

## History of The Former Hotel Easton, 140 Northampton St., Easton, Pa.

*(Text from the application for Part 1, Historic Preservation Certification; approval was granted on 12/12/07 as contributing to the historic significance of the Easton Historic District.*

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**Description of physical appearance:** The Hotel Easton, now the Eastonian, occupies an important corner site on Northampton Street, one of the two principal streets of the original Penn plan and for most of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early twentieth centuries, the principal commercial street of the city. The hotel is constructed of the 1920s rough-textured yellow brick that reflects the impact of the Traymore Hotel in Atlantic City (1914-1915) with limestone trim setting off the principal architectural elements. The main façade is massed with a raised center and recessed corners referring to the 1920s New York set-back skyscraper form, but the main block of the building is a full ten stories in height. Bricks are grouped as quoins to define the central block and to frame the adjacent wings. Despite the references to modernism for the overall form, secondary details link the building to the Federal Revival that was common in the 1920s. These elements, largely reflecting the architecture of Robert Adam, appear in the delicate colonnettes and flattened lunette ornaments of the oversized first floor windows that lighted the lobbies and public spaces, the flattened and delicate panels on the belt course that set off the upper stories of guest rooms and the broken pediments of the 9. floor that sets off the attic. While the main block is symmetrical on the Northampton Street front, the main entrance is pushed over toward the Green Street corner where it is sheltered by an overhanging canopy. A secondary entrance with a similar canopy accents the Green Street doorway on the east side. That side continues the architectural themes of the front with the oversized windows of the ballroom level, but without the lunettes of the center windows, on the first two bays and more utilitarian windows toward the rear. At the eighth story, a limestone colored band sets off the top stories. Grooves in the band suggest tryglyphs of classical orders.

The interior is approached from the two main entrances via large stairs. The stairs and floors are surfaced in terrazzo and lead into a generous lobby that retains its original massive octagonal columns that support the beams of the structure. The stair sequence continues up another half level toward the front of the building where the ballroom looked out over Northampton Street. The lobby extends to the rear of the building where it joins the original dining room. That room also retains its decorative plaster and moldings on the walls. Upper levels were utilized as 170 hotel rooms. These have been combined to create 40 apartments while retaining the original elevator lobbies.

The hotel was abandoned in 1989 and remained closed for nearly a generation with significant damage on the interior and upper levels. In 2004 the building was acquired and renovated as condominiums with great care for the surviving historic features. The present use has restored the exterior brick and limestone façade, maintained the original entrance, lobby stair and lobby as well as the rear hotel restaurant while incorporating the front ballroom into two level apartment units. On the upper levels, elevators remain in the original position with units replacing the hotel rooms. Despite the shift from hotel to condominium, the building retains a high degree of integrity that makes it a contributing resource in its historic district.

Date of Construction: 1924-6 \_\_\_\_\_ Source of Date: Philadelphia Real Estate Record & Builders  
Guide, 39:40 Oct 1924

Date(s) of Alteration(s): 2004-5 \_\_\_\_\_

**Statement of significance:** In the 1920s, many of Pennsylvania's mid-sized cities including Bethlehem, Allentown, and Pottsville in the east and Lancaster, York, Carlisle and Harrisburg vied with each other in the creation of downtown hotels that mimicked the ever-increasing splendor of major metropolitan hotels. These became the ornament of the new downtown and were usually the work of important Philadelphia architects who brought contemporary styling and up-to-date layouts to the new buildings. Philadelphians Ritter and Shay for example designed the comparable Hotel Bethlehem in the 1920s as well as the slightly later Americus Hotel in Allentown.

Easton was a part of this movement with the construction of the Hotel Easton. It is located on Northampton Street, the main business street that connects the bridge across the Delaware to the downtown public square. The Hotel Easton is an integral part of the early twentieth century downtown and marks the continuing evolution of the 18<sup>th</sup> century village into a modern small city. As such it marks what might be called the 'metropolitization' phase of early twentieth century towns as they tried to capture the architectural fashions and building types that represented the new modern world.

The building has added distinction as a significant work of design by a well-known Philadelphia architectural firm, Thomas, Martin & Kirkpatrick. Walter H. Thomas, Sydney Martin and Donald Kirkpatrick were graduates of the University of Pennsylvania School of Architecture and in the 1920s were among the better known firms in Philadelphia. Among their most important works is the handsome Girard College Chapel (1931) in a modern beaux-arts style, the powerful power plant (now the Hollenback Center) at the University of Pennsylvania (1923) and the delicate Gothic revival Christian Association (YMCA) on the Penn campus (1926). They were also the architects of several of the hotels for mid-sized cities including another hotel in Allentown, a hotel in Pottsville and they designed a modernistic hotel at Brigantine Beach. The Easton Hotel exemplified the architectural character of the age in its emphasis on modern forms within a traditional architectural stylistic frame. The hotel had additional importance as the new shared civic space of Easton that supplanted the old public-private churches and similar facilities. In its first half century, it was the site of weddings, conferences, and other events. As such it is a key local landmark that forms a principal anchor of its community.

The Eastonian is the chief building at the southeast corner of the city's downtown National Register District and forms an important anchor of the historic district.