

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: Grove Court Apartments

Other names/site number: _____

Name of related multiple property listing: _____

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & number: 559 S. Court St.

City or town: Montgomery State: AL County: Montgomery

Not For Publication: Vicinity:

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 X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

 A B X C D

	/Executive Director	October 21, 2013
Signature of certifying official/Title:		Date
<u>Alabama Historical Commission</u>		
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

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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:)

Joy Edson H. Beall
Signature of the Keeper

12.11.13
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

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	sites
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	objects
<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/multiple dwelling

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT/International Style

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: CONCRETE, BRICK, GLASS

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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

Grove Court Apartments is a complex of three three-story reinforced concrete International Style apartment buildings that are interconnected by covered walkways. The complex fronts along S. Court Street to the west and its southern building extends along Grove Street to the south. The site is bordered to the east by an alley that bisects the block and to the north by an adjacent property. Though it suffers from demolition by neglect, the complex still retains its architectural integrity.

Narrative Description

Buildings #1 and #3 are identical rectangular buildings that mirror one another and extend the full depth of the site along its north and south property lines. Building #2 is a U-shaped building that is centered between Buildings #1 and #3 and extends from the western property line eastward approximately two-thirds of the depth of the site. The open end of the U faces west and each of its wings is identical and mirrors the other. The transverse wing consists of a central rectangular core with smaller square blocks to its north and south connected by intermediate stair towers. The central core is elevated on pillars that form an open first floor space, making its apparent height four stories. All of the buildings have flat built-up roofs.

The west façade of Building #1 consists of an otherwise blank brick wall with corner cut steel casement windows at each level at its south side and cutaway balconies with tall concrete apron walls that project slightly from the adjoining wall planes and angle slightly outward at its north side. The corner cut windows to the south have slightly projecting plain cast surrounds. A similar corner casement window with no surround is recessed slightly within the balcony and wraps to the south elevation. A stair tower is recessed one bay from the south side of the façade and has horizontal four-light steel corner cut window walls supported by concrete floor systems. The north elevation faces the exterior of the complex and has similar balconies at the sixth, twelfth, and end bays. The second through the fifth and the thirteenth through the sixteenth bays each have four sets of six-panel casement windows separated by narrow brick piers and are set within continuous plain cast surrounds to form horizontal bands at each floor level. Similar bands at the seventh through the eleventh bays have single casement windows at their center bays at the second and third floors with an open pass through at the first floor level. The east elevation is similar to the west elevation. The south elevation faces a courtyard on the interior of the complex and is visually divided into twenty-seven bays. Recessed balconies extend the full-width of the elevation at each floor level between the stair towers. The balconies have simple concrete apron walls. Cutaway balconies are set at each of its outer bays and each is flanked to the interior by the stair towers. Transverse open covered walkways obscure the center bays at

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each floor level and extend southward to Building #2. Entrances to the apartment units are located at the ninth, eleventh, seventeenth, and twentieth bays. Remaining bays have alternating double and triple casement windows.

The south elevation of the north wing, the north elevation of the south wing, and the east elevation of the transverse wing of Building #2 are similar in design to the north elevation of Building #1. The north elevation of the north wing, the south elevation of the south wing, and the west elevation of the transverse wing of Building #2 are similar in design to the south elevation of Building #1.

The complex houses seventy apartment units. The interiors of Buildings #1 and #3 are divided into six apartment units per floor. The outer four units are two-bedroom units and the inner two units are one-bedroom units. An incinerator room is centered at each level and corresponds to the transverse walkways. Building #2 has four units on each floor of each of its wings and its transverse wing has two one-bedroom units at its first floor separated by a courtyard, four one-bedroom units at the raised first floor of its central core, and four one-bedroom units at its second floor, and a large open laundry room at its third floor. Each unit has a small kitchen and bathroom with a combined living/dining area and one or two bedrooms. Ceilings and walls are finished with smooth plaster and floors are typically concrete upon which carpet or composition coverings were applied.

Open lawns are set between each building, within the U at Building #2, and at the rear of Building #2 and retain a variety of mature trees and shrubs. A low concrete retaining wall separates the east yard from the alley.

The buildings are relatively unaltered from their original plans. Changes have generally been limited to the installation of new floor finishes and the painting of the exterior walls. The complex has been vacant for more than a decade and has suffered considerable moisture-related deterioration and vandalism.

Archaeology

An archaeological assessment of the study area was not completed as part of this project. However, given the nature of the area's history, there is potential that subsurface remains could provide additional information about the historical development of the area.

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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

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Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1947

Significant Dates

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Clyde C. Pearson and Farrow L. Tittle, Architects
Bear Brothers, Inc. , General Contractors

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Period of Significance (Justification)

The period of significance for Grove Court Apartments is 1947, the year of its construction.

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.)

The Grove Court Apartments are locally significant under Criterion C as being the only documented example of an International Style apartment complex in Montgomery and one of the most prominent examples of the style statewide.

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

The Grove Court Apartments are an excellent illustration of an International Style apartment complex and are the only example documented in Montgomery. They display all of the typical elements of the style. Only a few other International Style buildings have been identified so far in the city. Among the other examples are several office buildings and a hospital. The Hill Building, at the northwest corner of Perry and Washington Streets, and the Professional Center Hospital, at the southeast corner of Church and Catoma Streets, have both been demolished. Grove Court is one of the best remaining examples of the International Style in the state and is one of only two large apartment complexes documented in the style, the other being the Legarde Apartments in Anniston.

Stylistically, the complex is part of a trend toward more streamlined geometric designs that became popular throughout the United States in the years immediately prior to and after the World War II era. Buildings in this style are typified by flat roofs, horizontal planes and geometric shapes.

Historical Narrative

Three large dwellings are shown at this site on an existing condition survey of the siteplan completed in early 1947. The surrounding neighborhood had traditionally included many large mansions, especially along S. Perry Street immediately east of the site. Carl W. Bear, who was a principal in the Bear Lumber Company along with his father and brothers, was an incorporator for Bear Brothers, Inc., a construction company was established in 1946.¹ Bear acquired the subject property and developed it in association with his brothers Joe and Jack Bear through a corporation named Grove Court Apartments, Inc. The company was seeking to fill part of the demand for housing in the city created by the influx of population in the aftermath of World War

¹ <http://www.bearbrothers.com/history.php>

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II, "particularly for veterans wanting to rent good class homes."² The complex was constructed in 1947 with Bear Brothers, Inc. serving as the general contractor. Realty Mortgage Company provided financing for the project that was insured by the Federal Housing Administration. Grove Court Apartments, Inc. acquired the property on January 30, 1948, indicating that construction was complete by that time.³ The complex is shown in its present form on a 1950 update to the Sanborn maps that carries an annotation: "built 1947." The 1947-1948 city directory for Montgomery indicates also that the building was then under construction.

An article in the January 18, 1947 edition of the Montgomery Advertiser included the following description:

Construction will begin within the next few weeks on a 70-unit apartment house in the heart of the city, which will be modern in design and incorporate all modern housing facilities. Many of the features of this building will introduce revolutionary ideas in architecture and design into Montgomery. There will be ample community laundry and drying facilities on the roof; lockers in the basement; garbage chutes to a general garbage center; a special play area for children; all electric kitchens in the apartments, and private sun porches for each apartment.

The article continues:

The design will be modern, and the arcades and terraces—created by the building of the porches—will accentuate these modern lines. The magnolia and oak trees now on the site will, so far as possible, be preserved, however, to soften the austerity of the design.

Grove Court Apartments were designed by the architectural firm of Clyde C. Pearson and Farrow L. Tittle, Architects. Parker A. Narrows and John H. Hancock were listed as associates with the firm on the drawings for the project that were dated March 26, 1947. Clyde Collins Pearson (1904-1975) established his own architecture firm in Montgomery in 1941. A 1926 graduate of the Alabama Polytechnic Institute (now Auburn University), Pearson served as a draftsman from 1925 to 1928, first with Frederick Ansfeld, then with Harry Wheelock, and finally with Warren, Knight, and Davis in Birmingham. He served as the architect for the Alabama State Department of Education from 1928 to 1933 and again from 1935 to 1941. From 1933 to 1931, Pearson was an architect for the National Park Service. Pearson served as the President of the Alabama Council of AIA in 1942 and 1943.⁴

² "Court Street Named as Site of Apartment," Montgomery Advertiser, January 18, 1947, p. 1.

³ Montgomery, AL, Montgomery County Judge of Probate Office, Deed Book 285, p. 128.

⁴ American Institute of Architects, "Questionnaire for Architect's Roster and/or Register of Architects Qualified for Public Works," Clyde C. Pearson & Farrow H. Tittle, Architects, October 1946.

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Farrow Lee Tittle (1906-1981) attended Southern Methodist University from 1924 to 1927 and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology from 1928 to 1931. He began his career as a designer for LaRoche & Dahl (1936) in Dallas and Moreland Griffin Smith (1936-1942) in Montgomery. He joined Pearson in 1943 and became a partner in the firm in 1945.

A "Questionnaire for Architect's Roster and/or Register of Architects Qualified for Public Works" submitted by the firm to the American Institute of Architects stated:

At present this firm has an organization composed of 20 persons – architects, designers, draftsmen and structural men. Practice is varied and firm has designed many schools and college buildings, housing jobs, commercial jobs, theatres, airport buildings, hospital and government buildings. Government agencies with which we have had contracts include Federal Works Agency, Public Buildings Administration, F.P.H.A., and U.S. Engineers, as well as the State of Alabama.⁵

Among the firms' projects completed prior to 1946 in the International style include a school in Alexander City, the Administration Building for the Montgomery Municipal Airport, an office building for the State of Alabama, a 200-room hospital, and a showroom for the Vickery Equipment Company in Hartwell, Georgia. The firm also designed buildings in other styles during the period, most of which were simplified versions of classical styles.

Grove Court Apartments was awarded a "Mention" in the Progressive Architecture Awards of 1947 and the "Jury commended it for its clarity of plan and adaptation to site and climate." The apartments were featured in the June 1948 and February 1949 issues of Progressive Architecture Magazine.⁶

The apartments catered to a variety of residents in its early years. The 1949 city directory indicates that only one of the complex's seventy units was then vacant. A sampling of the occupations listed for the building's tenants include an adjudicator for the Veteran's Administration, a clerk at the Selective Service System, a salesman for the Germain Lumber Company, a mechanic at Wilbanks Motor Service, a typist at the State Department of Archives and History, a clerk at Olan Mills Portrait Studio, a Field Engineer for Gates Rubber Company, a foreman for Bear Brothers, Inc., and several widows. Local tradition has held that the building was built primarily for married couples, although the city directory indicates that a number of widows and other singles resided there. The original architect's plans include a "Play Area" in the open area under the core of Building #2 and a marketing brochure for the architect shows several photos with children playing there and elsewhere in the complex.

The Grove Court Apartment continued to operate as an apartment complex through the 1990s. The complex was closed over a decade ago and has sat vacant and deteriorating since that time. The complex was recognized for its architectural value to the state by its inclusion on the listing

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Pearson, Tittle, and Narrows, Architects, advertising brochure, n.d.

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of Places in Peril in 2009 by the Alabama Historical Commission and the Alabama Trust for Historic Preservation.

9. Major Bibliographical References

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

Alabama Department of Archives and History (ADAH) Postcard Collection, ADAH Digital Archives.
<http://digital.archives.alabama.gov/index.php>.

American Institute of Architects. "Questionnaire for Architect's Roster and/or Register of Architects Qualified for Public Works." Clyde C. Pearson & Farrow H. Tittle, Architects. October 1946.

Ayres, Edward L. The Promise of the New South: Life After Reconstruction. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992; 15th Anniversary Edition, 2007.

"Court Street Named As Site Of Apartment." Montgomery Advertiser, January 18, 1947, p. 1. Historical Census Browser, University of Virginia, Geospatial and Statistical Data Center, 2004. Accessed March 28, 2012. <http://mapserver.lib.virginia.edu/collections/>.

Montgomery, AL. Montgomery County Judge of Probate. Deed Books.

Pearson, Clyde C. and Farrow L. Tittle, Architects. "An Apartment Building for Grove Court Apartments, Inc." Architectural Drawings. Montgomery, A: Clyde C. Pearson and Farrow L. Tittle, Architects 1947.

_____. Advertising Brochure, n.d.

Polk, R.L. and Company, Publishers. Montgomery City Directory. Polk, R.L. and Company, Publishers. 1947-1948, 1949, and 1951-1952.

Rogers, William Warren, et. al. Alabama: The History of a Deep South State. Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1994.

Sanborn Map Company. Montgomery, Montgomery County, Alabama, 1900, 1910, 1950. New York: Sanborn Map Company.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency

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- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other
- Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1.38 ac.

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: | Longitude: |
| 2. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 3. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 4. Latitude: | Longitude: |

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

- | | | |
|-------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1. Zone: 16 | Easting: 565077 | Northing: 3581504 |
| 2. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

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Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The nominated property includes the entire parcel designated 10-04-18-2-009-006.000 in the tax assessment records for Montgomery County, Alabama.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The nominated boundary represents the historic boundary of parcel on which the resource is located.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: David B. Schneider (reviewed by Susan Enzweiler, AHC NR Coordinator)
organization: Schneider Historic Preservation, LLC
street & number: 411 E. 6th Street
city or town: Anniston state: AL zip code: 36207
e-mail: dbschneider@bellsouth.net
telephone: 256-310-6320
date: August 2013

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.)

Photographs

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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

Name of Property: Grove Court Apartments

City or Vicinity: Montgomery

County: Montgomery State: AL

Photographer: David B. Schneider

Date Photographed: July 2013

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

Photo #1 (AL_MontgomeryCo_GroveCourtAparts_0001)
West façade, camera facing northeast

Photo #2 (AL_MontgomeryCo_GroveCourtAparts_0002)
West façade, camera facing southeast

Photo #3 (AL_MontgomeryCo_GroveCourtAparts_0003)
West façade, camera facing southeast

Photo #4 (AL_MontgomeryCo_GroveCourtAparts_0004)
West façade, camera facing northeast

Photo #5 (AL_MontgomeryCo_GroveCourtAparts_0005)
West façade, camera facing east

Photo #6 (AL_MontgomeryCo_GroveCourtAparts_0006)
West façade, camera facing east

Photo #7 (AL_MontgomeryCo_GroveCourtAparts_0007)
West façade (left) and south elevation (right), camera facing northeast

Photo #8 (AL_MontgomeryCo_GroveCourtAparts_0008)

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South (left) and east (right) elevations, camera facing northwest

Photo #9 (AL_MontgomeryCo_GroveCourtApartments_0009)
North elevation, camera facing west

Photo #10 (AL_MontgomeryCo_GroveCourtApartments_0010)
East elevation, camera facing west

Photo #11 (AL_MontgomeryCo_GroveCourtApartments_0011)
Building #1, east elevation, camera facing northwest

Photo #12 (AL_MontgomeryCo_GroveCourtApartments_0012)
Building #2, east elevation, camera facing southwest

Photo #13 (AL_MontgomeryCo_GroveCourtApartments_0013)
Building #2, east elevation, camera facing west

Photo #14 (AL_MontgomeryCo_GroveCourtApartments_0014)
Building #2, south wing, north elevation, camera facing southwest

Photo #15 (AL_MontgomeryCo_GroveCourtApartments_0014)
Building #2, west elevation, camera facing east

Photo #16 (AL_MontgomeryCo_GroveCourtApartments_0016)
Building #2, south wing, north elevation, camera facing southwest

Photo #17 (AL_MontgomeryCo_GroveCourtApartments_0017)
Building #1, south elevation, camera facing northwest

Photo #18 (AL_MontgomeryCo_GroveCourtApartments_0018)
Buildings #1 and #2, walkways, camera facing northwest

Photo #19 (AL_MontgomeryCo_GroveCourtApartments_0019)
Buildings #1 and #2, walkways, camera facing southwest

Photo #20 (AL_MontgomeryCo_GroveCourtApartments_0020)
Buildings #1, south elevation, camera facing north

Photo #21 (AL_MontgomeryCo_GroveCourtApartments_0021)
Buildings #2, north elevation, camera facing south

Photo #22 (AL_MontgomeryCo_GroveCourtApartments_0022)
Typical unit, Building #1, interior view, camera facing northeast

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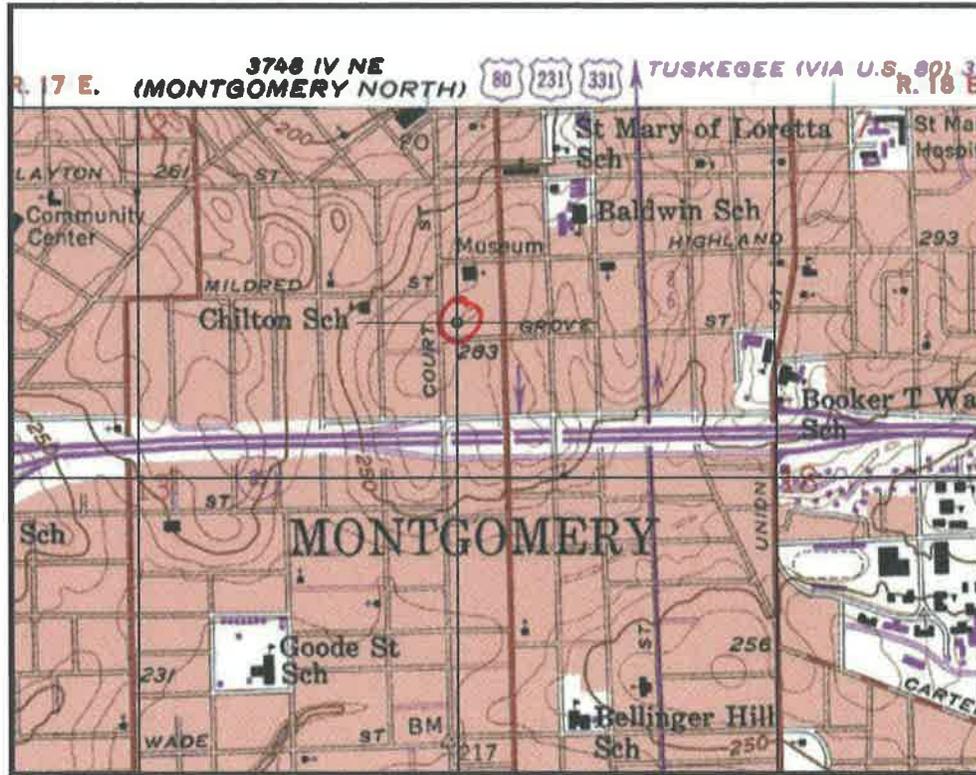
Photo #23 (AL_MontgomeryCo_GroveCourtAparts_0023)
Typical unit, Building #3, interior view, camera facing southeast

Photo #24 (AL_MontgomeryCo_GroveCourtAparts_0024)
Typical stair, Building #2, interior view, camera facing northeast

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

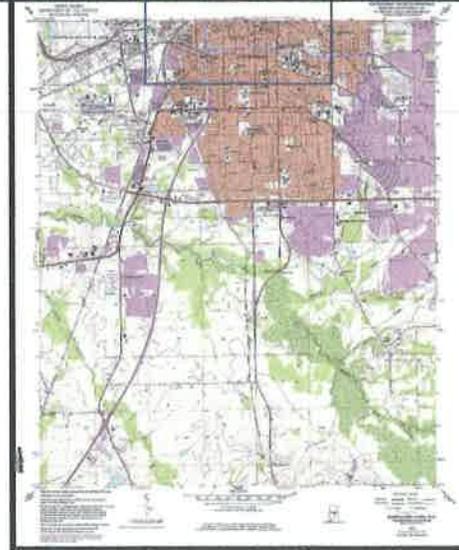
Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Grove Court Apartments Montgomery, Montgomery County, Alabama



U.S.G.S. Topographic Map
Gadsden West Quadrangle

Zone Easting Northing
1 16 565077 3581504















GROVE
S COURT

FOR SALE
CALL [unreadable]

Yellow arrow pointing right



UL 43

ABC

NO
THRU
TRAFFIC





DANGER
NO TRESPASSING
BY ANYONE



























