

**NORTH CAROLINA STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE**  
**Office of Archives and History**  
**Department of Cultural Resources**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**

**Barringer Hotel**

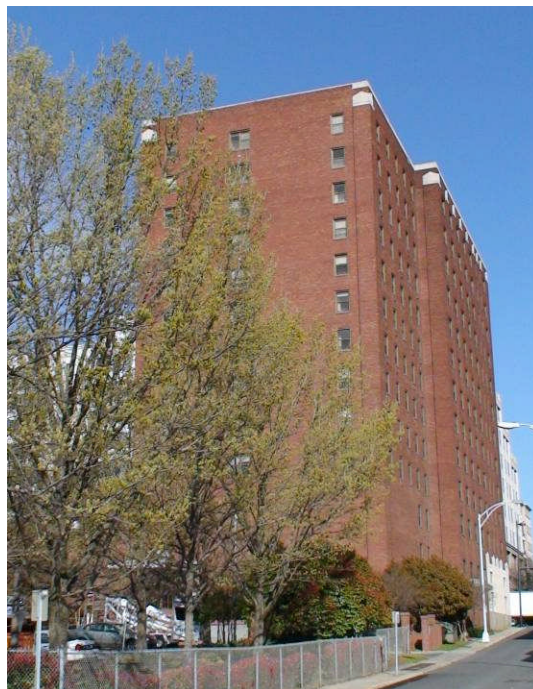
Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, MK2935, Listed 8/29/2011

Nomination by Rebecca O. Spanbauer

Photographs by Rebecca O. Spanbauer, March 2010



Façade view



Rear view

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# 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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. 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 certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

## 1. Name of Property

historic name Barringer Hotel

other names/site number Hall House

## 2. Location

street & number 426 North Tryon Street not for publication

city or town Charlotte vicinity

state North Carolina code NC county Mecklenburg code 119 zip code 28202

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,  
I hereby certify that this  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  meets  does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:  
 national  statewide  local

Signature of certifying official/Title \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources  
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government \_\_\_\_\_

## 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register  determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register  removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Action \_\_\_\_\_

Barringer Hotel  
 Name of Property

Mecklenburg County, NC  
 County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
 (Check as many boxes as apply.)

**Category of Property**  
 (Check only **one** box.)

**Number of Resources within Property**  
 (Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

- Private
- public – Local
- public – State
- public - Federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	district
0	0	site
0	0	structure
0	0	object
1	0	<b>Total</b>

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

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

N/A

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC: Hotel

COMMERCE/TRADE: Restaurant

**Current Functions**  
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC: Institutional Housing

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT: Art Deco

**Materials**  
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: CONCRETE

walls: BRICK

CONCRETE

GRANITE

roof: SYNTHETICS: Rubber

other: \_\_\_\_\_

Barringer Hotel  
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County and State

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**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

Designed by architects Bobbie Dial and Albert Thomas of Columbia, South Carolina, the Barringer Hotel is a twelve-story Art Deco-style red-brick hotel building that stands on the north end of Tryon Street in downtown Charlotte. The main block was constructed in 1940 and was expanded with a five-bay-deep rear addition in 1950. The building faces northwest and is located at the corner of North Tryon Street and East Eighth Street among modern skyscrapers, and early- to mid-twentieth-century two- and three-story brick commercial buildings. It stands close to both streets on a 2.2-acre lot. Most of the remainder of the lot is covered by a large, paved parking lot, except for three small landscaped areas: a narrow grass lawn with crepe myrtle trees and shrubbery lining the southwest elevation of the hotel; an almost square manicured lawn lined with an approximately six-foot-high brick wall in the west, front corner of the property containing a handful of oak and maple trees and brick walkways; and a narrow, rectangular lawn bordered along Eighth Street by a chain-link fence stretching along the northeast side of the lot behind the hotel, containing several maple trees and picnic tables. Sidewalks run along the façade of the building on North Tryon Street and along the northeast side along Eighth Street. In addition to the main, central entrance on the façade are two side entrances, one on the northeast side facing Eighth Street and on the front end of the southwest elevation articulated by a concrete canopy, later enclosed with glass; a rear entrance accesses the kitchen. A large parking lot covers most of the southwest side and rear of the lot and is accessed by a driveway off of Eighth Street.

The Barringer Hotel stands at the end of an approximately one-and-a-half-mile-long strand of mostly modern skyscrapers the line both sides of North and South Tryon Street. In the block to the north of the hotel building, along the southeast side of Tryon Street is a row of mostly one- to five-story early twentieth-century brick commercial buildings, the First United Methodist Church, a large, c.1930 Gothic Revival-style cast stone structure on the northwest side of the street, and an eight-story modern office building to the north of the church. Similar buildings face North College Street, which runs to the southeast of the hotel.

**Narrative Description**

See continuation sheets.

Barringer Hotel  
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**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

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

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

**Criteria Considerations**

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

Property is:

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

**Period of Significance (justification)**

See continuation sheets.

**Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)**

N/A

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

**Period of Significance**

1940, 1950

**Significant Dates**

1940, 1950

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Bobbie Dial and Albert Thomas (architects)

Jno. C. Heslep Company (general contractor)

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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

See continuation sheets.

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least one paragraph for each area of significance.)

See continuation sheets.

**Developmental history/additional historic context information** (if appropriate)

See continuation sheets.

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

See 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 # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

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

**Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission, Charlotte, NC; Charlotte Mecklenburg Public Library, Charlotte, NC**

Name of repository:

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** 2.2 acres

(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 17 514660 3898360  
Zone Easting Northing

3 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

2 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

4 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundaries coincide with the legal bounds of parcel ID # 08002201 and are shown on the accompanying tax map by a heavy line.

Barringer Hotel  
Name of Property

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**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary includes the entire parcel currently and historically associated with the building.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Rebecca O. Spanbauer  
organization Cardinal Historic Preservation Services, LLC date November 15, 2010  
street & number 600 Sampson Street Telephone 919/816.2895  
city or town Raleigh state NC zip code 287609  
e-mail [rspanbauer@cardinalpres.com](mailto:rspanbauer@cardinalpres.com)

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**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **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. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)  
Photographs located at North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, Raleigh, NC  
See attached photograph list.

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**Photographs:**

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

See continuation sheets.

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**Property Owner:**

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name City of Charlotte Housing Authority  
street & number P.O. Box 36795 telephone 704/336.5183  
city or town Charlotte state NC zip code 28202

**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.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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**7. NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION**

**EXTERIOR**

The original portion of the Barringer Hotel, constructed in 1940, is eight bays wide, eight bays deep, and is a solid, rectangular structure of steel construction with poured concrete floors organized around a light well. It has a mottled, textured tapestry brick. In 1950, a twelve-story, red-brick addition that is five bays deep was made to the rear of the building, enclosing the rear side of the light well. The tall first level of the façade (northwest elevation) has quintessential Art Deco-style decoration and a central entrance bay flanked by three bays on each side. The first level is sheathed with a cast-concrete frontispiece and a granite-veneered apron wall that runs below the windows. The frontispiece has low-relief stepped parallel lines and terminates at the top into a zig-zag pattern. The cast-concrete and granite wrap around to cover the first few bays of the side elevations. Pilasters define each first-level bay (except on the southwest elevation) and have a geometric design: they are stepped in depth and terminate in stepped caps, typical of the Art Deco style. Large, plate-glass, aluminum-frame replacement windows light each bay and are set within original six-inch-square glass block sidelights, another popular decorative feature of the style. Two courses of cast-concrete run above the display windows. Another section of five rows of glass blocks under a cast-concrete band with a strip of diagonally-set cast-concrete triglyph detailing lights the upper section of the first story. The entrance contains a pair of double-leaf, plate-glass, aluminum-frame replacement doors, and is sheltered by a rectangular concrete awning that projects approximately six feet past the façade and has two recessed lights. The face of the awning is sheathed with aluminum and a metal gutter runs along the north side. The awning is tied into the building's structural members and has no visible exterior supports, a feature common in Art Deco-style architecture. Above the first level begins the repetition of eleven rows of replacement windows (originally three-over-three double-hung sash configuration) defining each of the remaining stories. The four central bays are located directly above the entrance bay and each has a single one-over-one, double-hung, vinyl replacement window. On each side of the central bays are two bays, each with paired windows. Between each bay are brick pilasters that extend from the top of the decorative cast-concrete pilasters on the first level and are topped, just below the flat parapet roof, by decorative cast-concrete stepped caps that echo those below. Wide brick pilasters with stepped caps also punctuate each corner. The perimeter of the flat parapet roof is wrapped with aluminum flashing.

The southwest elevation of the original portion of the building has an entrance bay near the front of the building. The decorative cast-concrete facing wraps around from the façade to cover the front two bays, the first of which is defined by an original wood-frame fixed-glass window with six lights arranged into two columns and three rows; an air-conditioning unit has replaced the pane in the lower left corner. The second bay contains the side entrance.

The side entrance was expanded in 1950 with a vestibule when the rear addition was constructed. The vestibule is a tan brick enclosure topped by a flat roof that extends to form a large canopy projecting out approximately eight feet and supported by two large red-brick piers. On the northwest side of the brick enclosure is a large nine-light fixed-glass window that



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comprises most of this elevation. The exterior entrance on the southwest elevation has modern double-leaf, plate-glass, metal-frame doors topped by a large plate-glass transom. Inside the vestibule, the entrance to the main building has similar plate-glass metal-frame doors surrounded by narrow plate-glass sidelights and a large plate-glass transom. The interior finishes of the vestibule include linoleum floors and an acoustical tile ceiling, painted brick walls, and a rectangular, built-in brick planter below the multi-light window. A blank metal access door provides another entrance to an employee area to the side of the glassed entrance.

To the east of the entrance bay is a large, one-story, flat-roofed, curved brick bay that encloses an enlarged interior dining room, also added sometime in 1950. Four tall, narrow, six-light, fixed-glass windows light the curved bay. The kitchen was also expanded in 1950 with two-story red-brick additions on the rear/east end of the southwest elevation. The upper floors of the southwest elevation contain eleven rows of mostly paired one-over-one, double-hung, replacement windows, with two columns of single windows lighting the two bays above the entrance. Like the façade, each of the bays on this elevation is separated by brick pilasters which terminate in cast-concrete stepped-cap designs at the top of the building.

The northeast side elevation of the original hotel structure, which faces Eighth Street, is much like the southwest side elevation. The cast-concrete facing covers the first four bays of the tall first and mezzanine level. There is a service entrance with a blank steel door at street level in the sixth bay. Another service entrance is located in the rear addition and is accessible by stairs to service the first level and protected by a suspended awning similar to those on the façade and southwest elevation.

The rear addition of the building is narrower in width than the original building and steps in by one bay on the southwest elevation so that a column of paired windows are visible on the rear elevation of the original structure. The addition also steps in slightly on the northeast elevation, so that a single brick pilaster with a decorative capital creates a visual separation between the original structure and the addition. The side elevations of the rear addition are four bays deep with each bay containing a column of single one-over-one double-hung windows, except on the mezzanine and third levels, which are blank. Unlike the original portion of the hotel, the addition shows very little decoration, with the exception of brick pilasters at the corners, which have cast-concrete, stepped caps at the top. The rear elevation has three columns of one-over-one double-hung windows; two columns of single windows and one column of paired. Except for a rear entrance, there is no fenestration on the first three levels (corresponding to the first floor, mezzanine, and second floor on the interior), which houses the kitchen and ballroom. Since the grade of the lot slopes down toward the rear, the rear first floor entrance is not at street level but is accessible by a brick stair sheltered by a suspended awning, similar to those on the facade and northeast elevation. The rear entrance has a single-leaf blank steel door, which accesses the kitchen.

**INTERIOR**

The Barringer Hotel is entered through the central front doors and opens into a large lobby approximately ninety-feet wide and thirty-feet deep. The lobby, which occupies the front

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section of the first floor, has black-and-white-checked terrazzo floors, gypsum-board walls, and dropped ceilings (dating to 1983) with crown molding (likely dating to 1950). The space is punctuated by tall, square supports that extend the height of the eighteen-foot rooms. The posts are covered with gypsum board and topped by heavy, modillioned crown molding and paneled wood wainscoting at the bottom. Upon entering the lobby, one looks straight back to the two elevator bays, which are surrounded by floor-to-ceiling decorative raised-panel paneling, likely dating to 1950, with modillioned crown molding, identical to that on the support posts. To the left of the elevators is the mail service area, which, historically, was the reception desk. It has a projecting rectangular counter, finished with raised-panel wainscoting, and a large, rectangular opening. This opening was enclosed with plate glass in 1983 but was originally open to the reception office. Raised-panel wainscoting covers the lower portion of the rear and side walls. A section in the right, front portion of the lobby area was partitioned into rooms for the main offices. A hallway to the right leads from the lobby to the side vestibule entrance on the southwest side of the building; another hallway leads from this hall to the southeast dining hall/banquet area.

One enters the dining room through double-leafed raised-panel doors topped by a fanlight, followed by a round-arched opening of similar size and proportion. Similar to the main lobby, the expansive dining room has eighteen-foot ceilings (with a dropped ceiling from 1983), black terrazzo floors and two rows of substantial square posts, like to those in the lobby except with horizontal boards for wainscoting. The room is located along the southwest wall of the building. The large, curved bay with floor-to-ceiling windows brings lots of light into the room from the right-side (southwest) wall. Walls are gypsum board with a simple wainscoting around the perimeter. The wainscoting is made of horizontal eight-inch boards between six-inch baseboards and a molded chair rail. It is not clear whether this wainscoting is original or a later replacement. On the left wall, opposite the curved bay window, are two doors surrounded by floor-to-ceiling paneling, also likely dating to 1950, identical to that in the lobby surrounding the elevator bays. The doors lead to a janitor's closet and a dish-return area for the kitchen, then onto service hallways and mechanical areas. At the rear wall of the dining room is a large doorway identical to the one leading from the lobby, leading to the kitchen area.

The large, windowless commercial kitchen makes up the building's rear section of the first floor. The kitchen includes several refrigerators, food preparation and cooking areas with large stoves and ovens, a bakery, an office, and a serving area. The left (northeast) side of the first floor is accessed by a short hallway on the left side of the front lobby and contains service stairwells, men's and women's restrooms, offices and a workroom at the rear of the building, which was used most recently as a craft room for elderly residents. The workroom/craft room has terrazzo floors and square supports without molding or wainscoting. It is unknown how this room was used historically.

The mezzanine areas are only on the left (northeast) side and rear of the building, as the high ceilings of the front lobby and dining room take up the remainder of this level. The mezzanine rooms, which include a game room, a ballroom, restrooms, and service areas, are accessible by stairwells near the center of the building. The service areas have linoleum and

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carpeted floors, and stairs in these areas have decorative cast-iron balustrades, likely added in 1950. Spanning the rear section of the mezzanine level, over the kitchen, is the ballroom, which was used as an activities room in more recent years. The large room has a roughly nine-foot ceiling. There is a tray ceiling at the center of the room that has a modern dropped ceiling; the remainder of the ceiling is covered with gypsum board. There are gypsum-board walls and black-and-white terrazzo floors. It is unclear if these are original or were later updated. Around the room at regular intervals are large, rounded, fluted pilasters with Corinthian capitals, which add decoration to the windowless space. The game room, located along the northeast wall of the building in front of the ballroom, has carpeted floors and two square supports without molding or wainscoting. It is unknown how the space was originally used.

The upper levels, which include floors two through twelve, have similar floor plans. Each floor contains apartments arranged along the exterior walls and are all accessible by hallways running around the interior mechanical and service areas, including elevator shafts, stairwells, mechanical chases, and service closets. A light well is located at the center of the rear section of the original hotel building, which separates it from the 1950 rear addition. The light well retains original paired, double-hung, three-over-three window sash along the southeast-facing wall. The second through twelfth floors of the rear addition each have access to the central stairwell and a trash room. The hallways in both the 1940 and 1950 sections of the building have colorful, bordered linoleum floors and dropped ceilings. Each apartment throughout the entire building is accessible by blank, hollow-core doors. The doors in the 1940 building have brass, Art Deco-style knockers engraved with the room numbers, which are likely original. The apartments have gypsum-board walls, linoleum and carpeted floors, and textured ceilings.

Each apartment has a bathroom, which contains its 1940s features in the original building and similar 1950s features in the rear addition. The 1940 bathrooms have large cast-iron tubs with shower heads, cast wall-mount sinks, porcelain toilets, built-in medicine cabinets, pink mosaic ceramic-tile floors and full-height pink ceramic-tile walls with four-inch tiles. The bathrooms in the 1950 rear addition have almost identical features, though the ceramic tile only extends half-way up the wall. The tiles are a combination of pink and yellow.

#### INTEGRITY STATEMENT

The exterior of the Barringer Hotel remains largely unchanged from the 1950 expansion. Changes include alteration of the door and window sash, the demolition of the 1950 motor court, and the elimination of a curved driveway on the southwest side entrance. The building retains all of its Art-Deco style, character-defining features, including the frontispiece on the façade and northeast elevation and pilaster caps. The windows were originally three-over-three double-hung wood sash, but were replaced in 1983 with vinyl replacement, one-over-one, double-hung sash. The windows in the frontispiece on the façade and northeast elevation have also been changed. Originally, the window openings immediately flanking the front door were entirely filled with glass block. The remaining windows were large, six-pane, fixed-sash windows with glass-block sidelights. The glass block

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sidelights remain, but the large original sash have been replaced with plate glass. Original three-over-three windows also remain in the light well.

In 1959, Laurence Barringer built a motor court next to the hotel building on the southwest side in order to adapt the property to the popularity of automobile transportation. It is unknown what the motor court looked like, as no documentary photos are known to survive and it was demolished at some point to make way for a parking lot for the neighboring Charlotte Police Department offices. A documentary photo from the 1950s reveals that the southwest side entrance was enclosed with glass, creating a vestibule, and that the awning had a driveway running under it so that cars could pull through it. This driveway has since been eliminated and a walkway and brick retaining walls put in place instead.

Originally, the first floor of the Barringer Hotel housed the reception area and office in the front and the main dining room on the southwest side. There was also the Bamboo Room Bar, listed among its original amenities, but its location in the hotel is unknown.<sup>1</sup> Documentary photographs of the reception area dating to 1942 show a solid-color terrazzo floor, round columns, a streamlined, Moderne-style reception desk, and round globe light fixtures. The mezzanine level was open, overlooking the reception area, and had simple, streamlined, Moderne-style brass railings. The first floor interior was likely altered in 1950 by Lawrence Barringer to include Colonial Revival-style updates. The floors in the reception area and dining room were covered with white-and-black checkerboard-pattern terrazzo tiles. The columns were wrapped with gypsum to give the look of square posts; the posts in the reception area now have raised-panel wainscoting and the posts in the dining room have wainscoting of horizontal boards; all of the posts now have modillioned crown molding. Raised-panel wainscoting and modillioned crown molding was also added around the entire reception area and reception desk. Paneling and crown molding was also added around the elevators.

It is less clear what the original look of the rooms was in the rear and northeast side of the building on the first and mezzanine levels. It is not known what purpose the room labeled on the first-floor plan as residents' game room served; it may have been the Bamboo Room Bar or the coffee shop, which the hotel was also known to have. The ballroom at the back of the building on the mezzanine level likely does not retain its original features, since the other large public spaces received updates around 1950. The current interior finishes on the first and mezzanine levels likely date to 1950. In some of the stairwells on these levels are original, brass, Moderne-style railings. Service stairwells near the center of the building have decorative cast-iron railings, while other have plain, industrial steel railings. These are likely original. The upper floors likely remained unchanged through the 1970s, and they still retain their original tile, bathtubs, sinks and other bathroom fixtures from 1940 and 1950.

In 1983, the City of Charlotte renovated the structure. Exterior windows and doors were altered: the original three-over-three double-hung windows were replaced with vinyl one-over-one double-hung windows and storm windows; the window sash on the first floor of the façade were changed from the steel-frame six-light windows to aluminum-frame plate glass sash,

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<sup>1</sup> N.A. *Carolina Architecture* (n.p., 1942), 58.

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though the original glass block sidelights on each side of the sash remained in place; the front doors were also changed to glazed aluminum-framed doors. On the interior, the City removed the 1960s-era carpeting and restored the 1950 terrazzo and linoleum floors throughout the first floor and mezzanine area and in the hallways of the upper floors. In the main rooms of the first floor and mezzanine area, the City installed dropped ceilings, moved the crown molding down on the columns and room perimeters, removed the crystal chandeliers seen in a documentary photograph of the dining room from the 1950s or 1960s and installed fluorescent lights. The guest rooms were converted to apartments; some of the guest rooms were combined by removing one bathroom and creating a kitchenette in that space; partition walls were also added to create rooms within each apartment. New light fixtures were also installed in the apartments. The overall floor plan remains unchanged, as do the original linoleum floors, door placement, and door hardware in each section.

Downtown Charlotte has undergone heavy development throughout the twentieth century, with the building of a first generation of stylish, multi-story buildings beginning in the 1910s and 1920s, with continual development and redevelopment of lots and the construction of modern skyscrapers throughout the latter half of the twentieth century and into the present day. Despite the changes throughout, the Barringer Hotel retains most of its original character-defining exterior features as the only surviving Art Deco-style high rise in downtown Charlotte and its form, floor plan, and much of the interior finishes remain largely intact from the 1950 renovation.

The north end of Tryon Street, in which the Barringer Hotel is located, is under tremendous development pressure, with many of the 1920s to the 1960s commercial buildings now too small to meet the demands of current real estate needs. The Barringer Hotel stands on the cusp between a fully-developed section of skyscrapers, office towers, and hotels along Tryon Street to the southwest, and areas that may be targeted for new development, comprised of older, sometimes-vacant commercial buildings with parking lots and contemporary condominium and office buildings.

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### 8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Barringer Hotel, built in 1940 and expanded in 1950, meets National Register Criterion C for its Art Deco-style architecture and is locally significant as one of only a few Art Deco-style buildings constructed during the first half of the twentieth century that survives today in downtown Charlotte. Its character-defining features include the cast-concrete frontispiece with low-relief zig-zag and stepped caps at the tops of the pilasters. The glass block sidelights at the façade windows are modest Moderne-style features. The interior mainly features elements from its 1950 Colonial Revival-style update, but still retains some of the Moderne-style brass stair railings and many of its 1940 bathrooms.

The building also exemplifies the type of commercial high rise that transformed downtown Charlotte during its second phase of development, occurring between the 1880s and 1940s. Within this phase of development was a boom in construction of high rise buildings in downtown Charlotte that began in the early 1900s and continued through the 1920s, but was interrupted by the Great Depression; the Barringer Hotel was part of this high-rise boom. It illustrates the prosperity and modernity with which the city marketed itself to attract investment and build itself into one of the largest commercial and cultural centers in the Southeast in the first half of the twentieth century. The period of significance for the Barringer Hotel is 1940, the construction date of the main block, and 1950, the construction date of the addition and the date of the Colonial Revival-style interior update.

### HISTORIC CONTEXT

The City of Charlotte was incorporated in 1768 as the seat of Mecklenburg County (established in 1762) and originally contained 360 acres.<sup>2</sup> Thomas K. Polk, the city's most influential early founder, designed the city along a grid of streets that would become what today is known as the Center City. Charlotte's downtown started at the crossing of two early trading paths in the area, which are now known as Trade and Tryon streets. Polk laid out a grid of streets extending across the first 100 blocks in all directions from the intersection of Trade and Tryon streets, an intersection now known as Independence Square. According to historian Thomas Hanchett, Charlotte's downtown has gone through three phases of development, including the earliest days as a village or "walking city."<sup>3</sup> Lasting from 1753 to the 1880s, during this phase there was a small commercial core centered on the main intersection, with residential streets stretching out from the commercial center and the wealthiest residents living closest to the core, giving them the shortest walk. Charlotte's economy at this time was based around the trading of mostly agricultural goods. By the

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<sup>2</sup> LeGette Blythe and Charles Brockman. *Hornet's Nest: The Story of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County: Book Two*. (Charlotte, NC: The Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County, 1961), The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Story, <http://www.cmstory.org/history/hornets/early.htm>, accessed 24 May 2010.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas W. Hanchett. *Comprehensive Historical and Architecture Survey of the Center City of Charlotte, North Carolina*. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission, 1980, <http://www.cmhpf.org/educationneighhistcentercity.htm>, accessed 24 May 2010.

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1880s, with the advent of mechanization and the Industrial Era, the town grew as several mills were established on the outskirts of town, including the Charlotte Cotton Mill and the Mecklenburg Iron Works.<sup>4</sup>

The second phase of development, which Hanchett terms the “streetcar era,” lasted from 1887 to 1940 and was known as the “Golden Age” of downtown when many stylish buildings were constructed to house the boom of stores, office buildings, banks, and churches.<sup>5</sup> The Barringer Hotel was part of the tradition of stylish, high-rise buildings of this era, which showed that Charlotte was a booming, modern town from the late nineteenth into the mid-twentieth century.

In 1887, horse-drawn streetcars began to transform transportation and development patterns. This was further accelerated in 1891 when electrification came to Charlotte and the electric streetcar was introduced. The streetcar was the first form of mass transit, transporting people in and out of the commercial district of the Center City to farther-flung residential areas. The earliest suburban development came about during this period, as it became fashionable for wealthier residents to live in genteel, manicured, landscaped settings in larger, fashionable houses that increasingly had amenities such as indoor bathrooms. Suburban development opened up more land for residential development, and more people moved to Charlotte.<sup>6</sup>

The commercial district grew rapidly in the streetcar era, with many of the frame structures along Trade and Tryon streets being replaced by two-, three-, and four-story brick buildings. Additionally, with greater population came greater need for more stores and offices. Commercial development spread to other streets on the grid surrounding Trade and Tryon, including Poplar, Brevard, and Mint streets and the numbered streets of First through Seventh streets. The commercial core now composed four blocks in all directions around the crossing of Trade and Tryon streets. Expanding industrial endeavors on the outskirts of town, mostly cotton mills, increased economic activity in Charlotte and helped solidify its position as a major economic center in North Carolina’s Piedmont. Many established, wealthy families also remained in the mansions in Center City through the 1910s and 1920s. Through them, many churches were established and grew rapidly, building large buildings in various styles, including the Gothic Revival and Neoclassical styles.<sup>7</sup>

It was in the early 1900s that Charlotte began to see its first high-rise buildings, the first skyscrapers. High-rise structures were symbols of the city’s “progress, permanence, and prosperity.”<sup>8</sup> In Charlotte, the construction of skyscrapers began with the construction of the

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<sup>4</sup> Thomas W. Hanchett. *Sorting Out the New South City: Race, Class and Urban Development in Charlotte, 1875-1975*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 48-67; Hanchett, *Historical and Architecture Survey of the Center City of Charlotte*;

<sup>5</sup> Hanchett, *Historical and Architecture Survey of the Center City of Charlotte*; Hanchett, *Sorting Out the New South City*, 184-203.

<sup>6</sup> Hanchett, *Historical and Architecture Survey of the Center City of Charlotte*; Hanchett, *Sorting Out the New South City*, 54-67.

<sup>7</sup> Hanchett, *Historical and Architecture Survey of the Center City of Charlotte*.

<sup>8</sup> Catherine W. Bisher, Charlotte V. Brown, Carl R. Lounsbury, and Ernest H. Wood III. *Architects and Builders in North Carolina. A History of the Practice of Building*. (Chapel Hill & London: The University of North

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Realty Building in 1908, designed by local architect Frank Milburn. The 1920s saw the greatest number of new high-rise buildings: investment in construction nearly tripled between 1920 and 1926.<sup>9</sup> New structures included the Johnston Building (1924) at 212 South Tryon Street, Hotel Charlotte (1924) at 231 West Trade Street (now demolished), The First National Bank Building (1926) at 110-112 South Tryon Street, the Builders Building (1927) at 312 West Trade Street, the Southern Bell Building (1927) at 200 North Caldwell Street, Charlotte Observer/Charlotte News Building (1920s, address unknown, demolished in 1970), the Federal Reserve Bank (1927) at 401 South Tryon Street (demolished in 1997), and the Mayfair Manor Hotel (1929) at 237 North Tryon Street. All were between seven and eighteen stories tall, and were built in either the Neoclassical or Art Deco styles, both highly popular during the 1920s.

The Barringer Hotel was built at the end of the Center City's second phase of development. The Art Deco style developed in the 1920s and rose to national prominence in larger American cities in the 1930s, but the Great Depression of the 1930s halted construction in downtown Charlotte.<sup>10</sup> The Barringer Hotel was the first high-rise built in Charlotte after the Great Depression and one of only two Art Deco-style high rises; it was welcomed as a sign of renewed prosperity for the city.<sup>11</sup>

Laurence S. Barringer was a hotel owner and prominent businessman from Columbia, South Carolina. He owned at least two other hotels, one in Columbia and another in Augusta, Georgia. When he built the hotel in Charlotte in 1940, he named it the William R. Barringer Hotel, after his father who had lived in Charlotte briefly in the 1890s.<sup>12</sup>

In December 1940, the hotel opened to much fanfare, with an invocation from the minister of First Baptist Church, Dr. Luther Little, and a speech by Mayor Ben Douglas. Douglas proclaimed that the hotel was "...a testimonial to the progressive and pioneering spirit of the Barringers in the southern hotel field."<sup>13</sup> The opening was well attended by members of the Charlotte Chamber of Commerce, the downtown business community, and private citizens. The Barringer Hotel became an attraction in downtown and locus of social activity, as many people visited the coffee shop or ate at its fine restaurant. Notable guests include Judy

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Carolina Press, 1990), 292, 293; Hanchett, *Sorting Out the New South City*, 54-67.

<sup>9</sup> *Charlotte Chamber of Commerce, Charlotte, North Carolina*. (Charlotte: Observer Printing House, Inc., 1927), quoted in Dan Morrill and Stewart Gray. *Survey of Historic Buildings and Structures in Center City Charlotte: Charlotte High Rise Buildings*. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Districts Commission, 2004, [http://www.cmhpf.org/uptownsurveyskyscrapers.htm#\\_edn4](http://www.cmhpf.org/uptownsurveyskyscrapers.htm#_edn4), accessed 21 May 2010.

<sup>10</sup> Dan Morrill and Stewart Gray. *Survey of Historic Buildings and Structures in Center City Charlotte: Charlotte High Rise Buildings*. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Districts Commission, 2004, [http://www.cmhpf.org/uptownsurveyskyscrapers.htm#\\_edn4](http://www.cmhpf.org/uptownsurveyskyscrapers.htm#_edn4), accessed 21 May 2010.

<sup>11</sup> Dan Morrill and Mary Dominick. *Survey and Research Report on The Barringer Hotel*. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission, 2007, <http://www.cmhpf.org/Surveys&RBarringerHotel.htm>, accessed 21 May 2010.

<sup>12</sup> Morrill and Dominick, *Report on The Barringer Hotel*.

<sup>13</sup> Miscellaneous clipping. "Hotels, Barringer." Manuscript Collection, Spangler Robinson Room of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Public Library.



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Garland, Joan Crawford, Tyrone Power, and Gloria Swanson.<sup>14</sup>

Laurence Barringer hired his sister, Flora Barringer, to select the interior decoration at some point. It is not clear if she was responsible for the original Art Deco-style interior, but the redecoration in 1950 is clearly attributed to her. She designed furnishing plans for the dining room, coffee shop, and lobby areas. Documentary photos taken after the 1950 renovation reveal fine finishes and décor, including large, opulent crystal chandeliers and richly upholstered divans in the main lobby and dining room. She apparently used both French period- and Hepplewhite-style furnishings for many rooms. The hotel boasted two hundred guestrooms in the original 1940 building. Each room had a closet and its own private bathroom for guests, each finished with “suntan-colored tiles,” clean, white cast-iron bathtubs with shower fixtures, and built-in mirrored medicine cabinets.<sup>15</sup> Such amenities were hallmarks of the cleanliness and privacy that was so important to the air of modernity the hotel strove to reflect.

The Barringer Hotel was one of three hotel buildings erected from the 1920s to the 1940s in downtown Charlotte, including Hotel Charlotte (1924) at 231 West Trade Street (now demolished) and the Mayfair Manor (1929) at 237 North Tryon Street, both built in the Beaux Arts style. The building of hotels was part of an economic and cultural boom of the New South period from the 1880s to the 1940s. The New South was characterized by rapid urbanization, economic growth, expansion of transportation, government, and business services, technological improvements, pursuit of modernity, and enthusiastic city boosterism. Modernity incorporated a sense of style, decorativeness, aesthetic beauty, efficiency, new technology, and privacy. Hotel buildings were essential to any town wishing to attract visitors and business persons to its downtown and they helped transform downtown into a desirable place to see and be seen. Hotel buildings, along with other architectural stock of the era, including apartment buildings, churches, and office skyscrapers, document the economic and social changes that transformed Charlotte into a New South city.

Life in New South cities incorporated a sense of style which architecture helped determine. Historian Don Doyle states that hotels, along with high-style skyscrapers, commercial office buildings, stylish downtown and suburban apartment buildings, and grand suburban mansion, were part of the “architectural exhibitionism” that consumed New South cities and operated as the “visible bank balance” of the wealthy business class ascending to the top of New South society.<sup>16</sup> Such buildings were architectural innovations that became visible manifestations of wealth and prosperity for New South cities and were highly celebrated landmarks.<sup>17</sup> Any city that aspired to viable status in the New South had to have one to attract

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<sup>14</sup> Morrill and Dominick, *Report on The Barringer Hotel*.

<sup>15</sup> Miscellaneous clipping. “Hotels, Barringer.” Manuscript collection, Spangler Robinson Room of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Public Library.

<sup>16</sup> Concept comes from Don H. Doyle. *New Men, New Cities, New South: Atlanta, Nashville, Charleston, mobile, 1860-1910*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 194; quoted phrases come from Edward C. Kirkland. *Dream and Thought in the Business Community, 1860-1900*. (Ithaca, NY, 1956) 34, 49; quoted in Doyle, 344, n. 11.

<sup>17</sup> “Million-Dollar Apartment Hotel to Be Erected by William Candler.” (No author). 1920. The Atlanta

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business persons and tourists.

During the 1940s, new styles, such as the International Style, were gaining popularity, World War II further interrupted downtown development, and skyscraper construction would not gain steam again until the 1950s, when Modernist styles became widely popular in the Center City's architectural accumulation. The late 1940s and early 1950s began the third phase of development in the Center City, which is characterized by the demolition of older residences, the construction of more high-rise office towers and commercial buildings, and the introduction of low-income housing into downtown. The rise of the automobile in the late 1940s, when many middle-class households had at least one car, pushed middle- and upper-class residential development to the suburbs. Commercial and entertainment activities soon followed, with suburban, auto-oriented shopping centers, restaurants, and office buildings being constructed amid new suburban neighborhoods. City boosters faced an increasing struggle to keep businesses and hotel patrons coming to downtown and the allure of downtown life lessened, a trend that happened in cities nationwide. An expressway was constructed around Center City, requiring the demolition of hundreds of older homes and businesses, particularly in traditionally African American business and residential areas. City government followed national trends of allowing demolition of older homes and businesses to allow for construction of Modernist-style office towers from the 1950s through the 1970s. They also embarked upon the Federal program of Urban Renewal, in which older structures were cleared away and high-rise towers were built to house low-income residents receiving government housing subsidies.

It was at the beginning of the Center City's third phase of development, in 1950, that Laurence Barringer renovated his hotel. In the interest of keeping pace with changing aesthetic tastes, Barringer updated its interior in the Colonial Revival style, popular in residential architecture at the time. He also construction the rear addition with twelve stories containing 150 more guest rooms and an expanded kitchen. He also expanded the dining room of the original building, adding the curved bay visible on the southwest elevation, and enclosed the space underneath the canopy at the west end of the southwest elevation, creating a vestibule for the entrance on this side. In an attempt to cater to the suburban style and the widespread use of automobiles, Laurence Barringer bought a lot adjacent to the southwest of the hotel from Saint Mark's Lutheran Church and constructed a motor court in 1959 (now demolished).<sup>18</sup> Patrons of the motor court could access the hotels restaurant via

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Constitution (1881-2001), January 25, 1920, page 4A

<http://proquest.umi.com/pgdweb?did=513658652&Fmt=2&clientId=15109&RQT=309&VName=HNP> 14 Feb 2006; "Large Apartment House Proposed for Peachtree: Negotiations for Financing Project Now Reported Under Way." 1922. The Atlanta Constitution (1881-2001), January 1, 1922, page A10

<http://proquest.umi.com/pgdweb?did=519674862&Fmt=2&clientId=15109&RQT=309&VName=HNP> 14 Feb 2006; "Developments Atlanta for Year Hundred Millions: Before Has City Rapid and Development, Dealers Agree. BRIGHT 12 MONTHS Demand Still for Homes, Plant and Office Space of Character." 1920. The Atlanta Constitution (1881-2001), January 1, 1920; page 4

<http://proquest.umi.com/pgdweb?did=513592172&Fmt=2&clientId=15109&RQT=309&VName=HNP> 14 Feb 2006.

<sup>18</sup> Morrill and Dominick, *Report on The Barringer Hotel*.

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the enclosed vestibule/entrance on the southwest side of the hotel. However, with urban renewal programs and the expressway drawing traffic around the Center City rather than through it, the Barringer Hotel, like other businesses in downtown, struggled to remain viable, despite the updates.

Barringer's efforts seemed powerless against the rapid push to the suburbs; he closed the hotel in November 1961.<sup>19</sup> In 1961, the Belk Hotel Corporation purchased the hotel and operated it under the name of the Barringer Inn.<sup>20</sup> In 1968, a company called The King George III, Ltd. operated the kitchen and restaurant as the Barringer Dining Service Company.<sup>21</sup> The Belk Hotel Corporation renamed the hotel business as the Cavalier Inn in 1972, which continued until 1975.<sup>22</sup> Little else is known about the hotel and restaurant operations during the 1960s and 1970s, though local tradition states that attraction to the hotel declined during this period. By the late 1970s, the building was vacant. Downtown was no longer a popular entertainment destination for Charlotte's middle- and upper-class residents. Though the exact changes the new management made to the hotel's interior are unknown, few substantial changes appear to have been made, as the building retains much of its early features. It is believed that the hotel's floors were covered with carpet during its time as the Cavalier Inn. Though the physical building of the Barringer Hotel remained, it was in the tradition of urban renewal that the City purchased the building in 1978 and converted its guest rooms to apartments for elderly, low-income residents.<sup>23</sup> The City continued to manage the building as low-income elderly housing until 2006, when it decided to house these residents in other locations and offer the Barringer Hotel for redevelopment.

Urban Renewal programs lost popularity in the 1980s and 1990s as new, urban lifestyles again came into vogue and industries, businesses, and residents looked to the rebirth of downtown. Since the early 1980s, the Center City section of Charlotte has undergone a period of rapid growth and renewed interest in downtown aesthetics. New, contemporary skyscrapers have been built throughout downtown as Charlotte has become the nation's largest banking center. New businesses have flooded downtown. Many older structures representing the downtown's earlier periods of development have been demolished to make room for new office towers, bank buildings, commercial structures, and residential condominiums, although other older buildings have been renovated through private investment. The Center City has again become a vibrant hub of commercial, residential, and entertainment activity, in large part due to massive investment brought by the banking industry. The Barringer Hotel survives as a vestige of downtown Charlotte's Golden Age, when it was a booming cultural center that embodied the ideals of modernity and progress in

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<sup>19</sup> *Charlotte Observer*, 13 November, 1961.

<sup>20</sup> Mecklenburg County Register of Deeds. Certificate of Assumed Name, March 8, 1968, Book 1, Page 228.

<sup>21</sup> Mecklenburg County Register of Deeds. Certificate of Assumed Name, April 22, 1968, Book 1, Page 231.

<sup>22</sup> Mecklenburg County Register of Deeds. Certificate of Assumed Name, January 24, 1972, Book 1, Page 762.

<sup>23</sup> Hanchett, *Historical and Architecture Survey of the Center City of Charlotte*.

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southern cities during the first half of the twentieth century.

### **ARCHITECTURAL CONTEXT**

The Barringer Hotel was built in 1940 by hotel developer Laurence S. Barringer of Columbia, South Carolina. The hotel was designed by architects Bobbie Dial and Albert Thomas, also of Columbia, in the Art Deco style, which was popular in the southeast in the 1930s through the early 1940s. The hotel is a fairly restrained example of the Art Deco style and has a Moderne influence with its glass block sidelights on the first-floor façade windows.

The term Art Deco was coined at the Exposition Internationale des Arts Decoratifs et Industriels Modernes in Paris in 1925, in which were exhibited furniture, art, metalwork, and ceramics featuring the style. The style developed in American cities around 1925 at the same time as the Art Moderne style, which emphasized round, smooth, streamlined forms with a horizontal emphasis. The Art Deco style is characterized as a primarily decorative style, with blocky, angular geometric shapes applied to interior and exterior ornament and is inspired by an abstraction of lines, shapes, and forms seen in eclectic styles. It is also inspired by ancient Babylonian, Syrian, Egyptian, African, and Greco-Roman art and architecture. Art Deco-style architecture, as built in many skyscrapers and high-rise buildings, can include a combination of both blocky, angular, Art Deco forms and rounded, streamlined, horizontal Moderne forms. Flagship buildings representing the styles include the Chrysler Building in New York by architect William Van Alen, Cincinnati Union Terminal by architects Fellheimer and Wagner, and the Empire State Building in New York by architects Shreve, Lamb, and Harmon.<sup>24</sup> Hallmark features of the style include zig-zags, chevrons, and other geometric patterns often found in low relief on the exterior, abstracted sunbursts or floral patterns, stepped frontispieces, usually made of limestone or cast concrete, and a general emphasis on verticality.

Including the Barringer Hotel, downtown Charlotte once boasted five Art Deco- or Art Moderne-style buildings, including the Charlotte Union Bus Terminal (Art Moderne, 1941) at 418 West Trade Street (demolished in 2004), Charlotte Observer/Charlotte News Building (1920s, address unknown, demolished in 1970), the Federal Reserve Bank (1927) at 401 South Tryon Street (demolished in 1997), and the Southern Bell (AT&T) Building (1927) at 200 N. Caldwell Street. Only the Barringer Hotel and the Southern Bell Building survive today as examples of the style in downtown Charlotte.

The Southern Bell Building is made up of an eight-story, five-bay-wide, tan brick main block. The façade of this section of the building has elaborate cast-concrete carvings under and on either side of the four-over-four double-hung sash windows, as well as over the main entry. The stepped parapet is reflected in the stepped cast concrete blocks detail over the main entrance and first-story windows. Art Deco-style light fixtures flank the off-center entry. A five-bay-wide, six-story addition at the west end of main block lacks the carving of the main block and has six-over-six sash windows. Vertical strips of cast concrete reference the

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<sup>24</sup> Leland M. Roth. *American Architecture: A History*. (Cambridge, MA: Westview Press, 2001), 364-367.

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detailing on the main block. Several very large additions have also been made to the rear (south) side of the building, so that the building runs the depth of the city block to abut North Davidson Street to the rear. These later additions overpower the main building and obscure two of its elevations, but the still visible Art Deco stylistic features of the Southern Bell Building are notable in Charlotte.

The interpretation of the Art Deco style embodied in the Barringer Hotel is typical for mid-size cities across the country: it is a simple, rectangular-form, parapet-roof high rise building with applied exterior ornament, such as the cast-concrete frontispiece with low relief, vertical, stepped edges and zig-zag, cast-concrete shapes at the window headers, and ziggurat-inspired caps shaped as stepped pyramids on the pilasters in the frontispiece and at the top of the building. The original interior featured simple, clean, modern finishes typical of new buildings of its day: terrazzo floors, gypsum-board walls and ceilings, and ceramic-tile bathrooms. A few Moderne stylistic elements could be seen in the glass block sidelights in the first-floor façade windows and the delicate, streamlined, Art Deco-style brass railings along interior staircases and open staircases in the lobby (only two original railings survive in two of the interior stairwells today).

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