

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

SENT TO DC  
6-30-94

# 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 *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an 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. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Starr Hotel

other names/site number Custer Hotel, Shafer Hotel

### 2. Location

street & number 1913-1923 Western Avenue  not for publication

city or town Mattoon  vicinity

state Illinois code IL county Coles code 029 zip code 61938

### 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  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

William L. Gehl, SHPO 6-29-94  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Illinois Historic Preservation Agency  
State of Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is: Signature of the Keeper \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Action \_\_\_\_\_

- entered in the National Register.  See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register  See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain:)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Name of Property

County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property (Check only one box)

Number of Resources within Property (Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

- private, public-local, public-State, public-Federal

- building(s), district, site, structure, object

Table with 2 columns: Contributing, Noncontributing. Rows for buildings, sites, structures, objects, Total.

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Domestic/Hotel

Commerce/Restaurant

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Commerce/Specialty store

Not in use

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Late Victorian

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation brick

walls brick

roof asphalt

other

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**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.)

Property is:

- 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 of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**9. Major Bibliographical References****Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**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 # \_\_\_\_\_

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Commerce**Period of Significance**1888-1944**Significant Dates**1888**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A**Cultural Affiliation**N/A**Architect/Builder**Unknown

Eastern Ill. University Booth Library  
Mattoon/Charleston libraries  
Mid-Illinois Bank & Trust  
Odd Fellows fraternal organization

Starr Hotel  
Name of Property

Coles Co., Illinois  
County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of Property less than one acre

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>16</u>	<u>381410</u>	<u>4371070</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing
2			

3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing
4			

See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

See continuation sheet.

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title John R. and Cheryl L. Armstrong

organization N/A date May 4, 1994

street & number 3000 Western Avenue telephone (217) 235-1176

city or town Mattoon state IL zip code 61938

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

**Additional items**

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

**Property Owner**

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name John R. and Cheryl L. Armstrong

street & number 3000 Western Avenue telephone (217) 235-1176

city or town Mattoon state IL zip code 61938

**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. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 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 Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Starr Hotel

## Description

The Starr Hotel was built in 1888 by George M. Custer. The building has three stories plus a concrete floored crawl space. It is constructed of brick with a brick foundation. The roof is asphalt and has a slight pitch sloping to the rear. The hotel is located in the oldest section of Mattoon and is two blocks from the Illinois Central Railway Station and Big Four Railway Depot. Its original purpose for construction with its 37 rooms was to house Illinois Central and Big Four railroad workers during layovers in the city. (1)

At the time of this building's construction, Mattoon Tile and Brick Company with its railway connection was a major supplier of brick and tile throughout central Illinois and supplied the brick for this building. (2) The mortar type used on this building was a sand-lime mixture which was frequently used in 19th century construction.

The exterior historic integrity of the 1888 building has been basically maintained with the exception of an elevator shaft being added and minor window and door changes at street level.

In 1900 a two-story addition was constructed to the east which contained a restaurant at street level and an additional six hotel rooms and new lobby on the second floor. During the 1960's the exterior of the addition was significantly altered on the street level exterior and interior areas. Cast iron storefronts were removed and replaced with brick supports. The existing brick was painted. The first floor interior was divided into three retail shops. The second floor hotel rooms and lobby were unchanged. They still maintain their historic integrity.

The Starr Hotel maintains sufficient historic integrity for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. All of the areas of the building that were used historically for hotel functions including the first floor entry, stairway and second and third floors with their sleeping rooms and lobbies remain intact. The first floor restaurant

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area that was added on in 1900 has been modernized and changed into four store fronts which are now three stores. In the 1888 building, the three store fronts, which are now two stores, have had dropped ceilings and some panelling added over the original plaster walls. The original tin-pan ceilings remain above the additions. Their original cast iron fronts remain with the addition of modern doors. Although the building's windows and second floor fire exit doorways have been covered, 80% of their frames and casings remain behind the fiberglass coverings.

## Exterior:

The 1888 hotel building is three stories high with a concrete floored crawl-space. The building, including the restaurant addition is wedge shaped due to the odd shaped lots created by the railroad configurations of the era. This building was constructed only a few steps from the railroad tracks. One can still see the faint outline on the front and east sides of signs that were painted on the building and read Custer Hotel, which was the owner's name.

The north facade first story of the 1888 building has three cast iron storefronts. Going from left to right is the entrance to the second floor hotel with a transom above, and then three storefronts. These storefronts each have a large plate glass window with a transom, a recessed central entry door with a transom, and another large plate glass window with a transom. The storefront to the left has had its large plate glass windows covered with wood siding but the cast iron frame remains. The transoms have been painted over but remain. The other two storefronts have had modern doors installed, the middle storefront has a recessed entry, the storefront to the right has had a storm door installed, its original entry remains. This storefront design and its components were manufactured by the George L. Mesker Company of Evansville, Indiana. These Mesker storefronts were shipped by rail to various areas in the Midwest, including Mattoon, for distribution and use in construction.(3) This exterior feature with flat iron lentils and cast rosettes supported by the cast iron decorative pilasters gave the lower front exterior appearance an element of style for the

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period. This framework provided support for the original window openings and four door openings at street level.

The north and south, second and third floor elevation has segmental arched windows with wood frame, one-over-one panes with precast concrete sills.

The second floor elevation of the 1888 hotel building has six window openings and one fire exit door opening. There is also a bay window which has three squared one-over-one panes with wooden sills. All of these openings are presently covered by fiberglass panels. These windows remain intact.

The third floor elevation of the 1888 hotel building has seven arched window openings and one arched fire exit door opening. They remain intact under a protective fiberglass covering. There is brick corbelling at the cornice.

The rear or south street level elevation that fronts on the old rail line is constructed of brick from ground level to the third floor. There are three utility entrance doors at ground level. There are six window openings and one fire exit door opening on both the second and third floors.

The 1900 two story addition first floor has four store fronts. They each have a doorway to the side of a large plate glass window. The three storefronts to the west has a cast iron lintel that runs above the doorways and windows.

The front second floor elevation of the 1900 addition has wooden brackets and brick pattern asphalt siding which covers the original wooden clapboard siding above the eight window openings. All of the windows are currently covered with fiberglass panels to protect them from further deterioration. The east elevation has no openings.

Along the south elevation first floor are five doorways and four small window openings, two have glass block installed while the other two have room air conditioners. The second floor has five window openings.

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Throughout the years since the hotel's construction there have been few alterations. In the 1940's an exterior fire escape system was installed to comply with local codes. In the late 1960's a service elevator with the corresponding exterior elevator shaft on the east side second floor elevation was installed. On the north side street level, two store front windows have had their openings covered with wood and a smaller window. However, the original wood frame remains. The brickwork below these store front windows has been replaced. The exterior first floor street level hotel entrance door has been replaced by a double wooden utility door.

## Interior:

First floor: The first floor of the 1888 hotel building consists of two retail rental establishments. The west establishment has two front entrances. Acoustical tile ceilings are in each unit as well as some paneled walls. The ceilings above the modern additions are ornamental tin-pan throughout both units. These ceilings were likely purchased locally from the Mattoon Slate and Cornice Company who manufactured tin-pan panels. This company was located at 1913-1915 Broadway, directly behind the Starr.(4) The original decorative woodwork and moldings are intact. The wood floors are original. The original plaster, a horse-hair and lime variety, has not been removed.(5) The interior adjoining doors to each unit are original but not in use. The door openings to the exterior are original but two front doors have been changed with newer doors and modern closers. The west side front door is original.

Second floor: Entry to the second floor is from the street level north utility door which is the original hotel entrance. The door frame is original but the door itself has been changed. The original wooden staircase accesses the second floor. These stairs have their original banisters and wood crown moldings. On the left at the top of the stairs is the lobby of the second story addition that was built in 1900. This room has elaborate tin-pan ceilings and tin walls with the original wood floor. Further to the



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east along a central hall are six hotel rooms with the coal bin entry at the end of the hallway. The coal bin occupies an area north to south on the far east wall of the 1900 addition. The bin is eight feet wide.

To the west from the top of the stairs of the original hotel is the second floor hall which extends to the west end of the building. There are eight hotel rooms along the hall. It is intersected by a north-south hall which extends to the north exterior wall and to a southeast corner hotel room. The hotel rooms are aligned along these hallways.

The second floor features the original second floor lobby area which has a bay window and pocket doors to an adjoining room. The second floor rooms have all their original woodwork and crown moldings. The door frame woodwork which was made locally is Italianate in style and is arched with rounded corners. Many of the doors are Italianate in style with arched glass lights and wood panels. Most of the doorways on the second and third floors have transoms which provided for air circulation.

Third floor: Third floor access is by stairs which are aligned with the street level stairway. This floor has a middle hall which runs east to west and intersects two shorter hallways near the middle of the building and a north-south hall on the west end. Hotel rooms are aligned off of these halls.

There are two hipped skylights on this floor which are centered in the middle of the central hall to create a skylit atrium below. These lights were trimmed out with wood wainscoting over the plastered walls. The third floor woodwork is in its original condition and is of the same type as the second floor.

Crawl space: The foundation is brick with a concrete floor. The street level retail establishments have their own mechanical systems on the same floor.

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### Endnotes

1 Interview: Jim Bowlin, retired from Penn Central Railroad. March 14, 1994.

2 Interview: Steve Litchfield, Assistant Professor of Art History/Architecture. Eastern Illinois University. Interview: March 18, 1994. Building Inspection: March 14, 1994.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.

5 Interview: Russell Cox, retired Mattoon plasterer/contractor. Interview and Building Inspection: March 21, 1994.

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## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Starr Hotel provided lodging for the people to whom Mattoon owes its existence--the railroad crews. Seasonal farm crop workers, blue-collar workers coming into town looking for factory jobs, and hoboes rounded out the Starr's clientele, but its lifeblood from the beginning was railroad men on route layovers. Although there were many other hotels built to handle the heavy railroad traffic, the Starr Hotel and the U.S. Grant Hotel are the only historic hotels that remain in Mattoon, Illinois. The Starr Hotel was built at the crossroads for three major railroads--the Illinois Central, the Big Four (Cleveland, Cincinnati, Chicago, and St. Louis Railroad) and the Peoria, Decatur & Evansville (P.D. & E.) lines. The upstairs two floors were single-room-only lodgings and the first floor was divided into various retail businesses. The Starr Hotel is locally significant for Criterion A for commerce from its inception in 1888 to 1944, the 50-year cutoff for the National Register of Historic Places.

## COMMERCE

One of the founders of Mattoon, Ebenezer Noyes, originally wanted to build a town where he thought two major rail lines would cross. This town was called Essex, founded in 1837, and was located a few miles west of the current city of Mattoon. When the Illinois Central expansion began in 1850, he found he had miscalculated where the lines would cross. Realizing his error, he sold his land in Essex and in 1855 bought land from the Illinois Central Railroad where Mattoon now exists. (1)

"Mattoon did not evolve--it exploded into being...It is here because two railroads crossed at a particular point in the early summer of 1855...The importance of the railroads in the history of Mattoon cannot be overemphasized. Railroads created the town, determined the character of its people, brought it prosperity, and made it a major hub in Central Illinois." (2) No one was living in Mattoon in April of 1855, but by August of the same year there was a hotel,

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with another being built, a post office, two grocery stores and a dry goods store. It sprang to 500 residents and 113 homes by 1856.(3)

Legend has it that Colonel Mason, the builder of the Illinois Central Railroad (a north-south line) and Bill Mattoon, contractor for the Alton & Terre Haute Railroad (an east-west line), wagered to see who could reach the crossing first. The winner would get to name the station and the loser would bear the cost of future maintenance of the crossing. Mason won, but gratitude for the contest doubling his crew's productivity prompted him to name the station for Bill Mattoon.(4)

By the 1880s, three major rail lines intersected in Mattoon and had built rail yards, roundhouses and machine shops that the high-maintenance, coal fueled steam engines required. The Big Four Railroad shops employed 300 men by 1872 and the Illinois Central employed 650 men by 1913.(5) As the railroads developed, so did Mattoon. Its population was 2,000 by 1860. It doubled to 4,000 after the Civil War and by 1900 was at 10,000.(6) Mattoon also had a single-track streetcar line that operated through the town from 1901 until 1928 when a bus system replaced it. In 1904 a railroad that ran between Mattoon and Charleston, became the fourth railroad line through Mattoon.(7)

The Illinois Central played a critical role in transporting Union soldiers through Mattoon south to Cairo for the lower Mississippi campaigns of Vicksburg and Natchez during the Civil War. General Ulysses Grant mustered in his first regiment of command, the 21st Illinois, here in Mattoon in 1861.(8)

Mattoon's central location between Chicago, Cairo, St. Louis, and Terre Haute made it a major layover point for railroad crews and a processing center for mail, passengers and freight of all kinds. Surrounded by some of the nation's richest farmland, Mattoon (and Coles County in general) led the country with production of broomcorn. Production peaked in 1879 and remained high into the 1930s. There are still two broomcorn factories in town today--the

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American Broomcorn Company and Sun Broom Company. (9) Broomcorn, along with feed corn, wheat, oats and livestock were produced locally and shipped out of Mattoon to Chicago, St. Louis, Indianapolis and other smaller cities throughout the Midwest. Raw materials for manufacturing were shipped by rail to Mattoon for its burgeoning factory industry.

Mattoon recognized the importance of the railroads to its growth and lobbied the Illinois Central for years to build a below-grade dual track system and new depot in town. The "subway" system and two-level depot were completed in 1914 and allowed the two major rail lines to cross each other unimpeded, as well as creating street bridges over the tracks to permit unrestricted local traffic through the center of town. This depot and two-tier track system was considered to be the finest railroad facility in east central Illinois. (10)

The proximity of the railroads brought many heavy industry factories to Mattoon. Mattoon Tile & Brick Company, founded here in 1883, produced millions of clay tile and bricks annually for draining farmland and shipped their products throughout the state. (11) There were five grain elevators in town for storing and shipping the local crops, a coal company founded on top of a rich coal vein in the center of town, meat packing and processing plants, a shoe factory, foundries, commercial construction companies, an overalls clothing manufacturer, an ice and refrigeration company for refrigerated railcars, and a waterworks and meter manufacturer. These industries in turn spawned support services. Livery stables, grocery stores (Mattoon went from 37 in 1904 to 78 by 1930), feed stores, hardware stores, furniture stores, dry goods stores, general clothing stores, drug stores, jewelry stores, bakeries, banks, bookstores, restaurants and cafes sprang up as fast as the population grew from 1860 through 1930. (12)

Although Mattoon began as a rough frontier/railroad town in 1855, it began to organize and expand its social base at the turn of the century, as more professional people (doctors, lawyers, teachers, bankers) arrived in town. A public library, funded in part by the philanthropist Andrew

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Carnegie, was built in 1903. A new Post Office, listed on the National Register was erected in 1913. A new City Hall in 1928 and several new grade schools and a high school (built in 1879, third remodeling in 1929) were built. The Dole Opera House was built on Broadway during the Civil War, along with the Mattoon Theater which was built in 1896. Mattoon also developed several outdoor parks in town, among them Lytle Park (1912) and Petersen Park (1907). (13)

Hotels and saloons kept pace with Mattoon's growth and social diversity, brought by the 30-40 daily trains through town. The Mattoon Hotel, later the Pennsylvania House, was owned by Bill Mattoon and hosted Abraham Lincoln in 1858 for the fourth Lincoln-Douglas debate held at the Coles County Fairgrounds in Charleston, ten miles away. The building is no longer standing. (14) The Essex Hotel was Mattoon's third hotel and probably its best known. It was built in 1859 by one of Mattoon's founders, Ebenezer Noyes, at the original railroad crossing to house and feed rail passengers since railroads had no dining cars at that time. The hotel's owner, Noyes, was a staunch Unionist during the Civil War. The Essex saw many famous people; from Lincoln, Stephen Douglas and Ulysses Grant who were guests, to Theodore Roosevelt and various Illinois state officials, who gave political speeches from the rear platform of their trains that stopped at the Essex crossing. (15) William Cody, Annie Oakley and Wild Bill Hickock also stopped in Mattoon several times with the Buffalo Bill Wild West Show. The Essex Hotel was torn down in 1914 when the Illinois Central Railroad built the subway system. (16)

The Dole House, built in the 1860s, lodged entertainers coming through Mattoon on their tours to the Dole Opera House which was the center of entertainment in town. Many famous period actors performed in Mattoon on train layovers. The Dole House later became the Byers Hotel. It was demolished in 1971 to increase downtown parking space. (17)

The Everett House was built in 1878 as a three-story hotel. It was purchased by the Mattoon City Council in 1884 for city offices. It is no longer standing. The U.S. Grant Hotel, with 75 rooms, was built in 1928 and was a popular

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hotel. It was remodeled into private apartments in 1973. The Grant Hotel and the Starr Hotel are the only historic hotels still standing in Mattoon.(18)

Mattoon's hotels (20 at its peak in the early 1900s) catered to all classes, but the above-mentioned hotels were built for the middle and upper classes. Most of the others, about which little history is written, catered to working-class transients moving westward, railroad crews, and seasonal crop workers. The broomcorn industry saw 3,000-3,500 workers ("broomcorn johnnies") in Mattoon during the harvest season.(19) These workers frequented the saloons and cheaper hotels near the railroad tracks, like the Starr Hotel. Railroads often contracted with specific hotels along their lines for whole blocks of rooms for their layover crews. The Starr Hotel is located one block from the Illinois Central track right-of-way, two blocks from the subway depot and below-grade rail crossing built in 1914, and two blocks from the Big Four Depot on the old Big Four track. The Starr Hotel was built in 1888 and was constructed with simple, small rooms with kerosene heat and coal heat for the lobby area. The Starr was a main hotel for rail crews to stopover and was originally built to house Illinois Central and Big Four crews.(20)

The saloons flourished as well as the hotels. Eleven saloons were operating by 1865 and by 1902 there were 18 in town. One of the largest saloons, Lynch's (later Wade's Tavern) was built in the 1890s one block from the Starr Hotel. It was razed in 1987.(21)

In the early 1900s, an average of 55 trains a day stopped in Mattoon. Another segment of society appeared in Mattoon in quantity--the hobo. A hobo, who went by the name A-No. 1, wrote about his experiences and stated that only three other routes, all around Chicago, had as many hoboes as the Mattoon crossing. This hobo junction was a favorite because there were so many trains and access to other locales was easy. They would ride in empty boxcars or on top of the trains.(22) Western Avenue, located one block parallel to the old Big Four tracks (the tracks were removed in 1984), was one of the roughest areas in town, surrounded

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by saloons, hotels, and feed and farm implement stores. One Mattoon native who is nearly 90 years old recalled the sentiments of many townspeople when she said her parents would not let her walk unescorted by the Starr Hotel or around the area where the railroads met. (23)

The Starr Hotel, a three-story brick building at 1919 Western Avenue, was built in 1888 by George M. Custer, who operated it until he retired in 1918. He built a two-story wing on the east end of the lot in 1900 for a restaurant. He sold the hotel in 1920 a few months before his death. (24) Located near the tracks, the Starr's main business was layover railroad crews, but it also catered to broomcorn johnnies every summer and was a gathering place for hoboes looking for local work. After Custer's death, the hotel changed hands several times over the years, always remaining a working-class hotel. William Shafer converted it to a general rooming house in the 1920s. The upper floors were closed off in the 1960s and have been vacant ever since. (25) The first level houses a barber shop, a print shop, a tavern, a pawn shop and an antique resale shop.

DeBuhr's Seed & Feed Company is immediately west of the Starr and was built in 1895. Across the street is Alexander Office Supply, built in 1922. The Fitzgerald Building, east of Alexander's, was built in 1895 and now houses Heilig-Myers, a furniture store. Further west on Commercial Avenue, which branches off from Western and is also parallel to the tracks, are the old Roseboom Broomcorn Company warehouses and the old Reliance Manufacturing Company building which produced work coveralls.

In 1900, Western Avenue and Broadway were the two main commercial streets in town. Broadway had clothing stores, drug stores, banks, law firms, bookstores, bakeries, jewelry stores, and the Dole Opera House. Western hosted a railroad telegraph office, three butcher shops, two grocers, three hardware stores, a harness and buggy repair shop, a plumbing and heating shop, and a marble and granite yard, along with at least three hotels for railroaders and four saloons, all within 18th and 21st Streets. (26)



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Many hotels in Mattoon were second floor affairs, with the lobby and rooms being located on the second story with access from the street by stairway. The first floor was usually rented to commercial tenants, such as grocers, repair shops, barber shops, etc. The Starr Hotel had its lobby on the second floor and sleeping rooms on the second and third levels, with shops on the first floor. The Wells Hotel, at Broadway and 19th, had 10-12 rooms and a lobby on the second floor and shops on the first. It was built in the 1890s and torn down in the 1970s.(27)

The Starr, Wells and the Park Hotel on Charleston and 21st Street (1 and 1/2 blocks southwest of the Starr) all catered to railroad crews. All three hotels were a block from the Big Four tracks. Four saloons, all built in the 1890s, the Lynch Tavern on 18th and Western, the Opera House Saloon on the opposite corner of 18th and Western, the Fitzgerald Saloon and restaurant directly across the street from the Starr Hotel, and a saloon immediately east of the Starr Hotel which had several names and owners, all concentrated on railroad business. The unnamed saloon and its eastern neighbor, the railroad telegraph office, burned in 1899, were torn down, and Custer bought the lot and built a two-story addition to his hotel for a restaurant and additional rooms in 1900. The owners of the burned saloon built another one on the next block to the west of the Starr Hotel, where House Brothers Tavern is today.(28) The Opera House Saloon and Lynch's Tavern are gone now, and the Fitzgerald Saloon building houses the Heilig-Myers furniture store. The Wells and Park hotels have also been torn down.

Custer retired in 1918 and sold the hotel and restaurant in 1920. William Shafer bought the property, continued the restaurant and converted the hotel into a long term boarding/rooming house. Businesses immediately next door on either side of the Shafer Hotel (formerly the Starr Hotel) were a jeweler, harness shop, barber and a Kroger grocery store. These businesses existed beside the Shafer Hotel in the 1920s and 1930s.(29) Shafer sold the property to Robert Fuller in 1946.

The hotel had a hitching post rail across the back part

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Starr Hotel

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of the building that fronted on the Illinois Central rail line. In the 1920s and 30s, hoboes and migrant workers gathered here on a daily basis. Local townspeople and farmers often came to the hotel to recruit day labor from this pool and it became informally known as Hobo's Corner and the backlot fence was called "The Rail." (30)

Mattoon was the first city in Illinois to hold free street fairs (an idea borrowed from a town in Indiana) and did so from 1897 until 1902, every October. Exhibition booths were built along both Broadway and Western Avenues and the shops on both streets stayed open late for the huge crowds (100,000 people each year). In 1898, the City closed off the Western Avenue section of the fair after rowdiness, gambling and prostitution in its saloons and hotels, including the Starr Hotel, got out of control. (31)

From east to west, Mattoon was a checkerboard of structures and buildings, with commercial middle class Broadway, working class Western, and at 22nd Street, the beginning boundary for middle and upper class residential sections to the western edge of town.

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Starr Hotel

## Endnotes

- 1 Mattoon--a Pictorial History. First Mid-Illinois Bank & Trust. Johnston, Jean; Larrabee, Alice; Lumpkin, Gail; & Thiel, Marianne. 1988. p. 14
- 2 Ibid. p. 10
- 3 Main Line of Mid America--The Story of the Illinois Central. Corliss, Carlton. 1950. p. 88.
- 4 Ibid. p. 61
- 5 Mattoon--a Pictorial History. pp. 32-33.
- 6 Ibid. p. 28.
- 7 Ibid. p. 112.
- 8 Ibid. p. 25.
- 9 Ibid. p. 52.
- 10 The History of Railroads in Coles County. Willingham, Russell. 1974. p. 6.
- 11 Mattoon--a Pictorial History. p. 50.
- 12 Ibid. pp. 70, 123, 131.
- 13 Ibid. pp. 70, 126, 127.
- 14 Ibid. p. 8.
- 15 Ibid. p. 24
- 16 Ibid. p. 102.
- 17 Ibid. p. 167.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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Continuation Sheet**

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Starr Hotel

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- 18 Ibid. p. 72.
- 19 Ibid. p. 52.
- 20 Interview: Jim Robertson, retired from Penn Central Railroad. March 14, 1994.
- 21 Mattoon--a Pictorial History. p. 58
- 22 Main Line of Mid America. p. 392.
- 23 Interview: May Henne, 89-year old Mattoon resident. February 24, 1994.
- 24 Affidavit of George M. Custer. Coles County Warranty Deed, Vol. 173. August 23, 1920. p. 29.
- 25 Interview: Bernard DeBuhr. Owner of DeBuhr Feed & Seed Co. 2001 Western Ave., November 1993.
- 26 Souvenir Program of the City of Mattoon. Odd Fellows Home, 1899. pp. 67, 101, 102, 108, 110.
- 27 Interview: Jack Horsley, Historian/attorney with Craig & Craig Law Firm. March 22, 1994.
- 28 Ibid.
- 29 Polk's Mattoon City Directory, 1930.
- 30 Interview: Harold "Doc" Houts. Age 89. Real Estate broker. March 15, 1994.
- 31 Mattoon--a Pictorial History. p. 43.

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Starr Hotel

## Bibliography

Corliss, Carlton. Main Line of Mid America: The Story of the Illinois Central. 1950.

Johnston, Jean; Larrabee, Alice; Lumpkin, Gail; & Thiel, Marianne. Mattoon--a Pictorial History. G. Bradley, Publisher. 1988.

Willingham, Russell. The History of Railroads in Coles County. 1974.

Affidavit of George M. Custer. Coles County Warranty Deed, Vol. 173, August 23, 1920.

Polk's Mattoon City Directory. Published 1930.

Souvenir of the City of Mattoon. Odd Fellows Home. 1899.

## Interviews

Bowlin, Jim. Retired from Penn Central. March 14, 1994.

Cox, Russell. Retired Mattoon plasterer/contractor. Interview and Building Inspection: March 21, 1994.

DeBuhr, Bernard. Owner of DeBuhr Feed & Seed Co. 2001 Western, Mattoon. November 1993.

Henne, May. Mattoon resident, 89 years old. February 24, 1994.

Houts, Harold "Doc". Mattoon real estate broker, 89 years old. March 15, 1994.

Horsley, Jack. Historian/Attorney with Craig & Craig Law Firm. March 22, 1994.

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Starr Hotel

## Verbal Boundary Description

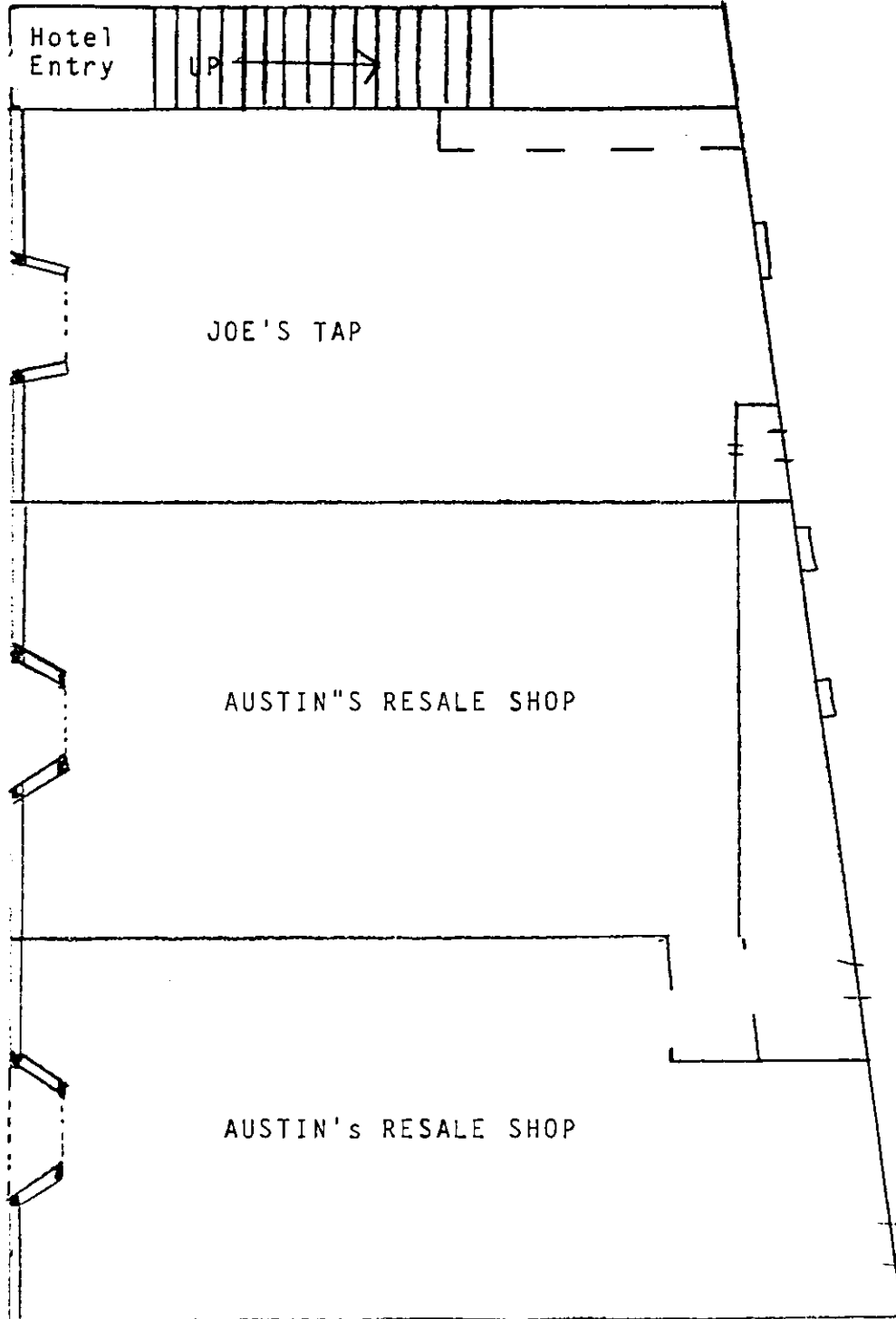
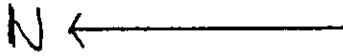
Survey Plat, December 23, 1992

Beginning at a point on the north line of block one hundred eleven (111) in Noyes' Addition to the original town, now city of Mattoon, Coles County, Illinois, 30 feet west of a point on the north line of said block 111 where said block 111 measured on line north and south is 16 feet wide, and running from thence west on the north line of said block 111 to the east line of lot 2 in said block 111, and from thence in a southeasterly direction along the east line of said lot 2 to the south line of said block 111, and from thence in a northeasterly direction along the south line of said block 111 to a point of beginning, and running from thence due north to the place of beginning, Coles County, Illinois; and the east 25 feet of lot two (2) in block one hundred eleven (111) in Noyes' Addition to the original town, now city of Mattoon, Coles County, Illinois, measuring the said 25 feet on the south line of said block.

## Boundary Justification

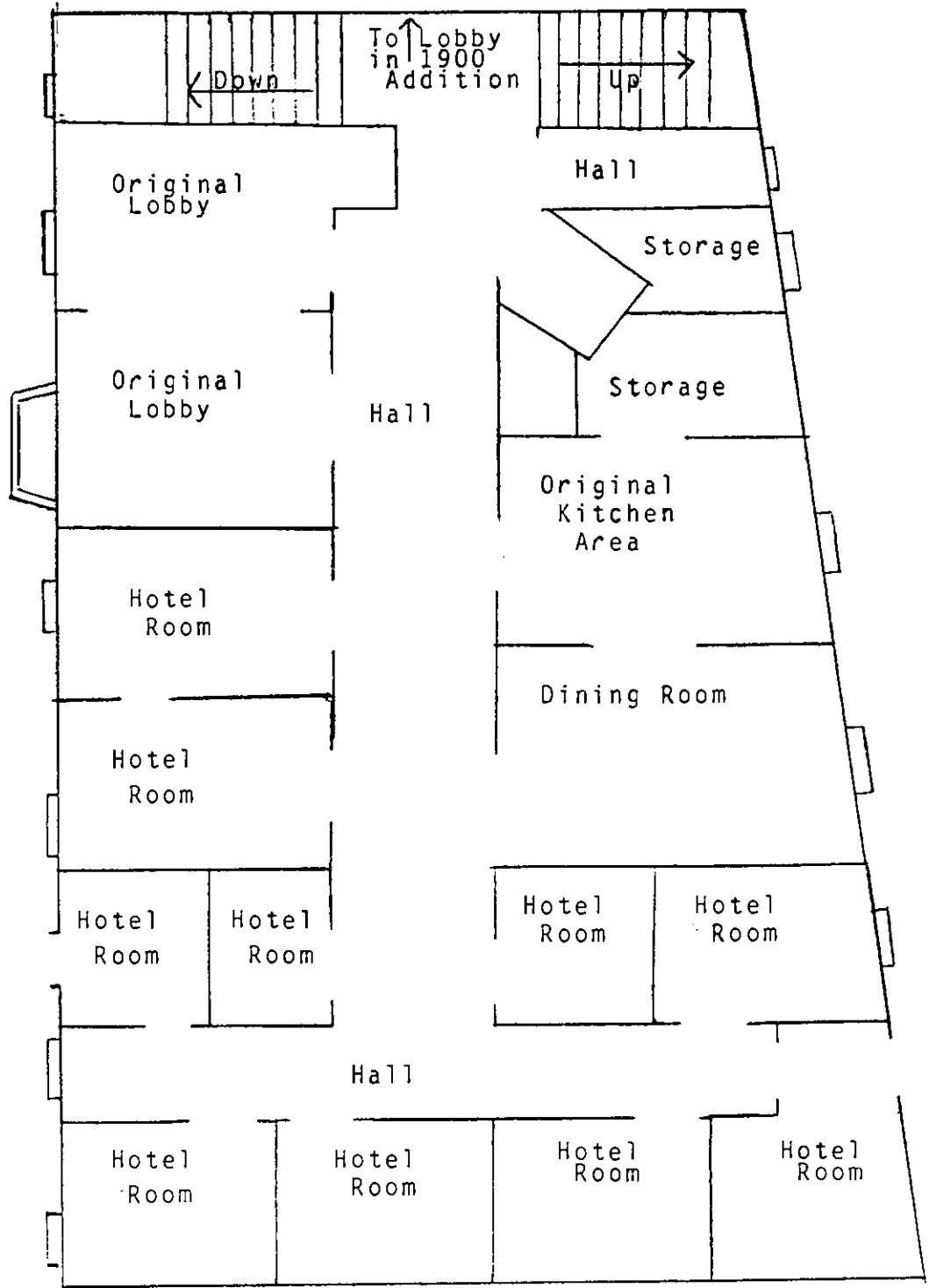
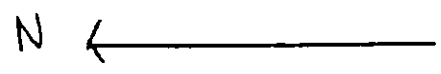
The boundary includes the building historically associated with the Starr Hotel. The hotel is bounded by Western Avenue on the north, 19th Street to the east, 20th Street to the west, and the old Big Four Railroad railbed to the south.

STARR HOTEL  
(Not to Scale)



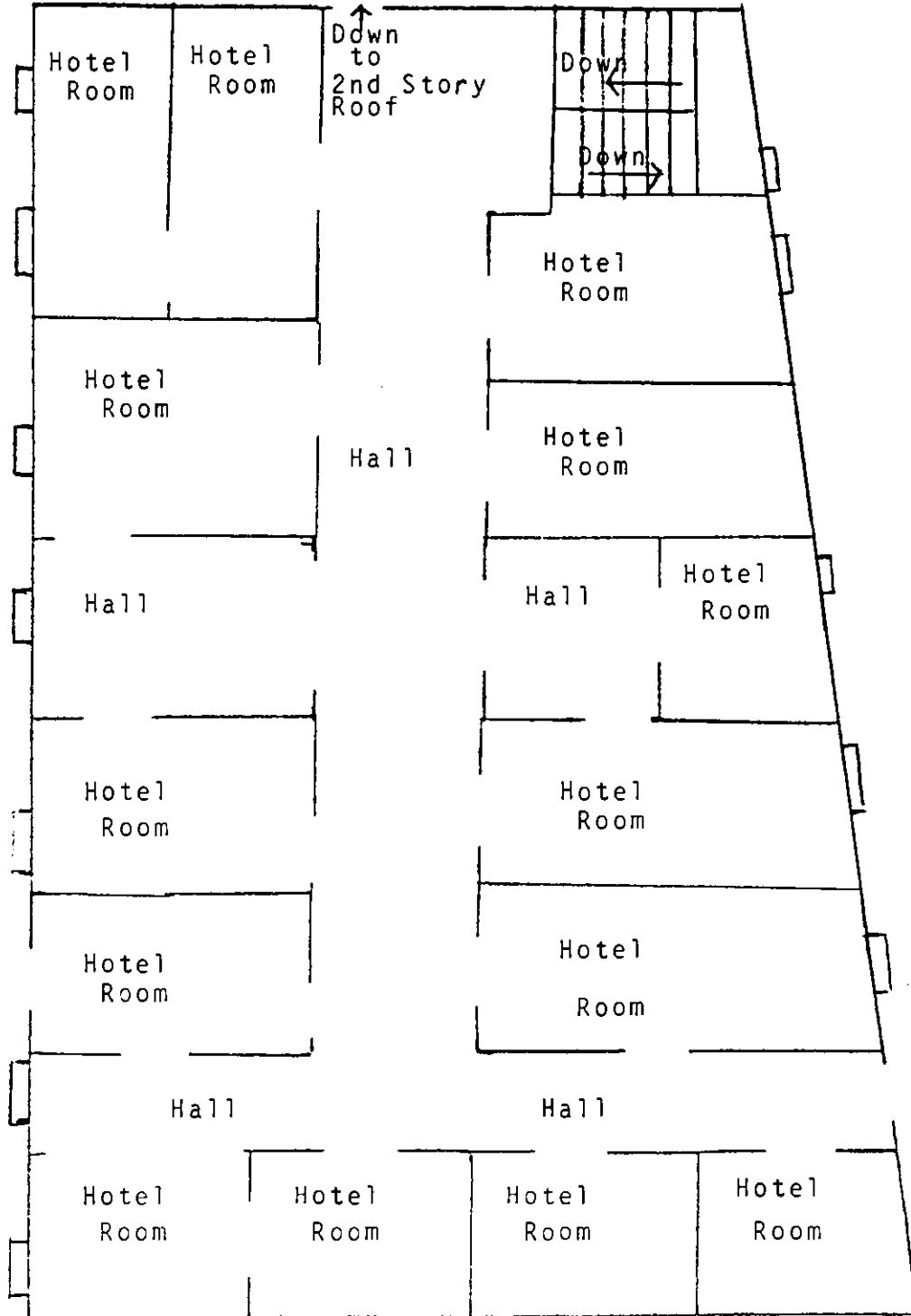
First Floor  
1888 Building

STARR HOTEL  
(Not To Scale)  
Second Floor  
1888 Building

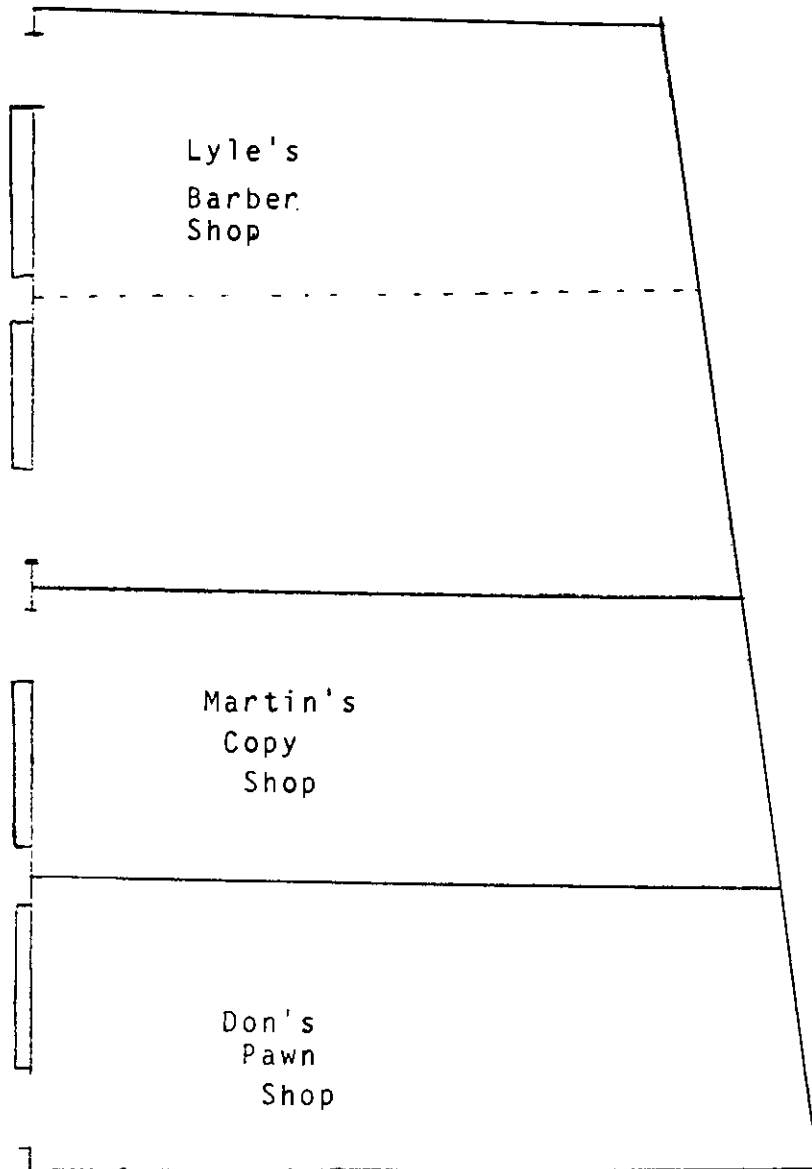




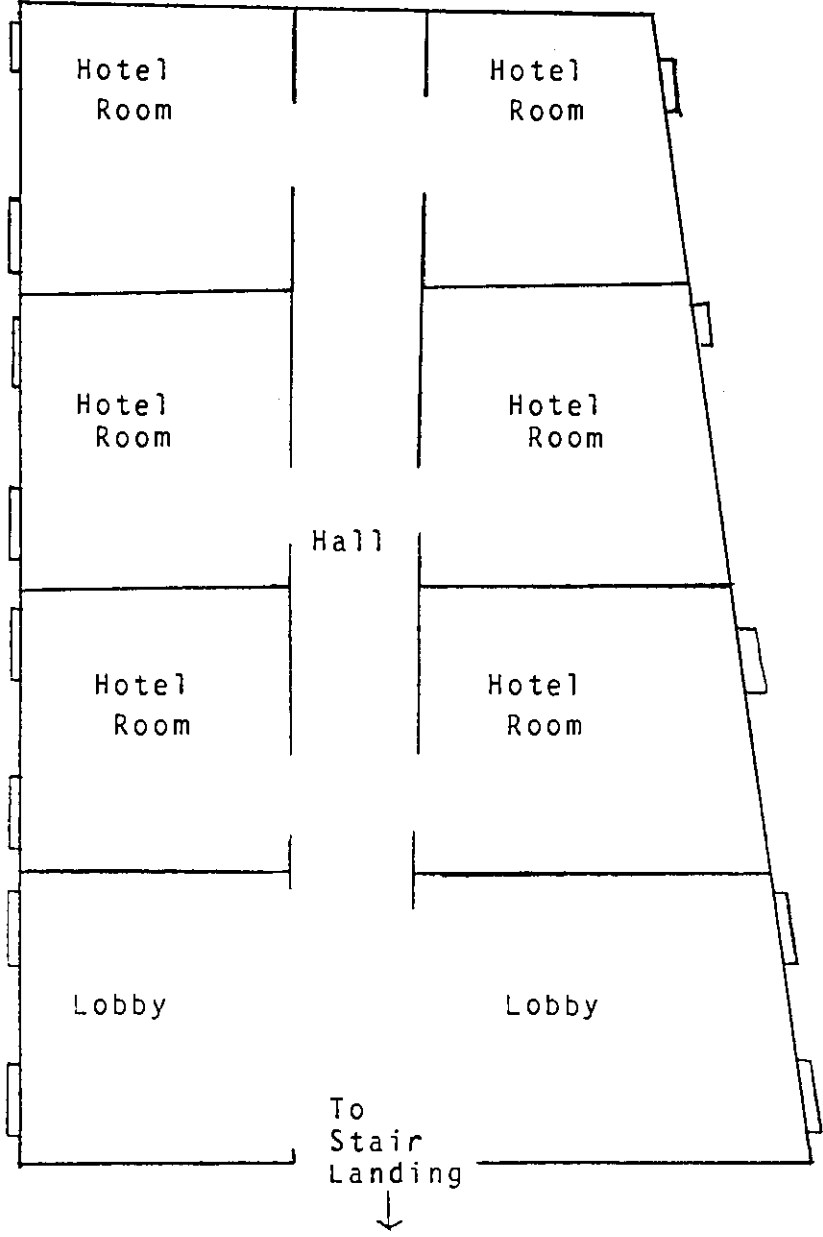
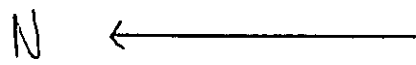
STARR HOTEL  
(Not to Scale)  
Third Floor  
1888 Building



STARR HOTEL  
(Not to Scale)  
First Floor  
1900 Addition



Starr Hotel  
(Not To Scale)  
Second Floor  
1900 Addition





# United States Department of the Interior



NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
P.O. Box 37127  
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

IN REPLY REFER TO:

## RECEIVED

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. For further information call 202/343-9542.

SEP 2 1994  
Preservation Services

### AUG 26 1994

WEEKLY LIST OF ACTIONS TAKEN ON PROPERTIES: 8/15/94 THROUGH 8/19/94

KEY: State, County, Property Name, Address/Boundary, City, Vicinity, Reference Number NHL Status, Action, Date, Multiple Name

- ALABAMA, CALHOUN COUNTY, Southern Railway Passenger Station and Freight Depot, 126 W. 4th St., Anniston, 94000795, OWNER OBJECTION, 8/11/94
- ARIZONA, PINAL COUNTY, Magma Hotel, 100--130 Main St., Superior, 94000981, NOMINATION, 8/19/94
- ARIZONA, YAVAPAI COUNTY, Prescott Armory Historic District, Roughly bounded by E. Gurley, E. Willis, N. Arizona, E. Sheldon and N. Rush Sts., Prescott, 94000829, NOMINATION, 8/15/94
- ARIZONA, CLEBURNE COUNTY, Pill School, AR 5/25 W side, N of Ida, Ida vicinity, 94000854, NOMINATION, 8/16/94 (Public School in the Ozarks MPS)
- ARKANSAS, CLEBURNE COUNTY, Woman's Community Club Band Shell, NE corner of Spring Park, Heber Springs, 94000849, NOMINATION, 8/16/94
- ARKANSAS, CLEVELAND COUNTY, Attwood--Hopson House, AR 8, N side, New Edinburg, 94000848, NOMINATION, 8/16/94
- ARKANSAS, CRAIGHEAD COUNTY, Nash--Reid--Hill House, 418 W. Matthews Ave., Jonesboro, 94000852, NOMINATION, 8/16/94
- ARKANSAS, GREENE COUNTY, Gulf Oil Company Service Station, Jct. of Main and S. Third Sts., SE corner, Paragould, 94000850, NOMINATION, 8/16/94
- ARKANSAS, INDEPENDENCE COUNTY, Bartlett--Kirk House, 910 College St., Batesville, 94000856, NOMINATION, 8/16/94
- ARKANSAS, LOGAN COUNTY, Chism, Dr. Stephen N., House, AR 23 E side, S of jct. with AR 217, Booneville vicinity, 94000853, NOMINATION, 8/16/94
- ARKANSAS, POPE COUNTY, Riggs--Hamilton American Legion Post No. 20, 215 N. Denver Ave., Russellville, 94000855, NOMINATION, 8/15/94
- ARKANSAS, PULASKI COUNTY, First Baptist Church, Jct. of 12th and Louisiana Sts., SW corner, Little Rock, 94000823, NOMINATION, 8/09/94
- ARKANSAS, RANDOLPH COUNTY, Hillyard Cabin, Old Burr Rd., W side, NE of Warm Springs, Warm Springs vicinity, 94000851, NOMINATION, 8/16/94
- CALIFORNIA, CONTRA COSTA COUNTY, Danville Southern Pacific Railroad Depot, 355 Railroad Ave., Danville, 94000860, NOMINATION, 8/16/94
- COLORADO, CONEJOS COUNTY, Palace Hotel, 429 Main St., Antonito, 94001013, NOMINATION, 8/19/94
- COLORADO, DENVER COUNTY, Lewis, A. T., New Building, 1531 Stout St., Denver, 94001006, NOMINATION, 8/19/94
- COLORADO, FREMONT COUNTY, Christ Episcopal Church, 802 Harrison Ave., Canon City, 94001011, NOMINATION, 8/19/94
- COLORADO, MESA COUNTY, Handy Chapel, 202 White Ave., Grand Junction, 94001012, NOMINATION, 8/19/94
- DELAWARE, NEW CASTLE COUNTY, Walnut Green School, Jct. of DE 82 and Owl's Nest Rd., Greenville vicinity, 94001014, NOMINATION, 8/19/94
- IDAHO, IDAHO COUNTY, Cold Meadows Guard Station, NE of McCall, Frank Church--River of No Return Wilderness, Payette NF, McCall vicinity, 94001017, NOMINATION, 8/19/94
- ILLINOIS, COLES COUNTY, Railway Express Agency Building, 1804 Western Ave., Mattoon, 94000974, NOMINATION, 8/16/94
- ILLINOIS, COLES COUNTY, Starr Hotel, 1913--1923 Western Ave., Mattoon, 94000975, NOMINATION, 8/16/94
- ILLINOIS, COOK COUNTY, Edgewater Beach Apartments, 5555 N. Sheridan Rd., Chicago, 94000979, NOMINATION, 8/16/94
- ILLINOIS, GRUNDY COUNTY, Coleman Hardware Company Building, 100 Nettle St., Morris, 94000980, NOMINATION, 8/16/94
- ILLINOIS, KANE COUNTY, Arcada Theater Building, 105 E. Main St. and 1st Ave., St. Charles, 94000977, NOMINATION, 8/16/94
- ILLINOIS, KANE COUNTY, Elgin National Watch Company Observatory, 312 Watch St., Elgin, 94000976, NOMINATION, 8/16/94
- ILLINOIS, WILL COUNTY, Heck, John, House, 1225 S. Hamilton St., Lockport, 94000978, NOMINATION, 8/16/94
- ILLINOIS, WOODFORD COUNTY, El Paso Public Library, 149 W. First St., El Paso, 94000972, NOMINATION, 8/16/94 (Illinois Carnegie Libraries MPS)
- ILLINOIS, WOODFORD COUNTY, Illinois Central Railroad and Toledo, Peoria, and Western Railroad Freight House, 8--10 E. Front St., El Paso, 94000973, NOMINATION, 8/16/94
- MARYLAND, CARROLL COUNTY, Union Bridge Historic District, Roughly bounded by Bellevue, E. Locust, Buttersburg Alley, Church, Whyte, W. Locust and the Western Maryland RR tracks, Union Bridge, 94000820, NOMINATION, 8/17/94
- MASSACHUSETTS, WORCESTER COUNTY, Grafton State Hospital, Jct. of Westborough Rd. and Green St., Grafton, 94000691, OWNER OBJECTION, 8/08/94 (Massachusetts State Hospitals MPS)
- MONTANA, BLAINE COUNTY, Dave's Texaco, 237 Pennsylvania St., Chinook, 94000862, NOMINATION, 8/16/94 (Roadside Architecture Along US 2 in Montana MPS)
- MONTANA, BLAINE COUNTY, Young Brothers Chevrolet Garage, 201 Pennsylvania St., Chinook, 94000867, NOMINATION, 8/16/94 (Roadside Architecture Along US 2 in Montana MPS)
- MONTANA, HILL COUNTY, Heltne Oil Company, 140 First St., Havre, 94000865, NOMINATION, 8/16/94 (Roadside Architecture Along US 2 in Montana MPS)

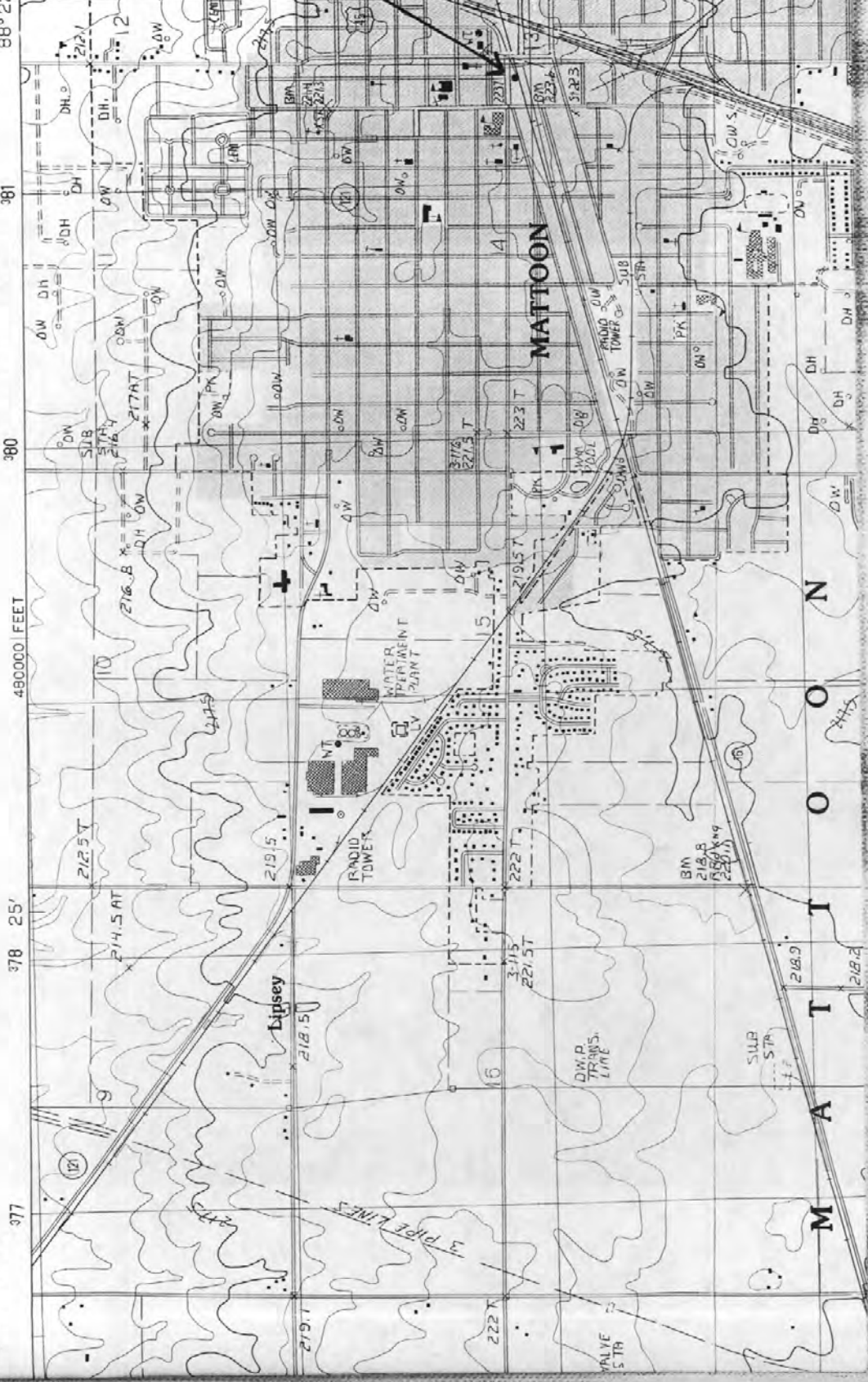
OF ILLINOIS  
AND NATURAL RESOURCES  
SURVEY DIVISION  
GN, ILLINOIS

MATTOON WEST QUADRANGLE  
ILLINOIS

7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

88° 22' 30" W  
39° 30' N

1:50,000  
FEET



STARR HOTEL  
ZONE 16  
E 381410  
N 4371070