

Carlton Towers
&
THE BEACON ON 3RD STREET
A HISTORY

With Thanks To
Mark Mahaffey, John & Heidi Marling,
Monica Kile, The Public Library,
Chris Cutler, Mike & Jeannette Harrison, Pat Garvey & her Grandmother

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CHAPTER ONE

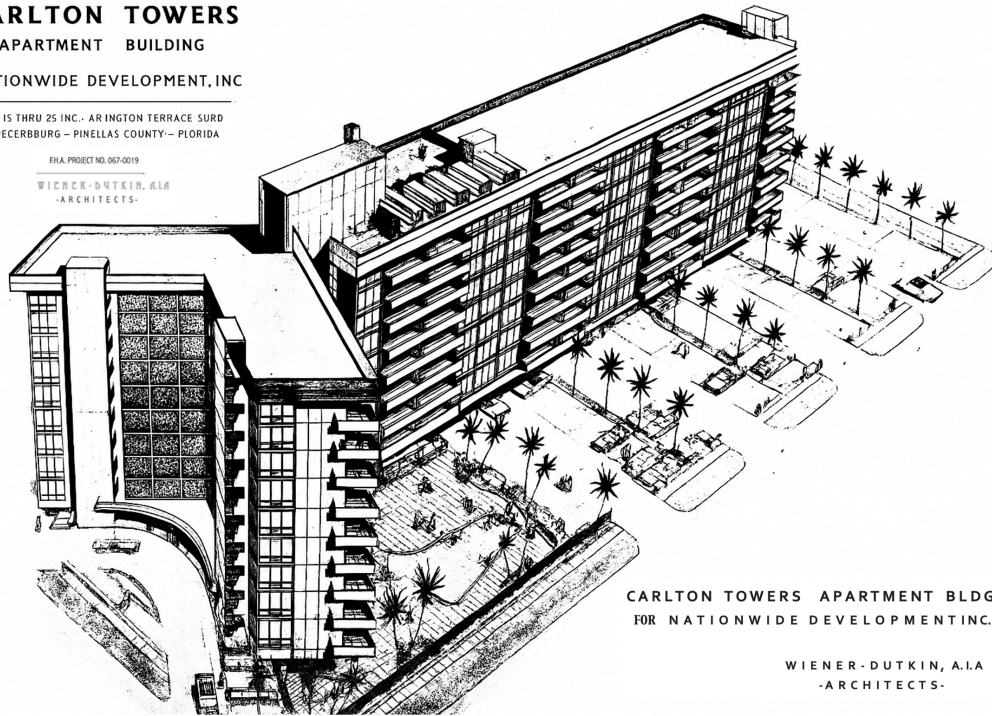
CARLTON TOWERS RISING IN ST. PETERSBURG

CARLTON TOWERS
APARTMENT BUILDING
FOR
NATIONWIDE DEVELOPMENT, INC.

LOTS 15 THRU 25 INC. - ARINGTON TERRACE SUBD
ST. PETERSBURG - PINELLAS COUNTY - FLORIDA

EHA PROJECT NO. 067-0019

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ARCHITECTS.



CARLTON TOWERS APARTMENT BLDG
FOR NATIONWIDE DEVELOPMENT, INC.

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ARCHITECTS.

The news first leaked on a Tuesday in September of 1959. It didn't make the front page. There, on the inside page of the local section, was news that a vacant lot in downtown St. Petersburg had finally sold. Details were sketchy.



"Longest-held unused block in the St. Petersburg core area, the Fisher tract on 5th Ave. S. at 3rd St., is likely to see development in 1959-60. Park-like, it has stood vacant while all the sites surrounding it have been developed with homes and apartment buildings. A Miami Beach corporation which has plans for its use, yet unannounced, is the buyer."

A follow-up story appeared December 22, 1959, on Page 17, just below the “Christmas Is For Children...” headline. Douglas Doubleday reported that Robert Lipman and his partner, P.C. Braunstein, both of Miami, had completed the purchase of the Fisher tract the day before, paying Al W. Fisher \$135,000 in cash.



“The largest modern rental apartment structure on this Florida coast will rise in 1960 on the south edge of downtown St. Petersburg. This \$4 million project, the 10-story, 200-unit Carlton Towers, is the first step in a long-term Suncoast development program. The Y-shaped tower structure, each unit with a balcony view of Tampa Bay, will refresh a southside neighborhood. Occupancy is scheduled for late December 1960.”

The first sketch of Carlton Towers appeared in the Sunday newspaper a week later. The paper reported that construction of the structure would begin in the spring.

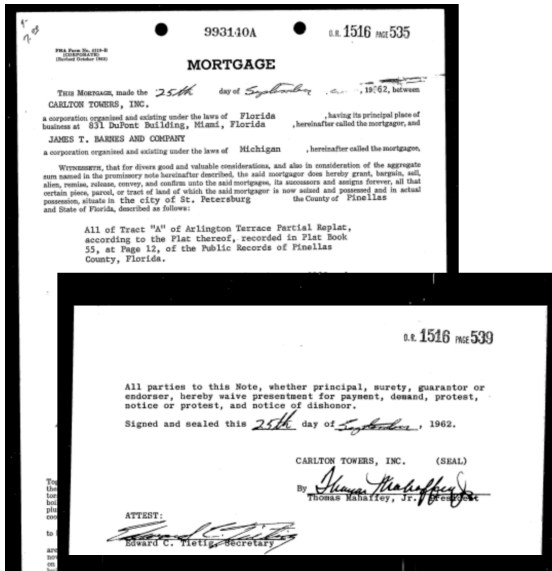
But it was a year and a half before the city of St. Petersburg issued a building permit to “construct a \$2,450,000 apartment building ... between Del Mar Terrace and Fifth Avenue South, from Second to Third Streets.”



Carlton Towers To Rise Downtown Here

This visualizes the 200-unit Carlton Towers rental apartment project which Miami-New-York investors said they will start in April in downtown St. Peters-

each unit with a seascape view from private balconies. The developer, which just purchased a lon-



At the time, the Mahaffey Apartment Company was one of the largest owners of FHA insured multi-family properties in the nation. The Towers would be built at a cost of \$3.5 million and was mortgaged by FHA in the amount of \$2,933,800, under Title 207, helping to ensure lower rental fees.

Crews got to work in December 1962. The Clearwater Flying Company documented their progress. The lot was first cleared and graded to level the site, followed by a surveyor marking the

building's footprint. Soil testing was completed, and underground utility lines were then installed.

Dozens of men scurried about the property. Project managers, civil engineers, crane operators, masonry workers, electricians, plumbers, carpenters, building inspectors. Of his employees, Thomas Mahaffey, Jr. once called them "Go-to-hell people. They'll go to hell for us because of the way we take care of them."



DECEMBER 1962



FEBRUARY 1963



MAY 1963



JUNE 1963



AUGUST 1963



Then-teenager and now-chairman of the Mahaffey Apartment Company, Mark Mahaffey remembered the year-long construction project.

“I came down during spring break and then after I graduated from high school. We had air conditioned models on the 2nd floor so that people could see the apartments, and we rented out apartments as each floor was built,” Mark recalled.

An article appearing in the St. Petersburg Times in mid-summer described the model apartments’ staging.

“The interiors were decorated to heighten the spacious effect. Italian provincial pieces and unusual accessories provide a formal but charming atmosphere. Gold and pale beige tones accented with touches of moss green and light blue, create a welcoming ambiance...”

Carlton Towers promoted the roof gardens, a swimming pool, coffee shop, card room, drug store, doctor’s office, and assigned parking.

Three months before its grand opening, Carlton Towers began heavy promotion in the local newspapers. Advertised as St. Petersburg's only downtown residential hi-rise offering “Beautiful modern rental apartments, luxurious carefree living, furnished and decorated by Lester Bros.” The newspapers called Carlton Towers “swank” and predicted it would bring “a look like that of Miami Beach, Las Vegas and other picturesque cities.”



THE LAND SEEMED TO BE WAITING

Over the first October weekend of 1963, four years after news broke of “the largest modern rental-apartment structure on this Florida coast,” in the face of financing troubles, permit delays and a change in developers, Carlton Towers officially opened. It was the first residential building of more than six stories in downtown St. Petersburg in decades.

The newspaper reported “The Carlton Towers was turned into a festive spot last night as more than 450 guests assembled for a gala opening night party...”

Tom and Jane Mahaffey, their son James and his wife, welcomed several hundred dignitaries and guests to the Mahaffey Apartment Company’s first development in Florida. One honored guest was 92 year old Al Fisher, who had originally owned the tract.



“Somehow, the land seemed to be waiting for a project like Carlton Towers,” Fisher said. “We had many offers for this piece of property but none of them seemed right. This lovely apartment is a building of which we can all be proud.”



Clearwater Flying Co.

OPENING WEEKEND

October 5, 1963

Tom Mahaffey and his company were far from finished. Of the 184 one and two-bedroom apartments, more than 100 had been rented, which meant they still needed to get the word out. Advertisements called it an "Ultra Modern Luxury Apartments catering to your own individual ideas of comfort, privacy and the convenience of downtown living."

ADVERTISEMENT

ADVERTISEMENT

You are cordially invited to visit
Carlton Towers
 8th Floor Model Apts.
 Two Bedrooms - One Bedroom
 Efficiency Units
ALL UNFURNISHED
Annual Leases
\$121 to \$295 monthly
Which Includes
All Utilities and Parking
 (No Pets)
IMMEDIATE OCCUPANCY
 ★ ★ ★
RENTAL OFFICE
OPEN DAILY 9 A.M.-5 P.M.
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470 Third Street South

A LIMITED NUMBER OF FURNISHED AND UNFURNISHED APARTMENTS NOW AVAILABLE FOR SEASONAL AND ANNUAL LEASE.

2 Bedrooms, 2 Baths, 4th Floor unfurnished, annual lease ...	\$270 mo.
2 Bedrooms, 2 Baths, 7th floor unfurnished, annual lease ...	\$285 mo.
2 Bedrooms, 1 Bath 4th Floor unfurnished, annual lease ...	\$260 mo.
2 Bedrooms, 1 Bath, 9th floor unfurnished, annual lease ...	\$285 mo.
2 Bedrooms, 1 Bath Furnished, Season, Nov. 1 - May 1	\$2700
1 Bedroom, 1 Bath Furnished Season, Nov. 1 - May 1	\$2100

Rates include ALL utilities and parking.

Downtown

Carlton Towers

Rental Apartments

Luxurious Carefree Living

ST. PETERSBURG'S ONLY DOWNTOWN
 HIGH RISE RENTAL APARTMENTS (Not A Co-Op)
470 THIRD STREET SOUTH
Overlooking Tampa Bay and The \$5 Million Dollar Bayfront Center

- Heated Swimming Pool
- Roof Garden
- TV & Card Room
- Beauty Shop
- Chauffeur Driven Limousine

FURNISHED MODEL APARTMENTS
 OPEN FOR YOUR INSPECTION
 Weekdays 9 to 5 - Sundays 2 to 5
 Telephone 894-5454 and 825-4141

CARLTON TOWERS RESTAURANT & COCKTAIL LOUNGE
 OPEN TO RESIDENTS AND PUBLIC
Serving lunches and dinners every day except Monday. For restaurant reservations call 894-5272.

In November 1963, the Mahaffey Company published a 12-page color promotion in the Sunday newspaper.



“A trip to this magnificent building is an adventure in uniqueness.

Stepping out onto the roof garden provides a never failing thrill. Far to the south the framework of the famous Skyway Bridge rises out of the sunset. The eye can travel up the full length of Tampa Bay and its boat-bobbing waters to the sparkling lights of the City of Tampa. St. Petersburg is spread out beneath you in a fascinating vista.

High above the city, flowers and trees are every where in this garden on the roof.... This is a place where every Carlton Towers resident is going to spend a great many happy hours.”

“Here is what residents have at their doorsteps,” reporter Douglas Doubleday added. “A 300-boat, municipally-owned marina with facilities to welcome the largest yachts. A Bayfront Civic Center which will play host to major theatrical musical, dance, professional ice hockey, basketball and convention groups. Al Lang Field, the recently-enlarged winter home of the St. Louis Cardinals, is just an outfielder’s throw from Carlton Towers. And St. Petersburg’s famous Million Dollar Pier...”



Through the years Carlton Towers would offer a coffee shop, restaurants, a beauty salon, a card room, shuffleboard courts, a swimming pool, fitness center, social room, and limousine service.

Tom and Jane Mahaffey Jr. did not return to Miami. Among the first residents of Carlton Towers, the couple lived in a double unit on the ninth floor until the mid-1970s. (and rented Apt 605, as well).

One of their neighbors was a petite, sprightly grandmother who enjoyed cooking, entertaining, and playing bridge. Mrs. Ann Archer wrote letters regularly to her daughter and granddaughter. We'll read a few in Chapter 2.

