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1. Name of Prope	erty	·····						
historic name	Redm	ont Gard	ens Aparti	ments				
other names/site n	umber	Same			<u> </u>			•
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Redmont	Gardens	Apar	tments
Name of Pro	perty		

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Jefferson,	Alabama
County and State	

Cour	ıty	and	Sta	ite

5. Classification				
Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)	Category of Property (Check only one box)	Number of R (Do not include p	esources within Propert previously listed resources in th	y e count.)
🛛 private	building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing	
public-local	☑ district	4	3	buildings
public-State public-Federal				
	☐ structure ☐ object			
				structures
				•
		5	3	Total
Name of related multiple p (Enter "N/A" if property is not part N/A	roperty listing of a multiple property listing.)	in the Nation	-	eviously listed
N/A		0		
6. Function or Use				
Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)		Current Functio (Enter categories fro		
DOMESTIC: Multiple D	welling	• •	Multiple Dwelling	
······································				
				<u></u>
				
				
7. Description				
Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)		Materials (Enter categories fro	m instructions)	
20th CENTURY REVIVA	L:	foundation	BRICK	
Colonial Revival	·	walls	BRICK	
		roof	SLATE	

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

Redmont Gardens Apartments Mountain Brook Jefferson County, AL

7. Description of Physical Appearance:

The Redmont Gardens Apartments consist of four separate two- and threestorey buildings of varying shapes, arranged on an eight-acre site near the ridge of Red Mountain in the Birmingham suburb of English Village in Mountain Brook. They are bounded on the south by Fairway Drive and on the east by Thornhill Road, which latter turns into the property and takes a right angle back onto Fairway on the south; on the west and north they back onto English Village and single-family residential properties respectively. The northern boundary of the property is in fact the Birmingham City Limit, along the right-of-way of the old Birmingham Mineral Railroad. The property includes green courtyards and interior parking courts, garages on the periphery, and sidewalks and garden landscaping.

The general arrangement of elements in any building is one of a more imposing central three-story section surrounded by two-storey wings or hyphens connecting with other two-storey sections at right angles to the main block. The buildings are more or less double-U or S-shaped in configuration, the sections folding around landscaped courtyards, some of which over time have been converted to parking lots. Despite this recent change, however, the basic plan of having green space devoted to each building has remained intact; a full 60% of the acreage remains in landscaping and walkways. This is in fact the most significant thing about these apartments (see Statement of Significance). The entire property contains 200 apartments of three to five rooms each, designed in such a way that every room has cross-ventilation and a view to the outside.

The buildings are of reinforced concrete and hollow tile construction on full basements; they are clad in red brick that is interestingly laid in common bond to resemble actual load-bearing walls, and the basement level is marked by drip tables. The style was described by the developers as "Williamsburg," but is actually a derivative, slightly out-of-proportion Colonial Revival architecture chosen to suit local tastes in the late 1930s when they were built. The variously hipped and side-gabled roofs were originally slate and many still remain so, but replacement roofing is asphalt shingle. Roofs are punctuated by gabled or hipped roof dormers, some vented and some containing windows. Some of the major central entry bays are distinguished by wall gables. The shallow-eaved end walls contain the large fireplace chimneys, some of the double, and there are circular vents in the gables. From each building rises a tall stack from the huge boiler that provides the heat. Windows are paired six-over-six wood sash with shutters, with singles interspersed. Other exterior decorative features include a rusticated sandstone facing on the three-storey center pavilion of the building at the turn of the street, topped by a cupola as are several of the other three-storey sections; recessed-course quoining at the entry bays, and Classical motifs at the entries such as broken pediments, segmental arches, pilasters, and projecting columned porches with crowning balustrades. Brick dentil courses mark the third floors.

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number ____7 Page ___2

Redmont Gardens Apartments Mountain Brook Jefferson County, AL

Service areas for the apartments are in the basements, which in some buildings are walk-in and in others down a short flight of steps. Garages in a northeast crescent at the rear were constructed early in the project's history, but they had an unfortunate collapse after heavy rains in 1941 and had to be rebuilt; there are also some newer ones on the west side at the rear.

Landscape features include not only the courts and plantings but fine stonework in the walls and entrance pilons. With the growth over time of a fine shade cover, the property has attained the luxury of appearance that was intended when it was constructed on cleared ground in 1938-39, raw and new and the latest thing in modern apartment living.

Interior construction used the latest modern materials and fixtures while maintaining a traditional atmosphere. Perhaps the most significant aspect of the interior plans is that large hallways or foyers have been omitted or reduced, partly as an economy measure in building and partly to allow every room to have cross-ventilated exposure to the outside. Floors are of a hardwood parquet known as Bruce block; ceilings and walls are plaster, with modestly proportioned but traditional floor mouldings and facings, but no crown or picture mouldings. Floors in the kitchens are covered in linoleum tile and in the baths with ceramic tile, and in most cases, except where modernized by individual tenants, kitchens and baths retain their original fixtures and finishes, all kept in excellent condition over the years by the managers.

Early rental promotional material on the apartments included the following description:

Throughout each apartment the rooms have been designed according to the most advanced ideas of interior arrangements. These modern ideas include such conveniences as plenty of closet space. Each of the apartments has at least four large closets and some have five.

Another of the modern features included in the new apartments is the lighting equipment. Adequate illumination, so placed as to eliminate glare, has been provided in every room of the 200-unit project.

. . . Every room in every apartment . . . has plenty of electric outlets to take care of occasional demands beyond ordinary usage.¹

Anyone who has lived in a 1920s apartment with few and tiny closets and insufficient electrical outlets can appreciate the appeal of these features.

Redmont Gardens Apartments Name of Property

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- **B** removed from its original location.
- **C** a birthplace or grave.
- **D** a cemetery.
- **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- **F** a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References Bibilography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS): N/A

- 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 # ____

Jefferson, Alabama

County and State

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMUNITY PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

Period of Significance

1938-1939

Significant Dates

1938-1939

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above) N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Raymond C. Snow, architect

B.L. Jackson Company, builder/owner

Primary location of additional data:

- □ State Historic Preservation Office
- □ Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- 🛆 Other

Name of repository:

B'ham Public Library Archives

Redmont	Gardens	Apartments
Name of Prope	erty	

10. Geographical Data

8 acres Acreage of Property _

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 116	5 2 0 3 9 0	3,70,60,90
Zone	Easting	Northing
2 1, 6	5 2 0 5 9 0	3,70,61,7,0

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the b	oundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)			
11. Form Prep	ared By			
name/title	Linda Nelson/Historic Preservation	ist; Melanie Be	etz/AHC Rev	iewer
organization	FuturePast	date	April 27,	1993
street & numbe	4700 Seventh Court South	telephone _	(205) 592-	-6610
city or town	Birmingham	state	zip code .	35222
Additional Doc	umentation			

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner				
(Complete this item at t	the request of SHPO or FPO.)			
nameRedmo	nt Garden Associates, Ltd.			
street & number	P.O. Box 385001	telephone(2	205) 991-4721	
city or town	Birmingham	state	zip code	

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement; Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

- 3 1 6 5 2 0 6 0 0 3 7 0 5 9 5 0 Zone Easting Northing
 - See continuation sheet

Jefferson, Alabama

County and State

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number <u>8</u> Page <u>3</u>

Redmont Gardens Apartments Mountain Brook Jefferson County, AL

Statement of Significance--Criterion C (Community Planning and Development)

The Redmont Gardens Apartments are being nominated to the National Register under Criterion C, as significant in the category of Community Planning and Development because of their representation of principles of residential planning characterized by rejection of urban street patterns and adherence to Garden City block patterns and green spaces. The Apartments are also significant locally as the first major apartment construction project of the Depression in the Birmingham area and the only Federal Housing Administration-sponsored project of this type in the City. In this latter regard they reflect the federal government's standards and principles for attracting investment in housing for working people that maintained good construction quality at reasonable cost. The Apartments are therefore an outstanding local example of a type of community residential development sponsored by the Federal government around the United States in the critical years of the Depression.

Historical Summary

The Redmont Gardens Apartments were constructed in 1938-39 by the B.L. Jackson Company, owner and contractor for the project. The majority of the \$1,250,000 cost was mortgaged through the New York Life Insurance Co. and guaranteed by the Federal Housing Administration. Jackson held the apartments under the name of Redmont Village, Inc. and contracted the leasing and management to Jemison Realty Co. Mr. Robert Jemison Jr. was at that time the Federal Housing Administrator for the State of Alabama, and his knowledge of the priorities of the government and his commitment to the project were undoubtedly factors in the quality of the development and its superior maintenance over the years.

Redmont Gardens were the first significant residential building project in Birmingham since the onset of the Depression in 1929, and they were conceived and built as much to get the building trades busy again, and to purchase from the local economy, as they were to provide affordable rental housing. In none of the advertising for the apartments, however, nor in any of the publicity surrounding their construction and opening, was it mentioned that the development was under the sponsorship of the Federal Housing Administration. Mr. Jemison confided in a letter in 1945 that "when this project was in its pioneering stages, we encountered a great deal of sales resistance in selling Redmont Gardens to the people of Birmingham, who at first were inclined to associate Redmont Gardens with some of the slum clearance projects, although such an attitude was unfair and not justified."² The quality of the construction and the appeal of the location -- not to mention the affordability of the apartments -- ultimately prevailed, and today Redmont Gardens is a very popular and desirable address.

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number <u>8</u> Page <u>4</u>

Redmont Gardens Apartments Mountain Brook Jefferson County, AL

The project architect was Raymond C. Snow, originally an Atlanta architect who by the time of his design for Redmont Gardens was located in Washington. While with his Atlanta firm he had designed apartments in Birmingham, most notably the Claridge and Highland Plaza on Highland Avenue, both of 1924-25. He seems to have been an apartment specialist, since his 1923 credits in Atlanta included the Peachtree Terrace, the Bonaventure Arms, and the Stradford Hall Apartments, all of substantial size. He also did the Realty Trust Corporation Building in Atlanta, 1924. Nor were the Redmont Gardens the only Alabama project he did for the FHA; he was also the designer of the contemporaneous and similar Summerville Court Apartments in Mobile.

The principles on which these projects were based were significant in two areas: First, they conformed to the government's priorities of providing affordable rental housing of good quality while stimulating the economy by putting the building trades to work and attracting private investment into housing. Next, such projects reflected a philosophy of community development and housing design deriving in large part from the planned communities or Garden City movements of turn-of-the-century and post-World War I England, when the ravages of industrialism and urban sprawl had become undeniable and totally dysfunctional to orderly growth and development and the maintenance of traditional civilization. The conjunction of these two strands of history resulted in the particular form of apartment living of which Redmont Gardens is a very fine example.

In a publication of the Federal Housing Administration entitled "Low-Rental Housing for Private Investment," the government made its case for the advantages of investment in rental housing for the largest segment of the population likely to need affordable apartments-- "the wage earning and lowsalaried families."³ Critical to the success of such investments were the factors of financing, construction, and location. The idea was to provide solidly built housing with aesthetic appeal but without luxuries, that provided services and amenities that could be supported by a relatively low rent level-- in those days, \$20-\$50 a month. (As it developed, Redmont's range was from \$45-\$72.50 originally; the upper figure was adjusted down to \$65 to increase sales, with the approval of the FHA.) Success also counted on a location that was accessible to sources of employment and transportation, in a neighborhood that represented stability and continued demand for housing. Further, according to the FHA, the location

should be conveniently situated with respect to schools, churches, shopping centers, and the recreational facilities of the community. The site must be . . . free from the hazards of floods, subsidence, fog, smoke, noxious odors, nuisance industries, and the like.⁴

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number ____8 Page ___5

Redmont Gardens Apartments Mountain Brook Jefferson County, AL

In all of these respects the land chosen for Redmont Gardens was ideal, adjacent as it was to a successful suburb that was already well built up with homes and shopping amenities and on a major transportation route into Birmingham. It was also far enough away from the city not to have industrial smoke and grime reach it, and it provided a semi-rural retreat that was nevertheless convenient to urban destinations. These were factors that were heavily advertised in the marketing of the apartments.

The other major advertised factor was the design of the project as a whole. The idea of having apartments surrounded by greenspace and gardens rather than strung out along a busy street was an outgrowth of the kind of town planning promoted in this country especially by Lewis Mumford, who took his text from the Garden City and Town Planning movements in England. The government in the 1930s actually built several towns along these lines, known as Greenbelt Towns, that demonstrated the principles of separated routes for motor and pedestrian traffic; buildings clustered around greenspace or commons, with numerous private or semi-private entries; service areas, including parking, concentrated at the rear; and no public or commercial amenity so far away that it could not be reached conveniently on foot. The government apartment projects such as Redmont were not planned on so grand a scale, since they were entirely residential in nature, but the criteria for design promulgated by the FHA followed the basic tenets exactly. The fact that fully 60% of the project's land area was devoted to landscaping and gardens testifies to the seriousness with which the government and the developers took these tenets, and the maintenance of this arrangement has proven very advantageous over the years.

To illustrate the degree to which Redmont Gardens meets the criteria of this idealized plan, consider the following from the FHA's publication:

In the search for methods of reducing building and operating costs there are certain essentials which must not be sacrificed. Substantial, well-built structures, located in good residential neighborhoods, with adequate space and equipment must be provided. A garden environment with play space for children is desirable, and ordinarily will be required. Plans must provide for light and ventilation, and each unit should incorporate the highest attainable degree of privacy and other amenities of family living. There must be adequate provision for automobiles either in garages or parking spaces. Due attention must be given to the problem of servicing the dwelling units and the removal of waste.⁵ (FHA, p. 11)

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number ____8 Page __6___

Redmont Gardens Apartments Mountain Brook Jefferson County, AL

The "latest thing" modernism of the apartments was also heavily promoted, with all materials and technology being the best available. For the record, since newspaper accounts are in the archives that name the suppliers and contractors, all in Birmingham:

Sample furnished apartments were done by Bromberg & Co. Concrete: Sloss-Sheffield Steel & Iron Co. Paint: Lucas Paints from Gingold Hardware Co. Woodwork and cabinetry: National Woodworks, Inc. Lumber: Stringfellow Lumber Co. Bruce Block flooring: E.P. Cuthrell Flooring Co. Appliances: Westinghouse Plumbing & Heating: Brown Plumbing & Heating Co. Insulation and pipes: Badham Insulation Brick: Brick & Tile Manufacturing Co.

There were a number of such apartment projects built all over America during the Depression. Examples of others are the Summerville Court and D'Iberville Apartments in Mobile, Edgewater Park in Seattle, Sequoyah Village in Knoxville, and Rivermont Park in Lynchburg. Plan and architecture vary somewhat from project to project, but each answers the government's criteria for design, construction, and affordability.

Justification of Period of Significance:

The significant dates for this property are those of its construction, 1938-1939.

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number _9,10 Page ____7

Redmont Gardens Apartments Mountain Brook Jefferson County, AL

Major Bibliographical References

Robert Jemison Jr. Papers in the Birmingham Public Library Archives, which included newspaper accounts, photographs, correspondence, brochures and advertisements of the Jemison Companies, and materials from the Federal Housing Administration.

The Dixie Manufacturer, February 10, 1924, for information about the architect, Mr. Snow.

Verbal Boundary Description

The property is bounded on the west by the east side of the English Village Survey, which is the rear of commercial properties along Cahaba Road; on the south by Fairway Drive; on the west by Thornhill Road; and on the north by the Birmingham City Limit and the old Birmingham Mineral Railroad.

The following is the full legal description, as recorded in the Jefferson County Courthouse:

P O B 190 FT NELY OF N INTER FAIRWAY DR 7 CAHABA RD TH NELY 637S FT ALONG FAIRWAY DR TO E SEC LINE TH N 430 S ALONG E SEC LINE TH NW 236 FT S TH SW 551 FT S TH S 173 FT S TH E 25 FT S TH S 311 FT S TO P O B LYING IN NE 1/4 SEC 6 T18S R2W LESS & ACCEPT 50 FT ROW FOR THORNHILL RD

Boundary Justification

These are the original and current boundaries of the Redmont Gardens Apartments property.





JEMISON REALTY COMPANY

221 North 21st Street

Birmingham, Alabama

Exclusive Agents

"CERTIFIED PROPERTY MANAGERS"

Redmont Gardens Apartments Mountain Brook Jefferson County, AL

Source: Jemison Realty Company

(



LL "A" type apartments consist of living room, one bedroom, kitchen and bath with all bedrooms corner rooms. "B" type apartments consist of living room, one bedroom, either dining alcove, breakfast room, or dining room, and kitchen and bath. These type apartments go through the building giving front and back exposures.

"C" type apartments consist of living room, two bedrooms, kitchen and bath. These all have either two or three exposures.

"D" type apartments consist of living room, two bedrooms, dining alcove, kitchen and bath. This type extends through the building giving two exposures.

"E" type apartments, our largest apartments, consist of living room, two bedrooms, dining room, kitchen and bath. This apartment extends through the building and gives two exposures.

All five of these types either have entrance foyers or two entrances into the hall enabling a person to go into the kitchen without going through the living room. These five types of apartments have eleven variations as to floor plans.



JEFFERSON

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STATE OF ALABAMA

DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE

AD VALOREM TAX DIVISION

COLE - LAYER - TRUMBLE CO.

ATA

TAX BAPPING DIVISION C ICT 234

BCALE 1" KC DATE OF MAP 11-19- 76 DATE OF PHOTOGRAPHY 1/ 4-1





31	22	33	34	35	30
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SUB-SHEET INDEX

05-1	D4 - 1	84-2	
04 - 3	65.4	08 - 3	
07-1	67-1	60 -2	

LEGEND

STATE LINE		AREA (FROM DELD)	10.5 Az
COUNTY LINE		MEA (CALCULATED)	10.8 Ac (c)
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SECTIONS <u>SE_1/4_95</u> TSP. IB SOUTH, RANGE 2 WEST

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number graphs Page 8

Redmont Gardens Apartments Mountain Brook Jefferson County, AL

Redmont Gardens Apartments Mountain Brook, Jefferson County, AL Description of Photographs

- 1. View from Fairway Drive, from S.
- 2. Sandstone-faced building at junction of streets, from S.
- 3. Building at Fairway Drive entry, from SW.
- 4. View along Fairway Drive, from WSW.
- 5. View along Thornhill Road toward E.
- 6. Primary building entry, detail, from SE.
- 7. Two-storey building entry, detail, from S.
- 8. Looking E from Thornhill into a rear parking lot.
- 9. Apartment entry, detail.
- 10. Apartment entry, detail.
- 11. Westernmost building, rear view showing chimney from boiler, from NNW.
- 12. View near E entry showing garages at rear, from SE.
- 13. Two-storey building near E entry, showing boiler chimney, from NE.
- 14. Looking into central rear court, from N.
- 15. Western garages, from SW. Houses behind are in the Birmingham City limits.
- 16. Interior hall and stair, this one along Fairway, from N.
- 17. Apartment interior, living room and dining room, from S.
- 18. Interior hall, from S.
- 19. Kitchen, showing original fixtures, from SW.
- 20. Apartment interior, living room with entry foyer at right.
- 21. Apartment interior, den detail.

All photographs January, 1993; Linda Nelson Negatives at Alabama Historical Commission