

FITZGERALD/GINSBERG MANSION, 145-15 Bayside Avenue, Queens.
Built 1924; John Oakman, architect.

Landmark Site: Borough of Queens Tax Map Block 4786, Lot 64.

On April 21, 2005, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Fitzgerald/Ginsberg Mansion and its related Landmark Site (Item No. 5). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. There were seven speakers in favor of designation including William Ginsberg, son of the longest-term owners of the house, representatives of Councilman John Liu, the Historic Districts Council and Municipal Art Society.



Summary

The Fitzgerald/Ginsberg Mansion is a rare 1920s, picturesque Tudor Revival style mansion in Flushing, Queens designed by architect John Oakman. Constructed in 1924, it features rusticated, irregularly shaped fieldstone walls, a multi-colored slate roof, casement and leaded glass windows, and picturesque massing. Large, suburban picturesque revival-style houses from the 1920s were at one time prevalent throughout New York City's affluent residential outer neighborhoods, but have become increasingly rare. The Fitzgerald house is one of the last great mansions from this period still standing in Flushing.

The house represents the affluence and optimism of the 1920s. It was built immediately adjacent to an extension of Flushing's Old Country Club and its golf course – a typical suburban pattern of those years. The Old Country Club, founded in 1887, built its golf course in 1902. It is credited as being one of the oldest private country clubs in the United States. The club house and golf course have since been demolished.

The architect of the house, John Oakman worked for Carrere & Hastings and then formed a partnership with W. Powell before starting his own practice in 1909, specializing in picturesque single family houses. The house was built for Charles and Florence Fitzgerald, who sold it in 1926 to Ethel and Morris Ginsberg. Ginsberg made his fortune as part of a family-owned business supplying sash, door and wooden trim for builders. The firm was considered to be one of the leaders in this field in the Long Island region. The Ginsberg family lived in the house for over seventy years.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

The Development of Flushing¹

One of the oldest settlements within what is now the City of New York – and together with Newtown and Jamaica one of the three colonial settlements now comprising the borough of Queens – Flushing traces its roots to English settlers who received a patent in 1654 from Pieter Stuyvesant, governor of the Dutch colony. Early in the town's history, Flushing residents stood together in support of a local Quaker community against the religious intolerance of Governor Stuyvesant. They lost the immediate battle, but their "Flushing Remonstrance" of 1657 stands as one of the earliest published defenses of religious freedom in the United States.

During the 17th century, Flushing began to develop as a major center for horticulture, an industry brought to the town by French Huguenots who imported fruit trees not native to the country. William Prince established Flushing's first profitable nursery as early as 1737. In 1838, Samuel Parsons established a nursery that introduced to the United States such plants as the Asiatic rhododendron, the Japanese maple, the Valencia orange, and the weeping beech. Parsons' nursery also provided trees for the city's first public parks, including Central Park and Prospect Park.

As in the rest of Queens County, Flushing's fortunes evolved with improvements in transportation. The introduction of regular train service to New York City in 1854 led to a post-Civil War boom in luxury house construction for wealthy New Yorkers. The extension of trolley lines into Flushing from 1888 to 1899, and the electrification of the Long Island Rail Road, helped turn Flushing into a commuter suburb. With the consolidation of Greater New York in 1898, Flushing became part of the new Borough of Queens.

From the 1890s until the outbreak of World War I, Flushing's estates were divided up into new suburban developments including Ingleside, Murray Hill, Broadway-Flushing, Bowne Park, Kissena, and Queensborough Hill.² Perhaps the biggest impetus to the growth of Flushing in particular and Queens in general was the opening in 1909 of the Queensborough Bridge connecting Queens with midtown Manhattan, followed by the extension of the IRT into the borough during the late 1910s. Over the next two decades, the population of Queens mushroomed by 750%.³ The boom continued well into the 1920s.⁴

Flushing participated heavily in the borough's growth, developing as a series of suburban neighborhoods surrounding a town center on Northern Boulevard. In 1910, just a year after the opening of the Queensborough Bridge, the Business Men's Association of Flushing published *Flushing: The Premier Suburban Colony of the City of New York*, a typical booster book touting the suburban advantages of Flushing life:⁵

Flushing has long waited to come into its own. Thousands of people who have enjoyed the luxuries of living in a community like this, where the home life, the social life, and the religious life are at their best, where rowing, yachting, fishing, tennis, golfing, baseball, driving, motoring, and other outdoor amusements are easy at hand and universally indulged in, have in the past found homes in Flushing, regardless of its inaccessibility to Manhattan. These people have preferred to put up with the annoyance, loss of time, and trouble in getting to and from their homes rather than suffer the inconveniences and disadvantages of a home in Manhattan or Brooklyn.

Now that the Pennsylvania Tunnels are completed, and a resident of Flushing can go from his home to Herald Square in sixteen minutes, and without change of cars, now that the great Queensboro Bridge is open to traffic, and a Flushing resident can go for a single five-cent fare by trolley in the finest cars in New York over this bridge in thirty minutes, and with the prospect of the Steinway Tunnel being quickly opened, tens of thousands of New York City's increasing population will take advantage of and enjoy the same invaluable privileges that have previously been the privilege of only thousands.⁶

The book extolled the neighborhood's advantages in healthfulness, openness, good schools, water supply, and churches, and focused on its character as "a Colony of Homes":

Flushing is distinctly and pre-eminently a residence place. It is and always has been a colony of homes - homes of detached houses, homes with broad lawns, large gardens, shrubs, trees, flowers, and abundance of God's pure, fresh air and sunshine. It has no apartment houses, neither has it any of the settlements which are characteristic of other places where there is

much manufacturing. Flushing is clean, wholesome, and restful to a degree possibly not equaled in any other suburb of New York.⁷

And the book proudly listed the prominent people who now called Flushing home, many of them New York City officials:

In later days many...men of note in various walks of life have established homes in Flushing. It would be well-nigh impossible to enumerate them all, but among those more widely known are Dr. William H. Maxwell, City Superintendent of Schools; Hon. Kingsley L. Martin, Commissioner of Bridges; Mr. J. Vipond Davies, Engineer of the McAdoo Tunnels; Mr. Arthur J. Nash, Superintendent of the Tiffany Studios; Mr. Clarence M. Lowes, Treasurer of the Williamsburg Dime Savings Bank; Mr. William O. Wood, President and General Manager of the New York and Queens County Railway; Mr. Charles G. M. Thomas, General Manager of the New York and Queens Electric Light and Power Company; Mr. Manley M. Gillam of the New York Herald; Mr. George N. Webster of the Wagner Palace Car Company; Mr. Foster Crowell, former Commissioner of Street Cleaning; Mr. David L. Van Nostrand, former County Clerk; Mr. Ellis Parker Butler, the author; Tax Commissioner John J. Halleran; Commissioner of Education Rupert B. Thomas; Mr. Frank A. Collins, Deputy Superintendent of School Buildings; Major Thomas K. Boggs, Capt. F.A. Hinman, U.S.A., retired, Rev. Dr. George R. Van DeWater, rector of St Andrew's Church, Manhattan, and so on indefinitely.

One of Flushing's major attractions was the great variety of outdoor recreation available to its residents. As recounted in the Business Men's Association publication of 1910:⁸

Recreation and Entertainment: There is no excuse for any one failing to enjoy himself in Flushing. The place affords every conceivable form of diversion, recreation, and entertainment. Flushing Bay and River provide bathing, fishing, rowing, yachting and motor boating, and skating in winter. The unsurpassed roads, nearly all bordered by great trees, lead to unnumbered picturesque localities. The Shore Road at Whitestone is so close to the water one could toss a biscuit to the decks of the Sound steamers as they sail majestically by.

In particular, the existence of country clubs was considered a major advantage:

The Flushing Country Club [the original name of what became the Old Country Club] has excellent tennis courts and golf links in Whitestone Avenue.

Country clubs and golf clubs in suburban development and in Queens

According to historian James M. Mayo,⁹ the first known country club was the Myopia Club organized in 1879 in Winchester, a suburb of Boston. In 1882, several members of the Myopia Club organized the Country Club at Clyde Park in Brookline, Massachusetts. According to the Brookline club's invitation to members:

The general idea is to have a comfortable clubhouse for the use of members with their families, a simple restaurant, bed-rooms, bowling-alley, lawn tennis grounds, etc.; also, to have race-meetings and, occasionally, music in the afternoon, and it is probable that a few gentlemen will club together to run a coach out every afternoon during the season, to convey members and their friends at a fixed charge.¹⁰

Mayo lists other early country clubs including "The Buffalo (1889), Powelton (1882), Richmond County (1888), St. Andrew's Golf (1888), and Tuxedo (1886) Country Clubs of New York, and the Town and Country Club (1888) of St. Paul, Minnesota...."¹¹ By 1900, more than 1,000 such clubs had opened. Initially, their sporting activities focused on horse-racing, polo or lawn tennis. But before long, those sports had been supplanted by golf, which became enormously popular.

The first club in the United States to build a golf course was the St. Andrew's Golf Club in Yonkers, New York, which opened in 1888.¹² By 1900 there were more than 1,000 golf courses throughout the country.¹³ According to Mayo:

Physically well suited for elites, golf was relatively injury-free and most people could play it. The equipment was not overly expensive; also some people wanted the countryside experience but were not enthusiastic about equestrian sports. Thus golf potentially optimized participation of many club members and their families.¹⁴

Golf clubs and country clubs became major components of new American suburbs. According to Mayo:

The physical connection between the country club and the elite suburb increased as elites sought to relocate to the suburbs and to join a country club.... In the 1880s the country club phenomenon was so new that real estate developers had not recognized its potential relationship to the elite suburb. All the essential ingredients of commuting lines, suburban settlement, and club organizing were coming together, but elites and developers needed a successful experiment to see the possibilities of combining club and suburb.¹⁵

The first such experiment was the development of Tuxedo Park, New York, planned with a clubhouse. The most influential suburban developer who depended on country clubs as part of his development was J.C. Nichols who, between 1906 and 1950, developed thousands of homes in Kansas City, including the Country Club District.¹⁶ Among his imitators were the developers of the Scioto Country Club (1914) outside Columbus, Ohio, River Oaks (1924) in Houston, Texas, Highland Park in Dallas, and many more.

In the early 20th century, of the five boroughs in the City of Greater New York, Queens was the most suburban in character, and had by far the largest number of golf clubs. A local Queens publication in 1924 described the borough as “Queens Borough - the Golfers' Paradise,” and “Queens Borough the Business Man's Playground.”¹⁷

No section of the country is better equipped to satisfy this craving for outdoor sport than Queens Borough, which has more golf courses than all the other boroughs of New York City combined - there being thirteen courses now in actual operation and two in course of making, the total occupying approximately 2,000 acres. The other four boroughs have a total of only six courses.

The same article described the Old Country Club in Flushing as “the oldest course on Long Island.”

The Old Country Club

The Old Country Club was organized in 1887 – just eight years after the pioneering Myopia Club – as the Flushing Athletic Club,¹⁸ making it one of the earliest such clubs in the United States.¹⁹ Though not originally planned with golf in mind, the club was not immune to the attractions of the sport. In the words of the club's *1927 Year Book*:

With the introduction of golf in this country, so many members became interested in the then new game, that golf soon became the principal activity. A Nine-Hole Course was constructed, and in 1902 the name was changed to The Flushing Country Club.²⁰

The Flushing Country Club was not part of a specific suburban development, but it played a large role in making the surrounding area desirable for suburban homes. Its nine-hole golf course, however, soon came to seem too small. As described by the Flushing Country Club's *1927 Year Book*:

Seventeen years passed, and in 1919 a majority of members banded together to form a new club on larger grounds. A handful of faithful golfers refused to leave their old course and promptly reorganized, taking the appropriate name of The Old Country Club, thus distinguishing themselves from the new club.

Steps were taken in 1922 to purchase the original Nine-Hole Course and sufficient adjacent property for nine additional holes. The membership was raised to Four Hundred, and The Old Country Club Land Company, Inc., was formed to acquire the desired land. ...One year later the Eighteen-Hole Golf Course was ready.²¹

The original site on which the Flushing Country Club was built had been acquired from the Mitchell estate, a large tract of land. The land purchased in 1922 by the Old Country Club Land Company, adjoining the original club grounds, was part of the estate of Cornelia Mitchell Wickham.²² Wickham's heirs, members

of the Mitchell family, owned a large plot, and sold land to other buyers as well. New York City in 1923 had already adopted a zoning code regulating land use, but the Mitchells must have had an eye to the value of their remaining parcels, and included very specific 50-year covenants in their deeds. The sale of the new plot to the Old Country Club Land Company included a detailed description not just of its potential club buildings, but also of potential residential development.²³ The covenant occupied several pages of the deed, and noted that permission was granted for the construction of “churches and buildings for ordinary parochial activities, private schools and private social clubs other than clubs promoting boxing and wrestling matches.” Apparently the Mitchells foresaw the eventual sale and redevelopment of the golf club into yet another suburban development. And indeed, in 1936, just 13 years later, the Old Country Club Land Company sold the plot to Parsons Old Country Club Properties, Inc., for residential development.²⁴

The Fitzgerald Home

Barely six months before the Old Country Club Land Company acquired its new property from the Mitchells, the Mitchells sold a plot 100x200 feet directly adjoining²⁵ the Club’s property to Charles and Florence Fitzgerald, formerly of Malba Drive.²⁶ The Mitchells included 50-year restrictive covenants in this deed as well:

And the party of the second part covenants, for herself [Florence Fitzgerald], her heirs and assigns that no building shall be erected on the land conveyed other than private dwellings, to cost not less than \$8000 each and one private garage for each such dwelling. Not more than two such dwellings shall be erected on the land conveyed. No such dwelling shall be erected nearer than 30 feet from the northerly line of Bayside Avenue and no such garage shall be nearer to Bayside Avenue than the rear line of the dwelling which it serves. Said lands, or any building erected thereon, shall not be used for any manufacturing or business purpose whatever, but the boarding or lodging of other persons in connection with the occupancy of the owner or lessee of the premises for dwelling purposes shall not be deemed a business, which covenant shall run with the land hereby conveyed for a period of 50 years.

Despite the covenant’s permission for the construction of two houses, the Fitzgeralds built only one house on the property, which became No. 290 Bayside Avenue (the address later changed to 145-15 Bayside Avenue). They hired architect John Oakman to design a handsome, Tudor-style mansion of the type that had become common in suburban developments.

John Oakman, architect

John Oakman (1878-1963)²⁷ earned his B.A. at Williams College (1899) and went on to study architecture in Paris at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts (Architecte Diplome, 1906).²⁸ He returned to America to enter architectural practice.²⁹

Available knowledge of Oakman’s career is sketchy. In 1906, on returning to the United States, Oakman joined the office of Carrere & Hastings as a draughtsman.³⁰ From 1907 to 1911 he was in a partnership with W. Powell Robins, in the firm of Robins & Oakman.³¹ In 1907 and 1908, he renovated several buildings on the campus of his alma mater.³² In 1907, Robins & Oakman received a major commission to design train terminals and a powerhouse for the Hudson & Manhattan Railroad (now PATH).³³ The Christopher Street station is still extant.³⁴ Judging from his design for the H&M Powerhouse in New Jersey, Oakman had a strong sense both of historical styles and of dramatic massing.

In 1914 Oakman returned to France, where he served during World War I.³⁵ After the war, he opened a practice in Manhattan.³⁶ He is known to have designed a war memorial in 1925 for Westchester Square, in the Bronx,³⁷ as well as the Knickerbocker Hospital and Nurses Residence at Amsterdam Avenue at West 131st Street (1920).³⁸ He described his work in 1949 as:³⁹

Extensive practice, mostly residential and institutional buildings in N.Y. State and vicinity.
Hospital design. Industrial work.

He listed examples of his work as:

Power House, Hudson & Manhattan Railway
Sub-Station, Hudson & Manhattan Railway
Protestant Episcopal Orphans’ Home, N.Y.C.
Williams College, Currier Hall, Dormitory & Commons Building (Competition)

Knickerbocker Hospital, N.Y.C. (Competition)
Nurses Home, Knickerbocker Hospital, (N.Y.C.) (Competition)
Numerous City and Country Residences.

Oakman's very brief obituary in the *New York Times*⁴⁰ described Oakman as specializing "in designing homes."⁴¹ Oakman retired in 1940, and moved back to France, but spent the last five years of his life in Alabama.⁴²

Suburban Housing in the Early Twentieth Century⁴³

By the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, American suburbs were being filled with huge numbers of single-family homes, built to provide housing for the growing middle-class. Historian Alan Gowans⁴⁴ calls this type of building the "Comfortable House." These houses had evolved from the early picturesque rural cottages promoted by landscape architect Alexander Jackson Downing and his followers into something new, a "combination of country and city home."⁴⁵ They were not strictly country houses because they were situated on small lots rather than large estates, but they were not attached city houses either. With three fully articulated facades, they related to others on the street in terms of size and scale, but were not identical to each other as row houses are. They also broke away from the vertical orientation and boxy internal divisions seen in rowhouses and earlier Italianate and Queen Anne style houses, and were composed to be more horizontal, relating better to the streetscape, and with interior spaces that easily flowed from one to another.⁴⁶

The styles that were dominant for suburban houses during this period usually related to an historical style previously developed in America or Europe. These styles provided a sense of security for their residents, a sense of the familiar in a world that was rapidly changing because of an influx of immigrants, increasing industrialization and its resultant change in work patterns, and the country's new and expanding role in the world at large. Going back to the past for visual metaphors was a way of expressing society's roots, and they became symbols of shared cultural values. Additionally, since the family was seen as the basis of moral values, its stability was of utmost importance, and its center, the home itself, became the focus of much concern.⁴⁷ On a practical level, the "Comfortable House" was appealing because it also included the latest technological developments to make life easier for its inhabitants: indoor plumbing, central heating, electricity and gas lines and laundry facilities.

Homes in this period used a variety of historical styles, but refined and rearranged them to meet contemporary design requirements. Popular styles included Beaux-Arts, Colonial Revival, Arts and Crafts, Tudor Revival, and Spanish Revival, among others. Although it would seem that these are very different types, they were linked by common attitudes among their designers, including "a willingness to use applied ornament, generous scale, systematically disciplined adaptation of past styles; and a vague, generalized sort of associationism," along with a self-consciousness about what they were creating.⁴⁸ Through the use of ornament, designers of the period helped maintain a sense of continuity with the past that was reassuring to their clients and to the community as a whole.⁴⁹

In domestic architecture, historically-based styles reinforced the status quo by confirming the pretensions of the emerging middle and upper class, with proportionally large and heavily elements, from fireplaces to columns and high ceilings. From Fifth Avenue mansions to revival style suburban houses, filtering down to working class bungalows, these details allowed homeowners to associate themselves with the history and culture of countries that had long and distinguished histories.

Suburbs from coast to coast soon filled with houses in a variety of historical revival styles. These buildings were publicized in architectural magazines and available from mail order companies. They were designed by individual architects or ordered from catalogues and constructed in all localities. Whether built on a grand scale or highly simplified, houses with historical references became the norm in American suburban life.

The Fitzgerald-Ginsberg house: Suburban Tudor

The house that John Oakman designed for Charles and Florence Fitzgerald is a handsome, large and unusually picturesque example of the 1920s Tudor Revival suburban home – a type sometimes referred to as "Stockbroker Tudor." Tudor is one of the various medieval revival styles much in vogue in the early 20th century. In particular, it represents the residential side of that vogue; in that period, religious and educational buildings – and occasionally commercial as well – preferred a more academic Gothic Revival. Tudor appealed

to architects of the day as a picturesque style appropriate to the suburbs, one that could make use of a variety of materials, shapes and textures, as well as a large natural site suitable for plantings.

The Tudor also suggested dignified prosperity.⁵⁰ Typical elements of a Tudor house include full-length French doors, and numerous windows connecting the inside with the natural world outside. Windows – often grouped together – could be decorative, leaded windows, casements, bays or oriels. Larger buildings were often faced with masonry or decorative brick but could also have stucco contrasting with areas of dark wood framing or stone. The massing was usually irregular and was emphasized by large and prominent gables, chimneys with multiple stacks, or side-swept catslide roofs over entryways.

The house designed by John Oakman for the Fitzgeralds fits this description. A large two-story mansion with basement and attic, it sits on a plot 100 feet by 200 feet. Well set back from the property line, the house is approached by a curving drive. Most of the house is faced in large blocks of irregularly shaped fieldstone of varying color, meant to suggest the rustic qualities of the countryside. The house has a pitched roof, with multi-colored slate shingles, and two tall chimneys with multiple chimney pots. Many of the windows – in groups of two, three or four – are of leaded glass with diamond-shaped panes. The overall impression is one of grand, picturesque, prosperous suburban comfort.

Just two years after its construction, when the Fitzgeralds sold the property to the Ginsberg family, the *New York Times* singled out the house for praise in an article about recent real estate transactions:

Long Island provided several excellent transactions, especially in the Queens Borough section. At Flushing, where the realty demand has been steadily increasing, one of the finest residences was purchased by Morris Ginsberg from Charles Fitzgerald through the Halleran Agency and Arthur Knapp. The dwelling occupies a plot 200 by 100 feet at 290 Bayside Avenue. It is of stone construction with slate roof and was erected two years ago under the supervision of John Oakman of New York.

Later History

In 1926, the Fitzgeralds sold the house to Morris and Ethel Ginsberg. Morris Ginsberg was one of three sons of Hyman Ginsberg, proprietor of D. Ginsberg and Sons, a prominent Queens manufacturer of sash, door and trim. As described in an account in 1929:

The firm occupies considerable quarters in Corona.... In Corona their building is a landmark. The firm has business throughout Queens, and outside of it, and is conceded as one of the outstanding concerns in its field. D. Ginsberg and Sons are also interested in real estate, notably the mortgage end of it.⁵¹

....Morris E. Ginsberg is in charge of the business end. The maturity of his business judgment found recognition in the fact that he is one of the youngest vice presidents of a national bank, being Vice President of the Woodside National Bank. Morris E. attended public school and high school in Queens, graduated and entered business immediately after. He is a forward-looking, well-informed, capable young businessman and is held in high regard by the builders who have on many occasions demonstrated the complete confidence they have in him. Morris E. is active in the civic and philanthropic affairs of the community, and is a member of a number of organizations.⁵²

The Ginsberg family lived in the house for over seventy years, during which few changes were made to the exterior.

During that time, however, the surrounding neighborhood changed dramatically. Flushing as a whole became heavily redeveloped with new homes and apartment houses, as well as new commercial buildings. The immediate area around the Fitzgerald mansion is occupied with much smaller houses, on small lots, built after the sale of the Old Country Club.

Today, because of its size and proportions, its deep setback on its lot, its entrance drive, its handsome rustic materials, and its carefully designed picturesque massing and details – all remarkably intact – the Fitzgerald/Ginsberg Mansion stands as an unusual survivor from the early 20th century history of Flushing and of Queens.

Description

The Fitzgerald-Ginsberg house is a substantial, two-story tall (plus basement and attic), Tudor Revival style mansion on a 100' x 200' lot, facing onto Bayside Avenue, with an attached garage at the rear. The house is substantially set back from the sidewalk, and approached by a curving gravel drive.

Main façade: The main façade, facing Bayside Avenue, is a long, asymmetrically massed, picturesque composition, organized around two major gable-end sections. Each gabled section is two-and-a-half stories tall, with the gable forming the top half-story, and each is faced with irregular fieldstone blocks of varying shape (generally rectangular) and color. The gables have flared eaves. The roof is a graduated slate roof, with larger, thicker slate at the eaves, and narrower, thinner slate at the ridge line.

Windows are slightly recessed, with projecting lintels, and enframed by the fieldstone blocks. The gabled section to the east has a tripartite window at the ground floor level, each with small diamond panes, and at the second story level a smaller window with four tall, narrow casements. The gabled section to the west has two irregularly placed windows at the ground floor level, and a window at the second story level.

Between the two gabled sections, the pitched roof slopes down to a one-story section with the house's main entrance; there is a small double dormer window set into the roof, but not directly over the entrance. The entrance is approached by two levels of flagstone; it is outlined by a finished stone surround that is curved at each of the upper corners of the entrance; a small period lantern is attached and centered just above the entranceway; the entrance is shaded by the roof eave which extends slightly over it. There is a historic wooden door, with vertical panels and a small light near the center top, at eye-level, and a non-historic storm door.

To the east of the eastern gabled section, there is a two-story section with a steeply sloping roof above; this section is faced not in stone but in stucco. The ground level is taken up almost entirely by a large four-part casement window with a painted wood frame. At the second story level, there is a smaller, four-part casement window, shaded by the roof eave which extends slightly over it.

To the west of the western gabled section, the roofline dips below the gable, though not as low as the roofline over the main entrance; there is a four-part casement window with a painted wood frame at the ground floor level, and a basement level below it, partly below-grade – where the ground slopes downward towards the west – with a similar four-part casement window; a retaining wall, constructed of the same unfinished fieldstone as the house, projects perpendicularly from the house just east of this window.

At the western edge of the façade, the ground slopes downward fully exposing the basement level of the façade. The house ends here in a two-story porch-like section corresponding to the ground-floor level and the basement level of the rest of the house. On the eastern half of this section, a stone stairway at the basement level leads to a ground-floor level doorway; the roof extends further down over this section, forming a separate pent-roof over the entrance; this roof section is supported by a wooden beam extending down to the second step of the stone staircase. On the western half of this section, the basement portion of the façade is faced in fieldstone, while the ground-level portion is almost entirely taken up by a large multipaned wooden window.

East façade: The east façade is comprised of two sections: to the front of the house, a two-story-and-attic gabled section slightly shorter than the main section of the house but projecting out, eastward, from it; and to the rear a small, one-story, separately roofed area. Its ground-level story is faced in fieldstone in its lower portion, with a central doorway with six panels in its lower half and a nine-light window in its upper half, with a four-light transom above; the doorway is flanked on either side by two tall casement windows. The second-story and attic levels are faced in stucco, with a large five-part casement window at the second story. The small, separately roofed area towards the rear of the house is largely occupied by casement windows with diamond-shaped panes.

West façade: The western façade has three sections: the projecting porch near the main façade, a stone wall behind it, and an attached garage.

Porch: This is the porch-like section at the far western end of the main façade and continues its design, with a fieldstone lower portion and windowed section above, with a roughly stuccoed section of wall at its eastern end, where the porch meets the main portion of the house. The wall area behind it (to its north) is faced in fieldstone, and has a ground-floor level window and a second-floor level two-part casement window. A small square dormer window projects from the roof above.

Attached garage: The attached garage has a gable end in rough stucco, a roof similar to the roof of the house, and one large wooden garage door. The driveway is paved in large rough masonry blocks.

Rear façade: The rear façade to some extent mirrors the general layout of the front façade, with two major gable-end sections. Most of the façade is of irregular fieldstone, but the upper story of the gable to the west is faced in rough stucco.

The easternmost gable end has a double window at the ground-floor level with diamond-shaped panes, and a three-part casement window at the second-floor level; the attic level gable has one small square window.

The westernmost gable end has four windows at the ground floor level, and four casement windows with diamond panes at the second floor level. Beyond it is the rear of an attached garage.

Between the two gabled sections, the pitched roof slopes down to a one-and-a-half-story section with a second entrance, with casement windows above. The entrance is outlined by a finished stone surround that is curved at each of the upper corners of the entrance. The historic wood door is similar in design to the front door, and has a screen door as well. In the roof above this section, there is one small square dormer window. Above and to the east rises a four-part brick chimney.

Report prepared by
Anthony Robins, Consultant

NOTES

¹For general information on Flushing, see Benjamin Thompson, *History of Long Island from its Discovery and Settlement to the Present Time*, vol. 3 (1918, rpt. Port Washington, N.Y., 1962), 30-42; and "Flushing," by Vincent Seyfried, in the *Encyclopedia of New York City*.

² Seyfried.

³ Jeffrey A. Kroessler, *Building Queens: The Urbanization of New York's Largest Borough* (PhD dissertation, CUNY 1991), pp. iv, 333.

⁴ Kroessler, p. 378: "The economic boom of the 1920s...was nowhere more evident than in Queens, and like the rest of the boom, the real estate explosion in Queens was built on credit. The result was an extraordinary period of construction. In the five years between 1924 and 1929, the city issued 73, 656 permits for 1- and 2-family homes in Queens, providing housing for 93,000 families, or an estimated 400,000 persons."

⁵ George Van De Griff, *Flushing: The Premier Suburban Colony of the City of New York* (Flushing, N.Y.: Business Men's Association of Flushing; printed by the Nation Press, c1910).

⁶ Van De Griff, p. 5.

⁷ Van De Griff, p. 19.

⁸ Van De Griff, pp. 39-41.

⁹ James M. Mayo, *The American Country Club: Its Origins and Development* (New Brunswick NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1998).

¹⁰ Cited in Mayo, p. 64.

¹¹ Mayo, p. 66.

¹² Mayo, p. 71.

¹³ Mayo, p.71.

¹⁴ Mayo, p.72.

¹⁵ Mayo, p.116.

¹⁶ Mayo, p. 120.

¹⁷ *Queen Borough* (published by the Chamber of Commerce of the Borough of Queens), May 1924, Vol X No. 5, p.299.

¹⁸ *The Old Country Club Year Book*, 1927, p.3.

¹⁹ Mayo, p.63.

²⁰ *The Old Country Club Year Book* 1927, p. 3.

²¹ *The Old Country Club Year Book* 1927, p. 3.

²² Queens County Registers Office Liber Deeds, Liber 2530 No. 54266, July 2, 1923.

²³ *Ibid.*: "...the said lands shall be subject to the following restrictive covenants which shall run with the land for a period of 50 years....Provided that no building or use at present existing shall be deemed to violate any of such covenants nor any additions or alterations to the present or any future clubhouse of the Old Country Club or any golf or country club using the premises hereby conveyed for a golf or country club nor any structures erected in or about such clubhouse in connection with their use for a golf or country club to wit: On lots fronting on Parsons Boulevard as so laid down or as hereafter located and opened no building or any part thereof shall be erected nearer than 40 feet from the front line of said lot not more than one (1) house shall be built on each 15,000 square feet of land and no house which shall cost less than \$10,000 except that on the westerly side of Parsons Boulevard north of 25th Drive one (1) house may be built on a lot not less than 12,000 square feet in area, and may cost not less than \$9000...."

²⁴ *Queensborough* (published by the Chamber of Commerce of the Borough of Queens), April 1936 (n.p. – clipping from the Flushing vertical file at the Long Island Division of the Queensborough Public Library): "Two More Golf Clubs Sold for Building: Another of Queens borough's golf clubs will cease to exist on April 30 when the Old Country Club, located on Whitestone avenue, Flushing, is turned over to Klein & Jackson, developers, who have paid \$450,000, all cash, for it. They will immediately begin the erection of several hundred residences, as well as a number of apartments of the chateau type. The Old Country Club, said to be the oldest golf club on Long Island and the second oldest in the United States, was established in 1887 as the Flushing Athletic Club. ...The new owners expect to spend about \$250,000 on improvements, including streets and utility services and about \$5,000,000 for construction work, according to the Halleran Agency, broker in the deal. The land is bounded by Bayside avenue, Willets Point boulevard, Whitestone avenue and 149th street. Adjoining it are the old J.F.B. Mitchell and Henry Wickham homesteads, which date back about a century."

²⁵ Liber 2530 No.54266: the deed to the Old Country Club Land Company specified that the property was bounded in part by the Fitzgerald property.

²⁶ Liber 2457 No. 67297, September 25, 1922, and Liber 2456 No. 67298, same date. The sale was specifically to Florence Fitzgerald; phone directories in 1925 list Charles Fitzgerald at 290 Bayside Avenue, the original address of the house. Little else is known about the Fitzgeralds.

²⁷ Williams College Archive, Society of Alumni obituary record.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ In 1907 he entered an architectural competition in Washington, D.C.: "150 Architects Enter: Offer Designs for Building of American Republics, *The Washington Post*, Jun 16, 1907, p.R2; he was listed as "Pennington Satterthwaite and John Oakman (associate architects), New York." In 1914, he was mentioned as being in attendance at the Fine Arts Ball organized by the Society of Beaux Arts Architects, "Venetian Pageant at Fine Arts Ball," *New York Times*, February 21, 1914, p. 11.

³⁰ Information submitted by Oakman to Williams College for his 1949 "Fiftieth Reunion" alumni publication; in the Williams College archives.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² New doorways at East College (1907), alterations to Jessup Hall (1908), and Currier Hall (1908).

³³ He might have been related to Walter G. Oakman, president of the railroad company.

³⁴ New York Buildings Department, New Building Application 1118 of 1906.

³⁵ American Ambulance Service in France, 1914-15; assigned to French army at Dunkirk, Jan 1915; Captain Engineers USA, Sept. 1917; in action Meuse-Argonne Offensiv; Army of Occupation, Nov-Dec 1918. Discharged July 1919; *ibid.*

³⁶ At 67 West 44th Street; Williams College Archives, alumni records.

³⁷ "Public Art in the Bronx... War Memorials (Lehman College, City University of New York, web site: http://bronxart.lehman.cuny.edu/pa/war_memorials.htm)

³⁸ New York Buildings Department, New Building Application 444 of 1920.

³⁹ Information submitted by Oakman to Williams College for his 1949 “Fiftieth Reunion” alumni publication; in the Williams College archives.

⁴⁰ Repeated word for word in the Williams College archive’s Alumni Notes.

⁴¹ “John Oakman,” obituary, *New York Times*, December 23, 1923, p.25.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ This section is adapted and condensed from a draft researched and written by Virginia Kurshan of the Landmarks Preservation Commission’s Research Department.

⁴⁴ Alan Gowans, *Styles and Types of North American Architecture, Social Function and Cultural Expression* (NY: Harper Collins, 1992).

45 Gowans, 33.

46 Robert Fishman, *Bourgeois Utopias: The Rise and Fall of Suburbia* (NY:Basic Books, 1987), p, 148.

47 Gowans, 7-11.

48 Gowans, 216.

49 Gowans, 217.

50 James Massey and Shirley Maxwell, *House Styles in America*, (NY: Dovetail Publishers, 1996), 219.

51 Franklin J. Sherman, *Building Up Greater Queens Borough: An Estimate of its Development and the Outlook* (New York: First limited edition, 1929), p. 211.

52 *Ibid.*, p.212.

FINDINGS AND DESIGNATION

On the basis of careful consideration of the history, architecture and other features of the building, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the Fitzgerald/Ginsberg Mansion has a special character and a special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, heritage, and cultural characteristics of New York City.

The Commission further finds that the Fitzgerald/Ginsberg Mansion is a rare 1920s, picturesque, Tudor Revival style mansion in Flushing, Queens designed by architect John Oakman; that it was constructed in 1924 and features rusticated, irregularly shaped fieldstone walls, a multi-colored slate roof, casement and leaded glass windows, and picturesque massing; that large, suburban picturesque revival-style houses from the 1920s were at one time prevalent throughout New York City's affluent residential outer neighborhoods, but have become increasingly rare and that the Fitzgerald house is one of the last great mansions from this period still standing in Flushing; that John Oakman received his architectural diploma from the Ecole des Beaux Arts in 1904 and then worked for Carrere & Hasings and that in 1905 he founded a partnership with W. Powell Robins and the firm was hired as the exclusive architects for the Hudson & Manhattan Railroad Company designing stations and the company's Jersey City Powerhouse; that Oakman left the partnership in 1909 and practiced on his own until his retirement in 1940 designing a variety of building types but being best known as the designer of picturesque single family houses; that the house represents the affluence and optimism of the 1920s; that it was built immediately adjacent to an extension of Flushing's Old Country Club and its golf course—a typical suburban pattern of those years; that the house was built in 1924 for Charles and Florence Fitzgerald who sold it in 1926 to Ethel and Morris Ginsberg and that Ginsberg made his fortune as part of a family-owned business supplying sash, door and wooden trim for builders and that the firm was considered to be one of the leaders in this field in the Long Island region and that the Ginsberg family lived in the house for over seventy years.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 74, Section 3020 of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 3 of Title 25 of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designate as a Landmark the Fitzgerald/Ginsberg Mansion, 145-15 Bayside Avenue, Borough of Queens, and designates Borough of Queens Tax Map Block 4786, Lot 64 as its Landmark Site.

Commissioners:

Robert B. Tierney, Chair; Pablo Vengoechea, Vice- Chair
Joan Gerner, Roberta Brandes Gratz, Christopher Moore,
Richard Olcott, Thomas Pike, Elizabeth Ryan



Fitzgerald/Ginsberg Mansion
145-15 Bayside Avenue, Queens
Photo: Matthew A. Postal



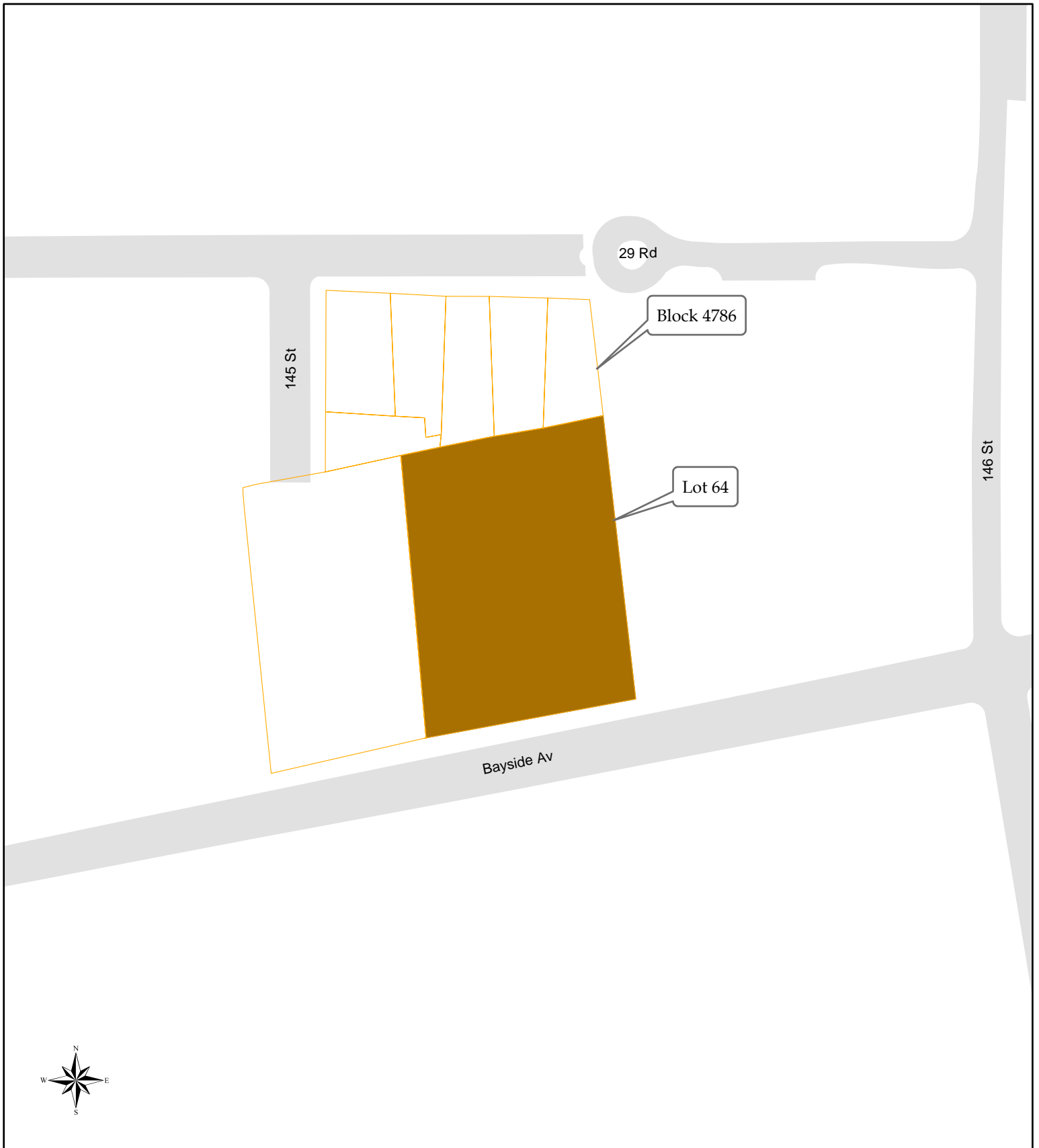
Fitzgerald/Ginsberg Mansion
145-15 Bayside Avenue, Queens
Photos: Matthew A. Postal



Fitzgerald/Ginsberg Mansion
Details
Photos: Carl Forster



Fitzgerald Ginsberg Mansion
Side Porch and Front entrance
Photos: Carl Forster



Fitzgerald/Ginsberg Mansion, 145-15 Bayside Avenue
Landmark Site: Borough of Queens Tax Map Block 4786, Lot 64
Graphic Source: New York City Department of City Planning, MapPLUTO, Edition 03C, December 2003



Fitzgerald/Ginsberg Mansion, 145-15 Bayside Avenue
Landmark Site: Borough of Queens Tax Map Block 4786, Lot 64
Graphic Source: Sanborn, Queens Building and Property Atlas, (2005) Volume 5, Plate 11