

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

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

1. Name

historic ³¹⁰ ~~Three Ten~~ West Church Street Apartments

and/or common Ambassador Hotel

2. Location

street & number 420 ~~North~~ Julia Street N/A not for publication

city, town Jacksonville N/A vicinity of congressional district N/A

state Florida code 12 county Duval code 031

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 checked="" 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
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input 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 Easton Land and Development, Inc.

street & number 225 North Liberty Street

city, town Jacksonville N/A vicinity of state Florida 32202

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Duval County Courthouse

street & number 330 E. Bay Street

city, town Jacksonville state Florida

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title N/A has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date N/A N/A federal N/A state N/A county N/A local

depository for survey records N/A

city, town N/A state N/A

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" 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 Ambassador Hotel, originally known as the 310 West Church Street Apartments, is a six story residential building designed in the Beaux-arts eclectic manner. It is constructed of reinforced concrete with a cast stone and English bond brick exterior and occupies the northeast corner of block 50 in downtown Jacksonville, Florida, bounded by Duval (south), North Pearl (west), West Church (north) and Julia (east) Streets. Three additional buildings are located in the block, all of them constructed after 1950. A comparatively small one-story structure, used as a residence and office, is situated on the immediate west side of the hotel and a four-story bank on its south side. Nearly half the block is devoted to a parking space. Across Julia Street, on the hotel's east side, is a multi-story modern office building. The new Federal Reserve Bank Building (1958) sits diagonally across the intersection of Church and Julia Streets. Only two buildings occupy the block that is across Church Street to the north of the hotel; parking lots constitute the remainder of that block. A red brick one and one-half story church rests on its southeast corner immediately north of the Ambassador Hotel. The hotel is thus set in a fully urban area occupied exclusively by office buildings and parking lots. The buildings in this area are well maintained and by day, when office or business hours are observed, populated.

Working in the Georgian Revival Style that was a common theme in Hentz, Reid and Adler's Beaux-arts eclectic manner, Hal F. Hentz designed the 310 West Church Street Apartments in accord with a scheme the firm often used for large apartment buildings. Under this plan, the body of the edifice served as a background for a rich entrance motif.

The main entrance, centered on the north facade, was formed by massive rusticated ashlar stonework set with a scroll keystone. A diamond-paned transom and wooden panelled double doors were set within that frame. An arched pediment, broken by the central pair of windows, rose at an approximately thirty-five degree angle from the stonework. The central pair of windows is additionally flanked by scrolls rising from the broken pediment and capped by an arched pediment elaborated with a scallop motif in its tympanum. This distinguished entrance has been altered by the addition of brickwork to create a small balcony below which the doorway is set. An insubstantial canopy extends above the balcony.

The first story of the building consists of a high, smooth ashlar scored water table, separated from the upper four stories by a shallow stringcourse. The red brick walls above the first story are set in English bond and articulated in shallow planes accented by rusticated ashlar cast stone quoins. There is a single stringcourse below the top story windows and a deep cornice above them. Rising from the cornice is a brick parapet with cast stone finials. The rounded pediment at the top of the building spans the central pair of quoins and repeats

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 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 checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates +1923, 1950 **Builder/Architect** Hentz, Reid and Adler (Architect)

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Built in the midst of the Florida Boom, the 310 West Church Apartments is one of the few remnants of an area of great Jacksonville hotels that begin in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and ended with the economic collapse of the late 1920's. Only two major hotel or apartment buildings constructed before 1927 remain in the city. The 310 Building is the older of the two. Among the extant hotels or apartments in Jacksonville, it is the only structure that exhibits a traditional architectural style, providing visual testimony to the sophistication that once attended the city's urban development. The quietly elegant building, designed in the Georgian Revival Style, represented locally the work of one of the South's leading architectural firms, Hentz, Reid and Adler, authoritatively described as "undoubtedly the most outstanding of the Atlanta architectural firms practicing Beaux-Arts eclecticism in the early twentieth century".¹ For several decades, its Jacksonville, building provided a stately anchor on the edge of the city's thriving business and commercial district. The 310 West Church Street Apartments was also an important residential and meeting space for local and state business and political leaders and in 1950 was the campaign headquarters for George Smathers during his successful campaign for the senate seat of Claude Pepper.

The apartment house was built for clients of the Adair Realty and Trust Company, an Atlanta-based firm that maintained a branch office in Jacksonville. The Adair Company formed a locally chartered firm, the 310 West Church Street Corporation, to manage the apartments and selected the building's name in keeping with the company's policy of incorporating the address in the name to make it distinctive and "leave no doubt to where the new apartment is."² The project was undertaken in response to demand for small apartments with hotel service, according to the Times-Union. The 310 Apartments offered features comparable to the most exclusive apartment houses in large eastern cities. Its amenities included a downstairs cafe, elevators, switchboard connections in all apartments, servidors to allow grocery deliveries during a resident's absence, adequate garages, and a special back entrance to accomodate motorists.

At the time the 310 Apartments Building was constructed, Jacksonville was experiencing an unprecedented period of growth.⁴ But the three large hotel or apartment buildings erected between 1923 and 1926 proved to be the last of an era that began in the 1870's when the city's thriving tourist industry encouraged development of a number of large hotels whose ornate appearance and ostentatious service earned them a national reputation.⁵ The great fire of 1901 destroyed most

9. Major Bibliographical References

(See continuation sheet # 4 Bibliography)

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one

Quadrangle name USGS Jacksonville, Florida

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

A

1	7	4	3	6	4	3	0	3	3	5	5	4	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

North 30 feet lot 3 and lot 6 block 50 (Jacksonville Hart's Map.) Boundary includes all significant area associated with nominated property.

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

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Paul L. Weaver, III Historic Sites Specialist

organization Bureau of Historic Sites and Properties date February 23, 1983

street & number The Capitol telephone (904) 487-2333

city or town Tallahassee state Florida

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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature 

title State Historic Preservation Officer

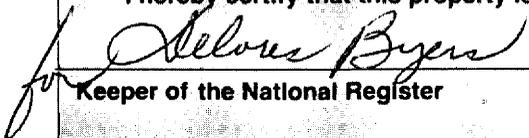
date February 23, 1983

For HCRS use only

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

Entered in the
National Register

date 4/7/83


Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
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Present and Original Physical Appearance, continued

in magnified size the arched pediment above the main entrance. There are three pair of windows placed vertically between the two pediments. Between the upper pair is a cast stone scroll.

Although the east elevation exhibits a deep central recess flanked by two projecting wings on all but the lowest story of the building, the decorative elements are comparable to those of the north facade. The quions, stringcourse, cornice and parapet are all repeated. The water table continues, but appears much deeper on this side because the building rests on ground that slopes downward from north to south. Thus, while the water table on the north contains only one horizontal row of windows, it here includes two rows.

There are two entries on the Julia Street side of the building. The central one consists of glass doors flanked by glass brick windows on either side, a streamlined parapet over the doorway, and a metal canopy projecting from above. The glass brick windows, glass doors, and a canopy were added when this part of the building was altered in the 1940's. At that time, the central east entry was brought up flush with the sidewalk. Originally, the entry was located in the recessed portion of the east side, where the street approach was framed by a balustrade that reached from the projecting north and south portions of the building to the walk that extended from the Julia Street sidewalk.

A second entry on the Julia Street side is located on the south edge of the building. Originally it consisted of a pair of wooden doors. This doorway, which now provides entry to a cafe, has been altered through the installation of a small recessed area leading to two glass doors. An aluminum canopy juts out over the sidewalk from the recessed doorway.

Interior decorative elements remain in evidence in the several rooms that were observed, including a cast plaster molding adjoining the walls and ceiling and in the larger rooms or suites, a recessed arch set within the walls that is symmetrical to an archway separating the dining and living rooms. The floor is terrazo tile. The interior portions have suffered deterioration, but in any renovation process the dominating characteristics, the archways, molding and perhaps the servidors (which remain though they are not presently used), will most likely be retained.

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Present and Original Physical Appearance, continued

Viewed from the street, the building appears much as it did in the 1920's. With the exception of the relatively insignificant details noted, its present condition is close to the original. Only upon close examination can the deterioration of the wood sills be noticed. Otherwise the fabric looks good and the structure solid and stable, reflecting its excellent design and construction.

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State of Significance, continued

of the nineteenth century hotels. Only one, the Windsor, was rebuilt on the ashes of the old, but in subsequent decades the survivors, which included the Aragon, Everett, and Gregg, were joined by additional large hotels such as the Seminole (1910), Burbridge (1911) and Mason (1913), reclaiming the city's tradition of fine hotelery. Beginning with the razing of the Windsor in 1950, all save the Ambassador and the Roosevelt (1926) have been destroyed. The latter, now known as the Carling, has been severely altered and is no longer used as a hotel, leaving the present Ambassador as the only major pre-Depression structure of its kind in Jacksonville that preserves its traditional appearance and offers visual evidence of a significant part of the city's architectural and social history.

The 310 West Church Street Apartments Building was constructed in 1923, some fourteen years after Hal F. Hentz and Neel Reid had organized their Atlanta architectural firm and a mere three years before Reid's untimely death. The two young architects first met in Atlanta in 1904. After further study together at Columbia University during 1905-06, they traveled to Paris to attend the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, which then provided the model for American architectural schools and exerted enormous influence over architecture in the United States. Returning to Atlanta they began practice in 1909 and were joined in 1915 by Rudolf Adler, a graduate of Columbia University's School of Architecture. In the partnership, Reid served as principal, though not the only designer, while Adler took the role of business manager. Upon Reid's death in 1926, the firm became Hentz, Adler and Shutze with the addition of Philip Trammel Shutze, the oldest continuous architectural practice in Atlanta.⁶

Hentz, Reid and Adler undertook commissions ranging from residential to large commercial designs, although they are best known for their residential work. Particularly notable were their houses in the Druid Hills and West Paces Ferry Road areas of Atlanta, which "represent a high quality of eclectic design."⁷ Among the public and commercial structures designed by the firm about the same time as the 310 West Church Street Apartments were Michael Brothers' Store (Athens, Georgia, 1922), "perhaps the most successful commercial building in a Renaissance manner by Hentz, Reid and Adler;"⁸ Tapley Hall and Sisters' Chapel (Atlanta, 1923), both simple but interesting evocations of American Georgian architecture;⁹ and the Masee Apartments (Macon, Georgia

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Statement of Significance, continued

1924), an eight-story Georgian Revival structure having much in common with the Jacksonville apartment house.¹⁰

The 310 West Church Street Apartments represent the work of Hentz, Reid and Adler in several important ways. As a large apartment building, it strikes a midpoint between the firm's residential and commercial production. It follows the Georgian Revival style that was one of the partnership's most frequent themes. It also reveals a keen use of scale, one of the hallmarks of Neel Reid's work,¹¹ although Hal Hentz's name on the original plans indicates that he was the designer for this project.¹² Like the Masee Apartments, 310 West Church "follow(s) a scheme often used by Hentz, Reid and Adler for their larger apartment buildings with the body of the building treated as a background to a rich entrance motif."¹³ The massive rusticated ashlar and arched pediment of the main entrance are reiterated in the double rusticated quoins edging the central bay and the large arched pediment above the cornice line.

The edifice, reputedly "Jacksonville's first big downtown apartment building," opened in 1923 with all apartments already rented.¹⁴ It was operated as an apartment building or apartment hotel until about 1944, when it became the Hotel Three-Ten. It was the Hotel Southland briefly (ca. 1947), but by 1949 the name had changed to the Griner Hotel and the address had been moved from 310 West Church Street to 420 North Julia Street. By 1955, the building had become the Ambassador Hotel, which it remains today.¹⁵

The property was purchased in 1943 by Charles B. Griner, the vice-president and manager of the Floridan Hotel and the Hotel Roosevelt. The facility was then and continued for a time, however, to be managed by the real estate firm of Telfair Stockton, established by one of Jacksonville's most prominent figures, a state legislator, newspaper owner, and mortgage broker.¹⁶ Griner, who was a personal friend of financier Ed Ball, executor of the Dupont estate, and of Jacksonville attorney and businessman, Daughtery Towers, purchased the hotel and apartment building in the conviction held by many members of the business community at the time that the city was "moving eastward."¹⁷

In 1950, another of Griner's friends, Florida Congressman George Smathers, set up campaign headquarters in the hotel from where he directed his successful senatorial race against incumbent United States Senator Claude Pepper in one

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Statement of Significance, continued

of Florida's most memorable electoral contests.¹⁸ Following Griner's death in 1955, his widow sold the property, only to regain it upon default by the mortgagor. On that occasion, she recalls, Ed Ball and Towers advised her to destroy the building. But Mrs. Griner demurred. "I didn't see it. They had tore down every other hotel around there."¹⁹

In 1973 The Easton Land and Development Company, the present owner, purchased the structure, which it continues to operate as a hotel, though some portions have been closed because of their deteriorated condition.

The present owner intends to return the former apartment to its original use upon completion of a thorough renovation. It would be a welcome readdition to downtown Jacksonville, which like most urban areas has suffered abandonment of its central core by residents. Equally significant, the rehabilitation and reuse of the building would insure survival of an important symbol of Jacksonville's age of tourism, great hotels, and enthusiastic growth.

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1. American Institute of Architects, Guide to Atlanta (Atlanta: AIA Chapter, 1975), p.35
2. Sunday Times-Union, Jacksonville, Florida, February 4, 1923.
3. Ibid.
4. James Robertson Ward and Dena Snodgrass, Old Hickory's Town (Jacksonville, Florida Publishing Company, 1982), p. 208.
5. For a description of Jacksonville's great hotels, see T. Frederick Davis, History of Jacksonville, Florida and Vicinity. (St. Augustine: Florida Historical Society, 1925), pp. 486-495; and Louise Frisbee, Florida's Fabled Inns (Bartow, Florida: Imperial Publishing Company, 1980), chapter two.
6. James Grady, Architecture of Neel Reid in Atlanta (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1973), pp. x-xii, xxii.
7. American Institute of Architects, Guide to Atlanta, p. 111.
8. Grady, Architecture of Neel Reid..., p. 168.
9. Ibid., p. 172
10. Ibid., pp. 176-178.
11. Ibid., p. xxii.
12. Plans for Apartment at 310 West Church Street Corporation, Job No. 505, 1926 (Plans on file at School of Architecture Library, Georgia Institute of Technology, Atlanta).
13. Grady, Architecture of Neel Reid..., p. 176.
14. Sunday Times-Union, Jacksonville: Florida, October 26, 1924.
15. R. L. Polk Company, Polk's Jacksonville City Directory (Jacksonville and Richmond: R. L. Polk and Company, 1923-1966), passim.
16. Jacksonville Journal, Jacksonville, Florida, September 9, 1942.

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17. Interview with Doris Griner, widow of Charles Griner, Jacksonville, Florida, January 26, 1983.
18. A bronze placque attached to the wall outside Room 105 notes the event.
19. Griner interview, January 26, 1983.

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Oral Interviews

Griner, Doris. Widow of Charles Griner. December 18, 1982 and January 27, 1983. Jacksonville, Florida.

Reese, Clyde. Attorney for the Griner estate. January 27, 1983. Jacksonville, Florida.