

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICENATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Ambassador Hotel Historic District

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION3600 Broadway; 435,441 Knickerbocker Place;
STREET & NUMBER 3527 Broadway.

CITY, TOWN

Kansas City

VICINITY OF

STATE

Missouri

CODE

29

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

COUNTY

Jackson

CODE

095**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY

☒ DISTRICT☐ BUILDING(S)☐ STRUCTURE☐ SITE☐ OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

☐ PUBLIC☒ PRIVATE☐ BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

☐ IN PROCESS☒ BEING CONSIDEREDX N/A

STATUS

☒ OCCUPIED☐ UNOCCUPIED☒ WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE

☐ YES: RESTRICTED☐ YES: UNRESTRICTED☐ NO

PRESENT USE

☐ AGRICULTURE☐ MUSEUM☒ COMMERCIAL☐ PARK☐ EDUCATIONAL☐ PRIVATE RESIDE☐ ENTERTAINMENT☐ RELIGIOUS☐ GOVERNMENT☐ SCIENTIFIC☐ INDUSTRIAL☐ TRANSPORTATION☐ MILITARY☐ OTHER:**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Interstate Commercial Investments

STREET & NUMBER

1001 West 43rd St.

CITY, TOWN

Kansas City

VICINITY OF

STATE

Missouri64111**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.Jackson County Recorder of Deeds

STREET & NUMBER

Jackson County Courthouse

CITY, TOWN

Kansas CitySTATE
Missouri**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

Preliminary Survey Form

DATE

☐ FEDERAL ☐ STATE ☐ COUNTY ☒ LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDSLandmarks Commission, 26th Floor, City Hall

CITY, TOWN

Kansas City

STATE

Missouri

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

☐ EXCELLENT
☒ GOOD
☐ FAIR

☐ DETERIORATED
☐ RUINS
☐ UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

☒ UNALTERED
☐ ALTERED

CHECK ONE

☒ ORIGINAL SITE
☐ MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Ambassador Hotel Historic District consists of four architecturally significant structures which are tied by common ownership and service to the Ambassador Hotel. The Ambassador itself is located at 3600 Broadway, on the southwest corner of Broadway and Knickerbocker Place. Apartments Ambassador A and Ambassador B are located adjacent to the hotel on Knickerbocker Street. The Congress Building is located directly across the street from the hotel at 3527 Broadway.

The development of Broadway, Main, and Armour Boulevard was dramatic in the 1920's and 1930's with the shift pulling away from the downtown Kansas City area. The era of construction of the four buildings in this district also includes many major apartment buildings on Armour and apartment and commercial buildings on Main Street. Both of these areas are pending nomination to the National Register, one in the form of a district (Armour Boulevard) and one in the form of another hotel district (Netherlands Hotel.) Immediately adjacent to the Craftsman-style Ambassador A and B is an area known as Knickerbocker Place, pending local Landmark designation because of its significant intact urban neighborhood. Directly to the north lies the Kansas City Life Building (Wight and Wight, 1923), a prototype for the Congress Building.

The area surrounding the Ambassador Hotel historic district is rich in architecturally significant buildings. The lawn and landscaping of Kansas City Life provide a lush park-like atmosphere to the streetscape which is further enhanced by Knickerbocker Place. Broadway in this block remains relatively intact, providing an urban streetscape of predominantly 1920-1930 buildings.

Buildings Contributing to the Character of the District:

1. The Ambassador Hotel (3600 Broadway): The Ambassador Hotel has a 140' frontage on Broadway and extends 108' to the west. It was constructed by the Quality Builders in 1924 and designed by Nelle E. Peters in a Spanish Revival mode.

The original facade of the building remains relatively intact. It is constructed of buff brick and is eight stories high, redesigned from an original four. The five-bay facade is flanked on each end by eight-story bays delineated by terra cotta quoins and projecting from the central three bays which extend to nine stories with the roof garden. Tile roofing, wrought iron balconies at the roof garden level, and polychrome terra cotta lunettes combine to exemplify the Spanish Revival style. The first floor storefront retains two of its original storefronts, with the remaining six having been altered by the addition of new glass and metal transoms. The original canopy has been removed and replaced by an aluminum canopy. The original doors have also been removed. The interior was remodelled in the 1950's² and little

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AMBASSADOR HOTEL HISTORIC DISTRICT

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of the original decor remains. However, the brass elevators with engraved "A" remain in good working condition.

2. Ambassador A (435 Knickerbocker Place) See #3.
3. Ambassador B (441 Knickerbocker Place): Ambassador A and B are 3-story Craftsmen-style apartments which were constructed in 1924 by Quality Builders, designed by Nelle E. Peters, and built to accommodate overflow and provide extra income for the hotel. They are identical in style, with inset stone decoration and a distinctive motif repeated on the porch posts and at the roofline which seems to have been possibly derived from an Art Nouveau tradition. The porch extends from the front facade, and has a roof of tile. It is supported by bracketed posts decorated with inset stone. The apartments are virtually unaltered on the exterior and retain many original architectural features such as copper Mission-style porch and post lamps, glass-reverse signage, and ornate brass door plates. The interior apartments have been modernized, but the brass mailboxes and marble wainscoting in the entry foyer remain.

The two apartments are located in a particularly beautiful area, at the beginning of Knickerbocker Street, and they are shaded by tall trees from the Kansas City Life property.

4. Congress Building (3527 Broadway): The Congress Building was built in 1925 for A.B. Robbins of the Congress Garage Company. It was designed by Robert F. Gornall for a lot 150'x150' square. Gornall's inspiration for this fine modern building was the Kansas City Life building down the block.³ It is built of brick and reinforced concrete and faced with Indiana limestone.⁴ The structure originally rose to four floors; in March of 1927 Gornall added yet another fifth story, in the same limestone veneer. The primary facade is divided into three bays, with a large central five-story bay flanked by two four-story bays. At the northwest corner of the building is the garage entrance. This ramp led to parking for 150 cars; parking which had access onto the interior suites and was separated from the commercial area by a massive fireproof wall. The second story features floor-to-ceiling plate glass windows flanked by a double hung sash; these window units rest between stone pilasters enhanced by massive copper Gothic-style lamps. The second story windows are then topped with a cresting in a classical motif. Beneath the windows are metal friezes, embellished with a design almost identical to the one used by Gornall in the design of the Uptown Theatre further

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south on Broadway. The storefronts are intact except for the addition of aluminum storm doors.

Footnotes

1. Kansas City Star, May 31, 1925.
2. Public Works Dept.
3. Kansas City Star, October 4, 1925.

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/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1927, 1927, 1927, 1925 BUILDER/ARCHITECT Nelle E. Peters, Robert F. Gornall

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Ambassador Hotel Historic District is significant as a group of buildings under common ownership and with a common past; as a group of buildings with architectural value, both individually and collectively; and as a group of buildings that, because of their age, their proximity to each other, and their location on Broadway recreate an atmosphere of thriving economic development present in the era of the 1920's.

The Ambassador Hotel was built on the Santa Fe Trail, on the site of the Allen B. McGee Farmstead. McGee entertained such famous visitors as Kit Carson, General John C. Freemont, and Senator Thomas H. Benton; such prominent fare enabled an enterprising 1920's ad man to exclaim: "Now the farm and forest home have been supplanted by America's most beautiful hotel and roof garden. But the friendly warmth and hospitality remain."¹ Perhaps the site was chosen for this romantic reason by developer/realtor Barney Goodman, founder of the Ambassador Realty Company, and Charlie Phillips of the Phillips Building Company for their new hotel in 1924. Goodman was a very successful real estate broker and hotel man who wisely invested in California property as well as Missouri hotels--at one time he was the owner of the famous Coronado Hotel. In fact, the Ambassador was christened after its namesake in Los Angeles.² Many of Goodman's deals were made with life insurance companies. For their architect for the project the two men chose Nelle E. Peters, one of Kansas City's foremost women architects.

Peters specialized in hotels and apartments, but designed many other buildings throughout Missouri. Born Nelle Nichols in Niagara, North Dakota in 1884, Peters graduated from Buena Vista College at Storm Lake, Iowa and slowly made her way in 1907 to the Kansas City office of Ernest O. Brostrom. After a lull in her career which coincided with marriage and divorce (1911-1925), she began practice in earnest and started designing homes. Much of her work was done in the Spanish Revival mode so common to Kansas City, and a style which the Ambassador typifies.³

Spanish Revival is a prodigious style in Kansas City, and many of the terra cotta buildings designed in this mode in the 20's and 30's still remain. They are however rapidly disappearing. The style was prominently used in the construction of the Country Club Plaza by Edward Buehler Delk in the early 1920's: "Perhaps the most

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characteristic features of the early Plaza style are found in the use of towers and in exterior polychromy. The latter was achieved through painted stucco, decorative tiles, terra cotta ornament, tile roofs, and ornamental ironwork."⁴ That Peters should choose to build the Ambassador in a Spanish Revival mode was not unusual; the style produced many handsome hotels during this period.

Peters originally designed the hotel for four stories but it was redesigned before construction with eight floors and an added ninth floor roof garden. In fact, the roof garden was advertised as one of the hotel's most ambitious features on its opening day of May 31, 1925. On that Sunday the crowd stood three blocks long down Broadway to see what was to that time the largest family hotel in Kansas City.⁵

Perhaps the building's most outstanding architectural feature was the roof garden. Its own separate elevator was added after the original plans, in addition to the two already operating elevators. It boasted a sunroom 100' long, four banquet rooms in walnut, a music room, and open gardens with palms, flowers, and awnings. The ninth floor kitchen was larger than the main kitchen. French doors opened out onto a wrought-iron balcony and the entire east side of the roof garden featured french windows between handsome wood columns.

The roof garden was not the only spectacle on opening day, however, as the 105 apartments and 108 hotel rooms were open for inspection and the advertising proclaimed: "The hotel has various service departments, one of the most interesting being a provision that a guest may specify "an apt. and piano," just as once a "room and bath" were ordered." The shops on Broadway included a grocery, library, barber shop, beauty shop in ivory and green, and a tailoring establishment. The dining room interior featured wrought iron grills and marble. The overall interior of the Ambassador was designed by M.E. Reiser.⁶

After such a prestigious beginning, the hotel began to rapidly change hands. In 1928 Dick R. Lane of the Blackhawk Hotels Company bought the hotel and hired George C. Allen, manager of several famous Chicago lakeshore hotels, to oversee it. From that time, it changed hands several times until in 1945 Milton Silverman & Associates bought all four buildings and owned them until 1981 when they were purchased by the present owners.

It was under Silverman's reign that many of the alterations took place. The Colony Steakhouse, a famous Kansas City institution, moved to the site around 1955 and placed a marble facade over the original storefronts on the north end. At this time, too, the original canopy was

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removed and an aluminum replacement put up.⁷ The dining room and bar were remodelled in 1945.⁸ The roof garden changed from a public party area to a private one in the early 1960's when it was altered into a private residence for Dominican Republic Dictator Truhilio, who was attending Commanding General Staff at Leavenworth. Rumor has it that the roof garden became a well-known party place for young starlets such as Kim Novak.⁹

The Ambassador Hotel is undergoing renovation by the current owners for use as an apartment/hotel.

The Ambassador A and B were also designed by Nelle E. Peters, in 1927, and were also built by Quality Builders, at a cost of \$70,000.¹⁰ They are fine examples of Craftsmen-style apartments of the period and retain many of their original details. The two apartment buildings were constructed as overflow for the Ambassador and for providing extra income. The telephones were run in conjunction with the hotel.¹¹ These units have been totally renovated by the owners as studio apartments.

The Congress Building was purchased by the Ambassador Hotel owners in 1945 to provide parking in an area that was increasingly becoming congested. The Congress Building was built in 1925 and designed by architect Robert F. Gornall.

Gornall first turns up as practicing in Kansas City in 1909. In 1925 with the construction of the Congress Building, Gornall and his partner Joseph Ridgway began a larger practice that extended on down Broadway and Main. The Uptown Theatre at 3700-12 Broadway, designed by Gornall in a classic mode, is listed on the National Register. Gornall also built the Netherlands Hotel at 39th and Main.

The reinforced concrete and brick structure was built on a 150'x150' lot for \$122,000.¹² The building is a significant example of Neoclassic design: "The architects were influenced in selecting this type by the presence of the Kansas City Life Building on the opposite side of Broadway, a little to the north. The latter also is a classic type in which it was possible to follow precedent more closely because of its monumental nature."¹³ When first constructed, the building was one of the largest on south Broadway in usable floor area. Another significant feature of the Congress Building was a parking garage designed behind the front office suites, to support 150 "motor cars." This was a design which was so virtually insure its survival 55 years later.

The Congress Building is being renovated for office suites and retail space by the current owners.

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Footnotes

1. Kansas City Star, May 31, 1925.
2. Interview, Mrs. Barney Goodman.
3. Piland, Sherry. "Early Kansas City Architect: A Liberated Woman."
4. Ehrlich, George. Kansas City, Missouri: An Architectural History.
5. Star, May 31, 1925.
6. " "
7. Interview, Mr. Irv Rubin.
8. Public Works.
9. Rubin interview.
10. Landmarks Commission records.
11. Rubin interview.
12. Western Contractor.
13. Kansas City Star, October 4, 1925.

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Kansas City Star, June 19, 1939.

Kansas City Star, May 13, 1945.

Kansas City Times, November 17, 1928.

Landmarks Commission Records, 26th Floor, City Hall, Kansas City, Mo.

"New Sites Listed on the National Register." Historic Kansas City Foundation News, Vol. 4 #2, p. 6.

"Novel Plan For a Building," Kansas City Star, October 4, 1925.

Piland, Sherry. "Early Kansas City Architect: A Liberated Woman."
Historic Kansas City Foundation News, Vol. 2 #5, p. 8.

Public Works Department Records, Fifth Floor, City Hall, Kansas City, Mo.

Rubin, Irving. Interview, 20 June 1981.

Western Contractor, Vol. 48, 16 Sept. 1925, p. 36. Affiliated Contractor Publications, 521 Locust, Kansas City, Missouri.

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the west side of Broadway until parallel with the Congress Building property and then crossing Broadway to the east side to the southwest corner of the Congress Building; extending east 150', thence north 150', then west 150' to the northwest corner of the Congress Building; and then crossing Broadway to the original starting point.

ITEM NUMBER 11 PAGE 11

2. James M. Denny, Chief, Nominations-Survey
and State Contact Person
Department of Natural Resources
Historic Preservation Program
P.O. Box 176
Jefferson City, Missouri 65102

June 1982
314-751-4096

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Ehrlich, George. Kansas City, Missouri: An Architectural History.
Kansas City: The Lowell Press, 1970.

Goodman, Mrs. Barney. Interview, 18 July 1981.

Kansas City Star, May 31, 1925.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than 1 acre

QUADRANGLE NAME KANSAS CITY, MO-KANS (1964)

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24,000

UTM REFERENCES

A 1,5 3,6,2 4,0,0 4,3 2,4 7,2,0

B

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C

D

E

F

G

H

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

North boundary beginning at the northeast corner of Knickerbocker Street and Broadway and extending west 108'; then extending south approx. 240'; hence east 108' back to Broadway; then extending north on

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

I. Mary J. Matthews, Preservation Consultant

ORGANIZATION

Phoenix Companies

DATE

August 17, 1981

STREET & NUMBER

#2 East 39th St. Suite 206

TELEPHONE

816-756-1070

CITY OR TOWN

Kansas City

STATE

Missouri 64111

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL X

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

Director, Department of Natural Resources and
and State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

12/27/82

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST:

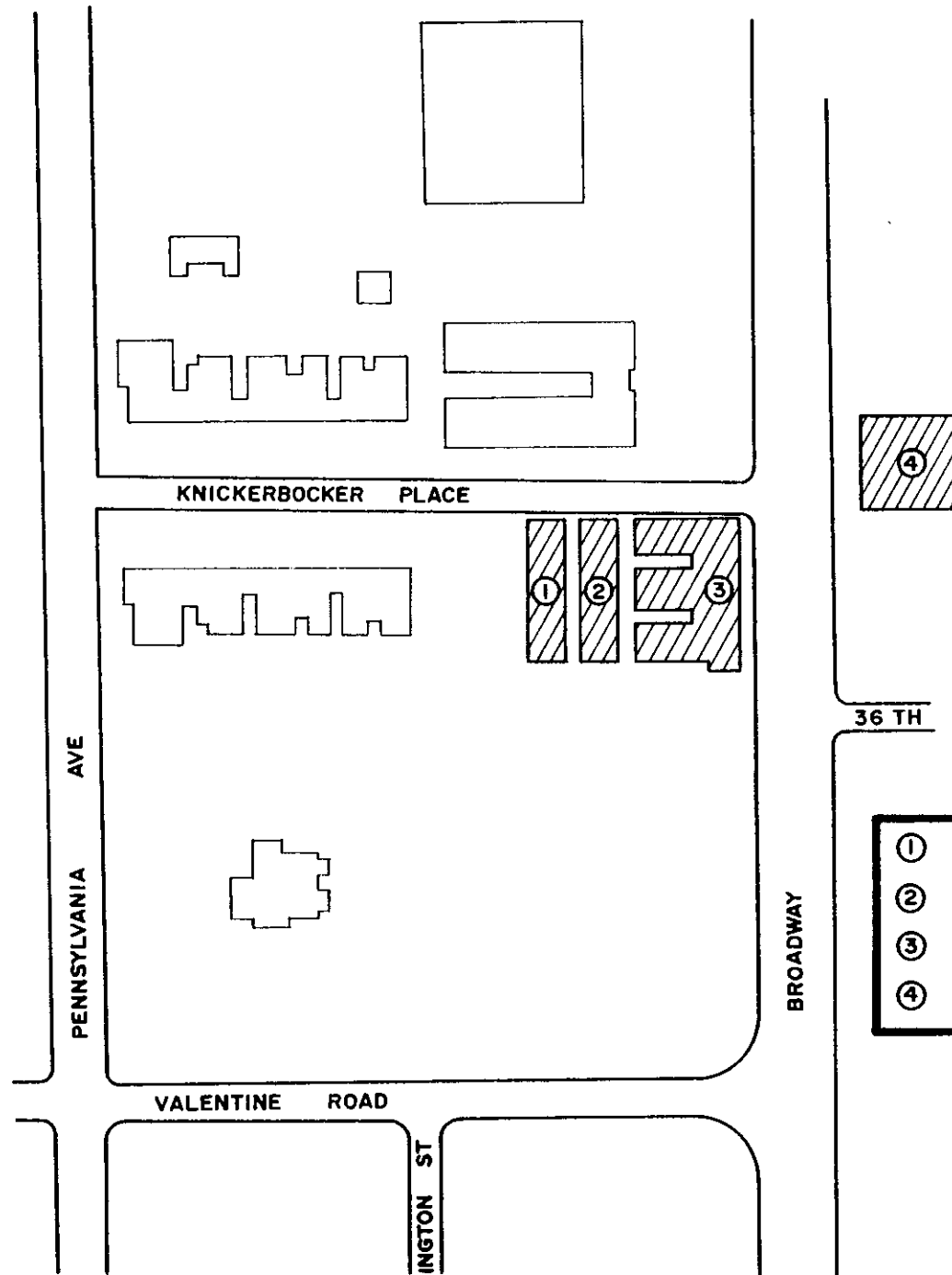
DATE

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

SITE PLAN MAP AMBASSADOR HOTEL HISTORIC DISTRICT KANSAS CITY, JACKSON COUNTY, MISSOURI



NOT TO SCALE



36 TH

- | | |
|---|-------------------|
| ① | AMBASSADOR "B" |
| ② | AMBASSADOR "A" |
| ③ | AMBASSADOR HOTEL |
| ④ | CONGRESS BUILDING |



AMBASSADOR HOTEL HISTORIC DISTRICT
 Kansas City Jackson Co., Missouri
 Quadrangle: Kansas City, MO-KAN
 Scale: 1:24,000 (1964)
 UTM Reference:
 15/362400/4324720

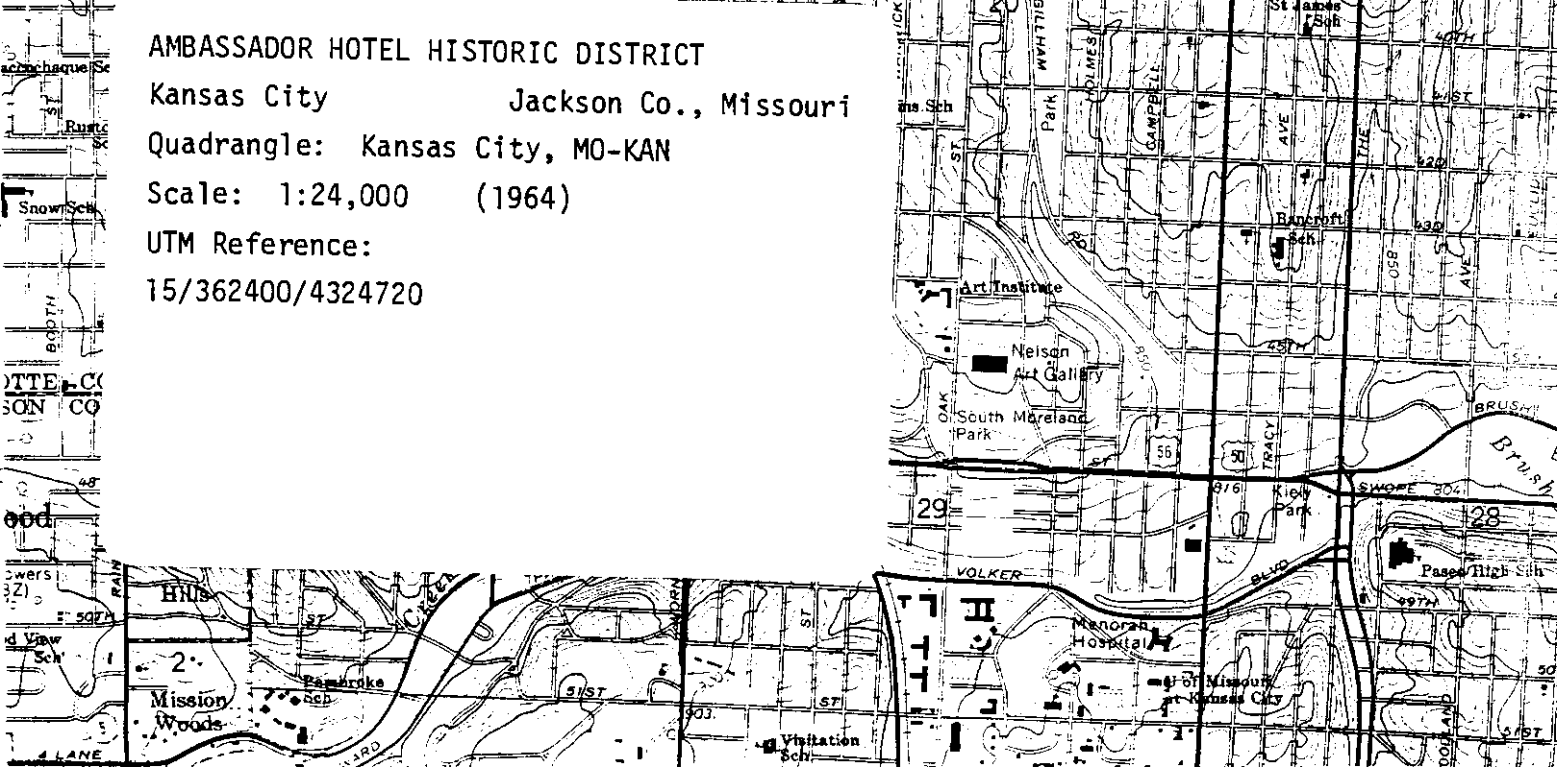


Photo Log:

Name of Property: **Ambassador Hotel Historic District**

City or Vicinity: **Kansas City**

County: **Jackson County**

State: **MO**

Photographer: **Mary J. Matthews**

Date

Photographed: **Jun. 1981**

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 20. Interstate Commercial Investments, 1001 W 43rd Street, Primary E façade.
- 2 of 20. Interstate Commercial Investments, 1001 W 43rd Street, E façade, detail of roofline of tower and loggia which originally opened from the roof garden.
- 3 of 20. Interstate Commercial Investments, 1001 W 43rd Street, N façade, 1st story terra cotta detail.
- 4 of 20. Interstate Commercial Investments, 1001 W 43rd Street, Altered storefront on the SE corner, E façade.
- 5 of 20. Interstate Commercial Investments, 1001 W 43rd Street, original storefronts, E façade.
- 6 of 20. Interstate Commercial Investments, 1001 W 43rd Street, brass elevator in main lobby.
- 7 of 20. Interstate Commercial Investments, 1001 W 43rd Street, primary N façade.
- 8 of 20. Interstate Commercial Investments, 1001 W 43rd Street, primary N façade, NE.
- 9 of 20. Interstate Commercial Investments, 1001 W 43rd Street, stone detail on porch posts, primary façade.
- 10 of 20. Interstate Commercial Investments, 1001 W 43rd Street, reverse glass sign, front façade detail.
- 11 of 20. Interstate Commercial Investments, 1001 W 43rd Street, copper Mission style porch lamp with maze glass.
- 12 of 20. Interstate Commercial Investments, 1001 W 43rd Street, brass door plate, front façade.
- 13 of 20. Interstate Commercial Investments, 1001 W 43rd Street, primary W façade.
- 14 of 20. Interstate Commercial Investments, 1001 W 43rd Street, parking entrance, W façade, NW corner.
- 15 of 20. Interstate Commercial Investments, 1001 W 43rd Street, storefront and main entry, W façade.
- 16 of 20. Interstate Commercial Investments, 1001 W 43rd Street, storefront and elevation, W façade.
- 17 of 20. Interstate Commercial Investments, 1001 W 43rd Street, pressed metal frieze above first floor, W façade.
- 18 of 20. Interstate Commercial Investments, 1001 W 43rd Street, copper lamp detail.
- 19 of 20. Interstate Commercial Investments, 1001 W 43rd Street, marble newel post at first floor main entry, stairway to second floor.
- 20 of 20. Interstate Commercial Investments, 1001 W 43rd Street, plaque describing parking system in Congress garage, bronze.







1020

Home Savings

DRYING
AND CLEANING
A CLEANER











† DELIVER †
GOODS IN REAR







CONGRESS PARKING

PUBLIC PARKING



BUYING
GOLD
SILVER
DIAMONDS
Instant Cash
OPEN 10 to 5 Mon-Sat
CLOSED

NG

P

BUYING
GOLD
SILVER
DIAMONDS
Instant Cash
OPEN 10⁰⁰ 5⁰⁰

CONGRESS
BUILDING



3529

OPEN

HOURS

MON	
TUE	
WED	
THU	
FRI	
SAT	
SUN	

D







An eagle with spread wings is sculpted into the top of the sign, perched on a small roof-like structure.

RAMP BUILDINGS
CORPORATION N.Y.

© *d'Humy* ©
Motoramps

A PATENTED SYSTEM
OF BUILDING DESIGN
INVOLVING
A COMBINATION OF
RAMPS WITH
STAGGERED FLOORS

