

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form

This form is for use in documenting multiple property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Type all entries.

**A. Name of Multiple Property Listing**

Wartime Emergency Housing In Bridgeport, 1916 - 1920

**B. Associated Historic Contexts**

Wartime Emergency Housing in Bridgeport, Connecticut, 1916 - 1920

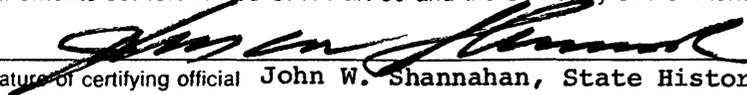
**C. Geographical Data**

City limits of Bridgeport, Fairfield County, Connecticut

See continuation sheet

**D. Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Planning and Evaluation.

  
Signature of certifying official John W. Shannahan, State Historic Preservation Officer Date 8/9/90

State or Federal agency and bureau

I, hereby, certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

Signature of the Keeper of the National Register \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

---

## E. Statement of Historic Contexts

---

Discuss each historic context listed in Section B.

The multiple property submission - Wartime Emergency Housing in Bridgeport 1916 - 1920 - is organized with reference to a local historic context of World War I Emergency Housing in Bridgeport, 1916 - 1920.

Of the ten complexes of Wartime Emergency Housing identified in the Bridgeport surveys, only eight meet registration requirements. The emergency housing phenomenon was begun by private industry (Remington City, Remington Village, Remington Apartments, and Remington Cottages), was carried on by Bridgeport's civic and business community (Park Apartments and Gateway Village), and was finally taken over by the federal government (Black Rock Gardens, Lakeview Village, Seaside Village, and Wilmot Apartments). These complexes represent one of the earliest attempts to solve housing needs generated by a modern wartime economy, and the ultimate, although belated, acceptance of that responsibility by the federal government. Although Remington Apartments and Remington Cottages were part of the overall wartime emergency housing built in Bridgeport, they were not included in this nomination because they have been substantially altered and lack sufficient integrity to meet registration requirements.

Prior to the outbreak of World War I in Europe, Bridgeport was a typical, conservative New England manufacturing community. It ranked as the foremost industrial city in Connecticut and as one of the most diversified industrial centers in the world. With the exception of the Union Metallic Cartridge Company, a division of the Remington Arms Corporation, its industries were primarily those of peace. Corsets and machinery were the city's staple products. The city's role as the winter home of the world-famous Barnum and Bailey Circus lent a note of the exotic to an otherwise working-class, ethnic, industrial metropolis.

By 1915, Bridgeport was in chaos and its housing stock was unable to accommodate the large numbers of munitions workers. Fueled by a massive infusion of war orders from the Allies, Bridgeport leaped out of its depression of 1914 and was transformed overnight into one of the greatest war-order cities in the country. Almost before people were aware of it, one of the greatest arms plants in the nation sprang from a vacant field as the Remington Arms Corporation hastily completed and put into operation the largest single factory of any kind in Connecticut.<sup>1</sup> With Remington setting the pace, many other shops in the city increased their work forces and, through subcontracts, became involved with war orders.

The war that brought prosperity also brought the pains associated with rapid growth. It thrust burdensome civic and social problems upon a city ill-equipped to deal with them. In the 20 months following the declaration of war, Bridgeport's population exploded from 100,000 to over 150,000 as workers flooded the city seeking employment in arms-related industries. The sudden influx overwhelmed the city, placing an enormous strain on all municipal services.

The most persistent problem, however, was a housing shortage of crisis proportions. Bridgeport simply did not have the capacity to house the thousands of new arrivals flooding the city. The sudden, overwhelming demand for housing sent rent levels soaring, throwing many workers out of their homes. The city became so seriously congested that the health of its inhabitants was in danger. Unsanitary houses and dwellings, formerly vacant, were pressed into use and filled to overflowing. Private homes and public roominghouses squeezed three and four beds in a room and rented them out in eight-hour shifts. Still the supply could not keep pace with the demand.

CONTINUED

See continuation sheet

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number   E   Page   1  

Initially the housing shortage was viewed as a free-market problem in which demand would stimulate supply. However, Bridgeport's real estate and building community hesitated to respond to the pressures of overwhelming demand. Some investors did take advantage of the market by erecting new housing, but for the most part, the city's building and real estate interests were not equipped to deal with the dramatic and abrupt increase in Bridgeport's population. Even if local investors had had confidence in the permanency of the boom, it is doubtful that they could have supplied more than a third of the estimated \$9,000,000 required to build the minimum number of homes needed. Besides, other fields promised higher, guaranteed returns. With most available local capital invested in war-related industries supported by lucrative government contracts, little money was available for speculative housing.

The housing shortage had a major effect on local industry; it hampered production and threatened profits. Industry's continually increasing appetite for labor further intensified the housing shortage, but a lack of living quarters aggravated a critical manpower shortage. In spite of plentiful employment opportunities and relatively high wages, industry had difficulty attracting, hiring, and retaining workers. With all available housing facilities taken, men often worked a few days and, unable to find accommodations for themselves, much less homes or boarding places for their families, quit and left town. As a result, manufacturers, faced with a high labor turnover, and the discontent, ill-health, and inefficiency of their work forces, could not produce war materiel in the quantities and at the speed required by foreign governments. The continued success and efficiency of Bridgeport's manufacturing establishments, as well as the future industrial development of the city, were seriously menaced.

The Remington Arms Corporation was a prime example of a company affected by the housing shortage. When the firm began erecting its mammoth "Russian Rifle" plant in the northeastern part of the city, it also constructed two-family houses for its foremen. Expecting local investors to jump into the boom and build houses, the firm initially provided nothing for the rest of the workforce. As its enormous plant neared completion, new housing investment failed to materialize. Facing the unpleasant prospect of being unable to staff its factory, the Remington Arms Corporation took steps to solve the problem to its own benefit. It established a real estate department, bought up large tracts of land near its new factory, and began erecting over 500 dwellings in Remington City, Remington Village, and Remington Apartments before abandoning construction in late 1916 due to "lack of funds."<sup>2</sup>

The Remington Arms Corporation hired architects Phillip Hiss (1857-1940) and E. Hobart Weeks, New York architects who were better known for designing commercial buildings and such luxury hotels as the Gotham (1905), and Alfred C. Bossom to plan and design its Bridgeport housing. Known more as a designer of high-rise buildings throughout the United States, British-trained Bossom worked in the Architecture Department of the

CONTINUED

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceMultiple Property Form  
Wartime Emergency Housing In Bridgeport  
1916 - 1920National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number     E     Page     2    

London City Council Housing Section before he came to America. A proponent of multiple-unit dwellings, Bossom advocated that any housing built for a temporary situation be durable enough to last for at least a generation. He based this reasoning on the supposition that the housing sponsors would have to maintain any housing that could not subsequently be sold to private citizens. Bossom's belief that these dwellings must be well planned and well constructed and have adequate light and access to the out of doors via gardens and porches is evident in the units he designed for Remington Village.

The hazards of the war boom were not lost on Bridgeport's more prominent citizens. Dissatisfied with the moribund Bridgeport Board of Trade, they formed a new civic group, the Bridgeport Chamber of Commerce, in 1915. Immediately after its incorporation, the chamber addressed the various issues, including housing, that threatened the general welfare of the city. The chamber organized a committee to study the housing problem. This committee engaged John Nolen, the city planner then completing work for Bridgeport's City Planning Commission, to make a detailed survey of the city's housing conditions.<sup>3</sup> Nolen was a natural choice. A leader in the City Beautiful planning movement, he had developed plans for dozens of cities across the nation and was known to be especially concerned with the physical relationship between housing and other sectors of the city. In less than ten months (early 1916), Nolen presented his findings in a report entitled More Houses for Bridgeport.<sup>4</sup> He concluded that the desperate housing situation in Bridgeport demanded at least 3000 new dwelling units. Accordingly, Nolen made a series of recommendations concerning the formation of a housing company that would erect low-cost houses. The essential elements for the proposed undertaking included cheap land, comprehensive neighborhood planning, low house density per acre, buying material at wholesale prices, modern building operations, a moderate but adequate dividend on capital, and residents' participation in ownership and management. Given the high value of real estate, Nolen further suggested that, once incorporated, the proposed company purchase various tracts of land in or near the city at the earliest possible date.

Building should be done not in one but many neighborhoods. In general the houses and apartments to rent should be located in the partly built-up sections; and the houses for sale in the outlying sections. Some developments for both renting and selling should be on relatively small parcels of land in the partly built-up sections, but the larger schemes, including all the features of a more economical and more ideal development, should be on the more extensive tracts of land in the outlying district. Land options should be obtained at once.<sup>5</sup>

CONTINUED

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number   E   Page   3  

On August 10, 1916, the housing committee of the Bridgeport Chamber of Commerce announced that it had incorporated itself as the Bridgeport Housing Company with an authorized capitalization of \$1,000,000, sufficient to build 1,000 dwellings which, according to "the recommendations of Mr. Nolen, is the minimum required to furnish any material relief." <sup>6</sup>

When the Bridgeport Housing Company was established, its directors went to great lengths to emphasize that their venture was neither a philanthropy nor a charity, but rather a legitimate business conceived to solve Bridgeport's housing shortage on sound economic principles. With the intention of giving its clientele the opportunity of buying houses, the company planned to build good, solid, permanent houses of non-combustible materials for various classes of workers. Moreover, it was not organized for excessive profit, but as a result of economies of scale, low overhead costs, and the use of scientific building methods, i.e., prefabrication, the company expected a reasonable return for the stockholders of the corporation and anticipated a substantial surplus for future investment.

Once incorporated, the Bridgeport Housing Company promptly set up operations, selected a board of directors composed of leading local financiers, industrialists, and civic leaders, and immediately sold its capital stock, primarily to local industrial firms. By October 1916, the company had purchased three parcels of land in relatively desirable neighborhoods with proximity to industry and access to streetcars. Two parcels, both relatively small, were located within the city limits. The smaller, in the South End, was set aside for a rental apartment house (Park Apartments), while the larger, in the East End, was reserved for rowhouse development (Gateway Village). The third tract, in the adjacent town of Fairfield, comprised in excess of 50 acres. Shortly thereafter the company purchased a fourth parcel in the Lordship section of Stratford for a second, less ambitious, suburban development. Called Grassmere Village and Lordship Village, respectively, the developments were not included in this nomination because they fall outside of the Bridgeport city limits and this registration was funded through Bridgeport's participation in the Certified Local Government Program.

Separate architects were commissioned to draw up plans for each of the three types of developments. Experts were consulted to determine proper room sizes and efficient but economical plumbing and sanitary facilities. Plans for houses were carefully studied to fit them to the needs of the people to be housed.

CONTINUED

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number  E  Page  4

By July 1917, the first development, Park Apartments, a brick and cast-stone rental apartment house designed by Herbert Lucas, was completed. Little is known about Lucas other than that he was from Bridgeport. He did, however, write for American Architect. Using the Park Apartments as an example, he explained the commercial benefits of building practical housing for workers. Timed to appear just before Congress appropriated the funds for the United States Housing Corporation, the article argued that it was time to build "a happy medium between the Garden City and the purely commercial development like Gary, Indiana."<sup>7</sup>

With its apartment house underway, the Bridgeport Housing Company began the construction of its town house project in the East End. Anna Schenck and Marcia Mead, the earliest known partnership of women architects in the New York City area, produced a picturesque scheme now known as Gateway Village at the corner of Connecticut Avenue and Waterman Street. Their design was organized along lines endorsed by contemporary town planning experts in both the United States and Great Britain and closely followed the plan of the ideal housing complex illustrated in Nolen's report.<sup>8</sup>

Schenck and Mead's partnership was formed about 1912 and lasted until Schenck's death in 1915. Although it appears that Schenck died prior to the incorporation of the Bridgeport Housing Company, the published plans and drawings of the project list both as designers for Gateway Village. Little is known about Schenck, but Mead (1879 - 1967) entered Columbia University's School of Architecture in 1911. In addition to her work in Bridgeport, she designed war housing in Washington, D.C., and a number of YWCA's throughout the East Coast. She also served as a part-time professor at Columbia.<sup>9</sup>

Between March and June 1917, the Bridgeport Housing Company began its last two projects, both located beyond the city limits and not within the scope of this nomination. Both designed by Boston architect R. Clipston Sturgis, they consisted of one and two-family homes. The first, Fairfield Development, was located on the east side of Fairfield, while the second, known as Lordship Village, was developed on a triangular parcel in Stratford.

While the Bridgeport Housing Company was building new houses, the United States was being drawn into World War I. Finally in April 1917, war was declared against Germany. Entry into the war precipitated a national expansion of industry stimulated by the federal government's placing war orders throughout the United States. Bridgeport experienced renewed war-related economic expansion while shouldering the full burden of a housing shortage. The Bridgeport Housing Company's efforts for more housing development were stifled by its inability to raise more capital locally. It began investigating the possibility of securing a sizeable loan from the federal government. Although the company never received any financial assistance, it did play a significant role in prodding a reluctant federal government into its first venture into civilian public housing: the United States Housing Corporation. Through the corporation, the government constructed war housing in cities throughout the country, including Bridgeport.

CONTINUED

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

Multiple Property Form  
Wartime Emergency Housing In Bridgeport  
1916 - 1920

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number     E     Page     5    

---

Even before the United States entered the war, the nationwide housing shortage was a concern to the Council of National Defense. By October 1916, an advisory commission on labor was appointed by President Wilson to assist the council. With Samuel Gompers as its leader, this commission created a subcommittee on housing. In May 1917, under the chairmanship of Phillip Hiss, the commission began an investigation of housing conditions throughout the county. This research revealed extremely serious conditions in Philadelphia, Washington, Newport News, Virginia, and Bridgeport. On August 30, 1917, the commission held a conference on housing. It quickly became apparent that private builders were unable to cope with building on such a massive scale and that only the federal government could finance the necessary building program. The seriousness of the situation was so obvious that, upon receiving the reports of the advisory commission, the council recommended immediate federal expenditure of 50 million dollars for housing, local transportation, and community facilities for employees of war-related industries. Due to the vagaries of Congress, however, it was not until May 16, 1918, that the money was appropriated. By July 8, Congress had increased the appropriation to 100 million dollars.

To facilitate the speedy use of funds, the President authorized the formation of a New York corporation to handle this operation. Known as the United States Housing Corporation, it was incorporated on July 8, 1918.

The initial activities of the United States Housing Corporation were greatly facilitated by the Department of Labor's Bureau of Industrial Housing, which had been organized five months previously. It had already made such essential policy decisions as the construction and operation of housing directly by the government, the erection of permanent rather than temporary types of buildings, and the use of local architects. The bureau also developed the federal government's first construction manual of national housing standards: Standards Recommended for Permanent Industrial Housing Developments.

Under the leadership of well-known contractor Otto Eidlitz, the United States Housing Corporation developed an efficient and professional system that carried each project from appraisal through design, engineering, and town planning considerations.

Because so much had been done by the Bureau of Industrial Housing prior to the incorporation of the United States Housing Corporation, the latter let its first contracts the day of its incorporation. Within four months it had planned 83 separate developments. More is known about the United States Housing Corporation projects than about those of the Bridgeport Housing Corporation or the Remington Arms Corporation because the government kept excellent records and published a comprehensive report on its projects after the war.

CONTINUED

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number     E     Page     6    

Under the leadership of the Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., who was appointed by Eidlitz to head the town planning division, each project was assigned a town planner, an architect, and an engineer. The first step in each project, once the land had been acquired, was an evaluation of the project by a town planner who then controlled most aspects of the project, including design of site plan, and density and type of housing. From this point in each project the architect was "free to exercise his own inventiveness both as to improvement of the plan and to its executed appearance,"<sup>10</sup> but for most aspects of house design, the architects were limited to a repertory of plans and details stipulated by the United States Housing Corporation. This requirement was clearly an attempt to keep costs low and to facilitate timely design and construction. Standard designs for houses, apartments, boarding houses, and many other building types were prepared (including a model apartment by R. Clipston Sturgis for the Bridgeport Housing Corporation complex at Grassmere Village in Fairfield). This standardization extended to such features as windows, doors, stairs, cupboards, and plumbing and light fixtures.

Given the strictures of standardization of essential building components, it is not suprising that the overall plan took precedent over specific design elements. The Bridgeport designers were primarily concerned with the importance of the plan and layout in the creation of a successful residential complex, even with tight budgetary constraints:

the lines of the roads and the layout of house-groups [are] being modified not for the sake of obtaining an arbitrary picturesqueness in effect, but primarily for sound economic reasons - sparing trees, groups of trees, ledges, and other desirable and valuable elements of beauty, instead of ruthlessly and expensively slashing and blasting a way through them for the sake of a gridiron monotony - a procedure that has earned for too many engineering operations the name of "landscape butchery."<sup>11</sup>

The architects also realized that the use of minor architectural features, such as trellises, and keen attention to simple landscape plantings could create a sense of variety in a development comprised entirely of standard designs. They carefully employed these inexpensive devices to relieve any potential sense of monotony in the Bridgeport developments.<sup>12</sup>

CONTINUED

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number   E   Page   7  

The United States Housing Corporation's team in Bridgeport consisted of Arthur Schurtleff as town planner, R. Clipston Sturgis as architect, and Bridgeport resident Alfred E. Terry as engineer. Shurtleff (1870 - 1957) studied under Charles Eliot from 1895 to 1896 at Harvard and worked for Olmsted Brothers Landscape Architects from 1896 through 1905, when he opened his own firm in Boston. Along with Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., he was an early faculty member of Harvard University's landscape architecture program, founded in 1900. In 1909 he prepared an extensive plan of the development of Greater Boston for the Metropolitan Improvement Commission. In 1930 he legally changed his name to Shurcliff, although the reason is unknown.<sup>13</sup> As Shurcliff, he is best known for his extensive work at Virginia's Colonial Williamsburg.

R. Clipston Sturgis (1860 - 1951) was born in Boston and apprenticed in architecture in London, returning to Boston to work in the architectural office of his uncle John H. Sturgis. He served as president of the American Institute of Architects from 1913-1915. Noted primarily for his work in domestic and institutional architecture, including the wings for Bulfinch's state house in Boston. Sturgis also designed the Perkins Institute for the Blind in Watertown, Massachusetts.

The first of the United States Housing Corporation projects to be completed was Black Rock Gardens, followed by the Wilmot Apartments, both designed by Sturgis with Skinner and Walker as associate architects. Seaside Village, the third to be finished, was designed by Sturgis with Andrew H. Hepburn as associate architect. The final complex, Lakeview Village, was designed by Sturgis, again with Hepburn as associate architect. Copies of plans for the United States Housing Corporation complexes are included in the individual forms which accompany this document.

The sudden termination of World War I completely changed the United States Housing Corporation's plans. Nationwide, 54 projects were immediately abandoned. Fifteen were modified, and 22 continued as planned. Of the 37 projects on which work was to proceed, nine more were ultimately canceled, leaving 28 major projects, including four in Bridgeport. By June 1, 1919, they were virtually complete, with sidewalks completed in the fall. The projects in Bridgeport were turned over to the Bridgeport Housing Corporation for management and purchase. Ultimately, all of the detached and semi-detached houses were sold to private owners and the apartment complexes were sold to cooperative associations comprised of tenants occupying the apartments. Given the inflated costs of construction during wartime, the United States Housing Corporation did well in its disposal of the buildings, netting 70% of the original cost.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceMultiple Property Form  
Wartime Emergency Housing In Bridgeport  
1916 - 1920National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number       E       Page       8      

## Statement of Historic Contexts Endnotes

1. Edward T. Mohylowski, "World War I Housing: The Bridgeport Housing Company " (unpublished manuscript at Bridgeport City Archives and Connecticut Historical Commission), page 4, footnote #5.
2. Ibid., p. 3.
3. Ibid., p. 3.
4. Ibid., p. 3.
5. Ibid., p. 5, footnote #13.
6. Ibid., p. 5, footnote #19.
7. Herbert Lucas, "Practical Housing a Commercial Asset," American Architect 114 (6 February 1918): 150.
8. John Nolen, Better City Planning for Bridgeport. (Bridgeport: City of Bridgeport, 1916): p. 41.
9. Susanna Torre, Women in American Architecture. (New York: Watson Guptill Pub., 1977): p. 88.
10. Henry Hubbard, ed., Report of the United States Housing Corporation. Volume 2 (Washington, D.C.: United States Department of Labor, 1919): p.39.
11. Sylvester Baxter, "The Government's Housing at Bridgeport Connecticut," The Architectural Record 45 (February 1919): 129.
12. Henry Hubbard, ed., Report of the United States Housing Corporation. Volume 2 (Washington, D.C.: United States Department of Labor, 1919): p. 30, 31, 65.
13. "Arthur Asahel Shurcliff," Landscape Architecture 48 (December 1957): 183.

---

**F. Associated Property Types**

---

I. Name of Property Type Residential

II. Description

The design of Wartime Emergency Housing in Bridgeport is a reflection of both the architectural styles and tastes of the period in which it was built and of an early attempt on the part of private industry, local civic organizations, and the federal government to provide a solution to a social problem: lack of housing in a booming wartime economy.

CONTINUED

III. Significance

Apart from its association with Bridgeport's most intense period of growth and prosperity, the Wartime Emergency Housing in Bridgeport, 1916- 1920 is of interest and significance for a variety of reasons. This construction effort was without precedent in the city. While local industrialists had constructed workers' housing in the late nineteenth century, never before had local industrial leaders and the federal government come together and agreed to develop housing, much less good model housing, for a city's work force on such a scale, for the common good, and without benefit accruing to any particular firm or industry.

IV. Registration Requirements

National Register-eligible Wartime Emergency Housing in Bridgeport, 1916 - 1920, should possess integrity of workmanship, materials, location, and character, as well as an associative significance by virtue of its role in the history of Bridgeport's development and domestic support of American defense efforts in World War I. \*

For associative significance the dwellings being evaluated should have been built specifically to shelter workers for Bridgeport's and Fairfield's defense-related industries. The site plans of the complexes precluded the construction of other ancillary resources on the site.

CONTINUED

See continuation sheet

---

See continuation sheet for additional property types

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number F, II Page 1

The National Register-eligible Wartime Emergency Housing in Bridgeport is located on eight sites, primarily in the more southerly and easterly portions of Bridgeport, adjacent to Bridgeport's and neighboring Fairfield's factories. Following the prevailing taste and perhaps inspired by war-related chauvinism, the majority of the housing developments were designed in Colonial or Federal Revival styles. In fact, only Gateway Village was designed in another style -- Tudor Revival. Tudor Revival, with its associations with an ally, Great Britain, was certainly an appropriate style in wartime America. The housing developments ranged in type from single-family dwellings to large multi-unit apartment buildings. When more than one unit was constructed at a particular site, they were usually laid out in a picturesque manner, incorporating design elements that included forecourts, courtyards, and gently curving streets.

Constructed in an extremely brief period, 1916 - 1920, the housing complexes, for purposes of comparison, can be divided into three groups, each undertaken in chronological order by the Remington Arms Corporation, the Bridgeport Housing Corporation, and the United States Housing Corporation, respectively.

The efforts by Remington Arms were prosaic developments. Limited to an already established grid plan, architects Hiss and Weeks and Alfred Bossom avoided the sense of banal regularity by alternating dwelling types, building materials, and compatible architectural modes. Groups of Philadelphia-type rowhouses alternate in a complex but regular pattern with Dutch Colonial Revival duplexes and Greek Revival quadraplexes in Remington City. In Remington Village, the architects used ten distinct but related Colonial Revival designs in a random pattern, giving the development an appearance of being erected over several years by several owners. The development thus self-consciously attempted to blend into its adjacent neighborhood. Other developments by the arms manufacturer -- Remington Cottages and Remington Apartments -- have been so altered that they are virtually unrecognizable.

The developments by the Bridgeport Housing Corporation reflected the widest range of type and styles of design. The first, Park Apartments on Rennel Street, was a prosaic effort in the Federal Revival. The second, located in the east end -- Gateway Village -- was designed by Mead and Schenck as a regularized Tudor-style enclave, with special courts for residents and small-scale detail created through the sophisticated use of brickwork.

The later efforts by the <sup>United States</sup> Housing Corporation were more uniform in style. The developments avoided stifling regularity through the use of minor detail changes in entries and porch designs.

The westernmost development, Black Rock Gardens, follows the general principles just mentioned. Each apartment block incorporates Colonial Revival details in its entries, while a small village effect is achieved through careful placement of the apartment blocks so that they combine to form intimate courtyards and streetscapes.

CONTINUED

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**Multiple Property Form  
Wartime Emergency Housing in Bridgeport  
(1916 - 1920)**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

F, II 2

Section number \_\_\_\_\_ Page \_\_\_\_\_

---

Seaside Village (1918) set the standard for excellence in housing design. Each unit is a carefully composed pastiche of Colonial Revival-style details embellishing a basic steep-gable-roofed house form that was more commonly seen in the Chesapeake Bay region than in the New England area. Despite the transplantation of style, the development strikes a sympathetic chord. The low scale of the building, in combination with the picturesque curving roads and open forecourts, creates a quite intimate and personal scale.

Wilmot Apartments, just north of Gateway Village, are, not surprisingly, very similar in style to Black Rock Gardens. Details are shared, but the former is more simply arranged, with the apartment blocks forming a cul-de-sac and a small interior courtyard.

Lakeview Village follows more closely the design strategy of Seaside Village. The 93 single-family, duplex, and rowhouse type-dwellings flank curving, intimate streets just off busy U.S. Route 1. Each structure occupies its own lot, with room for gardens and rear and side yards. In no particular rhythm, 11 identifiable types of Colonial Revival style houses are found. This area has been altered somewhat with new siding and an occasional large addition.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceMultiple Property Form  
Wartime Emergency Housing In Bridgeport  
1916 - 1920National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number F, III Page 1

The construction of housing in Bridgeport included apartment housing and the rowhouse. Because of the United States Housing Corporation's insistence on brick construction for all projects, these two building types marked a radical departure from local building tradition and provided an alternative to the frame three-decker tenement that had found its way into neighborhoods throughout the city.

Relying on current planning concepts, the projects succeeded in bringing some order to a haphazardly developed city by setting down in the midst of Bridgeport examples of worthwhile housing of substantial materials that private concerns could emulate. These projects demonstrated advanced techniques in house design and land planning. The usual rectangular block was abandoned where possible; the streets were made to follow the contours of the land; and significant natural features were incorporated into site plans. Special care and emphasis were placed on the planting schemes. An attempt was made to attain harmony without uniformity through spacing and placement of structures, as well as through variety of basic types, simple plantings, and the addition of minor architectural details. Dark gloomy rooms were avoided since light and air were regarded as prime requisites. The structures themselves bespoke a certain excellence, with a design quality and durability formerly lacking in low-income housing.

When considered as a part of the national housing effort, the Bridgeport World War I housing effort is significant as an early attempt to integrate the work of planners, architects, and landscape architects in an aesthetically pleasing, yet practical and economical type of housing for workers of moderate income.

The planning concepts employed on a large scale in the wartime housing were the legacy of a movement that began in England in the early nineteenth century. Planning historian Norman Newton attributes the concept of town planning, as it is known today, to "a process that emerged in an effort to counteract the worst environmental effects of the industrial revolution. This immediately suggests looking to Great Britain, where the great mechanized upheaval first made an impression on human lives."<sup>1</sup> English Garden City planning had its origins in the paternalistic yet practical efforts of industry owners. Industrialists who were also social reformers were active in planned communities which were designed to make the worker's life a pleasant one, in turn making the worker a better employee.

The foregoing concept had been promoted since the early nineteenth century by such visionaries as Robert Owen. However, it appears that American planners were primarily studying such British industrial developments as George Cadbury's Bournville (begun 1879) and the Lever Brothers' Port Sunlight (begun 1887) and were quite well acquainted with the writings of Ebenezer Howard, the father of the Garden City movement. In fact, the Garden City concept, as finally realized in the curvilinear streets and green belts of Letchworth (begun 1903) and Hampsted Garden Suburb (1890), was a paradigm for American city planners and influenced all of the planners of English and American war housing.<sup>2</sup>

CONTINUED

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**Multiple Property Form  
Wartime Emergency Housing In Bridgeport  
1916 - 1920**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**Section number F, III Page 2

A further influence on the projects in Bridgeport was, to some degree, the City Beautiful movement. In the opinion of Norman Newton, the movement can be credited with encouraging landscape architects to adopt and practice city planning, and it was through the movement that city planning developed as an academic and professional discipline that could be put to good use in the war effort.<sup>3</sup>

Another important American development that clearly influenced the World War I workers' housing was Forest Hills Gardens (begun 1911) on Long Island. Designed by Olmsted Brothers and Grosvenor Atterbury, this project was the consequence of the idealized, grand-scale planning of the City Beautiful movement, the general layout of Garden City justified by progressive sentiments supporting the improvement of general living conditions in American cities. Its altruistic purpose, uniformity of design and materials, and curving, picturesque site plans clearly correlate with the premise, plot plans, and cohesive architecture of the slightly later government-sponsored housing projects. In fact it is difficult to imagine the creation of the Bridgeport developments without the precedent of Forest Hills.<sup>4</sup>

**Planning and Design Concerns in World War I Housing in Bridgeport**

The designers involved in the earliest Bridgeport projects, those by the Remington Arms Corporation, were directly influenced by English precedents. In 1917 project architect Alfred Bossom wrote:

England has definitely learned the lesson and is providing the workers with homes of the collected or intensive type. So, knowing the difference of the temperaments and requirements between the workers here, why not make some use of the knowledge we possess and face the problem squarely and logically by providing housing of the low apartment type, heated and cared for from a central station, with ample playground and garden space all around, and rent them to the workers with the definite understanding that there may be some readjustment as to ownership after the war is over? 5

CONTINUED

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceMultiple Property Form  
Wartime Emergency Housing In Bridgeport  
1916 - 1920National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number F, III Page 3

Bossom, the architect for all the Remington projects, was involved around 1900 in the Architecture Department of the London City Council, Housing Section, where multi-family housing had become the accepted standard for government and company-sponsored housing. With regard to sheltering for American wartime workers, Bossom was a strong proponent of grouped housing, for it created a cost-effective, yet pleasant environment. Easier and faster to build, multi-family or "apartment housing", as it was often called, was easier for an employer to mortgage, and if well designed, could provide pleasant and cheerful residences:

But by using small apartment houses, only two or at the most three stories high in a few places for the sake of artistic value, that is, with only the same number of stairs as in the [detached] cottage, it is possible to provide 104 family units equally large and complete on this same ground area of 600 x 200. [as opposed to only 30 two-family houses] <sup>6</sup>

This philosophy is evident in the houses at Remington Village. Although the city grid plan had been imposed on the site, Blossom incorporated amenities such as open porches and ample rear yards for each dwelling unit.

The project staff of later government-sponsored projects were also clearly aware of English models. Led by the Journal of the American Institute of Architects (AIA Journal), the trade press urged the federal government to make plans and provisions for housing war workers. In fact, an editorial published in September 1917 in the AIA Journal specifically cited Bridgeport. <sup>7</sup>

The AIA Journal also carried an abundance of accurate information on the efforts of other countries, including articles on workers' villages built in England. Its editor, Frederick Ackerman, was sent to England expressly to study these and published a series of accounts on the best of them. <sup>8</sup>

John Nolen, the author of the Bridgeport plan on which all the housing was based, was in England in 1916. <sup>9</sup> In particular, Nolen advocated the adaption of the site plan for Well Hall in Eltham, Kent, the design of which had been fully illustrated in the AIA Journal. While most sites cannot be attributed to the direct influence of a particular British development, Seaside Village was clearly based on Well Hall. <sup>10</sup>

**Housing Units Created by Bridgeport Designers**

Aside from benefiting from the experience of English planning experts, the American planners and designers of the Bridgeport projects were concerned with creating housing units that were in themselves an improvement over the majority of dwellings available for the working class. Plot plans and layouts were not the only important elements in the development of war workers' housing. The design of proper units was a crucial factor in the housing reformers' minds.

CONTINUED

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

Multiple Property Form  
Wartime Emergency Housing In Bridgeport  
1916 - 1920

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number F, III Page 4

The then-dominant form of multi-family workers' housing was the New England three-decker tenement. While comparison of these individually conceived and generally speculatively built units to government-sponsored complexes may not be appropriate or fair, it is clear that the buildings built by the Remington Arms Corporation, the Bridgeport Housing Corporation, and the United States Housing Corporation, as illustrated by those included in this nomination, represent a marked improvement over the norm of existing housing types prevalent in the United States. This amelioration is clearly stated in the Report of the United States Housing Corporation:

In the standards of the Housing Corporation, types well established in certain localities were omitted because they did not afford satisfactory living conditions or because they might be economically replaced by better types. The most notable omissions were the "three-deckers" or detached wooden tenements of New England, the three-room deep row house of Philadelphia, and the two-flat house found in New London, Conn. Although it is possible that a "three-decker" might have been designed overcoming some of the worst faults of the type, it would have still remained a serious fire hazard. The same density per acre at the same or lower cost per family with a proper division of yard space can be obtained in the row or group house, the two-flat house, or the two-room-deep apartment house used at Bridgeport. <sup>11</sup>

In 1919 the Architectural Record praised the Bridgeport buildings as excellent housing which would be sure to set standards for future construction. They were:

a model of their kind; an invaluable asset to the community, enhancing the beauty of the city and setting so high a standard of convenience, comfort and taste as inevitably to encourage a demand among working-people of this class that will hereafter not be easily satisfied with anything less than "something just as good" in the truest sense of the term. <sup>12</sup>

Architectural Record praised them in comparison to typical, speculatively built workers' housing of the region and country:

And what a contrast to the jerrybuilt wooden three-deckers and two-flatters, in which workers are so often deluded into investing their good savings, are these substantially handsome and dignified apartments and equally substantial individual dwellings, enduringly built, beautifully cozy and garden-embowered! <sup>13</sup>

CONTINUED

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number F, III Page 5

---

## Wartime Emergency Housing in Bridgeport, 1916 - 1920 In Perspective

In 1940 Talbot F. Hamlin described the Black Rock Gardens complex as an excellent example of residential design that had withstood the test of time, suggesting that it become a model for future wartime housing. <sup>14</sup> Of Bridgeport he wrote:

The great number of brick houses built in communities in and around Bridgeport, Connecticut, designed by R. Clipston Sturgis, have become lovelier and lovelier as the planting has grown around them, and the little open courts and quadrangles of which they are chiefly formed and the curving streets which are part of their layout make them even today outstanding examples of suburban design. <sup>15</sup>

Considering this praise, it is worthwhile to note that the United States Housing Corporation, in its report after the project was completed, indicated that when designed, some of the buildings may have fallen short of the expectations of their architects. The Report of the United States Housing Corporation indicates that often architects' plans were revised with an eye towards economy and, while the final products were not quite the buildings envisioned by their designers, they were clearly the better for having been architect and not builder-designed:

The Architectural Division cooperated with the employed architects in the design of all houses so that they could more quickly be brought to the standards adopted. Many excellent designs submitted suffered revision because of the war economies already outlined. The type of house which might have been built, however, if architects had not assisted with the housing program, is illustrated by a builder's design for a row house of the South Philadelphia type submitted with one of the first requests for Government aid. It was redesigned by the Architectural Division, and the changes were made at a small additional cost per house, the increased frontage being possible because of low land value. <sup>16</sup>

## Conclusion

Wartime Emergency Housing in Bridgeport, 1916 - 1920, was a crystallization of previous planning and housing ideals. The Bridgeport complexes indicate an understanding of the underlying tenets of the English Garden City movement: the effect of one's surroundings and environment on outlook and personal and professional

CONTINUED

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number F, III Page 6

---

production. Envisioned and developed as utopian communities of sorts, the English Garden Cities were communities in which the goals of both workers and industrialists could be mutually achieved. Logically, these European communities served as models for the designers of Bridgeport's housing, for they were too primarily concerned with providing workers' housing as a means of attracting and keeping munitions workers in Bridgeport to improve the rates of production of wartime materiel.

The Remington Arms Corporations complexes bear the most direct result to English models because they were started by the Remington Arms Corporation as a solution to its own staffing problems and exist as a single manufacturer's answer to its own problem. Once begun, Remington's efforts were sustained by the Bridgeport Housing Company.

The Bridgeport complexes of the Bridgeport Housing Company and the United States Housing Corporation match Frederick Law Olmsted's concept of the ideal suburb "gracefully-curved lines, generous spaces, and the absence of sharp corners, the idea being to suggest and imply leisure, contemplativeness, and happy tranquility." <sup>17</sup> American preferences for rather naturalistic and non-grid plans, coupled with a unified although not monotonous architectural theme, were realized in much of the government-sponsored housing.

Although the Wartime Emergency Housing in Bridgeport was limited to small residential developments and could never approximate the citywide scope of the Garden City movement, the complexes, especially those of the United States Housing Corporation, represent America's earliest acknowledgment of public responsibility to provide adequate housing for factory workers. <sup>18</sup>

The emergency housing was a pioneering effort that can be appreciated as a model program defining the basic standards under which any successful public housing policy must proceed. The essence of the United States Housing Corporation's work lay in the adoption of a consensus for standard new housing. In developing housing for workers engaged in a common patriotic endeavor, there was no pressure to adopt a standard below that of private housing. The war effort made it possible not to worry about offending the sensibilities of private tenants and homeworkers in offering the working-class housing commensurate with middle-class tastes. The housing complexes have lasted well and remain a credit to Bridgeport.

The developments are fine examples of the work of prominent architects, including R. Clipston Sturgis, a noted housing designer, and Anna Schenck and Marcia Mead, partners in the first women's architectural firm in the United States, as well as local architect Herbert Lucas.

CONTINUED

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number F, III Page 7

---

The housing projects are also notable as good examples of their styles. The predominant Colonial Revival would seem to reflect the prevailing preference for this style among the middle class, while Schenck and Mead's more picturesque Arts and Crafts-style work was often proposed, by those who favored housing reform, for its intimate scale and detailing.

The properties in Bridgeport are the most comprehensive assemblage of workers' housing in the state and are of prime significance within the state. Other developments such as Yorkship Village in Camden, New Jersey (designed by Litchfield and Rogers, 1918 - 1919) and Westinghouse Village in South Philadelphia (Clarence Brazer, 1918 - 1919), represent more significant individual sites in that they were virtually small towns. Other sites such as the Hilton and Craddock Complex in Newport News, Virginia (Henry Hibbard and Francis Joannes, 1918 - 1919) utilized extensive experimental methods of housing prefabrication much more aggressively than was done in Bridgeport. However, as part of a national effort, Bridgeport's developments should be considered of national significance because they represent an intact and comprehensive collection of among the earliest such wartime developments in the nation.

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number E.III Page 8

---

## Associated Property Types III. Significance Endnotes

1. Norman Newton, Design on the Land (Cambridge, MASS: Harvard University Press, 1971): p. 477.
2. See especially Arthur Edwards, The Design of Suburbia (London: Pembrige Press, Ltd., 1981): pp 47-98.
3. Newton, op.cit., p. 423.
4. Ibid., p. 474.
5. Alfred Bossom, "Homes for Wartime Worker." The Architectural Record. Volume 45, March 1918. 222.
6. Ibid., p. 218.
7. See "The War - The Machine - The Man." AIA Journal 5 (September 1917)L: 421.
8. Frederick Ackerman, "What is a House." AIA Journal 5 (December 1917): 591 and "War-time Housing -- England's Most Urgent Civic Lesson for America," American City 18 (February 1918): 97-99.
9. John Nolen, "Types of England's War Housing," American City 18 (February 1918): 99-100.
10. AIA Journal 5 (September 1917): 426-7.
11. Hubbard, Henry, ed., Report of the United States Housing Corporation. Volume 2. (Washington, D.C.: United States Department of Labor, 1919): p. 64.
12. Sylvester Baxter, "The Government's Housing at Bridgeport Connecticut." The Architectural Record 45 (February 1919): 130.
13. Ibid.
14. Talbot Hamlin, "Architects and the Defense." Pencil Points 21 (September 1940): 549.
15. Ibid.
16. Hubbard, Henry, ed., Report of the United States Housing Corporation. Volume 2. (Washington, D.C.: United States Department of Labor, 1919): p. 64
17. Newton, op.cit., p. 467.
18. Newton, op.cit., p. 479.

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number F, IV Page 1

---

A dwelling need not currently be used as defense housing in order to have associative and architectural significance. However, at minimum, it should retain those features which initially distinguished it from other housing in the area, including cohesive design, low-scale massing, and original fenestration and decorative elements.

Extensive exterior alterations that leave only the massing should be considered excessive and those houses where only the massing remained were not considered to have retained sufficient integrity.

Each unit in itself is undistinguished. However, in conjunction with its neighbors, it forms a cohesive whole. No single structure could be considered individually significant, the impressive effect being derived from rows and asymmetrical groupings of modestly designed, small-scale structures. Those areas where infill housing has disturbed the visual continuity could not be considered for registration.

The National Register-eligible Wartime Emergency Housing in Bridgeport is located on eight sites in the south and east sections of Bridgeport, adjacent to Bridgeport's and neighboring Fairfield's factories. Following the prevailing taste and perhaps inspired by war-related chauvinism, the majority of the housing developments were designed in Colonial or Federal Revival styles. In fact only one, Gateway Village, was designed in another style, Tudor. Tudor, with its associations with an ally, Great Britain, was certainly an appropriate style in wartime America. The housing developments ranged greatly in type from single-family dwellings to large, multi-unit apartment buildings. When more than one unit was constructed at a particular site, they were usually laid out in a picturesque manner, incorporating design elements that included forecourts, courtyards, and gently curving streets.

---

\* Two complexes built by the Remington Arms Company, known as Remington Apartments and Remington Cottages, were considered ineligible. Remington Apartments, a high-rise complex designed by Alfred Bossom, has lost several of its original buildings, and the surviving structures have suffered insensitive alterations and additions that seriously compromise their architectural integrity. If the surviving structures were returned to their original appearance, which would require substantial restoration, a case could be made for their inclusion in this multiple property listing.

In addition to insensitive alterations, the Remington Cottages complex was never completed, and subsequent infill housing has compromised any sense of visual continuity of the neighborhood.

## G. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods

Discuss the methods used in developing the multiple property listing.

The Multiple Property Listing for Wartime Emergency Housing in Bridgeport, 1916 - 1920, was based on a field survey of all extant projects in the city, the Citywide and East End Historic Resources Surveys, conducted in 1984 and 1985 by Edward T. Mohylowski and Charles J. Hasbrouck, and a thorough study of pertinent primary and secondary references. The National Register criteria were applied to each property, and a determination of eligibility made on the basis of those criteria and of the relationship of the buildings to the historic context. Currently there are ten such housing projects extant in Bridgeport.

Because these housing developments were designed and constructed to serve a narrowly defined purpose, each maintains a close association with that historical pattern of development in Bridgeport. Therefore, a single historic context, World War Emergency Wartime Housing in Bridgeport, 1916 - 1920, was chosen to provide the best framework for evaluating the design, function, and setting of this property type at the local level.

The standards of integrity for evaluating each development were based on an analysis of the condition of existing developments, on the registration requirements as listed, and section F IV, and on the National Register Standards for assessing integrity. Information from historic photographs and other research literature was also used to assess the relative condition of each property and to determine the degree to which allowances should be made for alterations.  See continuation sheet

## H. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional documentation:

- State historic preservation office  
 Other State agency  
 Federal agency

- Local government  
 University  
 Other

Specify repository: Bridgeport City Archives

## I. Form Prepared By

name/title Steven Bedford and Nora Lucas, Reviewed by John Herzan, National Register  
organization Preservation Computer Services, Inc. date June 30, 1989 Coordinator  
street & number 306 Beach Avenue telephone (914) 698 5440  
city or town Mamaroneck state New York zip code 10543

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number     H     Page     1    

---

## Bibliography

Ackerman, Frederick. "What is a House." AIA Journal 5 (December 1917):591.

Baxter, Sylvester. 1919. "The Government's Housing at Bridgeport, Connecticut." The Architectural Record 45: 123- 141.

Bosson, Alfred C. 1918. "Homes for Wartime Workers." The Architectural Record 45:215-224.

"The Bridgeport Housing Development." 1918. The American Architect CXIII:129-146.

Candee, Richard M. and Greer Hardwicke. 1987. "Early Twentieth-Century Reform Housing by Kilham and Hopkins, Architects of Boston." The Winterthur Portfolio. 22:47-80.

City of Bridgeport, Connecticut. Tax Assessor's Records.

Culpin, Edward G. 1917. "The Remarkable Application of Town-Planning Principles to the War-Time Necessities of England." AIA Journal 5:157.

Edwards, Arthur M. 1981. The Design of Suburbia: A Critical Study in Environmental History. London: Pembroge Press. Ltd.

Hamlin, Talbot F. 1940. "Architects and the Defense." Pencil Points. September, 1940:546-551.

The Historic and Architectural Survey of Bridgeport, Connecticut Phase 1: The East End, City of Bridgeport and Connecticut Historical Commission, 1984.

Hubbard, Henry V. ed. 1919. Report of the United States Housing Corporation, United States Department of Labor: Washington, D.C. 2 Volumes.

Lucas, Herbert. 1918. "Practical Housing a Commercial Asset." The American Architect VXIII:129-146.

Mohylowski, Edward T. "World War I Housing: The Bridgeport Housing Company." (This unpublished manuscript was commissioned by the Connecticut Historical Commission and is on file (minus footnotes) both there and at the Bridgeport City Archives.)

CONTINUED

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number     H     Page     2    

---

Newton, Norman. 1971. Design on the Land. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Nolen, John. 1916. Better City Planning for Bridgeport. City of Bridgeport

Nolen, John. 1918 "Types of England's War Housing." American City 18:99-100.

Parker, W. Stanley, A.I.A. 1919. "Government Housing Work at Bridgeport, Conn." The Architectural Forum 31:111-117.

Shurtleff, Arthur A. 1918. "The Development of a Street Plan For an Industrial Housing Project." Landscape Architecture. 9:67-75.

Shurtleff, Arthur A. 1910. "The Present State of City Planning in America." The Architectural Review 17:1-3.

Sterne, Robert A. M., ed. 1981. The Anglo-American Suburb. London: Academy Editions.

Van Dorn, Archer. 1926. Government Owned Corporations. New York: A. A. Knopf.

"The War - The Machine - The Man." AIA Journal 5 (September 1917):421.

"War-time Housing -- England's Most Urgent Civic Lesson for America." American City 18 (February 1918): 97-99.

Wright, Gwendolyn. 1980. Building the Dream: A Social History of Housing in America. New York: Pantheon.