

# TENDENCIES IN APARTMENT HOUSE DESIGN

*Part IX—Enclosed Courtyard and "Studio" Apartments*



By FRANK CHOUTEAU BROWN

HAVING now considered the various types of "Open Court" apartment groupings, there remain but two further classifications to be analyzed in this series. The first of these is the grouping around a "Closed Court," or a building arranged entirely around the four or more sides of a courtyard space. After that there will still remain to be discussed the problem of utilizing any one of the types of building we have been illustrating, on the lot of irregular shape and outline, in which group will be found a number of interesting and unusual examples.

The "Closed Court" type of structure will now be taken up, primarily because it is closest allied to the buildings we have recently shown, but also partly, at least, from the fact that it is generally to be used upon the same types of lots—rectangular in proportion, and about the same or a little larger in size. In other words, this type represents in most cases the next logical forward step when considering an appropriate and desirable kind of building to use in the development of the kind of lot next larger in area and scale of operation.

As a whole, much the same considerations that have combined to direct the general plan of the individual apartments in the "Open Court" type, remain in effect with the "Closed Court" plan. This is certainly the case with the public circulation corridor and the matter of its effect upon any possible obtainable cross draught through the various rooms of the apartments. This matter now becomes even more serious, because the "closing in" of the courtyard does, in itself, much

to prevent the free circulation of air—particularly if the court is rather small and restricted in size. And this is, of course, the constant tendency in any improvement of valuable city property, where the difficulty of obtaining lots of sufficiently large area to plan an apartment group upon any comprehensive and large scale is an obstacle constantly encountered.

It is, nevertheless, fairly well determined by the material found during the process of securing the illustrations and information for this series of articles, that a very considerable part of the apartment house development in this country for the next few years is likely to take a line of growth that will utilize the "Courtyard" idea, in some one of its many and various forms.

From what has already been seen of the application of this group-type to the apartment plan problem, it is sufficiently obvious that this type of group is especially applicable to individual apartments of a small number of rooms—two, three and four room units, particularly. It should be definitely apparent that the apartment of five and six rooms can be equally well worked into a plan of this same type, requiring only a possible larger area of lot to become fully as effective and successful, from the point of view both of the occupying tenants, the realty operatives and the owner.

There is no bar to the utilization of the same arrangement of grouping, upon precisely the same identical scheme plan, if the "Duplex" type of arrangement is adopted. That is, each alternate floor plan for a four to six room apartment



FIG. 103. GENERAL VIEW—APARTMENT BUILDING AT 305 WEST 45TH STREET,  
NEW YORK CITY.  
Evarts Tracy, Architect.

could be very nearly identical with the plan of the living room floor of an eight to twelve room "Duplex"—the sleeping room floor being an easily invented and similar arrangement.

There is nothing to prevent this type of group plan being worked out to suit the convenient arrangement of apartments of this same or larger size, even with rooms all placed upon the one floor, although it has not yet been the fortune of this investigator to find such a type of acceptable plan that could be used here for purposes of proof and illustration. Nevertheless, attempts at such plans have been made in the past, and will undoubtedly be made again, and perhaps with better success. One such plan of this type was actually built a number of years ago in Boston, and was far from unsuccessful, even at that time. And this, too, despite a still somewhat undeveloped idea of the modern aspects of the apartment house problem. This type of plan arrangement is indicated in key form in one of

the illustrations in this article (Fig. 105). The exact plan is not reproduced. It was too large and complex in detail to reduce successfully to a small size, and in re-drawing it to indicate its essential idea the opportunity to both simplify and modernize the scheme has been undertaken, in order that it might the better serve to illustrate the present and future possibilities of this type.

But even here the plan is essentially one that cannot be employed for more than two apartments to the floor—the sort of plan that was also illustrated in Fig. 90, last month. It is more than probable, in the judgment of some of those who have given most study to the subject, that the next few years will see many more large apartments to the floor, grouped around one or more courtyards, in structures still larger and more distinctly urban and expensive in type.

Meanwhile we must continue to trace and illustrate the growth of the "Court-yard" idea, in larger aggregations of in-



FIG. 104. DETAIL OF DOORWAY—APARTMENT BUILDING AT 305 WEST 45TH STREET, NEW YORK CITY. EVARTS TRACY, ARCHITECT.

dividual apartments of small size, clustered around a completely enclosed central court, continuing from the point where the subject was dropped last month.

In that connection we will have to do with apartments of four rooms or less, and will turn at once to a definite illustration in New York City, an example that was also recently the recipient of a prize from the profession. This example is the better suited to our purpose, as it is a problem very nearly parallel to the example of a "double open court" plan, given the prize last year in the same city, which we illustrated in last December's issue (as Figs. 74 and 75).

This structure, where a similar class of small apartment is shown adapted to a "closed Courtyard" type, is illustrated this month as Figs. 103, 104 and 106, the latter being the plan, that may with interest be compared to the other plan, Fig. 75, printed last December. The plot of land is entirely different. It is now an "inside lot," of approximately square proportions, about one hundred and fifteen feet front and the usual one hundred feet depth. (These figures refer, as usual, to that portion of the lot covered in whole or in part by the structure itself.) Upon this area is shown a nearly square floor plan containing fourteen apartments—three of four rooms, nine of three rooms, and two of one room, and baths. Of the three and four room apartments, two rooms are always the kitchen and living room—the other one or two rooms being bedrooms—and all these rooms are of more than comfortable size, although not as large in each case as in the more recent plan shown in Fig. 75.

The enclosed courtyard is about twenty-seven or twenty-eight feet wide by forty-six feet long, and none too large

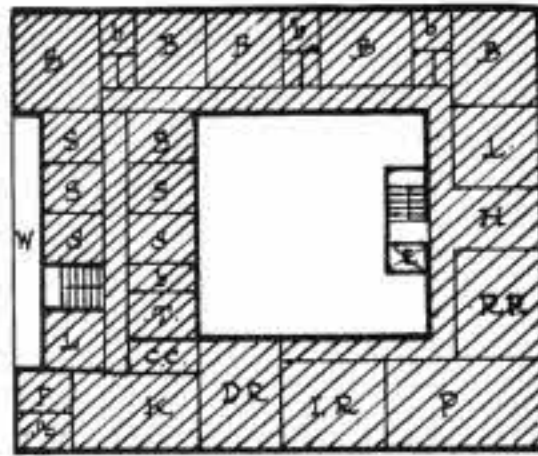


Fig. 105. Key Floor Plan—One Large Apartment to the Floor, Built Around a Central Courtyard.

for the purpose, in any event. This central court is, however, supplemented by two long and narrow courtyards, on either side of the building, extending from just back of the front range of the structure through to the rear, being open at that end. Across the front and rear ranges of the plan, the apartments extend entirely through the

structure, from the court to the outside frontage, so as to obtain good cross draught for the occupants. The public corridors extend from front to back, down the two side wings, enclosed in a middle position, with apartments opening out on both the center and the side courts. These apartments, therefore, cannot benefit by direct cross draught. If obtainable at all in warm weather, it is only secured in an indirect manner, across or through the public corridor.

This corridor connects two public staircases, one at the front, the other at the rear end; there are also elevators at the front end of each corridor—which are not connected across the width of the building, except on the entrance floor.

This building will serve as an excellent example of the simplest and most direct type of "completely enclosed" courtyard apartment group plan, and the different apartment units themselves are equally simple in their arrangement. It will also serve to illustrate at once the benefits and defects of the type scheme. So far as these are associated with the employment of the enclosed central courtyard itself, it requires no actual occupancy of such an apartment to realize that the width of the courtyard is not really sufficient to provide the occupants of the apartments on either side with a desirable degree of privacy, especially in warm summer weather. The height of the building also, a mere matter of six stories, at least as

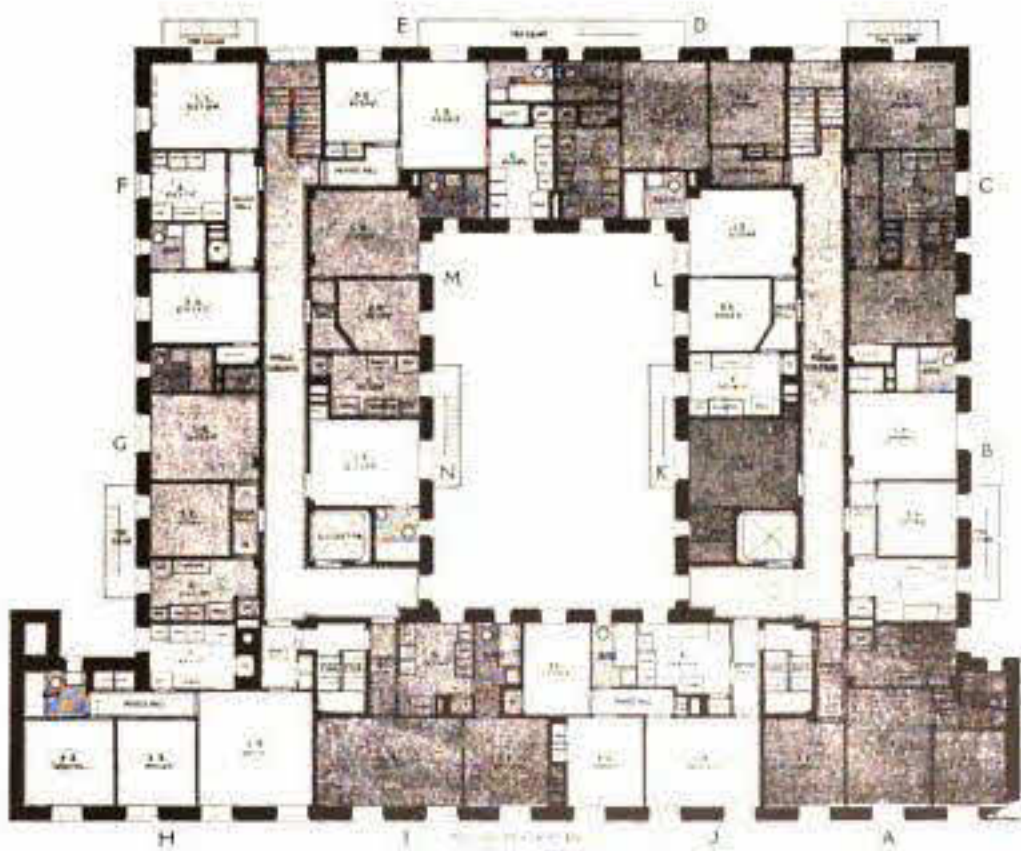
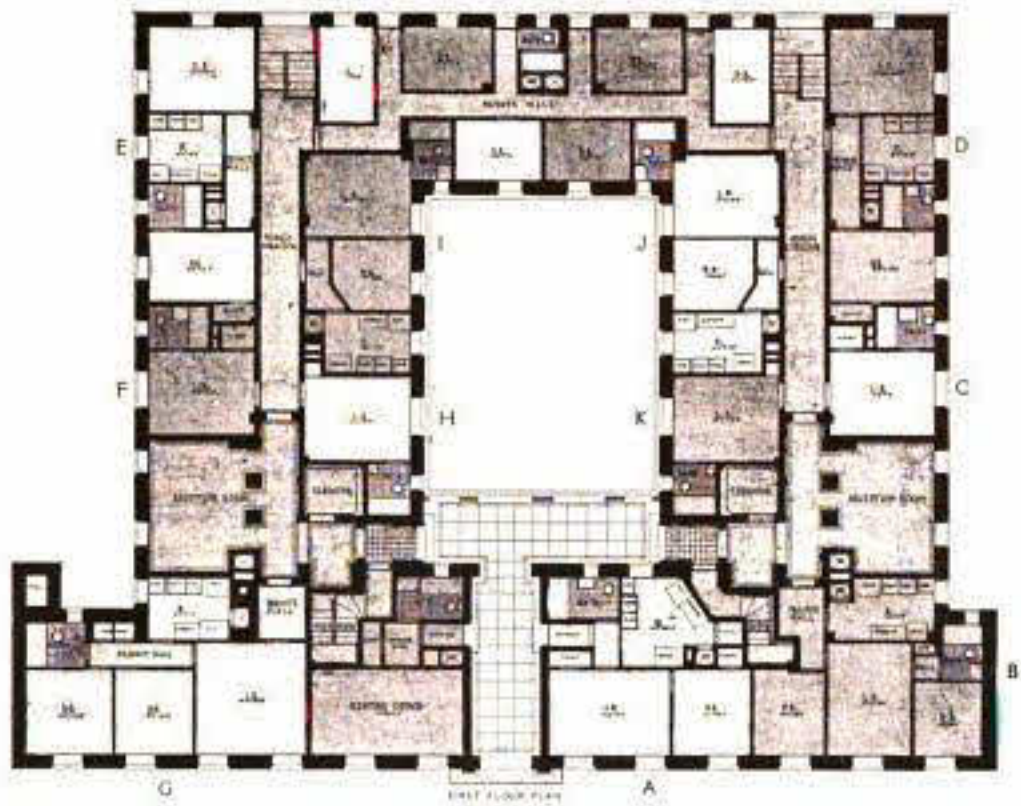


FIG. 106 FIRST AND TYPICAL FLOOR PLANS APARTMENT BUILDING AT 105 WEST 43RD STREET, NEW YORK CITY  
EVARTS TRACY, ARCHITECT.