

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

VUR 9/5/7
NRHP 10/29/7

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Preston Court Apartments

other names/site number VDHR File # 104-0239

2. Location

street & number 1600 Grady Avenue not for publication N/A

city or town Charlottesville vicinity N/A

state Virginia code VA county Charlottesville code 540 zip code 22903

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide X locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official
Virginia Department of Historic Resources
State or Federal Agency or Tribal government

Date

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

 entered in the National Register
 See continuation sheet.

 determined eligible for the National Register
 See continuation sheet.

 determined not eligible for the National Register
 removed from the National Register

 other (explain):

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply) **Category of Property** (Check only one box)

private
 public-local
 public-State
 public-Federal

building(s)
 district
 site
 structure
 object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 1 (contributing to Rugby

Road-University Corner Historic District

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.) N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Domestic Sub: Multiple dwelling: apartment

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Domestic Sub: Multiple dwelling: apartment

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Late-19th and 20th-century Revivals: Classical Revival

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete; Brick
roof Synthetics
walls Brick
other Concrete

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

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.)

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a 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.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture; Social History

Period of Significance 1928-1957

Significant Dates 1928

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

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder Stanislaw Makielski- architect; Frank E. Hartman Co.- builders

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

- 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 # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

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

Name of repository: Virginia Department of Historic Resources

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property .622 acres

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing	
1	17	719451E	4213140N	2			<u>See continuation sheet.</u>

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

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Maral S. Kalbian, Architectural Historian; Margaret T. Peters, Research Historian

organization Maral S. Kalbian, LLC date June 14, 2007

street & number P.O. Box 468 telephone 540-955-1231

city or town Berryville state VA zip code 22611

Additional Documentation

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 the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Barbara Hartman Walker, General Partner Preston Court Limited Partnership

street & number P.O. Box 396 telephone 434-971-8013

city or town Ivy state VA zip code 22945

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.). A federal agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 36 hours per response including the 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 National Register of Historic Places, National Park Service, 1849 C St., NW, Washington, DC 20240.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Preston Court Apartments
Charlottesville, Virginia

Section 7 Page 1

7. SUMMARY DESCRIPTION:

Located at 1600 Grady Avenue in the city of Charlottesville, Virginia, Preston Court Apartments is sited on the north side of Grady Avenue east of its intersection with Rugby Road. A remarkably well-preserved example of a garden-style apartment, Preston Court Apartments was constructed in 1928 after a design by University of Virginia architecture professor, Stanislaw Makielski, and was built by and for the Frank E. Hartman Company. The three-story, C-shaped, Classical Revival-style, reinforced concrete building is faced with brick and is the largest apartment building of its era in the City of Charlottesville. It is also one of the first multi-story apartment buildings in the city that was constructed for family living using the modern technologies of the period. Since its construction, the property has remained in the Hartman family and is still used as rental apartments. The surrounding yard and rear courtyard contain mature plantings that add to the building's residential character and further enhance the property's integrity.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION:

The Preston Court Apartments is one of the largest and most intact of a series of apartment buildings constructed in this part of Charlottesville during the 1920s in order to accommodate the burgeoning population of the city. Situated within a half mile of the Rotunda, the building's location in close proximity to the University of Virginia, as well as its easy accessibility to downtown, was meant to attract not only the faculty population and students, but also business professionals. Advertisements from when Preston Court Apartments opened in 1929 tout its modern characteristics, including that of being fireproof (**Figure 1**). This appeal to safety and modern conveniences, and the way those features are incorporated into the building, are what set Preston Court Apartments apart from other contemporary apartment buildings in Charlottesville.

Designed by University of Virginia architecture professor Stanislaw Makielski, Preston Court Apartments was owned and constructed by the Frank E. Hartman Company, run by brothers Leonard and Frank Hartman. In 1931 Frank Hartman, who was trained as a civil engineer, became superintendent of buildings and grounds at the University of Virginia, a position he held until 1957. The Hartman family is still the majority owner and a granddaughter of Leonard Hartman is the manager and operates the rental units at Preston Court Apartments, which cost \$220,000 to construct in 1928.¹

Located on the north side of Grady Avenue one block east of Rugby Road, the three-story building is C-shaped with a rear courtyard excavated to the basement level. Constructed using cast-in-place reinforced concrete with concrete tile partitions, the building is faced with brick with cast stone detailing.² The facade, which faces south onto Grady Avenue, is now somewhat obscured by mature magnolia trees that wrap around all sides of the building, yet it still addresses the street effectively. Measuring nearly 150 feet in length, the fourteen-bay front façade features two large multi-level porticos, each containing an entrance into the building. This pattern is echoed on the east and west elevations although they are narrower, measuring roughly 105 feet in length, seven bays wide, and containing only one portico each. The light-colored monumental porticos contrast with the dark brick walls and give the building a stately presence among the neighboring buildings that are primarily single-family residences or fraternities. Low fieldstone gateposts with a marble plate inscribed with "Preston Court

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Preston Court Apartments
Charlottesville, Virginia

Section 7 Page 2

Apartments” are located on either side of the west entrance to Preston Place, the street that runs alongside and behind the building.

The Preston Court Apartments is faced with brick laid in a Flemish-bond pattern on all sides. The bricks used in the foundation, which are a darker color than the red bricks of the walls, feature a molded brick water table. Cast stone quoins mark the corners of the building and frame the porches. The three-story building has a flat roof with a brick parapet topped by a wooden entablature and cornice. Another wooden cornice and frieze is located just below the third-story windows. On the parapet at the center of the Grady Avenue facade is a panel of pierced concrete blocks, which match those in the cornice of the portico, flanked by low-relief concrete consoles with an Art Deco motif. The building contains four capped interior brick chimneys along the front and two each on the side elevations.

Two two-story, five-bay, flat-roofed Ionic porticos are located on the front of Preston Court Apartments, each measuring 47 feet in width. The side elevations contain one of the same style of portico. Six stuccoed Ionic columns support a flat roof with a modillioned entablature and a cushion frieze decorated with Chinese Chippendale pierced vents. A metal awning shelters a deck on the roof of each portico. Porches with wrought iron balustrades are found at both levels of the portico and are accessible from the apartments by paired French doors. Another level of porches is found on the roof of the porticos for a total of twenty-four balconies. The portico columns are supported by a raised brick foundation at the basement level that contains segmental-arched two-light windows that provide light into the basement.

Entrances into the building are located at the center bay of each portico, between the porches, at the level of the stair landing between the basement and first story. The walkways are paved with flagstone. The paneled entrance doors have an entablature with shouldered architrave, deep cushion frieze, and denticulated cornice on consoles supported by pilasters. Above the entrance on the upper landing is a round-headed multi-light window with rounded brick arch and keystone that is fronted by a Chinese Chippendale balustrade. Unlike other similar apartment buildings of this era in Charlottesville, Preston Court stands out as the only one that incorporated multiple entrances. Nearby on University Way, the Lyndhall (1915), and on University Circle, the Wentenbaker (1916), and Rugby Apartments (ca. 1925) all have one main entrance as does the Altamont (1928), located on Altamont Circle closer to downtown. Raleigh Apartments (1927) located on University Circle contains two front entrances, but none on the side. Not only do multiple entrances disperse the tenants and provide more privacy, they are also a fire safety feature.³

The wooden windows are double-hung, six-over-six-sash with molded surrounds and louvered wooden shutters. The first- and some of the second-story windows have brick jack arches with stone keystones, and the first-story windows also have paneled wooden aprons. The second-story windows have cast stone jack arches, and a band of cast stone extending around the building acts as a common lintel for the third-story windows. Basement windows are segmental-headed; some are six-over-six-sash and some are half-sized two-light hinged sash. Some of the rear windows facing the courtyard contain eight-over-eight wood sash.

Access to the rear sunken courtyard along the north side of the building is by a pair of two-flight stairs from the top of a fieldstone retaining wall located close to the rear property line. The rear elevation of Preston Court Apartments is more simply detailed than the other sides of the building and serves as the service entrance. Each

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Preston Court Apartments
Charlottesville, Virginia

Section 7 Page 3

apartment has a back door from the kitchen that opens onto a fire escape that leads down into the well-landscaped rear courtyard. The four, three-bay, four-story, hip-roofed, steel fire escape units each contain a central staircase flanked by landings with a balustrade. Each level of the escape serves two apartments. The detailing on the escapes is minimal and the steel is painted black. As with the other elevations, mature magnolias are located in the courtyard, providing shade and privacy.

Although Preston Court Apartments was the largest building on the street when constructed in 1928, Makielski's judicious use of Classical design elements on the exterior allows the building to fit into the neighborhood. The exterior massing of what could have been an out of scale and bulky structure is de-emphasized and broken down into a more intimate scale by the use of multiple porticos with entrances, the contrasting use of brick and cast stone to call attention to the individual architectural elements, and the use of horizontal banding to minimize the building's height.

Apartment buildings were a relatively new phenomenon in Charlottesville during this time. Potential tenants, who would move there from single-family dwellings, would appreciate a more intimate and residential scale to which they were accustomed. An article in the April 3, 1928 edition of the Daily Progress about the construction of the Preston Court presents the building as a "modern 26-family fireproof structure." The exterior design is linked to the "Colonial" type "so exemplified in the major buildings at the University." Its location is touted, including its high and attractive siting that faces south, east and west "with an attractive court in the center." Modern amenities are described, some of which, including the roof garden, were not realized presumably because of cost overruns:

....All floors and walls, both exterior and roof will be strictly fire proof and the roof will be used as a roof garden and in addition to being insulated with corkboard to keep apartments cool,...sprinklers to spray the roof in extremely warm weather...Kitchens will be equipped with both gas and electricity, automatic gas, water heaters, and electric ranges, and an individual electric refrigerator in each kitchen.⁴

Preston Court Apartments contains thirty-five units, making it the largest historic apartment complex in the area.⁵ Of the twenty-four balcony level apartments, six contain three bedrooms and two bathrooms, twelve contain two bedrooms and one bath, and six contain one bedroom and one bath, and all back up to the interior rear courtyard. The basement level contains eleven courtyard apartments as well as the utility rooms. All apartments follow the same general plan, with the exception of the basement level apartments, which are less formal than the upper story ones. Reserved for students and directly adjacent to the mechanical rooms, one major difference is that unlike the upper story units, these do not feature an entrance vestibule. Although the interior has had modest upgrades over the years, the general floor plans are the same with the exception of some of the basement apartments (**Figure 2**). Upgrades have been made to some of the bathrooms and kitchens as well, although overall, the building is remarkably well preserved. The built-up roof has been resurfaced on several occasions and other minor service upgrades to the apartments have been made.

Each of the four entrances to the building leads to a vestibule with a set of dog-leg stairs up to the upper-story

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Preston Court Apartments
Charlottesville, Virginia

Section 7 Page 4

apartments and down to the basement apartments. The floor, landings, and stair treads are covered in light-colored marble and the metal rectangular pickets, wooden handrail, and turned newels are painted black.

Generally, each unit includes a small entrance vestibule with the living room at the front of the apartment containing doors that lead out to the porch. The dining room is located behind the living room and offers a view to the rear courtyard. The adjacent kitchen has a back door out to a small landing on the fire escape, providing a secondary service entrance to the apartment. The bedrooms are located off the living room area and center around the bathroom, which includes a sink, toilet, and usually a window. Wooden floors are found throughout the apartments with the exception of in the bathrooms, which are tiled, and the kitchens, which contain linoleum. Corkboard is found within the floors and walls providing not only insulation but noise abatement between the units. The plastered walls and ceilings in the vast majority of the apartments as well as the painted wooden crown mold, baseboard, and window and door trim are intact. The most formal space in each unit is the living room, which contains a fireplace with mantel. According to a newspaper article after Preston Court Apartments opened in February of 1929, the Classical Revival style mantels, featuring fluted Doric pilasters supporting a frieze with applied reliefs and a stepped mantelshelf, were manufactured by the Breecher Company of Louisville, Kentucky.⁶

Preston Court Apartments is architecturally significant as an exceptionally well-preserved example of a Classical Revival garden-style apartment from the mid-1920s in the City of Charlottesville, Virginia. The “modern and fireproof” building, designed by architect Stanislaw Makielski, successfully addresses apartment living while appealing to single-family residential characteristics including smallness of scale, privacy, light, and modern amenities as well as providing for secondary service entrances into each unit. Preston Court’s architectural sophistication reflects the desire of the architect and the original owner and builder, Frank E. Hartman Company, to address these concerns.

ENDNOTES

¹ John E. Wells and Robert E. Dalton. The Virginia Architects, 1835-1955, a Biographical Dictionary. [Richmond: New South Press, 1997], 277.

² Although the interior structural walls are not visible, this information was gleaned from the 1929 Sanborn Map, newspaper accounts, the current owners, and some of the floor plans.

³ Daniel Bluestone. “Buena Park Historic District,” National Register of Historic Places (1984). Section 8, page 13, 9.

⁴ Daily Progress (Charlottesville); April 3, 1928. The article describes it as containing 26 apartments not the 31 it currently has. This could be due to the fact that they did not count the basement apartments in the advertisement.

⁵ The Lyndhall (1915) located at 64 University Way contains 9 units; Wertenbaker (1916) (now Miramount) at 39 University Circle contains 6 units; the Rugby Apartments (ca. 1925) at 4 University Circle contains 10 units; the Raleigh Apartments (1927) at 10 University Circle contains 18 units; the Jack Jouett Apartments (1928) at 68 University Way contains 20 units; the University Circle Apartments (1947) at 32 University Circle contains 21 units; and the Altamont at 11 Altamont Circle (1928) contains 31 units.

⁶ Daily Progress (Charlottesville); February 16, 1929.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Preston Court Apartments
Charlottesville, Virginia

Section 8 Page 5

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

Preston Court Apartments, located in a primarily upscale residential neighborhood in the City of Charlottesville, Virginia, is significant as an outstanding example of Classical Revival architecture of the early 20th century in a community that boasts some of the finest buildings of that style in the nation. The apartment building is also significant as an excellent and well-preserved example of garden-style apartments popularized in the first three decades of the 20th century that were designed to provide upscale and healthy living accommodations for a growing population in America's cities and towns. To a populace accustomed to single-family dwellings, buildings like Preston Court were designed to offer living space that combined comfortable living quarters in a setting that recalled individual houses with numerous windows, individual entry-ways, and landscaped settings. Apartments were constructed in response to the growing demand for housing in more populous areas during a booming economy in the United States following World War I. Tenants of Preston Court included doctors, lawyers, architects, business leaders, and university professors, demonstrating the appeal of the building to successful and relatively affluent professionals in the Charlottesville community. Basement apartments were reserved primarily for university students. Preston Court Apartments is listed as a contributing resource in the Rugby Road-University Corner Historic District [DHR #104-0133], listed in 1984, but it is also individually eligible for the National Register on a local level under Criterion C for its exceptional architectural quality and under Criterion A as an outstanding example of how changing societal demands for adequate housing were met throughout the 20th century. The period of significance is 1928-1957, as the building has undergone little if any alteration and continues to be used as a rental/apartment building by the same family.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

Preston Court Apartments derives its name from the Preston family who owned the large Wyndhurst Estate in the northern portion of the City of Charlottesville. Thomas L. Preston, who earlier was recorded as a "farmer" in Albemarle County, appears in the 1900 Charlottesville census as an 87-year-old "capitalist," living with his 74-year old wife in what was called the "Court House District" of the City, possibly in the 19th-century house that stands behind Preston Court Apartments.¹ It is likely that it is his family name that marks one of Charlottesville's primary thoroughfares, Preston Avenue. The parcel on which the Preston Court apartment building was built was carved off from the larger Preston estate when it was sold to Jacob Leonard Hartman in 1927.²

Jacob Leonard Hartman, known as Leonard, was the grandson of Henry Hartman, who moved to Charlottesville from Ohio in 1867. Henry Hartman bought and operated what became known as Hartman's Mill. His son, Jacob Michael, helped his father at the mill, and ultimately owned three houses on Ridge Street, two of which he deeded to his sons, both of whom were born in Charlottesville, Frank Everett (born 1880) and Jacob Leonard (born 1890).³ Leonard paid for his brother Frank to attend engineering school at the University of Virginia, from which he graduated in 1911. Leonard went to work as an engineer for the railroad. After brief sojourns in Pennsylvania, the two brothers returned to Charlottesville, and Leonard, who was always the businessman of the pair, bought the two lots that comprised the front yard of the Preston House on Grady Avenue in 1927. The residential neighborhood would become home to many students, staff and faculty as well as professionals in the

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Preston Court Apartments
Charlottesville, Virginia

Section 8 Page 6

City. The Hartman brothers clearly saw the potential for development in the area. By 1928 when Preston Court was built, the Hartmans had established a construction company called Frank E. Hartman Company, with Leonard functioning as the contractor and Frank as the civil engineer.⁴ Frank Hartman would go on to become superintendent of buildings and grounds at the University of Virginia from 1931-1957. It was under his direction that the Alderman Library was constructed, one of the largest architectural projects at the University during the 1930s.⁵

With Preston Court Apartments, the Hartman brothers envisioned a multi-family building that would house community professionals, students, and faculty members of the University. They fortuitously employed a brilliant young architect to design their building, Stanislaw Makielski, who was on the faculty of the architectural school of the University of Virginia. Makielski, (1893-1969) whose parents were both born in Poland, was a native of Indiana and had studied engineering at Notre Dame University before coming to Charlottesville in 1919, where he earned his B.S. degree in Architecture from the University in 1922.⁶ He is closely identified with many of the buildings at the University of Virginia. These include the Zeta Psi Fraternity House in 1926; the Phi Gamma Delta, Alpha Chi Rho, Phi Kappa Psi houses, and additions to the Sigma Nu House in 1929; dozens of buildings on the University grounds; churches in Crozet, Stanardsville, Lancaster County, and St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Atlanta, additions to the Quarters building at Blandy Experimental Farm in Clarke County, Memorial Gymnasium at the University, and numerous private residences in the Charlottesville/Albemarle County area. Although he designed a variety of building types, it appears Preston Court was his only apartment project.⁷

It is not surprising that the Hartman brothers would turn to Makielski to design the building they envisioned. Makielski would have been thoroughly familiar with the design elements that Charlottesville residents preferred, and he clearly understood the residential elements desired by potential renters who were accustomed to single family buildings. Compatible with the University buildings whose architectural styles dominated the area, Preston Court would be seen as a prestigious place to live. Because of its proximity to the University, accessibility to downtown, and its underlying goal to attract business leaders and University staff to live in the new apartment building, both the Hartmans and Makielski would have expended every effort to make multiple-family dwellings as appealing as possible.

While the Hartmans had a vision of what they wanted to build, they were not functioning in a vacuum. During the last quarter of the 19th century, more and more people moved into cities and towns, and demand for housing was outstripping the housing supply throughout the country. In cities like Chicago and New York, apartment living was becoming more desirable and acceptable to those accustomed to well-appointed surroundings. Those charged with coming up with housing solutions labored to replicate single-family living conditions to attract residents. Chicago's Buena Park featured several imposing apartment buildings like the Pattington (David E. Postle, 1902) and the Eleanor Apartments (Frank V. Newell, 1906) that were limited to three or four stories and offered "light, air, and open space" in apartment design.⁸ In New York's Jackson Heights, the Queensboro Corporation developed one of the earliest "garden apartment" complexes. These apartment buildings were relatively shallow in depth, leaving more space for an open courtyard in the rear and offering large windows that permitted more light to residents than in traditional apartment buildings.⁹ Like the Cedar Court Apartments in Jackson Heights, New York,¹⁰ Preston Court was built in a C-shaped plan

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Preston Court Apartments
Charlottesville, Virginia

Section 8 Page 7

that encompassed a landscaped courtyard visible to nearly all residential upper story units. Probably most revealing was a book published in 1926 entitled American Apartment Houses of Today: illustrating plans, details, exteriors and interiors of modern city and suburban apartment houses throughout the United States, edited by R. W. Sexton. This treatise contends that garden apartments “provide relief for the housing challenges with which urban centers are confronted...” by offering a residence that retains the advantages of a private house while reducing operating costs to the owners. The book declares that “garden apartments represent the highest development in apartment housing today.”¹¹ The apartment plans with an interior open court, or a U- or C-shaped plan offered separate entries for individual apartment owners, mirroring individual houses. In the case of Charlottesville, Preston Court was designed to make the living environment comfortable for those who might otherwise have chosen a single dwelling, while at the same time making the building compatible with the single-family neighborhood in which it was located. It is a tribute to Makielski that he drew upon the most up-to-date multiple family dwelling designs, as well as to the Hartmans who embraced such an undertaking. Makielski also drew upon the architectural elements with which residents in Charlottesville were most comfortable, those that were featured in the growing number of Jeffersonian-inspired academic buildings at the University.

Beyond the aesthetics and the convenience of Preston Court apartments, the building was touted as “fireproof.” Being fireproof undoubtedly meant primarily steel and concrete construction, with “all floors and walls strictly fireproof.” A lengthy article in the April 3, 1928, Charlottesville Daily Progress provides a detailed description of Preston Court, noting that it stood on “one of the highest and most attractive locations at the University,” and describes the architecture as “true Colonial in its type...attractively exemplified in the major buildings at the University.” The upper floor apartments consisted of six rooms with two baths or five or four rooms and one bath as well as a fireplace and a large porch. These design elements, as well as the multiple entrances into the building itself, are again consistent with the resemblance to individual residences that was being sought.¹² Detailed architectural drawings provide a list of the various sub-contractors involved in the building, including Sensibaugh Ritchie Company for electrical work, King Lumber Company for millwork, John and Brown for heating and plumbing, and Baltimore and Updike for the fine brickwork. Garages, janitor’s rooms, and four complete laundries were incorporated into the planned building, to make shared services as convenient as possible.¹³ The apartments on the basement level were designed primarily for students, and an examination of the city directories for the city substantiates this arrangement.

The Preston Court Apartments was popular in its early years based on those who chose to live there in the first years after construction. Among the earliest residents recorded in the 1929 City Directory shortly after completion of the building were Henry W. Anderson, a lawyer; Cecil C. Dabney, a doctor; Marshall S. Wells, architect; and Henry A. Yancy, Charlottesville City Manager. Students did occupy the basement units, and several university instructors also lived in the building. Mr. James C. Bosworth was the first manager of the complex and lived in an apartment on site. By 1931, there were a few vacancies according to the directory, but Unit 106 had been leased by the Superintendent of the University Hospital, and lawyer and later prominent law professor T. Munford Boyd lived in unit 105, both of which were located on the first floor. The U. S. Census for Charlottesville calls the Preston Court Apartments “Preston Place,” but confirms the professional status of most of the residents. By 1934, there are at least five vacant units, probably attributable to the Depression and the inability of many to afford luxury living quarters. However, Preston Court was still home to several

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Preston Court Apartments
Charlottesville, Virginia

Section 8 Page 8

students and University of Virginia professors, the City Engineer S. L. Williamson, President of Piedmont Gas and Oil, T. V. Dickens, , and L. H. Timmons, manager of the Coca Cola Bottling Company in Charlottesville. Despite the downturn in residency in the mid-30s, it appears that rentals had rebounded by 1938 with virtually all units occupied by then. By 1940, Leonard Hartman had moved from his long-time home on Ridge Street and was living in Unit 108 in Preston Court. His brother Frank moved to unit 108 later and was living there when he died in the late 1950s. It appears that at least nine students were living in the basement apartments, and several widows occupied upper floor units. At least three University professors resided there as well.¹⁴ During the 1940s, there were periods when a number of the units were vacant; but by the mid-1950s, the residential occupancy rate had rebounded and included a number of widows, retirees and students along with a scattering of local professionals and university professors. City directories for 1955 reveal that all units were occupied with the largest number of residents since the building opened in the late 1920s.¹⁵

Preston Court Apartments is listed as a contributing building in the Rugby Road–University Corner Historic District Nomination [DHR #104-0133], which was listed on the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places in 1984. Six additional apartment buildings dating from the 1910s and 1920s are included within the district. Of those, Preston Court Apartments is not only the largest, but it is also one of only two with more than one front entrance. By having multiple entrances as opposed to one main entrance with one stairhall, the apartment building minimizes its impression of a large hotel-like structure. Termed “garden-style” apartments in the 1920s, these structures appealed to a set of new apartment dwellers that were used to single-family residences.¹⁶ Privacy, light, and safety were critical elements and Preston Court Apartments addressed these concerns effectively. The Lyndhall at 64 University Circle was constructed in 1915 in the Colonial Revival style and is located nearby within the Rugby Road-University Corner Historic District. The two-and-a-half-story brick apartment building has a symmetrical seven-bay front with a small one-bay Doric entry porch leading into the main stairhall, which accesses all nine units. The Miramount (originally the Wertenbaker) at 32 University Circle, also in the district, was constructed in 1916 and contains six units. Although it features a main central entrance, it is similar to Preston Court in its use of a three-story wooden and brick portico that helps to de-emphasize its large scale. More contemporary buildings to Preston Court that are located nearby in the district include the Rugby Apartments at 4 University Circle. Constructed in 1925, the three-and-a-half-story, Georgian Revival-style brick apartment building features a nine-bay front façade with projecting two-bay end pavilions and a two-story tetrasyle Corinthian portico with broad wooden entablatures between the second and third stories, all features attempting to break up the massive scale of the building. The Raleigh Court Apartments, constructed in 1927 and located at 10 University Circle, comes the closest of the entire group to the architectural sophistication of Preston Court. The three-and-a-half-story, Georgian Revival-style brick apartment building features a U-plan with a front courtyard, three two-story semicircular Doric front porticoes with balconies and decks, a broad wooden entablature between the second and third stories, and two corner entries with aedicule surrounds.¹⁷ The Altamont, located at Altamont Circle near downtown Charlottesville, is another contemporary apartment building although it is not located in the Rugby Road-University Corner Historic District. Constructed in 1928 for \$160,000, the five-story brick building was designed by Richmond architect Carl Max Lindner, Sr. The building features four radiating rectilinear bays that break up the massing of the large building, but there is only one main entrance which is recessed between the two front radiating bays.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Preston Court Apartments
Charlottesville, Virginia

Section 8 Page 9

Although Charlottesville as a community was never on the scale of a Chicago or New York, or even as large as Charlotte, North Carolina, which had several contemporary garden apartment complexes,¹⁸ the Preston Court Apartments clearly were part of the larger national trend toward luxury apartments in the early decades of the 20th century. It met a very specific demand for housing in the university town for students, professors, and instructors. At the same time, it offered comfortable, well-appointed and “house-like” living quarters for professionals, government officials and company executives in Charlottesville, with more modest accommodations for students. One must recall that home ownership was not nearly so prevalent in the 1920s and 30s as it is today. Not surprisingly, structures and apartment complexes of this type are even today becoming more and more popular as they are converted to condominiums. The Hartman brothers acted on their vision that Charlottesville needed apartments that would provide luxurious living to some and affordable student quarters to others. The architecture was compatible with the community and afforded its residents many of the amenities of single family living. Preston Court is particularly significant as a fine architectural example of this type of building, reflective of its community and responsive to a demand for upscale living accommodations in the prosperous University community.

ENDNOTES

¹ United States Census for Albemarle County, 1870, 1880, 1900.

² Charlottesville Deed Book 59/246 (1927).

³ Genealogical information provided by Frank Hartman’s daughter to Margaret Peters and Maral Kalbian, January 30, 2007.

⁴ Charlottesville City Directories, 1925-1928.

⁵ “The University’s Busy Builder,” University of Virginia Alumni News, December, 1958 (unpaged).

⁶ www.readthehook.com (May 2, 2002).

⁷ John E. Wells and Robert E. Dalton. The Virginia Architects, 1835-1955, a Biographical Dictionary. [Richmond: New South Press, 1997], 276-277.

⁸ Daniel Bluestone. “Buena Park Historic District,” National Register of Historic Places (1984). Section 8, page 13, 9.

⁹ New York Times, April 22, 1917; New York Times, September 2, 1917, 24.

¹⁰ Sexton, Randolph Williams. American Apartment Houses of Today: illustrating plans, details, exteriors, and interiors of modern city and suburban apartment houses throughout the United States. [New York: Architectural Book Publishing Company, 1926], 204.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, II.

¹² Daily Progress (Charlottesville); April 3, 1928.

¹³ Stanislaw Makielski, Commission # 380 (Preston Court Apartments), April 14, 1928. “Architectural Drawings, 1928-1968,” Special Collections, University of Virginia.

¹⁴ Charlottesville, Virginia. City Directories, (Polk City Directories, including Albemarle County) 1929, 1931, 1938, 1940. U. S. Census, Charlottesville, Virginia, Sheet 177 (1930).

¹⁵ Charlottesville City Directories, 1942-1955.

¹⁶ Sexton, Randolph Williams. American Apartment Houses of Today: illustrating plans, details, exteriors, and interiors of modern city and suburban apartment houses throughout the United States. [New York: Architectural Book Publishing Company, 1926], 204.

¹⁷ O’Dell, Jeffrey M. “Rugby Road-University Corner Historic District,” National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form (1983).

¹⁸ Dan L. Morrill. “Reconnaissance Survey of Superblock/Apartment Projects in Charlotte-Mecklenburg”. February 20, 2006.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Preston Court Apartments
Charlottesville, Virginia

Section 9 Page 10

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC SOURCES

Bibb, Eugenia. "City of Charlottesville Architectural and Historic Survey Form" for 1600 Grady Avenue; Summer, 1983.

Bluestone, Daniel. "Chicago's Mecca Flat Blues," The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians, Vol. 57, No. 4 (December, 1998), 382-403.

_____ "Buena Park Historic District," National Register of Historic Places Inventory Nomination Form (1984).

Charlottesville Deed Book 59/146 (1927).

Charlottesville, Virginia. Polk City Directory, 1925-1955. [Livonia, Michigan: Polk Company, various dates].

The Daily Progress (Charlottesville), April 3, 1928.

A Guide to the Stanislaw Makielski Papers, 1914-1968, Accession Number 10768-c, (A collection in the Special Collections Department of the Alderman Library, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Va.).

Hartman Family Genealogy, undated typescript provided by Barbara Hartman Walker.

The Hook, <http://www.readthehook.com> (May 2, 2002).

Makielski, Stanislaw. Commission # 308 "Preston Court Apartments." April 14, 1928. Architectural Drawings, 1928-1968, Special Collections, University of Virginia.

Morrill, Dan L. "Reconnaissance Survey of Superblock Apartment Projects in Charlotte/Mecklenburg (NC)," February 20, 2006.

New York Times, April 22, 1917; September 2, 1917.

O'Dell, Jeffrey M. "Rugby Road-University Corner Historic District," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form (1983).

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, 1920, 1929.

Sexton, Randolph Williams. American Apartment Houses of Today: illustrating plans, details, exteriors and interiors of modern city and suburban apartment houses through the United States. [New York: Architectural Book Publishing Company, 1926].

"The University's Busy Builder," University of Virginia Alumni News, December, 1958 (unpaged).

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Preston Court Apartments
Charlottesville, Virginia

Section 9 & 10 Page 11

United States Census for Charlottesville, Virginia, 1880; 1900; 1930.

Walker, Barbara Hartman. Interview with Maral Kalbian and Margaret Peters, January 30, 2007.

Wells, John E. and Robert E. Dalton. The Virginia Architects, 1835-1955, a Biographical Dictionary. [Richmond: New South Press, 1997].

<http://www.arch.virginia.edu/housinghistory>

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION:

The nominated boundaries include the land currently associated with Preston Court Apartments as shown on the City of Charlottesville Tax Map 05-0110.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION:

The boundary of the Preston Court Apartments includes the apartment building and yard associated with the property as held by the current owner. This being the same parcel recorded in 7/8/1999 Deed Book 759, Page 308; and Map Book 34, Plat Page 478; as recorded by the City of Charlottesville.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Preston Court Apartments
Charlottesville, Virginia

Section Photographic Data Page 12

PHOTOGRAPHIC DOCUMENTATION- Unless otherwise noted, all photographs are of:

Property: **Preston Court Apartments**; VDHR File Number: **104-0239**

Location: **Charlottesville, Virginia**

Date of photograph: **December 2006**

Photographer: **Maral S. Kalbian**

Digital Images filed at Virginia Department of Historic Resources in Richmond, Virginia.

Photo 1 of 10
Southeast view

Photo 2 of 10
View: Northeast view

Photo 3 of 10
View: Southwest view

Photo 4 of 10
View: South view

Photo 5 of 10
View: Detail portico on south side

Photo 6 of 10
View: Detail of entrance, south side

Photo 7 of 10
View: Fire escape in rear courtyard

Photo 8 of 10
View: North view, courtyard

Photo 9 of 10
View: Typical stairwell

Photo 10 of 10
View: Typical living room showing mantel

Preston Court Apartments
Charlottesville, VA
#104-0739
LTM Reference
17 719451/42134DN

