

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only
received FEB 7 1985
date entered MAR 7 1985

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic The Avalon
and/or common The Avalon

2. Location

street & number 3005-15 Highland Avenue; 3000-20 13th Avenue South NA not for publication
city, town Birmingham NA vicinity of 6th Congressional District
state Alabama code 01 county Jefferson code 073

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	NA	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Highland Associates, Inc., Attn: Gerald A. Drennen
street & number 1608 13th Avenue South
city, town Birmingham NA vicinity of state Alabama

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Jefferson County Courthouse
street & number 716 21st Street, North
city, town Birmingham state Alabama

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Alabama Inventory has this property been determined eligible? yes no
date 1970-present federal state county local
depository for survey records Alabama Historical Commission
city, town Montgomery state Alabama

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Avalon is a two-building apartment-house complex designed in the Tudor Revival Style of the 1920's. Set on the slope of Red Mountain above Highland Avenue, the two buildings turn their backs to each other to face the primary streets bordering the property.

The older building (1925) faces 13th Avenue, South. It is a three-story red-brick structure with limestone sills, a red clay tile roof, and prominent use of half-timbering as a decorative motif. Six gables that face the street above projecting bays formally define the building, giving the facade a vertical rhythm and (because the gables are treated in pairs starting with the outermost and moving inward) a symmetrical organization that is anchored by the distinctive treatment of the central pair (crenellation between the two gables, an applied cartouche now suggested only by a "ghost" coloring the brick, and the shed roof of the central portico that contrasts with the open-timbered gable porticos that flank it). The different half-timber design in each of the paired gables and variations in the half-timbering between stories adds interest and complexity to the facade without diminishing its overall sense of order.

Each of the 15 apartments in the building has a living room, dining room, kitchen, and a sun room in the projecting gable bay. Twelve of the apartments have three bedrooms, and three (in the center section) have two bedrooms. Although the interiors have accumulated modifications over time, most retain their original moldings, hardwood floors, and hardware typical of the period, in generally good condition. The only truly distinctive feature on the interior of the 13th Avenue building is the Gothic doorplate with quatrefoil knob on the interior doors of the three entry vestibules.

The second building (1927) occupies a more difficult sloping site along a curve in Highland Avenue overlooking Rushton Park. It, too, is a three-story red-brick structure with gables defining vertical bays. However, the roof is slate and there are five gables rather than six. It differs from the first building primarily in its decorative use of limestone rather than half-timbering to express the Tudor motif. Again, varied treatment of the slightly projecting, gable-defined bays gives the facade a distinctive richness and complexity.

There are 15 two-bedroom apartments in the building with a living room, dining room and kitchen. Like the 13th Avenue apartments, the interiors, though simple, for the most part retain their original moldings, floors, and hardware in good condition.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1925, 1927 **Builder/Architect** Charles H. McCauley, Architect

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Criterion A - Patterns of Social History

The Avalon exemplifies a residential pattern -- the apartment house -- that set Birmingham apart from other cities in Alabama (and many in the Southeast) in the early 20th century. Starting in the 1910's and cresting in the 1920's, a proliferation of apartment houses brought significant social changes to the city, as well as reflecting the rising land costs, extensive streetcar system, and housing shortages linked to economic boom and rapid population growth that characterized Birmingham's urban development. Apartment houses represented an important new alternative to boarding houses and extended-family living arrangements, offering more privacy, space, and status. At the same time, they offered homeowners an alternative to major housekeeping and maintenance responsibilities. In date, size, location on both a major streetcar line and the city's premier residential boulevard, and in overall design quality, the Avalon clearly illustrates the apartment boom of the 1920's and the changes it implied. In particular, the Avalon documents the apartment house that served the comfortably well-off middle class. Evidence includes its design quality, materials, craftsmanship, spaciousness, and such functional amenities as dining room buzzers to signal for service in the kitchen, as well as its early tenants, who included physicians, half-a-dozen presidents and vice presidents of companies, and a number of others in management, sales, and real estate.

Criterion C -- Architecture

The Avalon is significant architecturally as an excellent local example of the Tudor Revival style adapted to an apartment house. Designed by one of Birmingham's best known and most prolific architects, it is of particular importance as a two-building complex that illustrates the variety within the Tudor Revival vocabulary. Half-timbering distinguishes the 13th Avenue, South building, with variations in the design of each pair of gables. The Highland Avenue building uses carved limestone to express its Tudor heritage, achieving a more sophisticated facade. Distinctive features include the label molding over the windows and doors, the carved rosette-and-leaf ornament around the Tudor arch of the doorways, decorative iron lanterns, and patterned brickwork and quoining used with some of the windows to create an oriel effect. Quatrefoils and crenellation are used in both buildings.

The design quality of the two buildings is expressed in their materials, workmanship, and readily recognizable period details, and also in their formal complexity and textural richness. For example, on the Highland Avenue building, the use of triple, paired, and single windows orders the facade and establishes a pleasing rhythm. The triple windows give prominence and vertical emphasis to the slightly projecting bays capped by gabled single windows in the stairwells draw attention down to the entry, and the paired windows provide counterpoint and transition. The siting of the Highland Avenue building adds a final note of design skill and quality. The building rises with the topography, and turns to follow the curve of Highland, facing the boulevard coming from town and overlooking Rushton Park.

9. Major Bibliographical References

- W. B. Phillips & Company Property Atlas, c. 1938, vol. Apartments A-C "Avalon Apartments"
- Vertical files (Architects, Apartments), Birmingham Historical Society
- \$4,000,000 Invested in New Flats, newspaper article (probably 1924) B'ham Bd Realty Scrapbook
- City Directory of Birmingham, Alabama, 1925, 1926, 1927, 1928, 1935
- Original construction documents, The Avalon, Unit 1 (Job 52, May 1925), & The Avalon, Unit 2 (Job 161, March 1927), Charles H. McCauley, Architect

10. Geographical Data

Acree of nominated property 1.4 + acres

Quadrangle name Birmingham North, Ala.

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

1	6	5	2	0	4	4	0	3	7	0	7	1	1	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B

Zone		Easting				Northing							

C

Zone		Easting				Northing							

D

Zone		Easting				Northing							

E

Zone		Easting				Northing							

F

Zone		Easting				Northing							

G

Zone		Easting				Northing							

H

Zone		Easting				Northing							

Verbal boundary description and justification

Block 833, lots 2,3,4,5,6 (384' x 221')

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	NA	code	county	code
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state	code	county	code
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11. Form Prepared By

Alice M. Bowsher, Architectural Historian, Kidd/Plosser/Sprague/Architects. Inc.
 name/title Ellen E. Mertins

organization Alabama Historical Commission

date October 28, 1984

street & number 725 Monroe Street

telephone (205) 261-3184

city or town Montgomery

state Alabama

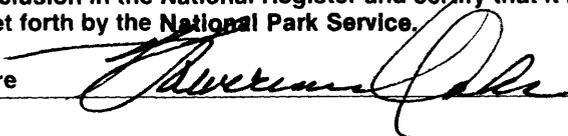
12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature



title State Historic Preservation Officer

date January 29, 1985

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.
 Entered in the National Register

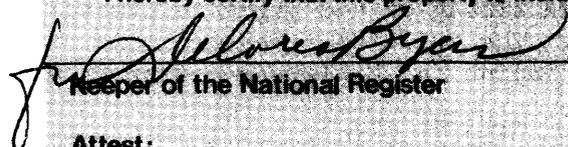
date 2-7-85

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration



The Avalon

Historical Background

The Avalon was developed and long-owned by Birmingham Realty Company, one of the primary firms in the city's development history and successor firm to the Elyton Land Company, which laid out the city of Birmingham in 1871 and in 1884-85 constructed Highland Avenue as the grand boulevard winding through the wooded highlands overlooking the city. In the 1920s, Birmingham Realty very actively developed property on the Southside in the vicinity of The Avalon, including the Exclusive Furniture Shop at 7th Avenue South and 29th Street and numerous residential and commercial properties in Forest Park.

The Avalon is of particular interest because of where it falls in architect Charles H. McCauley's long career. Born in Chicago, Illinois, in 1893, McCauley earned his architecture degree at the University of Illinois and worked in the office of Holabird and Roche before coming to Birmingham in 1919, following service in World War I. He was associated with well-known Birmingham architect William Leslie Welton until he opened his own office in 1925. For the next half-century, he designed important projects throughout the state, including numerous schools, hospitals, and public buildings. The Avalon project, dated May 1925 on the drawings, came in his first year of independent practice and was McCauley's 52nd commission. The project thus takes on a greater historical importance, in addition to its local architectural significance.

More in keeping with the site and the name (and image) of the apartment buildings, 13th Avenue, South was originally named Mountain Avenue, and the street running between Highland and Mountain was Avalon.