

D/DRC Case

1230 Sumter Street (1310 Lady Street)

Pending Individual Landmark

TMS: 11401-03-01

DESIGN/DEVELOPMENT REVIEW COMMISSION
DESIGN REVIEW DISTRICT
HISTORIC AGENDA
EVALUATION SHEET
Case # 1

ADDRESS: 1230 Sumter Street (also known as 1310 Lady Street)

APPLICANT: Rick Patel, owner

TAX MAP REFERENCE: TMS#11401-03-01

USE OF PROPERTY: Commercial

REVIEW DISTRICT: Pending Individual Landmark

NATURE OF REQUEST: Request recommendation for Group II Landmark Designation

FINDINGS/COMMENTS:

This is a six-story 1921 building and its ten-story 1951 annex located on the southeast corner of Lady and Sumter Streets, in the same block as the recently landmarked Owen building, built in 1949. Known for the past few decades as the Keenan Building, it was originally constructed during 1921 and officially completed in early 1922 as a meeting place for the various Masonic organizations in Columbia. The Palmetto State Life Insurance Company purchased the building in 1939 for their offices and were responsible for the construction of the ten-story annex. They made a conscious effort to create a modern skyscraper next to the 1920s building, creating an interesting juxtaposition. Renovated in 1977 and given the name “Keenan,” the building and its annex received a white and gray aluminum skin exterior that masked the disparate facades and created a somewhat unified appearance. The first floor of the skyscraper was also stuccoed during this renovation to replicate the 1920s building’s first floor and give continuity along the Lady Street facades. Unfortunately the process obliterated some key components of the terra cotta and cast stone details of the 1922 building, the original first floor of the skyscraper, and almost all of the windows were replaced throughout the structures, except for those on the south side of the 1920s Masonic hall.

Despite these changes, recent removal of the metal skin has revealed that a large portion of the exterior elevations remain essentially intact and are able to convey the original design intent of the buildings. The current owners would like to pursue landmark designation and plan to restore missing exterior elements during a massive renovation project, with a goal to qualify for the Bailey Bill.

PERTINENT SECTIONS FROM GUIDELINES

Section 17-691(c) Landmarks

Group II consists of structures or sites which constitute a delineation of Columbia's material visual history to a lesser degree than those of Group I; they evidence one or more of the following criteria for selection:

(1) The sites of events, homes of men, etc., having contributed to local history.

The 1922 structure was built as the home for Richland and Columbia lodges, Scottish Rite Masons, Knights Templar, Royal Arch Masons, Eastern Star, Shrine Club, and other branches of the various fraternal organizations. These organizations served an important social function for Columbians in the first half of the twentieth century, and although they are under studied in regards to their contribution to local history, their participation in public parades and events is a hallmark of their participation in the local community.

(2) *Reasonably distinctive characteristics in architectural design, not necessarily unique.*

The design of the 1922 building is reasonably distinctive and was called one of the “handsomest buildings in Columbia” during its construction. It echoes some elements of the Barringer Building two blocks away, with a granite and limestone first floor, red brick upper floors, and ornately designed cornice details. While terra cotta is found on several 1920s buildings on Main Street, its use here appears to have been much more ornate than many others from the same decade, including a fanciful egg and dart pattern in the cornice and a balustrade along the entire roof line made of terra cotta balusters. It was designed to be fireproof, with a steel frame filled in with hollow tile and brick. Marble and iron stairs extend up to every floor, with marble wainscoting on the first floor. The steel windows have a 2/2 pane configuration with wire glass and are hung with chains. The wire glass is apparent in original windows on the rear of the building, it is unknown if they were on any other elevation. The glass storefronts on the entire first floor have all been replaced.

The 1951 ten-story annex is also reasonably distinctive, featuring a simplified exterior that the architect consciously designed to contrast with the neighboring building. Described as “ultra modern” in the newspaper, it was designed with the latest techniques in fire prevention, a trait it shared with the Masonic building. Constructed of reinforced concrete exterior walls and floors, the building had its interior walls made of masonry to prevent the spread of fire, and there were two means of egress for each floor. Windows and glass doors that opened to adjacent buildings were reinforced with wire in the glass, a feature also found on the Masonic building.

The architect William Stork, Jr. eliminated the use of expensive materials on the exterior in order to spend that money on electrical, heating and air conditioning and elevators, according to a 1951 news article. The same article stated that “no attempt was made to carry out the design in form or materials, but instead the new structure was designed...as a direct contrast to its sister-building. It was constructed so as to compliment the older building.” The decorative terra cotta “of the old school” was too expensive and a new red brick would never match exactly so they used an “unusual” color and texture, which was considered a “salient advertising feature.” It featured steel windows that were designed for the ability to be cleaned easily, and the interior color scheme was light gray plaster walls, gray and coral asphalt tile floors and coral metal partitions, with off-white ceilings.

The annex building features a projecting right bay on the façade, where the vertically aligned windows and their concrete spans are framed by slightly projecting concrete framing. The upper nine floors are identical, with a horizontal orientation given to the window openings, delineated by a grouping of three windows separated from a single window that all share a continuous concrete lintel and sill. A projecting, flat concrete cornice at the roofline has been damaged and the original first floor was heavily altered in the 1977 renovation. The

original windows may have been vertical casements on a horizontal hopper, as one example of this type was found in the building.

These two buildings represent some distinctive architecture of two different periods, the 1920s and the early 1950s. The 10-story annex was designed almost as a reaction to its 1920s neighbor, making the unique juxtaposition of these two structures an important story in itself.

(3) Somewhat rare type within Columbia.

The 1920s genre of fraternal buildings is rare and perhaps unique within the City. While commercial and residential buildings are plentiful, structures created for social organizations are not as common. This building hosted commercial businesses on the first floor as a source of rental income to help sustain the building, so this floor was also designed with storefront, making it somewhat of a hybrid building. The tall mid-century office building is also rare, although one of the other good examples is directly across the street, making this a small grouping, along with a mid-century parking garage, that shows the expansion of the office district along Lady Street in the mid-1900s. Another 1950s skyscraper office building in the 1200 block of Washington Street, just one block to the northwest, has had all of its windows replaced and the entire exterior clad in a Styrofoam/stucco material, compromising most of its historic integrity.

(4) Belonging to a family or "genera" of buildings of which it is a good example.

The 1920s building belongs to both the commercial and social building genres of the 1920s, and it is a good example of the type, featuring ornate terra-cotta details as well as generous storefronts for the commercial portion of the building on the first floor, detailed in limestone, with symmetrical upper stories clad in brick.

The 10-story annex is a good example of the streamlined office buildings from the mid-twentieth century. Simplistic in design, the brick building shows hallmarks of the era, with an emphasis on geometric shapes, contrasting textures of brick and concrete, and a contrast of vertical and horizontal elements.

(5) The work of an architect of local importance.

There are three architects associated with the buildings. Hyman W. Whitcover of Savannah, GA was assisted by prolific local architect James B. Urquhart in the design of the original building. While Whitcover was an architect of note in Georgia, and an "inspector general" for Masons in South Carolina and Georgia, Urquhart was of high importance in Columbia, and was responsible for a number of buildings that still stand today, including several schools, apartment buildings and the Eau Claire Town Hall.

William Stork, Jr. designed the 1951 annex. He was responsible for several schools and a church by the 1940s and was in partnership with architects William G. Lyles, T.J. Bisset, and William A. Carlisle in 1946, who all went on to form the highly successful firm of Lyles, Bisset, Carlisle and Wolff, without Stork. He was on the ground floor of the most important architectural firm in Columbia's mid-twentieth century history, although his own practice did not have the same success.

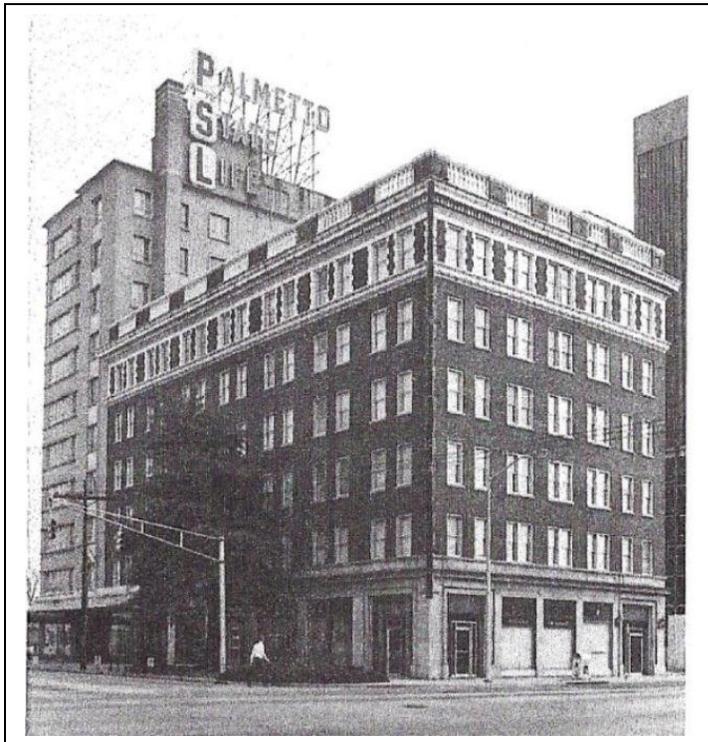
(6) A good example of a style or type of building which is becoming, or is in danger of becoming, extinct locally.

These buildings are good examples of their types and are somewhat rare in the city; there are no other known 1920s brick Masonic buildings in the city center and there are very few mid-century high rise buildings, office or otherwise, that have survived the past half century. Located in prime real estate spots, many of these types of corner buildings near or on Main Street have given way to newer, and often taller, structures. The damaged done to both buildings, including extensive loss of original limestone and terra cotta and some concrete details that projected from both buildings, is an indication that updates of these older buildings is one form of extinction, especially if an owner fails to see the value in restoring those details and instead considers the buildings too far gone.

Where at all possible, these should be preserved on their original sites, possibly by "adaptive use." Where the interior is impossible to preserve, the exterior should be retained by conservation and/or restoration.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

Staff finds that the 1922 and 1951 buildings comprising 1230 Sumter Street, also known as 1310 Lady Street, meet more than one criteria for listing as a Group II landmark under Section 17-691(c) of the City Ordinance, and notes that the c.1980s building on the south side of the tax parcel shared by these buildings is not included in this recommendation.



Undated image provided by applicant



Above: Sumter Street view of buildings with their 1977 cladding and the c.1980s building at right, image from 2004

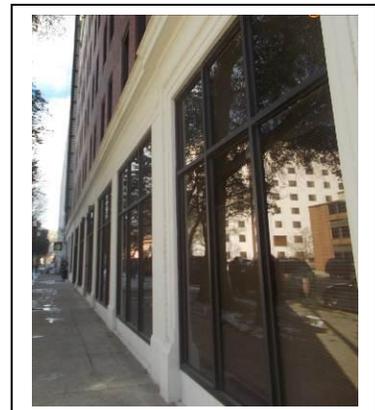
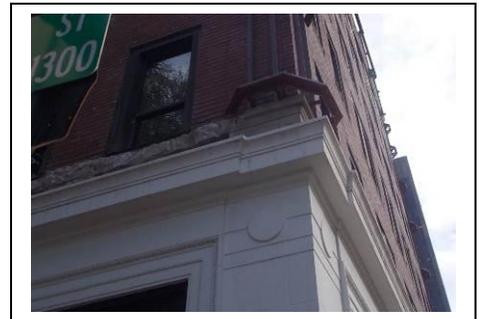


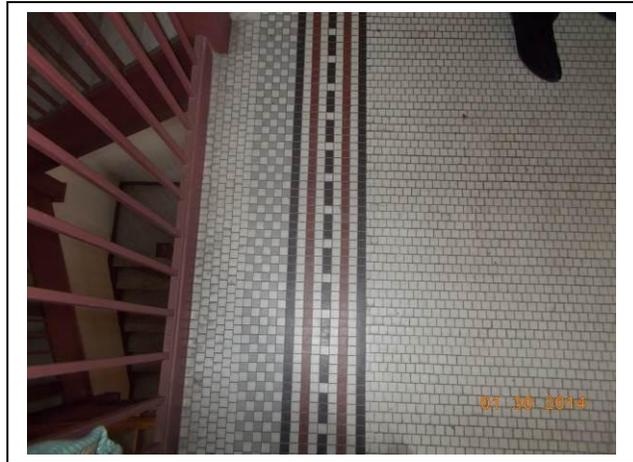
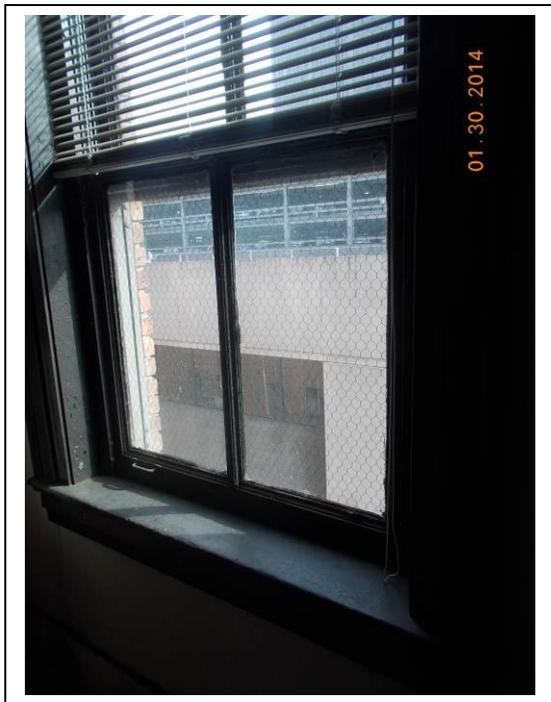
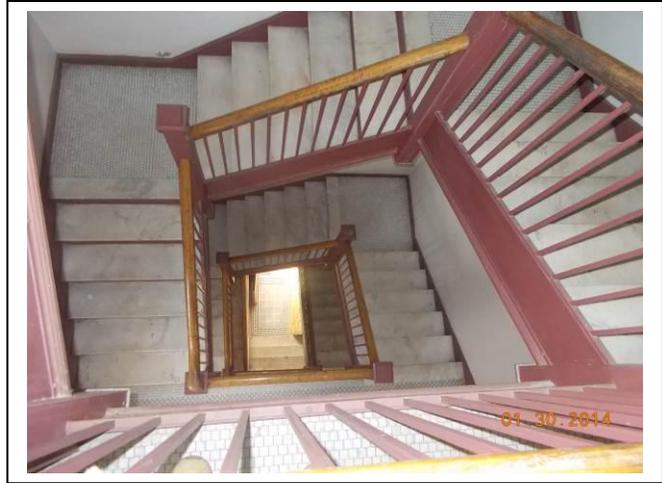
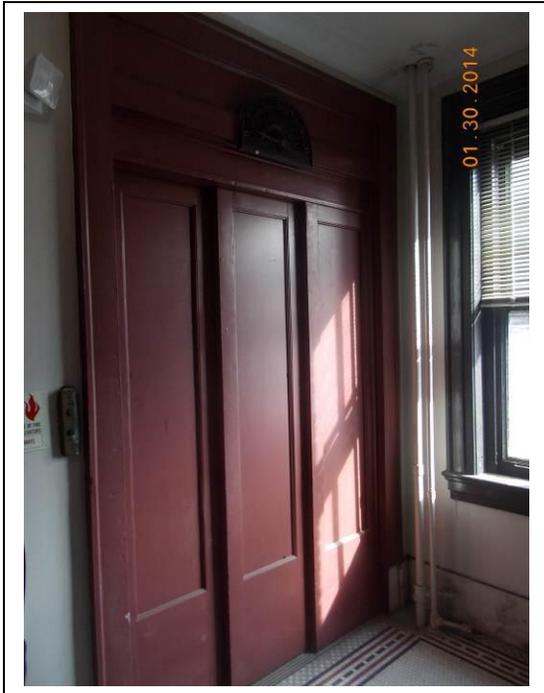


Recent removal of the 1977 cladding has revealed original brick, cast stone and terra cotta details on these buildings, with original window openings intact.

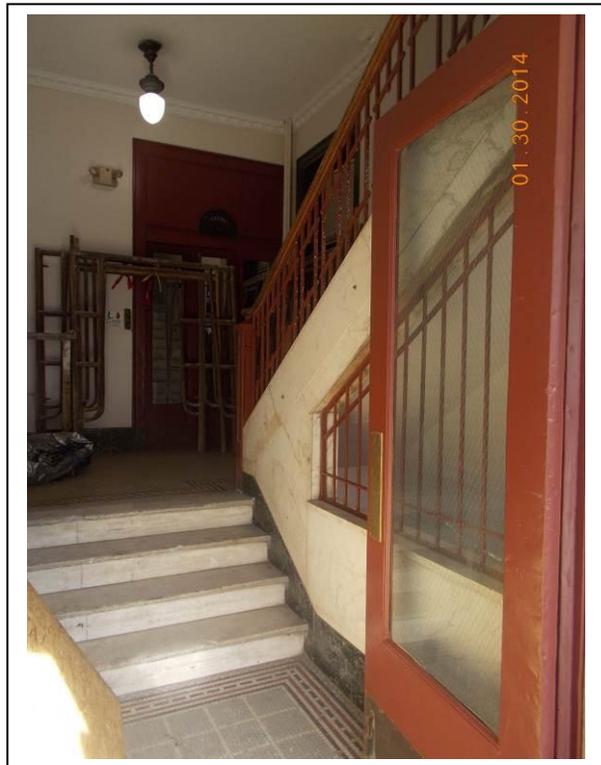


Left: Image from Sept. 23, 1949 from *The State* showing the architect's rendering.





Images inside the 1922 building showing original elevator doors, metal and marble staircases with tiled landings and marble wainscoting on the first floor, and an original window





Images inside the 1951 annex showing the original lobby, the reinforced concrete construction and a metal window that may be original