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 National Register Bulletin, How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form. If any 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.

1. Name of Property
   Historic name: _Laurel Apartments______________________________
   Other names/site number: ______________________________________
   Name of related multiple property listing:
   N/A
   (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location
   Street & number: _15 North Fifteenth Street_______________________
   City or town: _Minneapolis_ State: _Minnesota_ County: _053 Hennepin_
   Not For Publication:   Vicinity: N/A

3. State/Federal Agency Certification
   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 at the following
   level(s) of significance:
   ___national                  ___statewide           ___local
   Applicable National Register Criteria:
   ___A             ___B           ___C           ___D

   Signature of certifying official/Title: ___________________________ Date
   __________________________
   State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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

   Signature of commenting official: ___________________________ Date
   __________________________
   Title: State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government
4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

___ entered in the National Register
___ determined eligible for the National Register
___ determined not eligible for the National Register
___ removed from the National Register
___ other (explain:) __________________________

__________________________________________
Signature of the Keeper

__________________________________________
Date of Action

5. Classification

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
Laurel Apartments  
Name of Property  

Hennepin, Minnesota  
County and State  

### Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contributing</th>
<th>Noncontributing</th>
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Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register __0____

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**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

- **DOMESTIC/Multiple Dwelling**

- **VACANT**

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**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

- **DOMESTIC/Multiple Dwelling**

- **VACANT**

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Sections 1-6 page 3
7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)
  LATE VICTORIAN/Queen Anne

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)
Principal exterior materials of the property:
  Foundation: STONE/Sandstone, Limestone
  Walls: BRICK, STONE/Sandstone
  Roof: SYNTHETICS/Rubber

Narrative Description
(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a summary paragraph that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

See continuation sheet.

Narrative Description

See continuation sheet.
8. Statement of Significance

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.)

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 old or achieving significance within the past 50 years
Laurel Apartments
Name of Property

Hennepin, Minnesota
County and State

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions.)
ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance
1893

Significant Dates
N/A

Significant Person
(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Architect/Builder
Bowler, Septimus J.
Laurel Apartments
Name of Property

Hennepin, Minnesota
County and State

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

See continuation sheet.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least one paragraph for each area of significance.)

See continuation sheet.
9. Major Bibliographical References

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

See continuation sheet.

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**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

___ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
___ previously listed in the National Register
X___ previously determined eligible by the National Register
___ designated a National Historic Landmark
___ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #___________
___ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #_________
___ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey #_________

**Primary location of additional data:**

X___ State Historic Preservation Office
___ Other State agency
___ Federal agency
X___ Local government
___ University
___ Other

Name of repository: ________________________________

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** HE-MPC-0525

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10. Geographical Data

**Acreage of Property** 0.35

Sections 9-end page 8
Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

Datum if other than WGS84: __________

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 44.974218˚ Longitude: -93.284468˚

2. Latitude: Longitude:

3. Latitude: Longitude:

4. Latitude: Longitude:

**Or**

**UTM References**

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

- [ ] NAD 1927 or [ ] NAD 1983

1. 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 ten (10) and eleven (11); Block twenty-four (24); Wilson, Bell and Wagner’s Addition; City of Minneapolis.
Laurel Apartments
Name of Property

Hennepin, Minnesota
County and State

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

These boundaries encompass the city lots on which the Laurel Apartments were constructed.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Rachel Peterson and Jessica Berglin
organization: Hess, Roise and Company
street & number: 100 North First Street
city or town: Minneapolis state: Minnesota zip code: 55401
e-mail: rachel@hessroise.com
telephone: 612-338-1987
date: November 11, 2019

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- Maps: A USGS map or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

- Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.

- Additional items: (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)
Laurel Apartments
Name of Property

Hennepin, Minnesota
County and State

Photographs
Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn’t need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log
See continuation sheets.
7. Narrative Description

Summary

The Laurel Apartments constitute a four-building residential complex at the northwest corner of Laurel Avenue and North Fifteenth Street at the southwest end of downtown Minneapolis (Photograph 1; also see Building Key in Additional Documentation). The property’s current overall address is 15 North Fifteenth Street, but each building within the complex historically had its own address. One pair of buildings fronts on Laurel Avenue (1502 and 1506 Laurel Avenue), while the other fronts on North Fifteenth Street (15 and 19 North Fifteenth Street). The buildings are architecturally unified and exhibit characteristics of the Queen Anne style through the use of rough-cut stone, elaborate brickwork, and a complex footprint formed by several protruding bays on the front facades. Rear light wells and a small alley with an arched entryway compound the intricacy of the footprint.

Each of the buildings is four stories over a raised basement, and all have flat roofs. They have masonry, load-bearing walls. The front facades are red brick and rusticated sandstone, while the side and rear walls are common brick and limestone. Each pair is described more fully below.

Exterior

1502 and 1506 Laurel Avenue

The pair of buildings at 1502 and 1506 Laurel Avenue form a nearly symmetrical front facade (Photographs 1–4). Rusticated sandstone courses on the basement and above the first and fourth stories are unifying elements, as is the arched corbelling along the parapet. The raised basement in 1502 Laurel has metal, replacement, double-hung windows in historic openings. The 1506 Laurel side has two smaller window openings that are boarded with wood panels.

In each building, the entrances are in the center bay, framed by rusticated sandstone surrounds (Photographs 1-8 and 13). The entrance to 1502 Laurel has a pointed arch, while the 1506 building has a rounded arch with a keystone. Both have concrete stairs with sandstone wing walls that are rounded at the base. The railings are non-historic metal pipe. Both entrance doors are modern metal and glass, flanked by sidelights and topped with a wood panel.

The center bay of 1502 Laurel is slightly wider than its 1506 counterpart, but both have similar fenestration patterns (Photographs 3–4). Metal, replacement, double-hung windows are on the second through fourth stories in the center bay. The second-story windows are topped with rectangular transom windows, while the fourth-story windows are capped with demilune windows, which are trimmed with rusticated sandstone arches. The double-hung windows have sandstone lintels and sills. These are all paired in the wider center bay of 1502 Laurel. A projecting parapet with arched brick and sandstone corbelling is above the fourth-story window of 1502 Laurel.

The adjacent bays of 1502 and 1506 Laurel mirror one another and are joined at an internal party wall with fireplaces in the front corners of the apartment units (Photographs 1–4). The chimneys are articulated on the exterior of the building through vertical brick coursing that terminates at a stepped chimney stack above the parapet wall. Large picture windows are on either side of the chimney bays (Photographs 3–4). Each picture window is topped with either a rectangular or demilune transom. The demilunes feature lintels formed by brick
The corner (northwest and southwest) bays of each building follow a similar fenestration pattern as described above, although they do not have the vertical brick coursing to delineate internal chimneys (Photographs 3–4).

The west wall of 1506 Laurel overlooks a surface parking lot and is clad in cream-colored common brick. Metal, replacement, double-hung windows with brick segmental-arch lintels and limestone sills extend along the length of the wall on every story (Photograph 2).

The east wall of 1502 Laurel runs along North Fifteenth Street, (Photographs 5–6), and many architectural features are repeated from the south facade, such as two bays that project from the main wall plane. The corners of these projecting bays have rounded brick coursing that extends vertically from the top of the second story to the corbelled parapet. Horizontal sandstone courses above the first- and fourth-story windows are also continued from the south facade, as is the brick corbelling along the parapet. Near the south end of the east facade, vertical brick coursing terminates at a stepped chimney stack above the parapet, articulating the placement of interior fireplaces.

At the street level, concrete stoops with modern metal-pipe railings lead from the sidewalk to two basement entrances in the center of the east facade (Photograph 5). One door leads to an apartment unit, while the other leads to a rental office. A spiral, cast-iron fire escape is above the apartment door. It has grated landings at the second, third, and fourth stories, and an extension ladder runs from the second-story landing to the street.

The fenestration on the east facade comprises metal, replacement, double-hung windows with sandstone lintels and sills on each level from the basement to the fourth story (Photographs 5–6). The northern projecting bay features a demilune window on the first and third stories, each trimmed with sandstone round arches. Between the demilune windows is a small rectangular window with a sandstone lintel and sill.

The north wall of 1502 Laurel overlooks a narrow walkway between the two pairs of buildings. A one-story brick wall with a sandstone arch marks the east entrance to the alley and connects the two sets of buildings (Photograph 6). A cast-iron gate is in the alley just beyond the archway. The north wall of 1502 Laurel is clad in common brick and has double-hung windows with brick segmental-arch lintels and limestone sills. The basement is limestone, and a door is situated near the center of the wall. The alley turns to the south to form a lightwell between 1502 and 1506 Laurel. The windows and wall finishes described above are carried over to the walls of each building that overlook the light well (Photograph 12).

The northeast corner of 1506 Laurel overlaps the southwest corner of 15 North Fifteenth Street, the southern building in the northern pair of the complex. An archway at the ground level allows the alley to pass through to the rear of the apartment complex, where wood-framed balconies run from the first through fourth stories (Photographs 10–11). Wood stairs connect the landings at each level. At the landings, doorways with brick segmental arches hold wood doors. Next to these are double-hung windows with brick segmental-arch lintels and limestone sills. A brick chimney stack rises along the northwest corner of 1506 Laurel (Photograph 11).
15 and 19 North Fifteenth Street
The pair of apartment buildings at 15 and 19 North Fifteenth Street (Photographs 7–9) face east and the front (east) facades feature the same architectural details as 1502 and 1506 Laurel. Unifying elements between the two sets of buildings include projecting bays, a sandstone-clad basement on the front facade, rusticated sandstone arches at the entrances, horizontal sandstone courses above the first and fourth stories, brick and sandstone corbelling along the parapet, and vertical brick coursing to articulate interior chimneys. The fenestration pattern—a mixture of picture and double-hung windows topped with demilune or transom windows—is also carried over to the northern pair of buildings.

The south wall of 15 North Fifteenth overlooks the interior alley between the pairs of buildings. Limestone covers the basement level, and the upper stories are clad in cream-colored common brick. Double-hung windows with brick segmental-arch lintels and limestone sills extend along the length of the wall on every story. The north wall of 19 North Fifteenth neighbors a modern four-story apartment building and exhibits the same characteristics as the south wall of 15 North Fifteenth.

These features are carried over to the side walls facing the light well at the rear of the building (Photograph 12). A set of concrete steps descends to the basement, which has entrances to the mechanical room and a storage area. Window openings in the basement walls are boarded with wood panels. On the south wall of 19 North Fifteenth, a cast-iron fire escape extends from the second story to the fourth story with grated landings at every level.

On the rear (west) walls of 15 and 19 North Fifteenth Street, wood-framed balconies run from the first through fourth stories (Photographs 10–11). Wood stairs connect the landings at each level. At each landing, doorways with brick segmental arches hold wood doors. Next to these are double-hung windows with brick segmental-arch lintels and limestone sills.

The Laurel Apartments is being rehabilitated as a historic tax credit project (NPS No. 37,194). At the time of this nomination, no construction work has begun and the documentation represents the current condition of the building.

Interior

The landings in the front entrances feature historic mosaic-tile floors, millwork, and hand-painted signage on transom windows above non-historic metal doors (Photographs 14–17). The Laurel-facing buildings have brown and white penny tile laid in geometric patterns, and one features the word “Laurel” spelled out in tile (Photograph 16). The buildings fronting on Fifteenth Street feature multi-colored mosaics and stylized floral patterns (Photograph 17). Stairwells with historic wood newel posts are immediately beyond the entrance landings in each of the buildings (Photograph 18). The stairs are covered in non-historic carpet, but historic wood railings are extant (Photograph 19).

The buildings originally held a series of railroad flats, with two apartments on each level. Entrances to the two mirrored units were immediately off of the stair landing. Each flat had a long, linear configuration with six to eight rooms off of a single hallway along the interior core of the building (Photograph 31). In 1947–1949, the flats were subdivided into single-resident occupancies (small units with shared bath), but the historic floorplan remains largely intact. As part of the remodeling, the long hallways—previously on the interior of individual flats—became public corridors. Communal bathroom facilities were installed off of the hallways in former light well openings (Photograph 32).
Although the apartments were updated throughout the twentieth century, a number of the units feature historic parquet floors and decorative fireplaces and surrounds, evidence of the Laurel’s opulence in the late nineteenth century (Photographs 21–27). Historic architectural millwork—such as wainscoting, stair railings, and newel posts—is extant in the entrance lobbies and stairwells (Photographs 14-19). Historic baseboards, door trim, and window surrounds remain in individual apartment units (Photographs 26–29). Some apartments also feature historic built-in cabinets and ornate spindles (Photographs 28-30). Historic plaster walls remain in place throughout much of the building, although there are areas of deterioration. A non-historic, rough-textured topcoat was applied to many surfaces in recent years. Several kitchens hold modern cabinetry and non-historic vinyl or wood floors. In a number of places, the non-historic floors were laid on top of the historic wood floors. In some areas, the floors are visibly uneven, indicating that structural compromises have occurred over time.

**Integrity**

The Laurel Apartments display good integrity despite alterations in the mid-twentieth century. The property has never been moved from its historic location and retains integrity of location. Its setting has been impacted by modern developments, but it remains within blocks of Hennepin Avenue and Loring Park, important considerations for its placement at the corner of Fifteenth Street and Laurel Avenue. Although the flats were subdivided into smaller apartment units, the historic interior layout and circulation patterns remain evident. Several interior design elements remain as well, such as the tiled floors in entrance lobbies and historic parquet floors, architectural millwork, and decorative fireplaces and surrounds. These features, along with Septimus Bowler’s elaborate exterior facades, contribute to the property’s significance as a good example of Queen Anne architecture and underscore its integrity of design. The retention of these features bolsters the property’s integrity of materials and workmanship and provides evidence of what one historian called Bowler’s “specializ[ation] in interior and facade work.” All of these considerations contribute to the property’s integrity of feeling and association. The Laurel Apartments retains sufficient historic integrity to support its eligibility for the National Register.¹

¹ Larson, “First Church of Christ Scientist,” 8:3.
8. Statement of Significance

Summary

The Laurel Apartments are locally significant under Criterion C in the area of Architecture as a distinctive example of Queen Anne architecture. The building was constructed in 1893 as a premier apartment house in Minneapolis’s desirable Loring Park neighborhood. The building also represents the work of Septimus J. Bowler, a London native who arrived in Minneapolis in 1884 and established his own architecture firm around 1888. The Laurel Apartments was the height of his residential work and demonstrates the opulence of Queen Anne architecture in Minneapolis before the Panic of 1893. The Laurel Apartment features highly sophisticated facades composed of a variety of rectangular, arched, and demilune windows trimmed with rusticated sandstone details; decorative brick parapets with arched corbelling; and stepped parapets at the chimney stacks, which are articulated externally by vertical brick coursing. Interior details include tiled building entrances; fireplaces with ornate surrounds and tiled hearths; and oak and cherry parquet floors. When it opened, the property was described by the Minneapolis Tribune as “the most elegant flat building yet erected in this city,” and one “which will add largely to this class of accommodations.”

The Laurel Apartments is being rehabilitated as a historic tax credit project (NPS No. 37,194). At the time of this nomination, no construction work has begun and the documentation represents the current condition of the building.

Narrative Statement of Significance

Minneapolis grew exponentially in the last quarter of the nineteenth century as the development of milling, railroads, and allied trades transformed the pioneer town into an industrial powerhouse. Between 1880 and 1890, the population skyrocketed from 46,887 to 164,738, and the downtown area experienced a considerable boom in commercial, retail, and warehouse construction. In earlier years, approximately half of the city’s residents lived within a one-mile radius of the central core, which was concentrated at Bridge Square, named for its location at the foot of the Hennepin Avenue Bridge spanning the Mississippi River.

The present Loring Park neighborhood, situated just outside this one-mile threshold, was a gaming site for members of the Dakota tribe before Euro-American settlers began establishing homesteads there in the 1850s. The marshes and wetlands, as well as a spring-fed pond, were fruitful hunting and fishing grounds, while the surrounding land held great agricultural promise. Early white pioneers included Allen Harmon and Joseph Johnson, who subdivided their holdings into smaller farmsteads within years of filing their claims. By the 1860s there were dozens of agricultural plots, and “farmers constantly flowed through” the area according to one

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Laurel Apartments

Wealthy urbanites also purchased multi-acre tracts of land to build country estates beyond the edge of town. The area north of Hennepin Avenue between present-day Eighth and Twelfth Streets saw early development. All of the corner lots—the most prized building sites—were taken by 1862, and the area was fully developed within the decade. One of the most impressive estates, “Woodburn,” was constructed by Eugene M. Wilson, a prominent lawyer and politician who served as the first mayor of Minneapolis after it merged with the town of Saint Anthony Falls in 1872. That same year, Wilson built his grand villa on a large wooded lot facing Hawthorne Park, which was later renamed Wilson Park after the mayor. This frontier region generally retained its rural character for much of the 1870s, although a “careful observer could see that big changes were just around the corner,” noted one historian. Enterprising businessmen—including a young Thomas Lowry, who made a fortune in real estate and oversaw the growth of the local streetcar system—began buying and subdividing large tracts of land to create residential homesites for “the social elite of Minneapolis.”

Development on the fringe of downtown received a huge boost in 1883 with the creation of Central Park out of the nearby wetlands, which were not suitable for construction. The site, later renamed Loring Park, was the first to be established by the newly minted Minneapolis Board of Park Commissioners, also founded in 1883. The nearly thirty-four-acre park, which included spring-fed Johnson’s Lake, was improved and formally landscaped to enhance its attractiveness as an open green space for the growing metropolis. As a 1990 history of the Loring Park neighborhood reports: “The creation of Central Park . . . was a turning point in the history of the community. Substantial homes had been built in the area before its establishment, but the park accelerated the trend. It was the showpiece of Minneapolis and attracted the city’s most prominent families to the neighborhood.”

Development in the neighborhood was also spurred by the extension of a horse-drawn streetcar line along Hennepin Avenue. The track previously ended at Twelfth Street but was extended to Lake Harriet—on the outskirts of town at the time—in 1884. Recognizing the importance that the growing transit system would have on the geographic expansion of Minneapolis, speculative builders and real estate agents developed properties along the network. Many enlisted the help of architects to design brick and stone buildings to replace the earlier wood-framed structures that characterized these peripheral areas in earlier decades. The new edifices gave the budding city a greater sense of permanence and prominence as it was transformed from a pioneer town into a major American city. One such frame dwelling was situated on the northwest corner of Laurel Avenue and North Fifteenth Street when investor August Bergman purchased the site to construct the Laurel Apartments in 1893. Little is known about Bergman, but he hired architect Septimus J. Bowler to design the imposing sandstone and pressed-brick apartment house complex that has stood on the corner for nearly 125 years.

Bowler, born in England in 1868, first appeared in Minneapolis city directories in 1884, when he was working as a carpenter for architect and master builder Barclay Cooper. Although he received little formal training, Bowler

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4 Trimble, *In the Shadow of the City*, 10–12.
5 Trimble, *In the Shadow of the City*, 16–24.
6 Trimble, *In the Shadow of the City*, 25.
established his own architectural practice in 1888, which “flourished in the 1890s,” according to one historian. He was often lauded in contemporary press for innovative designs and layouts, which ran the gamut from single-family homes and brick flats to commercial and religious properties. As another historian noted, Bowler “survived the Panic of ’93 by specializing in interior and facade work.”

Erected in 1893, the Laurel Apartments—a quartet of four-story interconnected apartment houses—was the height of Bowler’s residential commissions. A year earlier he had completed two three-story brick flats at 1514 and 1516 Elliot Avenue, but the thirty-eight-unit Laurel Apartments were described by the Minneapolis Tribune as “the most elegant flat building yet erected in this city, and [one] which will add largely to this class of accommodations.” Built for approximately $120,000, the Laurel Apartments were “complete with every modern convenience,” which included walls of “solid masonry, faced on the exterior with St. Louis pressed brick and brown sand stone [sic] trimmings.” The newspaper noted that there were “over 225 rooms in the entire building, besides main halls, private halls, and bathrooms, the flats containing each from four to eight rooms, with one especially designed for a physician, containing, besides the living rooms for the family, a suite for three office rooms. The entire building will be equipped with modern conveniences and appliances, steam heated and supplied with hot water for kitchen and bath purposes, having also ample storage and laundry rooms.” In addition, the newspaper highlighted the oak and cherry interior finishes of the dwelling units, noting that “particular attention [was] being paid to this portion of the construction.”

More diverse commissions followed Bowler’s work at the Laurel Apartments, although none rivaled the size or budget of his complex at Fifteenth and Laurel. The majority of his projects were in Minneapolis, but his portfolio also included buildings throughout Minnesota and the Upper Midwest. Among Bowler’s notable Minneapolis works was a brick and stone mortuary chapel and gatehouse for the Montefiore Cemetery in south Minneapolis, constructed in 1894. The structure, built in a Richardsonian Romanesque style, was “a significant reflection of the religious and cultural development of early German Jewish communities in Minneapolis,” according to a local designation study for the property. According to building permits, the structure cost approximately $4,000.

Bowler received a commission for another religious property in 1897 with Elliot Park’s First Church of Christ Scientist (NRHP), which was built at 614–620 East Fifteenth Street in 1897. According to the National Register nomination for the property, “Bowler’s design for the Church of Christ Scientist was selected over six others, some apparently from out of state.” Historian Paul Clifford Larson, author of the nomination, praised the church as “an outstanding example of scaled down and vernacularized Beaux-Arts classicism. Its design skilfully [sic] synthesizes Roman and Renaissance sources with the functional requirements of a modern church building; its masonry surfaces are handled with clarity and imagination; and its scaling is perfectly matched to its lot and neighborhood.” Like the cemetery chapel and gatehouse, the First Church of Christ Scientist’s budget—estimated at $7,000—paled in comparison to the $120,000 price tag of Bowler’s Laurel Apartments commission.

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8 Davison’s Minneapolis City Directory (Minneapolis: C. R. Davison, 1884), 138; Davison’s Minneapolis City Directory (Minneapolis: C. R. Davison, 1888), 308; Kullberg, “Septimus James Bowler”; Larson, “First Church of Christ Scientist,” 8:3.
9 “Realty Is Reliable.”
11 Larson, “First Church of Christ Scientist,” 8:1.
Commercial properties rounded out Bowler’s work in the region in the 1890s. He designed a two-story brick commercial block with flats on the upper level at 929 Centennial Place (originally Eighth Avenue South) in 1895. The building was valued at $12,500 according to building permits. He also received a commission for a Minneapolis Brewing Company saloon at 1516 Seventh Street South in the Cedar-Riverside neighborhood. The building, identified as a “40x52 br. store & fl.,” cost approximately $7,000 and was erected in 1899.12

Local newspaper articles placed Bowler among the top architects in the Twin Cities in the 1890s. He was identified alongside several esteemed colleagues including Frederick Kees, Serenus Colburn, Franklin Long, Leroy Buffington, and Charles Sedgwick in 1893. The group competed for the design of a new branch library on Minneapolis’s north side, although the commission went to Frederick Corser, whose “Chateauesque” building was completed in 1894. The following year, Bowler joined the likes of Harry Wild Jones, William Kenyon, and Clarence Johnston in getting edged out of the new state capitol commission by famed Saint Paul architect Cass Gilbert. Despite these losses, Bowler demonstrated that he ranked among the leading circle of local designers in the late nineteenth century.13

Personal problems plagued Bowler’s career in the early twentieth century, although he enjoyed a short-lived resurgence in the 1920s and early 1930s. His encore included a 1927 commission for Mikro Kadesh Synagogue, a fanciful Byzantine-style edifice in north Minneapolis. It is not known when Bowler retired, but in 1938 he was admitted to the Rochester State Hospital due to alleged alcoholism. He died two years later and was buried at the Rochester State Hospital Cemetery.14

The modest budgets of Bowler’s mid- and late-1890s commissions reflected the economic conditions of the decade following the Panic of 1893. The Laurel Apartments were nearing completion as the effects of the downturn rippled through Minneapolis. In early 1894, the Minneapolis Tribune expressed faith in rental real estate as a sound strategy for weathering the recession. In an article commending the Laurel Apartments as “the most elegant flat building yet erected in this city,” the newspaper assured investors that “good real estate is reliable. When well bought it is profitable. There are many brick buildings in Minneapolis which have paid their owners 10 percent on the money invested year in and year out. Panics do not affect them. . . . They are seldom offered for sale because the owners can desire no better investment.”15

Economic trends did, though, affect building patterns throughout the city, particularly in the multi-family housing market. In the pre-Panic era, attached urban dwellings for the city’s elite were typically rowhouses. This property type was exemplified in the Loring Park neighborhood by the elaborate Swinford Townhouses (1213–1221 Hawthorne Avenue, NRHP). Constructed in 1886 during Minneapolis’s industrial boom years, the five attached rowhouses feature highly ornate facades with decorative brick and stone details in the French Renaissance and Renaissance Revival styles. The property’s $30,000 price tag matched its level of sophistication and reflected the

12 Minneapolis Building Permit Nos. A4681 (dated August 26, 1895), and B44635 (dated October 27, 1899).
14 Lathrop, Minnesota Architects, 26–27.
15 “Realty Is Reliable.”
character of its residents. Similar “luxury row houses [sic]” were built on the eastern edge of the Loring Park neighborhood according to historian Steve Trimble, but none of these remain.  

On the opposite end of the multi-family housing spectrum were tenement blocks, which catered to working-class families and laborers. Like many buildings from the 1880s, tenements were predominantly constructed using brick and stone, but the exteriors often were devoid of rich architectural finishes and features that characterized the wealthier residences from this era. This was not a common housing type in Loring Park, but two extant examples from the 1880s remain in the adjacent Elliot Park neighborhood: the Potter-Thompson Building, built in 1888 at 812–826 Tenth Street, and the Drexel Apartments, built in 1889 at 1009 Park Avenue. Both were classified as brick and stone tenements that cost approximately $50,000 according to building permits. Although the records do not indicate how many units filled the Drexel, the Potter-Thompson held seventy-seven residences.  

A different multi-family property type—the apartment house—occupied the middle ground. It became popular in Minneapolis during the 1890s as a more economically feasible counterpart to attached luxury rowhouses, while being a substantial upgrade from tenement housing. Although apartment houses were fairly similar in form to the earlier tenement blocks, they catered to upper- and upper-middle-class residents who wished to live in fashionable urban neighborhoods but did not have the financial means to build or buy a house. As Loring Park became the vanguard of urban neighborhoods in the late nineteenth century, it was a natural setting for the construction of apartment houses. A number of these structures—often referred to as flats because all of the rooms in each unit were arranged on one level—had been built in Loring Park by the early 1890s. The Laurel Apartments, however, represented the height of their development before the effects of the depression settled in. The property’s $120,000 price tag—evident in its substantial material palette, diverse architectural features, modern amenities, elegant interior finishes, and unit size—instilled a sense of opulence among residents. Its complex footprint also followed typical Victorian-era design conventions that maximized the livability of the units. As historian Christine Hunter explains: “Recesses and projections that add surface area to the building provide another way to increase the number of exposures and improve the light and air in each apartment.”  

In contrast to the Laurel, apartment houses constructed after the Panic of 1893 were generally more architecturally restrained to imbue a greater sense of economic conservatism. As one account reports: “The apartment house was a fitting structure during the decade of the 1890s. Following the boom of the eighties, the economic panic of 1893 caused a conservative attitude reflected in the class of residents . . . as well as the architectural style of the buildings.” The report further describes the typical post-Panic apartment house: “The walls are free of embellishment and left relatively flat. The window variation from floor to floor, characteristic of the Victorian style, is gone. Details are used primarily at the cornice and to emphasize the corners of the buildings with quoinings. Heavy lintels mark window openings. A common characteristic of the new apartment buildings is square windows on all floors, generally of one size.”  

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16 Koop, “Swinford Townhouses and Apartments,” 7:1; Carolan et al., “South Ninth Street District,” 13; Minneapolis Building Permit Nos. B6617 (dated April 17, 1886) and A246 (dated July 23, 1886); Trimble, In the Shadow of the City, 42.  
17 Minneapolis Building Permit Nos. B16209 (dated August 23, 1888) and B19879 (dated August 8, 1889).  
18 Christine Hunter, Ranches, Rowhouses, and Railroad flats—American Homes: How They Shape Our Landscapes and Neighborhoods (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1999), 192–193, 210, 217; Trimble, In the Shadow of the City, 42.  
19 Carolan et al., “South Ninth Street District,” 14, 16.
A nearby apartment house in the Loring Park neighborhood—the Swinford Apartments (1225 Hawthorne Avenue, NRHP), constructed in 1897—followed these conventions and cost approximately half of what the Laurel did. Although architecturally refined because it was developed for upper-class residents, the Swinford displays greater regularity in its overall wall planes, material palette, and window selections than the Laurel. Additionally, architectural details are concentrated at the cornice, entrances, and lintels. The Swinford Apartments were constructed next to the 1886 townhouses of the same name. Their completion four years after the Laurel Apartments solidified the growing preference for apartment houses in Loring Park among Minneapolis’s high society.  

The trend did not last long, however, as the neighborhood’s demographics changed after the turn of the twentieth century with the rise of the automobile. Wealthier residents, who could afford personal vehicles, moved to newer developments on the outskirts of town. At the same time, Loring Park—formerly the jewel of the neighborhood—was approaching twenty years old and showing signs of decay, motivating genteel residents to relocate. The Minneapolis Park Board could not escape the effects of the economic depression of the 1890s. Park acquisitions, improvements, and regular maintenance declined due to the organization’s limited funds. Newspapers reported stories of stagnated water at Loring Pond, which had become a dumping ground for debris and animal refuse. High levels of bacteria forced public health officials to condemn the public well, causing a blow to the scores of local residents who relied on the water supply. Conditions were prime for mosquito breeding, another concern for health officials, who feared a malaria outbreak and the spread of miasmatic germs. The air apparently carried such a stench that newspapers ran headlines declaring the park “Smells to High Heaven.”

Historian Trimble reported: “People of wealth were starting to leave for newer and more exclusive residential areas on the fringes of the city or beyond.” As older estates were abandoned, many were subdivided for institutional uses or boarding houses. Several were also torn down to construct new commercial buildings as the downtown area grew in the early twentieth century. Following the pattern of expansion in earlier decades, when the business district increased its footprint, housing along the urban fringe shifted its character. New apartment buildings appeared in Loring Park amidst these changes. They largely catered to working- and middle-class residents who needed to reside close to streetcar lines or within walking distance of their jobs downtown. A 1924 change in Minneapolis’s zoning code allowed for larger buildings, magnifying the density of apartment development from previous eras and increasing the affordability of rental housing.

A new property type—the apartment hotel—also emerged in the new century. In contrast to the new residential developments, apartment hotels often had fewer rooms and limited amenities in individual units, but offered furnished rooms and on-site dining facilities, club rooms, and services to occupants. Apartment hotels became popular with wealthier Minneapolitans who used them as in-town residences and then retreated to seasonal lake homes. Loring Park became the setting of many such properties because of the neighborhood’s easy access to downtown businesses and attractions. Other tenants in apartment hotels included those in search of permanent housing in the area. They were often on short-term leases until other arrangements could be secured.

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20 Koop, “Swinford Townhouses and Apartments,” 7:1; Minneapolis Building Permit No. A5413 (dated May 3, 1897).
21 Trimble, In the Shadow of the City, 43–45; David C. Smith, City of Parks: The Story of Minneapolis Parks (Minneapolis: Foundation for Minneapolis Parks, 2008), 53–54.
22 Trimble, In the Shadow of the City, 47–58.
The Loring Park area and its housing stock continued to respond to economic changes as downtown Minneapolis evolved in the mid-twentieth century. The Great Depression struck a fatal blow to the logging and milling industries, which had been in steady declines for decades. In the 1930s, sociologist Calvin Schmid noted that the formerly fashionable area surrounding Hawthorn Park on the northern edge of the neighborhood had become home to “rooming houses,” a common term for single-room occupancies where transient workers who struggled to find jobs could rent affordable apartments. Following World War II, the demand for such low-rent housing was magnified by an urban renewal campaign, which razed nearly 40 percent of the older building stock in downtown. Thousands of people—primarily single, unskilled male laborers—were displaced. Many of the grand townhouses and apartment houses on the outer edge of downtown were subdivided into single-room occupancies during this era to accommodate the influx.24

The Laurel Apartments experienced such a shift in 1947–1949. Each of the flats was partitioned into one- or two-room units with a kitchenette. Much of the historic interior layout remained the same, however, with rooms located off of the historic corridors. Communal restroom facilities were inserted into former lightwell shafts behind the historic stairwells. Despite the mid-century subdivision and minor subsequent alterations as the property changed hands over time, many units retain historic parquet floors, millwork, and decorative fireplaces and surrounds. Furthermore, historic tiled floors, millwork, and hand-painted signage remain in the entrance and stair lobbies. These interior features, coupled with the ornate brickwork and stone detailing on the exterior, provide a glimpse of the Laurel’s opulent past.25

Analysis of Significance

The Laurel Apartments is a good example of Queen Anne architecture as applied to apartment houses in the late nineteenth century. The property also exemplifies the peak of late-nineteenth-century apartment house development in Loring Park before the Panic of 1893 caused real estate investors and architects to adopt more conservative building approaches. For these reasons, the property is eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion C for Architecture. Its period of significance is 1893, the year it was constructed.

The Laurel Apartment features highly sophisticated facades composed of a variety of rectangular, arched, and demilune windows trimmed with rusticated sandstone details; decorative brick parapets with arched corbelling; and stepped parapets at the chimney stacks, which are articulated externally by vertical brick coursing. Interior details include tiled building entrances; fireplaces with ornate surrounds and tiled hearths; and oak and cherry parquet floors. This level of quality and detail was expensive—the Laurel Apartments cost $120,000 to build—and was not feasible following the financial Panic of 1893. Apartment houses that were developed in the years following the Panic of 1893 had a more restrained architectural character with less variety in their embellishment and building materials.

By the early 1900s, many of Loring Park’s wealthy residents began relocating to new fashionable areas of the city and the neighborhood became home to more working-class families who needed to reside close to their jobs downtown. This transition prompted the development of smaller, modest, apartment buildings in the new century.

24 Schmid, Social Saga of Two Cities, 38, 52.
25 Minneapolis Building Permit Nos. A27233 (dated March 5, 1947), B297469 (dated December 18, 1947), A28049 (dated May 21, 1948), and A28447 (January 20, 1949).
As this trend continued, many of the nineteenth-century residences, including the Laurel Apartments, were subdivided into single- or two-room dwelling units, solidifying the apartment house’s status as a thing of the past.
9. Major Bibliographic References

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*City of Minneapolis.* Minneapolis: C. M. Foote, 1892.

*Davison’s Minneapolis City Directory.* Minneapolis: C. R. Davison, 1884.

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“Plans for a Branch Library.” *Minneapolis Tribune,* February 22, 1893.

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Schmid, Calvin F. *Social Saga of Two Cities: An Ecological and Statistical Study of Social Trends in Minneapolis and Saint Paul.* Minneapolis: Minneapolis Council of Social Agencies, 1937.


**Unpublished**

Building Permit Collection. City of Minneapolis.


Laurel Apartments

Name of Property

Hennepin, Minnesota

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number 9  Page 2

Kullberg, Kathleen. “Septimus James Bowler, Architect (1868-1940), Architect Biography and References.” Minneapolis Collection, James K. Hosmer Special Collections, Hennepin County Central Library, Minneapolis.


“Montefiore Cemetery Chapel.” Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Local Landmark Designation, 1996.

Laurel Apartments
15 North Fifteenth Street
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55403
Coordinates: 44.974218°, -93.284468°
Laurel Apartments
Name of Property

Hennepin County, Minnesota
County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Key to Buildings
Laurel Apartments

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<td>Name of Photographer</td>
<td>Rachel Peterson</td>
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<td>Date of Photograph</td>
<td>December 2019</td>
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MN_HennepinCounty_LaurelApartments_0001
South (left) and east (right) facades, looking northwest.

Laurel Apartments

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MN_HennepinCounty_LaurelApartments_0002
West (left) and south (right) facades, looking northeast.

Laurel Apartments

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<td>December 2019</td>
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MN_HennepinCounty_LaurelApartments_0003
1506 Laurel, south facade, looking north.

Laurel Apartments

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<td>Rachel Peterson</td>
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<td>Date of Photograph</td>
<td>December 2019</td>
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MN_HennepinCounty_LaurelApartments_0004
1502 Laurel, south facade, looking northwest.
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<th>Photo 5 of 32</th>
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<td>Date of Photograph: December 2019</td>
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MN_HennepinCounty_LaurelApartments_0005
1502 Laurel, east facade, looking northwest.

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<td>Name of Photographer: Rachel Peterson</td>
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<td>Date of Photograph: December 2019</td>
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MN_HennepinCounty_LaurelApartments_0006
Arched gateway between 1502 Laurel (left) and 15 North Fifteenth (right), looking west.

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<tr>
<th>Photo 7 of 32</th>
<th>Name of Property: Laurel Apartments</th>
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<td>Name of Photographer: Rachel Peterson</td>
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<td>Date of Photograph: December 2019</td>
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MN_HennepinCounty_LaurelApartments_0007
15 North Fifteenth, east facade, looking west.

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<th>Photo 8 of 32</th>
<th>Name of Property: Laurel Apartments</th>
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<td>Date of Photograph: December 2019</td>
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MN_HennepinCounty_LaurelApartments_0008
19 North Fifteenth, east facade, looking west.
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<td>Name of Photographer:</td>
<td>Rachel Peterson</td>
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<td>Date of Photograph:</td>
<td>December 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Description:</td>
<td>East facades (left) and north wall of 19 North Fifteenth (right), looking southwest.</td>
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Name of Property: Laurel Apartments  
City or Vicinity: Minneapolis  
County: Hennepin County  
State: Minnesota  
Name of Photographer: Rachel Peterson  
Date of Photograph: December 2019

MN_HennepinCounty_LaurelApartments_0013  
Entrance to 19 North Fifteenth, looking northwest.

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**Photo 14 of 32**  
Name of Property: Laurel Apartments  
City or Vicinity: Minneapolis  
County: Hennepin County  
State: Minnesota  
Name of Photographer: Rachel Peterson  
Date of Photograph: December 2019

MN_HennepinCounty_LaurelApartments_0014  
15 North Fifteenth, entrance lobby, looking southwest.

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**Photo 15 of 32**  
Name of Property: Laurel Apartments  
City or Vicinity: Minneapolis  
County: Hennepin County  
State: Minnesota  
Name of Photographer: Rachel Peterson  
Date of Photograph: December 2019

MN_HennepinCounty_LaurelApartments_0015  
15 North Fifteenth, entrance lobby transom, looking northwest.

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**Photo 16 of 32**  
Name of Property: Laurel Apartments  
City or Vicinity: Minneapolis  
County: Hennepin County  
State: Minnesota  
Name of Photographer: Rachel Peterson  
Date of Photograph: November 2018

MN_HennepinCounty_LaurelApartments_0016  
1502 Laurel, historic tiled floor in entrance lobby, looking north.
Laurel Apartments
Name of Property
Hennepin County, Minnesota
County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

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Photo 17 of 32
Name of Property: Laurel Apartments
City or Vicinity: Minneapolis
County: Hennepin County
State: Minnesota
Name of Photographer: Rachel Peterson
Date of Photograph: December 2019

MN_HennepinCounty_LaurelApartments_0017
19 North Fifteenth, historic tiled floor in entrance lobby, looking west.

Photo 18 of 32
Name of Property: Laurel Apartments
City or Vicinity: Minneapolis
County: Hennepin County
State: Minnesota
Name of Photographer: Rachel Peterson
Date of Photograph: November 2018

MN_HennepinCounty_LaurelApartments_0018
1502 Laurel Fifteenth, first-floor newel post, looking northeast.

Photo 19 of 32
Name of Property: Laurel Apartments
City or Vicinity: Minneapolis
County: Hennepin County
State: Minnesota
Name of Photographer: Rachel Peterson
Date of Photograph: December 2019

MN_HennepinCounty_LaurelApartments_0019
1502 Laurel, stairwell with historic wood railing, looking northwest.

Photo 20 of 32
Name of Property: Laurel Apartments
City or Vicinity: Minneapolis
County: Hennepin County
State: Minnesota
Name of Photographer: Rachel Peterson
Date of Photograph: December 2019

MN_HennepinCounty_LaurelApartments_0020
19 North Fifteenth, historic unit entry door, looking east.
**Photo 21 of 32**
Name of Property: Laurel Apartments  
City or Vicinity: Minneapolis  
County: Hennepin County  
State: Minnesota  
Name of Photographer: Rachel Peterson  
Date of Photograph: December 2019

MN_HennepinCounty_LaurelApartments_0021  
1502 Laurel, historic fireplace, parquet floors, and millwork, looking northeast.

**Photo 22 of 32**
Name of Property: Laurel Apartments  
City or Vicinity: Minneapolis  
County: Hennepin County  
State: Minnesota  
Name of Photographer: Rachel Peterson  
Date of Photograph: December 2019

MN_HennepinCounty_LaurelApartments_0022  
15 North Fifteenth, historic fireplace and parquet floors, looking southeast.

**Photo 23 of 32**
Name of Property: Laurel Apartments  
City or Vicinity: Minneapolis  
County: Hennepin County  
State: Minnesota  
Name of Photographer: Rachel Peterson  
Date of Photograph: December 2019

MN_HennepinCounty_LaurelApartments_0023  
1506 Laurel, historic fireplace, looking southwest.

**Photo 24 of 32**
Name of Property: Laurel Apartments  
City or Vicinity: Minneapolis  
County: Hennepin County  
State: Minnesota  
Name of Photographer: Rachel Peterson  
Date of Photograph: December 2019

MN_HennepinCounty_LaurelApartments_0024  
1506 Laurel, historic fireplace, looking southeast.
Photo 25 of 32
Name of Property: Laurel Apartments
City or Vicinity: Minneapolis
County: Hennepin County
State: Minnesota
Name of Photographer: Rachel Peterson
Date of Photograph: December 2019

MN_HennepinCounty_LaurelApartments_0025
1506 Laurel, historic fireplace, looking southwest.

Photo 26 of 32
Name of Property: Laurel Apartments
City or Vicinity: Minneapolis
County: Hennepin County
State: Minnesota
Name of Photographer: Rachel Peterson
Date of Photograph: December 2019

MN_HennepinCounty_LaurelApartments_0026
15 North Fifteenth, historic fireplace and millwork, looking northeast.

Photo 27 of 32
Name of Property: Laurel Apartments
City or Vicinity: Minneapolis
County: Hennepin County
State: Minnesota
Name of Photographer: Rachel Peterson
Date of Photograph: December 2019

MN_HennepinCounty_LaurelApartments_0027
19 North Fifteenth, historic fireplace and millwork, looking northeast.

Photo 28 of 32
Name of Property: Laurel Apartments
City or Vicinity: Minneapolis
County: Hennepin County
State: Minnesota
Name of Photographer: Rachel Peterson
Date of Photograph: December 2019

MN_HennepinCounty_LaurelApartments_0028
15 North Fifteenth, historic millwork, looking southeast.
### Photo 29 of 32
Name of Property: Laurel Apartments  
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Name of Photographer: Rachel Peterson  
Date of Photograph: December 2019

**MN_HennepinCounty_LaurelApartments_0029**  
15 North Fifteenth, historic millwork, looking north.

### Photo 30 of 32
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City or Vicinity: Minneapolis  
County: Hennepin County  
State: Minnesota  
Name of Photographer: Rachel Peterson  
Date of Photograph: December 2019

**MN_HennepinCounty_LaurelApartments_0030**  
15 North Fifteenth, historic built-in cabinet, looking north.

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County: Hennepin County  
State: Minnesota  
Name of Photographer: Rachel Peterson  
Date of Photograph: December 2019

**MN_HennepinCounty_LaurelApartments_0031**  
15 North Fifteenth, corridor, looking west.

### Photo 32 of 32
Name of Property: Laurel Apartments  
City or Vicinity: Minneapolis  
County: Hennepin County  
State: Minnesota  
Name of Photographer: Rachel Peterson  
Date of Photograph: December 2019

**MN_HennepinCounty_LaurelApartments_0032**  
15 North Fifteenth, communal bathroom, looking southwest.
Laurel Apartments
Name of Property
Hennepin County, Minnesota
County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

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National Park Service
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1502-1506 Laurel Avenue - First Floor

15-19 Fifteenth Street - First Floor

North
Laurel Apartments
Name of Property
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1502-1506 Laurel Avenue - Third Floor

15-19 Fifteenth Street - Third Floor

North

25
24

29
26
32
Laurel Apartments
Name of Property

Hennepin County, Minnesota
County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)