

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Multiple Property Documentation Form

RECEIVED 413

MAR 8 1995

INTERAGENCY RESOURCES DIVISION
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

This form is for use in documenting multiple property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Type all entries.

A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

Little Rock Apartment Buildings, 1900-1945

B. Associated Historic Contexts

I. South Main Street Area Apartment Buildings

C. Geographical Data

City limits of Little Rock, Arkansas

☐ See continuation sheet

D. Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Planning and Evaluation.

Cathryn A. Slater

Signature of certifying official

2-22-95
Date

Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

State or Federal agency and bureau

I, hereby, certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

Edmon B. Beall
Signature of the Keeper of the National Register

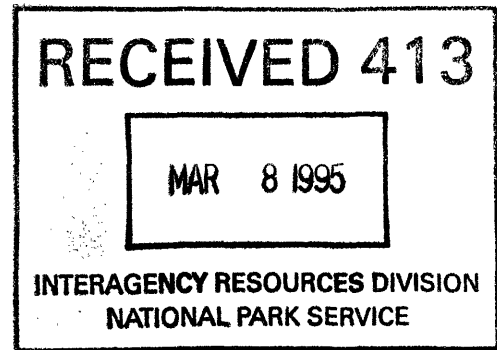
Entered in the
National Register

4.7.95
Date

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number E Page 1



Historic Context

I. South Main Street Area Apartment Buildings

The concept of the apartment building was not common in Little Rock at the end of World War I. Although there were a number of large homes which had been turned into "boarding houses," there were only a few apartment buildings. In the decade between 1920 and 1930 there were over one-hundred apartment buildings constructed in Little Rock. Reflective of a period of nationwide growth, the number of apartment buildings constructed in Little Rock in the 1920s marked the urbanization of the city. Accessible by streetcar, the southern blocks of Main Street were considered a convenient location to the city's ever expanding central business district. Construction of apartment buildings in the area was interrupted by the Great Depression of the 1930s, but resumed briefly just before the advent of World War II.

The townsite of Little Rock was first settled in 1821. It was chosen because it was in the center of Arkansas Territory, and was situated on the two most important transportation routes in early Arkansas--the Arkansas River and the Southwest Trail. It was, by all standards, a rough, crude, frontier settlement. In that year Little Rock was chosen to become the territorial capital of Arkansas. By the mid 1830s, the town had grown, and construction of a State House (See Old State House, NR 12-03-69) for the Territory of Arkansas was begun. By the time of its completion, Arkansas had become a state (1836) and consequent growth from this period marked the town's emergence from its frontier period. Growth of Little Rock was slow until just before the Civil War when a railroad line was begun between Memphis and Little Rock, a college opened, gas lighting became available, and a telegraph line was established, linking Little Rock with the rest of the nation.

When the Civil War ended in 1865, Little Rock's population was roughly 4,000. By 1900 Little Rock had progressed to a city of some 38,000 and offered to its citizens a full array of city improvements: water and sewer systems, electricity, telephones, and paved streets. Six railroads connected the city to the rest of the United States. The Arkansas River had been Little Rock's most important link with the rest of the world for many years and the city had been physically oriented toward the river.

Although a streetcar line had been established along Main Street which was pulled by horses or mules in 1877, it was not until the late 1880s that the presence of streetcars in Little Rock prompted new residential development in the areas south and west of the central business district. In July of 1888, the City Electric Street Railway Company put into service Little Rock's

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number E Page 2

first mechanically powered streetcars. By 1893 streetcars were carrying passengers as far south on Main Street as Twenty-Fifth Street. In the early 1890s stylish homes with "Queen Anne" features were constructed along this corridor.

By the end of the nineteenth century, electric streetcars carried passengers over nearly twenty-five miles of track in the city. Streetcar fares were low enough that most Little Rock residents were able to utilize the speed and convenience of public transportation. In 1900 Little Rock's commercial downtown had expanded to about twenty square block and land for new construction was becoming scarce.

In the first decades of the twentieth century, a new emphasis on home ownership was placed on modest, affordable housing which the typical urban worker could afford. A full-fledged construction boom followed the end of World War I. Little Rock was becoming an urban center. The desire to be "modern" was a distinguishing characteristic of new construction in the first three decades of the twentieth century in Little Rock. A number of "skyscrapers" and monumental public structures were erected which featured steel frame construction and advanced mechanical systems. Hotels, banks and a new train station were also constructed. In 1925 city officials called for the establishment of a city planning commission to regulate the rapid expansion of the city.

The population of Little Rock increased from 38,000 at the turn of the century to nearly 82,000 by 1930. Development of the city's first residential suburb, west of Little Rock's downtown, known as Pulaski Heights, was highly successful, partly due to the fact that its distance from the central business district was accessible by streetcar line. The use of the automobile further encouraged development of residential suburbs. Construction of a new high school (see Little Rock High School NR 8/19/77) in the western part of the city was necessitated by the growing population. A newspaper article in October, 1925, entitled "Little Rock Growing South and West" discussed the rapid growth of new suburban developments in the outlying areas of the city. In November, 1925 the Arkansas Gazette newspaper announced that a building record in Little Rock had been set in that year with the construction of 807 residences and ten apartment buildings.

Construction and development of multi-family buildings in Little Rock reflects a continuum of history between the World Wars. Interrupted by the Great Depression of the 1930s and World War II, construction of historic apartment buildings in Little Rock was accomplished in distinct periods, the largest in the decade 1920 to 1930 when over one-hundred were constructed. Only twenty-seven apartment buildings were built in Little Rock in the 1930s and most of these were

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number E Page 3

in the latter years of the decade. By 1940, with the aid of the federal government, construction of apartment buildings had steadily picked up. Slowed to a standstill by World War II, construction of large numbers of apartment buildings did not occur again until after the war.

The influx of young workers in Little Rock in the 1920s prompted the need for affordable housing. The first type of standard multi-family units to appear in Little Rock were in the early 1920s. Generally Craftsman in style, these apartment buildings were two-story and scaled to blend with existing single-family homes. Several of these apartment buildings were constructed near Little Rock's central business district. Other four-unit apartment buildings were constructed in the South Main Street area in the 1920s. The Barlow Apartment building at 2115 Scott Street, constructed in 1921, is one of the few remaining examples of this Craftsman type of multi-family building in the S. Main Street vicinity.

As the decade of the 1920s progressed the demand for apartments grew. Despite the large number of four-unit apartment houses constructed, only a few large-scale apartment buildings were built and they were concentrated on major thoroughfares, along streetcar routes. In August, 1924, Little Rock's then largest multi-family building, the Luxor Apartments, opened. Located at 1923 Main Street, the building contained twenty-eight units designed by an interior decorator and equipped with Murphy-In-A-Door beds, resident janitorial service and a uniformed doorman. A newspaper advertisement for its opening on August 10, 1924 stated:

"The building is complete in every respect.....and compares favorably with modern apartments in large cities, marking a step forward for Little Rock."

The same 1924 advertisement appealed to the homemaker in the family as well as the worker:

"Make a Luxor Apartment Your Home- The beauty, convenience, and desirable location of these new apartments appeal to homemakers. They are designed for modern and comfortable housekeeping, and include the latest built-in features, stoves, shades, refrigerator and water are furnished."

Almost exactly one year later, in August, 1925, another large Craftsman style apartment building called the Holcomb Court Apartments at 2201 Main Street opened. Located two blocks south of the twenty-eight unit Luxor Apartments, The Holcomb contained twenty efficiency units. The Holcomb Court Apartment building also featured "modern" conveniences and built-in fixtures, and was advertised as soundproof and fireproof. In addition, the Holcomb Court Apartments had a "new insulated water-cooled roof system," which the builders claimed was the first of its kind

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number E Page 4

in the mid south.

The 1920s saw other development along the southern part of Main Street. A two-story medical facility, and several small apartment buildings were constructed along this southern end of the city's main corridor. Small neighborhood grocery stores were constructed in the 1800 and 2200 block of S. Main Street to service the concentration of people living in the area.

Construction of the Barlow Apartment building in 1921 represents the beginning of a period of intense housing demand and construction in Little Rock. The much larger Luxor and Holcomb apartment buildings were "fashionable" addresses and their large size reflected the growing urban atmosphere in the city at the time of their construction in the mid 1920s.

The ever increasing emphasis on efficiency and technology became an important factor in building residences, just as it had become an important factor in constructing commercial buildings in the 1920s. Efficient public transportation and new conveniences such as built-in features appealed to the young working family.

The economic crises of the Great Depression in the 1930s virtually halted all construction in the country. In response to the dramatic downturn in construction nationwide, one of Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal programs, the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) was organized in 1934. The FHA insured residential loans and thus encouraged lenders to offer long-term, fixed rate mortgages. In 1938 FHA housing activity received further support when the Federal National Mortgage Association (FNMA) was created. The FNMA, in effect, purchased FHA-insured loans, establishing a market for local savings and loan associations to become involved with FHA projects. As a result, in the late 1930s a public housing program was created and implemented by local housing authorities. This public assistance stimulated housing construction in the late 1930s up to the advent of World War II.

The two Main Apartment buildings, erected in 1941 at 2209 and 2213 S. Main, were financed and construction was supervised by the FHA. Construction of these buildings, which were also geared toward the young working family, represents some of the first building activity in the S. Main Street area after the Great Depression. Each building contains four units. Rectangular in shape, the two Main Apartment buildings feature Colonial Revival design elements. Reflective of the somber mood of the country, the Main Apartments were functional, with little detailing on interior spaces.

The southern portion of Little Rock's Main Street has seen typical urban development and

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number E Page 5

change in the years following World War II, including a post-war boom, and stabilization in the 1950s. The continued desirability of S. Main Street apartments was reinforced when a second building, containing eight units, called Luxor Manor, was constructed next door to the Luxor Apartment building in 1957. Decline in the area did not begin until the 1960s following a general shift in population to the west of downtown. Although the fabric and character of the area remains historic, the concentration of historic multi-family buildings has been compromised through historic building demolition and construction of non-compatible buildings.

The small concentration of historic multi-family buildings on the south end of Main Street represents the urbanization and emphasis on housing for young working families which developed after World War I and continued to the advent of World War II despite the economic crisis of the Great Depression in the 1930s. The existence of public transportation facilitated the growth of this area of the city. A newspaper article in 1925 quoted a Little Rock Realtor:

"We are told that we are too far away from the manufacturing center of the trade routes.....after all in our sane and thoughtful moments all of us agree that a city is what it is, not because of geographic location, but because of the vision, courage and energy of its citizens."

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number F Page 1

F. ASSOCIATED PROPERTY TYPES

I. Name of Property Type: Apartment Buildings

II. Description

The apartment buildings included within this nomination are usually of brick masonry construction, though stone masonry and wood frame apartment buildings are also found occasionally. They typically range from one to four storeys in height, though some taller buildings are found, and they are capped with a variety of roof types and materials. All the popular architectural styles of the period (1900-1945) are represented, including the Colonial Revival, Craftsman, English Revival, Spanish Revival and Mediterranean. Some are elaborately detailed, though most tend to feature more restrained ornament. A broad assortment of floor plans are also evident.

III. Significance

The significance of the Little Rock Apartment Buildings derives largely from the fact that they represent the urbanization and planned community development of the city of Little Rock during the first four decades of the twentieth century. Many of these buildings were constructed in response to Little Rock's first large demand for affordable housing near the central business district. Some, constructed with the aid of public works efforts during the 1930's, also reflect governmental involvement and assistance in aiding the nation's construction industry through the Great Depression of the 1930's. Many are architecturally significant also and stand as fine examples of the particular national architectural style that influenced their design.

IV. Registration Requirements

In order to qualify for inclusion under this nominations a building must 1) have been originally constructed as multi-unit housing, 2) remain on its original site, and 3) have a verifiable construction date lying between 1900 and 1945.

G. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods

Discuss the methods used in developing the multiple property listing.

☒ See continuation sheet

H. Major Bibliographical References

☒ See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional documentation:

- ☐ State historic preservation office
☐ Other State agency
☐ Federal agency

- ☐ Local government
☐ University
☐ Other

Specify repository: _____

I. Form Prepared By

name/title Sandra Taylor Smith / AHPP Staff

organization AHPP

date 2-25-95

street & number 323 Center Street, Suite 1500

telephone (501) 324-9880

city or town Little Rock

state AR zip code 72201

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number G Page 1

SUMMARY OF IDENTIFICATION AND EVALUATION METHODS

Areas surrounding the 1800 through 2400 blocks of S. Main Street were evaluated by a local volunteer non-profit organization, the Downtown Little Rock Community Development Corporation. The five apartment buildings in this nomination (plus Luxor Manor at 1917 S. Main) were targeted as abandoned, trouble spots with potential to regain value to the community and contribute to the overall quality of life in the area. All four buildings on S. Main Street have been the site of illegal activities and had been mismanaged and allowed to deteriorate. Original units had been divided and rented by the week. The City of Little Rock closed the buildings over ten years ago because city housing codes were not being met.

The Downtown Little Rock Community Development Corporation, with funding from the Local Initiative Support Corp. (LISC) is renovating the buildings to their original appearance and the units will be rented to moderate-income tenants. Groundbreaking on the project took place on October 27, 1994.

Because the buildings are historic and the Downtown Little Rock Community Development Corporation wishes to restore their historic integrity, Certification Applications for the historic tax credit have been submitted and approved. Upon reviewing completed survey forms and materials, the staff of the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program determined the five buildings included in this nomination eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

The consultant responsible for preparation of this nomination is familiar with the historic resources of Little Rock and conducted additional research and field work to determine the significance of these particular buildings in a thematic relation to the city's stock of historic apartment buildings. Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, city directories, newspaper research and assessment records were used to confirm the significance of these five historic multi-family buildings.

The five nominated properties included with this multiple property nomination were chosen because of their imminent renovation and because they are good examples of important styles and types of historic multi-family buildings evocative of the urbanization of Little Rock. The nominated properties were limited to a small selection because of budgetary and time constraints.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number H Page 1

Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, 27 October, 1994.

Arkansas Gazette, 22 June 1924; 10 August 1924; 16 August 1925; 23 August 1925; 27 October 1925; 4 October 1925; 26 November 1925; 30 March 1941; 6 April 1941.

Little Rock City Directories for the years 1915 through 1960.

Pulaski County Real Estate Assessment Records, Block 418, 423, 420 all of Duvall's Addition, 1920 through 1942.

Roy, F. Hampton Sr. and Charles Witsell Jr. with Cheryl Griffith Nichols. *How We Lived: Little Rock As An American City*. Little Rock: August House, 1984.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps of Little Rock, 1913, 1939, 1947, 1952,

Schlisinger, Arthur M. Jr. *The Age of Roosevelt*. Vol. 2, The Coming of the New Deal. Boston: Riverside Press, 1959.

Storthz, Samuel Jr., Son of Samuel Storthz, Sr. Little Rock, Arkansas, Interview.