### **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

#### 1 Name

St. Charles Apartments (LC13:F12-225) historic St. Charles Apartments and/or common 2. Location street & number 4717 Baldwin Avenue n/a not for publication Lincoln  $\underline{n/a}$  vicinity of city, town code 109 county Lancaster Nebraska 031 code state 3. **Classification** Status **Present Use** Category Ownership  $\frac{1}{x}$  public  $\frac{1}{x}$  private \_ district agriculture \_\_ museum  $\underline{\mathbf{x}}$  building(s) unoccupied commercial \_ park both x private residence s \_ structure work in progress educational Public Acquisition \_ site Accessible entertainment \_ religious  $\frac{\mathbf{x}}{\mathbf{y}}$  yes: restricted \_ object <u>n/</u>an process government \_ scientific being considered ves: unrestricted industrial \_ transportation no military other: **Owner of Property** 4. William T. Kimball and Ralph J. Mapes name

800 South 13th Street street & number

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## 7. Description

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

St. Charles Apartments in the University Place neighborhood of Lincoln, Lancaster County, Nebraska, is a three-story brick structure of rectangular plan, with small projecting entry vestibules front and rear. Built in 1923-4, the blocky, freestanding apartment house employs simplified Neoclassical motifs on the exterior entries and cornice. The fenestration is irregular, reflecting the size and function of various rooms. The interior is arranged into sixteen large units, each with a corner placement. The building retains a high degree of exterior architectural integrity; on the interior the plan is unaltered and considerable finish remains intact.

St. Charles Apartments is a brick structure of three stories plus basement, measuring about 75 feet long north to south and 60 feet wide east to west. The varigated brown brick is laid in stretcher bond, with rowlock sills beneath the windows. There are projecting, gable-roofed entry vestibules on the north and south facades, with simplified Neoclassical entablatures and pediments. The blocky mass is pierced by twelve bays of one-over-one sliding sash windows on the north and south facades and fourteen bays on the east and west sides. The windows are clustered in trios, pairs, or singles, according to the size of the room they light.

The horizontality of the exterior is emphasized by broad wooden string courses between the upper floors and a wide wooden cornice and parapet. On the north and south facades, the horizontal lines of windows and stringcourses are interrupted at the centers by the entrances and by paired windows lighting the stairwells, forming a vertical element on each facade. The metal fire escape at the center of the rear (south) facade is probably an addition of 1939.

The interior is laid out as sixteen ample apartments on four floors (including the basement), allowing each unit a corner placement. There is a broad north to south corridor on each level, with main and kitchen entries to each unit and a high, transom-like window providing ventilation to an interior room. (The kitchen entries were sealed in 1981 when fire doors were inserted between the stairwells and corridors.) The transom windows have handsome beveled and leaded glass.

The apartments are all of similar plan, with a large (eleven-and-one-halt foot by twenty foot) living room at center, two smaller rooms and a kitchen on the outer (north or south) side, and two more rooms and the bathroom on the inner side. With the corner placement and twelve windows, each unit is brightly lit. Finishes are simple, with painted wooden baseboards, door and window frames. The sole ornate features are, the transom windows.

The apartment house retains a high degree of architectural integrity on the exterior, with the south fire escape (ca. 1939) and combination storm windows the only apparent changes. The principal interior changes are insertion of fire doors between the stairwells and corridors and the sealing of the kitchen entries, in 1981.

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## 8. Significance

Period	Areas of SignificanceC	heck and justify below		
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**Specific dates** 1923–4

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Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

#### the Charte & Constabal

St. Charles Apartments has local architectural significance as a well-preserved apartment house built in 1923-4 by William Henry Seng, a major building contractor of the 1920s and '30s in the town of University Place. The building is a good example of the freestanding, double-loaded central hall type of apartment house. Its presence in University Place, a block from the commercial district, is emblematic of the increased urbanization of that town in the 1920s, leading to its annexation by Lincoln in 1926.

William Henry Seng (ca. 1869-1958)

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When St. Charles Apartments was built in 1923-4, University Place, Nebraska, was an incorporated town of about 5,000 population. The town was organized in the late 1880s at the time of the founding of Nebraska Wesleyan University. The commercial spine of the town was built along Warren Ave. (now 48th St.), with residential districts both east of the avenue, around the Nebraska Wesleyan campus, and to the west. Most of the early residences were modest, detached, wood frame houses, along with a significant minority of brick structures and a few apartments above the stores on Warren Ave.

The town's growth by the 1920s led to the residents' vote to accept annexation by Lincoln in 1926. The construction of St. Charles Apartments in 1923-4, accommodating sixteen dwelling units on two lots a block from the commercial street, exemplifies the town's incipient urbanization. It was the first brick apartment house built in the town and the only one erected before annexation.

St. Charles Apartments has local significance both as one of the harbringers of annexation and, more particularly, as a well-preserved apartment house which William H. Seng built, (1923-4), owned (1923-38), and occupied (ca. 1926-38). Seng (ca. 1869-1958) was a major building contractor in University Place from the 1920s to '30s. He came to the Lincoln area in the 1910s from Clatonia in Gage County south of Lincoln where he had operated a grocery store as well as working as a builder. Previous to that he had lived in Richardson County in the extreme southeast corner of the state. In University Place he built a large frame bungalow for his family on land he had acquired in 1910 (3241 N. 48th). The local directories list him variously as contractor, carpenter, or general contractor from the 'teens to '30s. His output included many single family houses, churches in Fairbury and Humbolt, and four apartment houses in University Place.

Seng mostly built brick houses for specific clients, employing familiar forms such as the "Classic Box" (4919 Baldwin, 1923) and bungalow (5218 Walker, 1927). According to family tradition, he was the designer as well as builder [See Continuation Sheet.]

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# 9. Major Bibliographical References

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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of all his projects. Seng's apartment houses (the wood frame "Octavia" of 1921, 4925 Greenwood; St. Charles Apartments; 2827 N. 53rd, 1932; and LeRoy Apartments, 2539 N. 49th St., 1937), were built on his own account, remaining in family ownership for years or even decades.

These buildings appear more idiosyncratic in form and style than his detached houses, generally employing simplified Neoclassical motifs but varying widely in massing and detail. St. Charles Apartments, Seng's largest residential structure, uses Neoclassical motifs on a very blocky mass. The interior is planned around a double-loaded central hall. No air shaft is necessary to provide ventilation, since each apartment has a corner placement. The size of the units in St. Charles Apartments (approximately 900 square feet) and in Seng's other apartment houses approximates that of his smaller bungalows, indicating that the space requirements of University Place homeowners and tenants were similar. Seng moved from his own detached house to the St. Charles Apartments around 1926 and remained there a dozen years.

In summary, this building is evaluated as having local architectural significance as an early example of the apartment house type in University Place and as a well-preserved work of a major local builder.