



HISTORIC DISTRICTS COUNCIL



A GUIDE TO HISTORIC NEW YORK CITY NEIGHBORHOODS

# FAR ROCKAWAY BEACHSIDE BUNGALOWS QUEENS





The Historic Districts Council is New York's citywide advocate for historic buildings and neighborhoods. The Six to Celebrate program annually identifies six historic New York City neighborhoods that merit preservation as priorities for HDC's advocacy and consultation over a yearlong period.

The six, chosen from applications submitted by community organizations, are selected on the basis of the architectural and historic merit of the area, the level of threat to the neighborhood, the strength and willingness of the local advocates, and the potential for HDC's preservation support to be meaningful. HDC works with these neighborhood partners to set and reach preservation goals through strategic planning, advocacy, outreach, programs and publicity.

The core belief of the Historic Districts Council is that preservation and enhancement of New York City's historic resources—its neighborhoods, buildings, parks and public spaces—are central to the continued success of the city. The Historic Districts Council works to ensure the preservation of these resources and uphold the New York City Landmarks Law and to further the preservation ethic. This mission is accomplished through ongoing programs of assistance to more than 500 community and neighborhood groups and through public-policy initiatives, publications, educational outreach and sponsorship of community events.

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## A BRIEF HISTORY

In the early 20th century, a thriving network of vacation communities was constructed along the oceanfront in Brooklyn and Queens to accommodate the city's working class in their summertime recreational pursuits. One of these was Rockaway, Queens, which was once home to over 7,000 modest bungalows in dozens of distinct seasonal communities. Sadly, fewer than 400 exist today, the rest having been demolished to make way for new development beginning in the mid 20th century. Rockaway's largest cluster of existing bungalows (93 in total), located in Far Rockaway on Beach 24th, 25th and 26th Streets south of Seagirt Avenue, was once part of a Russian and German Jewish immigrant community called Wavecrest.

Designed by architect Henry Hohauser and constructed by builder Isaac Zaret in 1921-25, the Wavecrest bungalows are vernacular in design and constructed of local materials such as locust trees, brick and cedar shingles. Their architectural details include the use of hip roofs, central dormers, exposed roof rafters, porches, stove flues or small brick chimneys, and casement and double sash windows. They were originally clad in wood, brick, cedar shingles or stucco, though in recent years many have been restored in stucco. The interiors feature wood floors, clapboard and plaster walls, and claw-foot tubs in the bathrooms. Measuring approximately 20' x 30' on 25' x 50' lots, the bungalows are one-and-a-half stories and feature small floor plans with three bedrooms, a small kitchen, and a bathroom.

Seaside vacationing became very popular in America at the end of the 19th century. Those who could not afford to stay in hotels camped on the beach, which inspired developers to construct modest bungalow communities. The Rockaway bungalows were rented out in a "time-share" system to multiple families during the summer months. Friends and neighbors would meet for games and parties on porches, courtyards and streets, but the main attraction was the sandy beach and the lively boardwalk. As Long Island's beaches became more accessible with the construction of the Parkway system in the early 20th century, Rockaway dwindled in popularity. The post-World War II housing shortage led to the demolition of many bungalows in favor of apartment complexes and public housing under Parks Commissioner Robert Moses. As a result, the remaining bungalows were less desirable and many owners sold them to the city, which then subsidized the non-winterized buildings for year-round occupancy to those on welfare. In Wavecrest, many bungalows were demolished for the widening of Seagirt Boulevard. By the 1970s and 1980s, many of the bungalows had become derelict, and further destruction continues today, as new construction continues to encroach on the area.

In response to the decline of the bungalows, a group of concerned residents formed the Beachside Bungalow Preservation Association (BBPA), which became a not-for-profit organization in 1988. BBPA has worked to raise awareness of the significance of and threat to the bungalows. Due in large part to their efforts, the bungalows have been featured in publications including *The New York Times*, and were the subject of the 2009 documentary film *The Bungalows of Rockaway* by Jennifer Callahan and Elizabeth Logan Harris.

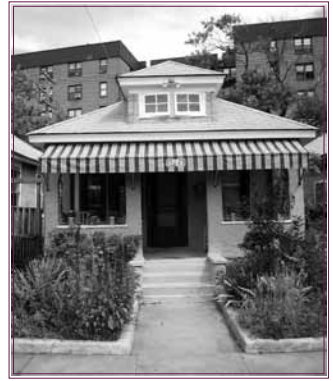
## I. 168, 170, 172, 174, 176, 178, 180 BEACH 24TH STREET

This group of bungalows is elevated along the east side of Beach 24th Street, forming a particularly attractive streetscape. Numbers 172, 178 and 180 have a particularly high level of architectural integrity and stand out in the row for their distinctive arched porches. Numbers 172 and 180 have many similarities, including stone diamond-shaped medallions on their front elevations, concrete porches, hip roof dormers with six-pane casement windows, and original wood cornices on the dormers and roofline. Number 180 has a fabric awning and an original holder. Number 178 is slightly different from the other two with its louvered dormer window and its use of stucco on the exterior. These three houses and their other elevated neighbors contribute greatly to the charm of this area of extant beach bungalows.



## 2. 170A BEACH 24TH STREET

Set in the rear courtyard behind Beach 24th Street, number 170A has a wood frame clad in stucco. It is fronted by a handsome arched porch. Its hip dormer contains an original four-pane casement window. Both the dormer and the roof have retained their original wood cornices, and the front door, which is wood with 12 glass panes, appears to be original, as well. The bungalow's interior contains original moldings, wood floors, pull-down attic stairway and claw-foot bathtub, as well as its original floor plan.



## 3. 167 and 169 BEACH 24TH STREET

These two bungalows have sustained significant alterations over the years and stand as a reminder of the staggering change that this community of bungalows has witnessed. Most notably missing from their façades is the original cladding, which has been replaced with vinyl siding. The original wood windows on both bungalows have been replaced and the dormer windows have been covered.



## 4. 155 and 157 BEACH 24TH STREET

Number 155, which was recently restored, has a white painted brick façade, square columns on its porch, exposed rafters and an asphalt shingle roof. Number 157 is sheathed in stucco and is notable for the many original features it has retained, including its front screen door, wood window surrounds and shutters, a gable dormer with louvered



vent and exposed rafters, and square tapered columns on its porch. Both bungalows, which are in very good condition, have brick planters on the front and side elevations.

## 5. 156 and 158 BEACH 25TH STREET

Numbers 156 and 158 Beach 25th Street are well preserved and contain many of their original features. Both are clad in stucco and have dormers with louvered vents perched on their hip roofs. In addition to its louvered vents, number 158 has retained its wooden vent shutters. Their integrated porches have white brick columns and stoops. The decorative details on their porch roofs differ, with number 156 exhibiting a fabric awning in an original holder, and number 158 exhibiting exposed roof rafters and wooden shutters with seahorse scrolls (not original). The interior of number 158 has its original wood floors, window and door surrounds, and moldings, as well as 1950s kitchen appliances.



## 6. 168 and 170 BEACH 25TH STREET

These stucco bungalows have fabric awnings and holders, exposed roof rafters, louvered vents on their dormers, and painted wood surrounds on their windows—number 168 in green and number 170 (not pictured) in blue. Number 168 has also retained its original wainscot porch ceiling. They form an attractive contribution to the streetscape of Beach 25th Street.

## 7. 169, 171, 173, 175 BEACH 25TH STREET

These four houses provide nice examples of the use of brick on the beachside bungalows. They are clad in stucco with multi-colored brick porches that all feature decorative patterned brickwork. Numbers 169 and 171 have scrolled brackets along the roofline of their porches, which is a less common feature for the remaining Wavecrest bungalows. Together with numbers 179, 181 and 183, the row nearly forms a unified brick street wall, except for the replacement of the brick with vinyl siding on number 177.



## 8. 171A BEACH 25TH STREET

While some of the bungalows in this alley behind Beach 25th Street exhibit severe damage and neglect, this stucco bungalow has been very well maintained. Its porch features square columns and an original wainscot ceiling. Its roofline has exposed rafters, and its gable dormer has a louvered vent with a wood surround.



## 9. 188 and 190 BEACH 25TH STREET

Like their neighbors on the southern end of the street, number 188 and number 190 (not pictured) feature brick-clad porches, though they differ slightly because they have been painted. The patterned brickwork can still be seen beneath the paint. The bungalows both have awnings and wainscot ceilings on their porches, paired louvered vents on their hip dormers, and original wood surrounds on the windows. Aside from their porches,

the bungalows are clad in stucco.



## 10. 159 and 160 BEACH 26TH STREET

The remaining bungalows on Beach 26th Street differ slightly from those on Beach 24th and Beach 25th Streets. In place of hipped dormers on their roofs, these bungalows have clipped gables with louvered vents on their front façades. These two houses have integrated arched stucco columns on their porches as well, which also differ from the other bungalows. The entrance to number 160 is on the side of its porch, as opposed to in the center, and it features lovely wood window shutters on its side façades.



## 11. 163 BEACH 26TH STREET

This stucco bungalow has a gable roof without a dormer, exposed roof rafters and a louvered vent at the gable pitch on the front façade. Its porch features a wainscot ceiling and columns that taper significantly at the bottom where they reach the porch ledge. This bungalow has a rear shed addition that it shares with number 165.

## 12. BOARDWALK

The boardwalk, constructed in 1925, was the social centerpiece of the Rockaway bungalow communities from the 1920s to the 1960s. It was host to parades, roller skating and basketball games, as well as vendors selling summer favorites such as knishes, ice cream and hotdogs. According to local legend, the now standard Chinese take-out carton, or “Tucky Cup,” was invented at Tuck’s Restaurant on Rockaway Beach. The boardwalk hosted many attractions for people from bungalow communities all over the Rockaway peninsula during the summer. A large concession stand was located at Beach 36th Street, there was a movie theater at Beach 68th Street, and the Playland amusement park was located at Beach 98th Street. While people reveled in the excitement and entertainment on the boardwalk, beachgoers relaxed underneath it, taking advantage of the shade it provided from the hot sun.

When the bungalow communities dwindled, the boardwalk fell into disrepair. In 2009–10, the city funded work on the boardwalk, replacing the deteriorated wooden boards with concrete. The lanes that lead from the street to the boardwalk have permanent easements to allow common beach and boardwalk access to all members of the public.



## HISTORIC IMAGES OF THE WAVECREST BUNGALOWS AND ROCKAWAY BEACH

The remaining bungalows in this section of the Rockaway peninsula play an important role in keeping the historic and cultural significance of this beachside community alive. These images offer a quick glimpse of the nostalgic memories to which the bungalows are inherently tied.

To see more photos or to share your own, please visit [www.rockawaymemories.com](http://www.rockawaymemories.com).



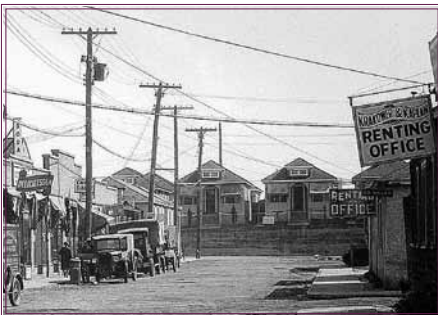
*The boardwalk and Playland amusement park at Beach 98th Street, circa 1935.*

*Photo & Caption Credit: [www.rockawaymemories.com](http://www.rockawaymemories.com), from the collection of Ed K. Gloegler.*



*Woman relaxes on the sand between Beach 33rd and Beach 34th Streets with the boardwalk behind her, circa early 1950s.*

*Photo & Caption Credit: [www.rockawaymemories.com](http://www.rockawaymemories.com), from the collection of Sherry Klein.*



*Bungalows on Beach 24th Street at the end of Seagirt Avenue (looking east), 1927.*

*Photo & Caption Credit: [www.rockawaymemories.com](http://www.rockawaymemories.com)*

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