

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For HCRS use only
received
date entered

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

1. Name

historic The St. Nicholas Hotel

and/or common "The St. Nick"

2. Location

street & number 400 East Jefferson Street not for publication

city, town Springfield vicinity of congressional district 20th

state Illinois code 012 county Sangamon code 167

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name: First National Bank of Springfield, as trustee, under a trust dated January 24, 1977
(known as Trust No. 3823), Sam Sgro, beneficiary.

street & number 5th and Adams Streets

city, town Springfield vicinity of state Illinois 62701

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Sangamon County Building

street & number 800 East Monroe Street

city, town Springfield, state Illinois 62701

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Inventory of Historic Structures in Sangamon County has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1974 federal state county local

depository for survey records Illinois Department of Conservation/Division of Historic Sites.

city, town Springfield state Illinois

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The St. Nicholas Hotel, located on the southeast corner of Fourth and Jefferson Streets, is on the site of the first St. Nicholas, built in 1855. The present complex is made up of an annex building (1910), the main section (1924) and lobby wing (1931). The 1924 main section is the most important. Designed by the firm of H. L. Stevens of New York City, specialists in hotel buildings, the St. Nick is a restrained Georgian revival style building, one of the most popular choices of 1920s architectural styles. It has a 90 foot frontage and is 60 feet deep with 11 stories plus penthouse. The facade is broken into three parts, after the fashion of a classical column. The two story base is made of Bedford stone, a seven story shaft and two story capital are both of red brick outlined with stone pilasters, belt course and trim. The building is capped with scroll pediments of stone and the facade is relieved with stone balustrades and urns. Originally this section was to form one half of the building, with a matching section to be constructed to the north. A lack of money during the Depression caused these plans to be dropped and the present lobby wing was added instead.

The 1910 annex, six stories tall, is also done in a neo-classical style. The first floor is limestone-fronted with the St. Nicholas monograms on each of four pilasters. The four story shaft and one story capital are of cream colored brick with simulated quoins and two matched, projecting bays, four stories in height, topped with decorative metal cornices and balustrades. A large metal cornice caps the entire front of the building. The exterior of both the 1924 main section and 1910 annex are amazingly intact with nearly all details in place, thus preserving the integrity of the facades.

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 type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1924 **Builder/Architect** H. L. Stevens & Co.

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The St. Nicholas was the State Capital's largest and most important hotel and is the only intact hotel building remaining in Springfield from the pre-motel era. Its physical location is extremely important: the hotel is only a few hundred feet from the Chicago and Alton (now Amtrak) railroad station which functioned for many years as Springfield's "front door", the first introduction visitors had to the city. The hotel was and is the first building seen by rail passengers leaving the station. This relationship to the station is particularly significant because when the Chicago and Alton railroad was completed in the early 1850s, it formed the final link connecting New York City and the Mississippi River by rail. When the hotel was built in 1855 it became a cornerstone for the lodging and entertainment district which grew up around it, in close proximity to downtown Springfield.

In the years before the great Depression, during the heyday of family excursions and traveling salesmen, Springfield boasted as many as forty hotels. Well over half of these were located within two blocks of the St. Nick. Within these same few blocks Springfield's best restaurants and Burlesque theaters were also located. The largest dance hall, the Arion, was on the corner diagonally opposite the St. Nick, and the area was well known for the quality and quantity of its night life. This section was also designated as Springfield's official saloon district by city ordinance. One crusading temperance advocate, William Lloyd Clark, found the vicinity too colorful for his taste and in his book Hell at Midnight in Springfield he denounced the area's saloons, pawnshops, gambling houses and "brothels, from the lowest ramshackle hovel to the most elaborately equipped which may be found anywhere in the state..." and the traffic where "from 10:00 in the evening until 4:00 in the morning cabs carriages and automobiles" could be seen moving about.

The St. Nick became a gathering place for Illinois' legislators when the General Assembly was in session because the hotel is within view of the State Capitol building. It became an unofficial State Building annex due to the amount of politicking done within its walls. The St. Nick was the focus of nationwide attention in 1970 when \$800,000 was found in a shoebox in the room of Paul Powell, former Secretary of State. Newspaper columnist Ken Watson described the St. Nick and two other Springfield hotels, the Abraham Lincoln and Leland as "symbols of legislative wheeling and dealing...fascinating and enjoyable watering places for several generations of lawmakers." The Abe Lincoln was demolished in 1978, and the Leland's exterior was significantly altered when Sangamon State University moved into it in 1973, leaving the St. Nick the sole survivor of an important era.

Despite the abundance of nearby hotels during the lifetime of the St. Nicholas, it grew rapidly to a position of dominance. It was during the peak of the hotel's popularity that the main section was constructed in 1924. The 1920s was Springfield's most optimistic decade. A monumental City Plan, which called for nearly re-building downtown was adopted. The newly formed Chamber of Commerce promoted the Capital City's tourist and convention attractions, bringing over 90,000 visitors to Lincoln's Tomb and 75,000 Conventioneers here during the time of the St. Nick's construction. At the time it was built its lavish opening was ballyhooed with typical 1920s fervor. No building in town then was taller than the capitol building, but the St. Nick was second in height. In fact the local press excitedly revealed that, after the Capitol, it was the tallest structure between Chicago and St. Louis.

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Continuation sheet

Item number 8

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The new building attracted thousands of guests and many notables over the years including Dwight D. Eisenhower, Harry Truman, John F. Kennedy, Hubert Humphrey, Carl Sandburg and Chicago Mayor Richard J. Daley.

By the 1960s Springfield had become de-centralized and the downtown was no longer the center of activity. After trying unsuccessfully to keep an aging building in repair while competing with numerous motels which better accommodated the automobile, most owners gave up, and the building passed through several hands before its final closing in 1977.

Today the Springfield Central Area Development Association, City officials and numerous private groups are working to re-develop the area around the St. Nicholas into a desirable and visually attractive place. But a great many buildings have been destroyed to make room for parking lots. The St. Nick, the Amtrak station and one vacant building are the only physical remains of this once colorful and thriving area. The hotel building and railroad station are clear remains of an assembly once common in cities -- a central area devoted to, and symbolic of, moving people in and out of town and accommodating and entertaining them while they are here. This is particularly significant in Springfield because of the great number of commuting state officials, tourists, conventioners and people passing through on their way to the South and West. Today that function is diffused throughout the city and we have lost our symbolic entrance to town.

The contract purchasers are preparing to rehabilitate the St. Nicholas without damaging the integrity of its exterior. When completed, the building will form the major anchor for this re-developed area which adjoins Springfield's Central Historic District.

Springfield has few commercial structures represented on its inventory of recognized Historic Sites, and none which were gathering places for such a large number of individuals associated with Illinois' Political history and Springfield's social and cultural heritage. Clearly the St. Nicholas Hotel meets three of the four criteria for evaluation for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places. It was the scene of important political events which affected the history of the State. It was associated with the lives of persons significant in our past, and it embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period and methods of construction in that it is a typical example of a large, first class, urban hotel from the last great period in the history of hotels. It is one of Springfield's most important landmarks.

9. Major Bibliographical References

"Big Building Boom Hit City in 1924." Illinois State Register, June 21, 1951
Clark, William Lloyd, Hell at Midnight in Springfield. Milan, Ill. 1910.
Temple, Wayne C., Abraham Lincoln and Others at the St. Nicholas. St. Nicholas Corporation, 1968.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property LESS THAN 1

Quadrangle name _____

Quadrangle scale _____

UMT References

A

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Zone Easting Northing

B

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Zone Easting Northing

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H

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Verbal boundary description and justification

West one half of Lot 3 plus 30' of the east side of Lot 4 in block 10 of the Old Town Plat.

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

state	code	county	code
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state	code	county	code
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title Edward J. Russo/Head, Sangamon Valley Collection

organization Lincoln Library date July 8, 1981

street & number 326 South 7th Street telephone 217-753-4910

city or town Springfield state Illinois 62701

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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title _____ date _____

For HCRS 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

FEB 16 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 during the week beginning February 6, 1983 and ending February 12, 1983. For further information call (202) 272-3504.

STATE, County, Vicinity, Property, Address, (date listed)

ARIZONA, Maricopa County, Phoenix, U.S. Post Office, 522 N. Central Ave. (02/10/83)

ARIZONA, Pima County, Tucson, U.S. Post Office and Courthouse, 55 E. Broadway (02/10/83)

CALIFORNIA, Humboldt County, Eureka, U.S. Post Office and Courthouse, Fifth and H Sts. (02/10/83)

CALIFORNIA, Merced County, Merced, U.S. Post Office, 401 W. 18th St. (02/10/83)

CALIFORNIA, San Diego County, San Ysidro, U.S. Inspection Station/U.S. Custom House, Virginia and Tijuana Sts. (02/10/83)

CALIFORNIA, San Joaquin County, Stockton, U.S. Post Office, 401 N. San Joaquin St. (02/10/83)

CALIFORNIA, Stanislaus County, Modesto, U.S. Post Office, Twelfth and I Sts. (02/10/83)

ILLINOIS, Bureau County, Princeton, Skinner, Richard M., House, 627 E. Peru St. (02/10/83)

ILLINOIS, Cass County, Beardstown, Park House, 200 W. Second St. (02/10/83)

ILLINOIS, Cook County, Chicago, King, Patrick J., House, 3234 W. Washington Blvd. (02/10/83)

ILLINOIS, Cook County, Chicago, Singer Building, 120 S. State St. (02/10/83)

ILLINOIS, Lee County, Dixon, Nachusa House, 215 S. Galena Ave. (02/10/83)

ILLINOIS, Logan County, Mt. Pulaski vicinity, Buckles, Robert, Barn (Round Barns in Illinois TR), SE of Mt. Pulaski (02/10/83)

ILLINOIS, McLean County, Chenoa, Scott, Matthew T., House, 227 1st Ave. (02/10/83)

ILLINOIS, Peoria County, Norwood Park vicinity, Christ Church of Lower Kickapoo, W of Norwood Park on Christ Church Rd. (02/10/83)

ILLINOIS, Pike County, Summer Hill, Scott, Lyman, House, U.S. 54 (02/10/83)

ILLINOIS, Sangamon County, Springfield, St. Nicholas Hotel, 400 E. Jefferson St. (02/10/83)

INDIANA, Monroe County, Bloomington, Blair-Dunning House, 608 W. 3rd St. (02/10/83)

KANSAS, Ford County, Dodge City, Sacred Heart Cathedral, 903 Central Ave. (02/10/83)

KANSAS, Gray County, Cimarron, Cimarron Hotel, 203 N. Main St. (02/10/83)

KENTUCKY, Christian County, Hopkinsville, Dalton, Monroe, House (Christian County MRA), 713 E. 7th St. (02/10/83)

KENTUCKY, Jefferson County, Harrods Creek, Nitta Yuma Historic District, 5028, 5040, 5044, and 5051 Nitta Yuma (02/10/83)

KENTUCKY, Taylor County, Campbellsville vicinity, Hiestand, Jacob, House, W of Campbellsville off KY 210 (02/10/83)

KENTUCKY, Taylor County, Campbellsville, Campbellsville Historic Commercial District, Roughly bounded by Columbia Ave., Broadway, 1st, Hotchkiss Sts., Central Ave. (both sides), and RR tracks (02/10/83)

MICHIGAN, Cheboygan County, Cheboygan, Newton-Allaire House, 337 Dresser St. (02/10/83)

MICHIGAN, Wayne County, Detroit, Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church Complex, 1345 Gratiot Ave. (02/10/83)