

**RICHMOND HILL REPUBLICAN CLUB**, 86-15 Lefferts Boulevard, Queens. Built 1908; Henry E. Haugaard, architect.

Landmark Site: Borough of Queens Tax Map Block 9273, Lot 89.

On October 29, 2002, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Richmond Hill Republican Club and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No.1). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of the law. Twenty witnesses spoke in favor of designation including Council member Melinda R. Katz; Council member Dennis Gallagher; representatives from the Historic Districts Council, the New York City Landmarks Conservancy, the Queens Borough President's Office, Assemblyman Brian McLaughlin's Office, and the Richmond Hill Historical Society; and residents of Richmond Hill. There were no speakers or letters in opposition to designation.

#### Summary

An integral part of downtown Richmond Hill, the Richmond Hill Republican Club served as an important political club and a cornerstone of the Richmond Hill neighborhood where parades, public lectures, picnics, dances, and dinners were held. Built in 1908 to the designs of Henry E. Haugaard, a prolific local architect and builder, the building was constructed of Roman brick and wood in the Colonial Revival style. Original stylistic features of the building include an elaborate entryway with classical pediment, a denticulated and bracketed cornice, and a roof-line balustrade. The building was constructed as a political club and post office. However during World War I, it took on a larger community function when it became a social gathering place for local citizens and an entertainment center and retreat for the armed forces. As late as 1980, a presidential candidate delivered a campaign speech there. Vacant since the mid 1980s, the Richmond Hill Republican Club is an intact example of a clubhouse designed to serve the social, political and recreational needs of a local community and an excellent prototype of small-scale Colonial Revival style civic architecture.



## DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

### History of Richmond Hill <sup>1</sup>

Richmond Hill is a neighborhood located in east central Queens, adjacent to Jamaica and bounded to the north by Myrtle and Hillside streets, to the east by the Van Wyck Expressway, to the south by Linden Boulevard, and to the west by 100<sup>th</sup> Street. Originally farmland, the area was developed by Albon Platt Man, a wealthy lawyer in New York City; Oliver Fowler, a local developer; and landscape architect Edward Richmond. Designed as a middle class suburb, it was laid out in the vicinity of the new Long Island Railroad line. Between 1868 and 1874, streets, a school, and a church were built; and 250 acres farmland were laid out into lots for private residents. Initial residents were mostly businessmen from Manhattan who erected large houses costing between \$2,500 to \$5,000. Some 400 shade and ornamental trees were planted, and the Richmond Hill passenger depot serviced the growing community. By 1895, the settlement was incorporated with Morris Park and Clarenceville as the Village of Richmond Hill and then in 1898, Richmond Hill became part of the consolidated Greater New York City. The Arcaneum Hall Library was established in 1899 and in 1905, the Richmond Hill Library, one of the Carnegie libraries, was built on Lefferts Boulevard. By 1900 Richmond Hill consisted of smaller cottages as well as larger, luxurious houses costing upwards of \$8,000. Many of these residences as well as commercial and institutional buildings were designed by the Haugaard brothers (William Haugaard, Henry E. Haugaard, and John T. Haugaard) who practiced architecture in Richmond Hill. By 1920, the population of Richmond Hill continued to grow and commercial activity flourished. With no more open land to develop, some of Richmond Hill's nineteenth century private houses were replaced by twentieth century apartment houses, and a population of mostly German and Irish descent gave way to an influx of Latin Americans. Still, Richmond Hill remains a low-rise neighborhood of two-family houses and apartment buildings.

### The Architect: Henry E. Haugaard

Born in 1867 in Brooklyn, Henry E. Haugaard was one of three brothers of Danish descent who made their mark as architects and builders in Richmond Hill. He opened his office in 1888 at Jamaica Plank Road and Lefferts Boulevard in the heart of Richmond Hill and by 1905 had made plans for over 1,000 houses. A 1905 article in the *Industrial Recorder* details Haugaard's architectural practice:

The residences of Mr. Louis Schroeder, at Myrtle avenue and Elm street, and Mr. Peter Zimmerman, on Division avenue, are examples of Mr. Haugaard's work, and he gives a careful attention to detail, which commands a wide appreciation. There is an especially active demand here for residences costing from \$5,000 to \$7,500, and Mr. Haugaard has succeeded in meeting this demand in a most satisfactory manner. He has been recently elected as supervising architect for the new Royal Arcanum building to be erected corner of Jamaica avenue and Elm street. <sup>2</sup>

Initially, Henry Haugaard worked closely with his two brothers, William C. Haugaard and John T. Haugaard. In addition to his architectural practice, Henry Haugaard also owned a planing mill and employed from fifteen to thirty-five men depending upon the number of projects ongoing. <sup>3</sup>

Little is known about the work or life of Henry Haugaard after 1917. A scandalous event in that year appears to have been a turning point in his career. On January 27<sup>th</sup>, Henry E. Haugaard and his brother William were shot while working in their office in the Hillside Bank Building in Richmond Hill by Herbert M. Newcomb, a local builder. Mr. Newcomb, who was intoxicated at the time, accused Henry Haugaard of ruining him financially. Henry Haugaard was taken to Jamaica Hospital and was reported to be in serious condition. <sup>4</sup> A 1920 Federal census record locates Henry Haugaard in Queens and gives his age as 53; a subsequent 1930 Federal census record locates him in Los Angeles and sites his age as 63. <sup>5</sup> No additional accounts of Haugaard's work or life have been found.

The Haugaard architectural legacy did, however, continue on into the next generation with two of the Haugaard sons becoming noteworthy in their fields. William E. Haugaard became New York State Architect in 1928 and John T. Haugaard Jr. worked as Senior Housing Control Architect and Associate Architect for the State of New York. <sup>6</sup>

### The Republican Club in New York City

In 1854, the Republican Party became a national organization and opened a New York State chapter in New York City. While the party initially embraced anti-Catholic rhetoric and a 25 year residency requirement for membership, by the end of the nineteenth century, the party had become known for its policies of social reform and began to influence local politics. Attacking Tammany Hall as corrupt, the Republican Party gained power and effected

change in city government. In 1894, a reformist Republican, William L. Strong, was elected mayor of the City of New York and was followed by another Republican, Seth Low, elected mayor in 1901. Low left the city with major reforms in place, such as improved public transportation and water supply and increased funding for public education. The Republican influence on city politics was, however, short-lived. By 1903, a Democrat was again in power and in succeeding decades the Republican Party became increasingly weak. The Republican Party's support of prohibition and the popularity of Democrat Franklin Roosevelt in the 1920s again put Republicans on the sidelines. During this period, the Republican Party evolved into an organization that was socially progressive and fiscally conservative. In 1934, Fiorello H. La Guardia, with strong ties to the Roosevelt New Deal and to nonpartisan government but a Republican in name, was elected mayor. His term lasted until 1945 and it was not until twenty years later with the election of Mayor John Lindsay that the Republican Party again had influence in city government.<sup>7</sup>

Because New York City was largely dominated by the Democratic Party prior to the 1930s, Republican clubs were important but many had a more social rather than political bent.

...in most of the city their existence was a gesture of futility, and their survival a testimony to the power of patronage in a one-party town. Republican clubs of the twenties and thirties left few records. They spawned no intraparty battles, stimulated few reform or splinter groups, and limited their activities to social and charitable events....<sup>8</sup>

Home to noted reformer, Jacob Riis, the neighborhood of Richmond Hill had strong ties to the Republican party, and the Richmond Hill Republican Club was in many ways atypical of republican clubs growing up in New York as it engaged in more political activity than most. As early as 1918, members of the Richmond Hill Republican Club acknowledged the important role that women played in politics and eagerly recruited them.

One idea for the soon to be vacant Post Office is to fit up this portion of the building as quarters for women. Since women were granted suffrage, the Republicans have been waging a campaign to bring as many women as possible into the G.O. P. fold, and there are many who believe that a pleasing method of drawing them into the Richmond Hill Club would be to supply them with the attractive quarters for meetings, entertainments, conference, etc.<sup>9</sup>

In many ways, the Richmond Hill Republican Club was also typical of Republican clubs in New York City at this time; the club was at the heart of neighborhood events and hosted public lectures, rallies, parades, picnics, dances, and dinners.<sup>10</sup>

The number of political clubs in Queens, as in the rest of New York City, dwindled with each decade. In 1932, Queens had a population of 1.79 million people and 404 political clubs; in 1972 the population had risen to 1.98 million with only 77 clubs remaining.<sup>11</sup> The Richmond Hill Republican Club remained a strong political and social voice for the borough well into the 1980s. Esteemed speakers over the years at the club included Theodore Roosevelt, Harry Truman, Richard Nixon, and Gerald Ford. As late as 1976 and 1980, Ronald Reagan delivered campaign speeches at the building.<sup>12</sup>

### The Richmond Hill Republican Club Building

Before construction of its club building on Lefferts Boulevard<sup>13</sup> in Richmond Hill, the Republican Club met in a building at Jamaica Avenue and Jefferson Street.<sup>14</sup> In 1907, the Republican Club commissioned Henry Haugaard, a well established architect and builder in Richmond Hill, to design its clubhouse. An article in the *Richmond Hill Record* dated December 28 of that year details the plans for the building.

According to the plans of Architect Henry Haugaard, the proposed Republican clubhouse to be erected on Lefferts avenue will be 50 feet wide by 80 deep. Its total cost, including the site, will be close to \$20,000. The structure will be Colonial in design, will be two stories in height, and will either be of stone or frame. There will be a ten foot piazza in front of the building. The bowling alleys and heating plant will be in the cellar. A meeting room, pool and billiard rooms and several smaller rooms will occupy the main floor, while the second floor will be a large auditorium.<sup>15</sup>

In January of 1908, Club House Realty Co., the stock of which was held by members of the Richmond Hill Republican Club, entered into a contract to erect a clubhouse with adjoining post office. The projected costs were \$27,000, \$7,500 of which was earmarked for the post office construction. Construction of the building began in May 1908 and by the summer of that year was completed. The second floor, though initially planned, was never built.<sup>16</sup>

An article dated January 18, 1908 from the *Richmond Hill Record* outlined that a portion of the ground floor and basement would be used as a post office facility. The main portion used for post office functions would be 75 by 22 feet in area and would be

“handsomely fitted up with desks and other necessary furnishings.”<sup>17</sup> The building housed the post office until 1918 when the government facility moved to another location. That same year, the Republican members voted to turn the clubhouse into the Soldiers’ and Sailors’ Club of Richmond Hill as part of the War Camp Community Service (WCCS). The former post office was converted into a dormitory, and dances were held every Tuesday and Saturday night. An article in the *Richmond Hill Record* in 1919 details the uses of the building.

The Clubhouse is splendidly equipped for this work, being one of the best operated by the WCCS in the country. The entrance leads into a foyer hall with the parlor or reading room alongside; this has a pool and a billiard room adjoining, with kitchen and committee room in the rear. There are six bowling alleys in the basement. The dormitory is in the building immediately adjoining and is a room 75 feet long by 25 feet wide and 14 feet high.<sup>18</sup>

A 1925 Sanborn Insurance Map notes the use of the entire building as “club rooms,” and subsequent maps published by E. Belcher Hyde, Inc. for 1936 note its use as “Republican Club-Royal Arcanum.”<sup>19</sup> Throughout its political history, however, the Richmond Hill Republican Club remained a central community meeting place until it became vacant in the mid 1980s.

#### Description

The Richmond Hill Republican Club is a Colonial Revival style building constructed of Roman brick with wood trim on Lefferts Boulevard in the Richmond Hill section of Queens. A cornerstone on the far left of the building dates the construction year as 1908. The building is one story with a full basement; four expansive semi-circular steps lead into the main entrance.

**Lefferts Boulevard façade-** The principal entrance of the Richmond Hill Republican Club is in the center of the building and is accessed by expansive semi-circular stairs. Double doors with large side windows, which were originally double-hung sash, are capped by a pediment and flanked by paired Ionic columns. The entry doors maintain original paneled frames with double doors and transom above. Non-historic light fixtures are affixed to each column, and non-historic plywood panels have been placed in the door frames. A bracketed cornice with dentil molding below runs

the entire length of the façade and is capped by a balustrade. A simple pediment with the words “Republican Club” is over the main entrance and in front of the rooftop balustrade. Nine non-historic spotlights hang over the balustrade and pediment. Large tripartite openings with paneled pilasters, wide lintels and decorative keystones form the end bays. The left bay consists of a doorway, flanked by windows, which were originally double-hung sash but have now been filled with non-historic painted wood panels. This entrance originally had double doors with transom above. The frames and transom are intact but the opening has been filled with non-historic wood panels. The right bay (originally the entrance to the post office) consists of an entry door on the far right with a showroom window to its left. Stone lintels extend the width of window and door openings of each side bay. Each lintel is divided into smaller coarsed stones with a keystone with applied bracket in the center. Adjacent to the side bay entryways, metal ventilation boxes, which appear to have been originally covered with open grills, have been closed with non-historic metal panels.

**South Elevation-** The south elevation is partially visible from Lefferts Boulevard. Roman brick covers the entire elevation. Four windows are slightly recessed and maintain original, individual stone lintels and window frames but have been filled in with non-historic plywood. A fifth window towards the rear of the building appears to be the original double-hung sash window with non-historic metal bars. A second row of windows at the basement level with original stone lintels is partially visible; the window openings have been filled with non-historic wood.

**North Elevation-** The north elevation is barely visible from Lefferts Boulevard. Roman brick covers the entire elevation. Three windows and one door appear to have original stone lintels but have been filled with non-historic wood. In addition, there is a small chimney towards the Lefferts Boulevard façade on the north elevation.

Report prepared by  
Isabel Hill, Consultant

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Carl Ballenas and Nancy Cataldi, *Images of America: Richmond Hill 2002* (New York: Arcadia Publishing, 2002); Vincent Seyfried, "Richmond Hill," Kenneth T. Jackson, ed., *The Encyclopedia of New York* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1995), p. 1004.
- <sup>2</sup> *The Industrial Recorder*, 1905.
- <sup>3</sup> "Representative Business Men of Richmond Hill, *Richmond Hill Record*, 1905.
- <sup>4</sup> *New York Times*, January 27, 1917.
- <sup>5</sup> *United States Census Records*, 1920 and 1930.
- <sup>6</sup> *New York Herald Tribune*, February 11, 1948; *Haugard Achievement Award*, New York State Division of Housing and Community Renewal.
- <sup>7</sup> Peter Field, "Republican Party," Kenneth T. Jackson, ed., *The Encyclopedia of New York* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1995), p. 999.
- <sup>8</sup> Norman M. Adler and Blanche Davis Blank, *Political Clubs of New York* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1975), p. 20.
- <sup>9</sup> *Richmond Hill Record*, 1918.
- <sup>10</sup> *Richmond Hill Record*, August 9, 1918; *Richmond Hill Record*, January 25, 1919.
- <sup>11</sup> Norman M. Adler and Blanche Davis Blank, *Political Clubs of New York* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1975), p. 34.
- <sup>12</sup> "Eve of Destruction," *Time Out*, August 5, 1999.
- <sup>13</sup> Note that Lefferts Boulevard was previously Lefferts Avenue and is referred to as such in certain historical documents.
- <sup>14</sup> *Richmond Hill Record*, August 1903.
- <sup>15</sup> *Richmond Hill Record*, December 28, 1907.
- <sup>16</sup> *Richmond Hill Record*, January 18, 1908.
- <sup>17</sup> *Richmond Hill Record*, January 18, 1908.
- <sup>18</sup> *Richmond Hill Record*, January 25, 1919.
- <sup>19</sup> *Insurance Maps, Borough of Queens, City of New York* (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1925, updated to 1968), vol. 6; *Atlas of the Borough of Queens* (New York: E. Belcher Hyde, Inc. 1936, updated to 1973), vol. 4.

## FINDINGS AND DESIGNATION

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture, and other features of this building, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the Richmond Hill Republican Club has a special character and special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, heritage, and cultural characteristics of New York City.

The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, the one-story Richmond Hill Republican Club is an integral part of the historic downtown of Richmond Hill and that along with the 1904 Carnegie Library, forms a small but important ensemble of civic architecture; that the Richmond Hill Republican Club was designed by Henry E. Haugaard, a prolific local builder and architect who was instrumental in shaping the urban fabric of the downtown residential and commercial neighborhood of Richmond Hill; that the building is an excellent, intact example of Colonial Revival style architecture with its dentilated and bracketed cornice, its accentuated front doorway with pediment, and its roof-line balustrade; that it served as a political club whose visitors included Theodore Roosevelt, Harry Truman, Gerald Ford, Richard Nixon, and Ronald Reagan and as a cornerstone of community activities including parades, public lectures, dinners, picnics, rallies and dances; that it was of particular importance as a haven for the Armed Forces during both World War I and World War II; that it is largely intact and remains a notable example of small-scale civic architecture and a vital historic resource for the neighborhood of Richmond Hill.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 74, Section 3020 of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 3 of Title 25 of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as a Landmark the Richmond Hill Republican Club, 86-15 Lefferts Boulevard, Queens, and designates Borough of Queens Tax Map Block 9273, Lot 89 as its Landmark Site.



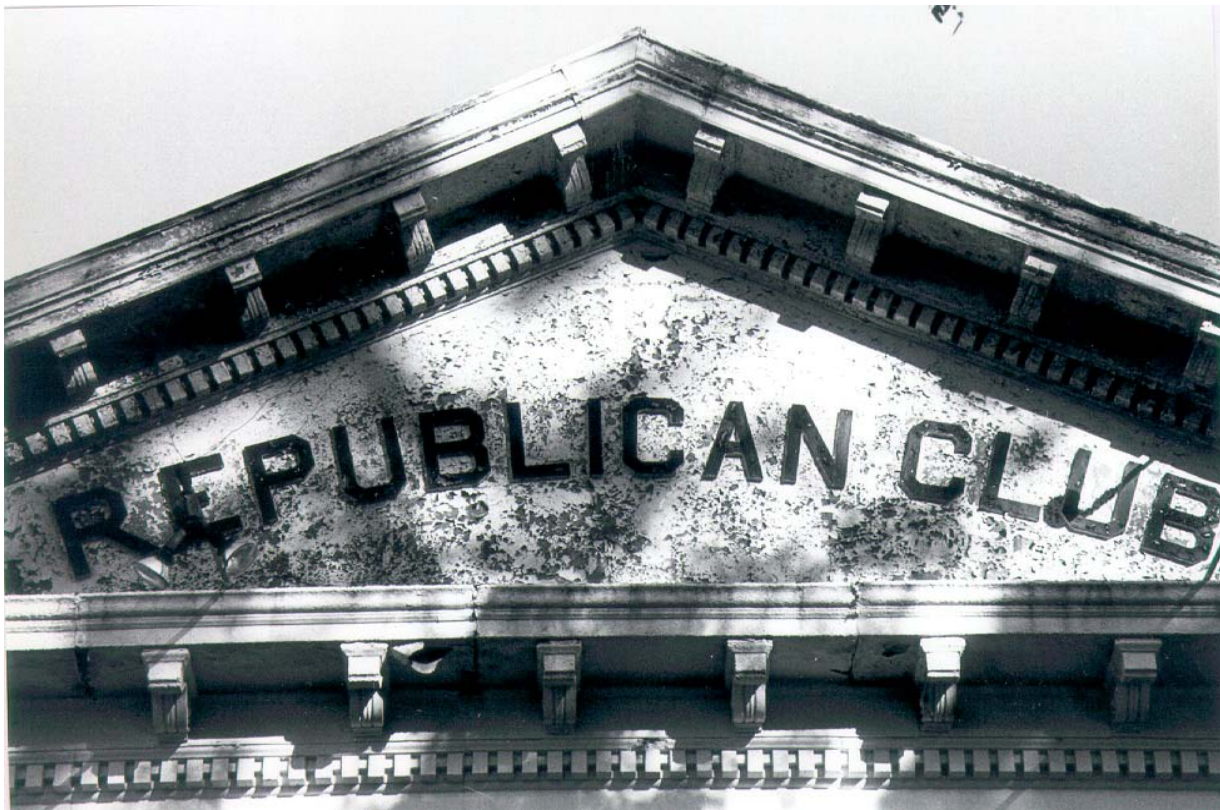
Richmond Hill Republican Club  
86-15 Lefferts Boulevard, Queens  
*Photo: Carl Forster*



Richmond Hill Republican Club, Detail of Entrance and Pediment  
*Photo: Carl Forster*



Richmond Hill Republican Club, Main Entrance  
*Photo: Carl Forster*



Richmond Hill Republican Club, Pediment of Main Entrance  
*Photo: Carl Forster*



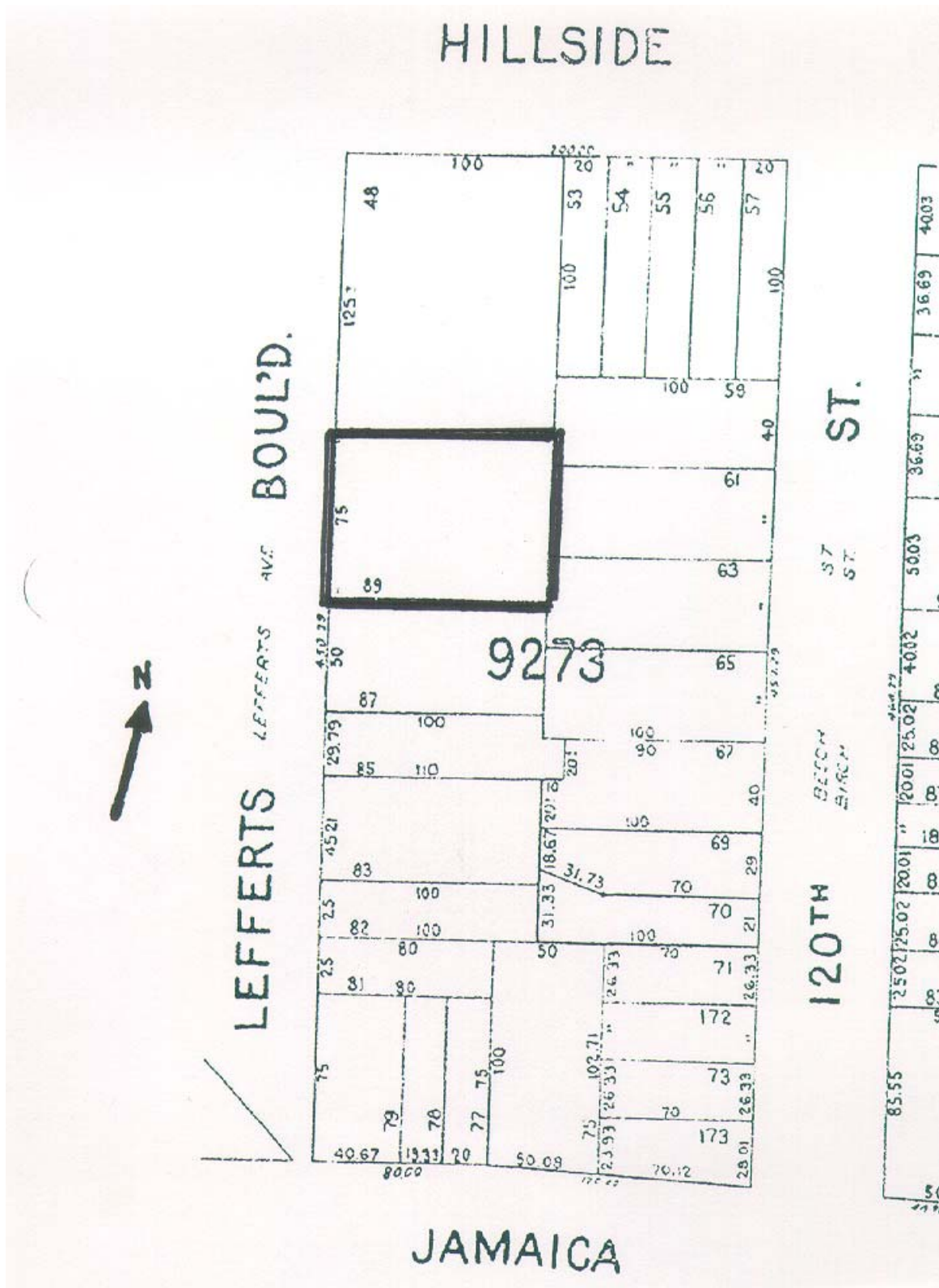
Richmond Hill Republican Club, North Entrance

*Photo: Carl Forster*

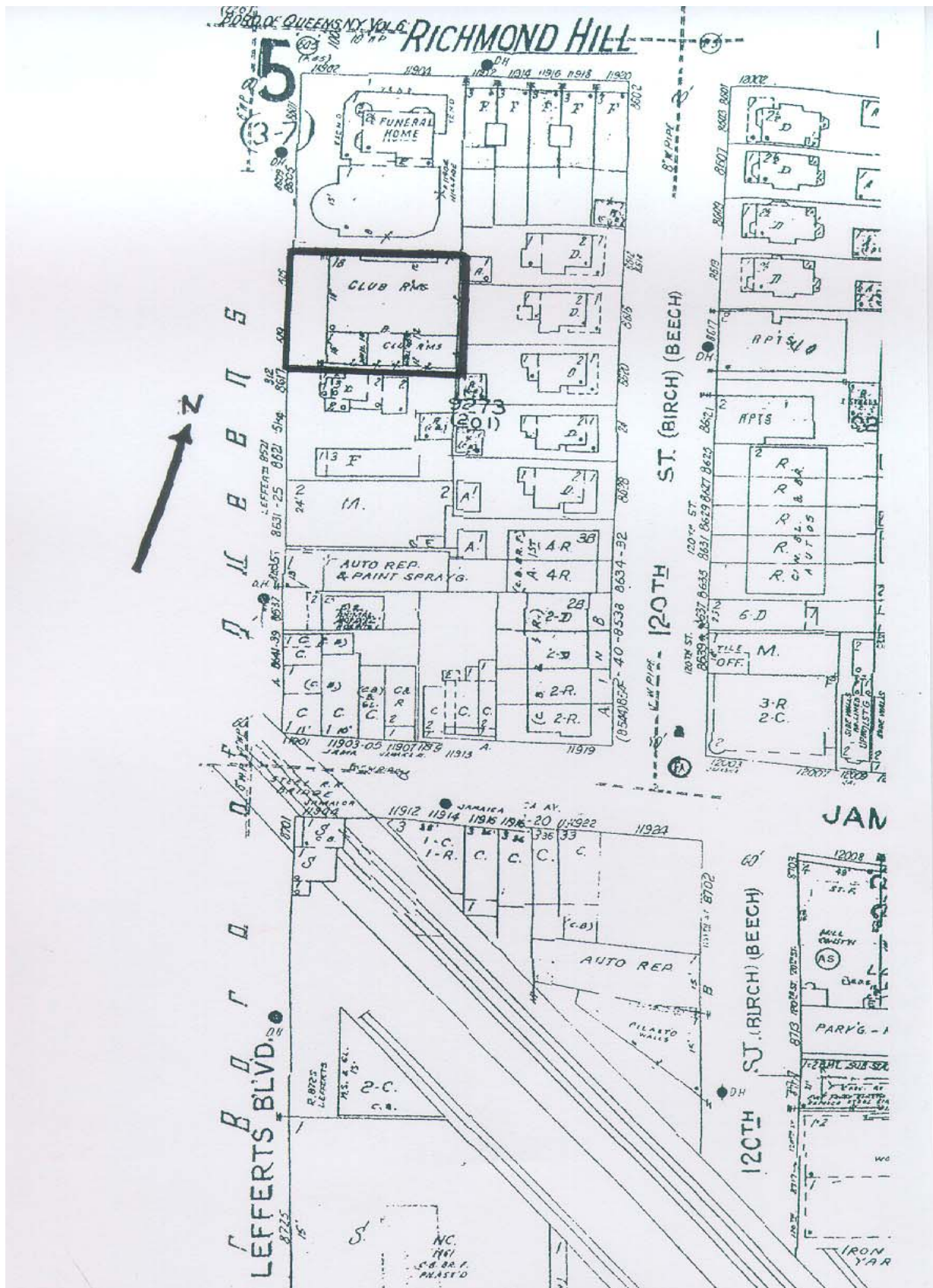


Richmond Hill Republican Club, South (former) Post Office Entrance

*Photo: Carl Forster*



RICHMOND HILL REPUBLICAN CLUB  
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 Source: *Sanborn Building & Property Atlas*, 2000-01, Queens NY vol. 6, pl. 5



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