

# Resourceful Modernization

**T**O complete an extensive apartment house modernization without disrupting rentals or seriously inconveniencing tenants is a first rate stunt, as anyone who has tried it knows. It was accomplished in the large building at 790 Riverside Drive, New York, but only by most careful planning and scheduling by Wood, Dolson Co., Inc., managing agents of the property.

This building is a 13-story fireproof structure, erected about 29 years ago, with a ground area of approximately 43,000 square feet and located on a plot extending along the Drive from 156th to 157th Streets. It is now owned by a large insurance company. As the accompanying floor plans show, it was built in five wings separated by deep light courts. There are two passenger elevators, one freight car and one service elevator. The original units were large, ranging in some cases up to 8 and 10 rooms.

Like many other apartment buildings of its era this structure was a victim of the depression. The residents,

a considerable proportion of whom had lived there for years, included college professors, physicians, and others of similar high type who were forced to curtail their overhead, with the result that by 1932 a large proportion of the old tenants had moved, leaving many large units vacant. A contributing cause of vacancies was the erection of a group of six-story buildings across the street that obstructed the view of the Hudson River which had hitherto been a good renting feature. This was somewhat counterbalanced by neighborhood improvements such as the construction of a viaduct which diverted traffic and eliminated some traffic noise, and the creation of a small park plot in the middle of the revamped thoroughfare.

## Modernization Program

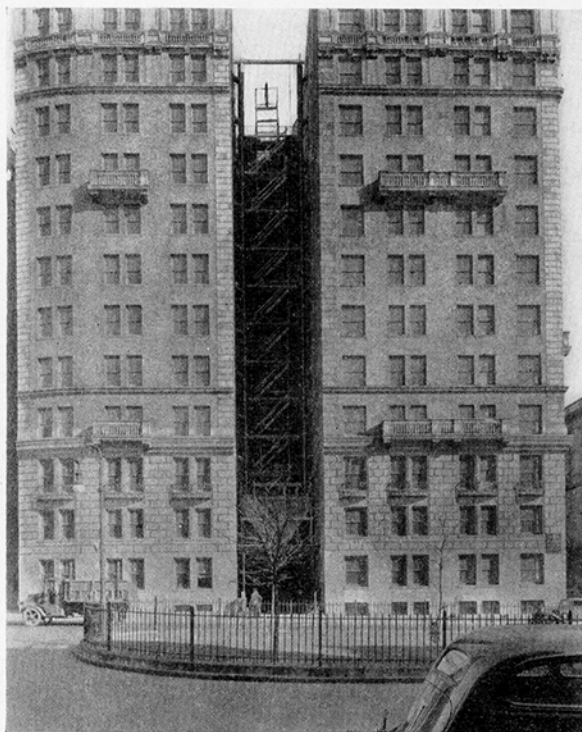
The modernization problem was first faced in 1933. Various alternative proposals were examined over a period of several years.

Lee I. Kramer, of the Wood, Dolson Co., listed the following questions in this connection in a recent discussion of the problem at a meeting of the apartment house group of the Real Estate Board of New York:

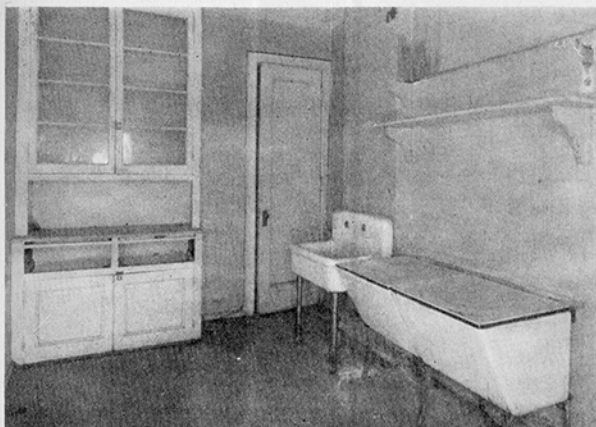
1. Should the entire building be altered, or would modernization of certain sections suffice?
2. In cases of partial modernization how many and which wings should be altered?
3. How to overcome the handicap of the long halls in those apartments facing on the deep light courts?
4. What sizes should the new units be?
5. How many baths should be installed per unit in the new spaces?
6. How to retain the tenants then in the building and thus save income?
7. How to install new brass pipes and still renew leases of the old tenants?
8. How best to deal with a number of physical problems of modernization, including painting of public halls, modernization of elevator cabs and doors and improvements of elevator service, caulking of windows, waterproof some exterior walls, improve laundry facilities, refurnish lobby, and repair dangerous terra cotta balustrades or replace them with new iron railings?
9. How to reestablish the former high character of the house and rent the new units most efficiently?

The objective obviously was to rent the newly created apartments to responsible tenants at rates which would produce sufficient income to warrant such an alteration.

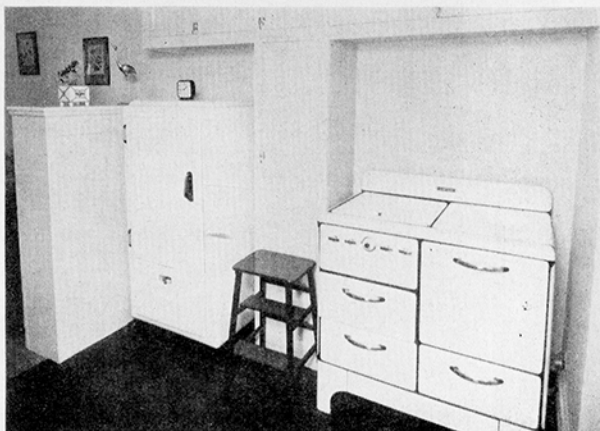
After several plans had been examined and discarded, it was decided to alter only two wings of the structure



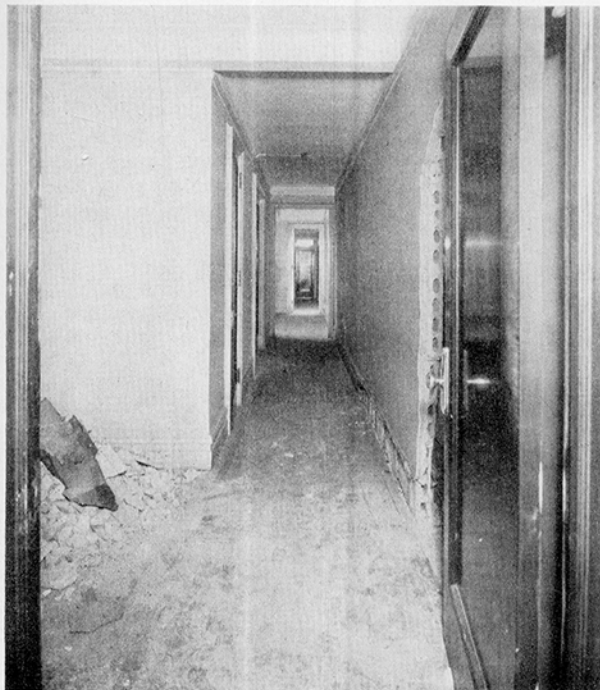
To minimize alteration annoyance to tenants at 790 Riverside Drive in New York City, a 13-story shaft was erected between the two wings for the handling of outgoing debris and incoming materials. Workmen also used the shaft for access to the job



**An old kitchen—**



**and a new one**



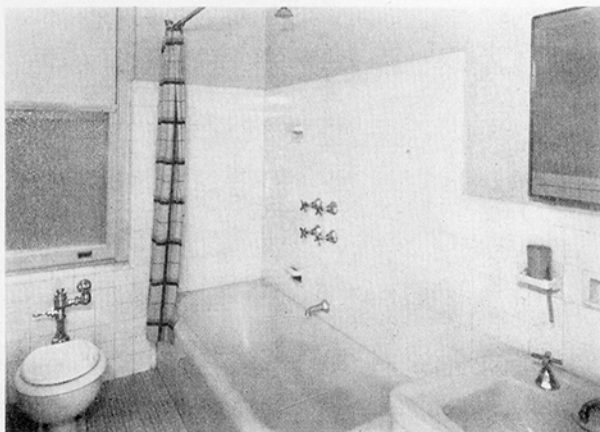
**Typical long, narrow hall—**



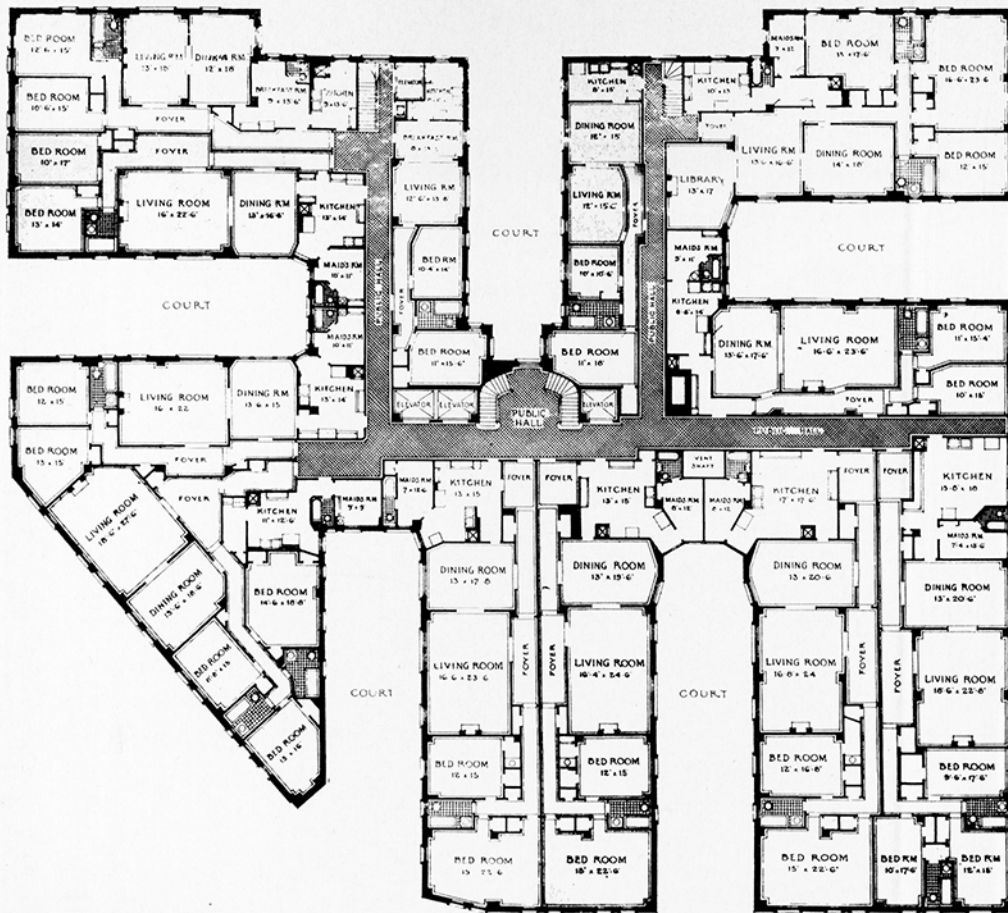
**and its modernized counterpart**



**An old style bathroom—**



**and its attractive successor**

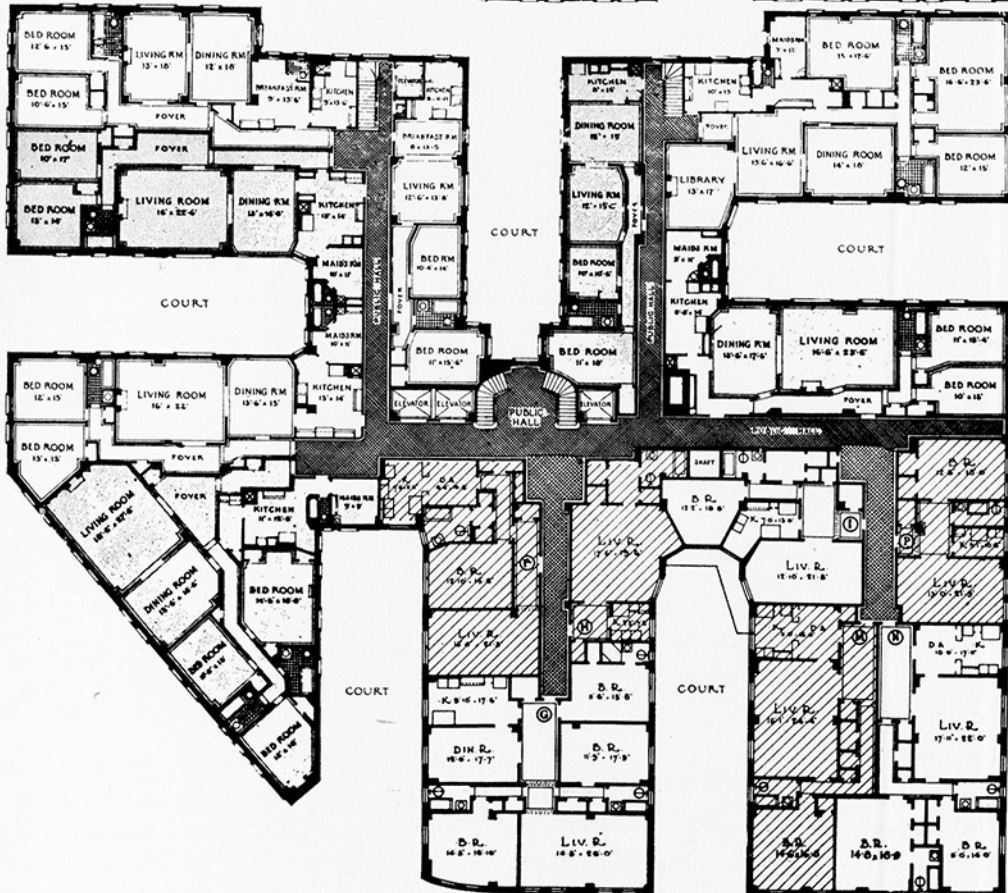


An Old Floor

Changes included converting 52 units of 7, 8, 9 and some 10 rooms into 91 apartments with 2, 3, 4 and 6 rooms. As these plans show, the revisions were carefully planned. The rooms in the new plan are commodious and mostly rectangular in shape. An off-the-foyer arrangement is used in all except the two-room apartments and these have full kitchens with windows. Ceiling heights are 9'6".

Rents for the modernized apartments range from \$45 to \$55 a month for the two-room units; from \$56 to \$80 for the three-room suites; from \$90 to \$110 for four rooms; and from \$110 to \$140 for six rooms. All of the 91 new apartments are rented at these rates, and there are only six vacancies in the entire building.

The two modernized wings of the building represent only 40% of its area, but produce 80% as much revenue as the suites in the older section.



A New Floor

and to save as many tenants in those sections as possible by transferring them to other wings unaffected by the work.

As soon as this was definitely decided upon the management set itself to renew leases expiring in the "old" section and to shift tenants from the two wings to vacancies in the remaining three. The success of the plan was shown by the fact that out of 65 leases expiring in September, 1938, 62 were renewed. In addition 9 out of 19 tenants were moved from the section to be altered, resulting in a saving of \$12,180 in annual rentals.

### Layout Changes

The alteration consisted of converting 52 units of 7, 8, 9 and even some 10 room apartments into 91 units of 2, 3, 4 and 6 rooms each, with one bath in the 2's and 3's, two baths in the 4's, and 3 baths in the 6's. Examination of the before and after floor plans shows that the rooms are commodious and mostly rectangular in shape, and that an off-the-foyer arrangement is used in all units with exception of the two-room suites which have, however, full kitchens with windows. Ceiling heights are 9'6". Typical living room dimensions are 14'5" x 26', 17'11" x 22' and 16'1" x 24'4", and bedrooms 14'8" x 16'9" and 12'6" x 18'.

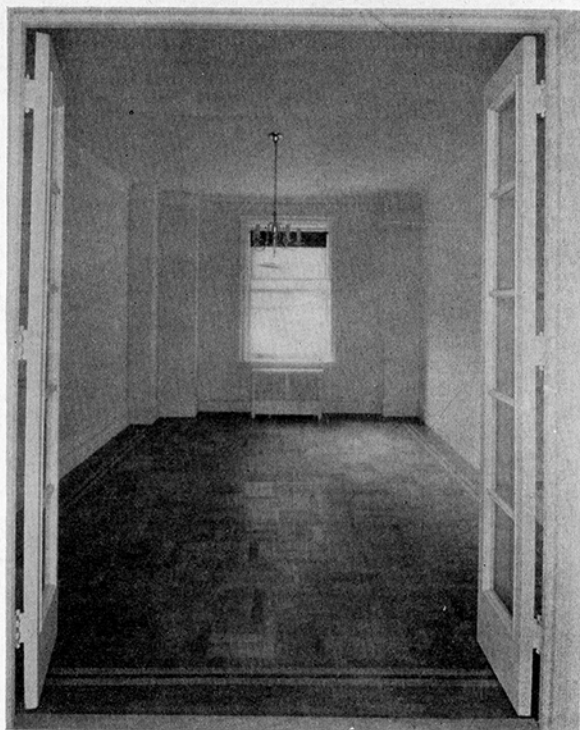
Kitchens and baths were completely refitted. New equipment in the former includes table top stoves, sink and tub combinations, solid panel cupboards and special hardwood dressers for use as work tables. Modern built-in bath tubs replaced the old style ones, and diagonal tubs were installed in the third bath of the 6-room units because of space limitations. All fixtures are Standard. New electrical fixtures of polished brass in Colonial design were installed. The new radiators are convector type.

To prevent annoyance to the nearly 100 tenants remaining in the building during the work a 13-story shaft was erected between the two altered wings. This shaft contained temporary electric power, water lines, an electric hoist, a stairway and two dirt chutes emptying into a hopper at the bottom. In this way debris was carted from the job and new materials brought in with a minimum amount of disturbance. In addition, the public halls were screened off on each floor where new public corridors were being run, so that all mechanics and tradesmen were obliged to use the shaftway to gain access to the spaces where they were working. These measures eliminated practically all troubles from dirt or disturbance.

### The Rental Campaign

Meanwhile the rental campaign was put into effect. A staff of three men was established in the building to work in cooperation with the renting department of the managing agency. The head renting man at the building worked in close personal contact with the main office. The renting office was repainted and new furniture and draperies were installed. A one price schedule was established and strictly followed.

In order to build up the tone of the building an advertising campaign was inaugurated in papers and periodicals which the management felt would reach the type of people desired. Use of the building's name with some special added caption was a feature of the advertisement.



One of the new dining rooms

The name of the building, the Riviera, was generally inserted in a black circle, beneath which the words "Residence of Distinction" were added. This not only enhanced the prestige of the property but also helped the renting public in identifying the advertisements.

The advertising schedule, set up in advance, was flexible and included daily papers, cards in Fifth Avenue coaches and direct mail campaign. Specific ads covering apartments which needed a little pushing were sometimes run towards the end of the campaign. One stunt, designed to bring forcibly to the attention of the renting public one of the advantages of the house, was the use of a picture showing an actual view of the River and the Palisades taken from the living room of one of the 6-room units. This was captioned "Not Written in the Lease, but It's Yours."

The mail campaign was directed to persons who had called at the building and to other logical prospects. These received a letter describing the progress of the work, accompanied by an advance proof of some of the newspaper advertisements.

About two months before the final occupancy date of October 1st, the building contractor completed alteration work on one floor and this space was used for demonstration purposes. By that time 58 of the 91 apartments had been rented from the floor plan. Finally some 900 persons who had visited the apartment during the alteration work were telephoned and informed that the apartments were ready. These moves resulted in the leasing of 85% of the apartments by September 1st.

### Moving Schedule

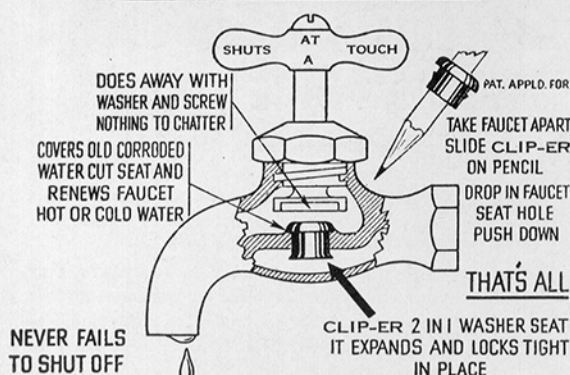
In the meantime a chart indicating the moving schedule was set up and each

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# As Simple as it Looks

LEAKY FAUCETS EASILY REPAIRED WITH

**CLIP-ER FAUCET SEAT and WASHER-IN-ONE**  
Reg. U.S. Patent Office



Take a glance at the above diagram. See how in a few easy steps you can quickly repair leaky faucets, and do it effectively, too, with CLIP-ER Faucet Seat and Washer-in-One. CLIP-ER guarantees you against troublesome and costly leaks, expensive repairs and water stained fixtures. Eliminates the troubles of washers, broken screws and re-seating tools forever. CLIP-ER reseats itself at every turn and always shuts off with the slightest touch. Always dependable—always easy to install—use CLIP-ERS for faucets, globe valves, ball-cocks, shut-off valves. Keep a supply of CLIP-ERS on hand—they cost so little, yet save so much.

Ask your supply house for CLIP-ERS.  
Write for circular and samples.

**H. & H. SALES CORPORATION**

232 SEAVER STREET, (ROXBURY)

BOSTON, MASS.



## Resourceful Modernization

(Continued from page 43)

tenant was notified of the day selected for him. Although the management conformed wherever possible, to the tenants' wishes as to moving day, the number of incoming tenants was limited to 8 or 9 per day. It was, of course, necessary to maintain service in the old section and make some transfers from one apartment to another as well as handle the new tenants. To insure that apartments would be in perfect order one day before occupancy copies of the moving schedule were distributed to the contractor, the architect, the renting agent and the superintendent. Only by close adherence to the schedule was it possible to complete all tenant moves between September 12 and September 27.

As soon as the tenant moved in he received a letter of welcome and representatives of the agency called to correct any oversight that might be cause for complaint.

### Decorating

Tenants were permitted a selection of three colors, pale gray, light cream and oyster white. A chart showing the tenants' preference was sent to the painting contractor and the building contractor, together with information indicating which apartments needed immediate attention.

Only after these matters were settled were the final decorative touches added to lobby and public halls.

Elevator service was speeded by installation of new brakes and overhauling of doors to cut down starting and stopping time. Glass facing of the lobby elevator doors was discarded in favor of laminated steel sheets which, with improvement of door hangers, eliminated noise. Color of elevator cabs was changed from stippled brown to stippled blue, resulting in much better lighting.

The heavy sombre ceiling of the lobby was repainted in tan and wedgewood blue to harmonize with the tan marble, which was given a cleaning. Rugs and draperies were carried out in colors of blue, tan and brown to lend color and life. Blue and cream floor tile and new lighting fixtures of less ornate design completed the re-decorating scheme.

Rents range from \$45 to \$55 a month for the two-room units; from \$56 to \$80 for the three-room units; from \$90 to \$110 for four rooms, and from \$110 to \$140 for the six room suites.

### Success of the Program

The success of the program is shown by the fact that on the official leasing date 89 of the 91 units in the modernized portion of the building were rented at the rates upon which the job was predicated, and one month later all of them were filled. At the present time there are only six vacancies out of the 191 apartments in the entire building.

The two modernized wings of the building, although only 40% as large in area as the older parts of the structure, now return to the owners 80% as much revenue as do the suites in the older portion.

The result is attributed in large part to the splendid cooperation between owners, architect, contractor, agents and renting men.