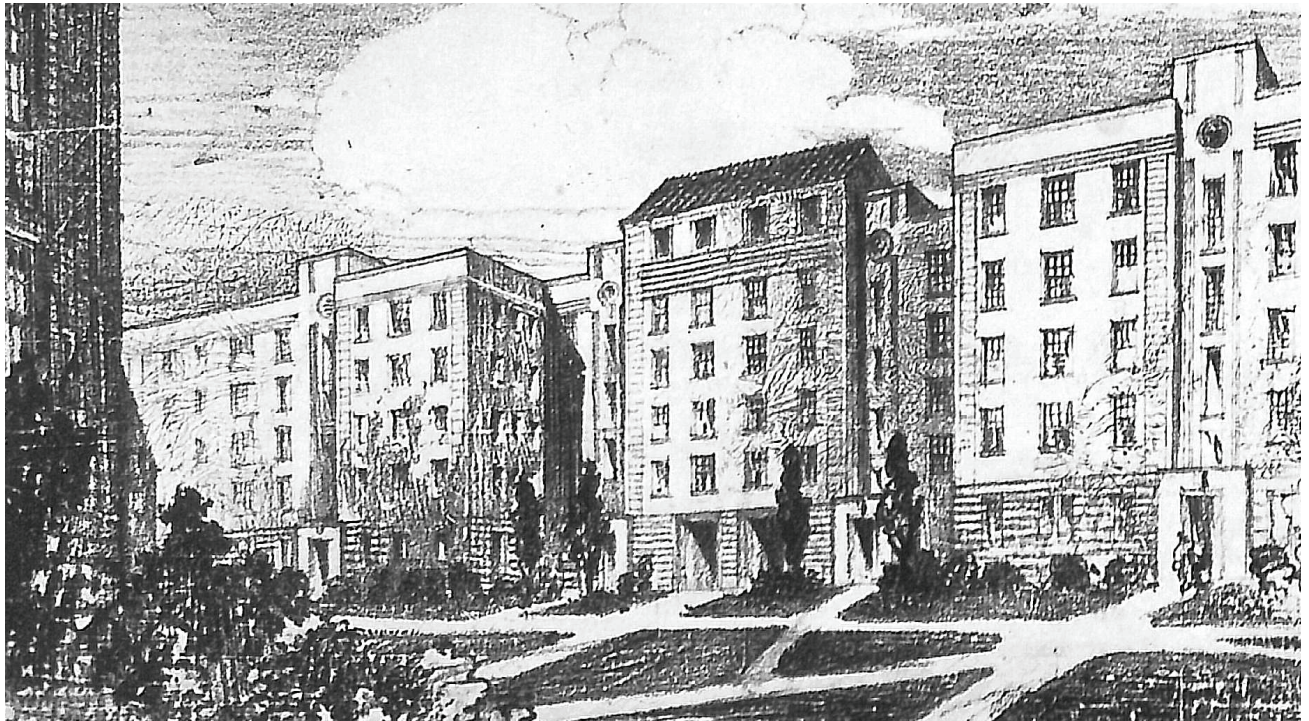
## **CONSTRUCTION AND DESCRIPTION OF THE ROSENWALD COURT APARTMENTS**

As Rosenwald turned his attention to the construction of an affordably-priced housing project for the Bronzeville neighborhood, he tapped his son-in-law, Alfred K. Stern, to take charge of the project in 1928. Rosenwald and Stern formed the Michigan Boulevard Gardens Building Corporation to plan,





In a similar effort in 1929, Marshall Field III, a trustee of the estate of department store mogul Marshall Field, provided the financial backing for an affordable housing complex, the Marshall Field Garden Apartments in Chicago's Near North Side. The buildings were designed by Andrew J. Thomas, a self-made architect who became known as a major figure in the affordable housing movement of the 1920s, along with local consulting architects Graham, Anderson, Probst & White. (Photo Credit: Affordable Housing Finance)



This drawing was one of many featured in a 1929 *Architectural Record* article that analyzed the floor plans and exposure for several typical apartment building floor plans. This study sketch for the Michigan Boulevards Garden Apartments was referred to as a simple indented plan and highlighted as a very efficient plan that maximized the rentable area, as it limited the size of the shared corridors, and maximized the amount of natural light and cross-ventilation for each unit. (Photo Credit: *Architectural Record*, March 1929, vol. 65)

finance and construct the new complex. Directors of this corporation represented a number of important Chicago companies and included (among others) E. E. Brown, vice-president of the First National Bank of Chicago, serving as chairman; publisher Otto F. Ball; E. J. Buffington of the Illinois Steel Co.; architect George C. Nimmons; George Richardson, a trustee of the Marshall Field Estate; lawyer Hugh Sonnenschein; Lloyd Steere, the business manager of the University of Chicago; and Charles H. Swift of Swift & Co.

A full block, bounded by E. 46th St., S. Michigan Ave., E. 47th St., and S. Wabash Ave. and largely vacant, was identified as the building site. Two existing apartment buildings from 1907 and 1908 that were located at the southwest corner of 46th and Michigan were kept, and plans were made to incorporate them into the larger building scheme.

As planning for the new housing project went ahead, Rosenwald and his associates looked closely at affordable housing efforts in New York and elsewhere in Chicago. The *Chicago Defender*, Chicago's premier African American newspaper, noted on July 14, 1928:

*Advantage is being taken in designing the Michigan Blvd. Gardens of the experience in New York of the Metropolitan Housing Corporation and others, including similar housing projects financed by John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Valuable suggestions have been obtained from a study of the Marshall Field garden apartments on the North Side.*

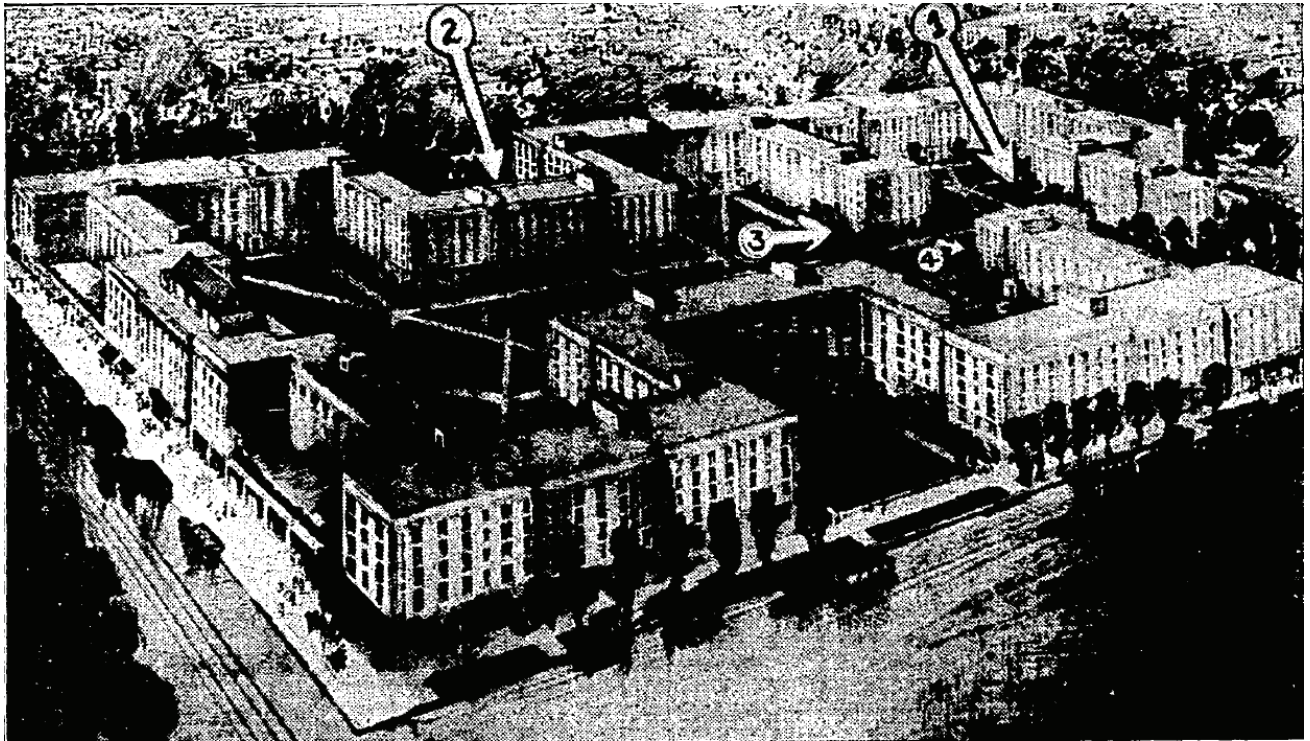
Rosenwald hoped that a well-planned and -built apartment building could draw quality tenants with modest rents while still making a 6% annual return on investment. To do that, he increasingly felt that New York housing projects built during the 1920s showed a path towards both affordability and quality.

Newspaper accounts of the Rosenwald Court Apartments in 1928 and early 1929 noted that the building was being designed by architectural partners Eugene H. Klaber and Ernest A. Grunsfeld, Jr., with the aid of architect George C. Nimmons. Rosenwald had a long-time professional relationship with Nimmons, who designed both the Sears, Roebuck & Co. corporate campus in the North Lawndale neighborhood of Chicago and Rosenwald's own expansive house in the Kenwood community area, only a mile or so east of the new project site. In addition, Henry Wright & Associates, a New York-based planning firm focused on housing, was noted in the newspapers as consultants to the project.

A City of Chicago building permit for the construction of the Rosenwald Court Apartments was issued on January 19, 1929. The owner was listed as the Michigan Boulevard Gardens. The architect of record was Klaber & Grunsfeld, while the B.W. Construction Co. was the contractor. The permit estimated building costs at \$1.4 million (although contemporary newspaper accounts placed building costs at between \$2.5 and \$3 million). Construction was completed within a year with the issuance of a Department of Buildings final report on January 3, 1930, although newspaper articles as early as October 1929 noted that tenants were already living in portions of the complex.

Historic building drawings for the Rosenwald Court Apartments list Lieberman & Hein as structural engineers and A.C. King as a consulting engineer. In addition, Henry Wright & Associates was listed as consultants, but are not listed on the building permit. Nimmons is not listed on either permits or drawings.





A 1930 *Chicago Tribune* article highlighted the Michigan Boulevard Garden Apartments, illustrating some of the features of the “modern home city,” including the Playground for “tots” (1), the playground for small children (2), the nursery schools (3), and the community room (4).



The buildings’ modern design, cleanliness, courtyards, and other amenities highlighted in the photo above made the Rosenwald Court Apartments a popular choice for African American families throughout the 1930s to 1950s. This photo from 1951 shows children playing in the courtyard. (Photo Source: Chicago History Museum)

At the time of the acquisition of the City of Chicago building permit for the Rosenwald Court Apartments, Alfred Stern was quoted by the *Chicago Daily Tribune* of January 16, 1929, concerning Rosenwald's goals for the building:

*Mr. Rosenwald objects to the project being considered a charitable enterprise. The purpose is to provide improved living conditions at a price which will yield a business return on the investment. This experiment, Mr. Rosenwald believes, will demonstrate that large scale projects can be profitably undertaken in various sections of Chicago for any group.*

This was Rosenwald's expressed goal throughout the planning and construction of the Rosenwald Court Apartments, to show other businessmen that a modest but adequate return on investment could be made on affordably-priced housing if the building was top quality and well-maintained.

The Rosenwald Court Apartments consist of a massive five-story, brick-clad building constructed from 1929-30, plus two three-story brick apartment buildings constructed in 1907 and 1908. The 1929-30 building originally had 421 apartments and 16 ground-level retail spaces facing 47th Street. The earlier buildings that were incorporated into the development had 33 apartments. After a recent rehabilitation completed in early 2017, the entire complex currently has 331 units of family and senior affordable housing together with retail, office, and commercial uses.

Devereux Bowly, in his seminal book on Chicago affordable-housing projects, *The Poor House*, noted that the complex "has the feeling of a college campus quadrangle." The 1929-30 building complex's overall mass is rectangular, with a large-scale central courtyard. However, the articulation of the building's plan creates a varied, "in-and-out" building form, with both street-facing courtyards and sections of the building extending into the central courtyard to create a "zig-zag" building footprint. The result is a building that, while rectilinear in form and detail, has visual variety. Many apartments were built with windows on more than one elevation, improving available light and air.

Historically, double-height, flat-arched portals provided pedestrian passageways from the surrounding streets to the central courtyard, which was landscaped with grass and trees. More than two dozen entrances to the building proper then opened off this courtyard. (This circulation pattern has been simplified in the recently completed rehabilitation.) Street-level storefronts line the 47th St. elevation, acknowledging the retail and commercial nature of this street. These storefronts have aluminum sash, granite bulkheads, and white piers and transoms trimmed in red. Windows typically are single rectangular openings with multi-pane aluminum sash, although round windows ornament the top of internal staircase towers.

The 1929-30 building is fireproof construction with a reinforced-concrete structure and interior walls and ceilings of clay tile. Exterior elevations and interior courtyard facades are constructed of wire-cut, buff-colored brick laid in common bond. Slightly projecting horizontal bands of red brick set in a running bond delineate the first-story base of the building, corner quoins, full-height piers, and cornice line. Vertical bands of canted red brick set in recessed panels are used to add visual interest to the exterior of the stair towers on the courtyard elevations. Window sills are terra cotta tile and the heads are steel lintels faced with brick. Exterior portal surrounds have rounded and stepped red-glazed terra cotta surrounds detailed in the Art Moderne style. Inner passageways are clad with glazed brick in a decorative pattern. Apartment entrances off the courtyard are marked by slightly projecting buff-colored brick, terra cotta tile, and red brick.





**(Top) The building at 4600-08 S. Michigan Ave./63-71 E. 46th St was constructed in 1908 by architect Henry Newhouse. (Bottom Left) One of the buildings Classical Revival style limestone entryways. (Bottom Right) The building at 4610-14 S. Michigan Avenue is configured as a combined three- and six-flat with two entrances.**



The resulting appearance of the 1929-30 building is non-historical, emphasizing the inherent visual qualities of the building's masonry, reminiscent of the Arts and Crafts manner, while stylistically the building harkens to the Art Moderne style, a modernistic style popular in America in the inter-war period. The building's overall appearance reflects both the architects' interest in modernism and the financial constraints faced by Rosenwald in his effort to create affordable housing on a limited budget.

Exterior changes to the 1929-30 building include changes during the recent rehabilitation of the building completed in 2017. These include the installation of new east and west residential lobby entrances facing Michigan and Wabash that partially consolidate the original building entrances. This consolidation of building entrances works in conjunction with newly installed elevators and newly configured interior circulation corridors from which apartments now open. (Originally, the building had no elevators and a plethora of completely separate building vestibules and staircases.) New aluminum-sash windows in historic configurations have been installed, as well as new storefronts with aluminum sash and granite bulkheads in historic configurations. A former power plant, originally located at the northern end of the building complex, has been demolished and replaced by a new residential entrance. These changes were approved by the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency and the National Park Service as part of a federal historic rehabilitation tax credit application for the building.

The two smaller buildings that pre-date the 1929-30 building occupy the northeastern portion of the building site. Both are three stories in height and clad with variations of red brick with gray limestone trim. The building at 4600-08 S. Michigan Ave./63-71 E. 46th St. is a corner apartment building with four entrances, two facing Michigan Avenue and two facing 46th Street. It was built in 1908 by the developers Collins & Morris and designed by architect Henry L. Newhouse. The building's Michigan Avenue entrances are recessed within three-story porches, while the 46th Street entrances are flush with the sidewalk and ornamented with Classical-style surrounds. A simple cornice tops the building's facade. The building at 4610-14 S. Michigan Avenue is configured as a combined three- and six-flat with two entrances. It was built by developer James C. Daly and designed by Bishop & Co. The building at 4612-14 has a central entrance embellished with a gray limestone porch with Classical-style Ionic columns and balustrade. Twin three-story bay windows flank the porch. A Classical-style cornice embellishes the building's parapet. Windows are a combination of 1-over-1 and 3-over-1, double-hung sash. Just to the north, the building at 4610 has a simpler entrance in terms of decoration, but is similar in overall design, exterior building materials, and details. Exterior changes to these 1907 and 1908 buildings include the addition of aluminum-clad wood windows in historic configurations and new wood entrance doors.

## **AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF GARDEN APARTMENT BUILDINGS**

The construction of the Rosenwald Court Apartments can best be understood as a historically-significant building within the larger efforts in American and European cities in the early twentieth century to provide modern, safe, and affordable housing for working- and middle-class urban residents. The issue of affordability was not limited to Chicago's Bronzeville. Other Chicagoans of



(Top) Rosenwald was influenced by the municipal-owned and -built apartment buildings ("*gemeindebauten*") commissioned by Vienna's socialist government. (Top) Rosenwald likely would have seen the Metzleinstaler Hof, built from 1921 to 1923. The overall scale, height, and internal courtyard from which the apartments are accessed is similar to the American garden apartment buildings, particularly Rosenwald's Michigan Boulevards Garden Apartments. (Photo Credit: Bezirksmuseum Margareten)



Constructed from 1927-30, The Karl Marx Hof in Vienna, Austria is an example of the type of affordable housing complexes were being built throughout Europe in the 1920s, a period increasingly guided by socialist political parties representing the working-class. (Photo Credit: Architectuul.com)

modest means, especially recent immigrants, often struggled to find housing that was safe, clean, spatially adequate, and affordable. Working-class New York residents saw these same issues only multiplied by the greater economic pressures of this American metropolis. Leaders in European cities such as Vienna, Berlin, and London also saw the pressing need for planned housing complexes that would provide affordable apartment living for residents of modest means. American affordable-housing efforts in the 1920s were privately developed, while efforts in European cities, such as Vienna, were often undertaken by municipal governments.

Within the United States, New York took the lead in the construction of affordable housing. The 1920s was an important period in the development of "garden apartment buildings," a housing subtype of which the Rosenwald Court Apartments complex is an important Chicago example. New York developers and architects built many garden apartment buildings throughout the city, with perhaps the most significant early examples from the early 1920s found in the outlying borough of Queens, which was rapidly developing during this period.

Garden apartment buildings can be loosely characterized as apartment buildings that are large in scale, typically covering an entire city block or blocks. Usually, they are four- to six-stories in height and are built with brick walls and modest ornament. Although their large scale and simple, applied embellishment are meant to accentuate their affordability, garden apartment buildings typically incorporated large landscaped courtyards, hence the name. These landscaped areas may be entirely private, surrounded by buildings and available only to tenants, or they may extend into the block from the street, creating pathways through building complexes. Building footprints often extend into the courtyards or other landscaped areas, creating sets of apartments with greater access to views, as well as light and air. This gives a somewhat "zig-zag" or "saw-toothed" appearance to buildings and gives them greater visual interest than straight walls would provide.

A large number of garden apartment buildings were constructed in New York during the 1920s and early 1930s. Many were designed by Andrew J. Thomas, a self-made architect who specialized in housing and is credited with being a major figure in the history of affordable housing in the 1920s. As early as 1919, Thomas advocated the construction of U-shaped apartment buildings surrounding interior landscaped courtyards. He believed that such building configurations provided greater light and air to apartments, but minimized building costs. Through the 1920s, Thomas designed many garden apartment complexes scattered throughout New York's boroughs, including Hays Court Apartments in the Jackson Heights neighborhood of Queens (1924), the Metropolitan Life Apartment Houses, also in Queens (1924), Thomas Gardens in the Bronx (1928), and Brooklyn Gardens (1929). Thomas was also the architect for the Marshall Field Garden Apartments in Chicago (1928-1929). The chief architect for the Rosenwald Court Apartments, Ernest A. Grunsfeld, Jr., worked for Thomas as a draftsman in 1923, while the Thomas office was preparing plans for several garden apartment complexes, including the one for Metropolitan Life.

One of Thomas' best-known apartment designs, the Dunbar Apartments, were built between 1926 and 1928 for African American tenants in New York, and it would have been known to Rosenwald and his team. Named for the noteworthy poet Paul Lawrence Dunbar, the complex covers the entire block bounded by 149th and 150th streets and Seventh and Eighth avenues in the Harlem neighborhood of Manhattan. Dunbar was commissioned by businessman and philanthropist John D. Rockefeller, Jr. and was the first large garden apartment complex built in Manhattan. It is similar to the Rosenwald Court Apartments in that it consists of U-shaped buildings clustered around a large interior garden courtyard. Arched entranceways lead from surrounding streets into the courtyard, from which residents entered the building through multiple entrances. The design of the com-



Built in 1922, the Cambridge Court apartments in Jackson Heights, Queens were designed by architect George H. Wells. Along with Andrew J. Thomas, Wells was a prolific designer and contributor to the development of the garden court apartment typology. (Photo Credit: New York Public Library)



Located in the Bronx, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers Union Apartments's first building was designed in 1927 as affordable housing for the Garment District's working class. The complex has grown to include more than 1,500 units. Note the elaborate development of the gardens. (Photo Credit: *A History of Housing in New York*)







The Francisco Terrace apartments were a very early subsidized housing venture by developer Edward C. Waller and designed by Frank Lloyd Wright in 1895. Waller and Wright had just completed construction on the neighboring Waller apartments, when they started work on Francisco Terrace. The buildings were demolished in 1975, though the Waller still stands, as a designated Chicago Landmark (1987).



The Dunbar Apartments in Central Harlem, New York, were designed by Andrew J. Thomas for John D. Rockefeller, Jr.. Like Rosenwald, Rockefeller commissioned the apartments to serve as affordable housing for African Americans. Rockefeller was the first to create a cooperative apartment complex specifically for African Americans, and the project won Thomas many awards.



Communal gardens were one of the amenities offered to residents of the garden court apartments. This image shows residents planting behind one of Andrew J. Thomas' developments, The Greystone, in Queens, circa 1918.



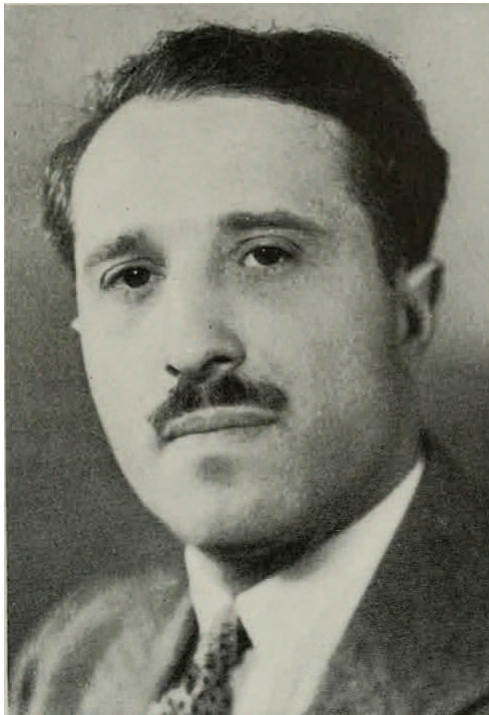
plex was decoratively simple, with much of its visual appeal derived from the massing of the buildings, the colors and textures of materials, and judicious use of terra cotta and wrought-iron decoration. The Dunbar Apartments were designated as a New York City Landmark in 1970.

In Europe, affordable housing complexes were being built throughout the continent in the 1920s, a period increasingly guided by socialist political parties representing the working-class. Rosenwald, himself, was influenced by housing that he saw on a 1926 visit to Vienna. Although a main reason for the trip was to review the city's science museum in anticipation of Rosenwald's own efforts to establish Chicago's Museum of Science and Industry, the Chicagoan also visited municipal-owned and -built apartment buildings ("*gemeindebauten*") commissioned by Vienna's socialist government. Accounts vary, but Rosenwald may have seen the Metzleinstaler-Hof, built from 1921 to 1923. Its overall scale, height and internal courtyard, from which apartments are accessed, have similarities to American garden apartment buildings, in general, and the Rosenwald Court Apartments, in particular.

In Chicago, before the development of government-owned public housing in the late 1930s, examples of purpose-built affordable housing were rare, and all built through the largesse of philanthropic-minded businessmen such as Rosenwald. The Waller Apartments and adjacent Francisco Apartments, both built in 1895 and designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, were small-scale buildings located in the East Garfield Park neighborhood on Chicago's West Side. The Waller Apartments (a designated Chicago Landmark) are located at 2840-58 W. Walnut St. They are two stories in height and originally built with 20 apartments. The now-demolished Francisco Terrace at 255 N. Francisco Ave. was also two stories, but larger with 44 apartments. Both were developed by Edward Waller, a River Forest resident and real-estate broker who was altruistically interested in providing decent low-cost housing and who expected only a 3% return on investment.

On the far South Side, the Garden Homes development was built in 1919 by real estate developer Benjamin Rosenthal. Interested in the welfare of workers, Rosenthal conceived the idea of a privately-financed development that would be affordable in cost. Familiar with English garden cities, Rosenthal saw his Garden Homes as similar in their overall small scale and emphasis on single-family houses and home ownership. A 40-acre site at the southern end of the then-developing Chatham community was purchased. Bounded by 87th Street, 89th Street, Indiana Avenue and State Street, the parcel was built up by 133 detached houses and 21 double houses designed by Chicago architect Charles Frost. The use of brick and stucco gave an English Arts-and-Crafts feeling to the development. Rosenthal sold the houses at cost to working families. The Garden Homes were listed as a historic district on the National Register of Historic Places in 2005.

Built in 1928-1929, a little before Rosenwald's construction of his namesake apartments, the Marshall Field Garden Apartments were built at the northern end of the Near North Side community area, a few blocks south of today's Old Town Triangle Chicago Landmark District. Similar in overall appearance to the Rosenwald Court Apartments, but somewhat larger in scale, the Marshall Field Garden Apartments were commissioned by the Estate of Marshall Field under the direction of his grandson, Marshall Field III. Built on a two-square-block site consolidated from 65 separate parcels, the Marshall Field project had 628 apartments. Five stories in height, the North Side building complex was similar to the Rosenwald Court Apartments in that it also had brick walls, minimal ornament, storefronts along a major street (in this case, Sedgwick Ave.), an internal landscaped courtyard, and various amenities such as a children's school, tenant social room for parties and meetings, and an auditorium. The Marshall Field Garden Apartments were designed by New York architect Andrew J. Thomas, with Ernest R. Graham of the Chicago firm of Graham, Anderson,



**Grunfeld & Klaber formed a relatively short-lived partnership, where they worked together from 1924 to 1930. The Michigan Boulevard Garden Apartments and the Jewish People's Institute are the most famous collaborations. The men went on to very successful individual careers, with Grunfeld (left) working as an architect and Klaber working on larger affordable housing issues for the Federal Housing Authority and as a professor.**

Probst & White serving as the local associate architect. It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1991.

## **ARCHITECTS AND PLANNERS OF THE ROSENWALD COURT APARTMENTS**

The 1929-1930 portion of the Rosenwald Court Apartments was designed by the Chicago architectural firm of Klaber & Grunfeld. The firm is best known as the architects of the Jewish People's Institute, a Chicago Landmark building located in the North Lawndale neighborhood on Chicago's far West Side. In addition, Ernest A. Grunfeld, Jr., also designed the Adler Planetarium while in solo practice. Although Grunfeld has long been credited as the design partner in charge of the Rosenwald Court Apartments commission, both he and Klaber had long-standing interests in housing design.

In addition, other architects and housing specialists credited with influence on the design of the 1929-1930 building are Chicago architect George C. Nimmons and the planning firm of Henry Wright & Co. Nimmons was a long-time favorite of Rosenwald, having designed the Sears company complex in North Lawndale and Rosenwald's own house in Kenwood. Henry Wright was a leading American planner in the field of housing design, credited (along with Clarence Stein) with the overall plans of the Sunnyside Gardens, Radburn and Chatham Village planned communities. The architects of the 1907 and 1908 portions of the Rosenwald Court Apartments were Henry L. Newhouse and Bishop & Co. Newhouse was a prominent architect within Chicago's Jewish community while Thomas Bishop, the principal of his namesake firm, was a specialist in apartment building design.



**Ernest Alton Grunsfeld, Jr. (1897-1970)** was born in Albuquerque, New Mexico. He graduated from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1918 with a B.S. in Architecture, followed by a certificate in naval architecture from MIT the following year. Upon completing his coursework at MIT, Grunsfeld acquired some professional work experience as a draftsman with the New York architectural partnership of Charles Butler and Robert Kohn from 1919 to 1920. He then attended the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris from 1920 to 1922, accompanied by a stint as a Visiting Fellow at the American Academy in Rome from 1921 to 1922. Upon returning to the United States, Grunsfeld worked briefly as chief designer for the Brooklyn Public Library. In 1923, he became a draftsman for Andrew J. Thomas, a New York specialist in affordable housing and garden apartments. He then worked as an assistant to Clarence S. Stein, also an architect focused on housing issues, before going into practice with architect Eugene Klaber in Chicago in 1924.

**Eugene Henry Klaber (1883-1971)** was a native of New York City and received his architectural education at Columbia University, from which he graduated in 1906, and the École des Beaux-Arts from which he graduated in 1910. Klaber practiced architecture in New York City for more than a decade and in 1922, he won second place in a competition to remodel a "Slum Area Block" in the city that was owned by the New York State Housing Commission. In 1923, he became a founding member of the Regional Planning Association of America (RPAA), which championed progressive low-income housing designs was later responsible for the Garden City design of Sunnyside Gardens in Queens, New York and Radburn in New Jersey. Klaber then joined Grunsfeld in practice in Chicago from 1924 until 1929. As the firm of Klaber & Grunsfeld, they designed the Jewish People's Institute (a designated Chicago Landmark), 3500 W. Douglas Blvd. (1927); the Whitehall Apartment Hotel, 105 E. Delaware Pl. (1928); and the Stephen A. Douglas Library, 3353 W. 13th St. (completed 1930).

After severing ties with Klaber, Grunsfeld designed his best-known work, the Adler Planetarium (1930), for which he was awarded a Gold Medal from the American Institute of Architects. Grunsfeld also designed the WGN Radio Studios, 401 N. Michigan Ave. (1935) and Sinai Temple, 5350 South Shore Dr. (1939, demolished). Grunsfeld also served on architectural teams that prepared designs for several early Chicago public housing projects, including the Jane Addams, Cabrini and Trumbull homes. From 1939 to 1946, Grunsfeld was a partner with Grunsfeld, Yerkes and Koenig. In 1946, he joined Friedman, Alschuler, Sincere and Ernest A. Grunsfeld, where he worked until 1955. He was a member of the Illinois Housing Commission. Late in life, he was awarded the Chevalier Legion of Honor from the French government for his efforts as president of the Ernest A. Grunsfeld, Jr., Fund, which sponsored exchange programs between architecture students of the United States and France.

Klauer continued in private practice in Chicago from 1929 until 1933, when he became Chief of the Technical Staff of the Housing Division, Public Works Administration, in Washington, D.C. The following year, Klauer joined the staff of the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) and served as Director of Architecture, Rental Housing Division, for the FHA from 1934 to 1942. During this period, Klauer was also closely associated professionally with urban planner Henry Wright. In 1944, Klauer joined the faculty of the School of Architecture at Columbia and subsequently was a private housing and planning consultant.

Besides the primary architectural firm of Klauer and Grunsfeld, architect George C. Nimmons and planner Henry Wright were noted in contemporary newspaper accounts as assisting with the planning and design of the Rosenwald Court Apartments. In addition, Henry Wright & Associates was listed as consultants on original drawings for the complex.

**George Croll Nimmons (1867-1947)** was born in Wooster, Ohio. He studied architecture in Europe before entering the office of Chicago architects Burnham & Root in 1885. In 1897, he entered into partnership with William K. Fellows. The resulting firm of Nimmons & Fellows subsequently the original buildings in the Sears, Roebuck & Co. company complex in the North Lawndale neighborhood on Chicago's far West Side. Nimmons was noted during his lifetime for his skill with large-scale industrial and commercial buildings, publishing numerous articles in architectural periodicals on industrial design. It was likely his Sears campus designs and a house designed for Rosenwald and built in the Kenwood neighborhood in 1903 that encouraged the businessman to involve Nimmons in the Rosenwald Court Apartments planning and design.

**Henry Wright (1878-1936)** was a planner, architect and advocate for the idea of "garden cities," planned communities characterized by low scale and abundant landscapes. Born in Lawrence, Kansas, Wright assisted with the overall plan of the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis, Missouri. He designed subdivisions in the St. Louis area before moving east to New York, where he designed (in partnership with Clarence S. Stein) the Sunnyside Gardens development in Queens, listed as a historic district on the National Register of Historic Places. Built between 1924 and 1929, Sunnyside Gardens was an early "superblock" development, where brick row houses clustered around a common central courtyard shared by residents. Wright and Stein later collaborated on the planned community of Radburn, New Jersey, founded in 1929, and Chatham Village, a planned neighborhood in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, started the same year. Both Radburn and Chatham Village combined modernistic or modestly Classical-style buildings with lush landscaping.

**Henry Leopold Newhouse (1874-1929)** was the architect for the 1907 apartment building incorporated by Rosenwald into his larger Rosenwald Court Apartments. Newhouse was born in Chicago. He began his education in the city's public school system, then studied at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where he graduated in 1894. He was a prolific architect, and *History of the Jews in Chicago*, published in 1924, credits Newhouse with the design of over 4000 structures during his long career. Buildings designed by Newhouse, either working solo or in later partnership with Felix Bernham, include houses and small flat buildings that form a significant part of the Washington Park Court Chicago Landmark District on Chicago's South Side. He also designed two individually-designated Chicago Landmarks, the Melissia Ann Elam House at 4726 S. King Dr. (1903) and (with Bernham) the (Former) Anshe Sholom Synagogue Building at 754 S. Independence Blvd. (1924-1926). With Newhouse as a member of KAM Synagogue, Newhouse and Bernham designed the congregation's building at 4945 S. Drexel Blvd. (1923-24), which is now the Operation PUSH headquarters. Newhouse also designed the Sutherland Hotel at 47th St. and S. Drexel Blvd., built in 1917 and listed on the National Register of Historic Places. In addition, Newhouse designed a number of movie theaters in the Chicago area, including the Howard, Roseland and Metropolitan theaters (either demolished or converted to non-theater use).

**Bishop & Co.**, the architect for the 1908 building included in the Rosenwald Court Apartments, was headed by Thomas Bishop. The son of a builder, Bishop specialized in apartment buildings. Although most documented examples of Bishop's work were on the South Side, he built buildings as far north as Lake View, Buena Park and Rogers Park.



## EARLY TENANTS AND LIFE IN THE ROSENWALD COURT APARTMENTS

By late 1929, even before its final completion in January 1930, the Rosenwald Court Apartments had become a coveted Bronzeville address and a source of community pride. The *Chicago Tribune* noted in October 1929 that the building had 100 percent of its apartments rented, along with a waiting list of applicants. The newspaper noted the quality of the building and its courtyard: "Flower beds, trees and shrubbery make a delightful retreat for the tenants of the building from the outside world." The article went on to note the modernity of the apartments, "A peep into a typical apartment discloses a home that boasts all the conveniences of the modern flat building of the north or south shores. The rooms are fair sized, the walls are stippled in single tints, kitchens contain mechanical refrigeration and labor saving devices."

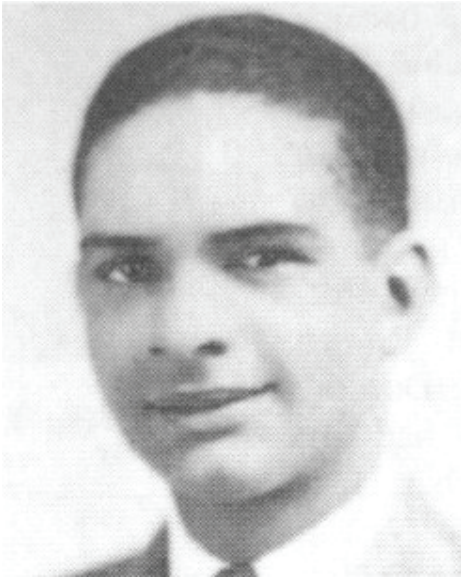
The building complex's modernity, cleanliness, and amenities compensated for the lack of elevators and somewhat lower-than-usual ceilings. The building's 47th Street shops included several by national companies, including Sears, Roebuck & Co. (which occupied three storefronts), Walgreen's, and the A & P grocery chain. A nursery and kindergarten founded by Rose Haas Alschuler and run for many years by Oneida Cockrell, educated in early childhood development at Columbia University, were well regarded. Again, the *Chicago Tribune* in 1929 commented on the school facilities:

*One drops in for a look in the nursery and kindergarten located in the basement. There one sees a group of tiny tots taking their morning's orange juice preparatory to a slight journey into the land of learning. Across the court opposite the nursery is a community center consisting of a group of rooms which may be rented for parties by tenants for one dollar.*

The same article noted the following breakdown of occupations among tenants: "Railroad porters, 70; railroad waiters, 33; postal clerks, 32; day laborers, 42; porters, 30; janitors, 25; red caps, 15; tilers, 17; insurance salesmen, 10; barbers, 14; waiters, 11; cooks, 15; chauffeurs, 17; teachers, 5; doctors, 2; social workers, 3; lawyers, 2; policemen, 2. And there is a large variety of other occupations."

The 1930 United States census provides a similar "snapshot" of Rosenwald residents just after its opening. The many occupations listed by census takers include bell boy, waiter, porter, butcher, laborer, machine operator, maid, postal clerk, milliner, shipping clerk, dressmaker, gardener, manicurist, laundress, barber, mechanic, janitor, entertainer, watchman, cook, bath attendant, teacher, bookkeeper, actress, chemist, secretary, electrical engineer, mail carrier, housekeeper, messenger, chauffer, elevator operator, doorman, servant, policeman, lawyer, physician, social worker, stenographer, dentist, dietician, musician, artist, baker, and decorator. Even in its first year of occupancy, the Rosenwald Court Apartments began to attract higher-income residents due to its amenities.

The manager of the Rosenwald Court Apartments, from its opening in 1930 through the mid-1950s, was Robert Rochon Taylor (1899-1957), an architect and early housing activist in Chicago. The son of Robert Robinson Taylor, the first African American graduate of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and a professor of Architecture at Tuskegee University in Alabama, Robert R. Taylor moved to Chicago in 1925 and quickly emerged as a business leader in the Bronzeville community. In the mid-1930s, he was appointed vice chairman of the Chicago Housing Authority while still working as the manager at the Rosenwald Court Apartments. By 1942, he would be named Chairman of the Chicago Housing Authority. Taylor continued to serve as the manager of the Rosenwald



A.



B.



C.



D.



E.

- A. Robert Taylor, trained as an architect and served as the building manager from 1929-1957. He became chair of the Chicago Housing Authority from 1942 to 1950. (Photo Credit: Blackpast.org)
- B. Nat King Cole, lived in the apartments as a teenager, and became one of the most recognized jazz musicians and was one of the first African Americans to host his own television variety show. (Photo Credit: Getty Images)
- C. Quincy Jones, was also a jazz musician and later record producer who lived in the building as a child. (Photo Credit: QuincyJones.com)
- D. Lorraine Hansberry lived in the building as a child. She was the first African American woman to have a play produced on Broadway. (Photo Credit: The Lorraine Hansberry Literary Trust)
- E. Gwendolyn Brooks was the first African American to win the Pulitzer Prize for poetry, she often wrote about the lives of African Americans. (Photo Credit: Chicago History Museum)



Court Apartments until his death in 1957, and throughout his tenure he worked tirelessly to create a sense of community among tenants and help them advocate for their interests. Early residents formed a cooperative community association which sponsored activities and worked with management to maintain the building. A number of tenants formed the Peoples Consumer Co-Operative in 1937 as a co-op buying club. It later established a credit union, as well as sponsoring and developing affordable housing units named for a pioneering African American certified public accountant, Paul G. Stewart, an early tenant at the Rosenwald Court Apartments.

Julius Rosenwald had hoped that the Rosenwald Court Apartments would prosper financially and return at least a 6% annual return on investment. By reaching this benchmark, he hoped to convince other businessmen to invest in the construction of similar affordable housing. Unfortunately, the onset of the Great Depression and its devastating effect of Chicago's African American community meant that many African American Chicagoans couldn't afford even the modest rents set by Rosenwald, and the apartment complex made back only about 2 to 3% on average during the 1930s.

In 1932, at the height of the Depression, the building corporation took over payment of gas and electricity. An April 23, 1932, *Chicago Defender* article noted that the average four-room apartment in the building was renting for \$60 per month. The article noted the complex had 24-hour security and that the community social room was "a scene of many enjoyable entertainments, such as club meetings, dances and bridge parties," as well as meetings and lectures on public events.

In 1936, a community house for the Rosenwald Court Apartments opened across Wabash Avenue from the original building. The building housed an auditorium, a recreation room large enough for basketball, crafts workshops, and a small kitchen. Designed by African American architect W. T. Bailey, the community house has since been demolished.

In 1946 a progressive summer school was founded in the Rosenwald Court Apartments by public school teachers Doris Anderson, Jane Howe, and Charlotte Stratton, who were appalled by the poor condition of African American-majority schools. Called Howalton School, the founders focused on young children at first, then expanded to older students. It was such a success that, soon overcrowded, it moved to the Parkway Community House in the nearby Washington Park neighborhood.

A number of well-known people lived at the Rosenwald Court Apartments at some point in their lives, including writer Gwendolyn Brooks, singer Nat King Cole, boxer Joe Louis and record producer Quincy Jones, who lived in the building until age 10. Others that have been linked to the housing complex include two United States Representatives (William L. Dawson and Ralph Metcalfe), Olympic athlete Jesse Owens, musician Duke Ellington, playwright Lorraine Hansberry, librarian Vivian G. Harsh, and publisher John H. Johnson.

## **THE LATER HISTORY OF THE ROSENWALD COURT APARTMENTS**

In 1956, the building started a succession of ownership and management changes after long-time manager Robert Taylor failed to get financing to convert the building into a cooperative. At this time, the *Chicago Daily Tribune* reported the building retained a strong cachet within the larger Bronzeville community. It reported that the building had three nursery schools for children 3 to 7 years of age. The community center was manned by a full-time recreation director and assistant



**The Rosenwald Apartments were forced to close after a gas leak in 2000 and by 2010, the building had fallen into a state of disrepair and many doubted that the Rosenwald could return to its former glory. The current owners bought the building in 2010 and have worked to fully rehabilitate the building.**

that supervised a program of activities including dancing, movies, picnics and book reviews. A ballet group had recently given a performance at the Eighth Street theater in the South Loop. The center also sponsored scouting troops for both boys and girls:

*At all times, tenants are given the feeling that the place is their home and are responsible for its appearance. Children get a sense of responsibility for the garden itself when management meets with them to explain the garden's care at various times of the year. Young people who have grown up in the apartments now include many doctors, lawyers, elementary school teachers, a ballet dancer in Europe, a young woman working on a government project in Iran, and another woman on the University of Puerto Rico faculty.*

After Robert Taylor's death in 1957, there was gradual decline in the Rosenwald Court Apartments' maintenance and services through the 1960s and beyond. Efforts to turn the building into a condominium in 1967 were attempted by the then-owner, the Kate Maremont Foundation, but were resisted by many tenants who felt unable to pay projected purchase prices for their units, and the effort failed. The building complex gradually became unsafe and plagued with crime. It was acquired by the City of Chicago through its Department of Urban Renewal in 1973. In the early 1980s, the building was listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and the Urban League and a private developer undertook a rehabilitation of the complex.

In 2000, a gas leak closed the Rosenwald Court Apartments, residents were relocated, and the building was boarded up. Much attention was subsequently focused on the building's uncertain future by historic preservation advocates. Despite its deterioration, many Bronzeville residents remembered the building in its heyday with affection and respect. In her 2010 book, *Culture of Opportunity: Obama's Chicago*, author Rebecca Janowitz wrote:



*In the late 1990s I asked an elderly black woman married to a postal worker how she and her husband had managed to send one child to Yale and one to Princeton. Well, she replied, I came up in The Rosenwald, indicating that her family had always aspired to a better life.*

The current owner acquired the building in 2010 and has completed a substantial rehabilitation as affordable senior and family housing utilizing, among other financial incentives, the federal rehabilitation tax credit incentive available to National Register of Historic Places-listed income-producing properties.

## CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION

According to the Municipal Code of Chicago (Sections 2-120-690), the Commission on Chicago Landmarks has the authority to make a final recommendation of landmark designation for an area, district, place, building, structure, work of art or other object with the City of Chicago if the Commission determines it meets two or more of the stated “criteria for designation,” as well as possesses a significant degree of historic integrity to convey its significance. The following should be considered by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks in determining whether to recommend that the Rosenwald Court Apartments be designated as a Chicago Landmark.

### ***Criterion 1: Value as an Example of City, State, or National Heritage***

*Its value as an example of the architectural, cultural, economic, historic, social, or other aspect of the heritage of the City of Chicago, the State of Illinois, or the United States.*

- The Rosenwald Court Apartments exemplify the significant history of affordable housing in Chicago.
- The Rosenwald Court Apartments are also significant for their associations within the larger context of early affordable housing in the United States.
- The Rosenwald Court Apartments were built at the end of the 1920s – before the public housing era – as a large-scale, privately-financed housing project for African Americans who were subjected to the era’s housing discrimination practices.
- The Rosenwald Court Apartments, commissioned by Chicago philanthropist Julius Rosenwald, exemplify the significant history of affordable housing in Chicago.
- The Rosenwald Court Apartments played a significant role in Chicago's Bronzeville community as the preferred place of residence for African American Chicagoans.
- The Rosenwald Court Apartments were home to a number of nationally-known African American celebrities including poet Gwendolyn Brooks, singer Nat King Cole, boxer Joe Louis, and record producer Quincy Jones.

### ***Criterion 3: Significant Person***

*Its identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the architectural, cultural, economic, historic, social, or other aspect of the development of the City of Chicago, the State of Illinois, or the United States.*

- The Rosenwald Court Apartments are significant for their associations with Julius Rosenwald, a Jewish businessman who became one of Chicago’s leading philanthropists, by generously contributing to progressive social causes, especially those intended to improve the life of African Americans.
- Rosenwald commissioned the Rosenwald Court Apartments (originally called the Michigan Boulevard Garden Apartments); created the "Rosenwald schools," to provide quality education and schoolhouses to rural African American children; and funded African American YMCAs in more than a dozen American cities.
- Rosenwald was significant figure in the history of Chicago, as he contributed to several of Chi-



cago's renowned institutions, including the University of Chicago, and was the founder and benefactor of the Museum of Science and Industry. Rosenwald was also significant for his contributions to the growth of a legendary Chicago business, as the Vice President, then President of Sears, Roebuck & Co. from 1908 until 1928 during which time his organizational and managerial talent led the company to unprecedented growth. It was during this time that he commissioned the Sears campus that operated in the North Lawndale neighborhood from 1906 to 1973; (now a designated Chicago landmark district, the Sears, Roebuck & Co. Landmark District).

#### ***Criterion 4: Exemplary Architecture***

*Its exemplification of an architectural type or style distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness, or overall quality of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship.*

- The 1929-30 portion of the Rosenwald Court Apartments comprise an outstanding example of a garden apartment building within the context of Chicago and stand as one of only two similarly significant properties of this type built in Chicago during the pre-public housing era of the late 1920s.
- The 1929-30 portion of the Rosenwald Court Apartments exhibit fine architectural craftsmanship including a brick exterior that features a unique combination of Arts and Crafts brickwork with Art Moderne terra cotta detailing – cost effective elements that together provide visual interest and community appeal.
- The 1929-30 portion of the Rosenwald Court Apartments that front 47th Street include an entire block-face of ground-floor storefronts that contribute to the commercial needs of the neighborhood.
- The 1907 and 1908 portions of the Rosenwald Court Apartments were intentionally included in the design of the Rosenwald Court Apartments by Julius Rosenwald and both display a fine level of masonry craftsmanship and details indicative of the Classical Revival style.

#### ***Criterion 5: Important Architect***

*Its identification as the work of an architect, designer, engineer, or builder whose individual work is significant in the history or development of the City of Chicago, the State of Illinois, or the United States.*

- The 1929-30 portion of the Rosenwald Court Apartments was designed by Klaber & Grunsfeld, a significant Chicago architecture firm, who designed the Jewish People's Institute (a designated Chicago Landmark, 2000). Ernest A. Grunsfeld, Jr. later designed the Adler Planetarium (a National Historic Landmark, 1987).
- The 1907 portion of the Rosenwald Court Apartments was designed by Henry L. Newhouse, who was a significant architect within Chicago's Jewish community. He designed – either solo or during his partnership with Felix Bernham – the Melissia Ann Elam House (a designated Chicago Landmark, 1979); the (Former) Anshe Sholom Synagogue (a designated Chicago Landmark, 2014); along with several buildings in the Washington Park Court Chicago Landmark District (designated 1991).

## ***Criterion 7: Unique or Distinctive Visual Feature***

*Its unique location of distinctive physical presence representing an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood, community or City of Chicago.*

- The Rosenwald Court Apartments monumental size encompasses an entire city block in the heart of Bronzeville.
- Since it opened in 1930, The Rosenwald Court Apartments have served as the social epicenter of the community.

## ***Integrity Criteria***

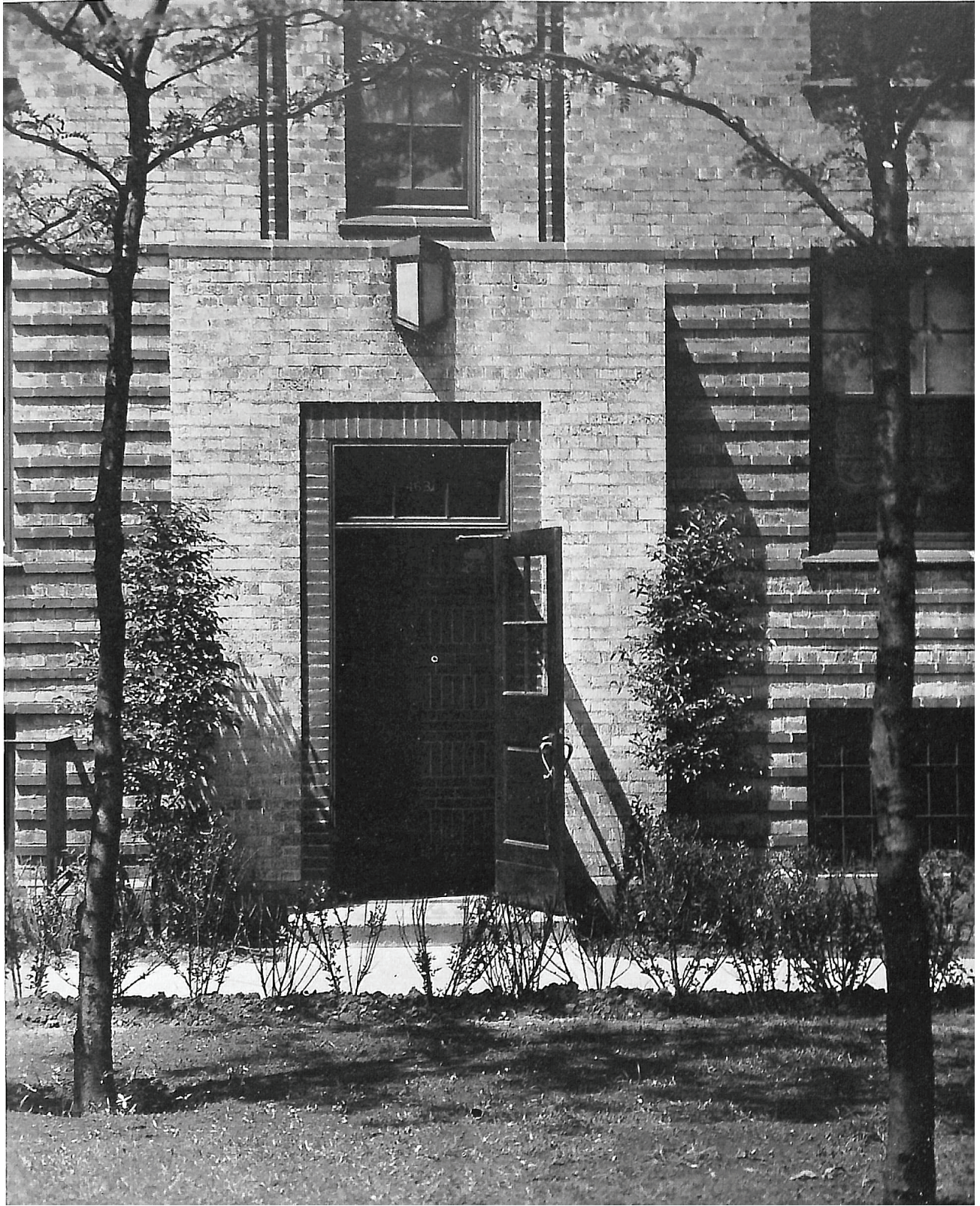
*The integrity of the proposed landmark must be preserved in light of its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship and ability to express its historic community, architecture or aesthetic interest or value.*

The Rosenwald Court Apartments has excellent historic integrity. It retains its original site, overall building form, and character-defining exterior and interior details. It retains historic window patterns, openings, and sashes, as well as historic pedestrian entrances. Inside, the building retains apartments and retail spaces, both accommodating historic uses for which the building was constructed.

Exterior changes to the building include new windows in historic sash configurations, two new building entrances off Michigan and Wabash avenues, and new storefronts in historic configurations. Original windows that are no longer in use have been filled in with visually-compatible brick, while original building entrances that are no longer in use have decorative-metal and clear-glass barriers that provide a sense of transparency. Changes to building entrances are in support of the building's recent rehabilitation and upgrading to modern standards with the creation of newly-inserted elevators and interior corridors that provide access to apartments.

Despite these changes, the Rosenwald Court Apartments retain more than sufficient historic integrity for Chicago Landmark designation. It remains as an exemplary affordable housing project with great historical importance to Chicago's African American community.





One of the entry doors from the courtyard of the Rosenwald Apartments. (Photo Source: *Architectural Record*, by Hedrich-Blessing, March 1931, vol. 69)

## **SIGNIFICANT HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES**

Whenever an area, district, place, building, structure, work of art, or other object is under consideration for landmark designation, the Commission on Chicago Landmarks is required to identify the “significant historical and architectural features” of the property. This is done to enable the owners and the public to understand which elements are considered most important to preserve the historical and architectural character of the proposed landmark.

Based upon its preliminary evaluation of the Rosenwald Court Apartments, the Commission staff recommends that the significant features be identified as:

- All exterior elevations, including rooflines, of the building complex, and interior courtyard elevations.



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## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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*The Commission on Chicago Landmarks, whose nine members are appointed by the Mayor and City Council, was established in 1968 by city ordinance. The Commission is responsible for recommending to the City Council that individual building, sites, objects, or entire districts be designated as Chicago Landmarks, which protects them by law. The Commission is staffed by the Chicago Department of Planning and Development, Planning, Design & Historic Preservation Division, City Hall, 121 North LaSalle Street, Room 1006, Chicago, IL 60602; (312-744-3200) phone; (312-744-9140) fax, web site: [www.cityofchicago.org/landmarks](http://www.cityofchicago.org/landmarks)*

*This Landmark Designation Report is subject to possible revision and amendment during the designation process. Only language contained within a designation ordinance adopted by the City Council should be regarded as final.*

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