

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 *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an 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 entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

historic name Ligon Apartments

other name/site number Udell Apartments

street & town 211 East Excelsior Street N/A not for publication

city or town Excelsior Springs N/A vicinity

state Missouri code MO county Clay code 037 zip code 64024

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 nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Mark A Miles MARCH 29, 2010
Signature of certifying official/Title Mark A. Miles/Deputy SHPO Date

Missouri Department of Natural Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

I hereby certify that the property is:

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

- entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register
 See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain:)

Ligon Apartments
Name of Property

Clay County, MO
County and State

Ownership of Property
(check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property
(check only one box)

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

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

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

Historic Function
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: multiple dwelling

Current Function
(Enter categories from instructions)

vacant

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th and 20th Century Revival

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation stone

walls brick

roof asphalt

other _____

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 7

Ligon Apartments
Name of Property

Clay County, MO
County and State

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 of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Areas of Significance

(enter categories from instructions)

Health/Medicine

Architecture

Period of Significance

1917 – c. 1960

Significant Dates

1917

Significant Persons

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

unknown

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 8

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more 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 # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other Name of repository: _____

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 9

Ligon Apartments
Name of Property

Clay County, MO
County and State

Acreage of Property less than one acre

UTM References

(Place additional boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

1 1/5 3/9/4/7/2/3 4/3/5/5/5/2/3
Zone Easting Northing

2 / / / / / / / / / / /
Zone Easting Northing

3 / / / / / / / / / / /
Zone Easting Northing

4 / / / / / / / / / / /
Zone Easting Northing

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Lots 3,4,5, Block 11, Original Town, Excelsior Springs, MO

Property Tax No. 123110022200600

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

This is the property historically associated with the Ligon Apartments, later known as the Udell Apartments.

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 10

name/title Rhonda Chalfant, Ph.D.
organization Chalfant Consulting date November 2, 2009
street & number 619 West 32nd Street telephone 660-826-5592
city or town Sedalia state MO zip code 65301

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

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.

Photographs: Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items: (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

name/title _____
street & number _____ telephone _____
city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

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. 470 *et seq.*).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 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 Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Ligon Apartments
Clay County, MO

Summary: The Ligon Apartments, also known as the Udell Apartments, is a 2 ½ story building located at 211 East Excelsior Street, Excelsior Springs, Clay County, Missouri. Constructed in 1917, the building is an example of a colonnaded apartment, a property type commonly built in small cities and urban areas in the state in the first quarter of the 20th century. The type is characterized by multi-story porches supported by brick or wood columns. The façade of the red brick building features a 2-story porch with a low pitched hipped roof supported by four square brick columns. The main roof is front gable with dentiled trim, and there are three large gabled dormers on the secondary (east and west) elevations. The façade is symmetrical with centered entrances flanked by sidelights on the first and second stories. To either side of the entrance are two original one-over-one wood windows with thick stone sills and lintels. The exterior of the building has seen few alterations and looks today much as it did in magazine articles, 1920s post cards, and tourism brochures (see figures 1-3).

Setting:

The Ligon is located on a tree lined street of mixed residential, commercial and institutional buildings. It backs onto East Broadway, Excelsior Spring's primary historic commercial street. It is also near the boundary of the Excelsior Springs' Hall of Waters Commercial East Historic District. Most apartment buildings and boarding houses in Excelsior Springs sit on narrow lots close to the street. Though the Ligon Apartments sits directly on the sidewalk was historically (and currently) flanked by wide grassy side yards dotted with trees. Behind the building is a gravel alley that separates the lot from a large parking lot (fronting Broadway).

Elaboration: The Ligon Apartments is a 2 ½ story square brick colonnade apartment building, a type of early twentieth century apartment building characterized by a balanced symmetrical façade with central entrance and square brick columns supporting a two-story porch that spans the entire width of the façade. The building occupies two lots on East Excelsior Street and faces north (photo 1). The front porch extends almost to the sidewalk, leaving no front yard, but there are large side yards to the east and to the west. The area to the rear of the building is a parking lot. East Excelsior Street is one block north of Broadway Avenue, the main business street in Excelsior Springs. Both East Excelsior Street and East Broadway Avenue were, during the period of significance, the site of several boarding houses, hotels, and apartments.

The north (front) façade of the building features a medium pitched gabled roof with three bays in the gabled end. The peak of the gable was topped with a decorative curved finial, but this has been removed. Dentil molding outlines the roofline. The center bay has paired one-over-one windows. A dentiled pediment over the center bay repeats the line of the gable. Four brick columns support the two-story porch covered by a low

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pitched hipped roof. On the porch, stone spans with decorative brackets accent the roofline (photo 2). Metal railing spans the openings at balustrade height. A centered door on the second floor opens onto the gallery. On either side of the door are two one-over-one windows with stone lintels and sills. On the first floor, the front door opens onto the porch at the center, and to either side are two one-over-one windows with stone lintels and sills.

The west façade of the building has three gabled dormers, each with paired one-over-one windows. The gable roofs are edged with dentil trim and accented with a line of trim that creates a pediment effect (photo 3). The roofs were topped with decorative finials, now removed, similar to the finial originally on the front gable. A band of dentil molding runs under the roofline. The second story has seven one-over-one windows with stone lintels and sills. The three center windows are more closely spaced than the two on either side. The first story has five windows aligned with those above but without the two center windows. Four basement windows are spaced along the stone foundation. A bulkhead leading to the basement is under the south-most bay.

The east façade has three gabled dormers. The gables are identical to those on the west façade (photo 4). The east façade features a garage topped with a sleeping porch; the garage doors were at some time removed. The sleeping porch above the garage has windows on the north, east, and south side (photo 5). To the south of the garage and sleeping porch are two bays with one-over-one windows with stone lintels and sills. To the north are three bays with one-over-one windows with stone lintels and sills.

The south (rear) façade features a gable roof similar to the roof on the north façade, with dentil trim and three bays. The second story features six bays with paired windows in the center. The first story features six bays, with a window and door at the center. The windows and doors have stone lintels; the windows have stone sills (photo 6).

Interior: The interior of the Ligon Apartments has been altered as the building was updated; however, some elements of its original interior remain. The basic layout of the first and second story apartments appears to have been retained (figure 4); the third story appears to have had some alterations such as added walls.

The interior detailing is simple, with a tiled floor in the foyer, oak balustrades and newel posts, and hardwood floors. The entry hall has a tile floor of hexagonal white tiles accented with a border of red and green tiles and small floral motifs of green tiles with red centers at regular intervals. The foyer is accented by an archway that opens onto a double-loaded central corridor. The double staircase is interesting. Stairs rise from the north end of the entry hall to the second floor, a second staircase rises from the south

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end of the entry hall to the second story. A single staircase rises from the second story landing to the third story. The newel posts and balustrade are oak (photo 7). The escutcheons and doorknobs are ornate, with cut-out corners and hexagonal knobs.

The units originally featured Murphy In-A-Box-Beds. These have been removed to make closet space, but the decorative doorknobs and oak doors have been retained. In the third story, one pair of rooms was separated by a pocket door.

Some original light fixtures remain. In one room, a plaster medallion that held a large center bowl remains; another room has the complete medallion and bowl. Other light fixtures are hanging fixture with one globe covering a single bulb (photo 8). These light fixtures are typical of those used in the early twentieth century.

The bathrooms of each unit are very small. Each has a small footed tub, a sink, and a toilet. One of the units has the original medicine cabinet.

The kitchens are also very small. Several of the kitchens have the original wall mounted sinks.

The Ligon Apartments retain the integrity of the exterior and many of the original details of the interior.

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Ligon Apartments
Clay County, MO

Summary: The Ligon Apartments, also known as the Udell Apartments, is located at 211 East Excelsior Street, Excelsior Springs, Clay County, Missouri. It is locally significant under Criterion A and C in the areas of Health/Medicine and Architecture. Excelsior Springs boomed in the late 19th and early 20th Century due to the hydrotherapy health craze. People flocked to “America’s Haven of Health”¹ to “take the waters” for a few day or several months. Medical facilities and businesses serving the health needs and recreational demands of this transient population flourished. To house this temporary population, families opened their homes to boarders and entrepreneurs constructed luxury and moderately priced hotels and apartment buildings. The Ligon is an excellent local example of an apartment constructed to house locals working in the health or tourism industry or tourists visiting to take “the cure” at the town’s multiple mineral springs. Its location within one to two blocks of the central business district, Siloam Springs Park and several of the town’s mineral springs made it an ideal location for tourists and long-term residents alike. Offering twelve efficiency units with private baths and kitchenettes, the Ligon provided the middle ground between luxury and economy—allowing residents privacy and self sufficiency. An example of the colonnaded apartment type characterized by multi-story columned brick porches, this building included Murphy In-A Box Beds an innovative heating and vitalization system when constructed in 1917. The period of significance is 1917 to c. 1960, the date of construction through Excelsior Spring’s heyday as a health resort.

Elaboration: The Ligon Apartments are located at 211 East Excelsior. One block east of Main Street and backing onto Broadway, the Ligon is adjacent to the business district and near the Siloam Spring, and the Hall of Waters (NR listed, 12/1983). The location provided ready access both the town’s business and entertainment district and to its mineral springs. It is west of the Boarding House Historic District proposed by in a 1994 architectural survey conducted by Deon Wolfenbarger, and was included in Wolfenbarger’s earlier (1991) survey of historic resources. Wolfenbarger assessed the property as eligible for individual listing on the National Register.²

Excelsior Springs is a town (population approximately 11,000) located about thirty miles northeast of Kansas City. The terrain is hilly and timbered, making the site pleasant for tourists and lending itself to a number of parks and attractive vistas. Excelsior Springs is close to the Watkins Mill State Historic Site near Lawson, Missouri, and the Jesse James Home in Kearney, Missouri. Both of these tourist sites were advertised as places of interest in early Excelsior Springs tourism brochures.

¹ *Excelsior Springs: America’s Haven of Health*, (Excelsior Springs, MO: Chamber of Commerce, 1930).

² Deon Wolfenbarger, *Excelsior Springs Historic Resources Survey Plan*, July 1991; Deon Wolfenbarger, *Excelsior Springs Historic District Survey Plan*, July 1994.

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Excelsior Springs originally developed as a health spa and resort town around the twenty mineral springs in the area. The presence of the mineral springs had been noted by local residents as early as the 1840s, according to the *History of Clay County*.³ Several stories offer explanations of the springs' first medicinal use and seek to add credibility to the springs' healing powers. Some of the stories seem to have been repeated by locals over the years until they made their way into local histories.⁴ Other stories refer to Native Americans, especially Chief Wapoo, and appear to have been created by city boosters to add "authenticity" by attributing mystical qualities to Indians.⁵

Whatever the story of the discovery of the springs' medicinal powers, the springs themselves were exploited by the Rev. Dr. J. V. B. Flack. He sent samples of the water to be analyzed by chemists Wright and Merrill in St. Louis, who found the waters contained iron manganese, soda bicarbonate, sulphur, saline, and lithia.⁶ The *History of Clay County* identifies four separate springs--the Excelsior, the Saratoga, the Relief, and the Empire--each with water containing a different combination of elements that could treat and cure a surprising variety of diseases."⁷

During the mid-nineteenth century, hydrotherapy or the water cure became a popular treatment for a variety of diseases.⁸ According to Loring Bullard, between 1870 and 1880, nearly eighty of Missouri's many springs operated as health resorts.⁹ Excelsior Springs existed primarily as a tourist site catering to the visitors who came to take the waters. Growth was rapid despite the town's relative isolation; by 1883, the city's population was 1375.¹⁰

The introduction of the railroads decreased the city's isolation and enhanced its growth. Visitors once had to ride the stagecoach to Excelsior Springs from the nearby towns that had railroad access. In 1887, the Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul Railroad line between Chicago and Kansas City passed through Excelsior Springs, increasing the

³ *History of Clay County* (Indianapolis: National Historical Company, 1885), 384. Hereafter cited as *HCC*.

⁴ *HCC*, 384; *Excelsior Springs: America's Haven of Health*, 5; James Watson, ed., *Reflections of Excelsior Springs* (Marceline, MO: Heritage House, 1992).

⁵ Philip DeLoria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale, 1988), 103; *Excelsior Springs: American's Haven of Health*, 5; *Wapoo: Keeper of the Springs* (Excelsior Springs, MO: McClardy Sanitarium and Clinic, 1939), passim, pamphlet on file at the State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia, Missouri; *Excelsior Springs in the Valley of Vitality* (Excelsior Springs, MO: Valley of Vitality Clup, n.d.), pamphlet on file at the State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia, Missouri. This document can be dated as post-1939 because it includes descriptions and photographs of the Hall fo Waters, built in 1939.

⁶ *HCC*, 384.

⁷ *HCC*, 387.

⁸ Katherine Sklar, "All Hail to Pure Cold Water," *American Heritage*, 26 (December 74), 64, 66.

⁹ Loring Bullard. *Healing Waters* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2004), 22-23.

¹⁰ *HCC*, 384-386.

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number of tourists and the number of permanent residents whose businesses served the tourist trade. The Wabash Railroad also extended its line into Excelsior Springs, further enhancing the town's growth.¹¹

In 1899, Excelsior Springs had 3500 residents, according to the *Kansas City Star*. In addition, the city had a large transient population. "Thousands visit here," taking advantage of the "large number of cottage hotels" as well as eight larger hotels. Statistics cited by the *Star* showed that of the 1000 patients treated by one physician, most stayed less than two months, but others stayed as long as six months.¹²

Excelsior Springs continued to grow because it was able to adapt to the changing desires of its clientele. The popularity of health resorts, hydrotherapy, and bottled mineral water waned somewhat in the early twentieth century, according to Bullard, in part because magazines such as *Everybody's Magazine* and *Good Housekeeping* criticized health spas as quackery. Many of the state's resorts remained rather primitive and closed as visitors demanded more and better amenities, but Excelsior Springs thrived.¹³ Excelsior Springs rebuffed criticism of the water cure by the presence of its sanitariums managed by doctors, including Ball Clinic, McCleary Clinic, Thornton Minor Hospital, and the Excelsior Clinic.

The city dealt with concerns about its accessibility by advertising the ease with which it could be reached. In addition to the trains already serving the city, transportation was enhanced when Excelsior Springs became part of the Kansas City, Clay County, and St. Joseph Interurban Railroad. Transportation into Excelsior Springs was also improved as a result of the Governor's Good Roads Plan that eventually resulted in Highway 69 being paved and county roads being surfaced with gravel.

To further improve the city and its position as a health resort and tourist center, Excelsior Springs embarked on a plan of improvement characteristic of the Progressive Era and the City Beautiful movement. The plan included better public utilities, electric street lamps, sewers and sanitary facilities. During the early twentieth century, the city passed a bond issue to provide for the paving of streets and the construction of granitoid sidewalks. A plan for creation and improvement of city parks was begun in 1915. Landscape architect George E. Kessler and the firm of Hare and Hare were hired to lay out parks with scenic walks and drives. In addition, the pavilion at the Siloam Spring was rebuilt by the city.

¹¹ *American's Haven of Health*, 7,

¹² "In the City of Health," *Kansas City Star*, 20 April 1899.

¹³ Bullard, 97.

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City utilities were largely developed by Dr. W.A. Bell, owner of the Bell Clinic. He received a franchise to provide water, gas, and electric service to the city. He created a waterworks system from deep wells and seven miles of water line to provide water for domestic use. In 1912, the Excelsior Springs Water, Gas, and Electric Plant opened. This plant provided complete utility service to its patrons, including steam heat that came to the patrons through underground mains that also kept the sidewalks warm and ice-free during winter. The underground mains also provided a means of heating water for domestic use during the summer.¹⁴

The city installed electric street lamps in 1915. Twenty thousand people gathered in Excelsior Springs to celebrate the reopening of Broadway Avenue. A parade of 100 cars, plus marching groups and floats, marked the event. The street had been repaved and new sidewalks installed. New electric streetlights illuminated a "brilliant white way" along the city's main thoroughfare.¹⁵

Excelsior Springs also embarked on a "Sanitation Movement." The city created a sewer system, and encouraged homeowners to add indoor plumbing to their homes. For those homes without indoor plumbing, the city mandated that all privies have concrete vaults. Ordinances requiring window screens to keep out flies were enacted. Excelsior Springs was named one of the most sanitary cities in the nation. The city also celebrated this event with a massive parade.¹⁶

The emphasis on sanitation was important to Excelsior Springs as a further confirmation of the health benefits of its resorts. The city had long advertised that the city had "no mosquitoes and no malaria."¹⁷ During the Spanish influenza epidemic, the *Weekly Standard* noted that drinking the sulpho-saline water would kill influenza bacteria.¹⁸

Many of these improvements were made in order to further enhance Excelsior Springs' position as a health resort and vacation spot. The city vigorously advertised the town. The Civic Improvement Association organized in 1903 as an active women's club dedicated to altruistic and civic work.¹⁹ The Commercial Club, made up of businessmen, gave Excelsior Springs "the widest publicity possible." A paid secretary directed the effort of "attracting visitors and making them comfortable when they arrive."²⁰ In 1920, their efforts were lauded: "They have made the town; they guarantee

¹⁴ *America's Haven of Health*, 11.

¹⁵ *Kansas City Times*, 22 October 1915.

¹⁶ *Excelsior Springs Weekly Standard*, June, July, August 1916, passim.

¹⁷ *Kansas City Times*, 22 October 1915.

¹⁸ *Excelsior Springs Weekly Standard*, 24 October 1918.

¹⁹ *Clay County, Missouri, Centennial Souvenir*, 70.

²⁰ *Clay County, Missouri, Centennial Souvenir*, 72.

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its future.”²¹ The 1920 *History of Clay County* noted that Excelsior Springs made “more substantial provision” for visitors than other towns that relied on only seasonal visitors. The city of Excelsior Springs had become a “real town, a real health and pleasure resort.”²²

Though only the large hotels and local health clinics were directly serviced by health professionals, the commercial, recreational, and notably housing options in Excelsior Springs grew in direct proportion to the town’s popularity as a health resort. As noted in Wolfenbarger’s 1994 survey of Excelsior Spring’s boarding house district, “it would be virtually impossible to find a building which was not at least indirectly associated with this [health resort] context.” As expounded by the Chamber of Commerce’s *Golden Jubilee* booklet:

We are, first of all, a HEALTH RESORT. Just that. Not a commercial or manufacturing center, mining town, or national airport – no, those things are purely secondary to an industry devoted to the mineral water cure.²³

In order to maintain its reputation as a health and tourism center, the town needed an adequate supply of housing for visitors of a wide range of economic means. Many of those taking the waters stayed for several months, having been told by physicians that they should expect to stay four to six months.²⁴ Excelsior Springs also needed housing near the downtown area for those who worked in the town’s stores, businesses, bathhouses, and sanitarium. Since the town had no bus service, housing within walking distance of the workplace was important.

Three types of multiple family dwellings developed in Excelsior Springs—hotels, boarding houses, and apartments. Wolfenbarger notes that the majority of the hotels, apartments, and boarding houses were in the eastern part of the city in the 300 and 400 blocks of Excelsior Street and Broadway Avenue. In 1923, the *Excelsior Springs Daily Standard* listed “Items of Interest” about the city, and identified 28 apartments, 4 first class and 16 second class hotels, and 87 houses renting furnished rooms.²⁵

The distinction between the three types of multiple family dwellings is outlined by architectural historian Ward Bucher. He defines a hotel as “a building with suites or rooms for rent by the day [that] typically includes public facilities for dining and entertainment,” and a boarding house is “a building where rooms are rented and meals

²¹ W. H. Woodson, *History of Clay County* (Topeka: Historical Publishing Co., 1920), 175.

²² Ibid.

²³ Deon Wolfenbarger, *Historic Resources Survey, Phase II: Boarding House District*, June 1994.

²⁴ “In the City of Health.”

²⁵ “Items of Interest About the Springs,” *Excelsior Springs Daily Standard*, 11 October 1923.

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provided to residents for a fixed term.” An apartment house differs, in that it is a building with multiple dwellings, each of which has kitchen facilities [though] originally the term was reserved for buildings occupied by the wealthy and/or those without kitchens.”²⁶

In Excelsior Springs, these distinctions were often blurred. In 1920, the *History of Clay County* grouped hotels and boarding houses together and noted that they “have heretofore met the needs of visitors.” Though this history identifies a resident population of 5000, it does not clarify whether permanent residents primarily owned their own homes, rented single-family houses, or stayed in apartments or boarding houses. In 1922, a souvenir pamphlet printed in honor of the Clay County Centennial further blurred the definitions among the types of rental housing. It mentions “magnificent hotels with every modern convenience [and] hundreds of apartments and rooming houses.”²⁷ These distinctions may be further blurred by the names taken by individual buildings. The Colonial Hotel, for example, though identifying itself as a hotel, served as a residence for several couples for many years.²⁸ The Ligon Apartments identified themselves from the beginning as apartments.

However the types of multiple family dwellings are categorized, Excelsior Springs experienced a need for more multi-family dwellings between 1913 and 1926. Wolfenbarger notes fifteen new buildings constructed in the Boarding House District in addition to the Ligon (Udell) Apartments just west of the Boarding House District in 1917.

Whether identifying themselves as hotels, apartments, or boarding houses, these rather large buildings, primarily two or more stories with multi-story porches, sat on small lots and were placed close to the sidewalks. They were built in a variety of styles, including Victorian, Classical Revival, and Craftsman.²⁹

During the first decades of the twentieth century, the four-to-twelve unit apartment became increasingly popular as housing for the rapidly growing middle-class.³⁰ One of the apartments in Excelsior Springs was the Ligon Apartments at 211 East Excelsior Street. In the midst of the move toward civic improvement, G. W. Ligon purchased two twenty-foot lots on East Excelsior Street, across from the Monfort House, from the Excelsior Springs School Board for \$2200. The price, according to the *Excelsior Springs Daily Call*, was a “bargain.” Ligon planned to erect a “modern apartment house” on the

²⁶ Ward Bucher, *Dictionary of Building Preservation* (New York: John Wiley, 1996), 240,55-56, 16.

²⁷ *Clay County Missouri Centennial Souvenir*, 66-7.

²⁸ U. S. Census, 1930; “R. B. Christian, Colonial Hotel, Excelsior Springs, MO.”

²⁹ Wolfenbarger, 1994, 1991.

³⁰ Sally E. Schwenk, *Historic Colonnade Apartment Building on Kansas City, Missouri*, National Register of Historic Places Nomination, August 2003, 11.

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lots.³¹

G. W. (Walter) Ligon was the youngest son of Leonard W. and Elizabeth Haynes Ligon. The extended Ligon family had settled in Clay County in 1819 and farmed land in Gallatin township. By the 1920s, G. W. Ligon owned several properties in Excelsior Springs, including the Ligon Apartments on Elm Boulevard and the Ligon Apartments on East Excelsior Street.

The Ligon Apartments on East Excelsior Streets are an example of the square brick column colonnade type apartment. The Beaux Arts and Neoclassical styles became popular during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and were, according to Schwenk, linked to the progressive movement: "The use of the classical idiom, with its references to the birthplace of democratic ideals, provides a noble style, evoking reform and progress toward perfection."³² The City Beautiful Movement postulated that social ills might be alleviated as people living in beautiful surroundings would be inspired to moral behavior. Beautiful natural surroundings were also thought to inspire improved health, a factor that Excelsior Springs had exploited in tourism brochures since the establishment of the health resorts. The elements of Beaux Arts and Neoclassical architecture seen in the square brick column colonnade apartment include symmetry, central elevated entrances, and stylistic details from other eras. Schwenk describes the colonnade apartment as featuring multi-tiered colonnaded porches and brick walls with contrasting stone details. The Ligon Apartments used a gable roof and dentil moldings that created a pediment effect. A center doorway and flanking windows create symmetry.

The colonnaded apartment building type was not used extensively in Excelsior Springs. Only five examples remain. Four of these are flat-roofed buildings; two have been altered. Only the Ligon has the gabled roof, roof gables, stone details, and dentil moldings.

The Ligon Apartments used the most modern fixtures and building techniques. One aspect of the building, the utilities, received national attention through an article in the *Heating and Ventilating Magazine*, a trade journal. The journal noted that the Ligon Apartments were supplied "by steam for heating, electricity for light and power, gas for cooking and water for domestic purposes" by one company, the Excelsior Springs Water, Gas, and Electric Plant. The building had no chimney, there being no furnace or boiler. Instead, a 500-gallon tank fitted with steam coils was located in the building's basement. This tank and coil system furnished hot water for the radiators and for the hot

³¹ *Excelsior Springs Daily Call*, 3 October 1916.

³² Schwenk, 23.

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water heater.³³ Theoretically, the lack of a furnace or boiler should have made the apartments more fire resistant, a factor that would have interested Excelsior Springs, which had seen major hotel fires in the years before the Ligon was built. The insurance companies apparently agreed that the building was safer, for the Ligon saved between ten to twelve per cent on fire insurance premiums.³⁴

The Ligon also advertised its use of Murphy In-A-Box beds. The Murphy Bed Company patented the bed that lowered out of a closet into a sleeping position in the early twentieth century. The Murphy Bed essentially doubled the space in a small apartment or hotel room by allowing a sitting room to become a bedroom when the closet was opened and the bed lowered.³⁵

The rooms at the Ligon were finished with a newly patented product, Elgin's Nu-Wa Metal Trim, invented by Harry Elgin of Excelsior Springs and marketed by the Murphy Bed Company. Elgin was one of the leading designers and contractors in Excelsior Springs.³⁶ Unfortunately, little else has been found that can help identify exactly what the Nu-Wa Metal Trim was.

The Ligon probably served both long and short-term residents. The 1920 census identifies Walter Ligon as the apartment manager; he resided there with his wife and son. Other residents included John Water and wife, and an Albright with two daughters; these residents list no occupation, suggesting that they might be visiting Excelsior Springs to take advantage of the health facilities.

In 1923, the *Excelsior Springs Daily Standard* printed a list of the city's amenities. In addition to streetlights, paved streets, water mains, fire hydrants, schools, and stores, the newspaper identified twenty bathhouses, nineteen mineral water dispensaries, three sanitariums, two hospitals, seven masseurs, six nurses, four optometrists, six osteopaths, twenty-six physicians, five chiropractors, and five dentists. These professionals and facilities served the needs of those who came seeking good health. The three theaters, one hundred acres of parks, thirty-six hole golf course, bridle paths, walking trails, bowling alleys, billiard halls, roller skating rink, target shooting range, swimming pools, fishing and boating lake, and penny arcade provided plenty of recreation for those visiting the city for recreation. Excelsior Springs had twenty-eight apartments, four first class hotels and sixteen second class hotels, and eighty-seven

³³ *Heating and Ventilating Magazine*, Vol. 14 (1917), 49.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ "The History of Murphy Bed," <<http://www.murphybedcompany.com>>, accessed 16 October 2009.

³⁶ "Patent Making Headway," *Excelsior Springs Daily Call*, 21 November 1916. Nothing else has been found regarding Nu-Way Metal Trim.

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houses renting furnished rooms.³⁷

The 1926 Sanborn Insurance Map identifies the Ligon Apartments as the Udell Apartments. According to a booklet published by the Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul Railroad, the Udell Apartments managed by Mrs. Mabel Ewing, rented for \$10 or more per week, making them some of the more expensive apartments in Excelsior Springs. The 1930 census identifies Ewing as the apartment manager, living there with her husband Theodore Ewing, a real estate agent. They valued the building as \$40,000.³⁸

Excelsior Springs survived the 1930s despite the Great Depression and notoriety of the presence of violent gangsters. Renewed interest in hydrotherapy followed research by the Simon Baruch Research Institute at Saratoga Springs, New York.³⁹ In 1930, the federal government added to Excelsior Springs' position as a health resort and to the city's economy and further need for housing by expanding the Veteran's Hospital to a 300-bed capacity costing \$1,200,000. Family members visiting hospitalized veterans added to the number of people needing temporary housing. Though the number of vacationers declined, the city's position as a "haven of health" meant that visitors still came to take the waters. In 1933, Governor Guy Park authorized the use of a Reconstruction Finance Corporation loan to expand and refine the mineral water system. In 1938, the Hall of Waters, within sight of the Ligon Apartments, was completed at a cost of nearly half a million dollars.

Excelsior Springs also survived World War II, despite seeing a decline in the number of tourists because of the rationing of gasoline and tires. The Hall of Waters and the VA hospital continued to provide an economic push for the town during the late 1940s and 1950s. In 1960, the McCleary Clinic consolidated with the Thornton Minor Clinic and built a two-story addition. Despite floods and fires in the downtown area during the 1950s, Excelsior Springs continued to grow. The city began an effort to secure businesses other than health spas and tourism, and AVSCO opened in 1951, and Nelson Plastics in 1957.

Excelsior Springs' position as Missouri's "haven of health" began to decline in the 1960s because of changes in attitudes and laws. The advertising that enhanced Excelsior Springs' growth during its early years led to its decline. Physicians' groups had been questioning the value of the various water cures for many years, especially the claims that hydrotherapy could cure the variety of diseases early proponents claimed. In 1959, the American Arthritis Foundation issued a statement on "The Misrepresentation of

³⁷ "Items of Interest About the Springs," *Excelsior Springs Daily Standard*, 11 October 1923.

³⁸ U. S. Census, 1930.

³⁹ Bullard, 108.

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Arthritis Drugs and Devices in the U.S.”⁴⁰ Following this, federal legislation forbade mineral water spas and clinic from advertising that their waters would cure arthritis and rheumatism.⁴¹ Medical insurance companies began to refuse to pay for hydrotherapy.

In September 1963, Excelsior Springs received another blow when the *Saturday Evening Post* printed an article “The Hucksters of Pain” denouncing the health spas, including the clinics at Excelsior Springs. Investigative journalist Ralph Lee Smith visited the McClardy Clinic in Excelsior Springs with trumped up symptoms of back pain; when he claimed not to have been cured, Excelsior Springs’ popularity as a medical destination declined.⁴² Excelsior Springs endured an economic slump, with its mineral water bottling industry losing an average of \$25,000 per year.⁴³ The Hall of Waters closed in 1967 and the Elms Hotel, after enduring a series of bankruptcies, finally closed in 1971. In addition, the city’s mineral water bottling industry was closed temporarily by an order of the state because the bottling and capping was done by hand.

Many of the boarding houses and hotels, including the Ligon, became low-rent apartments, poorly maintained and poorly kept. The Ligon Apartments, still structurally sound and maintaining the integrity of the exterior, were condemned in 2007. They have been vacant since. The prospective owner plans on remodeling the building into upscale apartments.

⁴⁰ “The Misrepresentation of arthritis Drugs and devices in the U. S.”
<<http://www.texasnonprofits.org/Article/%3FArticleID%3D1603>.>

⁴¹ *America’s Haven of Health*, 47.

⁴² “The Clinics.” <<http://theidlehour.com/health.html>.>

⁴³ Bullard, 136.

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Verbal Boundary Description

Lots 3, 4, 5, Block 11, Original Town, Excelsior Springs, MO

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

This is the property historically associated with the Ligon Apartments, later known as the Udell Apartments.

Photo Log:

The following is true for all photographs:

Ligon Apartments

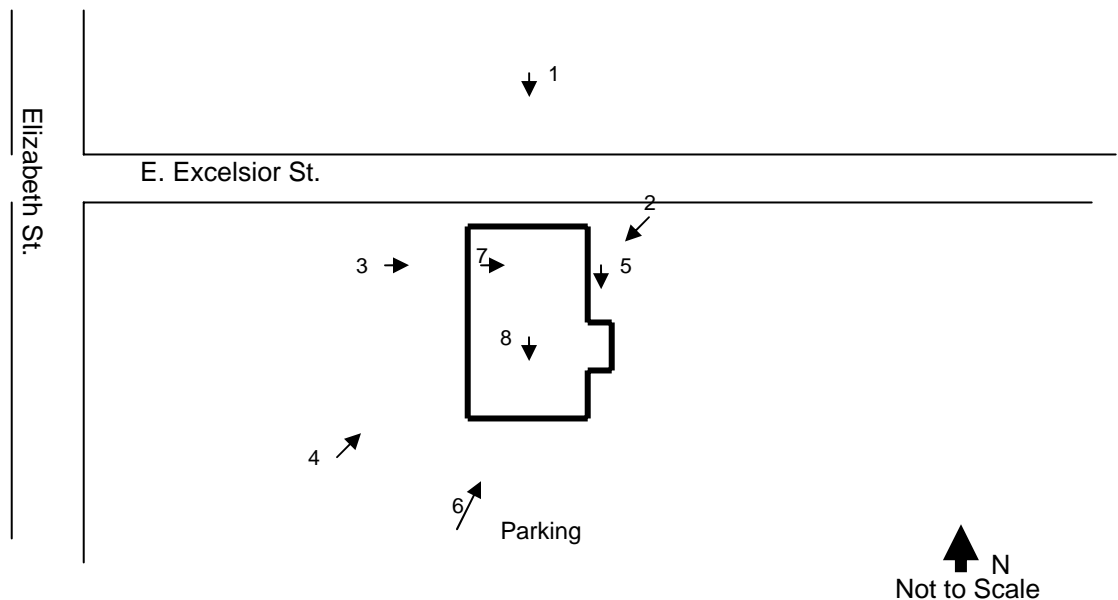
Clay County

Photographer: Rhonda Chalfant

Date:

Location of negatives:

1. North façade, looking south.
2. Porch roof detail, looking west southwest.
3. Gable detail, looking east.
4. West façade, looking northeast.
5. East façade, garage/sleeping porch, looking southwest.
6. South façade, looking northeast.
7. Interior, newel post detail, looking east.
8. Interior detail, light fixture and hall, third floor, looking south.



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Figure Log

1. *Heating and Ventilating Magazine* article showing Ligon Apartments, November 1917.
2. Postcard, c. 1917, Ligon Apartments, from the Excelsior Springs Museum collection.
3. Postcard, c. 1920s, Ligon Apartments, from the Excelsior Springs Museum collection.
4. First Floor Plan, Ligon Apartments (not to scale).


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Figure 1: *Heating and Ventilating Magazine* article showing Ligon Apartments, November 1917.



LIGON APARTMENTS, EXCELSIOR SPRINGS, MO., BUILT WITHOUT A CHIMNEY

When the building was being constructed the owner was advised to put in a flue for emergency purposes. His reply was that he was satisfied something would happen to his building before it did to the company's plant. It was figured that he saved from 10% to 12% on insurance by leaving out all suggestions of damage in its place.

A 500-gal. tank fitted with steam coils for furnishing hot water to the building is located in the basement. The heating system and the hot water tank are on separate valves so that either may be operated at any time independently of the other. It should be mentioned that the company

A Residence Without a Chimney.

A building without a chimney and supplied by one company with steam for heating, electricity for light and power, gas for cooking and water for domestic purposes is shown in the accompanying illustration. It is located in Excelsior Springs, Mo., being known as the Ligon Apartments. The building has a full cement basement which has storage lockers belonging to each apartment. It is constructed of red cherry-colored brick, trimmed with stone trimmings and is divided into twelve apartments, each having large closets and private baths. The apartments are furnished with the latest improved combination furniture, all beds being of the disappearing type, leaving a maximum amount of room space during the day time.

The steam for heating is furnished through underground mains and this, as well as the other services mentioned, are supplied by the Excelsior Springs Water, Gas and Electric Company. The building is piped for the American District Steam Company's Atmospheric system.

In place of the chimney there are small openings in the wall about 4 in. square, for taking away the fumes from the gas stoves. No provision is made at all for any other fire.

The Excelsior Springs Water, Gas & Electric plant was first put in operation in 1912. Last winter it had 68 service connections, two of which have 10,000 sq. ft. each of radiation connected. The company states that not a single customer has quit taking the service after being connected to the system.

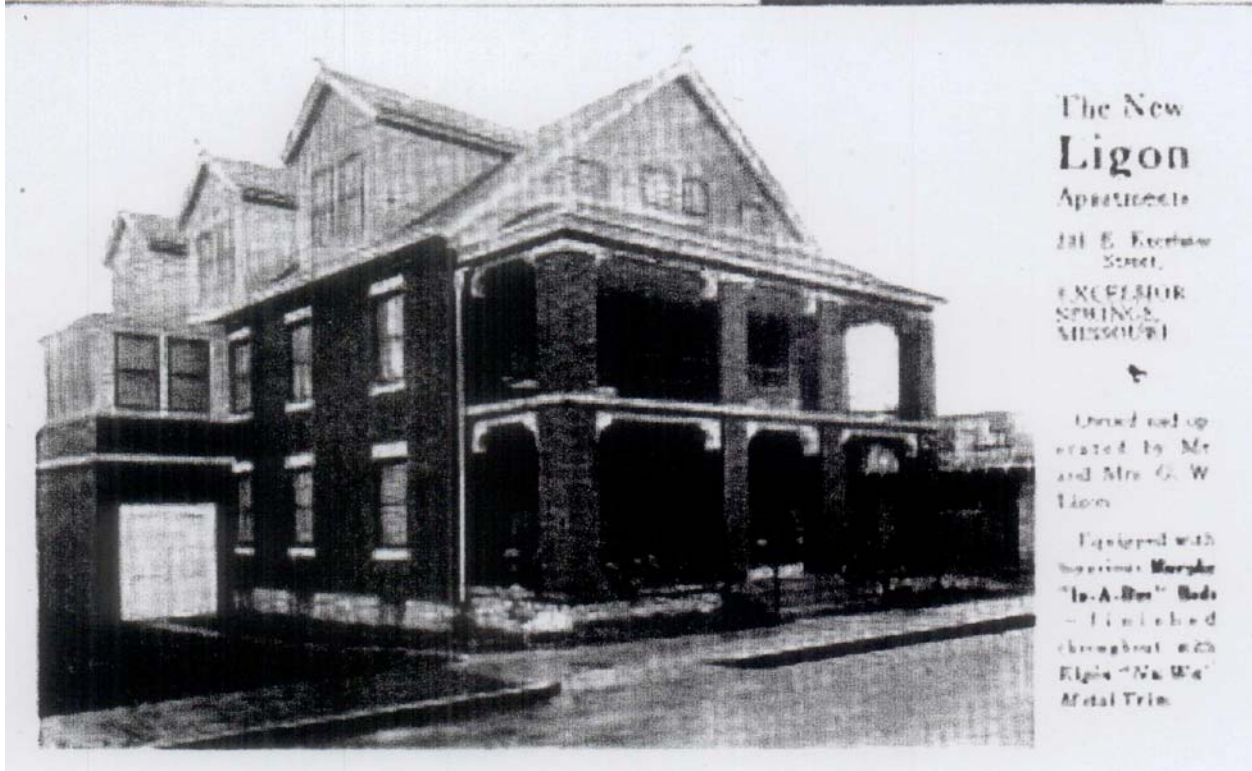
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Figure 2: Postcard, c. 1917, Ligon Apartments, from the Excelsior Springs Museum collection.



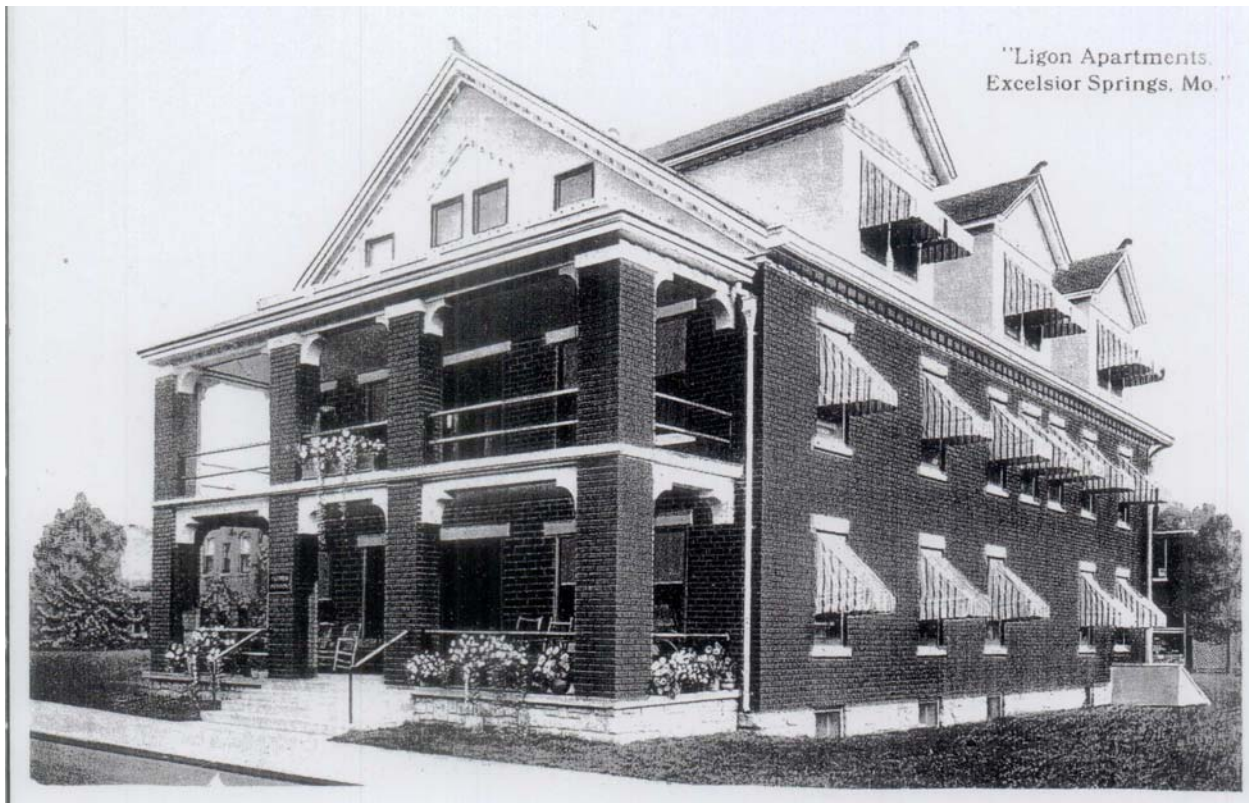
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Figure 3: Postcard, c. 1920s, Ligon Apartments, from the Excelsior Springs Museum collection.



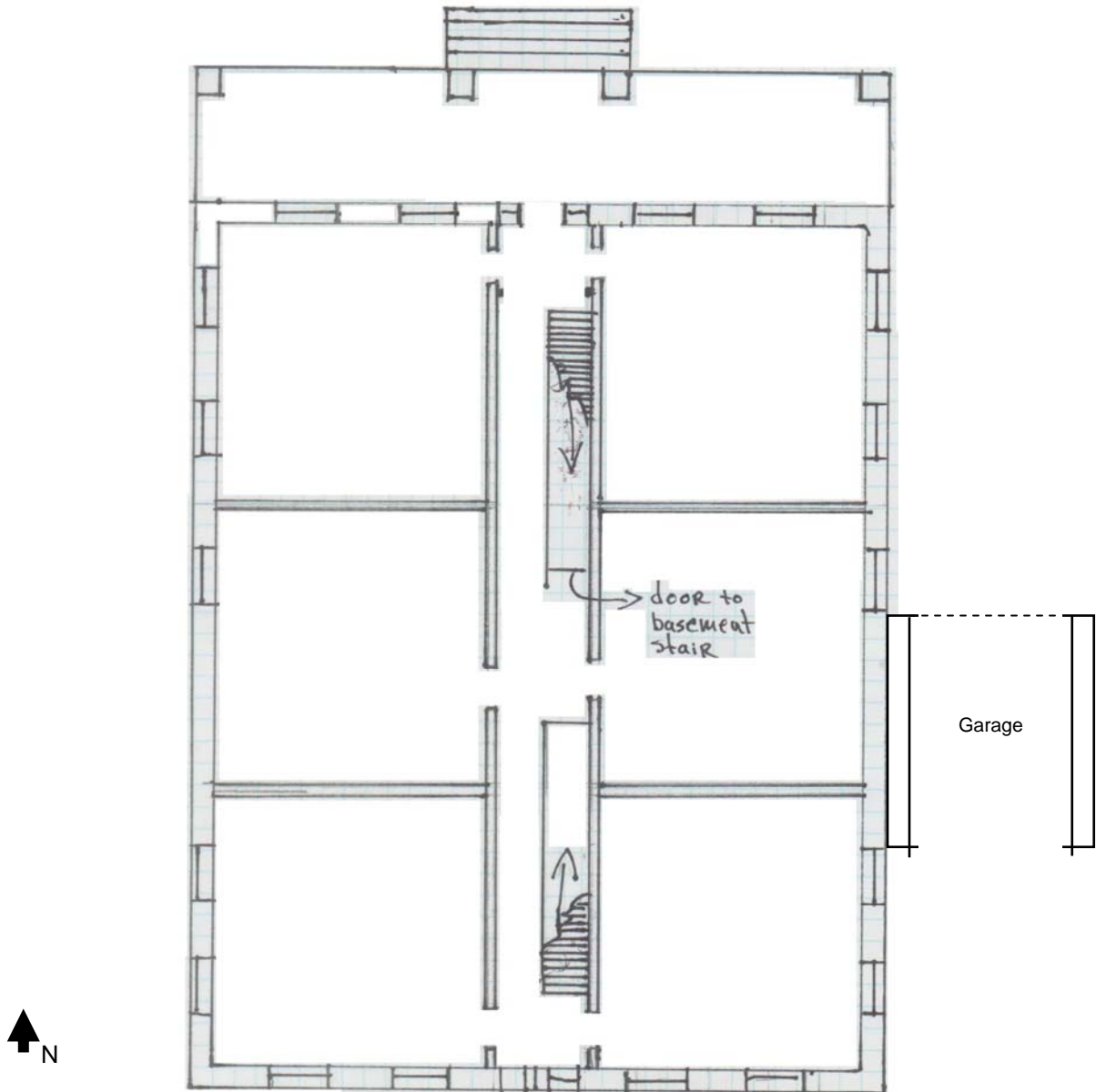
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Figure 4: First Floor Plan, Ligon Apartments (not to scale).



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