

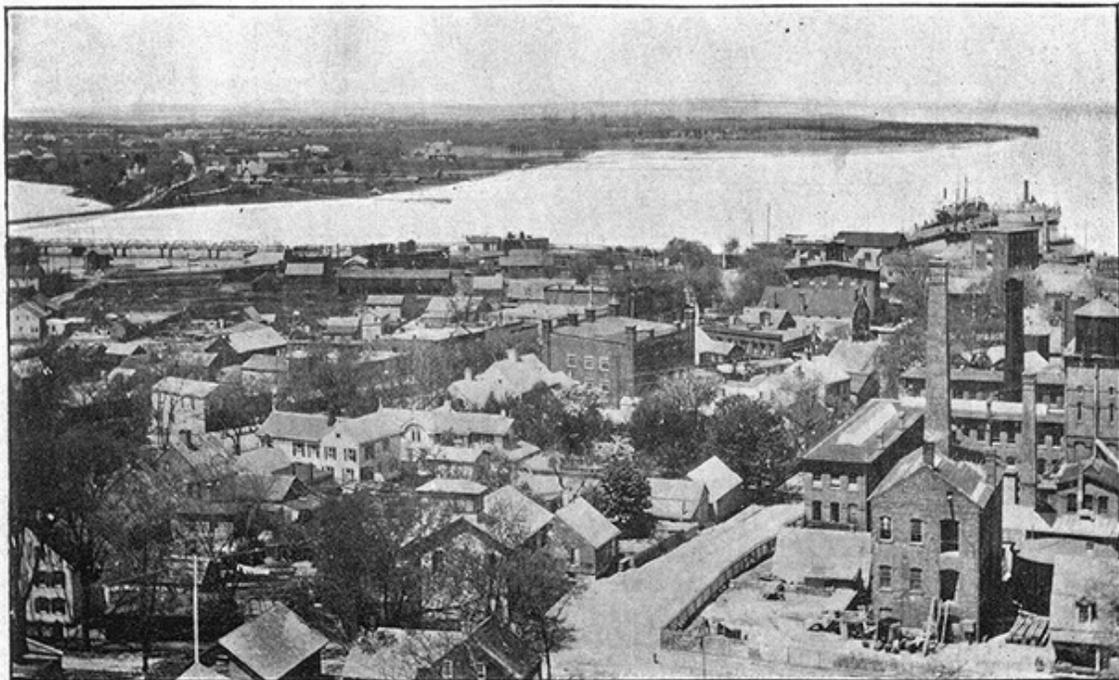
COOL HUNTING

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Watchcase: Reinvention in Sag Harbor

Historic preservation brings new life to the abandoned Fahys Watch Case Company factory

by David Graver in Design



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BIRD'S EYE VIEW, 1906

Long Island's Sag Harbor, a quiet Hampton's escape, has long maintained a community that holds history and preservation paramount. For the last seven years, a project has been underway to meet local standards and reinvent one of the village's iconic structures. **Watchcase** is more than a new luxury residence. It's revitalization and reinvention. The building began as the Fahys Watch Case Company in 1881 under architect Thomas Gradgrind, but was sold to Bulova in 1937. The former industrial hub was ultimately abandoned in 1969 and has lain idle ever since.



There is nothing like this structure in the surrounding area and, due to zoning regulations, there never will be. There is also no other factory building in the eastern part of Long Island that could be repurposed in such a way. Cee Scott Brown, Chairman of the Architecture Review Board of Sag Harbor, explained the extent of the effort, "**Cape Advisors** are the developer. This type of project is not new to them. They ensconced themselves in the community, and continue to demonstrate civic mindedness. Steps were taken beyond the back and forths with planning and zoning. Historic preservation has been held with the highest regard."



Watchcase is the largest historic building in the center of the historic village, located one block from Main Street. Brown further explains, "Until just this year when the real renovation started, if you walked down Main Street, you would not even notice the building. It was an embedded fixture in the community. Now, there's so much energy. When you look around while walking the streets, you see it. It glowing back there. This is a demonstration that positive repurposing is palpable."



The execution is fascinating: 20,000 original factory bricks were utilized. Lime-based two-color mortar bears historical accuracy. There was even a reconstruction of the original chimney stack, water-tower and the original signature octagon on the building's northwest corner. The entire project is additive and authentic, while also being another first. The region is known for big homes buried in woods, and this brings Sag Harbor a very modern condo complex—now there are new opportunities to step into a more maintainable living space with modern amenities. From the Grand Lobby Living Room and concierge services, to an underground parking garage and a state of the art Watchcase Pavilion fitness room, modernity thrives under the corniced facade.



Baldassano Architecture, an architectural conservator, local craftsmen, and Beyer Blinder Belle Architects joined forces to work on the 47 unique units in Watchcase and the nine new townhouses and eight bungalows built within an excavation site beside. No two residences are alike; drawing design elements from the overlaying structure. Further, every unit has some form of outdoor space. This village-within-a-village has been, and will continue to be, transformative and the 19th century architecture really articulates the area's character. Thoughtful, carefully crafted and with renewed vibrancy, Watchcase is one of a kind yet a welcome re-envisioning.

Renderings courtesy of Cape Advisors, model unit shots by Tria Giovan