

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

RECEIVED 410

JUL 27 1994

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 Ponce de Leon Apartment Building

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 4514 Connecticut Avenue, N.W. not for publication N/A
city or town Washington vicinity X
state District of Columbia code DC zip code 20008 county N/A code N/A

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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 X statewide locally.

(See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Robert L. Gallett
Signature of certifying official

7/22/94
Date

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 commenting or other official _____ Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

- 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): _____

Patrick Andrews 9/7/44

Signature of Keeper Date of Action

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

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>1</u>	_____ buildings
_____	_____ sites
_____	_____ structures
_____	_____ objects
_____	_____ Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register _____

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

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: DOMESTIC Sub: multiple dwelling

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: DOMESTIC Sub: multiple dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

20TH CENTURY REVIVAL
Spanish Revival

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation BRICK
roof TERRA COTTA
walls BRICK

other Decorative Elements: Limestone

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

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

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 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.)

- 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 1928

Significant Dates 1928

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation _____

Architect/Builder David L. Stern

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

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

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: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property Less than one acre

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	<u>18</u>	<u>320920</u>	<u>4312900</u>	3	_____	_____
2	_____	_____	_____	4	_____	_____

See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.) Square 1972, Lot 24.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.) The boundary includes the Ponce de Leon Apartment Building.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Eve Lydia Barsoum / Architectural Historian
organization D.C. Historic Preservation Division date June 30, 1994
street & number 614 H Street, N.W. telephone (202) 727-7360
city or town Washington state D.C. zip code 20001

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 Ponce de Leon Coopertive Incorporated
street & number 1401 I Street, N.W., Suite 7000 telephone _____
city or town Washington state D.C. zip code 20006

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

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Section 7

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INTERAGENCY RESOURCES DIVISION
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Ponce de Leon Apartment Building
Name of Property
Washington, D.C.
County and State
Apartment Buildings in
Washington, D.C. 1880-1945
Name of Multiple Property Listing

The Ponce de Leon Apartment Building located at 4514 Connecticut Avenue, N.W. has five stories and forty-nine units and is an example of a Conventional Mid-Rise Apartment Building. Its construction was made possible with the February 1, 1928 issuance of D.C. Permit to Build #5826. Located on the corner of Appleton Street and Connecticut Avenue, the Ponce de Leon faces east onto the avenue. It is situated in one of the more architecturally significant blocks in the apartment building corridor which runs along Connecticut Avenue. It is an H-shape building with projections and an irregular side which steps along the oblique axis created by Connecticut Avenue. The brick building presents a restrained Spanish Revival style as characterized in the distinctive use of multi-colored, diapered brickwork, limestone ornamental balconies, and decorative Moorish arches.

The Ponce de Leon's irregular mass emphasizes two corner towers on the Connecticut Avenue elevation (140 feet). Appleton Street received the secondary facade (152.5 feet). The building employs a poured-in-place post and beam concrete frame with exterior masonry bearing walls. It is faced with scored tapestry brick, being a mixture of dull dark blue, mottled reds, and golden yellow. The first story is outlined in a limestone watertable, beltcourse, and quoins.

The limestone entrance portico is set back from and forms an oblique angle with the Avenue. It is one story high, one bay deep, and three bays wide and suggests a small arcade. Its arches are comprised of vossiors which form a round arch for the opening and a pointed arch as the upper edge. The spandrels are accented by cartouches. The wall behind the portico is stuccoed and scored to match the arches. The portico's floor is comprised of terra cotta chips. The portico and steps feature wrought iron railings. The entrance door is arched with a single glass and wood paneled door under an arched fanlight.

The lower floors are faced with dark brown bricks. The corner tower at Connecticut Avenue and Appleton Street is decorated with a large diamond pattern of yellow brick which runs between the second and fourth floors. The fifth floor is defined at its lower edge by a limestone beltcourse. The fifth floor boast brick diapering formed of lines of golden yellow brick which delineate diamonds of mottled red and dark blue bricks.

The building's fenestration is composed of a variety of windows which are grouped as pairs or alone across the building's multi-planed facades. They are mainly wood sash, double-hung, six-over-six windows. Originally, some bays on each facade were comprised of sun porches; they were enclosed with glass doors in a later renovation. The second- and fourth-floor porches have the suggestion of balconies with projecting stone sills supported on small scrolled brackets and

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Ponce de Leon Apartment Building
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wrought iron balustrades. The third floor features corbeled stone balconies with carved floral panels. Other decorative elements include an escutcheon located at the fifth floor at the corner of Connecticut Avenue and Appleton Streets and a small frieze with a simple half-scroll motif at the cornice level. Although the roof is flat, a false terra cotta roof was incorporated to reinforce the use of the Spanish Revival style.

The Ponce de Leon is designed with ten vertical tiers of apartments on five floors totaling 49 units. The main lobby fills the 01-tier on the first floor. The main lobby also employs the Spanish Revival style. It features a multi-colored terrazzo floor, an elaborate plaster ceiling with a geometric and floral pattern, and a fireplace with decorative mantel and ornate surround. Each tier is generally repetitive, with the notable exception of the 03-tier which holds the largest apartments. The units are arranged along an interior corridor which runs east-west through the center of the building; this corridor steps to the south to reach the southeast corner units (01-, 02-, and 03- tiers).

The apartments have 1, 2, or 3 bedrooms, a living room, dining room, breakfast room, kitchen bathroom, and porch (now enclosed). Most of the units retain their original kitchen and baths, as well as original trim, wall, and floor treatments. The large 03-tier holds the most interesting floor arrangements and decorations. Apartment 403, originally occupied by the Ponce de Leon's architect, is particularly ornate. It includes a marble floor foyer with niches, a grand fireplace, stylized Spanish light fixtures and sconces, deep-coffer ceilings in the public rooms, a paneled library, three baths, and a tiled Pullman kitchen.

The building's original floor plan and decorative programs are essentially intact. In 1988, the northeastern portion of the basement was altered to accommodate three additional suites with exterior access and new windows.

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Ponce de Leon Apartment Building
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The Ponce de Leon Apartment Building located at 4514 Connecticut Avenue, N.W. was designed, built, and owned by David L. Stern. The 1928 building was one of the designs that established Stern's reputation as an architect of merit in Washington, D.C. The choice of the Spanish Revival style and its skillful execution represent a significant increase in the sophistication of Stern's work up to this time. Stern, whose career lasted over fifty years, was especially active in the design of apartment buildings in Washington, D.C. More than eighty apartment buildings have been credited to him, the majority having been designed in partnership with Frank Tomlinson. Of these, seventy-six were designed in the 1920s, representing more than ten percent of all apartment buildings constructed during the decade that witnessed the most apartment construction in Washington's history. Stern is best remembered for his luxury apartment buildings constructed in the late 1920s, during the decade in which the greatest number of apartment buildings were constructed in Washington.

Stern was born in Washington in 1888. He was of German decent and the son of one of the first rabbis of the Washington Hebrew Congregation. After attending local public schools, Stern went to George Washington University. He did not complete these studies before he began work at a local architectural firm.

World War I not only interrupted Stern's career, but it dramatically decreased the amount of housing constructed in the city during the war because it consumed most of the civilian industrial capacity and created considerable material shortages. Meanwhile, Washington's population was increasing dramatically as a result of the expanding federal government. Consequently, there was a great demand for housing when civilian construction resumed in the early 1920s. Architects, builders, and developers rushed to fill the void and the decade of the 1920s experienced a burgeoning of both apartment buildings and single-family residences.

After serving in World War I, Stern resumed his architectural career. In 1919, Stern collaborated with Frank Tomlinson on his first apartment building. Thereafter, they formed a partnership which lasted seven years. The D.C. Apartment Buildings Survey identified 63 apartment buildings designed by the firm of Stern and Tomlinson during the years 1919 to 1926.

Their first project, 3115 Mount Pleasant Street, was stylistically consistent with apartment buildings designed before the war. The 1919 design is a four-story apartment building with projecting bay windows in the Colonial Revival style. Between 1919 and 1922, Stern and Tomlinson continued to design modest three-, four-, and five-story apartment buildings, each accommodating fewer than thirty families. The buildings reveal a stylistic evolution toward simple and flat

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Ponce de Leon Apartment Building
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facades which used classical vocabulary. Their ornament is generally confined to the main entrance, the cornice, and sometimes quoins and beltcourses. In 1922, Stern and Tomlinson began to design larger apartment buildings. The first was the Shawmut at 2200 19th Street, N.W. which accommodated seventy-one families. In the same year, they designed the Argonne at 1629 Columbia Road, N.W. which housed 242 families. The Argonne is the largest apartment building that Stern and Tomlinson designed together. Throughout their partnership, they favored Classical Revival motifs, although their use of ornament was not limited to this style. One of their last commissions, and perhaps the most outstanding example of their work, were the twin, Gothic Revival buildings: the Windmere, 1825 New Hampshire Avenue, N.W., and the Harrowgate, 1833 New Hampshire Avenue, N.W. They were designed in 1925 for A. Joseph Howar, a Washington real estate developer who worked closely with Stern during this time.

In 1926, the partnership between Stern and Tomlinson was dissolved. Both architects continued to design apartment buildings on their own. Stern opened his own architectural office. Stern's apartment building designs continued to use restrained Classical Revival details for approximately the next two years. Between 1928 and 1930, Stern designed large, luxury apartment buildings and used a variety of architectural styles; some were designed in collaboration with A. Joseph Howar. These buildings include: the Ponce de Leon; the Lombardy, 2019 I Street, N.W.; the Sedgewick, 1722 19th Street, N.W.; the Frontenac, 4550 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.; and, Oaklawn terrace, 3620 16th Street, N.W. This group forms the core of Stern's most interesting work and the buildings for which he is most remembered.

In 1929, Stern moved his residence to the Ponce de Leon. He lived in apartment #403, the most ornate unit in the building. His colleague, A.J. Howar lived next door in apartment #402. Stern resided there until 1933 when he moved to the Broadmoor at 3601 Connecticut Avenue, N.W. Howar had relocated the previous year to 1722 19th Street, N.W., another apartment building designed by Stern.

Few buildings were constructed in Washington during the early 1930s as a result of the stock market crash and the subsequent building hiatus. Financial problems arose for Stern when the firm of Swartzell, Rheem, Hensey, et al., the financiers of the Ponce de Leon, as well as many other apartment buildings, went bankrupt. Apparently the firm illegally released the building, and Stern sold it in early 1929. When the bankruptcy process began, the legal title to the Ponce de Leon became a contested issue.

Stern established the David L. Stern Construction Company in 1936 and remained its head, even while semi-retired, until his death in 1969. To date, only a small percentage of this work has been identified through D.C. building permits. The majority of these buildings are plain brick structures with little ornament. One

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Ponce de Leon Apartment Building
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notable exception is 4801 Connecticut Avenue, N.W. It was built in 1938 with an arresting Art Moderne design.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

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- "David L. Stern, 81, Dies; Area Architect, Builder." *The Washington Star*, Sept. 1, 1969.
- D.C. Permit to Build #5826, Feb. 1, 1928. Located at the National Archives. Record Group 66.
- D.C. Preservation League/Traceries. *D.C. Apartment Building Survey, Washington, D.C. 1880-1945*. Located at the D.C. SHPO.
- Goode, James. *Best Addresses*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1988.
- "Ponce de Leon sold to Peter A. Drury." *Evening Star*, Feb. 3, 1929. p.13.
- "Ponce de Leon Trust Figures in Suit." *Evening Star*, May 27, 1931. B-1.
- "Ponce de Leon is off Indefinitely." *Evening Star*, May 29, 1931. p.A-12.
- Proctor, John Claggett, ed. *Washington Past and Present: A History*. New York: Lewis Publishing Co., Inc., 1930, vol 4, p. 501.
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National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number _____ Page _____

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 94001038 Date Listed: 9/7/94

Ponce De Leon Apartment Building DC
Property Name: County: State:

Apartment Buildings in Washington, DC, MPS
Multiple Name

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

Patrick Andrews
Signature of the Keeper

9/7/94
Date of Action

=====
Amended Items in Nomination:

As submitted, this nomination form had selected Criterion A and C and Architecture as an Area of Significance. A technical correction is made to the nomination form to add Community Planning and Development (to reflect the selected Criterion A). The SHPO concurs in this amendment.

DISTRIBUTION:

- National Register property file
- Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)