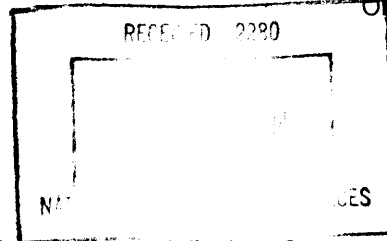


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form



This form is for use in nominating or requesting determination for individual properties and districts. See instruction 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 an 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 Altamaha Apartments

other names/site number Alta Court; 5DV2614

2. Location

street & number 1490 Lafayette Street [N/A] not for publication

city or town Denver [N/A] vicinity

state Colorado code CO county Denver code 031 zip code 80218

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this [X] 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 [X] meets [] does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant [] nationally [] statewide [X] locally. ([] See continuation sheet for additional comments.)
Signature of certifying official/Title: Georgiana Cortezuela, State Historic Preservation Officer
Date: 3/10/04
Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, Colorado 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 the property is:

- [X] entered in the National Register [] See continuation sheet.
[] determined eligible for the National Register [] See continuation sheet.
[] determined not eligible for the National Register.
[] removed from the National Register
[] other, explain [] See continuation sheet.

Signature of the Keeper: [Signature]
Date of Action: 5/5/04

Altamaha Apartments
Name of Property

Denver County, Colorado
County/State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

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

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

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

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not count previously listed resources.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
2	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 Function
(Enter categories from instructions)

Multiple Dwelling

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Business

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Italian Renaissance

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone

walls Brick

Stone

roof Other

other Terra Cotta

Wood

Narrative Description

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

Altamaha Apartments
Name of Property

Denver County, Colorado
County/State

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 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.

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

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture
Community Planning and Development

Periods of Significance
1902

Significant Dates
N/A

Significant Person(s)
(Complete if Criterion B is marked above).
N/A

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Architect/Builder
Bettcher, George L.

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
- # _____
- 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:
Colorado Historical Society

Altamaha Apartments
Name of Property

Denver County, Colorado
County/State

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property less than one

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1. 13 502600 4398658 (NAD27)
Zone Easting Northing

2. Zone Easting Northing

3. Zone Easting Northing

4. Zone Easting Northing

[] See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

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

Boundary Justification

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

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Rebecca D. Dorward

organization Dorward Historical Research

date November 26, 2003

street & number 11909 E. Iowa Ave.

telephone 303-745-0746

city or town Aurora

state CO

zip code 80012

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 SHPO or FPO.)

name Alta Court Offices LLC

street & number 1490 Lafayette St., Suite 201

telephone _____

city or town Denver

state CO

zip code 80218

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 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 Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Altamaha Apartments

Denver County, Colorado

Section number 7 Page 1

DESCRIPTION

The 1902 three-story tan brick and stone Altamaha Apartment buildings are located at the southeast corner of E. Colfax Avenue and Lafayette Street, just east of downtown Denver. The east-west Colfax Avenue is a street of commercial buildings of one to five stories in height and one- to four-story apartment buildings. Two lanes of traffic flow both directions. Lafayette Street, immediately south of East Colfax Avenue, contains several retail shops which give way further south to single-family residences and a few apartment buildings.

The Altamaha Apartments are composed of a large central building facing Colfax Avenue and a smaller building with the same facade treatment fronting onto Lafayette Street. The two buildings, joined by the bracketed cornice on the Lafayette Street (west) side form a narrow courtyard under a glazed roof. Within the courtyard, the rear of the main building contains two similar light wells adjacent to a projecting bay. The east side of the main building, adjacent to an alley, contains the same facing brickwork, beltcourses, quoins, wide bracketed cornice and frieze, stonecourse and raised panels with medallions as found on the facade. The window bays are stacked symmetrically. Decorative quoins occur from the foundation to the top of the second-story stonecourse. Above that, brick beltcourses form similar quoinlike effects.

Differences occur in the window treatments for the east side of the building compared with the Colfax Avenue façade. All the east side one-over-one sash have flatter arches, with brick only lintels that do not extend down the sides of the windows as on the façade. Below the medallions there is no stone beltcourse, and the wide bracketed cornice does not extend to the southeast corner of the building. The west side of the main building is nearly identical to the façade in terms of window placement, types of windows, brickwork and beltcourses, balconies, quoins, cornice with frieze and medallions beneath.

The first story appears to be the tallest, with the second floor of lesser height and the third story even less. The entrances are recessed from the exterior by three or four feet.

The façade shows three-part symmetry with two equally-sized side bays and a recessed center bay. The brick-faced foundation contains several arched windows and rectangular vents with metal bars, all primarily hidden by vegetation.

Façade center bay: The first floor of the recessed center bay contains a center entrance flanked on either side by two rectangular windows with brick and three-stone keystone lintels. On each floor, the first, third, and fifth windows are wider than the inner second and fourth windows. In front is an arcaded porch with a brick and stone balustrade flush with the two side bays, containing four round-arched

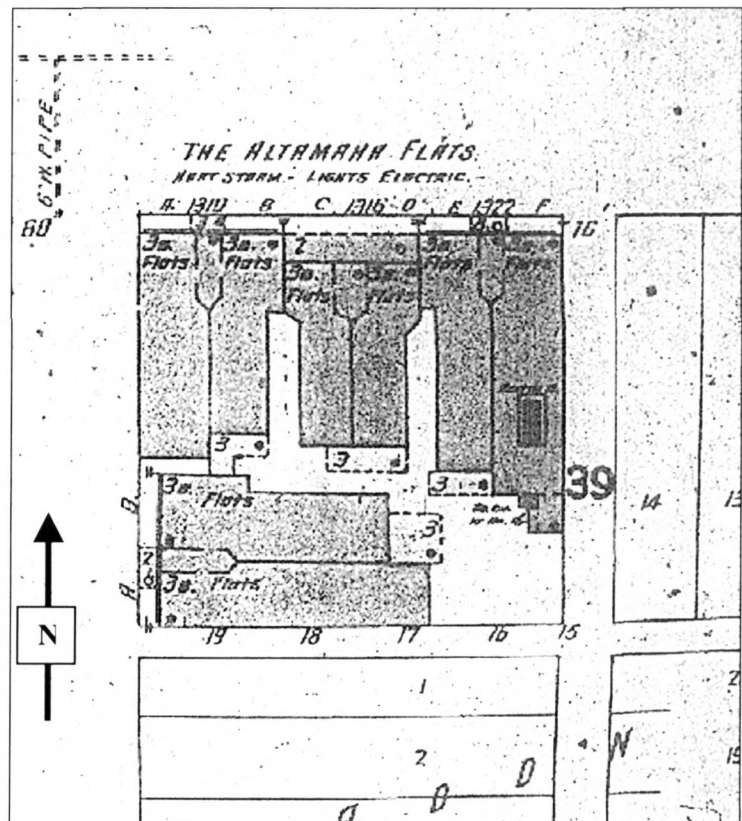


Figure 1. Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of 1904 shows the Altamaha under the name "Altamaha Flats." (Source: Western History / Genealogy Department, Denver Public Library)

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

Altamaha Apartments

Denver County, Colorado

Section number 7 Page 2

openings and a central round-arched entrance. The arched openings have been enclosed as one-over-one sash windows. The arches are faced with incised stone voussoirs and keystones containing an acanthus leaf motif. The incised stone arches are supported by brick piers containing decorative panels of stone grapevine motif. The piers are connected by a solid brick balustrade. Above the stone arches is a row of dentils and decorative woodwork. Five steps lead to the entrance porch. The second story contains the same four rectangular one-over-one sash windows with decorative lintels as the first floor, with a center one-over-one sash window above the main entrance. A balcony extends across the recessed bay and forms a cover for the first floor arcade. The masonry balustrade is supported by four rectangular brick piers and two pilasters. The plain white masonry between piers originally contained Beaux-Arts styled garlands, which have been removed. The piers support the open third floor balcony that contains decorative woodwork of dentils and modillions below the wooden balustrade with carved wood piers placed directly above those of the second floor. The five windows of the third floor are one-over-one sash, round-arched with stone keystones. Brick beltcourses and stonework between windows add visual interest. At the level of the medallions (architrave), stone rectangles alternate with brick, and in the center is a carved stone sign with the name, "ALTA."

Above the sign, the frieze contains the lower half of the decorative carved brackets, with two carved modillions placed between each bracket and a decorative garland under each set of modillions. Above the brackets are a wide wooden cornice and a flat roof. This entablature is most appropriately considered Italian Renaissance Revival, or simply Renaissance Revival.

At the ells of the recessed bays joining the projecting bays, doors are found on all three stories.

Façade side bays: The first floor contains 4 round-arched windows of equal size with decorative brick and stone lintels and stone sills in each side bay, a narrow stone and dog-eared brick sillcourse, corner quoins, and round-arched entrances in the center of each side bay. Four or five steps lead to the central entrances that also are round arched, but contain incised stone voussoirs and decorative keystones, similar to the center bay arches. The second story is marked by a stone sillcourse that merges into the second floor central balustrade. Four rectangular one-over-one sash windows flank a central round-arched door containing the alternating stone and brick voussoirs of the first floor windows. A wooden balcony with wood panels, supported by two carved wood brackets, occurs in front of the door. The second floor windows have stone sills and alternating three-stone and brick lintels, and are placed above those on the first floor. The third floor is marked by brick beltcourses directly below the stone sillcourse, and four narrow brick beltcourses layered around the third floor that take the place of the elaborate quoins of the first two floors. Four similar one-over-one sash windows occur over those on the second floor, with a rectangular center door with carved wood balustrade, decorative wood handrails, and two carved wood support brackets. This door is topped by a wide stone beltcourse that connects the third floor windows. Above the wide stone beltcourse is the continuation of the center bay entablature of symmetrically spaced medallions below carved wood brackets interspersed with carved wood modillions, and the wide overhanging cornice.

Lafayette Street Elevation: This features the long side of the main building and the second, smaller building south of the main portion, which is attached at the cornice. This smaller building appears to have the same dimensions as either of the façade side bays.

The brick and stone details of the façade side bays are exactly duplicated in the Lafayette Street façade of the smaller building. The long west side of the main building continues the façade side bay details of brick and stonework, beltcourses, lintels, quoins, window size and placement, and entablature, but without doors and balconies.

East side facing the alley from Colfax Avenue: This side has been described above. The window treatments are not as elaborate as those of the façade, but the façade brickwork, beltcourses, and entablature are continued on this side.

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Altamaha Apartments

Denver County, Colorado

Section number 7 Page 3

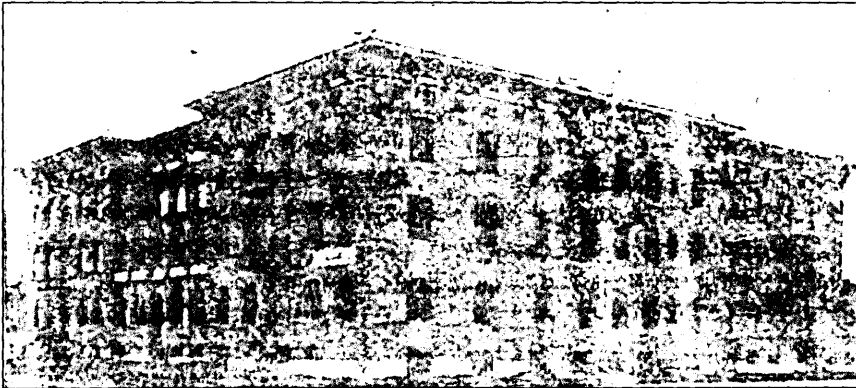


Figure 2. This poor quality newspaper image shows the Altamaha shortly after its construction in 1902. (Source: Western History / Genealogy Department, Denver Public Library)

Rear of the two buildings: The rear is bounded by the two alleys, one from Colfax Avenue and the other from Lafayette Street. Along the Lafayette Street alley is an exterior partly of the façade bricks and partly of red unfinished bricks, containing similar details to the east side exterior, but without the overhanging cornice. The rear of the two buildings form an "L" with projections and recesses. The first floor contains a patio with a masonry wall ten feet or more in height and metal fencing above that,

providing security for the first floor offices that have outside entrances. Inside the courtyard are three floors with a red brick exterior, simple one-over-one sash windows with slightly arched brick lintels and stone sills, and dog-eared brick corners in the two light wells of the larger building. Visual interest and character have been added to this space by the addition of metal walkways with covers, and staircases connecting second and third floor outside doors and even basement levels. A rectangular brick enclosure for an elevator occurs near the center of this courtyard space. On the roof, an A-frame glass sunroof provides shelter to the occupants below. None of the façade details occur at the rear.

Interior

The present interior of Alta Court shows little of its original design, materials and workmanship. Past owners removed walls and floors, rearranged the spaces, replaced plumbing and heating units, removed the original kitchens, and added or removed ceilings.

The first-floor enclosed colonnade porch, now rarely used, contains the original tiled floor with the "Altamaha" name spelled out in mosaic. The porch also retains its original pressed metal ceiling. The entry doors, door hardware, and windows appear to be original or early replacements.

Inside the first-floor entries, the configurations of stairways and entries into the former apartments remains as originally constructed. The original banisters remain as well.

In most of the rehabilitated apartment spaces, the original overall layout of each apartment can still be discerned, including a front parlor and a series of rooms behind opening onto a side hall which leads to the rear kitchen space. Some original narrow slat wood flooring remains in selected offices. It is believed that no original interior plaster wall coverings remain. All the walls were stripped to their structural brick. Some original doors and door frames remain. Original fireplace openings with original marble-tiled hearths remain. Reconstructed mantels have been placed in some offices. The original ceilings have been removed exposing the floor joists above. In some offices passageways were made through the brick side walls to join together two or more former apartments.

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Altamaha Apartments

Denver County, Colorado

Section number 7 Page 4

Alterations

In the 100-year history of this property, many alterations have occurred, most of them to the interior apartment units and the rear exterior. In 1925, repairs to unit #12 costing \$1000 were made by new owner W. L. Johnson. In 1936, new tar and gravel roofing was installed. This was replaced in 1947 with another new roof (Denver building permits). A new furnace was installed in 1937 and again in 1950 (Widmann, 1997; Denver building permits).

The building permit information is incomplete, however, a permit dated October 25, 1948 states, "Tear off cornice trim on alley & Marion street side as requested by Chief Build Inspector." An assumption can be made that the façade cornice and trim were also removed during that time frame. This permit is particularly confusing as the Altamaha is on Lafayette not Marion Street.

A 1956 photo shows the Colfax facade painted white and without any wood or terra cotta trim (*Fig. 3*). A 1970s photo clearly shows the buildings without cornice and trim on the Colfax and Lafayette Street sides (*Fig. 4*). Also shown at the corner of Colfax and Lafayette is an enclosed brick stairway leading to the basement. This has since been removed. The cornice was probably removed in the period 1948-1950, when the roofing was replaced.

The building permit information is incomplete, with no records from about 1955- 1970. In 1972 the owner's name changed to Altamaha Industries, Inc. In 1974, the owners were listed in tax assessor records as Robert L. Greene and Dennis D. Cuypers. Several other owners were listed during 1977-78. In March 1978, the building was deemed unsafe according to a building inspection. It was owned by Steven Strentz, Roger G. Semin, and William R. Williams, of 3984 South Niagara Way. In July of 1980, while owned by S. Strentz, interior repairs due to a fire were permitted. Richard Austin of 1252 Dexter Street apparently purchased the Altamaha in May 1981.

On January 8, 1982, owner Richard Austin took out a zoning permit application requesting the construction of new unenclosed balconies, 2'6" x 10' with 4' railings (Denver City and County Records Department). The attached drawings and

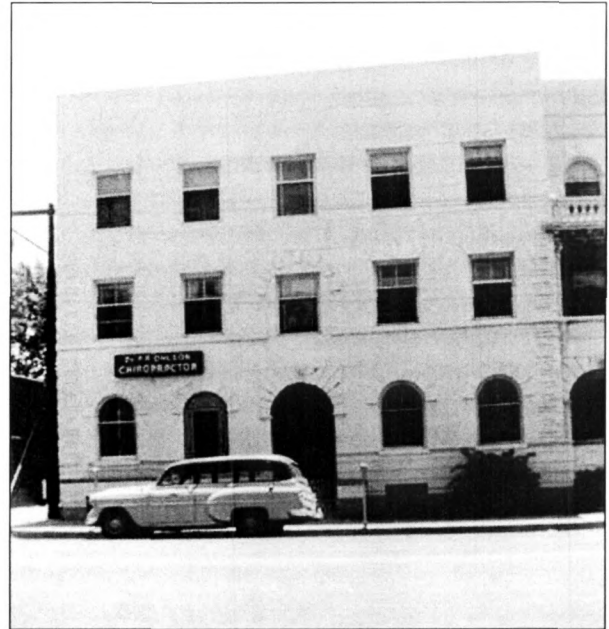


Figure 3. The Altamaha had lost its cornice and balconies by the time of this May 1956 photograph. (Source: Western History / Genealogy Department, Denver Public Library)

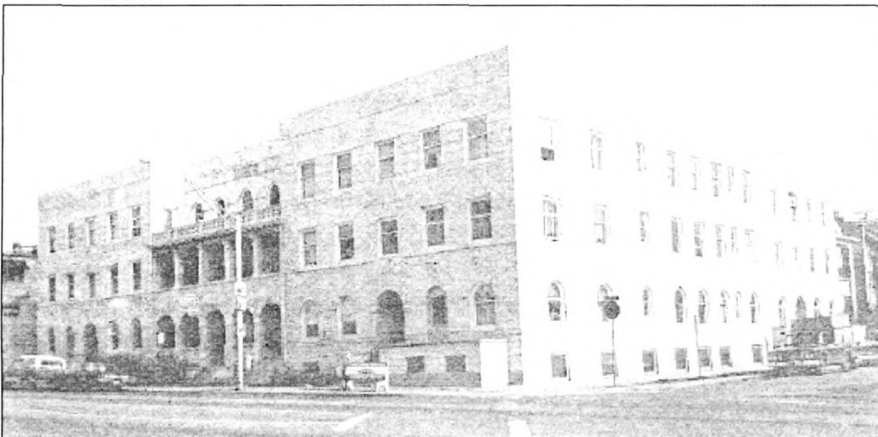


Figure 4. Even without its cornice and balconies, the Italian Renaissance Revival roots of the building's design remain evident in this 1970s photograph. (Source: Western History / Genealogy Department, Denver Public Library)

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Altamaha Apartments

Denver County, Colorado

Section number 7 Page 5

additional specifications were not available. The cornice and balconies had been restored by the time new owner Kent Riddle spoke to the *Denver Business World* in February 1983. The paper reported that the exterior "Greek Revival" style was preserved.

Perhaps the best photo documenting the original appearance of the Altamaha was found in a 1975 *Denver Post* article retelling the story of the 1922 robbery outside the Denver Mint (*Fig. 5*). The original cornice and frieze appear quite similar to the present day entablature. The façade balconies appear similar, but with more decorative railings and supportive brackets. Two enclosed basement stairs are visible near the east and west corners of the Colfax facade in that photograph. The current entablature appears to be nearly identical to the original, and the wood balconies on the façade and the Lafayette Street building façade have been re-created similar to the originals. The two corner enclosed stairs have been removed. The 1970s photo also shows a central facade stone sign stating "ALTAMAHA". This has been removed and replaced by a similar sign that reads "ALTA".

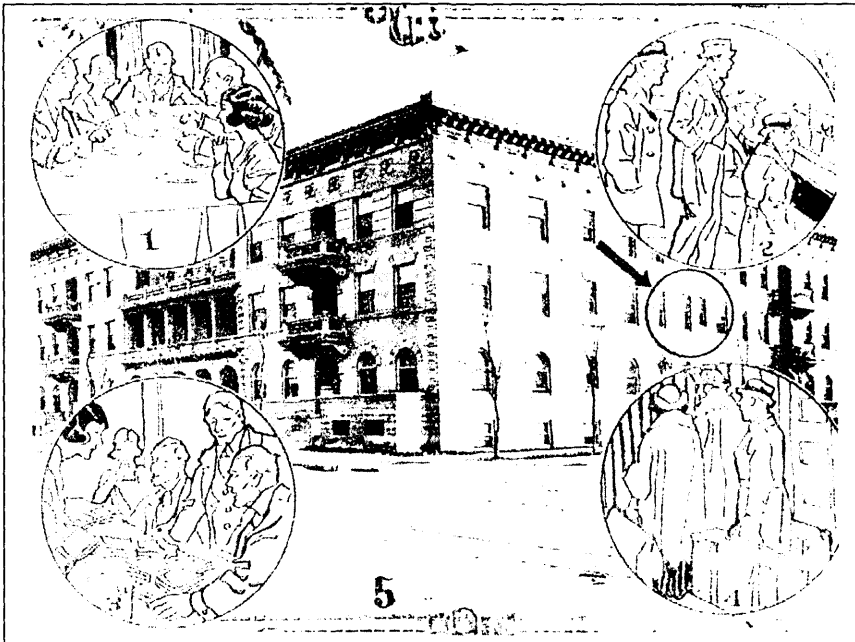


Figure 5. The 1975 *Denver Post* retelling of the 1922 Denver Mint robbery included a background photograph of the Altamaha. (Source: Western History / Genealogy Department, Denver Public Library)

Developer Kent Riddle purchased the Altamaha in May 1982 and began extensive renovations to convert the buildings into office and retail spaces. Many building permits were taken out to move partition walls, bring the electrical and fire systems up to code, install new interior doors, create new exterior exits in the rear, provide new plumbing and new "tenant finishes." A fitness center and a restaurant were added to the lowest level.

A fire on November 30, 1983, damaged the building. A

Building Inspection Complaint form dated December 5, 1983, noted the heavy fire damage and ordered the owners to repair all structural damage and electrical systems. Many additional building permits point to the completed interior renovation and exterior alterations that brought the building up to code in many respects by providing exterior doors and elevator in the rear courtyard area, improved electrical systems, fire and security alarms.

Alta Court Offices LLC currently owns the buildings, having purchased the complex in October 1997. Post purchase alterations include the glazing of the entry arcade and the installation of the white trim on the second-story balustrade on the Colfax facade.

The alterations to the Altamaha reflect the many owners of these two buildings in their hundred-year history. Yet today, the buildings convey their original Italian Renaissance Revival style. The entry arcade glazing does not detract from the overall integrity. Renovations that provided additional entrances occur at the rear in the courtyard, as do walkways and an elevator. The Altamaha remains capable of conveying its historical and architectural significance.

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

Altamaha Apartments

Denver County, Colorado

Section number 8 Page 6

SIGNIFICANCE

The 1902 Altamaha Apartments are eligible for the National Register under Criterion A in the area of *Community Planning and Development*. The buildings represent Denver's early twentieth century adoption of a new form of residential housing—the luxury apartment building. The Altamaha Apartments are also significant under Criterion C, as they embody the distinctive characteristics of the Italian Renaissance Revival style as applied to an apartment building.

A New Multi-family Building Type

The 1902 opening of the Altamaha came as part of a new trend in Denver's multi-family housing development. By the beginning of the twentieth century, a new type of luxury apartment based on models from the New York area was being designed by local Denver architects (Noel and Norgren, 1987: 82). Several were under construction in the area, among them the Colonnade (architect Charles Quayle), the Cornwall (Walter E. Rice), the Perrenoud (Frank Snell), and the Altamaha (George L. Bettcher).

The first apartment building in Denver was the Witter Building at the southeast corner of 16th and Blake Streets, completed in 1875 (Smiley, 1901: 968). Terraces such as La Veta Place at West Colfax Avenue and Bannock Street, continued to be fashionable throughout the nineteenth century. In 1890, architect John Huddart designed the Athelston Apartments (row houses) in a popular Richardsonian style. Two years later he designed the McClair Apartments in a simplified Chateausque style that contained a central entrance for some of the units (Brettell, 1973: 122-4). Apartment building designs were undergoing change.

Change was also occurring along Denver's primary east-west street, Colfax Ave. In 1887, horsecar tracks were constructed on Colfax between Emerson and York Streets. Two years later, a cable car line began operations east on Colfax from Broadway to City Park. Many considered Colfax to be one of Denver's tree-lined parkways. It was paved in 1899 and served as a major thoroughfare. Increased traffic signaled coming change along the avenue.

By 1899, Colfax Avenue had become an important residential area where large Victorian-era mansions housed prominent Denver families. In 1900, developer John Holmberg introduced a new form of residential rental property by financing the multi-family Corona Flats, completed on Colfax at Corona Street. Flat was an early term for an apartment building where each suite of rooms are on a single floor, as opposed to the multi-floor row house form. John Holmberg and his wife, Minnie, were Swedish immigrants who came to Denver sometime after 1873 (Widmann, 1997). In 1901, he erected Lafayette Flats on the southwest corner of Lafayette Street and 16th Avenue, followed by the Altamaha and the Colonnade, both completed in 1902. Only the latter two buildings remain.

Some labeled this East Colfax area of multi-family housing as "flatberg" (Hamer, Siler, George Assoc., 1986). The derogatory term identified areas of tenements and reflected the perceived transition of Colfax Avenue from an elegant residential area to one dominated by multi-family housing and businesses. Since no building codes existed at the time, property owners could construct any type of building. Colfax area residents, troubled by the changes to their neighborhood, unsuccessfully sought ways to restrict construction (Noel and Norgren, 1987: 83). Many who could eventually moved to different parts of the city, including such locales as the Country Club neighborhood.

The Altamaha Apartments were designed for urban Denverites, located with good access to the new streetcar transportation being constructed along Colfax Avenue. The architect George Bettcher designed the apartments for John Holmberg. Plans called for 24 units varying in size from five to seven rooms each. The building was completely wired for the new telephone service with an internal telephone system and switchboard that could connect "direct to the city telephone system," (*Denver Republican*, January 1, 1902, p.4). Perhaps the most innovative feature of the buildings was the underground garage for residents to park their new automobiles. Few cars operated in Denver at the time of the building's design. Bettcher or Holmberg must have anticipated the future growth of individual instead of mass

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

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

Altamaha Apartments

Denver County, Colorado

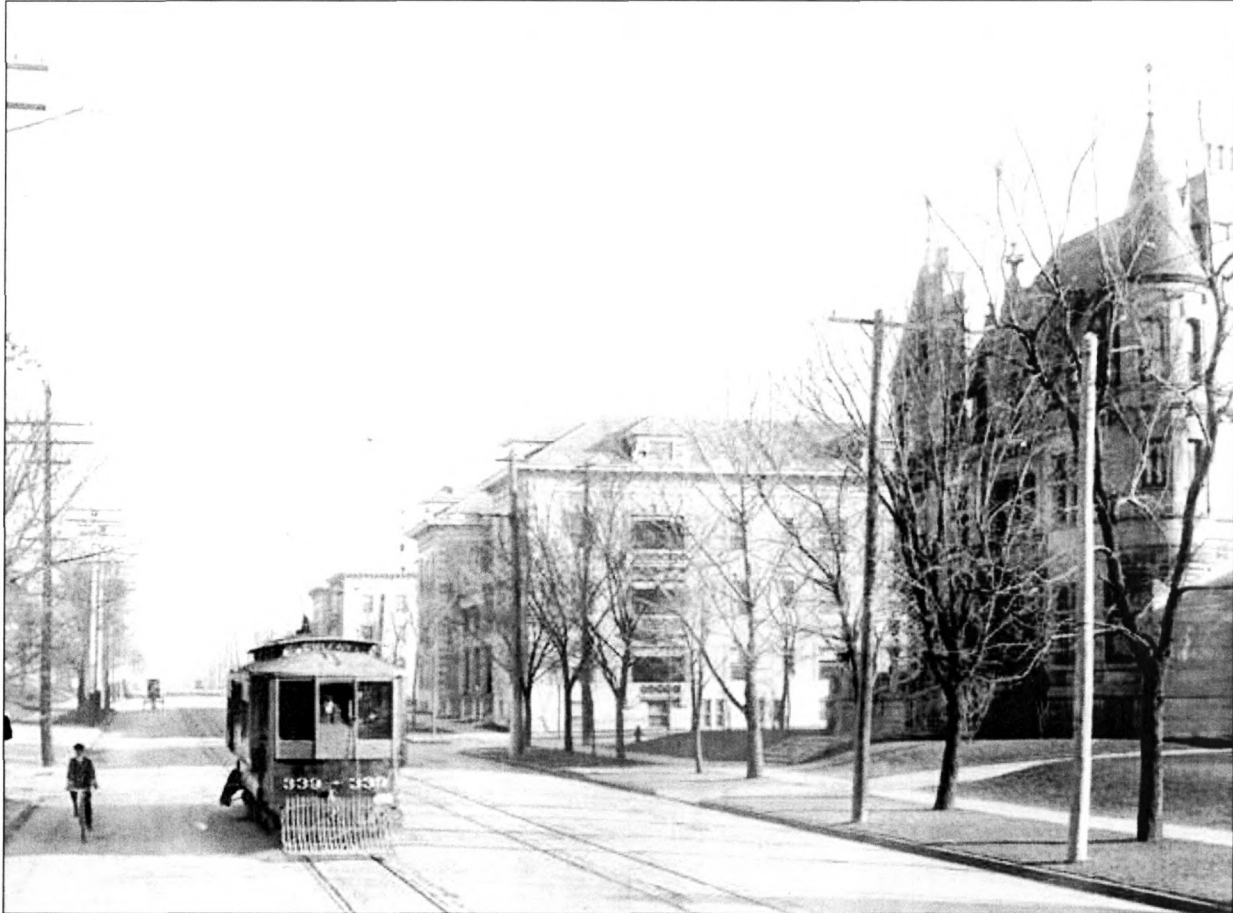
Section number 8 Page 7

Figure 6. In this circa 1905 view east on Colfax Avenue, the streetcar is heading west just past Marion Street. The large house on the right is the home of Lawrence C. Phipps. Across the street to the east is the Colonnade. The Altamaha is visible just above the streetcar's roof. (Source: Western History / Genealogy Department, Denver Public Library)

transportation. The January 1, 1902, *Denver Republican*, described the garage as “a cellar for automobiles, into which the machines may be driven by an inclined plane, and where they may be cared for by an attendant and be always at the call of the owner.” The completed structure was described in the same article as “built of buff brick with white stone and terra cotta trimmings and terra cotta ornaments.” John Holmberg spent approximately \$59,000 to construct the Altamaha. Minnie Holmberg held title to the Altamaha until about 1917.

One block west of the Altamaha, John Holmberg also developed the Colonnade (*Fig. 8*). Of similar shape and size, the more elaborate Renaissance Revival facade sported five three-story columns with composite capitals in the central recessed bay. Medallions with garlands lined the architrave under a similar bracketed cornice, but the hipped roof featured a hipped wooden dormer centered above each side bay in the facade and the side exteriors. The \$100,000 building originally contained frosted and leaded European glass and fireplaces.

The Cornwall Apartments at 921 E. 13th Avenue (*Fig. 9*), pre-dates the Altamaha by a few months, and was one of the first to reflect Italian and Mediterranean influences (Noel and Norgren, 1987: 85). Built for William T. Cornwall at a cost of about \$100,000, it contained 18 apartments of six or seven rooms each, and each unit had an outside balcony. The roof featured two gardens and a rooftop

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Altamaha Apartments

Denver County, Colorado

Section number 8 Page 8

ballroom, while the basement contained a men's billiard room and ladies party rooms. This National Register-listed building is considered one of Walter Rice's best buildings by local architectural historians Thomas Noel and Barbara Norgren. The elaborate façade details make it appear much more old-world European than any of the other luxury apartments built in the early 1900s.

The Perrenoud at 836 E. 17th Avenue was considered the most exclusive apartment house in Denver, at a cost of \$125,000 (Fig. 7). The Neoclassical façade, however, appears simplified in comparison to the other apartments mentioned above. It contained 24 units, six to a floor, with six to eight rooms each, and every room had a window thanks to four interior light courts. The main entrance led to a "grand hallway with marble wainscoting, French plate glass mirror walls, and the Tiffany skylight," and the central rotunda contained "a fireplace and an ornate brass grille elevator cage" (Noel and Norgren, 1987: 85). The Perrenoud employed a bellboy, janitor, attendants



Figure 7. The Perrenoud Apartments as it appeared in about 1920. (Source: Western History / Genealogy Department, Denver Public Library)

for the basement garage, and uniformed staff for the bowling alley, billiard room and ballroom. Named for socialite Adele Perrenoud who lived in unit A-2, the apartment house boasted a screening committee to select every tenant. It became a condominium in 1985 and continues to screen applicants.

These luxury apartments provided the latest amenities of central heat, party and game rooms, rooftop gardens, elevators, and attendants. Though some Denverites frowned on any form of apartment, referring to them all as tenements, these new designs appealed to the middle class and wealthy with small families and a need to be close to downtown. They provided security for living quarters and cars, the convenience of central heat, refined living spaces for small family groups, convenience to downtown Denver, and a prestigious Capitol Hill address. The financial backing of eastern investors as well as local real estate investors brought clout to the new residential style and acceptance by the local residents. The luxury apartment building found a place in early 20th century Denver's skyline. The Altamaha represents one of the few early twentieth century luxury apartment complexes remaining in the city.

Architecture

The Altamaha Apartments represents a relatively new style in architecture for turn of the twentieth century Denver—Italian Renaissance Revival. The style emulated the Renaissance palazzi of northern Italy and was most popular in America from about 1890 to 1930. Buildings of this style are usually rectangular or square in plan. Houses are usually ornate and two- or three-stories high; public buildings are usually imposing and also three- or four-stories high.

The Altamaha displays many of the character-defining elements of the Italian Renaissance Revival style. Though the exterior employs the same running bond tan brick on each story, differentiation between floors is achieved by variation of the beltcourses. Several evenly-spaced indented belt courses below the first story windows are topped by a sill course of brick dentils. A limestone sill course divides the first and second stories. A narrower limestone sill course divides the second and third stories. The third story is further articulated by a series of evenly-spaced indented brick courses. Typically, the corners are accented by brick quoins with dentiled panels. As is typical of the style, successive stories decrease in height from ground floor to cornice. The cornice itself is fairly massive with modillions and brackets.

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Altamaha Apartments

Denver County, Colorado

Section number 8 Page 9

The building's fenestration typifies the style. Windows on the lower story are more elaborate than those above, with an arched transom surmounted by voussiors of alternating limestone blocks and gauged brick. The second- and third-story windows are of the same size and pattern, but the flat arch voussiors of limestone or gauged brick differentiate the second story from the wide flat limestone belt course that forms the third-story lintels.

The balustraded balconies are common Italian Renaissance Revival elements. So too are the prominent arcading on the ground floor and the recessed arcaded galley on the floors above.

Denver's finest example of the style in a commercial building is the 1892 National Register-listed Equitable Building at 17th and Stout. Though a stylistic notch below the Equitable, the Altamaha holds its own in comparisons to other Denver examples. Both the neighboring Colonnade and the Cornwall apartments could be considered more elaborate examples of Italian Renaissance Revival. Yet, the subtleties of the Altamaha design point to the coming simplified trends in building styles. The building projected a quality in keeping with the luxury image its owner sought to maintain.

The Altamaha is an excellent local example of the Italian Renaissance Revival style. The stylistic elements are tastefully employed to create an interesting facade. The horizontal differentiation between stories provides visual distinction without sacrificing the tight symmetrical whole. Denver architect George L. Bettcher designed the Altamaha. Originally practicing in New Jersey, Bettcher moved to Denver in 1895 and practiced in the city until 1942, designing both residential and commercial buildings. His work includes residences in the National Register-listed Country Club District, Park Hill, and Whittier neighborhoods. He designed the National Register-listed Rossonian Hotel (1912) and the State Register-listed Denver Turnverein building (1921). After practicing with his son, George F. Bettcher, until 1942, the elder Bettcher died in Denver in 1952 (Noel and Norgren, 1987: 189-190).



Figure 8. The Colonnade Apartment building as it appeared about 1902. The Lafayette Street balconies of the Altamaha are just visible at the far left of the photo. The streets appear to be unpaved in this view. (Source: Western History / Genealogy Department, Denver Public Library)



Figure 9. Architect Walter Rice designed the Cornwall Apartments at 13th and Ogden. The National Register-listed building opened in 1901. (Source: Western History / Genealogy Department, Denver Public Library)

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

Altamaha Apartments

Denver County, Colorado

Section number 9 Page 10

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Brettell, Richard R., *Historic Denver, The Architects and the Architecture, 1858-1893*, Denver, Historic Denver, Inc., 1973.

Harris, Cyril M., *American Architecture, An Illustrated Encyclopedia*, New York, W.W. Norton & Company, 1998.

McAlester, Virginia and Lee, *A Field Guide to American Houses*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1994.

Noel, Thomas and Barbara Norgren, Denver: *Denver the City Beautiful*, Historic Denver, Inc. 1987.

Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation. *A Guide to Colorado's Historic Architecture and Engineering*. Denver: Colorado Historical Society, 2003.

Smiley, Jerome C., *History of Denver*, Denver, Times-Sun Publishing Company, 1901.

Newspapers and Periodicals

Denver Republican, January 1, 1902

Denver Business World, February 14, 1983, p.4

Rocky Mountain News, Dec. 18-19, 1922

Denver Post, December 7, 1975, p.79-80

Rocky Mountain News, 5/1one-over-one947, p. 24

Manuscripts and Files

Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, Colorado Historical Society, 1988 Inventory Form.

National Register of Historic Places, "Helene Apartment Building," and "Rossonian Hotel," Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, Colorado Historical Society Website.

Hamer, Siler, George Associates, "Architectural and Historical Development of Denver's Uptown," 1986, Colorado State Historic Preservation Office.

Widmann, Nancy, "Alta-Colonnade-Bourbon Square Neighborhood Notes," July, 1997, Historic Denver, Inc. file.

Other References

Denver Building Permits, Denver Public Library, Western History Department.

Denver City and County Records.

Historic Photos, Denver Public Library, Western History Department.

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

Altamaha Apartments

Denver County, Colorado

Section number 10 Page 11**GEOGRAPHICAL DATA****VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

Lots 16 through 19 inclusive and the west 9 feet of Lot 15, Block 39, Park Avenue Addition, City and County of Denver, Colorado.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The nomination includes all the land historically associated with the Altamaha Apartments.

PHOTOGRAPH LOG

The following information pertains to photograph numbers 1-14 except as noted:

Name of Property: Altamaha Apartments
 Location: Denver City and County, CO
 Photographer: Becky Dorward
 Date of Photographs: October-November 2003
 Location of Negatives: Possession of the photographer

Photo No.	Photographic Information
1	Facade (north or Colfax elevation) of north building; view to the southeast.
2	Main entry, north elevation of north building; view to the south.
3	Main entry, north elevation of north building; view to the southwest.
4	Second floor porch over entry; north elevation of north building; view to the south
5	West elevations of north and south buildings; view to the southeast.
6	East elevation of north building; view to the northwest.
7	East elevation of south building and south elevation of north building; view to the northwest.
8	East elevation of the south building; view to the west.
9	South elevation of the south building; view to the west.
10	East elevation of the north building; view to the southwest.
11	Window detail, north elevation of north building; view to the southeast.
12	Cornice detail, east elevation of the north building; view to the northwest.
13	Corner detail, north and east elevations of the north building; view to the southwest.
14	Balcony detail, north elevation of north building; view to the southeast.

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Altamaha Apartments

Denver County, Colorado

Section number

Page 12

USGS TOPOGRAPHIC MAP
Englewood Quadrangle, Colorado
7.5 Minute Series

UTM: Zone 13 / 502600E / 4398658N (NAD27)
PLSS: 6th PM, T4S, R68W, Sec. 2 NE¼ NE¼ NE¼ NW¼
Elevation: 5,300 feet

