National Par	R – 1/18/83 NP es Department of k Service		For	NPS use only
Invento See instruction	I Register o ry—Nomina s In How to Complete Na —complete applicable so	tion Form	dat	eived e entered
1. Nam	e			-
historic Ri	verside Apartments	(Preferred)	(VHLC 12	1-39)
and/or common	Shipyard Apartments			
2. Loca	tion			
street & number	4500-4600 Washin	gton Avenue	N	A not for publication
city, town	Newport News	N/A vicinity of	congeneratedictrist	
state	Virginía code	51 county	(in city)	<b>code</b> _ 700
3. Clas	sification			
Category district _X building(s) structure site object	Ownership public private both Public Acquisition in process being considered N/A	<pre> occupied  unoccupied  work in progress Accessible  yes: restricted  yes: unrestricted  no</pre>	agriculture         commercial         educational         entertainment         government         industrial         military	museum park private residence religious scientífic transportation other:
4. Own	er of Proper	ty		
name River	side Apartments. a	Limited Partnershi	p; c/o Mr. Elbert W	laldron
street & number	3801 Electric Road	P.O. Box 4175		· · ·
city, town	Roanoke	N/A_ vicinity of	state	Virginia 24015
5. Loca	tion of Lega	al Descripti		
courthouse, regis	stry of deeds, etc. Cler	k of Court		· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·
street & number	Newport News Ci	ty Hall		
city, town	Newport News		state	Virginia 23607
	esentation	in Existina		2 20007
N / A				igible?yesX_no
title	•	pre		,,
title N/A date N/A			<u>N/A</u> federal sta	te county local

# 7. Description

### ....

Condition     excellent deteriorated     Xgood ruins     fair unexposed	Check one _ <u>×</u> unaltered altered	Check one original site moved date <sup>N/A</sup>
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### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

#### Summary Description

The Riverside Apartments consisting of two, four-story brick apartment buildings are decorated with simple bands of sandstone. They were erected after the plans of New York architect Francis Y. Joannes (1876-1952) and consist of two large massive brick and sandstone decorated structures patterned after New York City tenaments of the time. There is some classically derived decoration around the portals and a few accents of the same type on the parapets. These buildings have always been used as apartment dwellings with shops in the basement. This residential use will be continued by the current owner. Located at 4500-4600 Washington Avenue, directly across the street from the Newport News Shipyards where the original tenants worked, these two apartment buildings are close to the downtown area in a single-family residential area. The two buildings remaining from the original four are remarkably well-preserved despite some neglect. At the time of building in 1918, the Riverside Apartments were advanced, fireproof structures with many amenities provided for residents.

#### Architectural Analysis

The two remaining apartment buildings of the Riverside complex are placed lengthwise, each on a separate block, to form a long rectangular interior entrance-court with an open side facing the Shipyard across Washington Avenue. Each of the buildings is four stories set on a high basement. The windows on all elevations are evenly spaced. The buildings are constructed of brick on a granite-faced foundation. Above the basement story and at the top of the first story is a band of yellow-buff sandstone. The bands surround the buildings on three sides. Between these the brick has been laid in five rows to create emphasis and give visual stability to the structure. The brick is laid in American bond with five rows of stretchers separated by one row of headers. At the ceiling level of the fourth floor is a narrow band of case concrete with a small lip above. The flat roof is hidden by the wall above this narrow band. This parapet terminates in another band of case concrete which is scored in the center and has a rounded molding at the top. On the roof of each building there are three open pavilions. Metal structures for attaching clothes lines are affixed to these pavilions. The two side pavilions are unornamented, but the center pavilion was integrated with the false front above the major entryways parallel to Washington Avenue. A chimney punctuates the center of this pavilion. At the top inner corner of each building is a square brick structure with a hip roof which tops the stairwell. The other two staircases are each covered by a small pavilion.

From the front elevation, the building's major decorative features are accented at the roof line. On the extremities of the U-shape, the fifth bay in from the side streets has three windows clustered together. The second-story apartment in this decorative unit has a door with Above and below this are grouped three windows a balcony supported by small metal scrolls. on each level. At the top, the parapet wall is lifted to form a flat accent supported by concrete scrolls. Above the top group of windows is a recessed arch with a concrete keystone at the In the center is a round unornamented cement-faced circle. The main facade, set back in top. the court parallel to Washington Avenue, is ornamented by featuring the two stairwells. Above the sandstone door surrounds the open stairwells are recessed into a cement-lined niche with a brick edge inside. Three metal and glass awnings rise in this opening to protect first, second, and third-floor landings. The fourth-floor landing has a recessed arch ornamented with a keystone. Above this arch the parapet continues to form a gable at the end of the U-shaped pavilion on the roof. The gable has a molded cap of sandstone supported by large scrolls on either side. In the center, above the keystone, is a round unornamented cementfaced circle.

# 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance-C	heck and justify below		
prehistoric 14001499 15001599 16001699 17001799 18001899 _X 1900-	<ul> <li>archeology-prehistoric</li> <li>archeology-historic</li> <li>agriculture</li> <li>architecture</li> <li>art</li> <li>commerce</li> <li>communications</li> </ul>		Iandscape architecture Iaw Iiterature Iiterature Iiterature music I philosophy I politics/government	religion science sculpture social/ humanitarian theater transportation other (specify)
			<u></u>	

Specific dates 1918-1919

Builder/Architect James Stewart & Company, NYC/Francis Y.

Joannes

## Statement of Significance (in one paragraph) STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Riverside Apartments, 4500-4600 Washington Avenue, Newport News, Virginia, commonly known as the "Shipyard Apartments" were built during 1918 to alleviate the housing shortage created by an influx of workers into the Newport News Shipyards during World War I. The Riverside Apartments were built for the United States Shipping Board Emergency Fleet Corporation to be rented to the Shipyard workers. Consisting originally of four apartment buildings, four stories high, of the New York City open-stair tenement type with six entrances to each building, there were 372 separate apartments and eight basement stores in the original buildings, in addition to storage rooms, workshops, and boiler rooms. The apartments incorporated the very latest in construction techniques and fittings for fire safety, light, ventilation, health, and convenience for residents. Built across the street from the Shipyard, the Riverside Apartments form a very important adjunct to the development of nearby Hilton Village by providing immediate quarters, on a rental basis. The apartments, with their easy accessibility to the Shipyard and to the city center, filled an important need in America's war effort. Housing during World War I was the Federal government's initial entry into subsidized housing. Plans for workers' housing followed the realization that full war production depended on adequate shelter for workers in war industries. The two remaining buildings are in a good state of preservation. The Riverside Apartments are one of the few government-initiated apartment buildings of this era to survive without significant alteration. Two of the four original buildings were destroyed, one in 1975 and the other in 1979. The Riverside Apartments relate to the history of government workers' housing. Such was a Socialist concept in Europe but never really caught on in the United States, making these buildings a somewhat rare phenomenon for this country.

#### Historical Background

At the beginning of World War I, workmen's housing came to a standstill. Shifting population trends due to workers migrating to war industries created great pressure for housing. Reports were published of two and three men using beds in shifts and others living in stables, sheds, and every kind of shelter. Despite the great patriotism of the time, Congress was skeptical about workers' housing; the high labor turnover in essential war industries caused the lawmakers to act.

In 1916 Samuel Gompers, who was Chairman for Health and Welfare of the National Council for Defense, saw how lack of housing would hamper a sudden expansion of war industries on America's entrance into the hostilities. By summer of 1917, the National Council for Defense recommended permanent "housing of good quality for best economy in the long run. . ."1 In October of 1917 the Council appointed another committee, with Otto M. Eidlitz as Chairman, which recommended high standards of permanent construction for workmen's housing. On November 30, 1917, the National Housing Association concurred in a strong letter to President By February of 1918 Congress had appropriated funds for housing under the Shipping Wilson.<sup>\*</sup>

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 68.

Recent Trends in American Housing, p. 67.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References (See Continuation Sheet #6)

 Abrams, Charles. The Future of Housing. New York: Harper Brothers, 1946.
 Brown, C.C., Ed. Newport News 325 Years: A Record of the Progress of a Virginia Community. Richmond: The Baughman Company, 1946.
 Colean, Miles J. Housing for Defense. New York: Twentieth Century Fund, 1940.

# **10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of nominated property <u>1<sup>1</sup>2 acres</u> Quadrangle name <u>Newport News South</u> , VA UMT References	Quadrangle scale 1:24000
A 1 18 3 7 11 9 16 0 4 0 9 4 6 5 0 Zone Easting Northing	B Zone Easting Northing
Ε	

**Verbal boundary description and justification** 200 feet per building on Washington Avenue (45th Street to 47th Street) and 100 feet on each side street (45th, 46th and 47th Streets). Boundaries coincide with the Riverside Apartments.

List all states and counties for p	roperties over	lapping state	or coun	ty boundari	es	
state N/A	code	county		N/A	c	ode
state N/A	code	county	-	N/A	c	ode
11. Form Prepar	ed By					<u> </u>
name/title William Kuthy and W	W. L. Whitwe	-11		•	· ,	
organization N/A			date	October	1982	
street & number 308 2nd Stree	et, SW		teleph	none (703)	344-204	4
Roanoke		1	state	Virginia	24015	
<u> </u>	perty within the	state is: local		••••••		
The evaluated significance of this pro national X As the designated State Historic Pres 665), I hereby nominate this property according to the criteria and procedur	eperty within the state ervation Officer for inclusion in t res set forth by t	state is: local for the National the National Reg	Historic I ister and	Preservation certify that i	Act of 196	6 (Public Law 89
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Continuation sheet #1	Item number <sup>7</sup>	Page <sup>1</sup>
7. DESCRIPTION		

Architectural Analysis (continued)

Most distinctive about the Riverside Apartments are the six entrance surrounds to each stairwell. Two of these are visible from Washington Avenue below the open arch stairwell with its gable above.

The doorway surrounds to the six staircases in each apartment building clearly reflect architect Joannes' Beaux Arts training. Using a Tuscan order, Joannes has many features correct, but has superimposed a cyma recta curve molding at the top of the portal and a dentil molding at the top of the frieze. The whole composition has a severe Roman appearance.

At each corner of the buildings, bricks were laid slightly above the main wall surface to suggest quoins. These go to the bottom of the parapet. The rear of each building is unornamented except for the band of sandstone above the fourth story and at the top of the parapet. On the sides and on the back of each building are metal balconies, with scroll supports, and doors to the basement. At the side of each courtyard entry, a half story below grade, is the entrance to the shop area in the basement. Above the doorway from 4500 L an original light fixture still remains.

Each building contains some two-room apartments with a bedroom, bathroom, and combined kitchen and dining room, while the greatest number of apartments are of three rooms, consisting of a bedroom, bathroom, kitchen and combined living and dining room. There are also several four-room apartments in each building which provide two bedrooms, bathroom, kitchen, and combined living and dining room. Notable in each building is the lack of corridors. Each apartment's access is from one of six stairwells with the entrances to the stairwells being from the court, instead of directly from the street. A typical apartment was carefully arranged for air and light in each room with easy access to the kitchen from the apartment entrance. According to a contemporary newspaper article entitled, "Splendid Apartments built by Shipyards Company for Employees," published by the <u>Newport News Daily Press</u> on October 9, 1918, each apartment's appearance was "secondary to a high degree of efficiency and the simplification of household work." The interior arrangement of the Shipyards Apartments has remained unchanged, and to the extent city, state and <sup>f</sup>ederal codes and standards permit, will remain unchanged.

Inside there are many interior fixtures remaining. The steel staircases, the dumbwaiters, and the standpipe recesses are all intact. Many of the original hardwood and tile floors have been covered over with linoleum. Remaining interior fixtures include most of the original bathroom and kitchen equipment, much of which is in serviceable condition.

The courtyard still has its concrete walkways defining landscaped areas. The walkways are now lined with pipe fences.

The two apartment building masses are set in a linear manner, each having 200 feet of frontage on Washington Avenue and with 100 feet of depth on the side streets. The buildings are much larger than the small adjoining single-family homes in the neighborhood behind them. The apartments are sited directly across Washington Avenue from the main entrance to the Shipyards. The general impact of the Riverside Apartments is massive within its residential setting.

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### EXP. 10/31/84

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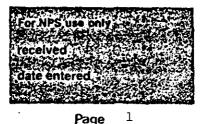
United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

RIVERSIDE APARTMENTS, NEWPORT NEWS, VA

### Continuation sheet #2

Item number 8



8. <u>SIGNIFICANCE</u> --

<u>Historical Background</u> (continued)

Board. Seventy million dollars was appropriated for the Emergency Fleet Corporation,<sup>3</sup> an agency of the Shipping Board. Congress empowered the Emergency Fleet Corporation to "purchase, lease, requisition or otherwise acquire . . . houses and buildings."<sup>4</sup> "The American public, as represented by the Government, should look upon housing at this stage (1918) as a war expenditure to create a greater efficiency in labor and to produce munitions and ships with dispatch."<sup>5</sup>

Shipping Board housing projects were a wartime variation of the familiar company-owned employees' housing through a subsidiary holding company. The Shipping Board's Emergency Fleet Corporation lent money to realty companies incorporated by ship-building companies, which provided the land. Now, the United States Government went into large scale housing operations of a high character until by the end of the war some 55,000 people had been housed by the Shipping Board.<sup>6</sup>

Newport News, Virginia was very crowded during the early war years. Shipworkers increased from some 7,000 to 14,000, cramming into the city. The Emergency Fleet Corporation included a four apartment building project for Newport News on "A list of Government Housing Projects Under Way and Proposed with the Size and Character of the Accommodations Provided."<sup>7</sup> There were to be 372 apartments in the Newport News project.<sup>8</sup> The Newport News newspaper, August 31, 1979, at the time two of the four apartment buildings were torn down, reported on the construction of these apartments: Theywere "built and financed by the United States Shipping Board and the Newport News Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company to meet . . . an acute shortage of housing for Shipyard men and their families." The four apartment buildings (called the Riverside Apartments) were constructed for the account of the United States Shipping Board Emergency Fleet Corporation as mortgagee of the Housing Corporation. They were operated by the Shipbuilding Housing Corporation and rented to the Shipyard workers.

Housing was constructed as an aid to winning the war by making workers happy and contented and thereby increasing their efficiency. By the end of the war the Newport News Shipyard had repaired some 1,000 ships, many of which were victims of German U-Boat attacks.

Selection of architects, engineers, and contractors had to be approved by the Fleet Corporation. Chosen for the design of the Riverside Apartments was architect Francis Y. Joannes (1876-1952). Joannes brought a good education to this project. He had studied

<sup>4</sup>Housing for Defense, pp. 11, 12.

<sup>5</sup>Architectural Record, p. 221.

<sup>6</sup>Recent Trends in American Housing, pp. 78, 79, 81.

<sup>7</sup>Journal A.I.A., p. 447.

8<sub>Ibid</sub>,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup>The Nation, p. 84.

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8. SIGNIFICANCE		

Historical Background (continued)

at the Art Institute and the Armour Institute in Chicago; he received a B.S. degree in Architecture from Cornell University in 1900. After working as designer and office manager for the well-known Virginia architect John Kevan Peebles, Joannes studied at the Ecole des Beaux Arts, receiving a diplome in 1906. Joannes then spent six years working with Francis H. Kimball in New York City. After a year with Donn Barber in New York he went to Montreal, Canada with the firm of Ross and MacDonald. After this, Joannes practiced independently in New York for the rest of his life. Francis Y. Joannes' obituary' credited him with ". . . design of the Department of Justice building in Washington." Other buildings noted in the obituary include the Y.W.C.A. in New York City, the Medical Center in Springfield, Missouri, the Calco Chemical Company plant in Bound Brook, New Jersey, the Union Station in Toronto, Canada, and the Halifax Ocean Terminals in Halifax, Canada. Joannes was also the architect and planner for the planned community of Hilton Village in Newport News, Virginia (National Register of Historic Places 1969), also a wartime project for shipyard workers.

Joannes' Riverside Apartments in Newport News, constructed by the New York City firm of James Stewart and Company, represent one of his first major commissions as an independent architect. Within the constraints of a Federal project, the Riverside Apartments proved that wartime housing could be constructed to good standards of design.

"Splendid Apartments built by Shipyard Company for Employees soon will be ready for Occupancy" reported the Daily Press of Newport News on Wednesday, October 9, 1918. In great detail this article described the new buildings and their fittings. The two remaining apartment buildings have most of the original fittings still intact. Each building was constructed of concrete foundation walls (faced with granite) to hold a superstructure of brick walls laid in cement mortar. Interior columns were of structural steel. Reinforced concrete slabs were laid on steel beams to support the first floors while the upper floors were carried by wood joists resting "in all cases" on the brick walls and the steel girders. Ceilings and plastered walls were solid from both sides "so that there are no hollow spaces to harbor mice or vermin." Each building was four stories high, two hundred feet long on Washington Avenue, and one hundred feet wide on each side. The basements had space for boiler rooms, storage for tenants, work rooms, and baby carriage rooms. The basement area was also designed to incorporate stores (a candy store-confectionery is still located in one of these spaces). There are six entrances to each building. Concrete portals, without enclosing doors, open directly to each staircase which goes to the four stories in an open stairwell. The landings were protected by glass canopies. (These still exist.) On each staircase landing are located doors to the apartments as well as to a dumbwaiter, "by which tradesmen make deliveries." (These still exist.) There were to be, in the words of this detailed newspaper article, no poorly lighted hallways and staircases, no long narrow light wells, nor any courts as "sources of discomfort and disease." Each apartment floor plan had been carefully worked out by the architect who was concerned for simplification of household work, that each apartment should

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup>"F. Y. Joannes Dies," <u>New York Times</u>, p. 70.

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8. SIGNIFICANCE		

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Historical Background (continued)

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have its own private entrance, and that all apartments of a similar plan should be grouped together. Most of the apartments in the complex were of three rooms consisting of bedroom, bathroom, kitchen and combined living room and dining room. A few units had four rooms and others only two. On the top floor of 4500 and 4600 Washington Avenue there were two units for accommodation of boarders in "cooperative apartments," each of which consisted of a large living and dining room, kitchen, bathroom, four single bedrooms and one double bedroom. These units were designed so that the renters "might employ a housekeeper."

All the apartments were provided with the latest in amenities. There were hardwood floors and hardwood window trim (originally varnished a dark walnut color) and tiled bathrooms. Each kitchen was provided with a gas stove, sink, washing tub, and a kitchen cabinet. (Many of these furnishings are still in place.) In the stairwells there were standpipes for fire protection. The lower entryways had a push button-buzzer system by the mailboxes, as in New York City apartments at the time. The flat roof was covered with fireproof material with a hard smooth surface so it could be walked on. On the roof, each building had three play pavilions for children. Metal supporting forms for clothes lines were provided. (These still remain.) The dumbwaiters went to the roof to transport clothes. In conclusion, the Newport News Daily Press took "pleasure in publishing a description of the four splendid apartment houses which are being built for the Shipbuilding Housing Corporation opposite the Shipyard on Washington Avenue."

These four buildings proved that ". . . government housing could be produced and administered in the United States without scandal, without extravagance, without the sky falling, or the construction going on the scrap heap."<sup>10</sup>

At the Armistice, twenty building projects of the Fleet Corporation proceeded, fiftyfive were abandoned and fourteen were curtailed.<sup>11</sup> In 1919, the Fleet Corporation wrote off the mortgages and in 1920 Congress directed that Fleet Corporation properties should be sold. The Fleet Corporation had provided a total of 8,336 houses and 849 apartments.<sup>12</sup> Joannes' Riverside Apartments (and his Hilton Village) in Newport News provided a significant number of these dwelling units.

On April 6, 1922, Shipyard officials purchased the Riverside Apartments from the Emergency Fleet Corporation and set up the Newport News Land Corporation to take title to the properties. The buildings had a series of owners after this sale. In 1975 and 1979 two apartment buildings were torn down to make way for a parking lot. The remaining two buildings were purchased by the Roanoke-based firm of Fralin and Waldron, Incorporated, in 1982.

Many prominent Newport News citizens lived in these apartments and started their careers there. As an integral part of this city's life they were described in <u>Newport News 325 Years</u> as "Sturdily built at the outset, well managed, and sympathetically administered (promising) to continue to occupy this place over many years to come." Reviewing World War I housing in

<sup>10</sup><u>Recent Trends in American Housing</u>, p. 82.

<sup>11</sup>The Nation, p. 84.

<sup>12</sup>Housing for Defense, p. 14.

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United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

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RIVERSIDE APARTMENTS, NEWPORT NEWS, VA

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8. SIGNIFICANCE --Historical Background (continued)

1940 while anticipating housing needs for war workers in World War II, a commentator noted:

Apartment houses were constructed only when unavoidable. The structures themselves were excellent showing a quality and durability almost unknown in low-income housing. They have lasted well. They are still a credit to their communities.<sup>13</sup>

Current plans of Fralin and Waldron, Inc., call for renovation of the Riverside Apartments under the Economic Recovery Tax Act of 1981 for use as low- to moderate-income housing under the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development's Section 8 Moderate Rehabilitation Program.



<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup>Housing for Defense, p. 30.

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### **National Register of Historic Places** Inventorv—Nomination Form

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#### MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES 9.

"F.Y. Joannes Dies; Building Designer." <u>New York Times</u>, June 22, 1952, p. 70. "Government Housing Chaos." <u>The Nation</u>. Vol. CUIII. January 18, 1919, pp. 84-85.

"Government Industrial Housing a Business Proposition." The American Architect. Vol. CXIV. No. 2224, August 7, 1918, pp. 157-166.

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"Splendid Apartments Built by Shipyard Company." Daily Press. Newport News, Virginia, October 9, 1918, p. 8.

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