

Apartment Hotels in Birmingham, Alabama 1900-1930  
Thematic Group Nomination

3. RIDGELY APARTMENTS

608 21st St. North  
Birmingham, Jefferson County

Owner: Tutwiler Properties  
608 21st St. North  
Birmingham, AL 35203

UTM: 16/517840/3708740

Legal Description: Lot 19 less 10 ft. and  
lots 20 and 21, Lots 22 & 23 & 24,  
Block 33 Birmingham, 210' x 215'

Acreage: 1.04

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1914

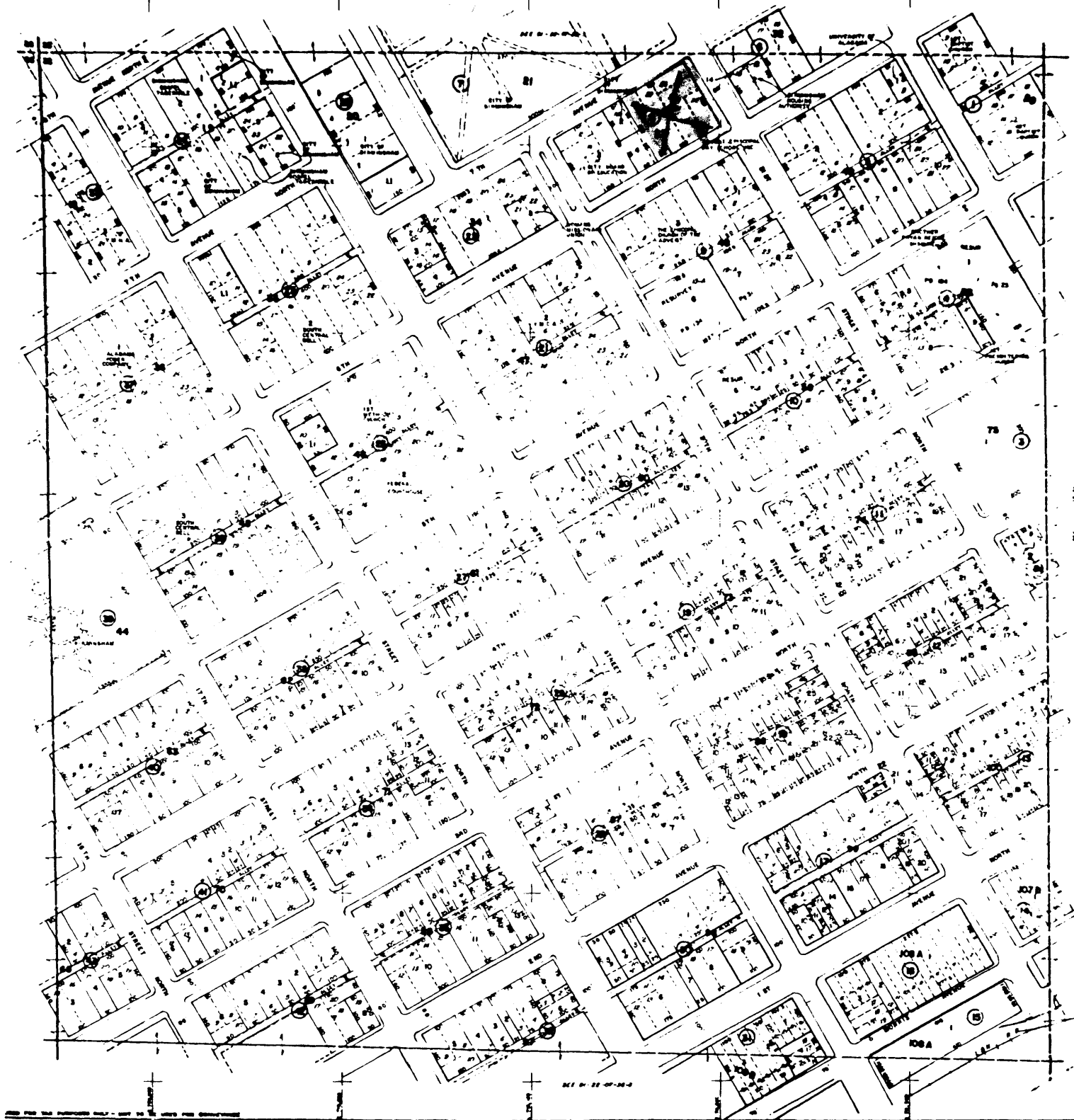
Builder: Wells Bros. & Co., N.Y.

Architect: J.E.R. Carpenter; W.L. Welton (associate)

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Significance and History: The Ridgely was the first luxury apartment hotel constructed in downtown Birmingham and remained its finest and most prestigious. William Leslie Welton, one of the city's most distinguished architects, was associated with New York architect J.E.R. Carpenter in the design and building of the apartments with their notable two-story-arch motif. As a luxury apartment hotel, it featured private porches with floors of red promenade tile and self-watering flower boxes, a roof garden featuring a children's playground, a laundry and a house telephone service, lobby, cafe, and first-floor shops. The financier for the building was Major Edward Magruder Tutwiler, an early entrepreneur in coal, coke and iron, who developed it for his friend Robert Jemison, Jr., probably the city's single most influential developer.

Description: The Ridgely is an eight-story building faced in deep red brick with cream colored terra cotta details. It is designed in a modified U-shape to facilitate maximum exposure to light and air. The southern side of the building, on the low end of a north slope, provides ground floor retail space. The main east facade fronts on a courtyard within the U of the building. A brick drive curves through the courtyard in front of the building. The main entrance is framed by a marble porch with Corinthian pilasters and a cornice with dentils. The next six floors above the entrance have recessed balconies, the top two of which are framed within a trio of compound arches of Venetian Renaissance derivation. A pair of cartouches hangs above the joints of the archivolt. Chicago-style sash windows frame the central recessed balconies and the porch. The motifs of the central bay are repeated around the building. The first floor windows are framed in terra cotta with false balconies. All of the other windows are paired or single sash. A wide continuous sill below the second floor windows serves as a beltcourse to further distinguish the base from the upper floors. The cornice has been removed and a wide band of stucco replaces it. Balconies below the arched windows on the street facades were also removed. The interior remains essentially intact, echoing the simple classicism used on the exterior. The lobby has marble wainscoting and balusters.



Scale 1" = 400'

Ridgely Apartments - Inventory # 4  
Apartment/hotels in Birmingham, Alabama 1900-1930  
State of Alabama  
Department of Revenue, Ad Valorem Division