NPS Form 10-900
(7-81)

OMB NO. 1024-0018
EXP. 10/31/84

**United States Department of the Interior**
**National Park Service**

# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only
received AUG 23 1983
date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

## 1. Name

historic

and/or common Ridgewood MRA Multiple Resource Area (partial: Historic Districts and rows)

## 2. Location see continuation sheets

street & number ~~see continuation sheets~~ 18 dist, ___ not for publication

city, town ___ vicinity of ~~congressional district~~

state New York code 036 county ~~Kings~~ Queens/Kings code 081/047

## 3. Classification

| Category | Ownership | Status | Present Use | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ___ district | ___ public | X occupied | ___ agriculture | ___ museum |
| ___ building(s) | ___ private | X unoccupied | X commercial | ___ park |
| ___ structure | X both | ___ work in progress | X educational | X private residence |
| ___ site | **Public Acquisition** | **Accessible** | ___ entertainment | X religious |
| X object | ___ in process | ___ yes: restricted | ___ government | ___ scientific |
| X Multiple Res. Area | ___ being considered N/A | X yes: unrestricted | X industrial | ___ transportation |
| | | ___ no | ___ military | X other: public monument |

## 4. Owner of Property

name Multiple

street & number

city, town ___ vicinity of state

## 5. Location of Legal Description see continuation sheet

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Queens County Office of the Registrar

street & number 90-27 Sutphin Blvd.

city, town Jamaica state New York

## 6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Statewide Inventory of Historic Resources has this property been determined eligible? ___ yes X no

date 1982 ___ federal X state ___ county ___ local

depository for survey records NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation
Historic Preservation Field Services Bureau

city, town Albany state New York 12238

Kings County Office of the Registrar
210 Joralamon Street
Brooklyn, N.Y. 11201

# 7. Description

| Condition | | Check one | Check one |
|---|---|---|---|
| xx excellent | xx deteriorated | x unaltered | xx original site |
| x good | ___ ruins | x altered | ___ moved date NA |
| xx fair | ___ unexposed | | |

**Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance**

The Ridgewood multiple resources were identified by means of a complete survey/inventory of structures conducted during the summer of 1982 by the Greater Ridgewood Restoration Corporation, a non-profit neighborhood organization committed to the revitalization of the Greater Ridgewood Community, under the guidance of the State Historic Preservation Office staff. The nomination,which includes 2,890 structures, consists of 16 districts, two rows, and 15 individual properties. All properties included in the nomination were recorded on New York State building/ structure inventory forms and systematically evaluated against the National Register criteria. The multiple resource nomination includes properties in the Greater Ridgewood area that have been determined to be of architectural and/or historical significance. The Vander-Ende Onderdonk House Site (1711) in Ridgewood has already been listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

The Queens community of Ridgewood, which encompasses approximately four square miles, is situated upon the gently sloping ridge that extends in an easterly direction from Ridgewood through the center of Long Island. The community ranges in elevation from 60 feet at the western boundary to just over 100 feet on the east. Ridgewood is located along the boundary between Queens County and Kings County (Brooklyn), and is bounded on the west by the Bushwick section of Brooklyn. Several large cemeteries, including Evergreen, Union Field, Mount Carmel, and Cypress Hills, form Ridgewood's southern border. The Queens communities of Glendale and Middle Village lie to the east, while the Maspeth section of Queens bounds Ridgewood to the north. A definition of and justification for the Multiple Resource Area boundaries can be found in Item #10.

Ridgewood's irregular street system consists of older main thoroughfares that have been in use for several centuries, such as Myrtle Avenue, Metropolitan Avenue, and Fresh Pond Road, and several disjointed grid patterns that were laid out with the opening of each new subdivision during the first twenty years of the twentieth century. The New York Connecting Spur of the Long Island Railroad traverses Ridgewood from north to south, cutting off east to west movement along several streets in the eastern section of the community. In addition, the elevated line of the New York City transit system cuts diagonally through several blocks, adding to the geographical asymmetry of the community.

In the nineteenth century, Ridgewood was characterized by open farmland and several amusement parks. As a result of the population pressures of a growing New York City at the turn of the century, Ridgewood was subjected to the eastward march of urbanization and transformed into a dense

community of two- and three-story masonry and frame buildings. Almost all of the buildings were constructed within the relatively short period of time between 1900 and 1920. Most were designed by local architects and built by speculative developers for working and middle-class families eager to escape the crowded conditions in western Brooklyn and Manhattan.

At the backbone of each of Ridgewood's 16 historic districts and two rows are rows of intact masonry buildings, two to three stories, which retain an astounding level of cohesiveness and integrity (60-58 to 60-62 70th Ave.; Photo 11). There are also occasional two- and three-story frame buildings within some of the districts which, because they have been altered substantially, are considered non-historic (60-33 68th Ave., Photo 96). Some of the districts contain commercial and institutional buildings such as banks, schools and churches, some of which contribute to the sense of place depending upon their age, use of materials, design qualities and degree of integrity.

Three types of masonry buildings characterize the districts: row houses, which accommodate no more than one family per floor (16-16 Grove Street; Photo 4),(60-56 69th Ave.;Photo 14); tenements, which house two or more families per floor (18-59 Putnam Ave.; Photo 26); and semi-residential buildings with commercial establishments at ground level and one or more apartments on each of the upper floors (18-31 Madison St.; Photo 31).

The buildings in Ridgewood's districts display the popular architectural decorations of the early twentieth century: applied Romanesque and Renaissance details, such as arched window openings (Photo 56), pedimented door surrounds (Photo 26), decorative lintels (Photo 20), ornate cornices, brick or stone bandcourses and ornamental ironwork (Photo 52). The buildings are constructed of load-bearing masonry walls of speckled brick, usually laid in stretcher bond, with narrow mortar joints (Photo 61). Many individual buildings feature more than one shade of brick to achieve a striking decorative effect, while some rows are articulated by alternating shades from building to building (17-01 to 17-19 Madison St.; Photo 39). Another notable feature of these buildings is the use of various kinds of facades. Some rows display flat fronts; others exhibit bowfronts, with either box bays or round bays.

A number of features serve to unify the architecture of Ridgewood. Elaborate cornices, usually two to three feet in height, cap most of the buildings. Unbroken stretches of cornices, running the length of entire blocks, tie Ridgewood's streetscapes together (16-61 to 16-93 Grove St.; Photo 6). A steady rhythm of window and door openings, articulated by arches of varying shapes, add texture to the blockfronts (16-61 to 16-67 Cornelia St.; Photo 9). Stoops, both high and low, lend perspective to long vistas of brick, while wrought-iron fencework, stretching along the base of entire rows, act in concert with the cornices to unify Ridgewood's broad streetscapes (60-51 to 60-87 69th Ave.; Photo 12).

Most of Ridgewood's row houses are set back from the sidewalk to create small enclosed yards or gardens (60-58 to 60-62 70th Ave.; Photo 11). Generally, the corner buildings in each row extend beyond the rest of the buildings to define the row. The first stories of these corner buildings are usually commercial in use (18-31 Madison St.; Photo 31). The facades of the buildings are frequently angled in order to unite the two facade planes (10-27 Seneca Ave.; Photo 65). This feature is often apparent on both sides of the street. This framing technique evokes a sense of enclosure, so that individual blocks seem to be plazas rather than blockfronts (20-21 to 20-49 Palmetto St.; Photo 27).

Most of the corner buildings originally had stores at ground level and apartments on the upper floors (18-31 Madison St.; Photo 31). Most of these storefronts have either been modernized over the years or converted into residential space (803 Onderdonk Ave.; Photo 30). In addition, one-story commercial additions (often called taxpayers) or garages were usually constructed at the rear of the corner lots, facing the intersecting streets. These have also been altered over the years.

The masonry buildings retain most of their original character because of the high quality of the materials and workmanship that went into their construction. The durable iron-spot bricks were carefully laid up so that the brickwork retains its original integrity despite years of weathering (20-29 to 20-31 Woodbine St.; Photo 34).

The facade trim consists mainly of cast stone, brownstone, and bluestone. This trim often displays elaborate carvings and incisions (Photo 20, 58 and 59). Many of the entrances are especially striking, consisting of a pair of cut-glass doors, topped by a stone entablature with an incised frieze, a full pediment, and carved consoles (Photo 26). The window openings are often decorated with stone lintels that

have incised "Neo-Grec" detailing (Photo 48), splayed stone lintels with elaborate keystones or mascarons (Photo 21), or arches formed by radiating header bricks of varying surface textures (Photo 56).

Many buildings are characterized by the use of a different arch at each level, such as: flat arches on the first story, segmental arches on the second story, and round arches on the third story (17-23 Bleecker St.; Photo 7).

Almost every building has a pressed-metal cornice in the classical tradition, often featuring modillions, dentils, and swags (18-77 to 18-93 Stockholm St.; Photo 24). Most stoops consist of brownstone slabs set on bases of brownstone blocks (60-87 69th Ave.; Photo 12). The stoops and front yards are frequently enclosed by elaborately patterned iron rails, newels, gates and fences (59-12 to 59-42 Summerfield St.; Photo 36).

Approximately 85 to 90 percent of Ridgewood's buildings are exclusively residential, while about 10 to 14 percent are either wholly commercial or have commercial ground stories with residential upper floors. There are also institutional buildings such as schools, churches and libraries, which represent about one percent of Ridgewood's building stock.

The following method was employed to determine the boundaries of the historic districts and rows. An initial visual survey was undertaken by the GRRC staff to identify the preliminary boundaries within which the historic resources were thought to lie. Next, the staff of the State Historic Preservation Office, who worked closely with the GRRC staff throughout the survey and designation process, reviewed and revised the study boundaries identified by the GRRC staff. The final list included 16 districts, two rows, and fifteen individually significant properties which require separate discussion. New York State Building/Structure Inventory forms were completed for each structure. Because the Greater Ridgewood Community covers such a large geographical area and possesses such a rich history, not every site of historical significance in Ridgewood was identified at the outset. Therefore, it is expected that additional sites will be appended to the Ridgewood Multiple Resource nomination as they are identified.

Most of the buildings in the Greater Ridgewood area were built of brick with stone details and metal cornices (17-33 and 17-35 Grove St.; Photo 5). Because of the soundness of construction and the high quality of workmanship, the overwhelming majority of these buildings retain a good deal of their original integrity. Taken together, they are a cohesive collection of early twentieth century speculative urban architecture. These masonry buildings form the nuclei of the districts of historic Ridgewood. A number of other masonry buildings dating from the same period that have lost some of their integrity because of altered storefronts have been included to support the nucleus of each district (803 Onderdonk Ave.; Photo 30). Most storefront alterations are limited to the first story, while the upper stories remain intact. Ridgewood also has several concentrations of frame buildings, occupying Ridgewood's earliest subdivisions, which were developed before the fire laws requiring masonry construction took effect around 1905. While these buildings contribute to an understanding of the developmental history of Ridgewood, virtually all of them have been drastically changed by the removal of original detail and the addition of synthetic sidings (59-11 to 59-17 67th Ave.; Photo 54). Therefore, most were excluded from the district boundaries. The boundaries of each district were determined by carefully determining the points at which the presence of intrusive buildings interferes with the district's cohesiveness and integrity (13 to 17 St. John's Rd.; Photo 19).

National Register level documentation and the necessary continuation sheets for a minimum of fifteen individually significant resources are under preparation and will be forwarded at a later date.

# 8. Significance

| Period | Areas of Significance—Check and justify below | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ___ prehistoric | ___ archeology-prehistoric | ___ community planning | ___ landscape architecture | ___ religion |
| ___ 1400–1499 | ___ archeology-historic | ___ conservation | ___ law | ___ science |
| ___ 1500–1599 | ___ agriculture | ___ economics | ___ literature | ___ sculpture |
| ___ 1600–1699 | _x_ architecture | ___ education | ___ military | ___ social/ humanitarian |
| ___ 1700–1799 | ___ art | ___ engineering | ___ music | |
| _xx_ 1800–1899 | ___ commerce | _X_ /settlement | ___ philosophy | ___ theater |
| _xx_ 1900– | ___ communications | ___ industry | ___ politics/government | ___ transportation |
| | | ___ invention | | _x_ other (specify) immigration |

**Specific dates** various (see text) **Builder/Architect** various (see text)

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

The Ridgewood Multiple Resource Area contains a significant concentration of historic structures which reflect the development of Ridgewood into a working-class neighborhood by German immigrants in the early twentieth century. The building boom that occurred in Ridgewood between 1895 and 1920 resulted in over 5,000 buildings most of which occurred in rows of similar brick houses and tenements. Sixty percent of these buildings are found within the 18 nominated historic districts and rows. Ridgewood's historic row houses and tenements were handsomely designed and solidly constructed. As a result, most of their original Romanesque and Renaissance Revival style details remain intact. Ridgewood's historic districts and rows are unusually cohesive because of the short period of time during which they were developed, and because they were constructed by a handful of like-minded architects and builders who shared a common ancestry. The solid brickwork and fine detailing that characterize Ridgewood's row houses and tenements attest to the dedication and careful workmanship employed by the German developers. Ridgewood's eighteen historic districts and rows, 14 individual structures, and one building complex, which together constitute the Multiple Resource Area nomination, retain the essence of an historic neighborhood to a degree rarely encountered in New York City.

The great wave of German immigration to the United States peaked in the 1880's, a decade during which nearly 1.5 million newcomers from Germany reached our shores. An additional 500,000 arrived in the decade that followed. The influx slowed somewhat after the turn of the century, but in 1910 Germans remained the largest foreign-born population in the country.

The Germans that settled in New York City originally concentrated in such neighborhoods as Manhattan's Yorkville and Lower East Side and Brooklyn's Williamsburg. After the turn of the century, however, many German immigrants, having established themselves financially, became eager to escape the overcrowded conditions in these neighborhoods, into which were pouring the next wave of immigrants from southern and eastern Europe. Ridgewood, an agglomeration of several small farming villages, stood at the threshold of urbanization at that time. It became an ideal new community where this upwardly mobile German population could relocate. Many of these Germans came to America in possession of the skills and crafts of the building trades, and these abilities were put to use in transforming Ridgewood's early farms and amusement parks into a comfortable residential community during the twentieth century.

Prior to the development, land in Ridgewood was farmed by families of Dutch or English descent whose ancestors had been among the earliest settlers in the area. Originally, these farms were known for their orchards, but by the end of the nineteenth century, farming in the area shifted toward crops such as lettuce, corn, potatoes, and cauliflower. Another major land use at the end of the nineteenth century, which gave the area its first notoriety, was represented by several amusement parks, such as the Ridgewood Park and the Cypress Hills Park. After the consolidation of the five boroughs in 1898, the value of land in Ridgewood, which was part of the Queens borough, increased rapidly as urbanization approached from the west. The farms and parks were gradually sold off to the German developers who built the solid rows of buildings that characterize Ridgewood.

Ridgewood's earlier phase of urban development, which began in the mid 1890's, consisted mainly of attached frame houses, two or three stories, housing either one or two families to a floor, (66-45 Forest Ave.; Photo 55; 370 Stanhope St.; Photo 78, and 372 Stanhope St.; Photo 79). These three residences are included in this nomination as rare, surviving intact examples of frame residences in Ridgewood, representative of its earliest development. The majority of the frame buildings have been extensively altered, and retain little of their original appearance except for their basic proportions, (59-11 to 59-17 67th Ave.; Photo 54).

The transition from frame to brick buildings occurred around 1905, when city fire codes requiring masonry construction went into effect in Ridgewood. Prior to that year, this important safety code, which originated in the early nineteenth century after a series of disastrous fires levelled several neighborhoods of frame buildings in Manhattan, had been restricted to the Brooklyn side of the Ridgewood border. The rapid spread of urbanization into Queens in the first decade of the twentieth century prompted the fire commissioners to extend the fire districts across the border to prevent any further development of attached frame houses in Ridgewood. As a result, occasional rows of pre-1905 frame buildings intermingle with post-1905 masonry rows on many Ridgewood streets, such as St. John's Rd. in the Grove-Linden St. John's Historic District (Photo 19). Brick houses occasionally occur in Ridgewood's older frame developments. If the masonry building was constructed

before the fire laws took effect in 1905, it was because the builder chose brick construction on his own, since the laws did not require it at that time. All attached row houses constructed after 1905, had to be masonry by law.

One exception to the rule is the Cypress Avenue West Historic District which lies both in Queens and Brooklyn. Most of the district was developed between 1900 and 1906 by August Bauer and others into rows of three-story attached brick houses (16-65 to 16-67 Grove St., Photo 4), and tenements (17-23 Bleecker St., Photo 7). At the time, the builders had to contend with two sets of building regulations: the strict Brooklyn regulations requiring masonry construction and the less stringent Queens codes permitting frame buildings. This situation was further complicated by the fact that the county boundary line, which was adjusted to its present form in 1925, extended diagonally through several blocks, causing several individual building lots to lie partly in Queens and partly in Brooklyn. Rather than having to deal with two sets of specifications, these builders chose to work from one set of plans that satisfied the more demanding Brooklyn building code. Therefore, the brick rows were the first to be extended across the border into Queens.

The old boundary line, which was set in 1881, was the source of much trouble in the early twentieth century. Water, insurance, and tax rates differed between the two boroughs, so that owners whose houses were divided by the boundary line had to pay part of their taxes to Kings County and part to Queens County. Furthermore, Kings County was served by the city fire department, while Queens County depended upon volunteer fire service to the confusion and hazard of all. Finally, the state legislature, bowing to pressure from politicians and private citizens alike, adopted the present boundary line, which runs down the centers of the streets, in 1925.

Building activity in Ridgewood was given a big boost with the coming of the electric trolley in 1894, but the real impetus to development occurred with the advent of rapid and dependable rail service on the elevated line in 1908. The "El" was extended from its original terminus at Myrtle and Wyckoff Avenues to Fresh Pond Rd. and 67th Ave. in 1915. The subway did not reach Ridgewood until 1928.

A nucleus of about 50 developers was responsible for Ridgewood's building boom in the early twentieth century. Such developers usually purchased the whole or part of one of the old farms or parks and built stretches of identical or similar buildings. Changes in brick color and the use of detailing along Ridgewood's streets often demark the original boundaries of the old farms, parks and purchases, and often serve as the boundaries of Ridgewood's historic districts.

Three basic types of masonry housing were constructed in Ridgewood: row houses, which accommodate no more than one family per floor (16-16 Grove St.; Photo 4, and 60-56 69th Ave.; Photo 14); tenements, which house two or more families per floor (18-59 Putnam Ave.; Photo 26); and semi-residential buildings with commercial establishments at ground level and one or more apartments on each of the upper floors (18-31 Madison St.; Photo 31). Ridgewood's only extant freestanding mansion (66-75 Forest Ave.; Photo 71), was built in 1906. It was designed by Louis Berger, who also designed most of Ridgewood's row houses and tenements. It is included as an individual component in this nomination as an extant example of upper-class housing built for one of the community's prominent families.

Ridgewood's row houses and tenements contribute to an understanding of the history of housing in New York City. Masonry row buildings were first constructed in New York City in the eighteenth century and became the predominant middle-class housing type in the city during the nineteenth century. The areas in which the heaviest concentration of row houses occurred were Manhattan and southwestern Brooklyn. During the nineteenth century, most row houses were built for occupancy of a single family. The buildings ranged in size from modest two-story residences for less wealthy families to opulent five-story mansions for the rich, in which the upper floors were usually used for servants' quarters.

By the end of the nineteenth century, however, improvements in mass transit and the invention of the automatic elevator allowed for greater densities in convenient and fashionable residential areas. Building lots that were formerly good only for four- to five-story houses became prime locations for apartment buildings of ten or more stories. As a result, property values increased dramatically and row houses were no longer economically feasible in traditional residential neighborhoods in Manhattan and parts of Brooklyn.

In the outer reaches of the boroughs, such as Ridgewood at the turn of the century, where land was not so well served by rapid transit and not in such great demand, row house construction continued into the 1940's. In Ridgewood, however, the row houses that were built in the early twentieth century were constructed for middle-class people of lesser means, typically recent German immigrant families, who could not afford to maintain oversized houses or apartments. Therefore, Ridgewood's row houses were built with a single five- or six-room apartment to a floor and usually two or three apartments per house. Because they were modest in size, most apartments in Ridgewood row houses still retain their original layouts.

Throughout the nineteenth century, tenements proved to be the scourge of New York City. These working-class residences contained dark and stuffy apartments, often with inadequate sanitary facilities. Tenement neighborhoods, such as the Lower East Side, were frequently characterized by overcrowded, unsanitary and inhuman living conditions.

When Gustave X.Mathews began to construct Ridgewood's first tenements shortly after the turn of the century, he experimented with using wider lots for larger rooms, providing large air wells so that no room would be without ample light and circulation, providing private and adequate sanitary facilities, and housing no more than two families per floor. At the same time, he sought to control costs so that both the houses and the apartments could be affordable to families of moderate income.

This improved type of tenement, called "Mathews Model Flats," were an immediate success. Mathews built and sold over 300 of his model tenements, such as 1859 Putnam Ave. (Photo 26) in Ridgewood in 1909 to 1912. They are found in the following historic districts: Seneca-Onderdonk-Woodward, Woodbine-Palmetto-Gates, and Seneca Ave. East. Other Ridgewood developers, such as Bauer and Stier and Henry Meyer, soon modelled their tenements after Mathews's flats, and other tenements following his example were constructed in other parts of the city. Mathews Model Flats gained so much favorable recognition in the early twentieth century that the Tenement House Department of New York City exhibited them at the Panama-Pacific Fair in San Francisco in 1915.

The firm of G.X. Mathews Company was organized by Gustave X. Mathews in 1900. Mathews built occasional rows and scattered buildings in Ridgewood until 1910, when he purchased the Meyerrose farm, upon which he constructed the 300 model tenements that became known as Mathews Flats (1859 Putnam Ave.; Photo 26). The Seneca-Onderdonk-Woodward Historic District District 7), which occupies the site of the old Meyerrose Farm, was developed by Mathews in 1910-1912. During the year 1911, the G.X. Mathews Company received 25 percent of the Tenement House Certificates in Queens County.

The G.X. Mathews Company employed Louis Allmendinger to design its famous tenements. Very little is known about Allmendinger except that his work is also found in the Bushwick section of Brooklyn. He is also the architect of the Russian Orthodox Cathedral of the Transfiguration of Our Lord in Brooklyn, which is also listed in the National Register.

August Bauer and Paul Stier were responsible for most of the buildings within Ridgewood's historic districts. Mr. Bauer, who was trained as a carpenter, was born in Bavaria in 1860 and arrived in America in 1882. He came to Ridgewood in 1893 and embarked on a building campaign in which he built over 300 houses during the next 17 years before joining Paul Stier in 1910. Stier was born in Mecklenberg, Germany in 1874 and came to America in 1891. He settled in Buffalo, where he learned masonry, and came to Ridgewood in 1902. In his first eight years in Ridgewood, Stier built 750 houses, mostly in the Central Ridgewood Historic District, and became the largest single building operator in Ridgewood and one of the biggest land developers in the New York metropolitan area.

Bauer and Stier were responsible for over 2,000 buildings in Ridgewood, almost all of which are included in the nominated districts. Bauer and Stier, who continued to operate into the 1920's, produced most of the following historic districts:Cypress Ave. West, Central Ridgewood, Summerfield St., Cypress Ave. East, Forest-Norman, Fresh Pond-traffic, and 75th Ave.- 61st St.

Other German builders who worked prolifically in Ridgewood and whose work is found within the historic districts, are: Stephen Burkard, John Braunreuther, Jacob Raedler, Kilian Schurger, Henry Schmidt, Albin Wagner, and Stephen Woris.

Perhaps the most important factor which serves to unify Ridgewood's masonry architecture is that a single architectural firm was responsible for the designs of approximately 90% of the buildings within Ridgewood's districts. The firm of Louis Berger and Company produced over 5,000 building plans in the Ridgewood area between 1895 and 1930. Louis Berger, who was born in Rheinpfalz, Germany in 1875 and came to America in 1880, settled in Ridgewood in 1892. He studied architecture at Pratt Institute and served his apprenticeship with the well-known architectural firm Carrère and Hastings before establishing his own business in 1895. His office was located at 300 Saint Nicholas Avenue, Brooklyn until 1910, when it was moved to Myrtle Avenue near Cypress Avenue in Queens. That same year he joined Bauer and Stier, Inc., Ridgewood's largest building firm, as resident architect. Berger, whose work is also found in the Prospect-Lefferts Gardens and Bedford-Stuyvesant sections of Brooklyn, practiced until 1930.

Other architects who designed brick houses in Ridgewood were Charles Infanger, Henry Schmidt, Stephen Woris, and James A. Caufield.

Not only did the developers of Ridgewood have German backgrounds, but so did the owners of the concerns from which they purchased the bricks, stone, ironwork and woodwork.

The bricks that were used for most of Ridgewood's pre-World War I houses came from the Kreischer Brick Manufacturing Company in Staten Island (Photo 60). The brick company was founded by Balthazar Kreischer in 1854. Kreischer was born in Bavaria in 1813 and came to New York City in 1836, where he worked as a mason before forming his business. The company's heyday was in the early twentieth century when it produced bricks of all colors and types along with terra-cotta ornaments (Photo 8), which were used by architects and builders all over the east and midwest.

Kreischer's specialty was smokestack bricks, which are specially molded into trapezoidal shapes that produce circular stacks when laid side by side. This special type of brick was used creatively by Ridgewood's builders to make the round bayfronts that distinguish Ridgewood's row houses. A number of builders working in Greater Ridgewood used Kreischer's products, including Henry Bockrath,Stephen Burkard, and Adam Wischerth. More significantly, Louis Berger and Company, which designed the overwhelming majority of Ridgewood's homes, specified Kreischer bricks for construction, as did another architect, Charles Infanger. In the early twentieth century, Balthazar Kreischer's sons sold the business to Charles Androvette. The company's prominence declined after World War I and the factory was closed in 1927.

Most of the Kreischer bricks that were used in Ridgewood are iron-speckled bricks with smooth surfaces and tight, flush joints (Photo 61). Speckled bricks, sometimes called iron-spot bricks, were obtained by adding manganese in a finely granular condition in order to produce softer tones. Rock-faced bricks, also originating from Kreischer, were used for brick detailing such as band courses and lintels (Photo 56).

After World War I, a new kind of brick, which was imported from factories in Pennsylvania, came into vogue. Known as wire-cut bricks, these bricks had rough surfaces and were laid with raked joints (Photo 62). This change signalled the decline in the quality and appearance of brickwork in Ridgewood.

A local Ridgewood masonry contracting firm, Reilly and Macdonald, laid much of Ridgewood's brick. Although neither principal was of German extraction, James Reilly having been born in Brooklyn and John Macdonald in Scotland, they employed about 50 masons, many of which were German and Italian. Reilly and Macdonald worked for Bauer and Stier, Ridgewood's largest builders.

The Evergreen Steam Stone Works, which was located on Myrtle Avenue at Decatur Street, produced most of the stone used in Ridgewood's stoops and as applied ornament on facades (Photos 12, 57-59). The company, founded in 1890 by Eirich and Ruppenstein, manufactured machine-cut, hand cut and cast-stone. The Evergreen Steam Stone Works building has been demolished.

Two firms produced much of the ornamental iron used by Ridgewood's developers in the early twentieth century (Photos 11 and 42). Strubel's Ridgewood Iron Works, which was located on DeKalb Avenue and Wyckoff Avenue, was founded in 1870 by John Strubel. Charles Strebel and Sons, whose factory stood on Myrtle Avenue, was founded in 1901 by Charles Strebel. Both buildings have been razed.

Charles Rothenbach, Inc., another local firm, manufactured most of the wooden sash, doors, and interior woodwork found in Ridgewood. The business was established in 1904 by Charles Rothenbach, who also sold his products to builders and contractors all over Long Island.

The end product of this tight network of German construction tradesmen was a cohesive urban community, characterized by buildings that are human in scale, pleasing to the eye, and solid in structure. The pride and dedication

that went into every facet of their construction, from their design and siting to the laying of the bricks and the finishing touches, are still evident in these buildings despite seven decades during which major economic changes have occurred.

The buildings have survived intact because they were originally sensible and conservative in design and layout. The exteriors are handsome and simple in appearance, with applied ornament consisting mainly of Renaissance Revival, Romanesque, and Neo-Grec inspired motifs. As a group, they leave an impression of architectural unity with mild visual variations. The projecting bays provide rhythmic interest, while the unbroken strings of cornices and stretches of ironwork unify the whole (5912 to 5942 Summerfield St.; Photo 36).

Corner stores were another original feature of Ridgewood. While many of these small shops remain intact, they are gradually being converted into ground floor apartments, such as 803 Onderdonk Avenue (Photo 30), as social, economic, and zoning needs change.

One-story commercial buildings were often built at the rear of the corner lots facing the intersecting streets. These small shops once provided necessary services, such as laundries, tailors, barbers and shoemakers. With the advent of mass automobile ownership in the 1920's, many of these one-story frame structures were subsequently replaced by brick garages with simplified Colonial Revival or Art Deco details. Many of the remaining storefronts are presently vacant and in a state of disrepair or have been unsympathetically altered to fulfill other needs.

One Ridgewood tradition that continues into the present is the graining of the double wooden doors of the facade with paint (Photo 27). Instead of varnishing the natural grain of the wood, many Ridgewood homeowners coat their doors with enamel and apply a simulated grain with a special brush and a darker shade of paint.

The German influence in Ridgewood was by no means limited to the building trades alone but also permeated the social and economic lives of its early twentieth century residents. This influence remains evident today.

It took a great amount of capital to finance the building of Ridgewood, and several banks opened in the neighborhood in the early twentieth century. Two of them, the Ridgewood Savings Bank(Photo 67) and the Manufacturers Hanover Trust Bank (Photo 73) are included as individual components in this nomination.

The Ridgewood Savings Bank (b. 1928-1930) was designed by the prominent architectural firm of Halsey, McKormick and Helmer, which also designed the Williamsburg Savings Bank, the tallest building in Brooklyn. The Manufacturers Hanover Trust Bank (1910) was originally the Ridgewood National Bank. The architect of the bank, Louis Berger, who also designed most of Ridgewood's brick row houses and tenements, served as the bank's first president.

Among the biggest employers of labor were the local breweries. Names like the Welz and Zerwick Brewery, the W.H.Frank Brewery, Diogenes Brewing Company, the Montauk Brewery and the George Grauer Brewery, all located in nearby Brooklyn, kept employment at a peak.

Most of the civic associations that sprang up in the early twentieth century were filled with local businessmen and prominent citizens who had come from Germany. These associations, including the Citizens' Improvement Association and the Ridgewood Board of Trade, were responsible for bringing about such improvements as the installation of sewers, sidewalks and street lamps.

A number of social organizations were also founded in the early twentieth century, many of which are still in existence, such as the First German Sports Club, the Schwaebischer Saengerbund, the Steuben Society of America, the Rheinpfaelzer Volkfest Vereins, and the German-American School Association. The American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars commissioned the Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument (Photo 77) in 1920, which is included in the nomination as an example of a public monument in Ridgewood.

Worship also played a vital role in early twentieth century Ridgewood and continues as an important part of Ridgewood life at the present. Dozens of Lutheran, Presbyterian, Reformed, and Roman Catholic Churches were built in the early decades of this century through the generosity and faith of the German residents who settled here. Several of these churches are included in this nomination as the most architecturally distinguished examples of church architecture in Ridgewood, including: St. Aloysius R.C. Church, St. Brigid's R.C. Church, St. John's Ridgewood United Methodist Church, the Covenant Lutheran Church, and the St. Matthias R.C. Church Complex. Some of these are within historic districts and several are individual components of this nomination.

Adequate and accessible health care was also a concern of early Ridgewood residents, and two hospitals were built in Ridgewood, both of which are included in the nomination. The Wyckoff Heights Hospital (Photo 74), originally the German Hospital, was built in 1894 as a non-sectarian institution. The Bethany Deaconess Hospital (Photo 72) was built in 1901 by the Methodists.

Education was valued by Ridgewood's early twentieth century inhabitants, and several schools, both public and private, were built in the neighborhood. The Junior High School #93 (Photo 80), was built in 1917 and the Public School #77 (Photo 81) was built in 1909-11. Both schools were executed in the Tudor-Gothic style and are included in the nomination as distinctive examples of turn-of-the-century public architecture.

Local business also displayed an ethnic flavor. Scores of German merchants opened their establishments along Ridgewood's major shopping thoroughfares and in corner storefronts. Many of these businesses, such as Rudy's Pastry Shop (Photo 64), Schaller and Weber Meats, Minz Decorators, Waxgizer and Rindler Stationers, and Becker's Discount Store, still survive, although their storefronts have been altered, as a reminder of the German influence in the early days of the community. Ridgewood's aging German population continues to thrive despite the gradual, but steady, entrance of other ethnic groups into the community, such as the Italians, Hispanics, Asians and East Europeans.

When constructed, Ridgewood was intended to be a place where a family of modest means could live among a community of people who enjoyed interaction with their neighbors and fellow residents. The success of the original developers in achieving these goals is best demonstrated by the fact that the community continues to thrive along these very lines today (Photo 63).

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

see continuation sheet

# 10. Geographical Data

**Acreage of nominated property** see continuation sheet
**Quadrangle name** Brooklyn **Quadrangle scale** 1:24,000
**UMT References** see continuation sheets

| | Zone | Easting | Northing | | Zone | Easting | Northing |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | | | | B | | | |
| C | | | | D | | | |
| E | | | | F | | | |
| G | | | | H | | | |

**Verbal boundary description and justification**

see continuation sheets

**List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries**

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| state New York | code 036 | county Queens | code 081 | | |
| state New York | code 036 | county Kings | code 047 | | |

# 11. Form Prepared By see continuation sheet


**name/title** Contact: Larry E. Gobrecht
**organization** Historic Preservation Field Services Bureau Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation **date** August 1983
**street & number** Empire State Plaza, Agency Bldg. 1 **telephone** 518-474-0479
**city or town** Albany **state** New York 11238


# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

**The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:**

___ national ___ state X local

**As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.**

**State Historic Preservation Officer signature** [signature]

**title** Commissioner **date** 8/17/83

**For NPS use only**
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

See Continuation Sheet for Listing date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest: date

Chief of Registration

Major Bibliographical References

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Researched and written by:

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NPS Form 10-900-a
(3-82)

OMB No. 1024-0018
Exp. 10-31-84

**United States Department of the Interior**
**National Park Service**

# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only
received
date entered

Continuation sheet | Item number | Page 1 of 2

Multiple Resource Area
Thematic Group

dnr-11

Name Ridgewood Multiple Resource Area
State New York

Comm accept 9/30/83

| Nomination/Type of Review | | Date/Signature |
|---|---|---|
| 1. 68th Avenue-64 Place Historic District | Entered in the National Register | for Keeper Attest — Delores Byrd 9/30/83 |
| 2. 75th Avenue-61st Street Historic District | Entered in the National Register | for Keeper Attest — Delores Byrd 9/30/83 |
| 3. Central Avenue Historic District | Entered in the National Register | for Keeper Attest — Delores Byrd 9/30/83 |
| 4. Central Ridgewood Historic District | Entered in the National Register | for Keeper Attest — Delores Byrd 9/30/83 |
| 5. Cooper Avenue Row Historic District | Substantive Review | for Keeper Attest — Brenda Greene Bright 9/30/83 |
| 6. Cornelia-Putnam Historic District | Entered in the National Register | for Keeper Attest — Delores Byrd 9/30/83 |
| 7. Cypress Avenue East Historic District | Entered in the National Register | for Keeper Attest — Delores Byrd 9/30/83 |
| 8. Cypress Avenue West Historic District | Entered in the National Register | for Keeper Attest — Delores Byrd 9/30/83 |
| 9. Forest-Norman Historic District | Entered in the National Register | for Keeper Attest — Delores Byrd 9/30/83 |
| 10. Fresh Pond-Traffic Historic District | Entered in the National Register | for Keeper Attest — Delores Byrd 9/30/83 |

NPS Form 10-900-a
(7-81)

**United States Department of the Interior**
**National Park Service**

# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

[redacted]

Continuation sheet | Item number | Page 2 of 2

Multiple Resource Area
Thematic Group

Name Ridgewood Multiple Resource Area
State New York

| Nomination/Type of Review | | | Date/Signature |
|---|---|---|---|
| 11. Grove-Linden St. John's Historic District | Entered in the National Register | for Keeper | Delores Byrd 9/30/83 |
| | | Attest | |
| 12. Madison-Putnam-60th Place Historic District | Entered in the National Register | for Keeper | Delores Byrd 9/30/83 |
| | | Attest | |
| 13. Seneca Avenue East Historic District | Entered in the National Register | for Keeper | Delores Byrd 9/30/83 |
| | | Attest | |
| 14. Seneca-Onderdonk-Woodward Historic District | Entered in the National Register | for Keeper | Delores Byrd 9/30/83 |
| | | Attest | |
| 15. Stockholm-DeKalb-Hart Historic District | Substantive Review | for Keeper | Beth Grosvenor 9/30/83 |
| | | Attest | |
| 16. Summerfield Street Row Historic District | Entered in the National Register | for Keeper | Delores Byrd 9/30/83 |
| | | Attest | |
| 17. Willoughby-Suydam Historic District | Entered in the National Register | for Keeper | Delores Byrd 9/30/83 |
| | | Attest | |
| 18. Woodbine-Palmetto-Gates Historic District | Entered in the National Register | for Keeper | Delores Byrd 9/30/83 |
| | | Attest | |
| 19. | | Keeper | |
| | | Attest | |
| 20. | | Keeper | |
| | | Attest | |