

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

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

For NPS use only

received MAY 6 1986

date entered

1. Name

historic Dorson Apartment Building

and/or common Dorson Apartment Building

2. Location

street & number 912 - 914 - 916 - 918 Benton Boulevard not for publication

city, town Kansas City, MO vicinity of congressional district

state Missouri code 29 county Jackson code 095

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> n/a	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: Apartment Bldg.

4. Owner of Property

name Dorson Apartments Partnership John Hueser Associates

street & number 7 East 34th Street

city, town Kansas City vicinity of state MO 64111

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Office of Recorder of Deeds: Jackson County
Courthouse - Kansas City Annex

street & number 415 East 12th Street

city, town Kansas City state MO 64106

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Kansas City A Place in Time; pg. 104
Opinion Survey Historic Inventory has this property been determined eligible? ☒ yes ☐ no

date July 1985 federal ☐ state ☒ county ☐ local

depository for survey records Missouri State Dept. of Natural Resources, Historic

city, town Jefferson City state Missouri Preservation

7. Description

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

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Item #7.

The red and buff pressed brick and limestone three-story (plus full basement) structure, completed in 1906, was designed by Kansas City builder Frank C. Reynolds for R. L. Dawson.¹ Measuring approximately 46 feet by 130 feet, the rectangular shaped building extends four bays on the east elevation and one bay on the north and south elevations. Construction of the building is masonry; roof type is built-up tar and gravel, sloped to the west. Foundation is cut stone with projecting horizontal belt coursing on the east, north and south facades. Fieldstone is used for foundation on west facade. A red, pressed common brick octagonal chimney (originating from boiler) extends above the roof line on the west side.

EXTERIOR TREATMENT

The main facade of the Dorson Apartments faces east on Benton Boulevard. This elevation features two arched rusticated limestone entryways, below unadorned entablatures, flanked by three bay porches with fluted, Corinthian columns and pilasters. Columns rest on square limestone pliths and round toruses. First and second-story porches contain decorative, Art Nouveau styled wrought-iron railings. Each projecting porch is divided by a classical entablature (embellished with triglyphs and metopes), which originate from the plain entablature above the two main entrances. Second-story entablatures extend the full length of each unit and are unadorned (see alterations) with the exception of paired, carved decorative brackets, coupled at each corner above the end columns of each porch. Each third-story unit contains a balcony with simple, unadorned post (see alterations) in addition to canopies with rafters. Original thirty-story balustrades, styled in Art Nouveau elements, are missing. (see alterations).

Vertical and horizontal cut limestone patterning highlight the third-story between the fenestration. Double, voluted cast plaster brackets support a denticulated, boxed wooden cornice at the north, east and south elevations, as well as a brick parapet with cut limestone cap. Cut limestone quoins occur at each exterior main corner; each quoin replaces two brick courses with one brick course between quoins. Quoins are also offset and project from the face of the brick and extend in alternating patterns.

FENESTRATION

There are 22 windows on the east facade. All windows are double hung, sash-type with three-over-one light (basement and first-story) three-over-two light (second-story), and five-over-two light (third-story). Fenestration of first and second story contains cut stone lugsills and radiating, flat arch lintels with pronounced keystones. Fenestration of third-story level utilizes the cornice as a continuous, decorative lintel accented by pairs of cast, plaster brackets and decorative stone tiles. Basement windows have cut stone sill and lintels.

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Fenestration of the west facade numbers 54. All single window and tripartaite windows are double hung, sash-type, three-over-one light with few exceptions. Remaining fenestration is consistent in construction with one-over-one light. All fenestration, at this elevation, contains cut stone lugsills and lintels with one exception. At all stories, every fourth bay, fenestration contains segmented brick arches. Windows at basement level have cut stone sills and flat stone lintels.

Fenestration of the south elevation numbers 12. Windows, which are double hung, sash-type contain a varying combination of multipaned toplights over one light. Middle section contains tripartite window construction. Basement through second-story windows have cut stone lugsills. End fenestration (first and second-story) have radiating flat arch lintels, with pronounced keystones. Central windows have projecting decorative entablatures supported by cast plaster brackets on first and second-story levels. Windows on the third-story level repeat the cornice treatment as described on the east elevation.

Fenestration of the north facade is as described on the south facade with one exception. The windows below grade are set in window wells on the basement level, or are omitted altogether.

DOORS AND ENTRYWAYS

Main entry doors (east elevation) are recessed in detailed, ornamental archways. Haunches are of rusticated, large cut stone as are the voussoirs. Molded, cut stone archivolts surround each entryway. Intrados-soffits are embellished with cast-plaster coffered panels with applied decorative plaster filagree. The northern main entrance consists of a double-door with a curved, Art Nouveau styled wood and glass transom. The double door is made of full beveled glass Art Nouveau styled panels. South main entryway (see alterations) contain a single, paneled wood door. Transom design of the north door is duplicated here.

The northern main entryway incorporates a one riser limestone stoop; southern entryway has five raisers of cut limestone to accomodate the change in grade on Benton Boulevard.

Porch entry doors are of similar design to main entry doors with transom panels, circular glass, and curvilinear wood muntins as part of the design. Doors (single leaf) are flanked by side lights which repeat the main entryway door design motif. Doors and side lights are recessed within projecting jambs.

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INTERIOR FEATURES

Major interior features include: wood coffered ceilings in dining rooms of each apartment, and fireplaces inset with ceramic mosaic tile work in a classical motif (grecian wreaths, torches, and ribbon designs). Mantels are of wood with denticulation below the mantel shelves.

ALTERATIONS

Major alterations were made to the apartment building in 1944. The interior apartment count was changed from thirteen (13) to twenty-eight (28) units. Alterations made after 1944 were verified by the previous owner.

1. Addition of iron security bars at windows on grade; 1944.
2. Addition of third floor porch roofs; date undetermined.
3. Removal of plaster balustrades at third floor; replaced with wrought iron in 1982. Small portion of balustrade remains for reproduction and restoration.
4. Removal of Corinthian capitals for reproduction; 1984.
5. Addition of storm doors and window screens, dates unknown.
6. Alteration of Northern main entryway door; 1944.
7. Removal of decorative trim from entablature, date unknown.
8. Enclosure of (screening in) of open areas off basement level apartment; east facade, 1980.
9. Alteration of exterior windows; date unknown.
10. Removal of terra cotta roof coping; stored on side; 1983.
11. Various electrical conduits were surface mounted on the exterior of the building; dates unknown; 1944 - 1982.
12. Removal of gas heaters in interior fireplaces; dates unknown.

PRESENT STATUS AND CONDITION

The overall condition of the Dorson Apartment Building is from good to fair. Renovation (see attached letter) will be carried out by John Hueser Associates and will comply with the standards set forth by the Secretary of the Interior.

SITE

The Dorson Apartments, located in a northwest Kansas City neighborhood, face Benton Boulevard to the east. The Tusawara Apartments, built in 1901 are located to the southeast of the Dorson structure.

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1. Landmarks Commission of Kansas City, Missouri, Kansas City: A Place in Time.
(Kansas City: Landmarks Commission, 1977), p. 104. Refer to footnote #1 in
Item 8.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates July 5, 1905-06

Builder/Architect

Frank C. Reynolds, Builder

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Dorson Apartment building, located at 912-914-916-918 Benton Boulevard in Kansas City, Missouri, is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places according to criterion C and is significant in the following area: ARCHITECTURE. Designed in 1905 by Kansas City builder Frank C. Reynolds for R. L. Dawson,¹ this three-story structure appears to be the oldest surviving example of the Kansas City Porch Style, a popular apartment design constructed between the years 1916-1930.

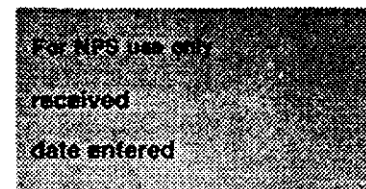
The style of the Dorson Apartments is closely linked with the apartment designs of John W. McKechnie's Pergola Apartments of 1900 and William H. Collins and his Colonnade Apartments of 1905. McKechnie, a prominent local architect practicing at the turn of the century, is credited with contributing to the early designs of the Kansas City Porch Style. His ideas about the benefits of exterior porches are expressed in an interview of May 16, 1909, "The porches of necessity are a dominating feature of the modern flat in this climate."² This design philosophy was clearly illustrated in the Pergola Apartments, now known only through photographs, but originally located at 1000 Paseo Avenue. The Kansas City builder W. H. Collins, preferred this Kansas City Porch Style as well and developed large tracts of land into apartment complexes all built in this classical revival mode. The Colonnade Apartments at 201-219 Armour Boulevard, were a 30-unit facility extending from Wyandotte to Central Street. Set back on a deep front lawn, this single, continuous brick structure was composed of a series of five connecting three-story, six-unit apartments. The classically detailed appointments, deep multi-deck porches and overall mass made the Colonnade, together with the Pergola Apartments, premier prototypes of the Kansas City Porch Style. Unfortunately, the Colonnade was sold and razed in 1963.³

The Dorson Apartments has much in common with the scale, proportion and general design approach of the Pergola Apartments. Like the Pergola, the facade of the Dorson is divided into a series of bays with porches flanking the entryway: the former having four levels, the latter with three. The cornice of both apartments is related only to the main body of each, while the porches can be read as separate entities added onto the facade, not integrated with it. In the Dorson Apartments, colossal columns stretch two stories in height and are surmounted by a modest third-story balcony with projecting shed roof. The Pergola Apartments, by contrast, employ a series of single-story, classical columns stacked one upon the other with the fourth floor having no sheltering roof.

Mention must be made of the decorative Art Nouveau features used in the design of the Dorson Apartments. Beveled glass transoms above the doorways, wrought iron railings and a gently curving rear staircase are all that remain. Although not exceptionally clear from a turn-of-the-century photograph, the Pergola Apartments appear to share this tendency toward delicate exterior ornament.

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While the Dorson Apartment is more modest in scale than the Colonnade, both structures employ classical detailing and accommodate more than the typical six to eight apartment units. In fact, this multi-unit apartment construction in the classical revival style was fairly typical in Kansas City from 1916-1930. Local developers such as McCanles Building Company employed this apartment style almost exclusively.

Examples of the Kansas City Porch Style apartment building from the late teens to the end of the 1920s include the 43rd and Oak Street structures (1922) and the Alameda Vista and Grandview Apartments which were located at 45th and main (1925, demolished 1978). All of them were clearly influenced by Collins' and McKechnie's apartment designs. As mentioned previously, these apartments are no longer standing thus leaving the Dorson Apartments as the earliest known survivor of this type.

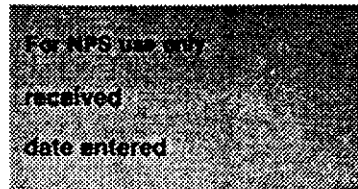
There is no question that a number of apartments in Kansas City built in the first decades of the 20th century contain similar features such as the multi-deck veranda, classical columns and ornamentation. But, if we examine the chronology of apartment housing stock in Kansas City, it still remains that the Dorson Apartment is the oldest, extant prototype of the Kansas City Porch Style.

A transition from the detached, single-family residence to the apartment building is the row house, commonly known as an unbroken line of houses sharing one or more sidewalls with its neighbors. Although there are extant examples of 19th century row houses in Kansas, 20th century examples are almost non-existent. There are, however, the "detached" row houses which are located on Kansas City's West Side, built in 1900. Although relatively plain, these structures contain ample porches to accommodate the hot summer temperatures.

Approximating the multi-level apartment house only in function are the apartment houses located at 513-519 Harrison Street, built in 1900-1901. Unlike the detached row houses, porches were generally later additions to these structures. Also located in the Riverfront area of Kansas City is another structure that typified early 20th century domestic design. A three-story apartment building at 517 Gillis Street incorporates a first-story storefront into its design. Like the apartment houses on Harrison Street, the porches were added at a later date.

In the first decade of the 20th century in Kansas City, we find that the typical apartment house was generally plain, unadorned and small in scale and proportion. Porches, if present, were often added to the structure at a later date. Their design, although important in the history of apartment construction in Kansas City, was not linked to the Kansas City Porch Style.

Kansas City was expanding rapidly in the early 1900's; "The population grew by 54% in the first decade of the 20th century, from 163,752 in 1900 to 248,381 in 1910."⁴ The growth of the city for the most part followed the direction of

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the boulevard system that was rapidly nearing completion in practically every corner of the Metropolitan area. The city was moving to the East, and to a lesser extent to the South and West at this time. "The park and boulevard system, most of which was completed between 1895-1915, emphasized the natural beauty of the land and imparted some order to the development of the city. While the major apartment building boom did not occur until the 1920's, the development of the boulevards at the turn of the century inspired some rather impressive apartment construction along these prestigious streets."⁵

The neighborhoods in the Northeast area were well established in the early 1900s. Benton and neighboring Gladstone boulevards were the site of many stately homes built for the socially prominent and well-to-do. "Among those famous Kansas Citians living in these high styled, architect-designed mansions were the lumberman, R. A. Long and wealthy landowner, William Chick Scarritt, to name a few."⁶ The Dorson Apartment building and other classical revival style apartments located across the street and next door, were an attractive alternative to the single-family residences. Their gracious exteriors, in keeping with the popular Georgian style, provided a fashionable address for those who preferred urban apartment life in a convenient and prestigious neighborhood atmosphere.

"Residential architecture in the 1900's covered the full range of sizes, types, and building costs, and the entire spectrum of styles was used or adapted in modified form."⁷ The most typical and most universally adapted form, however, was the indigenous Kansas City Porch Style, with its projecting colonnades. The porch was "a design device adapted to meet the hot, humid summers that affect the region, and its local proto-type can be traced to the exterior galleries found on ante-bellum houses in the city. The multi-deck veranda for apartment buildings was a logical development of the gallery and of the later, two-story porch found on many of the larger residences."⁸

FOOTNOTES

1. Western Contractor, vol. 4, no. 27, (July 5, 1905) p. 1. This issue lists R. L. Dawson as the owner, and Frank Reynolds as the builder. The Landmarks Commission, however, lists R. L. Dawson as the builder. There is a discrepancy between the listing of R. L. Dawson as builder and Frank Reynolds as builder in A Place in Time and this reference.
2. Mrs. Sam Ray, Postcards from Old Kansas City, (Kansas City: Historic Kansas City Foundation, 1980), p. 24.
3. Ibid, p. 35.

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4. George Ehrlich, Kansas City, Missouri: An Architectural History 1926-1976 (Historic Kansas City Foundation; 1979, p. 58).
5. Sherry Piland, John McKecknie, Architect, (Kansas City: Landmarks Commission, 1981), p. 6.
6. For additional listings of residences along Benton and Gladstone Boulevards, refer to Kansas City, A Place in Time, p. 84-114.
7. Ehrlich, p. 63.
8. Ibid, p. 70

9. Major Bibliographical References

Ehrlich, George, "Kansas City, Missouri: An Architectural History, 1826-1976",
Kansas City: Historic Kansas City Foundation; 1979. (See continuation sheet)

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property less than 1 acre

Quadrangle name KANSAS CITY, MO-KANS.

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A

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Zone Easting Northing

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Zone Easting Northing

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Verbal boundary description and justification Lot 4, Kirwin Place, a subdivision in Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri, according to the recorded plat thereof; also a tract in the Southeast $\frac{1}{4}$ of the Northwest $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 3, Township 49, Range 33 in Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri

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

state	code	county	code
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state	code	county	code
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title 1. Patricia Brown Glenn & Cydney Millstein, Architectural Historians

organization Consultants date January 13, 1986
c/o John Hueser Associates

street & number 7 East 34th Street telephone (816) 756-3439

city or town Kansas City state Missouri 64111

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

☐ national ☐ state ☒ local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *Frederick A. Brunner*

Frederick A. Brunner, Ph.D., P.E., Director, Department of Natural Resources, and
title State Historic Preservation Officer date 3/19/87

For NPS use only

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

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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Landmarks Commission of Kansas City, Missouri. Kansas City: A Place in Time.
(Kansas City: Landmarks Commission, 1977).

Piland, Sherry. John McKecknie, Architect. (Kansas City: Landmarks Commission,
1981).

Ray, Mrs. Sam. Postcards from Old Kansas City. (Kansas City: Historic Kansas City
Foundation, 1980).

Western Contractor, vol. 4, no. 27 (July 5, 1905).

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2. James M. Denny
Chief, Survey and Registration
and State Contact Person
Department of Natural Resources
Division of Parks, Recreation,
and Historic Preservation
P. O. Box 176
Jefferson City, Missouri 65102

Date: February 3, 1987

Phone: 314/751- 5376



DORSON APARTMENT BUILDING
912 - 914 - 916 - 918 Benton Boulevard
Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri

U.S.G.S. 7.5' Scale: 1:24,000
KANSAS CITY, MO-KANS. Quadrangle: 1964
(Photorevised 1970 and 1975)

UTM Reference Point:
A. 15 366460 4329000

MAY 6 1967

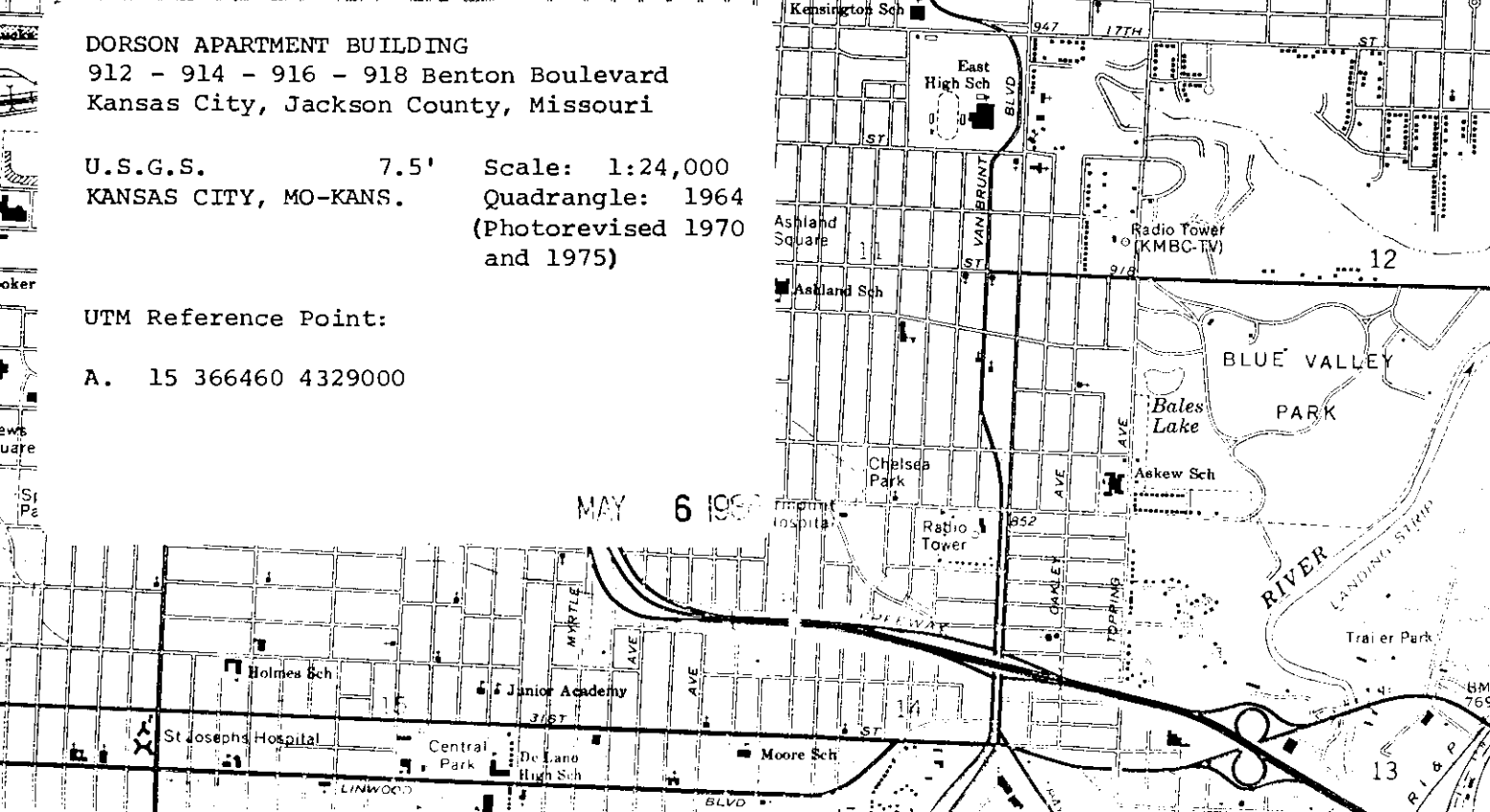


Photo Log:

Name of Property: **Dorson Apartment Building**

City or Vicinity: **Kansas City**

County: **Jackson County** State: **MO**

Photographer: **Michael Sinclair**

Date

Photographed: **Sept. 1985**

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 18. Looking W, E façade.
- 2 of 18. Looking W, partial E façade.
- 3 of 18. Looking W, partial E façade.
- 4 of 18. Looking SW, N and E facades.
- 5 of 18. Looking W, partial E façade.
- 6 of 18. Looking N, S façade.
- 7 of 18. Looking E, W façade.
- 8 of 18. Looking W, partial E façade.
- 9 of 18. Looking W, partial E façade.
- 10 of 18. Looking SW, entablature detail.
- 11 of 18. Looking NW, main entry.
- 12 of 18. Looking W, main entry door.
- 13 of 18. Looking N, window detail.
- 14 of 18. Looking S, brackets.
- 15 of 18. Looking S, single window.
- 16 of 18. Looking E, W face, window.
- 17 of 18. Interior fireplace.
- 18 of 18. Looking SW, E façade.





































