

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

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

For NPS use only

received

date entered

APR 18 1984

## 1. Name

historic Apartment/hotels in Birmingham, Alabama (1900-1930) TR

and/or common

## 2. Location

street & number see individual inventory sheets

NA not for publication

city, town Birmingham

NA vicinity of

state Alabama

code 01

county Jefferson

code 073

## 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 type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	NA	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: apartments

## 4. Owner of Property

name see individual inventory sheets

street & number

city, town

vicinity of

state

## 5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Jefferson County Courthouse

street & number City Hall

city, town Birmingham,

state Alabama 35203

## 6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Alabama Inventory

has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☒ no

date 1970 - present

☐ federal ☒ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records Alabama Historical Commission

city, town Montgomery

state Alabama

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## 7. Description

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**Condition**☐ excellent☐ good☐ fair☐ deteriorated☐ ruins☐ unexposed**Check one**☐ unaltered☐ altered**Check one**☐ original site☐ moved

date \_\_\_\_\_

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**Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance**

see individual forms

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

**Specific dates** see individual forms **Builder/Architect** see individual forms

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Apartment Hotels of Birmingham (1900-1930) Thematic Group Nomination consists of the only four apartment hotels built during that period. The earliest--the Ridgely--was built in 1914 and the remaining three were constructed a decade later, around 1924-25.

The apartment hotel represented a uniquely urban phenomenon which arose as an attempt to market to an increasingly mobile and transient society as well as to an increasingly affluent and urbane populace. Such city dwellers desired convenient and luxurious accommodations as well as what was considered a more wholesome environment for children. The apartment hotel was unique in that not only could the permanent resident enjoy the luxury and services of a hotel within the privacy of a homelike atmosphere, but the traveling businessman could also find such accommodations and could, in addition, bring his family with him. The buildings' architecture reflected this new living concept with one eye toward luxury, convenience and the prevention of undesirable tenants and spectators, and the other eye toward privacy and a homelike atmosphere.

### ARCHITECTURE: Criterion C

The four buildings included in this nomination are good local examples of apartment hotels and exhibit the common features associated with such structures--public lounges built close to the elevators to prevent loungers, large common lobbies and common dining areas, accommodations for maids/valets/butlers or for live-in servants, first-floor shops, courtyards, long narrow corridors easily accessible by each apartment and to elevators, formal and elegant dining rooms, laundry service, switchboards, courtyard/play areas for children, and a mixture of efficiency and full-sized apartments.

Each of the buildings has retained use of the common lobby; the retention of other determinant features varies from building to building. In two cases (The Altamont - NRHP - Five Points South Historic District - 1983; and the Ridgely) first-floor shops remain. In addition, the Claridge Manor and the Highland Plaza continue to rent to short-term residents. All four are on original lot locations and have retained use of their courtyards (except in the case of the Claridge which had instead a landscaped lawn, still in use).

\* \* \* \* \*

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

N/A

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property See individual forms

Quadrangle name Birmingham North

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References See individual forms

A 

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Zone Easting Northing

B 

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Zone Easting Northing

C 

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D 

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E 

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F 

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G 

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H 

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Verbal boundary description and justification

See individual forms

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

state NA code county code

state code county code

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Pamela Sterne King, Historic Preservationist, and Ellen Mertins

organization Alabama Historical Commission date 6-13-83

street & number 725 Monroe Street telephone 205-261-3184

city or town Montgomery state Alabama

## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

   national    state   X   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 National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature 

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date 4-12-84

For NPS use only

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

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

## HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

As a phenomenon the construction of apartment/hotels began around 1905 and its initial showpieces were in such cities as Detroit and Chicago. Their financiers and builders sought to tap into the apartment building market, but with a twist. They hoped to attract the more affluent classes--both native residents and visiting businessmen--who desired luxury, comfort, privacy, a "wholesome" environment for their children, and accessibility to the city's commercial district. These desires as well as the interaction of a building boom, new-found prosperity, the soaring cost of land, and a revolution in household technology coalesced into the creation of the apartment/hotel. There would be none of the stigma--albeit a waning one-- frequently attached to apartment and boarding houses; in fact, the apartment/hotel was considered a fashionable address.

Exclusiveness was guarded by a host of additional features. Small lounges were built close to elevators to prevent the common hotel lounge or spectator. Rent was kept high. Leases were pre-arranged to prevent off-the-street transients, and they were such that a tenant could be removed quickly. In addition, tenants usually submitted to a series of rules and regulations which were strictly enforced and which prohibited the slightest hint of inappropriate or unbecoming behavior.

The building of apartment/hotels in the city of Birmingham differed little from the nation-wide trend. They tended to be luxurious, modern, private, and convenient to transportation lines and to the business and commercial areas. They arose during a time of prosperity and a massive growth in urbanization. They catered to the affluent, whether they were permanent Birmingham residents or the relatively new traveling businessman, who sought the comforts of home and the convenience of a luxury hotel either for himself or for his family who was increasingly likely to accompany him.

Birmingham's debut apartment/hotel would also remain perhaps its most luxurious. Built in 1914 by the prominent Tutwiler family, the Ridgely was constructed just four blocks from the city's core commercial district during a time of industrial and community prosperity. The city, it was believed, desperately needed exclusive accommodations not only for her permanent residents but for traveling industrialists and business leaders. For some reason, however, it was not immediately utilized as an apartment/hotel for which it was built; it was not until 1925 that it was reconverted to its original use. The Tutwiler family still owns the Ridgely which remains occupied by retired people from relatively affluent backgrounds.

In 1924-25, the Altamont (NRHP-Five Points South Historic District-1983), the Claridge Manor, and the Highland Plaza were all built in the thriving and fashionable Five Points South area. During the 1920s, the city saw a general construction boom and in Five Points there was a plethora of apartment houses of all types and geared to all classes of people. To attract the more affluent classes who sought an escape from the old downtown residential areas, G. L. Miller and Company of Atlanta contracted to finance these three apartment/hotels. All were luxurious and exclusive and all also offered temporary residence to the traveling businessman who was more and more of a professional class. These three buildings are today occupied partially by professional people of various groups, as well as by students, members of artistic communities, and aspiring middle classes.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE 1

Apartment-hotels in Birmingham, Alabama 1900-1930.

1. Ann Burkhardt, Town Within a City: The Five Points South Neighborhood. 1880 - 1930, BHS, 1982.
2. Birmingham Age-Herald - 3-10-24, 8-3-24, 7-2-47
3. Birmingham Historical Society files
4. Birmingham News - 1-1-24, 8-1-24, 8-23-25, 11-1-45, 6-1-67
5. Birmingham Public Library Archives
6. Carolyn Green, Historical Sites of Jefferson County, Alabama, 1976
7. Interview with Altamont Apartments' resident manager 5-23-83
8. Interview with Elizabeth Certain, Claridge Manor resident manager 5-26-83
9. Interview with Highland Plaza Apartments resident manager, 5-20-83
10. Marjorie Longenecker White, Downtown Birmingham: Architectural and Historical Walking Tour Guide, BHS, 1980
11. Southside - Highlands Survey Report, BHS, 1981.
12. Birmingham Post Herald - 8-2-24, 3-3-65
13. National Real Estate Journal, Vol. XXVII #2, January 25, 1926, pages 22-24 - "An Apartment Hotel"

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Continuation sheet

Item number

Page

Multiple Resource Area  
Thematic Group

dnr-11

Name Apartment Hotels in Birmingham, 1900-1930, Thematic Resources  
State Jefferson County, ALABAMA

Nomination/Type of Review

Date/Signature

1. Claridge Manor Apartments

Entered in the  
National Register

for Keeper

Attest

Delores Byers 5/17/84

2. Highland Plaza Apartments

Entered in the  
National Register

for Keeper

Attest

Delores Byers 5/17/84

3. Ridgely Apartments

Entered in the  
National Register

for Keeper

Attest

Delores Byers 5/17/84

4.

Keeper

Attest

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