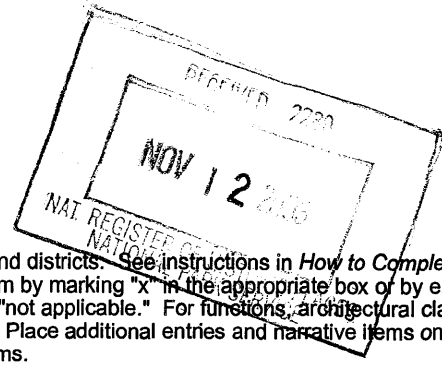


**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form**



This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name The Stuart Building
other names/site number University Towers (NeHBS# LC13:C09-3)

2. Location

street & number 13th & P Streets [N/A] not for publication
city or town Lincoln [N/A] vicinity
state Nebraska code NE county Lancaster code 109 zip code 68508

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. ([] See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Lawrence Samner Date 11/4/03
Signature of certifying official
Director, Nebraska State Historical Society
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. ([] See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title _____ Date _____
State or Federal agency and bureau _____

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:
 entered in the National Register. Edson H. Beall 12/23/03
[] determined eligible for the National Register
[] determined not eligible for the National Register.
[] removed from the National Register.
[] other, (explain): _____
Signature of Keeper _____ Date of Action _____

Stuart Building

Name of Property

Lancaster County, Nebraska

County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

(Check only one box)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

n/a

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE/business, specialty store

RECREATION AND CULTURE/theater

SOCIAL/clubhouse-

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/ multiple dwelling

COMMERCE/TRADE/specialty store, restaurant

RECREATION AND CULTURE/theater

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

MODERN MOVEMENT/Art Deco

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete

walls limestone

roof other, built-up tar and gravel

other

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

See Continuation Sheets.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or a grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance

1927-1929

Significant Dates

1927-1929

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Davis and Wilson of Lincoln/Olson Construction Co.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

See Continuation Sheets.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey
Record # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering
Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 - Other State agency
 - Federal agency
 - Local government
 - University
 - Other
- Name of repository:
Lincoln/Lancaster County Planning Department

Stuart Building

Name of Property

Lancaster County, Nebraska

County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1. 14 693820 4520495
Zone Easting Northing

3. Zone Easting Northing

2.

4.

[] See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

See Continuation Sheet.

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Edward Zimmer, historic preservation planner; David Murphy, research historian (Nebr. State Historical Society)

organization Lincoln-Lancaster County Planning Department date September 2003

street & number 555 South 10th Street telephone (402) 441-6360

city or town Lincoln state NE zip code 68508

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name multiple, DBA University Towers Condominium Association Inc., contact: The Arter Group (property managers)

street & number 927 M Street telephone (402)477-9300

city or town Lincoln state NE zip code 68508

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 1

Stuart Building
Name of Property
Lancaster County, Nebraska
County and State

DESCRIPTION

The Stuart Building in Lincoln, Nebraska is a multi-function urban structure housing retail, nightclub/theater, and residential facilities, with each distinct use expressed externally in the building's design (the residential spaces occupying those formerly utilized as offices). The construction is steel-frame encased in concrete, with exterior sheathing of Bedford limestone. The main block of the structure is ten stories tall, surmounted by a three-story tower on the west front, set back in two stages. The building is characterized throughout by superior materials and design.

The Stuart Building is an impressive ten-story pile crowned on the west front with three additional floors in the form of a stepped-back, mounted tower. The plan is rectangular on the first six floors, measuring 150 by 142 feet, and U-shaped on floors seven through ten. The three-story tower extending across the west base of the U-shape has a basically rectangular plan, with clipped or bevelled corners.

The ground floor has storefronts along the north and west fronts under a continuous marquee, with segmentally arched clerestory lights above the marquee at each storefront bay. The west facade features the main building entrance and the theater/nightclub entrance, interspersed with storefronts.

Above the first-floor level, the treatment of the walls has a decidedly vertical emphasis, transforming a blocky mass into a skyscraper. Between heavy masonry corners, the walls employ a pier and spandrel system of considerable refinement which produces a strongly vertical effect. Each pier continues unbroken from the second floor to above the parapet line, suggesting crenellation. The piers alternate in width, the broader ones projecting a central rib that creates that creates additional vertical line and shadow. Each narrower pier has a similar rib, but only at the tenth floor level. The spandrels are vertically fluted. The original windows were steel, bifold-type with a high horizontal muntin which formed a French cross pattern when the windows were closed. These windows augmented the verticality of the facades by their tall proportions whether opened or closed. Most of these windows, except for a few on secondary facades, were replaced in the mid-1980s with sliding sash.

The parapet above the tenth floor has finely executed Gothic tracery, which continues in simpler design on the spandrels and parapet of the mounted tower. The tower was built for and occupied by the private University Club for seven decades. It is now being converted to residential spaces. The tower has larger, tripartite windows with stone mullions. Separating the windows are broad piers, aligned with the wider piers below; topping four of the tower piers are large stone gargoyles. A glass and copper addition to the club was built atop the north leg of the U-shaped block in 1968. It is visible but relatively unobtrusive from the original design, due to its modest height and respectful setback from the parapet. A one-story, windowless penthouse surmounts the main tower.

Always a multifunction building, the Stuart Building was constructed to provide facilities for four distinct purposes--retail shops, an 1,800-seat movie theater, offices, and a private club. Each was distinctly expressed on the exterior. The uses of the building have evolved, but still include a complex mix. A remodeling of the theater in the 1970s created a bar and restaurant of the former backstage, accessed by a cozy alley entrance. The office spaces were converted into residential condominiums in the late 1980s. The University Club operated until the turn of the 21st century. Many of its unique finishes were removed when the club ceased operations, and its spaces are now (2003) being transformed in an adaptive reuse. The grand Stuart Theater was reduced and remodeled in the early 1970s, disguising most of its original finishes behind curtain walls coverings and drop ceilings. In 2002 a renovation restored many of the original finishes and reopened the auditorium's full volume, but removed the theater seating. Renamed the Rococo, the theater occupies the eastern half of the first six floors of the building, as indicated on the east half of the north facade, which is nearly windowless except for a decorative oriel.

The recent work on the theater re-established its loge and upper and lower balconies, ornamental plasterwork, and giant

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 2

Stuart Building

Name of Property

Lancaster County, Nebraska

County and State

chandelier. The decoration employs an eclectic mixture of motifs, dominated by an Italian Renaissance flavor.

The majority of the space in the building was originally allocated to offices and is now occupied by residences. They occupy the west half of floors two through six and all of the U-shaped floors seven through ten, totalling approximately 150,000 square feet of space. The entrance lobby to the former office and club floors has tile floors, marble walls, and a decorative plaster ceiling with beams and stencil painting. There is considerable brass trim including exterior door frames, directory, large ceiling lights, and elevator doors.

Structurally the building is principally of steel-frame construction encased in concrete. Eight-foot deep steel trusses span the theater roof, while the floors in that area are variously reinforced concrete pan and/or concrete over steel frame. The exterior walls are masonry curtain walls sheathed in Bedford limestone.

The Stuart Building has retained considerable integrity--a testament to quality materials and flexibility incorporated into the original design. The major exterior change was the replacement of most windows in the 1980s, which while significant did not denature the strong exterior design. The theater renovation restored a large degree of the original splendor of this special space. The University Club's major spaces are being altered in an adaptive reuse but the exterior expression of this penthouse/clubhouse remains unaltered, except for the innocuous "Sky Room" added in 1968.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 1

Stuart Building

Name of Property

Lancaster County, Nebraska

County and State

Statement Of Significance

The Stuart Building is significant on the local level under Criterion "C" in the area of architecture as well-designed, multipurpose office tower of the 1920s, designed in a hybrid Art Deco-Gothic Revival style by the leading Lincoln architectural firm of the period and executed in first-class materials and workmanship.

HISTORY

Designed in 1927 and erected for \$1,500,000 between 1928 and 1929, the Stuart Building was constructed by the Olson Construction Company to the design of the prominent Lincoln architect Ellery L. Davis of Davis & Wilson. Numerous noted local craftsmen were involved: Clarence W. Forberger executing the stonework; Al Jorgenson, the decorative wrought iron; Keats W. Lorenz sculpting the models for casting the major decorative metal work; Leonard Thiessen, working with the architect and with Joseph Cooper, founder of the Cooper Theaters Company, designing the theater interior. The Stuart Investment Company, original owner of the building, has been an active Lincoln family business concern since 1880. Its head in 1928 was Charles Stuart, a financier with substantial interest in other major downtown Lincoln buildings of the era including the 16-story Sharp Building (13th & N, 1927) and the 6-story Nebraska Buick Building (13th & Q, now National Research Corp.).

Architect Ellery L. Davis (1887-1956) was educated at the University of Nebraska and at Columbia. His architectural practice in Lincoln spanned five decades and the firm he founded continues as Davis Design, the "dean" of Lincoln architectural firms. Among his major works of the 1920s were University of Nebraska's Memorial Stadium (1921), Morrill Hall (Nebraska State Museum, 1925), and Coliseum (1927), Westminster Presbyterian Church and South Street Temple (both 1924), and Everett Junior High School (1928). Among Davis' other important early works in downtown Lincoln, designed in partnership with George Berlinghof, include Lincoln Commercial Club (11th & P, 1912); Miller & Paine Department Store (2-story corner building/1914, 8-story tower/1916); and Scottish Rite Temple (1915).

The Stuart Building remained Lincoln's prestige office address until the construction of the NBC (Wells Fargo) Center across the street to the west in the mid-1970s. The Stuart family donated portions of the building to the University of Nebraska Foundation in 1977 and 1981, retaining approximately half interest. In 1985 the Stuarts gave the remainder to benefit the Lincoln Foundation, then the whole building was sold to a new owner, Larry Price. He accomplished the initial residential conversions and sold storefronts, apartments, and other portions as condominiums. The theater ceased operation as a cinema in the early 21st century and the rehabilitation of that space as an entertainment venue was carried out by 2001. This nomination was requested by the Rococo owner in support of a certified historic rehabilitation.

SIGNIFICANCE

As a major work of Lincoln's leading architect of the first half of the twentieth century, the Stuart Building represents an important work of a master. The building is functionally well-designed, gracefully accommodating four distinct original uses and the conversion to a new mix of uses. Stylistically, the building is a noteworthy combination of Art Deco and Gothic Revival characteristics. The former include the stepped back massing and such details as the fluted spandrels. The Gothic Revival features include the finely executed tracery on the parapet and tower, the tower's gargoyles, and the overall vertical emphasis. A promotional description of the building issued ca. 1928 refers to the style as "modified Gothic design" and emphasizes the setback of the upper stories as "giving the structure a pyramidal effect, in harmony with the latest and most accepted theory of office building design." (Weisman's history of the American skyscraper assigns these characteristics to his Phases V and VI.) In the Stuart Building the decoration and form successfully combine to give a rather squat mass the verticality of a skyscraper.

Other Nebraska office towers, such as Lincoln's Sharp Building (1927) and Federal Trust Building (1928) employ Gothic

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 2

Stuart Building

Name of Property

Lancaster County, Nebraska

County and State

motifs, while Art Deco elements are found in examples such as Omaha's Redick Tower and Lincoln's Lincoln Liberty Life Building. The combination of both in a single major office structure is locally uncommon. So is the use of Bedford limestone for sheathing all the principal facades, emulating the quality of the limestone Nebraska State Capitol, which neared completion as the Stuart Building was being erected.

**United States Department of the Interior
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**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 9 & 10 1

Stuart Building

Name of Property

Lancaster County, Nebraska

County and State

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Building permits on file, Building and Safety Department, City of Lincoln, County/City Building.

Davis, Ellery L., "Application for Registration to Practice Professional Engineering or Architecture," typed form submitted Aug. 9, 1945 to Nebraska State Board of Examiners for Professional Engineers and Architects. (Microform at Nebraska State Historical Society.)

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"Ellery Davis, Longtime Local Architect, Dies at Age of 69," *Lincoln Star*, March 22, 1956, p. 6.

Ertl, Ted A., ed., *Historic and Architectural Site Survey of Lincoln*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska-Lincoln, College of Architecture, n.d. (1976).

Gebhard, David. "Art Deco: About Style, Not Ideology," *Architecture* 72:12 (1983), 34-44.

Stitcher, Teresa. "The Stuart Story--Part 1," *Lincoln Unlimited* 2:2 (1978), 2-7; "Part 2," 2:3 (1978), 3-8; "Part 3," 2:4 (1978), 3-9.

"The Stuart Building," Lincoln: Stuart Investment Company, 5 pp, n.d. (ca. 1928).

"Stuart Building," clipping file, *Lincoln Journal Star* newspaper library.

Weisman, Winston. "A New View of Skyscraper History," in Edgar Kaufman, Jr. (ed.), *The Rise of An American Architecture*, New York, Washington, London: Praeger Publishers (in association with the Metropolitan Museum of Art), 1970, 115-160.

Zimmer, Edward. "Davis and Wilson," entry for *Encyclopedia of the Great Plains*, Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, forthcoming.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 9 & 10 2

Stuart Building

Name of Property

Lancaster County, Nebraska

County and State

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

This property is described as all of Lots 4, 5, and 6, Block 39, Original Plat, Lincoln, Lancaster County, Nebraska.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

These boundaries include all the property historically associated with the Stuart Building.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Stuart Building

Section number Photographs 1

Name of Property
Lancaster County, Nebraska
County and State

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Stuart Building, LC13:C09-03
Lincoln, Lancaster County, Nebraska
E. Zimmer, photographer, Sept. 2003
Lincoln/Lancaster County Planning Dept.
View of east side of N. 13th Street from SW, Stuart Building at center
Photo 1 of 18

Stuart Building, LC13:C09-03
Lincoln, Lancaster County, Nebraska
E. Zimmer, photographer, Sept. 2003
Lincoln/Lancaster County Planning Dept.
View of Stuart Building main (west) facade from SW
Photo 2 of 18

Stuart Building, LC13:C09-03
Lincoln, Lancaster County, Nebraska
E. Zimmer, photographer, Sept. 2003
Lincoln/Lancaster County Planning Dept.
View of north (center) and west (right) facades of Stuart Building from NNW
Photo 3 of 18

Stuart Building, LC13:C09-03
Lincoln, Lancaster County, Nebraska
E. Zimmer, photographer, Sept. 2003
Lincoln/Lancaster County Planning Dept.
Detail of gargoyles at 12th floor level, west facade, Stuart Building
Photo 4 of 18

Stuart Building, LC13:C09-03
Lincoln, Lancaster County, Nebraska
E. Zimmer, photographer, Sept. 2003
Lincoln/Lancaster County Planning Dept.
Detail of oriel on north facade of Stuart Building, 2nd & 3rd floor levels
Photo 5 of 18

Stuart Building, LC13:C09-03
Lincoln, Lancaster County, Nebraska
E. Zimmer, photographer, Sept. 2003
Lincoln/Lancaster County Planning Dept.
Detail of stonework including grotesques on Stuart Building north oriel
Photo 6 of 18

Stuart Building, LC13:C09-03
Lincoln, Lancaster County, Nebraska
E. Zimmer, photographer, Sept. 2003
Lincoln/Lancaster County Planning Dept.
Ticket/entrance lobby, Stuart (Rococo) Theater, looking SE
Photo 7 of 18

**United States Department of the Interior
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**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Stuart Building

Name of Property

Lancaster County, Nebraska

County and State

Section number Photographs 2

Stuart Building, LC13:C09-03
Lincoln, Lancaster County, Nebraska
E. Zimmer, photographer, Sept. 2003
Lincoln/Lancaster County Planning Dept.
Detail of marble walls and blind arcade opposite ticket office, Stuart Theater lobby
Photo 8 of 18

Stuart Building, LC13:C09-03
Lincoln, Lancaster County, Nebraska
E. Zimmer, photographer, Sept. 2003
Lincoln/Lancaster County Planning Dept.
Ticket lobby ceiling, Stuart Theater
Photo 9 of 18

Stuart Building, LC13:C09-03
Lincoln, Lancaster County, Nebraska
E. Zimmer, photographer, Sept. 2003
Lincoln/Lancaster County Planning Dept.
View from ticket lobby to toward auditorium lobby/bar, Stuart Theater
Photo 10 of 18

Stuart Building, LC13:C09-03
Lincoln, Lancaster County, Nebraska
E. Zimmer, photographer, Sept. 2003
Lincoln/Lancaster County Planning Dept.
Proscenium arch, Stuart Theater
Photo 11 of 18

Stuart Building, LC13:C09-03
Lincoln, Lancaster County, Nebraska
E. Zimmer, photographer, Sept. 2003
Lincoln/Lancaster County Planning Dept.
View of face of loge and balcony, Stuart Theater
Photo 12 of 18

Stuart Building, LC13:C09-03
Lincoln, Lancaster County, Nebraska
E. Zimmer, photographer, Sept. 2003
Lincoln/Lancaster County Planning Dept.
Interior view looking east at loge, balcony, and east wall of Stuart Theater
Photo 13 of 18

Stuart Building, LC13:C09-03
Lincoln, Lancaster County, Nebraska
E. Zimmer, photographer, Sept. 2003
Lincoln/Lancaster County Planning Dept.
Detail of ceiling, Stuart Theater
Photo 14 of 18

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**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Stuart Building

Name of Property

Lancaster County, Nebraska

County and State

Section number Photographs 3

Stuart Building, LC13:C09-03
Lincoln, Lancaster County, Nebraska
E. Zimmer, photographer, Sept. 2003
Lincoln/Lancaster County Planning Dept.
View of east wall, Stuart Theater, showing balcony exit
Photo 15 of 18

Stuart Building, LC13:C09-03
Lincoln, Lancaster County, Nebraska
E. Zimmer, photographer, Sept. 2003
Lincoln/Lancaster County Planning Dept.
Detail of east wall, Stuart Theater, showing balcony
Photo 16 of 18

Stuart Building, LC13:C09-03
Lincoln, Lancaster County, Nebraska
E. Zimmer, photographer, Sept. 2003
Lincoln/Lancaster County Planning Dept.
Detail of plasterwork, Stuart Theater interior
Photo 17 of 18

Stuart Building, LC13:C09-03
Lincoln, Lancaster County, Nebraska
E. Zimmer, photographer, Sept. 2003
Lincoln/Lancaster County Planning Dept.
Detail of major chandelier (one of two), Stuart Theater
Photo 18 of 18