

Dunbar Apartments

Individual Landmark

226 West 150th Street

Designation Date: July 14, 1970



Dunbar Apartments April 15, 1970

Image courtesy of the NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission

The Dunbar Apartments, named after the famous black poet of the turn of the 20th century, Paul Lawrence Dunbar (1872-1906), occupies the entire block bounded by West 149th and 150th Streets and Seventh and Eighth Avenues (now Adam Clayton Powell Jr. and Frederick Douglass Boulevards). It was the first large cooperative built for blacks and was Manhattan's earliest large garden apartment complex.

Financed by John D. Rockefeller, Jr., and designed by the architect Andrew J. Thomas, the building was completed in 1928 and was destined, from the planning and sociological points of view, to occupy a pivotal place in the history of the Harlem community.

The complex consists of six independent U-shaped buildings, containing 511 apartments, and is clustered around a large interior garden court. Eight arched entrance ways lead into the court and to public staircases. With its lawns, shrubs and trees, the garden court provides a quiet, green oasis removed from the traffic and noise of the surrounding streets.

Architecturally, the dominant note is one of simplicity. The architect avoided the cold monotony of many later housing projects by breaking up the massive wall surfaces. He varied the heights of the buildings from five to six stories, alternately projected and recessed adjoining units and introduced a variety of window alignments and sizes. The warm tones of the Holland varicolored brick are set off by decorative accents of limestone. Handsome wrought iron balconies and window guards, and architectural terra cotta at the roof level, complete the decorative scheme.

[Read the full NYC LPC designation report here.](#)