

1698

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NOV 16 1992

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

NATIONAL  
REGISTER

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 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 Plaza Hotel

other names/site number 8DU2072

2. Location

street & number 353 East Forsyth Street n/a  not for publication

city or town Jacksonville n/a  vicinity

state Florida code FL county Duval code 031 zip code 32202

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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.)

Suzanne P. Walker/Deputy SHPO 11/12/92  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Florida Division of Historical Resources, Bureau of Historic Preservation  
State of 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:
- 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:)

Entered in the ~~National Register~~ National Register Date of Action

Selove Byers 12/30/92  
Signature of the Keeper

Plaza Hotel  
Name of Property

Duval Co., FL  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

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

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

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.)

Historic Buildings of Downtown  
Jacksonville, Florida

**Number of contributing resources previously listed  
in the National Register**

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Domestic: Hotel

Domestic: Single Dwelling

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Commerce/Trade: Professional

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Other: Masonry Vernacular

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

walls Concrete

roof Asphalt

other Wood

**Narrative Description**

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

- Criteria A, B, C, D with checkboxes and descriptions.

Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

- Criteria A through G with checkboxes and descriptions.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Commerce

Architecture

Period of Significance

1903-1913

Significant Dates

1903

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

n/a

Cultural Affiliation

n/a

Architect/Builder

Ivers, William F., builder

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more 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):

- Documentation checkboxes: preliminary determination, previously listed, landmark, etc.

Primary location of additional data:

- Location checkboxes: State Historic Preservation Office, Other State agency, etc.

Name of repository:

Plaza Hotel  
Name of Property

Duval Co., FL  
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property Less than 1 acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

E 1	17	4387810	33548990
	Zone	Easting	Northing
2			

3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing
4			

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 Stephen Olausen/Barbara E. Mattick, Historic Sites Specialist

organization Bureau of Historic Preservation date November 1992

street & number R.A. Gray Bldg., 500 S. Bronough Street telephone (904) 487-2333

city or town Tallahassee state Florida zip code 32399-0250

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 Glenn Allen

street & number 353 E. Forsyth Street telephone \_\_\_\_\_

city or town Jacksonville state FL zip code 32202

**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.

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**SUMMARY**

The Plaza Hotel is located at 353 East Forsyth Street in downtown Jacksonville, Florida. The two-story Masonry Vernacular building, constructed with rough-faced cast concrete blocks in 1903, is notable for its circular turret topped by a conical roof. It contributes to the Historic Buildings of Downtown Jacksonville multiple property group under Associated Property Type F.3, Historic Domestic Buildings of Downtown Jacksonville.

**Setting**

The Plaza Hotel, is located on the three-hundred block of East Forsyth Street, and occupies the east half of lot 3 of block 4D of Jax Doggets Map subdivision in downtown Jacksonville. The Plaza Hotel is surrounded by two-story masonry commercial buildings. The hotel is a landmark on the northwest corner of East Forsyth and Liberty Streets.

**PRESENT AND ORIGINAL APPEARANCE****Exterior**

The south facade features a two-story tiered veranda, the main entrance, and a circular tower (Photo 1). The veranda, covered by a flat roof and supported by Tuscan columns with balustrade, stretches across the front facade and around the circular tower. Topped by a conical roof, the circular tower which projects from the southeast corner, constitutes the most distinguishing feature of the building. Accessed by a short double stair leading to the porch, the main entrance consists of a steel door with a sidelight and transom. All window openings on the south elevation have cast stone lintels and sills and are lighted with 1/1 double-hung sash windows.

The east elevation consists of the corner tower, a semi-circular bay window, and a small addition which is attached to the north elevation (Photo 2). The semi-circular bay window, located toward the north end of the facade rises the full height of the building and contains three 1/1 double-hung sash windows. The two-story addition, which projects from the north elevation, has a steel entrance door and stucco exterior wall fabric.

The north elevation, or rear of the building, is comprised of a section of rough faced concrete block wall material and a

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two-story stucco addition which wraps around the northwest corner of the building (Photo 3). Built in 1985, the addition which contains a stair to the second story, bathrooms, and storage, was required to satisfy building codes.

The west elevation which is mostly hidden from view by the neighboring building, has the two-story addition, and a projecting bay located toward the south end of the facade which contains the entrance foyer (Photo 4). Other features include 1/1 double-hung sash windows. The exterior wall fabric on this elevation is stucco. The original material was borrowed from this area of the building for two reasons: first, to repair and re-stabilize the deteriorating wall on the east elevation, and second, because the west elevation is mostly obscured from public view.

### Interior

In general, the hotel has retained much of its original moldings, doors, flooring material, and major detailing. Patrons enter the Plaza Hotel through the receptionist's office (Photo 5). The office is dominated by a set of leaded glass double doors with an overhead transom. The pattern in which the panes are set matches that of the transom and sidelight configuration of the main entrance. A conference room, accessed through a full-height raised-panel pocket door is immediately east of the receptionist's office (Photo 6). Outstanding features include a semi-circular conversation nook, which is formed by the southeast tower, and a fireplace situated in the opposite corner of the room. The fireplace has an oak mantle, a beveled glass overmantle, an iron firebox with applied ornamentation, and polychromatic tile around the firebox. This room also has a pocket door leading to an office immediately to the north. The office has a fireplace very similar to that in the conference room (Photo 7). The remainder of the downstairs is comprised of two more offices, a kitchen area, a half-bath and stair. One of the offices has a segmental curve in the exterior wall, which contains three windows in a common frame. The kitchen area is defined by a temporary partition, a counter, sink, and a refrigerator. The stair has a paneled newel post, wooden banister, and balustrade (Photo 8).

The second story, accessed by the original stair is identical to the plan of the first story with the following exceptions: a secretary's office, enclosed with a partially

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glazed partition, is situated in the southwest corner of the second story, and a small stair with a ninety degree landing serves to access the roof through a glazed hatch cover (Photo 9).

**ALTERATIONS**Exterior

In 1985, the Plaza Hotel was converted into an attorney's office. During this process, the building was re-stabilized and a small addition was attached to the north elevation. The re-stabilization mostly occurred on portions of the east exterior wall which was falling outward. During this process, much of the area was reassembled. Many of the concrete blocks in the repair area were destroyed and replaced with original block taken from areas on the north and west elevations. This had a positive effect on the exterior appearance of the east elevation, while having minor effect on the west elevation, which is hidden by the neighboring building.

Because it can be seen from the street, the north elevation exhibits most of the impact of the renovations. Jacksonville building code required an exit stair from the second story. To satisfy the requirement, a two-story addition to the northwest corner which contains a stair, storage space and bathrooms, was attached. The addition projects several feet from the original wall surface and is finished with stucco exterior wall fabric. A steel exit door located on the north elevation provides access to the building and stair area.

The original sash have been replaced with modern wood frame doublehung sash windows, which match the original sash with 1/1 lights. A new entrance door, which is constructed of steel, replaced the original wooden door. The tiered veranda has been replicated with materials similar in size, design, and color to the original fabric.

Interior

In 1985, the Plaza Hotel, in an advanced state of disrepair, was renovated into an attorney's office. In compliance with city safety codes for commercial properties, a fire exit was required for the second story. While performing other important functions, the addition to the north and west elevations at the rear of the building serves this purpose. The area contains the

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down and upstairs half-baths, a storage area and the fire escape stair. In order to repair areas of unstable exterior wall on the east elevation, where blocks had been broken or shaken loose, original block was taken from the area enclosed by the fire escape addition. This solution has preserved the integrity of the east elevation while it maintained the integrity of the original interior appearance and dimensions. The partially glazed partition which cordons off the secretary's office is also an alteration. Infrastructure, such as air conditioning, electricity, lighting, and plumbing, has been introduced in an inconspicuous manner. Florescent light fixtures in each room have been installed with removable wooden frames which blend well with the extant door and window moldings.



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### SUMMARY:

The Plaza Hotel is significant at the local level under Criterion A in the area of Commerce as one of only a few remaining historic hostelries in Downtown Jacksonville. It has further significance under Criterion C as the oldest surviving example of manufactured concrete block construction in Jacksonville. The Plaza Hotel contributes to the Downtown Jacksonville multiple property group under historic context, Jacksonville Renaissance, 1901-1920 and associated property type F.3, Domestic Buildings of Downtown Jacksonville, 1901-1927.

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

The Plaza Hotel was constructed in 1903 on a lot that previously was the site of the Augustus Bexley House. Bexley, a grocer and Realtor from Lake City, served as a Chief Surgeon for the Confederacy during the Civil War. At some point prior to 1887, Bexley acquired the lot on the corner of Forsyth and Liberty streets and built a brick residence. Between 1891 and 1893 a threestory tower at the SW corner and a large verandah were added to the building.

Bexley's home, like most others in Downtown Jacksonville, was destroyed during the Great Fire of 1901. In May 1903, Bexley's son, Robert, was issued a building permit to reconstruct the residence as a hotel. Local contractor William F. Ivers was hired to construct the new building. It was constructed using fireproof manufactured concrete block, a relatively new building material, which was first used in Jacksonville during the late 1890s. The new building was designed to resemble the one lost in the fire, except that the tower was placed on the southeast corner of the building. Construction was completed by December 1904.

The use of concrete block as a construction material occurred in Florida as early as the 1870s in Tampa, and the 1880s in Orlando. Contractors in those areas obtained molds, which allowed them to pour and make their own block on site. The use of this material was originally considered a viable substitute for building quality stone, which was not native to Florida and, therefore, was expensive. By the latter part of the nineteenth century, the use of concrete block was common in foundations and porch construction in Jacksonville and all over Florida. Only a

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handful of buildings in Jacksonville, however, were constructed completely of rusticated concrete block before the 1910-1920 era when many bungalows were built with the material.

There are no extant concrete block buildings in Jacksonville that pre-date the Plaza Hotel. The earliest known surviving examples of rusticated concrete block buildings are located in the Springfield residential neighborhood (NR 1983) north of the downtown area. Those buildings date from 1905. In the period before the turn of the century, only one structure, the Duval County Armory, was built using rusticated block for exterior walls. That building was also destroyed by the 1901 fire.

The Plaza Hotel opened in early 1904 to take advantage of the coming tourist season. Advertising flyers described the facility as "a handsome stone building two blocks from the Clyde New England Pier and one block from the fashionable Bay Street district. It is situated in the aristocratic section and is designed for refined guests." The Plaza's location near the steamship pier of the Clyde Line and the Duval County Courthouse, which was located on the same block as the hotel, made it an ideal location for overnight visitors to Jacksonville.

As a seaport and railroad town, Jacksonville had a thriving tourist trade during the late nineteenth century. The city had hundreds of hotels and rooming houses for short-term and long-term guests. During the 1901 fire, however, most of those tourist accommodations were lost. Few were rebuilt, as Jacksonville, by the early 1900s had lost much of its tourist trade to the more popular destinations of Southeast Florida. The Plaza is the oldest surviving historic hotel in Downtown Jacksonville.

The Plaza was operated as a hotel until 1913 when Robert Bexley and his family began using the building as a home. Throughout its later history, the house was used at times as a boarding house, but remained the residence of Bexley and his descendents, Sarah Ellis and Mary Connery. In 1985 the building was purchased by local attorney Glenn K. Allen, who renovated it for use as a law office.

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# **National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet**

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## **VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

East half of lot 3 block 4D of Jax Dogget's Map subdivision,  
Jacksonville, Florida.

## **BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION**

The boundary includes the city lot that has been  
historically associated with the property.

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Photographs 1 Plaza Hotel, Jacksonville, Duval Co., FL  
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**INVENTORY OF PHOTOGRAPHS**

1. PLAZA HOTEL
2. JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA
3. ROBERT BENNETT
4. 1991
5. HISTORIC PROPERTY ASSOCIATES
6. PLAZA HOTEL: LOOKING NORTH AT SOUTH ELEVATION
7. PHOTO NO. 1 OF 9

Numbers 1-5 are the same for the remaining photographs.

6. LOOKING WEST AT EAST ELEVATION
7. PHOTO NO. 2 OF 9
  
6. LOOKING SOUTHEAST AT NORTH ELEVATION
7. PHOTO NO. 3 OF 9
  
6. LOOKING SOUTHEAST AT WEST ELEVATION
7. PHOTO NO. 4 OF 9
  
6. LOOKING SOUTH AT ENTRANCE AND RECEPTIONIST'S OFFICE
7. PHOTO NO. 5 OF 9
  
6. LOOKING SOUTHEAST AT FIRST STORY CONFERENCE ROOM
7. PHOTO NO. 6 OF 9
  
6. LOOKING SOUTHWEST AT FIRST STORY FIREPLACE
7. PHOTO NO. 7 OF 9
  
6. LOOKING NORTH AT FIRST STORY STAIR
7. PHOTO NO. 8 OF 9
  
6. LOOKING SOUTH AT SECOND STORY HALL AND STAIR LANDING
7. PHOTO NO. 9 OF 9

PHOTOGRAPH KEY

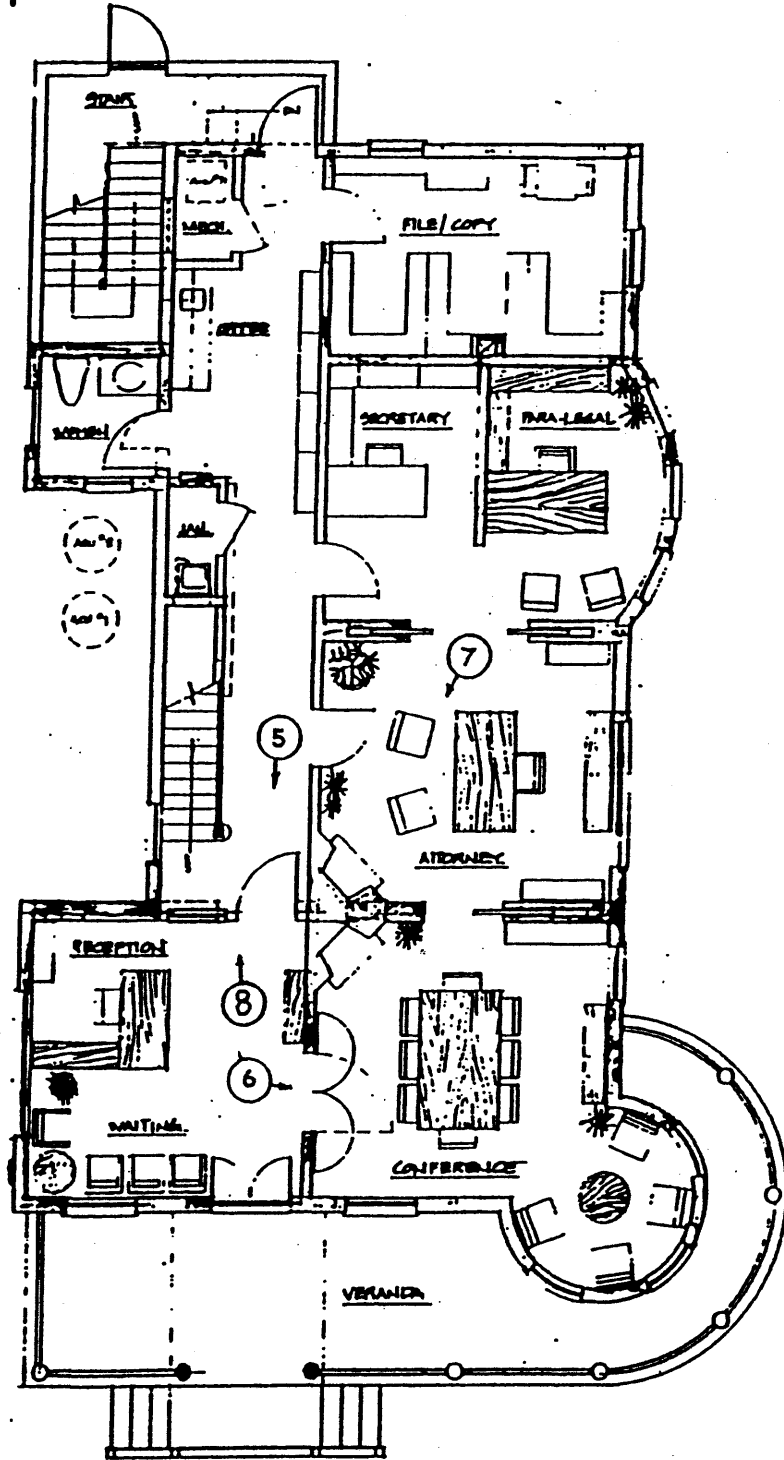
1st Floor

# Plaza Hotel

scale: 1" = 11'

4

3



2

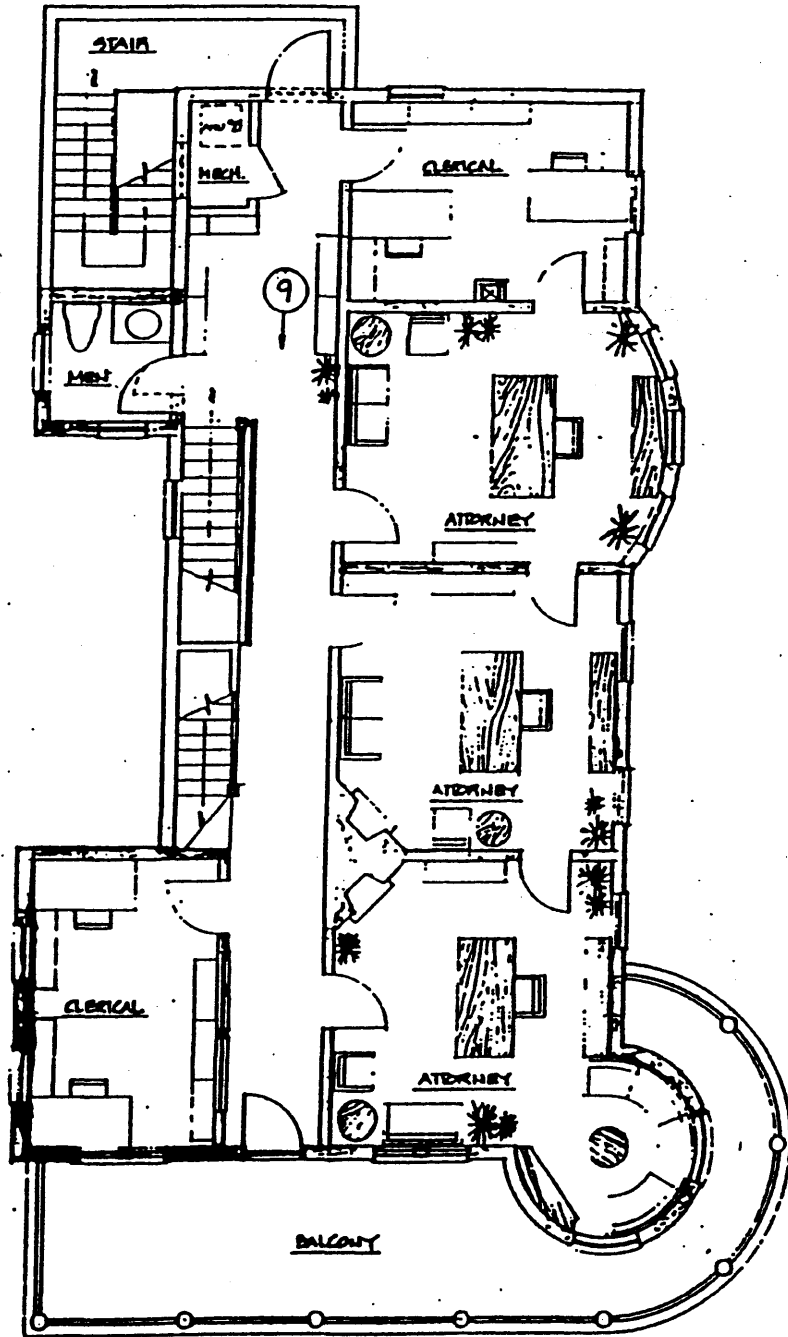
1

PHOTOGRAPH KEY

2nd Floor

# Plaza Hotel

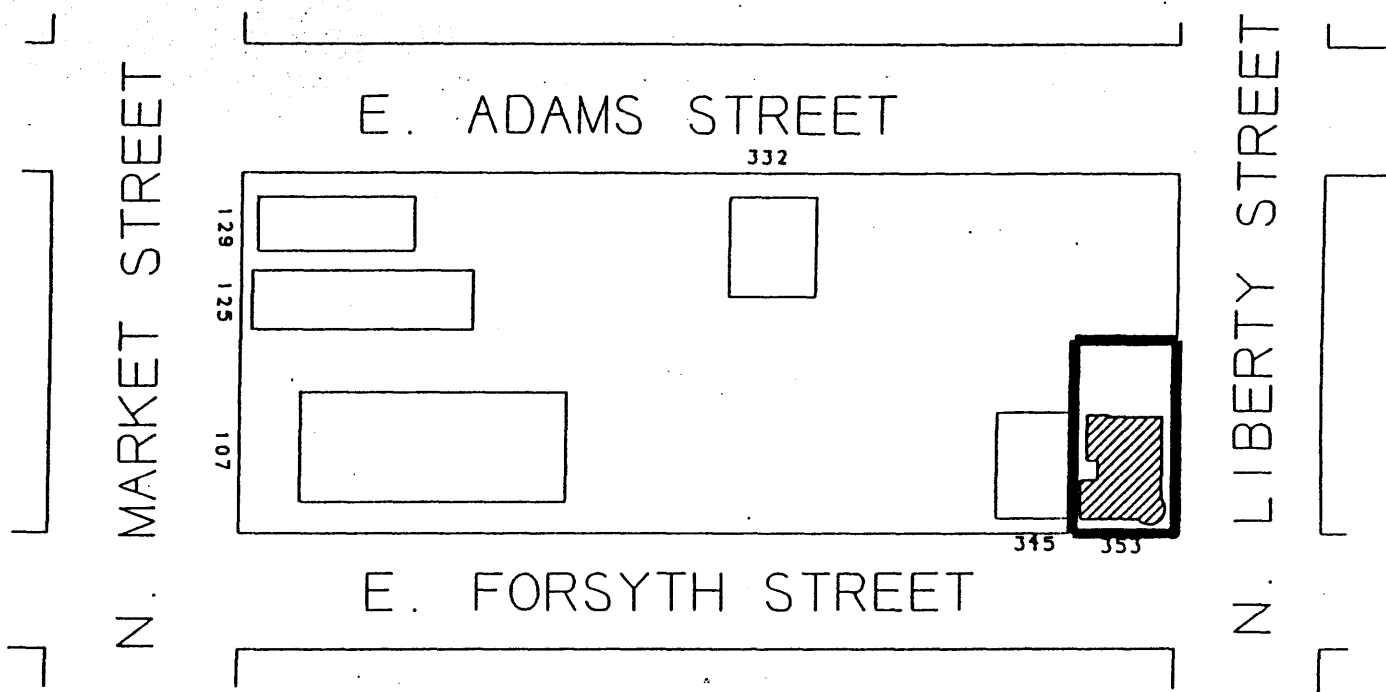
scale: 1" = 11'





# Site Plan

## Plaza Hotel

353 East Forsyth Street



**Key:**  
Boundary   
Contributing Building   
Scale: 1" = 125'