

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic 4606 North Hermitage Avenue

and/or common Hermitage Apartments

2. Location

street & number 4606 North Hermitage Avenue *N/A* not for publication

city, town Chicago *N/A* vicinity of

state Illinois code 12 county Cook code 031

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<i>N/A</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Harris Trust and Savings Bank under Trust #5205

street & number 111 West Monroe Street

city, town Chicago *N/A* vicinity of state Illinois

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Cook County Recorder's Office

street & number 118 North Clark Street

city, town Chicago state Illinois

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Chicago Historic Resources Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1984 federal state county local

depository for survey records Commission on Chicago Historical and Architectural Landmarks

city, town Chicago state Illinois

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date <u>N/A</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Hermitage Apartments building is a common-corridor studio-apartment building, three stories high over an English basement. It stands on a 60 by 163 foot lot and covers essentially all the land except for a setback of 15 to 20 feet in front. As usual for this building type, the architectural interest resides in the treatment of the facade; the other elevations are handled in common brick without distinguishing features.

The facade is of pressed brick in varying shades of red, and in gray limestone. It is surmounted by a fourth-floor mansarded attic. Casement windows are used throughout, in varying sizes.

Reading the facade from left to right (south to north): The first of the five bays forms a rectangular projection and reads as a stone tower, surmounted on the attic level by a smaller rectangular dormer with a hip roof, and decorated on the right side with a quarter-cylindrical turret engaged in the angle with the main elevation. This turret begins just below the second floor and terminates in a conical roof.

The second and third bays are flat, and are finished with stone up to the lintels over the first-floor windows, and brick above. The second bay has the largest windows, and in the second and third floors these windows have wrought-iron balcony grilles.

The entrance is in the "basement" or ground level of the third, central bay. It has a simple rectangular frame and is surmounted by an ornamental tablet like a coat-of-arms. In the attic above the second bay, a large dormer has an arched window crowned with elaborate stone trim. A tiny dormer high above the third bay gives a suggestion of a fifth floor.

The fourth bay is a trapezoidal projection, finished in brick, capped at the attic level by an elaborate stone parapet. At each floor, vertically elongated windows are laid into each of the three faces of the trapezoid. At the roofline a brick chimney can be seen above this bay.

The fifth bay is a flat brick bay, in the same principal plane as the second and third. Irregular stone quoins are used at the corner of the building, and are cut at a 45-degree angle except at the cornice where they are corbeled out to a right angle.

One extraordinary feature: set behind the mansard attic above the fifth bay, where it can hardly be seen except from a distance (since the construction of the adjacent building), is a nearly conical metallic spire, surmounted by a tall finial with a weather vane.

A light stone cornice runs across the building between the third floor and the attic, consisting of a plain frieze, dentils, and a crown molding.

The principal features of the lobby, which is at the English basement level, are wrought-iron railings and gates and a large ornamental plaster fireplace. Doors and other openings are round-arched, and the ceiling is bordered with a plaster cove molding.

The foundation is poured concrete. The structure is steel I-beams on posts. There are 48 apartments, consisting primarily of studio units, with some one-bedroom units; six of the apartments are at the basement level, and 14 on each of the three upper floors, all of which have the same plan.

The appearance of the building has changed very little since 1928. The original slate roof of the mansard has been replaced with composition shingles, and two ridge finials and a tiny eyebrow dormer (above the fifth bay) have been removed. But the facade is intact and well maintained. Even the light fixtures by the exterior door and in the lobby are original.

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 1927-28 **Builder/Architect** Jens J. Jensen

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Hermitage Apartments building stands out among the numerous common-corridor apartment buildings in Chicago not only for its fine design and high degree of integrity but for the unique solution that it presents to the problem of conveying the idea of old-fashioned domesticity in a modern, high-density urban structure.

During the real-estate boom of the 1920s many Chicago neighborhoods changed radically as spacious but obsolescent single-family houses were razed and multi-unit rental apartment buildings erected in their stead. The year 1927 was the peak for apartment construction in Chicago. A number of apartment buildings were built in that year or thereabouts in East Ravenswood, where the 4600 block of North Hermitage Avenue is situated.

During the late twenties a new building type emerged in certain favored areas: the common-corridor apartment hotel. Built to maximize rental income from a lot of 40- to 60-foot frontage, these buildings distributed a large number of small studio or "kitchenette" units on both sides of a straight front-to-back central corridor. By contrast with the multi-entrance courtyard apartment building, which rarely had more than six units at each entrance, the corridor building obviously sacrificed something in privacy and domesticity, and represented an urban lifestyle which differed little if any from hotel living.

At the same time that it possessed urban amenities such as excellent public transportation and good shopping, the Ravenswood neighborhood still had a quiet, domestic, suburban character. Grassy front lawns were (and still are) unfenced. Single-family homes were still (and are still) the most numerous buildings, though housing a minority of the residents. Mature trees lined the parkways, and no high buildings rose above the treetops.

Many different architects designed corridor buildings in the late twenties. Because of the economic impulse which lay behind this type of construction, most such buildings follow a formula. Whether traffic patterns and lobby planning required the entrance to be at the center or the side, the regular and symmetric interior led most architects to a regular and symmetric facade. A few decorative elements of one kind or another were applied to the front to "give character." Most architects were apparently willing to do their buildings in whatever "style" the client suggested.

Jens J. Jensen (1891-1969) was a successful Chicago architect of Danish extraction, with an office in Uptown, a few blocks from the Hermitage site. In the late 1920s he built a number of apartment, store-and-office, and store-and-apartment buildings; eleven of his projects are mentioned by the Economist just in the last three months of 1927, including five on the North Side but only this one in Uptown or Ravenswood. Among his large commissions are the 300 West Adams Building, the Howard Trust and Savings Bank, the Midwest Athletic Club, and the Guyon Hotel.

Jensen's designs from this period include examples of many different "styles", using brick, stone, or terra cotta in a neo-classical, Spanish, or Gothic mode. At 4606 Hermitage, however, Jensen appears to have reflected on the problem of

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Continuation sheet 1

Item number 8

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giving a domestic face to this most urban of building types. In Chicago History magazine, Summer 1984, Robert Fishman writes:

"...As quiet village streets were transformed into busy avenues lined with houses, the need arose for a style of architecture and a method of conscious planning that would preserve the vanishing serenity. In domestic architecture this meant a turn away from the stiff formality of ... classicism, which in any case was too closely associated with urban townhouses. As J. C. Loudon put it, 'as townhouses have in all ages been concentrated and symmetrical, so country houses have...been comparatively scattered and irregular.'"

Fisher is talking about detached houses in the London suburbs of 1800, but the same problem was present in Ravenswood in 1927.

Jensen goes to great lengths to break up the symmetry of his facade, to make it informal and irregular. Of the five bays, no two are alike. The first and fourth are projecting, but in different profiles, different materials, different fenestration. The entry is central, but this element of symmetry is concealed by the emphatically asymmetrical surrounding area. The limestone is carried all the way up in the first bay, only to the top of the first floor in the second and third bays, and then abandoned except for the corner quoins at the right end. Balcony grilles are used only in the upper floors of the second bay. Each bay has different size windows.

The roof is handled with the same freedom: three different dormers in the first three bays, then a parapet and a chimney, and finally the surprising conical tower and weather vane placed quietly behind the attic in the fifth bay.

All these various forms are skillfully arranged into a composition which gives an impression of balance and control. But the building does not present itself as a closed, classically complete composition. Especially since the construction of an apartment building of comparable height next door on the north, and due in part no doubt to the mature trees which make it difficult for a summer observer to see all the building at once, the 4606 design eludes us, and we perceive this interesting fabric of stone and brick not so much as a unit but rather as a slice of a continuing streetscape. The de-emphasis of the entrance is a key element. It is almost as if we were looking at five narrow old houses, rather than one 60-foot apartment building.

Whether the "style" of the decorative elements is regarded to be something specific, as French Renaissance, or just generic European medieval, the symbolic effect is of something old-fashioned. The design gives a feeling not of the modern city but of the Old World city from a time before the invention of railroads or factories, or for that matter before the invention of office buildings or kitchenette apartment hotels.

The developer, Lionel H. Uhlmann, was president of the Uhlmann Cheese Company, and this was apparently his first venture in real estate. It is not known what role he played in the thinking which led to this design. The other known corridor buildings by Jensen are sometimes in the formal, symmetric styles which predominated, and at least in one or two cases more like 4606 Hermitage in treatment. But the latter buildings, where known, are less successfully realized than this one, and less well preserved.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet #2.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 0.22

Quadrangle name Chicago Loop, IL

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A

1	6	4	4	4	2	40	4	6	4	6	0	0	0
Zone		Easting				Northing							

B

Zone		Easting				Northing							

C

Zone		Easting				Northing							

D

Zone		Easting				Northing							

E

Zone		Easting				Northing							

F

Zone		Easting				Northing							

G

Zone		Easting				Northing							

H

Zone		Easting				Northing							

Verbal boundary description and justification

See Continuation Sheet #2.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state (does not apply) code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Martin C. Tangora

organization

date October 7, 1984

street & number 4636 North Magnolia Avenue

telephone (312) 878-7118

city or town Chicago

state Illinois

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

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 William C. Farner

title Deputy

date 12/30/84

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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Continuation sheet 2

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Item No. 9: Major bibliographical references

- Architect's original plans and drawings (owner's possession)
- Ancient permit files, City of Chicago, Dept. of Inspectional Services, File No. 178680
- The Economist, vol. 78, 1927 (July-December) - for the economic climate at the time, and announcements of various related buildings. Permit for 4606 Hermitage: see page 1158.
- Chicago Tribune, Sunday, Nov. 13, 1927, Sec. 3, page 4: brief article announcing the building.
- The common-corridor building. Uptown Chicago Commission, 1983 (135 pp.). Opp. p. 21 is a map showing the location of 77 such buildings in Uptown.
- Homer Hopyt, One hundred years of land values in Chicago. Univ. of Chicago, 1933. On successive waves of development of Chicago neighborhoods.

Item No. 10: Legal description of property

Lot 10 (except the North 40 feet thereof) and all of Lot 11 in Block 7 in Ravenswood Subdivision of the East 1/2 of the Northeast 1/4 of Section 18, Township 40 North, Range 14 East of the Third Principal Meridian, in Cook County, Illinois.