

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

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NATIONAL REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Coulter Flats  
other names/site number The Coulter

2. Location

street & number 2161 North Meridian Street N/A not for publication  
city, town Indianapolis N/A vicinity  
state IN code IN county Marion code 097 zip code 46202

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> objects
		<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A  
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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.  See continuation sheet.  
Jane Costello 4-9-90  
Signature of certifying official Date  
Indiana Department of Natural Resources  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.  
Signature of commenting or other official Date  
State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:  
 entered in the National Register. Patrick Andrus 5/31/90  
 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:)

for Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

## 6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling

COMMERCE: specialty store

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling

## 7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Jacobean Revival

Craftsman

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation BRICK

walls BRICK

TERRA COTTA

roof METAL

other METAL: iron

ASPHALT

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

Erected in 1907, Coulter Flats is a three story detached apartment building which rests on a raised basement. Coulter Flats has exterior walls of reddish-brown face brick with buff colored terra cotta ornamentation on the west (main) facade. Interior walls consist of hollow clay tile and concrete framing. It is approximately 65 feet long and 56 feet wide. The building is situated at a slight angle to Meridian Street.

The immediate surroundings consist of historic and non-historic commercial and residential structures randomly interspersed. Meridian Street itself is a busy, four lane thoroughfare. This street is the "cardo" or east-west divider of Indianapolis. This near-northside portion of the city has nearly flat terrain.

Architecturally, Coulter Flats is an eclectic statement. The combination of contrasting brick and terra cotta, heavy classical ornamentation, and use of Flemish gables indicate a Jacobean Revival influence, while the dominant porches and interior details reflect the fully developed Craftsman Style. In many respects, Coulter Flats may reflect the Mannerist/Early Baroque style buildings found in the town squares of many Low Country cities. (This would be roughly contemporary with the actual Jacobean era in England.) The use of Flemish gables and the boldly scaled Classical details of the entry show the Low Country influence. The bathroom windows, which are etched with windmill scenes, may also be an allusion to the Low Counties.

The west or main elevation of the building faces onto Meridian Street. This elevation consists of three sections - a central entry/staircase section flanked by projecting three story porches.

The central entrance section is the focus of the main facade. The main entrance to the building is formed entirely out of terra cotta with two Tuscan columns flanking the main door (photo 5). The entablature, also out of terra cotta, above the columns is fairly simple consisting of un-ornamented cyma recta, a fascia, cyma reversa and dentils, then the frieze, where the building numbers are located, a cyma reversa and another fascia (photo 6). Above the portico is a balcony for the first landing. The balcony is also entirely formed out of a terra cotta and framed with large terra cotta blocks is a Baroque surround with a large terra cotta keystone above the door opening.

See continuation sheet

**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally     statewide     locally

Applicable National Register Criteria     A     B     C     D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)     A     B     C     D     E     F     G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: Urban Growth

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1907 - 1930

Significant Dates

1907

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

Coulter Flats is significant under Criterion A as a good representative of the growth and development of Indianapolis. Criterion C also applies to the Coulter because it is a fine combination of Jacobean Revival exterior detailing with Craftsman style interiors. The exuberant use of architectural terra-cotta makes this building especially noteworthy in Indianapolis.

Coulter Flats was constructed in 1907 for David A. Coulter, a prominent Indianapolis insurance and real estate entrepreneur, and one of the founders of the Indianapolis Metropolitan Board of Realtors (MIBOR) in 1911. He was a continuous member until his death at age 80 in 1950. This was the first apartment building constructed by Mr. Coulter. Built when he was 37 years of age, the building may have been the first flat constructed north of the mile square on Meridian Street. From this first project, Mr. Coulter went into partnership with E. G. Spink, also a prominent early 20th century Indianapolis developer, building and managing large apartment buildings. Mr. Coulter also subdivided a large portion of eastern Indianapolis by Post Road and Washington Streets. He also constructed and operated the Ohio Theater (now demolished). Coulter Flats is the last surviving example of the kind and quality of work this developer created.

Upon opening Coulter Flats, Mr. Coulter moved into his new building. The first tenants included the upperclass clientele that its Meridian Street address demanded. Upon the opening of the Marott in 1926, the prestige of the 2161 North Meridian Street address diminished somewhat, however, it still attracted an upper middle class group. Among the earliest tenants was George Schley, a patent attorney and partner in the firm of Schley, Trask & Jenkins. Mr. Schley was instrumental in gaining the patent for the development of insulin for the Eli Lilly Company. Jacob Wolf, president of the Old Star Store and later an executive with H. P. Wasson & Company lived at Coulter Flats from 1914 to 1921.

See continuation sheet

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

Building Permit Fee Registers and Indexes, City Microfilm Division, City of Indianapolis, City-County Building, 1907 book.

"City of Homes. . . In Apartments and Flats," Indianapolis News, January 28, 1905.

Dunn, Jacob Piatt, Greater Indianapolis, Vols. I & II. Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1910.

Indiana Biography Series, Indiana State Library: George Schey, Vol. 56, p. 78. E. G. Spink, Vol. 11, p. 234-35. Olive, Vol. 47, p. 58. David A. Coulter, Vol. 35, p. 92.

Indianapolis City Directories. Indianapolis: R. L. Polk and Company, 1907 - 1903.

See continuation sheet

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

Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of property Less than one acre

UTM References

A 

1	6
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5	7	2	1	9	0
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4	4	0	5	3	1	0
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Zone      Easting      Northing

C 

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B 

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Zone      Easting      Northing

D 

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Lots 36 and 37, except 44 feet off of the entire southside of said Lot 37, in Lazarus and Pierce's Meridian Place Addition, now in the City of Indianapolis, as per plat thereof, recorded in Plat Book 8, page 192, in the Office of the Recorder of Marion County, Indiana.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

This is the historic property boundary.

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title John Everett Davis

organization D. Everett Alan Construction Co. date July 11, 1989

street & number 703 East 30th St., #7 telephone 317/926-9100

city or town Indianapolis state IN zip code 46205

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The smaller blocks in the surround are decorated with an egg and dart pattern that accents the terra cotta ceiling over this balcony. The railing for the balcony is out of ornamental iron, all hand assembled with out welding (photo 7). The second landing balcony is supported by two large consoles (photo 7). This balcony is accented in a similar manner as the first, including the railings and terra cotta surround. A large roundel formed in terra cotta, surrounded by ornamental fruit and also formed in terra cotta, caps the second balcony (photo 8.) Each balcony originally had French doors which had been removed. The French doors have been recently replaced.

Flanking the entrance in the center section are two below-grade basement entries. A terra cotta beltcourse runs across the west elevation at the first floor sill level. On each of the three stories of the building, one window stands to either side of the entrance/landing bays. These windows are large, wooden, six-over-six double hung sash with terra cotta sills and lintels. The lintels are in the form of a flat arch with a projecting keystone (photo 3). All hip roofs visible from any elevation are roofed with standing seam roofing (photo 10), however, the main roof is flat and not visible. The pitched roof running between the two bays is flat and not visible. The pitched roof running between the two bays is also of standing seam roofing and supported by terra cotta brackets (photo 11).

As mentioned earlier, two three story porch bays flank the entrance section giving each of the six flats its own porch (photo 11). A low wall with banded brick surrounds the first story porch. The walls have large rectangular openings on the front and sides which served as storefronts (The basement originally had commercial use). Decorative iron bars are still found on some of these openings (photo 13). Massive square brick piers support the first and second stories of the porch (photo 22). The columns have cavetto molding bases and stylized capitals with keystones and egg-and-dart moldings, both in terra cotta.

Large wood beams disguised with cornice and dentil moldings make up the second floor porches (photo 19). The second and third floor porches have cut-out balustrades. Both of these porches also have wood floors. All of the porches have exposed wood ceiling beams (photo 189).

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The brick columns terminate at the third floor porch level, where they support a box gutter-cornice. The third floors porch feature battered square wood columns which are tripled at the western corners. Above these are hip roofs covered in standing seam metal (photo 10).

Within each porch is a semi-hexagonal bay window with terra cotta entablature lintels. The front face of each bay has full length multi-paned French doors, while the sides have six-over-one windows.

Following the bay windows up, one finds a semi-hexagonal, paneled, terra cotta parapet, or battlement above the hipped porch roof. Behind this, each of the porch sections is topped by a Flemish gable with terra cotta copings. In the center of each gable, above the battlement, is a terra cotta quatre-foil (photo 4). The Flemish gables mask the flat roof of the building.

The north and south elevations are identical (photo 14). The treatment here is very functional. The main feature of interest is a three story, galvanized metal oriel window which is supported on brick corbels at the first floor. The oriels are centered in each elevation, semi-hexagonal in plan, and have simple panels. Each face has a six-over-one window.

Other window placement and type varies. Openings located west of the oriel have terra cotta sills and lintels and small casement windows (corresponding to interior fireplaces). Openings located east of the oriel are semental arched and fitted with rectangular one-over-one windows.

The rear or east elevation is even more plain (photo 2). This elevation has a U-shaped light well. Most of the window openings are segmental arched, but there are rectangular openings on the back or west wall of the well. All windows are one-over-one sash. Two below grade basement entries are located on the west wall of the well. There is a single plain exterior chimney in the well which probably served a furnace or incinerator.

The interior consists of six flats, two to a floor, over its three main floors. A central staircase is located to the front of the building. There are also two retail spaces in the basement level with their own entrances from Meridian street. Each of the flats

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consists of 9 rooms including three bedrooms, one bath, formal dining room, large living room, kitchen and a pantry.

The entrance into the building is panelled in white marble with grey streaks with grey marble base providing accents at the floor (photo 15). The floor is of inlaid tile set in a base of mortar (photo 16). Each of the units is accessible from the main stairs. The stairs are constructed of a steel framework (photo 18) overlaid on the ceilings with plaster. The stair treads are of white marble, as are the risers. At each landing (two total) are a set of 10 light french doors opening out to a small balcony framed in terra cotta panels and exhibiting an ornamental iron railing (photo 3, 17).

All interior doors are constructed of African Mahogany and are two panel doors (photo 23). The doors to all of the bedrooms are two panel on the front and one panel on the back to accommodate a full length mirror. The windows are primarily double hung units, though there are two casement windows in the living room flanking a gas fireplace (photo 24). The windows on the west elevation are six over one 1 3/4" sash (photo 25), the windows in the dining room are also six over one, however, they are 1 5/8" sash (photo 26). All other windows are one-over-one, 1 5/8" sash (photo 27). The glass is unremarkable except for the panes in the bath which have been etched to opaque with a windmill pattern (photo 28).

The dining room exhibits two remarkable features - first, it alone, is finished in oak and exhibits a large ornate plate rail with oak panel divisors around the room; and it also exhibits box beams on the ceiling (photo 29, 30). The entrance to the dining area can be reached through a large set of pocket doors from the living room (photo 31) or through a large cased arch from the main hall. The arch is three-centered and is supported by fluted pilasters. The arch is cased in oak on the dining room side but with African Mahogany on the hall side (photo 32). The dining room also incorporates a bay which is covered on the exterior with galvanized metal (photo 26). The living room has a massive plaster crown mold around the entire perimeter (photo 33) and a large brick fireplace centered along the wall opposite the entrance. The fireplace has a simple mantle with large modillions under the shelf (photo 34, 35). The floor in the dining room and the living room is oak with a teak border strip ornamenting the otherwise unremarkable floor. Each of the bedrooms has a picture

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rail located approximately 8 feet off the floor. Each also has a small closet (photo 36). In the front bedroom closet there is a small fixed pane window that overlooks the front entrance. The kitchens have been stripped and no indication of their original layout or detail remains. The pantry consists of a two large cabinets and one smaller set of drawers (photo 37). The pantry is located between the dining room and the kitchen. The bath is typical except for its inlaid tile floor set in a deep mortar base and its etched window.

Alterations were made to the building by the second owner. These alterations enabled this owner to accommodate 9 units. In both of the first floor units the pantry was converted to a bath and the arched opening closed in so that two units could be created. The wall dividing the master bedroom from the main hall was removed. One unit was an efficiency and one was a one bedroom. These alterations were done without regard to the integrity of the structure or the significance of its details. The entrances to the retail space were separated from the main entrance with concrete block instead of the ornamental iron railing evident in other areas of the structure. Terra cotta details had been painted over and iron work over the basement windows had been cut or removed in many cases. The property had had some of its marble destroyed by vandalism over the years and a number of doors have likewise been ruined. The effects of wind and weather have also not been kind. The building's terra cotta columns were cracked and a large portion of the ornamental panels were in immediate need of attention to prevent their destruction.

In 1989, a potential certified rehabilitation was undertaken on Coulter Flats. (Conditional approval for Part 2 was granted October 19, 1989). The general scope of work included repointing damaged brick work, resetting cracked terra cotta, installation of new aluminum storm windows, and the replacement of rear fire escapes on the exterior. Missing French doors were replaced in the front balconies. Windows were repaired, several damaged sash were replaced. On the interior, the building was returned to its six-unit plan by removing the above described later partitions. Several of the cased arches in the dining rooms needed to be replicated due to past alterations. The kitchen/pantry areas were modified by removing pantry walls, installing a new master bathroom in the former kitchen and installing new kitchen equipment in the former pantry.



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HVAC systems were installed for each unit to replace the original steam heat. A gas furnace was installed in the former kitchen and ductwork was run in concealed areas by lowering ceilings or adding bulkheads. The ductwork was added without disturbing the original woodwork.

Site work included the construction of two carports to the rear. Since the carports do not have enclosing walls, they were not considered permanent buildings and are not included in the resource count.

In short, the rehabilitation has returned the building to a functional state while preserving its most significant features.

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Mr. Frank C. Olive, an Indianapolis attorney and former state legislator was a resident beginning in 1917. Mr. Olive was a partner in the firm of Olive, Knox & O'Harra. He was also a member of the house of delegates of the American Bar Association. Mr. Frank Wampler, appointed by Governor McCray in 1923 to be a member of the Public Service Commission and a former executive with Indiana Bell Telephone, was a resident from 1919 to 1926. Mr. Louis Chevrolet, the builder of the first Chevrolet car and a race car driver, lived in the building in 1930.

The period in which Coulter Flats was constructed was one of a flurry of development activity in Indianapolis. Between the years 1890 and 1920 the population of the city increased almost 200%, growing from 105,000 to 314,000. Though this increase is substantial by itself, when analyzed in terms of the make up of that population increase, it becomes even more significant. During the same period, the percentage of foreign-born residents decreased to a level of 8% in 1920. This suggests that the increase was primarily from net in-migration from the rural areas surrounding the city. Housing for these new residents, many of whom did not have the financial wherewithal to purchase a home, was to come primarily from the development of multi-family dwellings. These dwellings, many constructed in closer proximity to the center of the city, but all convenient to the economic and social hub of the city, proved to be the solution to this rapid increase in population. An article in the Indianapolis News in January 1905 list 165 flats that were within the downtown area. This growth in apartment living was further fueled by the emergence of the working woman as a factor in the workplace. Two of the earliest residents of Coulter Flats were working women. Buildings such as Coulter Flats are one property type which illustrate the dramatic growth of Indianapolis from 1890-1930.

At the beginning of the century, there were two distinctive styles of apartments in the city - the first was "the apartment", this consisted of a suite of 2 or 3 rooms without a kitchen. The second type was "the flat", which contained 5 to 7 rooms and included a kitchen. Flats could also be commercial/flats, which contained commercial space on the ground level and living spaces on the second floors. There were many types of flats constructed during this period, and an extremely popular one was the "Eastern Style." The eastern style consisted of a building, usually no more than three stories tall, with two flats to a floor. Several

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of these types of flats have been placed on the National Register through the thematic nomination "Apartments and Flats of Downtown Indianapolis Thematic Resources" (listed 9-15-83). This nomination was to include all historic apartment buildings which met certain integrity criteria and are located in the "interloop" downtown area of Indianapolis. (The "interloop" is the area which is encircled by interstates 70 and 65.) Since Coulter Flats is located about one mile north of this area, it was not included in that nomination. The "apartments and flats" nomination defined the above building typology, into which Coulter Flats fits. Coulter Flats is an eastern style flat with commercial space in the basement. This is certainly not typical of the style, in fact few examples of it remain in the city. However, David Coulter, realizing the value of a prime Meridian Street address, took advantage of his location and created retail space. This example was followed in the construction of the Marott Tower by his friend and business partner, E. G. Spink. When evaluated in the context of other apartment buildings in Indianapolis, the Coulter is comparable with the finest Eastern Flats in terms of its association with local real estate development, interior and exterior integrity, and quality of architectural design. The period of significance for Coulter Flats should probably be set at 1907 - 1930, since this would correspond with its association to population increases and real estate development in Indianapolis.

Coulter Flats is eligible under Criterion C as a well detailed example of Jacobean Revival complemented by fine Craftsman interiors. Characteristics indicative of the Jacobean Revival which are seen on Coulter Flats include: The use of contrasting brick and masonry, Flemish gables, and the fanciful Baroque-style entry composition. The Jacobean Revival style is closely allied with the Tudor Revival style, which first appeared in Indianapolis in about 1905. Two of the earliest known examples include the Van Camp House of 1905-06 (demolished) and the Glossbrenner Mansion of 1909 (NRHP, 2-19-82). The "Jacobean" variation did not become popular until the 1920s. This places the Coulter (1907) among the earliest examples of this style in the city.

The same case could be made for the Craftsman interiors of Coulter Flats. The Craftsman style was first introduced to Indianapolis in about 1905, but by 1910, it quickly became a popular housing style (especially seen in the bungalow type). The interiors of the Coulter were therefore early examples of Craftsman detailing

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in Indianapolis. Few other Eastern flats or apartments in the city have the level of Craftsman style detail seen in the Coulter. (The Buckingham Apartments, 1910, at 3100 North Meridian and the Esplanade, 1913, 3100 North Pennsylvania Street are two other good examples of apartments with Craftsman interiors.)

The craftsmanship of Coulter Flats is outstanding. Most noteworthy is the architectural terra cotta on the west elevation which is extremely elaborate for a building of this period (prior to WWI) in the city. After about 1920, terra cotta work became increasingly popular in Indianapolis, and it was not uncommon to have entire facades composed of the material.

Unfortunately, the architect of the Coulter is unknown, although it bears a close resemblance to the works of Rubush & Hunter and Frank Hunter.

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Bibliography (continued)

"Indianapolis Keeps on Building Flats, Has Built More This Year Than Ever and is Now Erecting Them Far From City Center,"  
"Indianapolis News, December 9, 1905.

Interviews with John Davis, Done During 1989: Coulter, Ms. Mary Catherine, daughter of David A. Coulter. Schwartz, Mr. Seymour, son-in-law of second owner of building.

National Register of Historic Places Nomination - Inventory Form.  
"Apartments and Flats of Downtown Indianapolis Thematic Resources,"  
Listed 9-15-83, Authors: Niggle, Karen S.; Roberson, Samuel;  
and Roberson, Sheryl.

"Obituary of David A. Coulter," Indianapolis Star, November 5, 1950.

"Obituary of Edgar Spink," Indianapolis News, March 18, 1927.

United States Bureau of the Census, Vol. 1, 1880, 1890, 1900, 1910, 1920.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

A preliminary determination of individual listing for Coulter Flats was approved on 9-18-89 (#10596 IN). Part II received a conditional approval on 9-29-89.