

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form (Rev. 8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

CAREW TOWER-NETHERLAND PLAZA HOTEL

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

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National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: CAREW TOWER-NETHERLAND PLAZA HOTEL

Other Name/Site Number: Starrett-Netherland Hotel

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: TOWER: West Fifth Street and Fountain Square

Not for publication: ___

HOTEL: 35 West Fifth Street

City/Town: Cincinnati

Vicinity: ___

State: Ohio

County: Hamilton

Code: 061

Zip Code: 45202

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property

Category of Property

Private: X

Building(s): X

Public-Local: ___

District: ___

Public-State: ___

Site: ___

Public-Federal: ___

Structure: ___

Object: ___

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

Noncontributing

1

buildings

sites

structures

1

objects

0 Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 1

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing:

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4. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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.

Signature of Certifying Official

Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

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

Signature of Commenting or Other Official

Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

5. 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 Keeper

Date of Action

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6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic: Commercial/Trade
Domestic

Sub: Office Building
Hotel

Current: Commercial/Trade
Domestic

Sub: Office Building
Hotel

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION:

Modern Movement: Art Deco

MATERIALS:

Foundation: Concrete (reinforced)
Walls: Brick (glazed)
Roof: Asphalt: Macadam
Other:

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Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

The following architectural description is from the National Register nomination:

The multi-functional Carew Tower-Netherland Hotel Complex is composed of a common base, five stories in height, supporting an office tower of 48 floors, a hotel 30 stories in height, and a garage tower 27 stories tall.

The base of the Carew Tower contains a first floor with black, polished granite pierced by large, single-pane display windows. The windows are enframed by simple white brass surrounds with reeding. The second floor wall material is composed of smooth limestone blocks. Large, three-part windows have metallic enframements with simple small brackets below the sills and a decorative lintel with cartouche. The major frontispiece, occupying the central bay of the east facade, is two stories in height and leads into the arcade. It is composed of different cast metal bas-relief motifs depicting various aspects of transportation. Each motif is separated by a decorative rectangular panel. Flanking each side of the decorative band are two semicircular columns of varying height capped by palmette ornamentation. The third through fifth floors are accentuated by fluted piers separating paired recessed windows and blind panels. The upper trim of the base exhibits an interlacing oval motif with limestone coping across the east and north facade. Above the arcade entrance, a stylized eagle with outstretched wings rests atop a globe supported by foliated decoration. A low pediment serves as a backdrop to the eagle. A portion of the elevated walkway pierces one bay, at the second floor, on the east facade. This connects the Carew Tower to the new Westin Hotel complex.

The upper floors of the Carew Tower exhibit a vertical emphasis with the use of variegated smooth piers and spandrels framing bays that have a vertical alignment to the yellow brick spandrels and setbacks. The east, upper floor facade is distinguished by the use of a central recessed wall composed of six bays flanked on either side by a six-bay wing. The central portion is recessed two bays back from the wings. This fenestration is terminated above the 15th floor where a one-bay setback rises for another five floors and terminates. Above this point, the east facade bays are flush until the 38th floor. A series of setbacks then appear in rapid succession capped by an observation platform on the 49th floor. The setbacks are articulated by a horizontal band. The north and south facades exhibit the same general architectural details as the east, except the number of bays are reduced, thus giving a pronounced north-south emphasis to the tower. The upper story spandrels are gilded, adding a distinctive element of the Art Deco style. The west facade of the Carew Tower is largely the same at the upper floors, except for a reduction in the number of set-backs.

The base of the Netherland Hotel, at the interior portion of the north facade, is composed of an altered first floor to accommodate display windows and signage for Pogue's Department Store and smaller retail establishments. The second and third floors, with limestone wall treatment, exhibit seven large, multi-paned, rectangular windows, extending through both floors to be capped by a stylized eagle with outstretched wings suggesting a broken pediment. The extension of the skywalk into the facade at the second floor has altered the lower half of one of these windows. Above the stylized eagle is a large octagon window with four recessed panes. The roof line is accentuated by a decorative course composed of foliated swags and flower motif. Stylized urns, free-standing above the roof line, terminate the base treatment.

The base treatment of the wings on the north facade exhibits the same general fenestration except, instead of octagon windows, three-part windows exist and another floor rises above the foliated course and is capped by the interlacing elliptical stone course similar to the east facade of the Carew Tower.

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The west facade of the base is similar, except that paired, 1/1 windows are present above the decorative swags. A single course of vertical channels below the parapet completes the wall detail.

The entrance to the Arcade is articulated by a large, flat, rectangular canopy. A similar treatment exists over the garage entrance.

The upper story detail is similar to that of the Carew Tower, exhibiting setbacks and vertical accentuation of the spandrels creating a vertical emphasis. The orientation of the hotel is east and west, created by the multi-bay treatment of north and south facade.

The garage tower rests atop the same base and is oriented in the same direction as the hotel. Architecturally, the vertical emphasis is maintained because of its mass and scale. The east and west facades exhibit three bays while the north and south are largely void of fenestration. The same wall treatment and material are used that are found on the Carew Tower and Netherland Hotel.

The interior of the Carew Tower has changed throughout the years to meet the needs of its tenants and to modernize. The office spaces today can be categorized as those reflecting distinctive interior designed spaces, typically modern and efficient, and those spaces largely functional in detail lacking substantial interior significance. The varied interiors reflect different taste, style, and images.

The arcade, extending lengthwise through the base, exhibits distinctive Art Deco detailing. The central portion is raised higher than the entrance lobbies, and this vertical emphasis is accentuated by the tall, polychromic Rookwood tile panels with stylized floriated and geometric motifs. A balcony has been added to one side and disrupts a portion of the tile. Display windows and doorways are emphasized by the use of a zig-zag silver metal pattern at the surrounds. Air registers exhibit open, interlaced floral motifs. Alternating light and dark stone accentuates the wall treatment. Lighting is characterized by a zig-zag motif with illumination reflecting off the metal ceiling. Minor lighting comes from diamond-shaped fixtures reflecting up to diamond-shaped metallic motifs above them. The elevator lobby to the hotel is distinctive for its use of incised floral and bird patterns on the elevator doors and caps. The stylized mail box, with eagle in relief and silver metallic construction, adds to the Art Deco treatment.

Through the years, modernization to Pogue's and other storefronts has intruded into the arcade and diminished some of the original Art Deco detailing, principally the pilasters and original wall treatment. However, the arcade remains a distinctive space with significant motifs and contributes to the overall importance of the Complex.

The lower arcade connects the Carew Tower and hotel to the garage and provides additional shopping and office space. The distinctive detailing is largely free from alteration. The wall treatment is travertine with undulating bays pierced by segmental arched display windows with silver metallic surrounds. Above the arches, air registers with stylized leaf and floral patterns are found. Larger, three-part display windows with decorative trim and stylized finials separate the undulating bays. The interior cornice exhibits a pseudo-dentil course capped by a decorative scallop treatment. The ceiling is articulated by steps with a fluted center panel that diffuses the florescent lighting.

The Netherland Hotel exhibits extremely significant Art Deco treatment throughout its public spaces. The main entrance exhibits a foyer of marble floor and walls. Stylized leaf light fixtures illuminate the area. The staircase walls are of imported Roman Breccia marble. The landings exhibit large floriated urns and palm leaf indirect light fixtures decreasing in size to the ceiling. A high ceiling at a middle landing exhibits a mural dedicated to the traveler and framed by a richly decorated, gilded floral and geometric motif.

Below this hangs a large stylized palm leaf fixture the color of bronze. The silver stair handrails exhibit bronze-colored swags and floral bouquet motifs.

The landing at the main lobby is paneled in rosewood with fluting accentuating the wall detail. The ceiling is trimmed with a border composed of a honeysuckle motif. Metal details in geometric and floral patterns are found at air registers, rails, and various door and window surrounds. The square columns in the main lobby exhibit rosewood with central fluting atop a marble base. Decorative floral motifs in rectangular panels are found below floriated ceiling molding. The ceiling is accentuated by stepped rectangular panels above the piers and wall trim. The elevator lobby exhibits the same floral and bird motif that exists in the arcade.

Most recently used as a restaurant, the Palm Court is distinguished by a mixture of Art Deco details. The wall and ceiling trim are divided into five bays on each side wall. The rosewood wall treatment is highlighted by rosewood spandrels at the mezzanine level with a stylized female nude riding a dolphin. Ten ceiling panels of pastoral and recreation scenes terminate the bays. The scenes are framed by a gilded, foliated and geometric motif. Large, foliated bronze light fixtures with indirect lighting adorn the walls. The ceiling also exhibits a decorative fluted band broken by large cross panels.

The focal point of the Palm Court is the Apollo Gallery with its rams head fountain surmounting a rectangular staggered marble pedestal. The stairs to the fountain are flanked by paired, round fluted columns on a marble base with stylized horses supporting the palm leaf indirect light fixtures. Above the fountain is a large mural of Apollo's chariot in the cross axis which leads to the mezzanine and Continental Room.

The Continental Room is the last of the public spaces on the first floor of the hotel. It was the hotel's original dining room and has most recently been used as a ballroom. The distinctive features include large, stylized light sconces, large windows that originally allowed natural light to illuminate the room, low marble base trim, and fluted window surrounds. The ceiling treatment is composed of a broad gilded band with geometric and leaf motifs, recessed panels bordered by floriated motif, and cross panels. The two bays at either end of the room exhibit murals dedicated to the four seasons. Marble urns are flanked by an open rail treatment with swags. Large, profusely foliated doors adorn the east alcove and flank a stylized fireplace.

The mezzanine staircase, leading to the Hall of Mirrors and other public rooms, is characterized by the use of rosewood wall panels, decorative metal rails, and grillwork in varied patterns. It continues the architectural theme of the lobby.

The Hall of Mirrors is the grand ballroom and, as such, reflects an exuberance of details and materials. The first floor is characterized by a wall treatment of polished marble and plaster exhibiting fluting and swags. Decorative light sconces of bronze and frosted glass provide indirect light. Paired doors with mirrors break the wall treatment. The cornice exhibits an enriched floriated pattern with another decorative band below the balcony trim. The raised stage area is accented by a stepped marble proscenium frame with staircase leading to the balcony. A large mirror forms the backdrop to the stage. The balcony is articulated by a decorative open rail with geometric and floral motifs. A panel depicting a horn player is repeated throughout the railing. Extremely large mirrored doors with decorative curtains highlights this area. The ceiling is composed of very large foliated trim that encircles the room, and a recessed elliptical light well which reflects the light from the central chandelier below.

The Corridor of Periods leads to private and smaller dining rooms. The architectural distinction arises from the detailed doorways that lead to them. Doors representing details associated with Gothic, Louis XIV, Romanesque, Italianate, Empire, and Georgian motifs

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are depicted. Two doors are devoted to illustrating the various details and trims associated with the particular style. The interiors of the dining rooms have been remodeled throughout the years.

The Pavilion Caprice is the last of the major public spaces. Initially used as the night club of the hotel, it has been remodeled several times to reflect the popular decor of the respective periods and has most recently been used as a large ballroom and exhibition space. None of the original interior is currently visible; it has been covered by successive layers of renovations.

The original hotel rooms and corridors of the upper floors are largely functional in detail. Successive renovations throughout the years have reduced the number of rooms. There is some very significant Art Deco detailing in four of the top floor suites. Two distinctive Art Deco styled staircases exist in separate suites. There are two detailed tiled bathrooms, with the original hardware largely intact, in two other suites. These four suites suggest the opulence of the Art Deco style as applied to functional interiors.

The last remaining interior space of the complex is the garage tower. Originally used as an automated garage with mechanical devices that parked and retrieved automobiles, it no longer provides this technology due to changing car sizes and lack of replacement parts for the elevators. Originally, automobiles were driven to the lower level where they entered one of two functioning elevators of the original three capable of moving two cars at a time to the upper story parking areas. Because of antiquated manual operation, the garage tower did not provide for an efficient and economic use of space. A typical floor of the garage was divided by a central elevator shaft flanked on either side with a three bay parking platform. Automobiles were raised to the floor and were driven by an attendant directly to a parking space. The automated garage tower, which was an innovative element in the project, was demolished in the late 1980s. In addition, the complex has been integrated into Cincinnati's new downtown shopping center, Tower Place. The creation of the mall brought with it a number of alterations to the complex, including changes in circulation patterns in the central arcade and the division of the large department store areas for smaller stores and passageways.

Throughout the years, minor changes have occurred to the Carew Tower-Netherland Hotel Complex with the bulk of the changes on the interior. Most have been planned functional changes to upgrade and modernize. Through all of this, the exterior of the complex and the major significant public spaces have retained their distinctive Art Deco detailing and motifs.

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8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:
Nationally: X Statewide: ___ Locally: ___

Applicable National Register Criteria: A ___ B ___ C X D ___

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): A ___ B ___ C ___ D ___ E ___ F ___ G ___

NHL Criteria: 4

NHL Theme(s): XVI. Architecture
T. Moderne-Art Deco

Areas of Significance: Architecture

Period(s) of Significance: 1930

Significant Dates: 1930

Significant Person(s):

Cultural Affiliation:

Architect/Builder: Walter W. Ahlschlager
Delano and Aldrich

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Built during the Depression, the 1930s' Carew Tower-Netherland Hotel is one of the finest examples of skyscraper modernism in America. As designed, it makes the most complete statement of the 1920s' Jazz Age, an embodiment of speed, high style, and a mass-market machine age. The block-square complex cost \$33,000,000, an enormous sum for that time, and was finished in 13 months by crews working seven days a week, 24 hours a day. The demand for glamour and excitement following World War I was a new phenomenon, and the "modern" Art Deco style evolved from streamlined machines and European design vocabularies. The Netherland Hotel is a superb example of European-Deco design adapted to commerce. Most of the decorative work had been created in France several years prior to construction of the buildings and exhibited at the 1925 Exhibition of Decorative Art in Paris. The complex of the hotel and tower is a particularly coherent series of public areas that ascend upward from the street entrances and are evidence of the masterhand of an architect with experience designing dramatic theater spaces such as the flamboyant Roxy in New York.

The Carew Tower complex in downtown Cincinnati is an outstanding example of 1920s' skyscraper construction that was farsighted and innovative in design but was also symbolic of progressive city planning in a socially conscious reform urban government. Pioneers of reform, such as Cincinnati's John A. Emery, were usually identified with burgeoning urban centers such as New York and Chicago, but the Carew complex became synonymous with the city's civic center and still serves as a multi-purpose complex in the heart of Cincinnati that works extremely well.

In a recent article on the history of the complex, the genesis of the design is discussed in detail:

On 24 August 1929, Cincinnati industrialist and real estate developer John J. Emery, Jr., announced plans to build a mixed-use skyscraper complex on Cincinnati's most commercially and historically prestigious site. The project was completed with exceptional speed only seventeen months later. Starrett's Netherland Plaza Hotel in Emery's complex, with eight hundred rooms and twenty-eight stories, was spatially more sophisticated and stylistically conservative than New York City's grander contemporary, the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel. With forty-nine stories of tawny brick crowned by gold-leaf trim, the Carew Tower was Cincinnati's tallest and most distinctive office building. The complex's through-block arcade of more than twenty high-rent shops and two elegant department stores joined these major functions to one another and to the larger city center. Its fully automated twenty-five-story parking garage held 750 cars.

While built for profit, the Carew Tower complex was nevertheless an unusual example of the congruence between progressive architectural planning and design on the one hand, and social and political undertakings on the other. The functions of the Carew complex, unlike those of mixed-use skyscrapers elsewhere, were modern versions of those previously served by outdated buildings on or next to its site, thus providing for historical continuity in Cincinnati's downtown. Moreover, Emery's political leadership during this period, and the managerial and economic rationalism that underlay private development, public works, and governmental reforms in Cincinnati, gave the city's most important commercial complex a more substantial civic identity that can be ascribed to most other skyscrapers of the period.

Emery initially undertook a building project of unusual complexity as a logical extension of his experience with the decade's new organizational economies of scale. Between 1925 and 1929, he thoroughly reorganized the business interests in

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industrial chemicals and real estate that he had inherited from his father and uncle. Besides merging four related chemical companies into Emery Industries, Inc., of which he became president, Emery was also executive vice president of Thomas Emery's Sons one of the nation's largest realty firms.

In 1925, Emery sold enough of the firms's holdings to finance the purchase of all but one of the properties necessary for a large development on the northern half of the block bordered by Vine, Race, Fourth, and Fifth Streets. Emery's initial plans for the site called for a large theater, a department store, an office building of undetermined size, and a hotel whose beauty he intended to be second to none in the United States.¹

With enormous insurance rates in the offing, Emery took on a partner, William A. Starrett, a well-known skyscraper builder. Col. Starrett and Starrett Brothers, Inc., assumed control of the planning and construction of the complex. Thomas Emery's Sons maintained ownership of the land, but the firm became a minority partner in the new Starrett Ohio Corporation, which leased the property from Emery. The Starrett Ohio Corporation hired Starrett Brothers, Inc., of Chicago, as the general contractor. Starrett Brothers, in turn hired architect Walter W. Ahlschlager as the principal architect. Emery's preferred architects, Delano and Aldrich, were employed as associate architects. It was not until November 1932, after the opening of the complex and after the death of Col. Starrett, that Thomas Emery's Sons gained control of the structures by acquiring the majority interest in the Starrett Ohio Corporation.

The complex's association with the Starretts is one of its most significant aspects nationally. Col. William A. Starrett and his company were responsible for advancements in construction management and for the construction of many of the country's most notable buildings. According to Richard Rauh, the Atlanta architect who supervised the renovation of the complex, while Col. Starrett served as the sole director of U.S. government building programs during the Great War effort of 1917-18, he pioneered fast-track methods of construction on a gigantic scale. These methods would be exemplified in the construction of the Cincinnati complex. Col. Starrett personally supervised the construction of a number of outstanding structures, including the Lincoln Memorial and Union Station in Washington. As a group, Starrett Brothers, Inc., the Starrett Construction Company and the Thompson-Starrett Company built such major structures as the Empire State Building, Pennsylvania Station, the Starrett-Lehigh Building, Saks Fifth Avenue, and the Plaza Hotel, in New York City. In his book, *Skyscrapers and the Men Who Build Them*, Col. Starrett states the five Starrett brothers "designed and built a vast number of skyscrapers throughout the United States and Canada, and indeed, a few in the Orient and some in Cuba."

The final design evolved as two-towered, one an office tower, the other a hotel. The costs were \$15,000,000 for construction and another \$15,000,000 for the land, financed through a 30-year lease. The result was what the *Cincinnati Enquirer* called the largest single realty deal ever closed [up to that time] in the United States.

To carry out such a large project, Emery and the Starrett organization employed two architectural firms. Principal architect Walter W. Ahlschlager of Chicago, had designed hotels, theaters, and mixed-use facilities in New York, Chicago, and other Midwestern cities. His skyscraper work included an unbuilt Chicago project of 1929, the Crane Tower, which was to have been both the tallest and the largest office building in the world. The powerfully modeled seventy-five-story tower was to exploit air rights over the Illinois Central Railroad tracks at Randolph Street and

¹ Edward W. Wolner. "Design and Civic Identity in Cincinnati's Carew Tower Complex." *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*. Vol. LI:1. March, 1992, p.35.

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Grant Park. Beveled rather than squared edges, like those on Holabird and Root's skyscrapers, heightened the inherent sculptural power of the numerous vertical and horizontal setbacks. Deep reveals set off the exceptional number of uninterrupted vertical lines and furthered the impression of a carved masonry mass. The reveals and the vertically recessed center bays accentuated the tower's sheerness.

Associated Architects Delano and Aldrich, among the most accomplished Beaux-Arts practitioners of the time, had been engaged by Emery earlier that year to design an English Georgian Revival house on his estate in Indian Hill outside Cincinnati. The previous year, however, the firm had completed the thirty-two-story Wall and Hanover Building in Lower Manhattan, a skyscraper praised in the *American Architect* for its balanced composition and massing on an irregular site, and for the absence of "any arbitrary [historical] form...."

Not surprisingly, the original features in the previous skyscraper work of both firms were reflected in their skyscraper for the Carew Tower complex. Ahlschlager's preliminary design for the office tower was a scaled-down version of the Crane Tower, for it included beveled edges, recessed and uninterrupted center bays, and numerous vertical and horizontal setbacks. Yet, when built, the Carew Tower included none of these features; Delano and Aldrich, whose sole responsibility on the mixed-use project was to develop the tower's final design, almost certainly used their own Wall and Hanover Building as a model for the massing and composition of its lower half.

The site, 216 x 142 feet, was neither wide nor deep. These proportions made the Wall and Hanover Building, on a similarly narrow and shallow site (200 X 100 feet), a suitable model.²

Another design source for the complex may have been Holabird and Root's Chicago Daily News Building (1927-1929), with its high-density development of a narrow site that rose above the Illinois Central railroad tracks. This was one of the first uses of railroad air rights.

Much of the hotel's interior ornament, too, was derived from recent work. Among numerous examples, four metal grills in the hotel lobby and lounge were more intricate, heavier versions of grillage designs created by the architect Henri Favier and executed by metalsmith Edgar Brandt for the International Exposition of the Decorative Arts in Paris in 1925. The decorative work was created expressly for this project based on the designs in the Paris exhibition. The Netherland Plaza Hotel not only exemplifies the Art Deco design aesthetic but also the manner in which Art Deco design influenced commercial architecture throughout the United States in the five-year period after the 1925 exhibition. A comparison of the Netherland Plaza Hotel's design with other Art Deco hotels in the United States also may show that its design more closely reflects Art Deco ideals, while the other designs may more appropriately be termed "Art Moderne" in style.

Most features of the Pavillion Caprice, the hotel's nightclub, were variations on those for a nightclub on SS *Leviathan* [a Trans-Atlantic liner], designed in 1929; the similarities included curvilinear metal railings, musical notes in the carpet, certain indirect lighting effects, and tables on two levels flanking the long sides of the room. Finally, the nightclub's three columns were heftier, more sharply fluted versions of those in Hans Poelzig's Grosses Schauspielhaus of 1919.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 36-37.

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In contrast to these derivations, however, Ahlschlager's planning for the mixed-use complex produced an original concatenation of spaces. As the circulation spine of the complex, the arcade connected Vine and Race Streets, the separate elevator lobbies for the office building and the hotel, a pedestrian entrance to the car garage, a Fifth Street entrance corridor lined with shops, two department stores facing the arcade's two-story "patio" or court, a staircase to the basement level of shops, a second staircase to the lobby of the hotel, and a third staircase to court's mezzanine, which also linked the court to the hotel lobby.

Rooted in Beaux-Art principles, the most exceptional planning involved the four public floors of the hotel. Their notable features included axial and cross-axial relations among the important spaces; anterooms, foyers, and mezzanines whose low ceilings intensified the impact made by the grander dimensions of the major room; the circulation pattern, which drew the hotel guest symmetrically and asymmetrically through near and distant, partial and whole, axial and oblique, and lower and higher views of focal objects and spaces; indirect lighting to highlight lower and upper levels of rooms; and the discipline exercised in deploying luxurious woods, marbles, metals and cast ornament.³

Walter Ahlschlager was well-known as one of the major theater architects of the time—especially for his manipulation of space (The Roxy Theater in New York, 1926). He used an asymmetrical spiral of space in the public rooms and interconnecting corridors in the Carew Tower Arcade and the Netherland Hotel. It was a demonstration of originality that would not be duplicated until the building of Rockefeller Center in New York.

One noticeable difference in the design and placement of the Carew complex compared to mixed-use skyscrapers in New York City and Chicago is that it enhanced social and commercial life in center-city. Many of the tenants of the new building were well-known businesses that were already located nearby including a hotel and arcade owned by the Emery family.

A half block away, on the north side of Fountain Square, in 1892, merchant Joseph T. Carew had erected a Romanesque Revival building to house the prestigious Mabley and Carew Department Store; and on the southwestern corner of Fifth and Vine Streets, he had simultaneously built the Carew Building, a Romanesque Revival office building. Contiguous with the Emery Hotel, the Carew Building framed the west end of Fountain Square, Cincinnati's social, commercial, and political center.

In 1930 John J. Emery's project replaced the demolished Carew Building, whose four decades as Cincinnati's visual focus Emery acknowledged by naming the skyscraper the Carew Tower. Similarly, the old Emery Arcade reappeared a few feet north of its original site, hollowed out of a grander, more comprehensive mixed-use facility. The new arcade's two largest tenants were an expanded Carew and Mabley Department Store and the H.S. Poque Company, another exclusive department store, which for most of its sixty-seven years had been located in the southwest quadrant of the Carew block. The earlier Emery Hotel became the much larger Starrett's Netherland Plaza.

The work of two craft firms in Cincinnati provided other local references. Newman Manufacturing fabricated the bronze and nickel silver for such major decorative features as the dozens of grills in the complex and the hotel's etched-metal elevator doors. The monumental Egyptoid ram's head fountain and flanking sea-horse torches at the northern end of the hotel lounge, as well as the faience tiles on the two

³ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

flat arches framing the arcade court, were crafted at Rookwood Pottery, an internationally recognized local firm.

Because of these and other features, many Cincinnatians viewed the complex as a modern extension of the traditions of progressive real estate development associated with two earlier generations of Emerys. Thus, four floors in the Carew Tower provided physicians and dentists with gas, compressed air, alternating and direct current, and waste and water lines in every column. With fully mechanized parking and retrieval systems for 750 automobiles, the garage, located in the angle behind the office tower and hotel, was one of only two such facilities in a downtown skyscraper development to acknowledge the machine that was remaking American cities and suburbs. Hoteliers in New York and Chicago declared the Starrett's Netherland Plaza to be "among the finest [hotels] in point of equipment and modernistic decoration in America."⁴

Concurrent with the building's conception and completion, there was a wave of civic reform. Cincinnati was controlled by ward-based patronage for decades until a City Charter Committee, a bipartisan group of reformers, were successful in having a city manager form of government elected. In 1925, they instituted a comprehensive city plan that controlled zoning and rampant development. This reform movement became a national model and a number of outstanding public works such as the Union Terminal, the planned community of Mariemont, and the Albee Theater (1927) were built. Emery's multi-use skyscraper was the epitome of this re-birth of downtown. Carl Condit summarized this as follows:

the building renaissance indicated not simply that Cincinnati was sharing in the extravagant life of the 1920's, but also was creating a new image of itself as a modern, progressive and expansive city....⁵

At the same time, the city carried out an expansion and improvement of parks and playgrounds, improved transportation facilities, and civic works under the City Charter Committee. Emery was a founder-member and served as vice-president until he was elected president in 1935 of a membership that numbered ten thousand people.

Together with the complex's historical continuities and Emery's political leadership, the comprehensive managerial and economic rationalism that characterized both public and private development in Cincinnati helped the Carew complex acquire a more substantial civic identity than that accorded to most skyscrapers of the 1920s. The complex "will give national impetus to the program of progress of Cincinnati," averred the *Cincinnati Enquirer* in 1929; for the *Enquirer*, other newspapers, and their readers, Emery's development took on "the measurements of a great civic undertaking."

Thus, many Cincinnatians came to regard the complex as part of the city's civic center, a view typified in 1934 by Fred W. Schwenck, an industrialist and member of the Hamilton County Republican Executive Committee: "Government Square, with the Carew Tower, the big hotel and office buildings...form[s] a fine civic center...that has grown naturally with the years." When Emery became its president in 1935, the City Charter Committee moved its headquarters—and its files with more than three thousand newspaper and magazine articles examining in the nation's most influential publications the committee's ongoing successes—to the Carew Tower, thereby adding to the building's civic identity. In the context of skyscraper development from 1920

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

⁵ Condit, Carl. *The Railroad and the City*, Columbus, Ohio, 1977 p. 233.

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to 1935, Emery's complex thus embodied in an exceptional variety of progressive ways the historical, commercial, and political power of the city center.⁶

The latest restoration of the entire complex took place in the years between 1982 and 1993 at a cost of approximately \$80,000,000. The architectural firm was Richard Rauh and Associates of Atlanta, Georgia.

⁶ *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 24 August 1929, Section 2, 1. For Cincinnati's record between 1925 and 1940 as "one of the best governed" cities in the country, see M.J. Fisher and D.C. Bishop: *Municipal and Other Local Governments*. New York, 1950, pp. 47, 64-71, 104-107, 154-157.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

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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 (Specify Repository):

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: 1.96 acres

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing
 A 16 43330680 714010

Verbal Boundary Description:

All that lot of land in the City of Cincinnati Hamilton County, Ohio being Inlots 216, 217, 241, 242 and parts of Inlots 215 and 240, of the original plan of said City:

Beginning at the southeast corner of Fifth and Race Streets; thence eastwardly along the south side of Fifth Street 399 feet and 11³/₈ inches to the southwest corner of Fifth and Vine Streets; thence southwardly, along the west side of Vine Street 216 feet, 5³/₄ inches to the north line of a lot formerly owned by Chas. D. Coffin; thence westwardly along said Coffin's north line, 134 feet 1³/₄ inches; thence southwardly, parallel with Vine Street, 29 feet 9³/₈ inches, more or less, to the north line of a lot conveyed by The Fifth Third National Bank to The Fifth Third Union Trust Company, by deed recorded in Deed Book 1445, page 503, Hamilton County, Ohio Records; thence westwardly along said north line 66 feet to the west line of said Inlot 215; thence northwardly along said west line 45 feet 8⁷/₈ inches, more or less, to the north line of said Inlot 240; thence westwardly along said north line 105 feet 11³/₄ inches; thence southwardly parallel with Race Street 0 feet 6¹/₂ inches; thence westwardly parallel with the north line of said Inlot 240, 94 feet 1⁸/₈ inches to the east line of Race Street; thence northwardly along the east line of Race Street 200 feet 2¹/₄ inches to the place of beginning.

Boundary Justification:

This is the original lot and block on which the tower and hotel were built.

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11. FORM PREPARED BY

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Date: March 30, 1993

National Park Service/WASO/History Division (418): September 12, 1994