**1 NAME**

**HISTORIC**

Battery Park Hotel

**AND/OR COMMON**

**2 LOCATION**

**STREET & NUMBER**

Battle Square

**CITY, TOWN**

Asheville

**STATE**

North Carolina

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

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<td>PRIVATE RESIDENCE</td>
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**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

**NAME**

D. M. Blackwell

**STREET & NUMBER**

Osborne Plumbing & Heating Co., 221 W. French Broad St.

**CITY, TOWN**

Brevard

**STATE**

North Carolina

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

**COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.**

Buncombe County Courthouse

**CITY, TOWN**

Asheville

**STATE**

North Carolina

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

**TITLE**

**DATE**

**DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS**

**CITY, TOWN**

**STATE**
Rising fourteen stories from the summit of a high hill in the midst of Asheville, the Battery Park Hotel is one of Asheville's most striking landmarks. Standing on the remains of the higher hill truncated by developer E. W. Grove, it faces down the slope, Grove's equally ambitious, sprawling Arcade (NR). Designed by hotel architect W. L. Stoddart, the Battery Park is a representative and little-changed example of eclectic 1920s hotel architecture, its functional brick mass accented with notes of Neo-Classical elegance and Spanish romanticism.

The main block of the building is a massive T form, with the crosspiece of the T forming the main (south) facade. The main elevation is seven bays wide, with the third and fifth bays being double ones. To either side of this block is a two-story wing, and at the top is a three-bay penthouse. At the rear of the stem of the T rises a chimney. The corners of the brick building are defined by brick quoins, and horizontal decorative bands break up the height of the building into a strong three-part division: the three-story base, the eight-story main expanse, and the one-story cornice topped by the penthouse.

Across the entry level of the facade stretches a terrace, bounded by a classical urn balustrade. The balustrade is repeated on the flanking terraces that serve the wings. The east side terrace is shaded by a pergola whose open roof is supported by Ionic columns. (The pergola on the west is gone.) Large French doors with fanlights connect the terraces with the large rooms filling the wings.

The focus of the ground level front is a trio of large, arched openings, each two stories in height—the main entrance and flanking windows. In the remaining pairs of flanking bays are first-level French doors and second-level paired windows with double-hung sash. At the third level are simple double-hung sash windows occurring singly and in pairs. This three-story base area is further emphasized by the use of brick in striated courses that continue the lines of the quoins, and by a heavy, richly decorated carved cornice that carries around the front and sides of the building. This cornice serves as continuous sill for the elaborately treated windows of the fourth level. Ornate open pediments, cartouches, and other classical motifs are used to enrich these windows. Similar motifs recur at the three central bays of the fifth level. The windows at the sixth through tenth levels are simply treated with double-hung six-over-one sash.

The upper levels are elaborately treated. At the eleventh level, which is set off by a narrow molded cornice, alternating bays have ornate iron balconies. Above, creating a dominant roofline, is a broad, strongly molded stone cornice accented with a series of shields in high relief, beneath a dentil molding. The thirteenth-story windows occur between this molding and the wide bracketed eaves of the overhanging green tile roof. This area is further enriched by the use of the diaperwork in colorful tile filling the wall surfaces between the windows. The roofline is interrupted by the penthouse, whose three bays rise a full story above the thirteenth story. Its three large arched windows are served by iron balconies, and cartouches flank the windows. The bracketed cornice and deeply overhanging tile roof are repeated.

Within, the hotel retains vestiges of its earlier splendor despite the ravages of thieves, vandals, and neglect in recent years. The lobby is a splendid, light open space overlooked on three sides by the paneled balcony of the mezzanine, which is carried
on elaborate ceiling-high pillars and ornate consoles. Tile floors, marble stairs (minus their railings), marble baseboards, and paneled wainscots survive. Of special importance is the fountain in the elevator lobby. Resembling a fireplace in appearance, this ceramic fountain, located against the wall, has a semi-circular opening with a molded fan back. Above this a rectangular composition of tile rises to near-ceiling height, framing a colorful, realistic, and skillfully executed ceramic mosaic of the original Battery Park Hotel. The ceramic inscription reads, "Erected 1884 BATTERY PARK HOTEL Razed 1923".

The wing rooms, the gold room and the dining room are spacious and handsomely finished. The gold room or ball room has paneled wainscot, triple windows beneath fanlights, applied moldings on the walls, and ornate rococo molded plaster ceiling decoration. The dining room is somewhat simpler but has a dramatic series of supporting arches and a handsome coffered ceiling.

The rooms of the several floors are functional and typical hotel rooms, arranged around a T hall plan. Walls are plastered, wainscoted, and papered. Many original bathroom fixtures, marble accoutrements, and tile floors remain.

The penthouse is as handsomely appointed as the main floor. The front room is especially fine. On all four sides of the rectangular room are large openings, those on the inner wall being mirrored, those on the other three sides windows and French doors, creating a light interior and permitting a grand view of the city and mountains beyond. On either side, French doors open to roof terraces not visible from below. All the openings, with a central glazed leaf framed by sidelights and transom, are surmounted by a fanlight which is in turn framed by a pointed vault that fits into a cove ceiling. The walls and vaults are articulated with applied moldings forming panels. Under the peeling paint can be seen ornate stenciling on the plaster with urns, scrolls, wreaths and foliage in green, gold, brown, and ivory. The cove ceiling is underlined with a rich plaster cornice of corn, oak leaves, pineapples, and grapes. The rear penthouse room is less elaborately treated, has a tile floor, and windows overlooking balconies.
The Battery Park Hotel is one of Asheville's most prominent landmarks topographically and historically, a vivid expression of the city's rapid development in the 1920s. In the early 1920s E. M. Grove, entrepreneur and ambitious developer of Asheville, bought the old Battery Park Hotel, razed it and its hill, and created a major complex including an arcade, office buildings, and a new Battery Park Hotel. The fourteen-story brick hotel, designed by hotel architect W. L. Stoddart, stands high on the summit of the slope, commanding a dramatic view of the city.

In the late nineteenth century, the mountain town of Asheville began to attract attention as a health and pleasure resort, where tourists and tubercular patients enjoyed the mountain air and cool summer temperatures. The Eagle and the Swannanoa were two of the relatively simple hotels providing accommodations. Among the visitors was Colonel Franklin Coxe (grandson of cotton industrialist Tench Coxe of Philadelphia) a successful banker and entrepreneur associated with A. B. Andrews in the building of the Western North Carolina Railroad. During his regular Asheville visits, Coxe, according to one source, was "attracted to the necessity of higher class accommodations for the visitors from other States, both North and South." He purchased the chief hill in the small town of Asheville—known as Battery Porter and the location of a Confederate battery—and thereupon constructed "what was at that time the largest and best hotel in the entire South." Finished in 1886, the sprawling, turreted frame hotel was called the Battery Park.

The completion of the Battery Park Hotel in 1886, the same year the Western North Carolina Railroad reached Asheville, was the beginning of Asheville's first boom period. "That year... began the dawn of a new era, and new life and energy crept into the town. Capitalists and homeseekers began pouring in..." The population, 2,610 in 1880, had climbed to 11,500 by 1890. Local tradition states that it was from the porches of the Battery Park that George Vanderbilt "first gazed out upon the misty stretch of towering mountain peaks and resolved to make his home in the Land of the Sky."

After Coxe's death in 1903, the property was purchased in 1920 by Edwin W. Grove. Grove, according to a grandson, was a man of little (third-grade) education but great financial genius. The inventor of a process of suspending powdered quinine in fluid, he had made a fortune in pharmaceuticals. He came to Asheville early in the twentieth century, fell in love with the place, and with his son-in-law Fred Seely in charge, constructed the splendid mountainside hotel, the Grove Park Inn, which opened in 1913. According to his grandson Fred Seely, Jr., Grove and his son-in-law were convinced that tourism must replace the tubercular institutions as the major industry if Asheville was to realize its potential as a city. The two, Seely recalled, had a grand plan for Asheville's development.
Grove's Asheville development plan involved moving mountains—literally. Soon after purchasing the old Battery Park Hotel, which stood on its wooded, landscaped hill on the edge of Asheville, work began that was to change the face of the city. The old hotel was torn down and burned—some accounts say it was burned intentionally, others that the ruins caught fire from a workman's fire—and a massive earth-moving project begun to flatten the hill for development. Earth variously described at 250,000 and 500,000 cubic yards was hauled away and used to fill in "an unsightly worthless ravine." Begun in December, 1922, the excavation was completed in August, 1924, creating a broad, barren, gently sloping expanse for development. At the summit stood the tall new brick hotel, which had risen even as the lower parts of the hill were leveled.

Reactions to Grove's work varied. When he announced his plans, according to a 1925 newspaper article, "there was considerable opposition to the project by a great many citizens of Asheville, ... but with the completion of this undertaking, ... there has been nothing but praise for Mr. Grove's foresight and vision." Another writer reflected, as the hotel was under construction, that "... where once were winding paths and terraces, ... the advocates of industry have assiduously and relentlessly created a business district of inestimable value to the growth of Asheville. ... While many of us have felt a pang of regret at every load of dirt that has been carted from this romantic old landmark, we cannot help feeling a twinge of pride at the colossal task that Mr. Grove has accomplished in the interest of Asheville's future growth and prosperity." Native son Thomas Wolfe, however, was not so easily persuaded. In Look Homeward, Angel, he wrote,

In the center of town, there had been a beautiful green hill, opulent with rich lawns and lordly trees, with beds of flowers and banks of honeysuckle, and on top of it there had been an immense, rambling, old wooden hotel. ... It had been one of the pleasantest places in town, but now it was gone. An army of men and shovels had advanced upon this beautiful green hill and had leveled it down to an ugly flat of clay, and had paved it with a desolate horror of white concrete, and had built stores and garages and office buildings and parking spaces—all raw and new—and were now putting up a new hotel beneath the very spot where the old one had stood. It was to be a structure of sixteen stories, of steel and concrete and pressed brick. It was being stamped out of the same mold, as if by some gigantic biscuit-cutter of hotels that had produced a thousand others like it all over the country.

Wolfe's "biscuit cutter" was in fact William Lee Stoddart 11 (1869-1940) of New York, one of the most prolific early twentieth century hotel architects in the country. Among his large hotels were the Lord Baltimore (Baltimore), the George Washington (Washington, Pa.), the Charleston Hotel (Charleston, S.C.), the Tutweiler in Birmingham,
Stoddart’s Battery Park was, as Grove wanted it, the very latest in convenience and modernity. It was described with enthusiasm in the Southern Tourist of June, 1924:

It is built of modeled red brick trimmed in terra cotta. The hotel is graceful, yet imposing. ... Mr. W. L. Stoddart of New York has omitted no detail to make this hotel a bit of perfection in architectural science and art. The lobby is spacious with beautiful and harmonious fittings—deep lounges, comfy love seats and dignified pilaster chairs, all made in North Carolina. Rose taupe chenille rugs complete the unusual and lovely color scheme. The Mezzanine floor, where the orchestra will be stationed, is very attractive. Writing desks and everything for the comfort of the guests will be provided.

Just off the mezzanine floor to the west is the luxurious lounge room, and to the east is the capacious dining room which seats about two hundred people.

There are two hundred and twenty bedrooms, each an outside room with private bath. Twin beds are used throughout. All the furniture in these rooms was made in North Carolina, and no effort has been spared to make every room as comfortable and attractive as possible even to the most discriminating guests.

The kitchen is electrically equipped and so arranged that one thousand people may be served.

Another wonderful attraction of the hotel is the roof garden, where there will be dancing every evening. The roof dining room will seat about one hundred and fifty people. Another lounge room on the roof is very suitably furnished in pretty fibre furniture.

Opening from the roof lounge room through French doors there are open terraces which command a view of the mountains in all directions. Even though the hill has been abolished these terraces are forty feet higher than the old hotel.

The development of the rest of the project was not far behind. It included Grove's impressive Arcade (NR), which was a shopping mall and office building with extensive and novel underground parking; a post office designed by James Wetmore and the product of intensive lobbying by Grove; a flatiron building; the Asheville Citizen-Times Building; and a telephone building. Art Deco was the dominant style of these new buildings which declared for Asheville a bustling, modern new identity.

Grove's activities on and around the old Battery Park Hill in the mid-1920s were part of a larger boom in Asheville. Expansion in the period from 1900 to 1920 was major, but orderly. In the 1920s, however, Asheville was inundated with land speculators, many of whom were fresh from the early 1920s boom in Florida. The Jackson
Building, Asheville's first skyscraper, went up in 1924. By late 1925 property on North Pack Square at Broadway was bringing $8,150 per front foot. Grove's Arcade was begun in 1926. Grove's death on January 27, 1927, delayed completion of the project until 1929. By then the land boom had collapsed. In 1930 Asheville's Central Bank and Trust Company, the largest financial institution in the area, failed, followed quickly by five others.

The Battery Park Hotel had stood but a few years before the Crash, but it remained open and busy. The hotel was managed at first by Wilbur Dowendorf, former manager of the old Battery Park; he was followed by Pat H. Branch. In 1930, according to a 1940 newspaper article, the Knott Hotels corporation of New York leased the hotel. In 1940, in the settlement of the Grove estate, his daughter, Mrs. Fred Seely, became owner of the hotel. Her husband, Fred Seely, had long been operator of the Grove Park Inn. Upon Mrs. Seely's ownership of the Battery Park, A. N. Barnett, for twenty years manager of the Grove Park, was appointed manager of the Battery Park. Within the decade, in 1949, Mrs. Seely transferred the Battery Park Hotel property to her sons, Fred L. Seely, Jr., and James Grove Seely. Fred Seely, Jr., announced plant to renovate and refurnish the hotel, and by the spring of 1950, renovations were complete and a new manager, Don B. Grady, Jr., was placed in charge.

In 1955 the hotel left the Grove descendants' hands. On October 1, the Asheville Citizen reported a "swap of deed" between Maurice Puckett, owner of the George Vanderbilt Hotel, and Charles F. Johnson, "conservator-receiver for Battery Park Hotel." The deal was reported to involve "about $1,000,000." During the 1950s the hotel hosted the casts of a number of movies made in the area, including The Swan, Thunder Road, and Tap Roots. In 1971, the newspaper reported that the hotel would be sold at auction by Maurice Puckett, who was reported to have paid $900,000 for the property when it was purchased from the Grove family estate. The building was described as having cost $600,000 to build. Valued at about $527,000 on city tax lists, the hotel was sold at auction in the hotel's Gold Room, December 9, 1971, for $262,000. The purchaser, Jack Bryant of Brevard, North Carolina, expressed interest in renovation. Efforts at remodeling the hotel, however, proved more costly than expected—"Every time you turned around it was $50,000 here or $100,000 there," Bryant said—and on October 31, 1972, the hotel was closed. It was purchased from Bryant by D. M. Blackwell of Brevard. Still structurally sound, it stands vacant, vandalized, boarded up. At present plans for a HUD-backed renovation for an apartment complex for older citizens are being reviewed.
FOOTNOTES

1 Southern Tourist (Asheville), June, 1924.

2 Southern Tourist.

3 Fred A. Sondley, History of Buncombe County, p. 34; Ina W. Van Noppen and John J. Van Noppen, Western North Carolina Since the Civil War, p. 259.

4 Southern Tourist.


6 Our Appalachia, pp. 163-164.

7 Asheville Citizen, December 6, 1925.

8 Asheville Citizen, December 6, 1925.

9 Southern Tourist.

10 Thomas Wolfe, Look Homeward, Angel.

11 Southern Tourist.


13 Joan and Wright Langley, Yesterday's Asheville, pp. 57-58, 90-92.

14 Southern Tourist.

15 Asheville Citizen, December 6, 1925.

16 Asheville Times, September 5, 1940.

17 Asheville Times, September 5, 1940.

18 Asheville Times, October 20, 1940.

19 Asheville Times, October 13, 1949.

20 Asheville Times, October 13, 1949.
**MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**


*Asheville Citizen.* 1925 to present, passim.

*Asheville Times.* 1940 to present, passim.

*Charlotte Observer.* January 28, 1927.

Langley. Joan and Wright. *Yesterday's Asheville.*

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**GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

**ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY**

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**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

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**FORM PREPARED BY**

**NAME / TITLE**

Description and Significance prepared by Catherine Bishir.

**ORGANIZATION**

Division of Archives & History

**STREET & NUMBER**

109 E. Jones Street

**TELEPHONE**

733-4763

**CITY OR TOWN**

Raleigh

**STATE**

North Carolina

**DATE**

May 12, 1977

**GPO**

892-453

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**STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION**

**THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:**

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL X

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

**STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE**

**TITLE**

State Historic Preservation Officer

**DATE**

May 12, 1977

**FOR NPS USE ONLY**

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

**DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION**

**ATTEST:**

**KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER**


Sharpe, Bill. *New Geography of North Carolina*. Volume II.

Sondley, Fred A. *History of Buncombe County*.


Van Noppen, John J. and Ina W. *Western North Carolina Since the Civil War*. 