

Rossmore Apartment House (Berkeley Hotel)
664 South Fourth Avenue
Louisville
Jefferson County
Kentucky

HABS No. KY-150

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KY
56-LOUVI,
70-

PHOTOGRAPHS

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Southeast Region
Department of the Interior
Atlanta, Georgia 30303

HABS
KY
56-LOUVI,
70-

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDING SURVEY

ROSSMORE APARTMENT HOUSE (Berkeley Hotel)

HABS No. KY-150

Location 664 South Fourth Avenue, Louisville, Jefferson
County, Kentucky
USGS: Louisville West Quadrant, Universal
Transverse Mercator Coordinates: 16.608640.4233700

Present Owner: Urban Renewal Agency of the Louisville Community
Development Cabinet, 727 West Main Street
Louisville, Kentucky 40202, March, 1983

Present Use: Vacant

Significance: The Rossmore Apartment House was Louisville's first
modern apartment building. The structure shows clear
evidence of the influence of the Chicago School Style
of the late nineteenth century, of which few examples
remain in Louisville.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: The south, three bays were begun in 1893 and completed in 1894. The north, two bays and facade were most likely completed by 1899. ("Rossmore", Evening Post and McDonald and Sheblessey Catalog).
2. Architect: Kenneth McDonald (1899 addition, source, McDonald and Sheblessey Catalog) was a regionally prominent architect. He originally practiced with his brothers in the firm of the McDonald Brothers, based in Louisville (1876-1896). The firm designed numerous courthouses and jails throughout the south-east United States. Kenneth McDonald executed the design for the 1899 Rossmore addition during a period when he was practicing independently. The McDonald Brothers firm was possibly responsible for the original portion of the building. The Rossmore Apartment House is an important work utilizing Chicago School elements and apartment design in Kenneth McDonald's development.

Kenneth McDonald continued to practice in Louisville until his retirement in 1913. He had a partnership with John E. Sheblessey from 1900-1905. He was a partner with prominent Louisville architect, William J. Dodd between 1906 and 1913. The firm of McDonald and Dodd was responsible for some of the most important downtown Louisville buildings during this period (Source: Hedgepeth thesis).

3. Original and subsequent owners: The Rossmore Apartment House was constructed for Alonzo J. Ross, a local grocer. Ross began construction shortly after acquiring the site in 1893. Ross sold the structure in 1901 to a wealthy Louisvillian, Theophilus Conrad. Conrad was involved in the tanning industry and real estate. The property was willed to Conrad's heirs in 1905, and sold by them in 1919 to the Consolidated Realty Company. Consolidated sold the building in 1921 to P. A. Gaertner. It was shortly after this transition that the structure became a hotel. The structure was sold to the Berkley Company in 1965 (Source: Jefferson County Kentucky Deed Books).
4. Original plan and construction: No original plans are known to exist. The Evening Post article of 1894 stated that Alonzo Ross had studied apartment houses in Chicago as models. The article also described the structure as follows:
"The ground floor is occupied by a storeroom, 186X25 feet. On the left hand side of the front is the entrance lobby with tile and stone. Apartments are on the second, third and fourth floors and each parlor has a bay window....Servant's quarters were at the rear of each floor and the fifth floor had storage rooms for each apartment."
No view of the 1894 portion of the structure has been located.
5. Alterations and additions: The 1894 section of the building was described as having a north hall and that the owner spoke of plans to add a north addition (source: "Rossmore", Evening Post). In 1899, Ross drew up a party wall agreement with the lot owner to the north of his site for the purpose of erecting an addition (source: Jefferson County Kentucky Deed Book). A photo of the structure (c.1903, McDonald and Sheblessey Catalog) shows a central entry and the structure now has a central hall which would have been the north hall of the original structure. There is no visual disunity or inconsistencies in the facade, thus a new facade was completely added in 1899 or the original was perfectly matched. The interior of the structure after the addition consisted of a ground floor store containing Mr. Ross's grocery. Each apartment had a private hallway opening into the main hall which extended the length of the building on the north side. Apartments consisted of four rooms, kitchen, bathroom, linen closet, and pantry. The servant's rooms remained at the rear and storage on the fifth floor. One large central light/airwell and two smaller ones central to the kitchen/bath areas on the east and west were incorporated in the 1899 addition. (Source: National Register nomination). The later additions consist of numerous changes to the first floor facade (c.1940s-1970s) and the rearrangement in the floor plans and the removal of interior architectural details date from the structure's use as a transient hotel (c.1940s to 1970s).

B. Historical Context:

The Rossmore Apartment House took its name from the original owner Alonzo Ross. Ross, a grocer, located his store on the first floor of the Rossmore until 1904. The subsequent owner was Theophilus Conrad, a prominent Louisvillian, who made a fortune in the tanning industry.

The construction of the Rossmore Apartment House was part of the expansion of downtown Louisville south along Fourth Avenue. This movement occurred between the late 1890s to the late 1920s. It culminated in the construction of the Brown Hotel (1926) and the Martin E. Brown Office Building (1928) at either corner of Fourth and Broadway.

The Rossmore was built for well-to-do persons who had had larger homes and servants.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The Rossmore Apartment House is an excellent local example of the Chicago School Style. The simplicity of line and detail, the hard-edged brick arches which articulate the fenestration and create a rhythmic pattern in the facade and the rows of bay windows on the south side are all typical elements of the style.
2. Condition of fabric: The exterior is in fairly good condition.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: Fifty feet by one-hundred and eighty feet. The structure has five bays across the facade which is five stories in height.
2. Foundation: The basement consists of twelve inch stone blocks in good condition.
3. Walls: This structure has a red brown-brick covering the exposed, exterior walls. A rusticated brick forms the lintels, and coursing on the first and second stories. A stone entablature with egg and dart mold articulates the first and second stories. A stone bandcourse is between the second and third and the fourth and fifth stories. Pilasters articulate the windows of the third and fourth floors and have round arches springing from the capitals.

4. Structural systems, framing: The structure has brick exterior party and bearing walls. Eight inch wood columns and two by fourteen inch wood girders are in the basement midway between bearing walls. The floors and roof framing are wood. The bay windows are supported by steel.

5. Openings:

- a. Doors and doorway: The original entry doors are no longer in place. This central doorway has been infilled with steel doors with full glass lights.
- b. Windows: The windows are double-hung, one-over-one sash. The windows on the fourth-story of the facade have round-arch tops. The windows on the south side are set in projecting bays.

6. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: The structure has a hip roof with a tin covering of approximately a 4:12 slope. The roof leaks causing interior damage to the upper floors.
- b. Cornice, eaves: The structure has an extended cornice with a paneled soffit and a dentil-like trim in the fascia and below the soffit.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. The first floor consists of a central stair lobby flanked by open commercial space which extends for the depth of the structure (see sketch).
 - b. The upper four floors consist of a series of rooms with closets in the south section, central and more irregularly spaced rooms, closets and baths along the north (see sketch).
2. Stairways: The interior central stair has nineteen risers to the landing. The lobby through the fifth floor has seven inch risers with ten-and-one-half inch treads. The stairway has a wood banister.

3. Flooring: The lobby has white marble tile. The first floor commercial spaces have hexagonal ceramic tile. The corridors of the second through fifth floors have hexagonal tile. The basement floor is part brick and part concrete.
4. Wall and Ceiling finish: The structure has plastered walls and ceilings. The first floor ceiling has decorative molded plasterwork. The corridors of the second through fifth floors have a wainscot of wallpaper with a decorative pattern of relief. Some of the bathrooms have ceramic tiles.
5. Doorways and Doors: Doors to the former suites have transoms to the ceiling and decorative wood trim.
6. Decorative features: Four large mirrors (approximately five by five feet) remain in each front room of the upper floors. These are set in heavy wood frame with decorative treatment in the Ionic order.
7. Heating: The structure has a steam heat system which was originally coal-fired and later converted to gas.

D. Site:

1. The structure faces almost due east. It fills the entire lot except for approximately 12 feet at the rear. The sidewalk abuts the facade and there is no landscaping. The structure has an alley to the south. The rest of the block-face consists of structures of a similar scale and a vacant lot. The structures at either end of the block (one directly south of the Rossmore) are of a much larger scale. The structure originally faced a street which has been turned into a pedestrian mall with miscellaneous benches and small trees.

Prepared by:
Marty Hedgepeth
Director of Research
Historic Landmarks and Preservation
Districts Commission
April 1983

PART III SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- A. Early Views: 1899 facade, Kenneth McDonald and J. F. Sheblessey: Architects. Louisville: D. B. Foster and (c. 1903). (Filson Club, Louisville, Kentucky, only known copy).
- D. Bibliography:
1. Primary and unpublished sources:

C. K. Caron Directory of Louisville: Louisville:
C. K. Caron, 1892-1930.

Jefferson County Kentucky Deed Book 410, p.31 (1893;
Book 564, p.278 (1901); Book 619, p. 560 (1905;
Book 940, p. 41 (1919); Book 1028, p. 449 (1921);
(Jefferson County Court House, 517 W. Jefferson,
Louisville, Kentucky).
 2. Secondary and published sources:

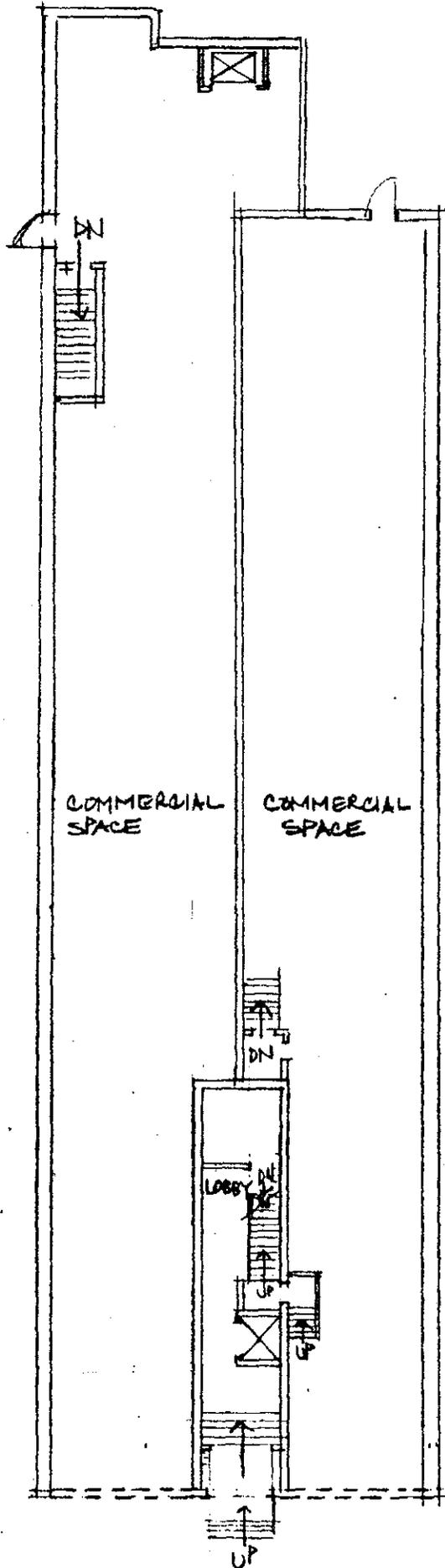
Hedgepeth, Marty Poynter, "The Victorian to the Beaux-Arts:
A Study of Four Louisville Architectural Firms, The
McDonald Brothers, Dodd and Cobb, McDonald and Sheblessey
and McDonald and Dodd," Masters thesis, University of
Louisville, 1981.

"Rossmore." Louisville Evening Post 10 December 1894, p.5.

"Rossmore Apartment House," National Register of Historic
Places Nomination form, Listed 14 November 1978.

PART IV PROJECT INFORMATION

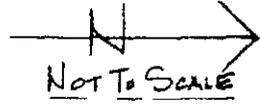
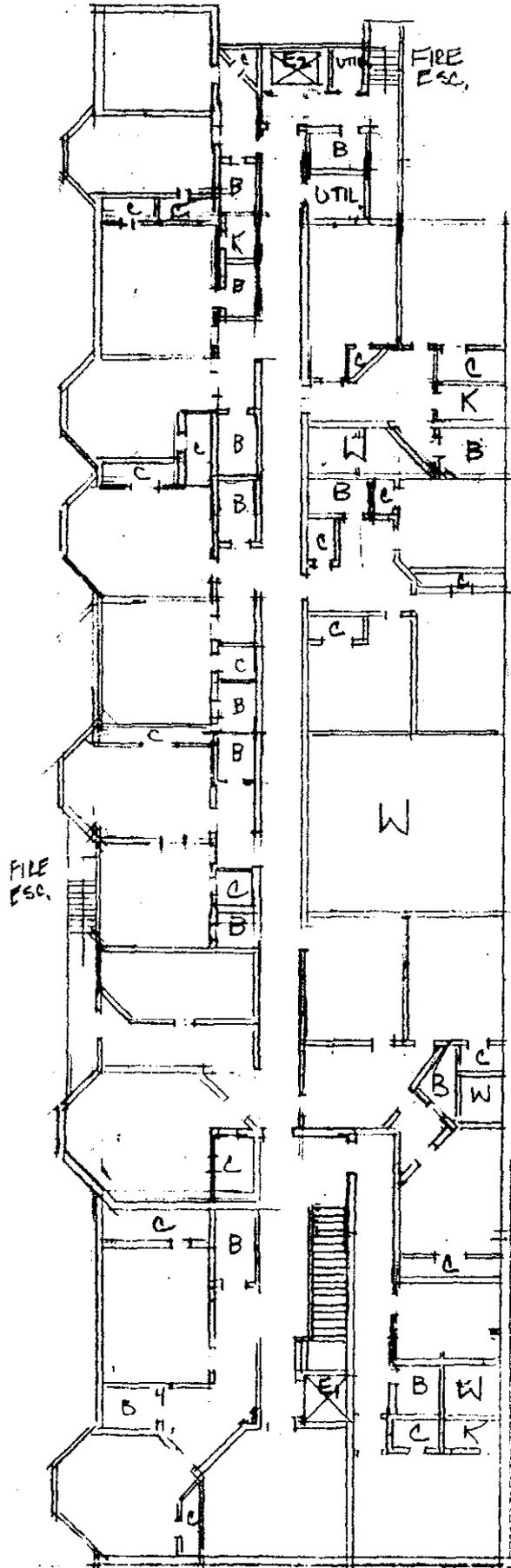
This project was sponsored by the City of Louisville. The historical documentation was compiled by Marty Poynter Hedgepeth, Director of Research of the Historic Landmarks and Preservation Districts Commission. The measured drawings and structural information were prepared by Lane Stumpler of Ward and Taylor Architects, Louisville, Kentucky. The photography was completed by Donald Mitchell, photographer, Louisville Community Development Cabinet.



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NOT TO SCALE

ROSSMORE APT. HOUSE
(BERKELEY HOTEL)
LOUISVILLE, KY
FIRST FLOOR PLAN

MAY 1983
LANE STUHLER
WARD & TAYLOR ARCHITECTS
LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY



- B: BATHROOM OR TOILET
- K: KITCHEN
- N: LIGHT/AIR WELL
- E₁: PASSENGER ELEVATOR
- E₂: SERVICE ELEVATOR

ROSSMORE APT. HOUSE
(BERKELEY HOTEL)
SECOND FLOOR PLAN
FLOORS 3-5 SIMILAR

MAY 1983
LINE STUMLER
WARD & TAYLOR ARCHITECTS
LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY

ADDENDUM TO
ROSSMORE APARTMENT HOUSE (Commercial building)
(Berkeley Hotel)
664 South Fourth Avenue
Louisville
Jefferson County
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