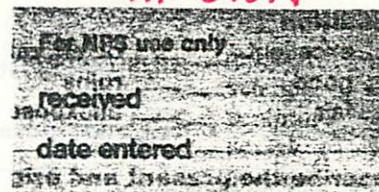


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

WASHINGTON

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form



See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Malden Towers

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 4521 North Malden Street

not for publication

city, town Chicago

vicinity of

state Illinois

code 12

county Cook

code 031

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Bank of Ravenswood - Trust No. 25-4040

street & number 1825 West Lawrence Avenue

city, town Chicago

vicinity of

state Illinois

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Cook County Recorder's Office

street & number 118 North Clark Street

city, town Chicago

state Illinois

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title none has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records

city, town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_

## 7. Description

### Condition

excellent  
 good  
 fair

deteriorated  
 ruins  
 unexposed

### Check one

unaltered  
 altered

### Check one

original site  
 moved date \_\_\_\_\_

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Malden Towers apartment building is a six-story common-corridor apartment building with a large seventh-story penthouse. The facade and most of the lateral elevations are finished in light tan pressed brick and cream-colored terra cotta, with polygonal turrets at the upper front corners.

The building is sited at the rear of a city lot about 50 by 143 feet, west front to the street. The main block is set back 8 feet from the north and south property lines. About 29 feet from the rear line the setbacks stop and the rear of the building occupies the full 50-foot width. In the front there are two-story wings 7 feet wide and about 39 feet deep forming part of the lobby, lounge, and office areas, which stand at grade and have 14-foot ceilings. Behind this, the center and rear portions are raised over a basement containing service areas.

Above the six-floor block there is a flat roof and upon this roof stands a large one-story bungalow or penthouse structure roughly 25 by 95 in plan. This bungalow is finished in stucco and has a flat roof with Spanish tile overhangs.

The facade divides into base, shaft, and capital, and is strictly symmetrical. Turrets and parapets, and the use of decorative motifs such as swords and shields, crossed fasces, and floral designs are evidently intended to give a medieval flavor.

The base is in cream terra cotta, laid up as random ashlar, with polychromatic ornament. The entrance is on center and consists of a large arched portal bordered with a floral design. Flanking it are two smaller arched openings for the lobby and lounge windows, which are French doors with wrought-iron grilles. Similar arches appear in the one-story wings. Between the wings and the main block the corners of the facade angle back at 45 degrees and similar but still smaller arched windows appear in the angles. The fan light over the doors has a simple geometrical pattern. The original doors have been lost, as have two bronze lanterns which originally flanked the entrance. The base is strongly terminated by a pointed-arch molding running across the entire facade.

The facade of the shaft is brick with terra-cotta trim. It is divided into three bays and the central bay is emphasized by joining the 3rd, 4th, and 5th floor windows with terra cotta, and placing a terra-cotta balcony at the 3rd. The corners angle back at 45 degrees and are likewise emphasized by terra-cotta trim. The windows of the second floor are trimmed in terra cotta so as to give a horizontal movement which causes this floor to act as a transition between the base and the shaft. The one-story wings are joined to the shaft by terra-cotta ailerons, which lead to platforms supporting seated chimeras (the chimera on the north wing has been lost).

(Continued on Continuation Sheet #1)

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Continuation sheet

#1

Item number 7

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A string course separates the shaft from the upper zone of the facade, consisting of the sixth floor and a high parapet. The central window here is a projecting oriel with two narrow casements, while the side windows are double-hung sash with simple trim. The angles carry octagonal turrets which overhang the angles of the lower floors and project slightly above the parapet. Originally these turrets had steep pyramidal roofs but these are now gone. The parapet is horizontal over the side bays but in the center bay forms a triangular gable with a small blind window. Two slender engaged tourelles flank this gable.

Similar gables are found on the lateral elevations about 20 feet back from the facade, and terra-cotta trim is again used to draw the windows of these bays into a vertical movement. Another such gable was originally found further back on the sides, but for some reason these rear gables were removed. For the most part the lateral elevations are finished with the same pressed brick and terra cotta as the front, but less elaborately. The parapet is battlemented between the gables. Where the rear gables were removed, these crenellations were not introduced, but the parapet was finished smoothly in the same brick and terra cotta.

The wide rear block is done in common brick and exposes the concrete-slab structure. The only feature here is a pair of balconies for the rear sixth-floor apartments, with little tile overhangs and iron grilles. The sixth floor is set back two feet from the alley to accommodate these balconies.

The rooftop bungalow was originally conceived as a 4-bedroom luxury apartment, but was redesigned to hold five hotel rooms. The front room gave onto a rooftop patio surfaced in quarry tile. The roofs of the one-story wings also were intended as terraces and were paved with quarry tile. These areas of the roofs have now been covered with asphalt or tar.

The high parapet corresponds to a crawl space above the sixth floor which gives access to mechanical and electrical systems.

Planning of the apartments was similar from floor to floor but no two apartments on the same floor are alike. In fact the common corridor is off center; the tenant space is about 16 feet wide on the south side of the corridor and 11 on the north.

Originally the front of the main floor was a grand lobby and lounge with a Spanish flavor. The ceilings had plaster beams. There was a large fireplace and doors had small openings filled with obscure glass and protected by wrought-iron grilles. Insensitive remodelings have spoiled the character of this space, but much of the original work appears to be in place and may be recoverable.

The brick fence in front of the building is a later addition.

# 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1928-29

Builder/Architect N. Ronneberg, Inc.

## Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

In a Chicago neighborhood rich in fine apartment buildings, the Malden Towers stands out as exceptionally ambitious and distinctive. Its imaginative castle-like design, its lavish use of fine materials on the sides as well as the front, and its unusual decorative vocabulary give it a striking presence, and it epitomizes the craftsmanship and optimism of the 1920s.

The Sheridan Park section of Chicago's Uptown, like many outlying city neighborhoods, underwent several waves of successively more intense development between 1891, the date of subdivision, and 1929, when the greatest building boom came to a halt. The large suburban homes of the 1890s were followed by six-flats around 1905-1910 and then by larger and larger buildings containing smaller and smaller apartments.

The last step in this progression is the "common-corridor" building, which attempts to maximize land use by improving an interior lot, typically 50 feet wide, with an apartment hotel covering as much of the land as possible; small dwelling units are placed along a common corridor running from front to back.

A recent study identifies 77 Uptown buildings of this type, although not all characteristics are always present. Of all these buildings, the one with the most distinctive appearance may well be the Malden Towers.

The six- or seven-story height is not unusual, but in the Malden Towers special care was given to proportion. Instead of using the full 50-foot frontage, the architect narrowed the facade to only two-thirds of the available dimension, apparently to emphasize the vertical.

The use of fine brick and terra cotta for the lateral elevations is unique for this class of buildings. The use of exposed concrete slab and common-brick infill, widespread at the time, is here confined to the rear 30 feet.

Finally, the building displays an unusual decorative style. Most of the buildings of this type fall into a narrow range of ornamental styles and one sees repeatedly the same red brick and the same classically inspired ornamental vocabulary. The "medieval Spanish" flavor here provides a welcome contrast, with the projecting turrets and battlemented parapets, and the use of polychrome terra cotta for decorative elements representing swords and shields, fasces, and floral motifs.

The Malden Towers was announced in the Chicago Sunday Tribune of October 14, 1928, and the reporter was enthusiastic. It was open and renting in the late summer of 1929.

(Continued on Continuation Sheet #2)

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#2

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The building was designed by N. T. Ronneberg, a Norwegian-American engineer (1876-1939) who came to the U.S. in 1898. Settling in Chicago, he established a reputation as an engineer for industrial buildings, and then in 1928 opened his own architectural firm intending to specialize in large apartment buildings. He apparently built about a dozen before the Depression brought construction to a halt.

The building seems to have been a financial success in spite of the Depression, always well rented, and sometimes attracting celebrities. According to local tradition, Bob Hope, the entertainer, maintained an apartment there for many years.

To publicize the building it was given dramatic night lighting (described in Ronneberg's article in the Norwegian-American Technical Journal) and thus was literally a landmark of the North Side. The views from the rooftop bungalow are panoramic.

The Malden Towers has been altered only slightly over the years and retains its unique character. Its brick and terra cotta exteriors are in excellent condition.

This "medieval Spanish" tower, designed by a Norwegian-born engineer, built at a time of frenzied overbuilding, rich in materials, generous in its use of space, and unique in design and detail, is a monument to the great eclectic period of the twenties, one of the most distinctive buildings of its kind, and irreplaceable today.

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Continuation sheet #3

Item number 9 and 10

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Item No. 9: Major bibliographical references

- Original plans and drawings (owner's possession)
- Norwegian-American Technical Journal, vol. 3 No. 1, February 1930 (owner's possession). Articles about Malden Towers (several illustrations) and about N. T. Ronneberg.
- Kenneth Bjork, Saga in steel and concrete, Northfield, Minnesota, 1947, pp. 368-9: Narrative of Ronneberg's career.
- The common-corridor building. Uptown Chicago Commission, 1983 (135 pp.). Opp. p. 21 is a map showing the location of 77 such buildings in Uptown.
- Ancient permit files, City of Chicago, Dept. of Inspectional Services; esp. File No. 200093 for construction of Malden Towers.
- Homer Hoyt, One hundred years of land values in Chicago. Univ. of Chicago, 1933. On successive waves of development of Chicago neighborhoods.

Item No. 1): Legal description of property

Lot 113 in Sheridan Drive Subdivision, being a subdivision of the north 3/4 of the east 1/2 of the northwest 1/4 of Section 17-40-14 together with that part of the west 1/2 of said northwest 1/4 which lies north of the south 800 feet thereof and east of the Green Bay Road.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet #3.

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 0.16

Quadrangle name CHICAGO LOOP

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A 16 445140 46457910  
Zone Easting Northing

B           
Zone Easting Northing

C         

D         

E         

F         

G         

H         

Verbal boundary description and justification

See Continuation Sheet #3.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state (does not apply) code county code

state code county code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Martin C. Tangora

organization N/A date July 21, 1983

street & number 4636 North Magnolia Avenue telephone (312) 878-7118

city or town Chicago state Illinois

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

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 *David Ferry*

title *Director* date 10/24/83

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration



# United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

DEC 12 1983

IN REPLY REFER TO:

The Director of the National Park Service is pleased to inform you that the following properties have been entered in the National Register of Historic Places beginning December 4, 1983 and ending December 10, 1983. For further information call (202) 343-9552.

STATE, County, Vicinity, Property, Address, (Date Listed)

ARIZONA, Maricopa County, Phoenix, San Carlos Hotel, 202 N. Central Ave. (12/08/83)

ARIZONA, Navajo County, Winslow vicinity, Chevelon Creek Bridge, Chevelon Creek, SE of Winslow (12/08/83)

CONNECTICUT, Fairfield County, Stamford, St. Andrew's Protestant Episcopal Church, 1231 Washington Blvd. (12/06/83)

ILLINOIS, Cook County, Chicago, Malden Towers, 4521 N. Malden St. (12/08/83)

ILLINOIS, Cook County, Chicago, New Michigan Hotel, 2135 S. Michigan Ave. (12/08/83)

ILLINOIS, Cook County, Chicago, Oliver Building, 159 N. Dearborn St. (12/08/83)

ILLINOIS, Cook County, Chicago, S/S CLIPPER, Navy Pier 600 E. Grand Ave. (12/08/83)

ILLINOIS, Cook County, Oak Park, Ridgeland-Oak Park Historic District, Roughly bounded by Austin Blvd., Harlem, Ridgeland, and Chicago Aves., Lake and Madison Sts. (12/08/83)

ILLINOIS, Jefferson County, Belle vicinity, Judd, C. H., House, Ina-Belle Rive Rd. (12/08/83)

ILLINOIS, Kane County, St. Charles, Beith, William, House, 6 Indiana St. (12/07/83)

ILLINOIS, Lake County, Libertyville, Public Service Building, 344-354 N. Milwaukee Ave. (12/08/83)

ILLINOIS, McLean County, Bloomington, Holy Trinity Church Rectory and Convent, 704 N. Main and 106 W. Chestnut Sts. (12/08/83)

ILLINOIS, Montgomery County, Virden vicinity, Thomas, Lewis H., House, N. Virden Rd. (12/07/83)

ILLINOIS, Ogle County, Stillman Valley, Stillman's Run Battle Site, Roosevelt and Spruce Sts. (12/08/83)

KENTUCKY, Jefferson County, Louisville, Ballard, Rogers Clark, Memorial School, 4200 Lime Kiln Ln. (12/08/83)

KENTUCKY, Jefferson County, Louisville, Gaffney House (Jefferson County MRA), River Rd. (12/08/83)

KENTUCKY, Jefferson County, Louisville, Halde man House (Jefferson County MRA), 3609 Glenview Ave. (12/08/83)

KENTUCKY, Jefferson County, Louisville, Thornburgh House (West Louisville MRA), 376 N. 26th St. (12/08/83)

LOUISIANA, Terrebonne Parish, Houma, Houma Historic District, Roughly bounded by East Park Ave., Main, Roussell, Goode, School, Belanger, Church, Verret, Grinage, Lafayette, and Canal Sts. (12/08/83)

MARYLAND, Baltimore (Independent City), Dundalk Dundalk Historic District, Roughly bounded by Liberty Pkwy., Dunman, Dundark, Willow Spring and Sunship Rds., Colgate, Chesapeake and Patapsco Aves. (12/08/83)

MARYLAND, Baltimore County, Parkton, Parkton Hotel, York Rd. (12/08/83)

MISSISSIPPI, Copiah County, Hazlehurst, Cook House, 222 Extension St. (12/08/83)

MISSISSIPPI, Madison County, Tilda Bouge, (12/09/83)