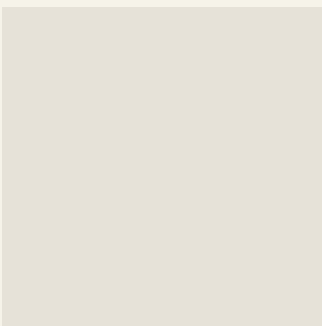
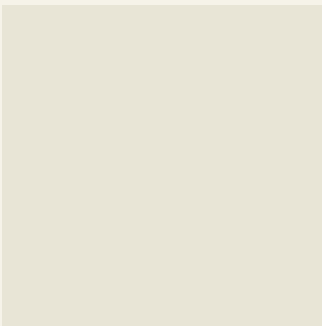


HISTORIC APARTMENT BUILDINGS OF SALT LAKE CITY



Photographs & Text by
Lisa Michele Church
LAYOUT & DESIGN BY KENT HEPWORTH



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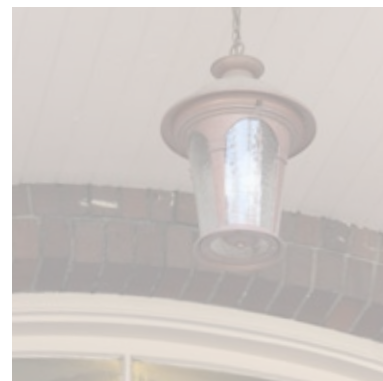
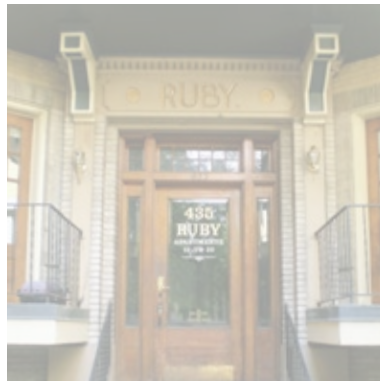
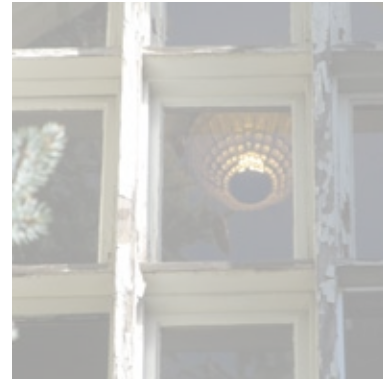
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INTRODUCTION

The lovely streetscapes of downtown Salt Lake City feature historic apartment buildings on nearly every block. I began photographing them in 2006 as I was researching family stories. My parents lived in the Los Gables Apartments as newlyweds in the 1950s; I lived in the Council Crest Apartments as a college student in the 1970s. I walked around the buildings studying their stone work, quirky architecture and antique lighting. I fell in love with their style and determined to photograph every one. This volume is intended to document Salt Lake's historic apartment buildings still standing within the grid from Main Street to Thirteenth East, and from Fourth South to Third Avenue. The building exteriors were my focus in this effort; perhaps another volume will cover the

interiors. To me, the architectural beauty of a building itself creates a powerful image.

Still, I realized that each building echoes with the sounds of the people who passed through it. Along with capturing photographs, I looked into some of the residents' stories. To find the fragments of lives within the apartment walls, I chose the names of random residents listed in the Polk's Salt Lake City directories during the period between 1920 and 1960. I researched those residents through the census, the birth and death records, and the local newspapers. Each resident's story was fascinating in its own right, but as a story that occurred in an historic Salt Lake apartment building, it told an even richer tale of personal memories entwined with enduring buildings.

—Lisa-Michele Church, 2016

THERE'S ALWAYS SOMEBODY HOME

EARLY 20TH CENTURY APARTMENT BUILDINGS OF SALT LAKE CITY

BY LISA MICHELE CHURCH

Salt Lake City contains many beautiful examples of early 20th-century apartment buildings constructed to house a growing urban population between 1900 and 1940. With whimsical names such as the Piccadilly, the Peter Pan, and the Waldorf, these buildings beckoned to Utahns who were interested in a new approach to residential life. Apartments became places of beginnings and endings. Whether you were a young couple starting out your marriage, a single woman leaving home for the first time, or an immigrant finally finding work in America, an apartment was just the right mix of permanency and impermanency. It felt like a home, but not necessarily *your* home.

As one early resident put in, "You move in with a suitcase; you move out with a truck."¹ Salt Lake's early urban apartments were usually occupied by members of the city's middle class and offered people modern luxuries they may not have been able to afford previously.² The apartments featured innovative amenities such as

Murphy "disappearing beds,"³ Frigidaire refrigerators, electric ranges, and laundry facilities. The interiors were also upscale, some with French doors, elegant balconies, chandeliers and mosaic tile foyers.⁴

"The building will be steam heated, you will have hot water ready at all times of day or night, as well as free janitor and night watchman service, telephone and gas range...you will save on coal bills, water, telephone, street car fares and other incidentals, will reduce your cost of living, and you will have all the comforts besides," boasted an ad for the newly-built Woodruff Apartments in 1908.⁵ The Salt Lake buildings were designed either as walk-ups with one or two entrances on each landing, or as a double-loaded corridor with multiple entrances along a central hall. They included decorative brick or stone exteriors and ornate front doorways.

"There's always somebody home in an apartment," advertised the Apartment House Association of Utah. "It's nice to



This 1908 photograph shows a “disappearing” Murphy bed in the interior of the new Woodruff Apartment building. During the day the bed could fold into the wall and the room could be used as a dining area or study. Note the velvet curtains and leaded glass sideboard. Courtesy Utah State Historical Collection, MSS C-275, #09969, Shipler Collection.

return at night to well-lighted corridors and know that help if needed can be quietly summoned.”⁶ Apartment buildings included a built-in set of comrades who were available to help unclog a sink, lend a cup of sugar, or just give a word of encouragement.⁷

A turn-of-the-century Salt Lake apartment could also be the site of life’s dramatic events. Births occurred in the bedrooms. Tonsils were taken out by local doctors on the kitchen table. Deaths occurred in the quiet of the night. Fights broke out into the hallways, where all the

residents unwittingly shared in the combat zone. Without much privacy in the tight quarters, messy human interactions spilled over to affect all residents.

Even the names of these historic apartment buildings were a bold statement designed

to grab attention and evoke drama. Some were named with exotic European references, such as the Piccardy, the La France, the Marquette, or the Normandy. Others were named after characters in literature, such as Lorna Doone (from an 1869 British novel) or Barbara Worth (from a 1911

This 1908 photograph of an apartment in the Smith Apartments is lavishly furnished with velvet upholstery, lace curtains and an elegant chandelier. The “disappearing” bed is hidden behind the two sets of doors in the cabinet on the wall. Courtesy Utah State Historical Collection, MSS C-275, #08864, Shipler Collection.



American novel). The most common type of building name used a familiar surname, such as Bigelow, Woodruff, Stratton, Ruby, or Sampson. A few were just plain invented, such as the Bell Wines or the Armista. The idea of living in a building with a name is audacious enough, because it is designed to build a sense of collective elegance and exclusivity.⁸

On the stage of your own apartment, you might see the next act of your life come into view. A woman could move in single and move out married. An elderly couple may move in for the last few years of life, and a lonely widow may remain. A nervous high school graduate could find himself launched in his new profession while living at the building. Newlyweds moved in, only to become parents and need a single family home. Then, the apartment stood vacant, awaiting another tenant to begin the reinvention again.

At the beginning of the 20th century, interest in downtown living was at a peak. A 1902 *Salt Lake Tribune* article noted that, "Most of the available sites for houses within convenient distance of the business center are already occupied, and the constant demand of renters for apartments close in has resulted in stimulating the erection of terraces or flats."⁹ The popula-

tion of Salt Lake City increased dramatically from 20,000 residents in the 1880s to more than 92,000 by 1910.¹⁰ By 1940 it had jumped again, to 140,000.¹¹ This was a time of civic improvements in the inner city, including streetcar lines, paved sidewalks and grass medians in the middle of the wide streets. Downtown apartment living offered the advantages of convenience, comfort and proximity to jobs.

The investors that established Salt Lake's apartments in this period included local families such as the Coveys, Downings, and Sampsons, along with out-of-town financiers from California and surrounding states. There were several prominent builders involved in the apartment construction. W.C.A. (Andy) Vissing, who built more than twenty of the buildings, is credited with the La France, Hillcrest, Kensington, Buckingham, Fairmont and Commander apartments. He came to Salt Lake City from Denmark as a 14-year-old in 1888, married a Covey girl, formed a construction company and erected many of Salt Lake's enduring edifices.¹² Other examples of apartment contractors were Herrick and Company (Armista), Bowers Investment Company (Piccardy, Lorna Doone, Annie Laurie) and Bettilyon Home Builders (Arlington and Kenneth).

Goodwin's Weekly.
Vol. XIII SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH, SEPTEMBER 5, 1908. No. 18

FIRE PROOF
SOUND PROOF

Free from the noise and crowds, yet it is only two blocks from the Kenyon Hotel

The Woodruff

The handsome new apartment building now nearing completion, located on Second East between Second and Third South Streets, just two blocks from the very heart of the shopping and business district, yet far enough removed from the bustle of business to impart that restful feeling. No street cars within half a block to disturb your sleep.

The building is four stories high. The first story being of red hand cut sandstone, laid in alternate courses of rough and smooth finish, the three upper stories light buff pressed brick, with stone trimmings. There are fire-proof and sound-proof walls between each apartment, every room light, bright and well ventilated.

By selecting your apartment now you will be comfortably housed for the winter, you will get just the one you want, and it will be finished to suit you.

The building will be steam heated, you will have hot water ready at all times of day or night, as well as free janitor and night watchman service, telephone and gas range.

Rents are reasonable, and the amount you will save on coal bills, water, telephone, street car fares and other incidentals, will reduce your cost of living, and you will have all the comforts besides.

There are a number of apartments suitable for bachelors. References required. Floor plans can be seen any time at the company's office.

BE YOUR OWN LANDLORD

It is no longer necessary to have a big fortune to own good income producing real estate.

By investing your surplus money in the shares of this company, you can soon own your own apartment and be YOUR OWN LANDLORD.

If you put each month the difference between the cost of living in THE WOODRUFF and what you would have to pay for the same accommodations and comforts elsewhere, in the stock of this company, you will soon be your own landlord and have an investment that will pay you a larger rate of interest than the savings bank will give you and have the same security they lend your money on.

MUTUAL REALTY COMPANY
524 SECURITY AND TRUST BUILDING

This advertisement for The Woodruff apartment building urges residents to enjoy the many amenities of apartment living and notes that there are even "a number of apartments suitable for bachelors" although references are required. *Goodwin's Weekly*, September 5, 1908, *Utah Digital Newspapers.com*

The rental rates for the city's apartments remained relatively stable during most of the early century, starting in the \$20 to \$30 per month range and increasing to \$40 or \$50 per month by the mid-century. An interesting scuffle ensued between owners and tenants shortly after World War I, when apartments were in high demand and owners decided to increase rents. "The poor, unfortunate, somewhat misguided and much to be pitied apartment house dweller is facing a dilemma. A regular, full-fledged dilemma with complexities and all the trimmings...The poor fellow – despite impending rental advances – can neither kick nor move. There isn't a vacant apartment in town," reported the *Salt Lake Herald* on August 8, 1919.¹³ The Coveys started the rent increases, but other apartment owners quickly followed suit. The Coveys published vehement denials of profiteering and claimed increased costs. New apartment buildings sprung up all through the 1920s and the competitive market resolved the rent dilemma.

Salt Lake City's apartments were constructed in two general phases, with one boom from 1904 through the start of World War I, and then another flurry from the early 1920s until World War II.

During the Depression, funding for new construction evaporated. After the War, residents demanded cozy bungalows in the suburbs, which were suddenly more affordable with federally-subsidized loans. Downtown apartment construction declined further, and the patterns of occupancy changed dramatically. The clientele became more transient and less middle class. The buildings became more expensive to maintain. Residents valued different amenities, such as yards and garages, and the charm of apartment living ebbed.

By the early 21st century, some of these grand old buildings have become upscale condominiums and others serve as low-income or affordable housing. Owners take care to maintain the unique architectural features and advertise the historic beauty of the structures. There are at least 73 of these downtown apartment buildings listed in the National Register of Historic Places.¹⁴ Salt Lake City adopted Design Guidelines for Historic Apartment buildings in 2014, emphasizing their charm as well as their "distinctive urban scale and presence."¹⁵ The more than 100 historic apartment buildings still in use today are a vivid demonstration of the boldness and style with which Salt Lake City entered the 20th Century.

Endnotes

1. Interview with Ralph Holding, November 15, 2014.
2. Roger Roper, "Homemakers in Transition: Women in Salt Lake City Apartments, 1910-1940," *Utah Historical Quarterly*, 1999.
3. William Lawrence Murphy invented the disappearing bed in the late 19th century while living in a one-room apartment in San Francisco. He was a gentleman who did not want to court a lady in his bedroom, so he came up with a way to stow his bed in the closet, converting the space into a sitting room. His design was patented in 1911 and became popular for apartment living. "Curator Finds Murphy Bed's Place in American History", by Joseph Caputo, *Smithsonian Magazine*, April 28, 2009, www.smithsonian.com.
4. Design Guidelines for Historic Apartment & Multifamily Buildings in Salt Lake City, S4:4 PART I, Historic Overview of Apartment and Other Multifamily Buildings; Thomas Carter and Peter Goss. *Utah's Historic Architecture*, 1847-1940, Salt Lake City, Utah: University of Utah and Utah State Historical Society, 1988.
5. *Goodwin's Weekly*, September 9, 1908.
6. "Live the Apartment Way," *Salt Lake Telegram*, August 29, 1939.
7. Even today, that sense of community within a community exists. I was struck by this as I photographed one building, and saw an elderly lady sitting on the apartment stoop. A young man came out of the building and greeted her: "Hi, Miss Nancy! I got a job interview today, Miss Nancy!" he said. "You'll do well, sugar, you'll do well," she murmured as he flew down the stairs and jumped into his car.
8. Elizabeth Collins Cromley, "Alone Together: A History of New York's Early Apartments," Cornell University Press, 1990.
9. *Salt Lake Tribune*, July 27, 1902.
10. "Urban Apartment Buildings," National Register of Historic Places, Multiple Property Documentation Form, Historic Resources of Salt Lake City, Urban Expansion into the Early Twentieth Century, 1890s-1930s, September 12, 1989.
11. Design Guidelines, *ibid*.
12. "Prominent City Contractor Dies," *Salt Lake Tribune*, March 20, 1936.
13. "Rent Raise Called 'Unjustifiable' by Dwellers at Covey," *Salt Lake Herald*, August 8, 1919.
14. "Urban Apartment Buildings," National Register of Historic Places, Multiple Property Documentation Form, Historic Resources of Salt Lake City, Urban Expansion into the Early Twentieth Century, 1890s-1930s, September 12, 1989.
15. Design Guidelines, *ibid*.



SECTION ONE

Bold Beginnings

IN THE EARLY PHASE OF APARTMENT BUILDING before World War One, the most common design was the “walk-up” plan with six units. Each three- or four-story building had a central entrance with two apartments opening off the landing. Units were known for their extensive front porches, often with columns and decorative railings. Colonial Revival or Neo-Classical architectural styles were popular.



COVEY | 1909 | 239 EAST SOUTH TEMPLE

THE MOST LUXURIOUS OF THE COVEY BUILDINGS, with a passenger elevator serving seven stories. The Covey brothers – Almon Andrew (“AA”), Hyrum Theron (“HT”) and Stephen Mack (“SM”) – were a successful group of investors, contractors, ranchers and entrepreneurs who built several of Salt Lake City’s largest apartment complexes during the early twentieth century. They originally made their fortune herding sheep in Wyoming, but also had investments in oil and real estate. Beyond apartments, they owned the Little America motel and gas stations, the Rainbow Rendezvous dance hall and Ballard-Covey Motors. After their original apartment building – the La France on 300 South – succeeded, they built several high-end developments from South Temple to the lower Avenues: the Kensington, Hillcrest, New Hillcrest and Buckingham.



DENI-ZAY | 1925 | 254 SOUTH 300 EAST



BREELYN - RIGBY | 1925 | 435 EAST 100 SOUTH



MAHDEEN | 1925 | 47 SOUTH 300 EAST



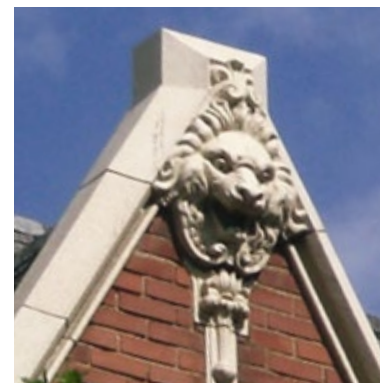
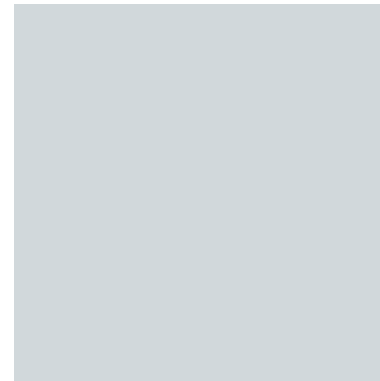
ASHBY - SUZANNE | 1925 | 358 EAST 100 SOUTH



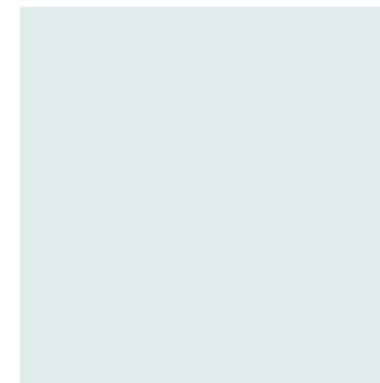
ARMISTA | 1927 | 555 EAST 100 SOUTH

BUILT BY HERRICK AND COMPANY, featuring a solid Colonial Revival style and a double-loaded corridor plan with 30 units. The name was later changed to the Waldorf Apartments. A *Salt Lake Tribune* ad in October 16, 1927 read: "Splendid 3 room apartments equipped with electric ranges and electric refrigeration. \$40.00 to \$42.00. One of the most modernly equipped and conveniently located apartments in the city."

Prominent Utahn Noble Warrum, Jr. lived here in 1931. He was a lawyer, newspaper editor, U.S. Postmaster and diplomat. In 1895, Warrum was a signer of the original Utah State Constitution. He and his wife, Julia, lived in Mexico during the 1920s and 1930s where he worked at the consulate. Upon returning to Utah, they moved to the luxurious Armista.



PICCADILLY | 1929 | 24 SOUTH 500 EAST



BIGELOW | 1930 | 223 SOUTH 400 EAST

THERE ARE 30 UNITS in this double-loaded corridor plan and apartments. According to a 1940 newspaper ad, they rented for \$33.50 per month: "2 rm modern, lots of space, light, all electric, good service, exclusive."



MCCULLOUGH | 1928 | 125 South 600 East



MEREDITH | 1915 | 170 East First Avenue



PEERY | 1911 | 223 East Third Avenue



SWALLOW | 333 East 100 South



VIVA | 1927 | 150 South 700 East



WESLEY | 217 East Third Avenue



PETER JR. | 1925 | 35 South 700 East



POLLYANNA | 35 F Street



56 South 1300 East



WILSHIRE ARMS | 234 East First Avenue



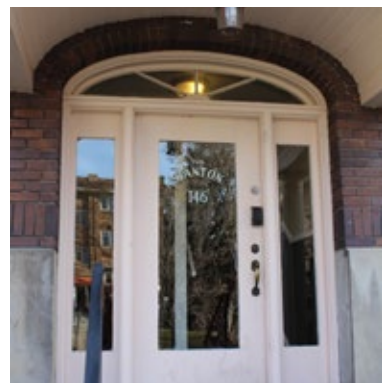
YALE | 144 East Second Avenue



RITZ | 35 East South Temple



SCARSDALE - BEEZLEY | 1931 | 125 South 900 East



STANTON | 146 East Second Avenue



162 I Street



800 East 300 South