

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form



1084

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any 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 certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

1. Name of Property

historic name C. Berg's Hotel

other names/site number Berg Hotel

2. Location

street & number 145 W. Main Street

☐ N/A not for publication

city or town Sleepy Eye

☐ N/A vicinity

state MN code MN county Brown code 015 zip code 56085

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 at the following level(s) of significance:

☐ national ☐ statewide ☒ local

Britta L. Bloomberg
Signature of certifying official/Title Britta L. Bloomberg, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

12/13/11
Date

Minnesota Historical Society
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official

Date

Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

☒ entered in the National Register

☐ determined eligible for the National Register

☐ determined not eligible for the National Register

☐ removed from the National Register

☐ other (explain:)

Agar [Signature]
Signature of the Keeper

2/6/12
Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	private
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box.)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

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

Contributing	Noncontributing
1	buildings
	district
	site
	structure
	object
1	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

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

VACANT: Not in use

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE VICTORIAN: Queen Anne

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: STONE

walls: BRICK

roof: ASPHALT

other: STONE

METAL

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

Summary Paragraph

The Berg Hotel is located in Sleepy Eye, Minnesota, a town of 3,500 people in the south-central section of the state. This imposing three-story brick building has a prominent location within the city's downtown commercial district, anchoring the northwest corner of the block bounded by Main Street on the north, Second Avenue S. on the west, First Ave. S to the east, and Walnut Street to the south.

Main Street (U.S. Hwy. 14) is a primary east-west thoroughfare through Sleepy Eye. The Dakota, Minnesota and Eastern Railroad passes through the city one-and-a-half blocks to the north.

Built in 1899, the hotel was designed by Hermann Amme, a New Ulm architect. It reflects the late Queen Anne commercial style with its heavy Kasota stone sills and central arched stone entry.

Narrative Description

See attached continuation sheet.

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7. NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

C. Berg's Hotel is located in Sleepy Eye, Minnesota, a town of 3,500 people in the south-central section of the state. This imposing three-story brick building has a prominent location within the city's downtown commercial district, anchoring the northwest corner of the block bounded by Main Street on the north, Second Avenue S. on the west, First Ave. S to the east, and Walnut Street to the south.

The building faces Main Street (U.S. Hwy. 14), the primary east-west thoroughfare through Sleepy Eye. The commercial district extends on both sides of Main Street for one block to the west and two blocks to the east, with several late nineteenth and early twentieth century buildings intermixed with storefronts erected within the last fifty years. The commercial center only extends one block south, transitioning into a residential neighborhood.

The Dakota, Minnesota and Eastern Railroad railroad passes through the city one-and-a-half blocks to the north. Two railroad buildings are listed on the National Register of Historic Places: the Winona & St. Peter Freight Depot (added 1979) and the Chicago & Northwestern Depot (added 1992).

The building is located on lots 11 and 12, block 3, with the rear of the property currently vacant. A public sidewalk surrounds the property on the north and west, while an alley marks the south boundary of the lots.

Hotel Exterior

This three-story building has a rectangular floor plan, conforming with the lot. It is constructed of brick with a stone foundation. The street façade, facing Main Street, is divided into three bays, originally with a central entry framed by brick piers, capped by buff-colored stone capitals. The original centered entry has a full, rusticated, Kasota stone arch, flanked by plate glass windows (Photo #03). The former doorway is infilled with a brick bulkhead and plate glass. The primary entry is now through a recessed single entry glass and metal door, on the left side of the street façade. There is an additional entry — a single entry wood door — on the far right (west) of this façade. The storefront cornice shows a steel beam across the openings, with a row of dentiled brickwork dividing the ground floor from the upper wall. Historic photographs show that the original entrance was covered with a one-story columned portico. This was removed since it extended to the street — U.S. Hwy. 14 — and infringed on the right-of-way when the highway was widened.

The second story consists of three sets of paired 1/1 double hung windows featuring stone sills and lintels. The top floor fenestration is similar to the one below, except that the windows have nearly flat brick arches with keystones. A row of corbelled brick in the form of dentils surmounts these windows.

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The raised center panel displays "C. Berg's Hotel" carved in stone, with the date stone below it (Photo #02). An additional row of corbelled bricks serve as a terminus to the façade. On both floors, the central windows replace what were originally double doors opening out to balconies.

The west sidewall is highlighted by a central bay featuring prominent stairwell windows (Photo #04). This bay is set off by raised brick piers, running the full height of the building, broken with stone capitals on the upper storefront level. The most striking architectural element on this wall is the upper window, lighting the interior stairwell. This Palladian window has a full-arch fan light above and brick hood, with a Kasota stone keystone and sills (Photo #05). The remaining windows on the first and second floors are rectangular, with heavy stone lintels and slightly lighter stone sills. The third floor windows are segmentally arched with brick hoods and stone sills. This wall continues some of the decorative brick corbelling seen on the front façade. There is a below ground entry into the basement on the northwest corner, with concrete steps from the sidewalk level.

The rear of the building, on the south, yields clear evidence of the former rear wing, with exposed interior wall brick, and includes several boarded doors (Photo #07).

The east sidewall is adjoined to a two-story brick building.

Hotel Interior

Much of the hotel interior was removed in 2003, stripped down to studs and some framing (Photo #07). Several traces remain that provide clues as to its configuration. The former office remains relatively intact, as does the stairway with bannisters (see attached original floorplan). There are three floors and a full basement, each with 3,535 square feet.

The original first floor plan included an office, a parlor, a dining room, and a saloon. The kitchen was located in the older attached building in the rear. This floor plan was reconfigured in 1914, with the parlor reduced in size (and labeled a writing room) with a "wash room" taking over some of the space. The basement walls remain intact.

Integrity

The exterior retains reasonably good historic integrity because the building's original materials and most architectural details are intact and clearly visible. Two key architectural elements are missing. The original 1874 Minnesota House was moved to the back of the lot in 1899 and given a brick veneer. It was integral to the original 1899 plan, but demolished in 2003. The striking columned entry portico had previously been removed in the 1950s due to concerns of the Minnesota Department of Transportation that it extended to the street (a state highway). This portico, with its porch off the second floor, gave the

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hotel an impressive public façade on Main Street. Despite these changes, it is an imposing building that provides a visual anchor to one of the city's primary downtown blocks, indeed, to the whole commercial district

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 old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE

Period of Significance

1899-1950

Significant Dates

1899

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Amme, Herman (architect)

Period of Significance (justification)

The period of significance begins with construction of the hotel in 1899 through the end of ownership by the Berg family in 1950.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

The C. Berg Hotel is locally significant under National Register Criterion A for its association to the broad patterns of our history in the area of commerce. After the opening of the Sleepy Eye Flour Mill in 1882, the city came to play an important role in the economic development of central Brown County. The mill's expansion spurred rapid growth in the downtown commercial district, which provided the surrounding farms and hamlets with retail, service, and banking industries, as well as social and cultural opportunities.

The Berg Hotel — advertised as the “only first class hotel in the city” — offered accommodations for travelers who came to Sleepy Eye, particularly business visitors to the commercial district and the flour mill. Its dining room also served as an informal community center, hosting diverse civic and social organizations.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

See attached continuation sheet.

Developmental history/additional historic context information (if appropriate)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

See attached continuation sheet.

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 # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

☒ State Historic Preservation Office
☐ Other State agency
☐ Federal agency
☐ Local government
☐ University
☐ Other

Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): BW-SLC-008

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8. NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Berg Hotel is locally significant under National Register Criterion A for its association to the broad patterns of our history in the area of commerce. After the opening of the Sleepy Eye Flour Mill in 1882, the city came to play an important role in the economic development of central Brown County. The mill's expansion spurred rapid growth in the downtown commercial district, which provided the surrounding farms and hamlets with retail, service, and banking industries, as well as social and cultural opportunities.

The Berg Hotel — advertised as the “only first class hotel in the city — offered accommodations for travelers who came to Sleepy Eye, particularly business visitors to the commercial district and the flour mill. Its dining room also served as an informal community center, hosting diverse civic and social organizations.

The period of significance begins in 1899, the hotel's construction date, and ends in 1950, when the Berg family sold the hotel. The building is significant within two statewide historic contexts, “Railroads and Agricultural Development 1870-1940” and “Railroad Development in Minnesota, 1862-1956.”

The City of Sleepy Eye

Founded in 1872, the town of Sleepy Eye came relatively late in the settlement of Brown County. Much of the land in the eastern half of the county had been bought up quickly when it first became available following the signing of the Treaties of Mendota and Traverse de Sioux in 1851. These treaties between the United States government and indigenous representatives saw the Dakota give up their rights to most of southern Minnesota, and led to the creation of the Upper and Lower Sioux Reservations in 1853 — land which included a ten-mile wide swath of land directly south of the Minnesota River in Brown County.

Euro-American settlement followed rapidly as settlers and land speculators bought up the rich farmland of Brown County. Transportation routes were oriented to the river, although farms and crossroads hamlets might be found away from the Minnesota River. One observer noted that the population grew sparse west of New Ulm, stating, “Only here and there is found a settler.”¹

The U.S.-Dakota War of 1862 changed all of that, as government policy shifted to removal of native populations and nullification of various treaties. A new land rush developed in its wake, as settlers —

¹ *St. Peter Tribune*, July 16, 1872.

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some who had received checks from the federal government as claims for damages — grabbed up this newly available prime farm land.²

The construction of the Winona and St. Peter Railroad, extending west from New Ulm in 1872, transformed the region. Typically, the railroad established towns every ten to twelve miles as track was laid toward South Dakota, and Sleepy Eye (1872), Walnut Grove (1874), Springfield (1877), and Lamberton (1878) were all platted by the late 1870s. Sleepy Eye's plat was filed on September 18, 1872, by Walter Brackenridge, a Rochester lawyer for the railroad, and Thomas Allison, a settler who was living near Sleepy Eye Lake. Named after a Dakota leader, the village was incorporated six years later. There was an early controversy about the name of the new town. Citizens voted in January 1880 to change its name to Loreno, unhappy with the prominent association with a Dakota Indian, then reversed itself a year later, returning to the older title of Sleepy Eye Lake. The commercial district grew up just south of the railroad depot, with Christian Emmerich building the first hotel on the northwest corner of Main Street and First Avenue.

It was a boom town in those early decades, especially after the railroad constructed a branch to Redwood Falls in 1877. The new line encouraged farmers to expand wheat production by providing reliable and relatively fast transportation for their crops. Between 1890 and 1900, the percentage of land farmed in Redwood County grew from forty-six to ninety percent, with more than a third given over to wheat production — with all shipments funneled through Sleepy Eye. By 1880, the village had reached a population of 1,300 residents.

Soon after the town was organized, German immigrant Carl Berg opened his first hotel, a simple wood-frame two story building with a saloon on the first floor. Berg was born in Mecklenberg, Germany, on July 17, 1846, coming to the United States in 1855. After fourteen years in Milwaukee, he moved to Minnesota and acquired a farm in Milford Township, Brown County, in 1870. Finally, in 1874, he and his wife — with whom he would have eight children — decided to abandon the farm and open a saloon and hotel in Sleepy Eye. A New Ulm newspaper announced, "The Farmers and Travelers Hotel of Charles Berg will be opened on Sunday evening, June 28, 1874, with a free lunch and dance. The best accommodation of the guest's care is exercised." The new hostelry's name was soon changed to the Minnesota House. Sanborn maps show that Berg's building was located on lot 12, on the street corner, with a large one-and-a-half story barn along the alley. Early competition included the Lorena House and the Exchange Hotel.³

² "Heimstättegesetz [Homestead law]," *New Ulm Post*, December 16, 1864; "Die Sioux-Reservation," December 30, 1864.

³ *New Ulm Plaindealer*, June 26, 1874; *New Ulm Review*, December 15, 1920, April 4, 1923; *Sleepy Eye Herald-Dispatch*, October 2, 1914; April 5, 1923. At some time between 1889 and 1894, a wood frame commercial building on lot 11 was removed, opening the lot for Berg's expansion in 1899.

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Sleepy Eye in 1899

By 1894, the town had grown to more than 2,500 people. Local boosters now boasted, "Sleepy Eye is the most centrally located town [and] one of the wealthiest and most progressive." Although the Chicago & Northwestern moved its division headquarters from Sleepy Eye to Tracy, the railroad remained an important employer with a roundhouse and machine shops in town.

The greatest economic spur, however, was the Sleepy Eye Flour Mill, opened in 1883. As the 1917 *History of Brown County* stated, "By all odds the flour industry has done more for the city than any other and possibly all other industries combined." By 1899, Sleepy Eye's flour mill was among the largest such operations in Minnesota, producing Cream, Apple Blossom, Gold, Snowflake, Chief, and Cyclone Brands of flour. The mill owned twenty-seven elevators in other southern Minnesota and South Dakota towns as well. It maintained its own cooper's shop, where barrels were made for shipment of flour. At its high point, it employed 240 people, working night and day shifts, six days a week.⁴

Apart from the direct impact, the mill drew farmers into town when they delivered their harvest. One writer noted in 1894, "Everything about the establishment runs like clockwork. By the time the wheat is unloaded, the farmer steps over to the office and finds his check filled out awaiting him." Flush with a prosperity fostered by those checks, the downtown developed into an important commercial center for the surrounding area.

Although it was not a major employer, the Farmers Elevator, organized in 1891 as the Sleepy Eye Farmers Warehouse Association, also served as an economic anchor for nearby farmers, as they brought their wheat to town. In 1898, the association erected a 16,000-bushel elevator at a cost of \$2,998. It continued to expand over the next two decades, with an additional elevator in 1902, coal sheds in 1907, and a replacement elevator in 1921.

All of this spurred the growth of Sleepy Eye's commercial district, with a typical mix of banks, retail shops, and professional services. Other signs of civic improvements included a new library, built in 1901, and a new train depot, opened in 1902. In an 1899 newspaper article reflecting on the "close of a century," a mill spokesman wrote: "Many of our citizens are already preparing plans and making arrangements for the erection of substantial business blocks and residences. We do not think there is a town in the state that is doing as much business." Local businessman P. Christiansen joined the chorus, stating: "When there is lots of building, you may depend upon it that the times are good. . . . People do not indulge in fine houses and good clothes unless they have money. We have the richest county in the state [and] the best town of its size anywhere."⁵

⁴ *Brown County Journal*, August 18, 1940.

⁵ *Sleepy Eye Dispatch*, February 9, 1899.

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Berg's Hotel

In this heady atmosphere of economic optimism, Carl Berg decided to build a new hotel in January 1899. At the time, there were two other major local hotels that served travelers: the Leona and the new Windsor. A Sleepy Eye newspaper announced the plan: "For a few weeks past, Mr. Carl Berg has been laying plans to erect a new hotel. It is his intention to move his present place of business back and on the two lots build a three-story solid brick hotel 50 x 70 feet. . . . In the main building, he will have forty large bedrooms."

Berg would advertise his new establishment as the "only first class hotel in the city" and so aimed for a distinguished piece of architecture. He turned to New Ulm architect Herman Amme to design the building. Amme was a native of Brown County, but had spent several years studying architecture in Germany. A local newspaper said that Amme was "one of the best educated architects in this part of the state." In 1899, however, he was still relatively young — thirty-one — and most of his work had been for private homes. In the wake of the success of the Berg Hotel, Amme received commissions for a new high school building in New Ulm in 1900 (no longer standing) and a substantial commercial block in downtown New Ulm (Louis Buenger Block, 227 N. Minnesota, a contributing building in the New Ulm Commercial Historic District).⁶

Amme's plans were promptly approved, as described by the *Sleepy Eye Herald*:

The basement will have a ceiling 10 feet high, while the first floor will have a 13 foot ceiling. The two upper floors will have 10 foot ceilings. The basement will have a fine large room on the corner to be used for bath rooms and barber shop. The first floor will contain office, ladies' parlor, dining room, bar room, lavatory, closets, etc. The upper floor will have the parlors and rooms. On every floor there will be a bath room and closets. The building will be solid brick with a handsome front, with large plate glass. When completed, it will be second to no hotel on this line of road.⁷

Costs were estimated at \$20,000. "From the footing stone to the last inch of roofing," declared Berg, "the building will be absolutely first class."⁸

Construction began by March, with the removal of the old hotel to the back of the lot, and then incorporated into an attached rear wing to be used as a kitchen. A Sleepy Eye newspaper noted, "The frame building that Mr. Berg has used for so many years as the Minnesota House will be brick veneered

⁶ *Brown County Journal*, January 28, 1899; January 20, 1917; *New Ulm Review*, February 8, 1899.

⁷ *Sleepy Eye Herald*, March 17, 1899.

⁸ *Sleepy Eye Dispatch*, January 12, 1899.

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and joined on the rear of the new structure." By late October, work was nearing completion, and the cut stone with "C. Berg's Hotel" was installed on the upper wall near the cornice.⁹

In early December, the hotel opened with a grand banquet and dance to mark the occasion, with the Cadet Band playing from the second floor balcony and Professor Hicks' Orchestra in the dining room. The event also served as a fundraiser, since tickets went for \$2.50 each. "Every citizen and businessman of Sleepy Eye," one person recommended, "ought to buy a ticket and thus show his appreciation to our generous and big-hearted citizen Mr. Berg." Touring the building, a local reporter boasted, "The new Berg is the Waldorf Astoria of southern Minnesota and no matter how particular the guest, he can find accommodations as he may want under the spacious roof of this modern caravansary."¹⁰ Within a few months, Berg added a billiards room in the basement, sure to attract salesmen who frequented the place.

One interesting side effect of the new building was its impact on the city's power system. Until that time, the electric light plant ran only in the evenings, and then was shut down at 11:15 p.m. When the Berg Hotel opened, the plant began to operate in the mornings as well. "The new Berg Hotel has about 150 incandescent lamps," explained the local newspaper, "and it was absolutely necessary to have light in the morning." The extra hours prompted the city to hire its first full-time plant operator.¹¹

The new hotel was a success. Writing in *America's Main Street Hotels*, historian John A. Jakle noted, "Modern hotels were critical to attracting transients and, of course, the money they spent. Importantly, hotels could also function as a kind of community center." In outstate Minnesota, hotels played a vital role in a small town's, as evidenced by similar examples of National Register listed properties such as the St. James Hotel in Red Wing, the Slade Hotel in Nobles County, the Hotel Broz in New Prague, the Hotel Atwater in Atwater, and the Union Hotel in LeSueur County.¹²

Much of the trade at the Berg Hotel was driven by traveling salesmen, for whom sample rooms were set aside. These business travelers would arrive by train, carrying samples of their wares in large trunks that were hauled to the hotel by wagon. The salesman then set up their displays in the office, allowing merchants to drop by, look over new products, then place orders for their inventory.¹³

The hotel's role as a community center was derived from the patronage of its dining room, which was open to the public. A scan of local newspapers shows that the Berg Hotel was a popular venue for banquets and other public celebrations. For example, the Knights of Pythias met here on a regular basis,

⁹ *Sleepy Eye Herald*, January 13, 1899.

¹⁰ *Brown County Journal*, December 9, 1899; *Sleepy Eye Dispatch*, October 27, November 23, 30, December 7, 1899; *Sleepy Eye Herald*, November 24, 1899.

¹¹ *Sleepy Eye Herald*, November 24, 1899.

¹² John A. Jakle and Keith A. Sculle, *America's Main Street Hotels: Transiency and Community in the Early Auto Age* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2009), 5.

¹³ *Sleepy Eye Herald-Dispatch*, January 7, 1916; January 13, 1899.

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thanks, in part, to "Mine host, Carl Berg" who "did himself proud is setting such a fine supper." When Reverend Alois Plut was honored at a banquet, the dinner was praised as "the most elaborate and costly ever set before a Sleepy Eye party . . . and would do credit to any big hotel in metropolitan cities." Berg served as a city councilman for several years, and political dinners were common in his hotel as well.¹⁴

Carl Berg continued to manage the hotel until October 1914, when he tentatively retired and moved to St. Paul, renting out the building to D. F. Blackney. The new manager promptly made changes to the first floor, as reported:

It was a case of general change-about, the front parlor on the east was ousted and fixed up as a writing room — six fine new oak desks sparkling in the youth and splendor, fully equipped with stationery and other essentials. . . . The office also presents a strange appearance; the long table has been completely removed, ousted completely, now that the room is a lobby, the whole thing, [with] leather upholstered chairs [and] rocking chairs.¹⁵

Within a year, however, Carl Berg's two sons, Will and Herman, took over management. In 1917, Will was drafted into the army after the nation entered World War I. Sent to a training camp in the south, he fell ill and died before ever going overseas. To fill the void, Carl returned to work with son Herman until the founder's death in 1923.¹⁶

These were key transitional years in Sleepy Eye. During the decade between 1910 and 1920, the mill struggled financially, victim of an industry-wide consolidation of milling, as large corporations bought up many small town mills, combining business operations. By the early 1900s, three Minnesota-based corporations controlled 97 percent of the nation's flour production. In 1914, the Sleepy Eye Mill closed for a time, and ownership transferred to United Milling Company, with headquarters in Minneapolis. Although it reopened under the new management, in 1921, the mill shut its doors for the last time, although the flour continued to be produced elsewhere under the Sleepy Eye trademark.¹⁷

The town was hit hard by the closure. The Bergs faced another challenge when prohibition forced the closure of its saloon. This prompted the Bergs to make changes on the main floor, closing the bar and turning it into a storeroom. A substantial first floor restroom was built at that time.

One year before Carl Berg passed away, the hotel hosted the most famous guest in its history. On October 16, 1922, little more than a week after the New York Yankees lost the World Series, Babe Ruth — along with teammate Bob Meusel — came to Sleepy Eye on a barnstorming tour, their only stop in

¹⁴ *Sleepy Eye Herald*, January 12, 1900. Also see March 30, 1900, for an account of another early banquet.

¹⁵ *Sleepy Eye Herald-Dispatch*, October 2, 9, 1914. The long table was moved to the basement and has been returned to the original office in recent years.

¹⁶ *Sleepy Eye Herald-Dispatch*, January 7, 1916.

¹⁷ *Sleepy Eye Herald-Dispatch*, January 13, 20, 27, 1909, give reports of early financial difficulties.

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Minnesota. When they arrived in town, the local newspaper reported, "The Berg Hotel where they stopped was the scene of a great crowd anxious to get a glimpse of the home run swatters." The Babe did not disappoint on the baseball field, hitting two "screaming homers, the longest hits ever recorded on the local grounds." While this is a charming anecdote, it also suggests the continuing role of the hotel as an informal community gathering place.¹⁸

Later History

Herman Berg continued to manage the hotel in the twenty-seven years following his father's death. Then, in 1950, the Berg family sold the hotel to Orin Hiers, who promptly began making changes. The hotel operations were turned over to Hans Peterson, who lived on the premises. The typical lodger now tended to be seeking long term transient housing rather than a brief overnight stop for business, especially as travelers turned to the automobile. The railroad halted passenger service on the Redwood Falls branch in the 1930s, and on the main line in 1959. The hotel's location near the depot was no longer an asset. However, the hotel office, still intact on a prominent downtown street corner, was designated as a bus depot, and so generated some traffic for the upstairs rooms.

Reflecting this economic shift, Hiers converted much of the main floor into a grocery store. His brother, Rolland, had operated a store in town for several years, and following the remodeling of the store front and interior, the Hiers' Super Valu moved to the ground floor, opening in December 1950. The upper floors continued to be rented out, more typically for longer term residents.¹⁹

The building went through several different owners over the next fifty-two years. In 2002, owner Don Henderson donated the building, then known as the Chief Hotel and Apartments, to the Sleepy Eye Area Foundation. Determined to save this prominent local landmark by making the property supposedly more attractive for new investors, in 2003, workers stripped the interior down to its basic framing and demolished the rear wing.²⁰

Conclusion

The Berg Hotel was the finest hotel in Sleepy Eye when it was constructed in 1899. At the time, the city was undergoing a boom period as the Sleepy Eye Mill expanded into one of the five largest operations in all of Minnesota. During these years, it offered accommodations and food for the hundreds of travelers who debarked at the nearby train depot, or later by automobile and bus. These transients

¹⁸ *Sleepy Eye Herald-Dispatch*, October 19, 1922.

¹⁹ *Sleepy Eye Herald-Dispatch*, September 7, 12, 14, 1950; December 5, 1950.

²⁰ *New Ulm Journal*, August 25, 2002; March 6, 2003.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Name of Property: C. Berg's Hotel

County and State: Brown County, MN

Section number: 8 page: 8

Name of Multiple Property Listing (If applicable)

included salesmen who brought their sample trunks and set them up at the hotel, enticing local merchants to stock their inventory. It also served the milling industry, as business people came to town to close important deals. Its dining room offered local patrons a place to eat out and a popular spot for banquets and other public ceremonies.

For these reasons, the Berg Hotel is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, locally significant for its contribution to the city's commerce.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Name of Property: C. Berg's Hotel

County and State: Brown County, MN

Section number: 9 page: 1

Name of Multiple Property Listing (If applicable)

SECTION 9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

Blegen, Theodore C. *Minnesota: A History of the State*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1963.

Fritsche, Louis. *History of Brown County, Minnesota: Its People, Industries and Institutions*. Marceline, Mo.: Walsworth, 1976 (reprint).

Jakle, John A., and Keith A. Sculle. *America's Main Street Hotels: Transiency and Community in the Early Auto Age*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2009.

Neill, Edward D. *History of the Minnesota Valley*. Minneapolis: North Star Publishing Co., 1882.

Scobie, Elizabeth. *Sleepy Eye: A History of Sleepy Eye, Minnesota*. Sleepy Eye: Herald-Dispatch Printing, 1972.

Trebesch, Mary Ann. "History of the Berg Hotel," *Sleepy Eye Herald-Dispatch*, May 20, 2007.

Newspapers

Brown County Journal (New Ulm)

New Ulm Review

Sleepy Eye Dispatch (1890-1908)

Sleepy Eye Herald (1890-1908)

Sleepy Eye Herald-Dispatch (1908-present)

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property $\frac{1}{2}$ acre
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	15	362463	4906312	3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2				4			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The nominated property is described as Brown County Parcel 002.105.003.11.110, being lots 11 and 12, block 3, Brackenridge 1st Addition.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary of the nominated property includes the parcel of land historically associated with the hotel.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Daniel J. Hoisington
organization _____ date Summer 2011
street & number P. O. Box 13790 telephone 651-415-1034
city or town Roseville state MN zip code 55113
e-mail preservation@edinborough.com

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **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. Key all photographs to this map.

- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

See attached continuation sheet.

C. Berg's Hotel
Name of Property

Brown County, Minnesota
County and State

Property Owner:

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

name _____
street & number _____ telephone _____
city or town _____ state _____

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.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

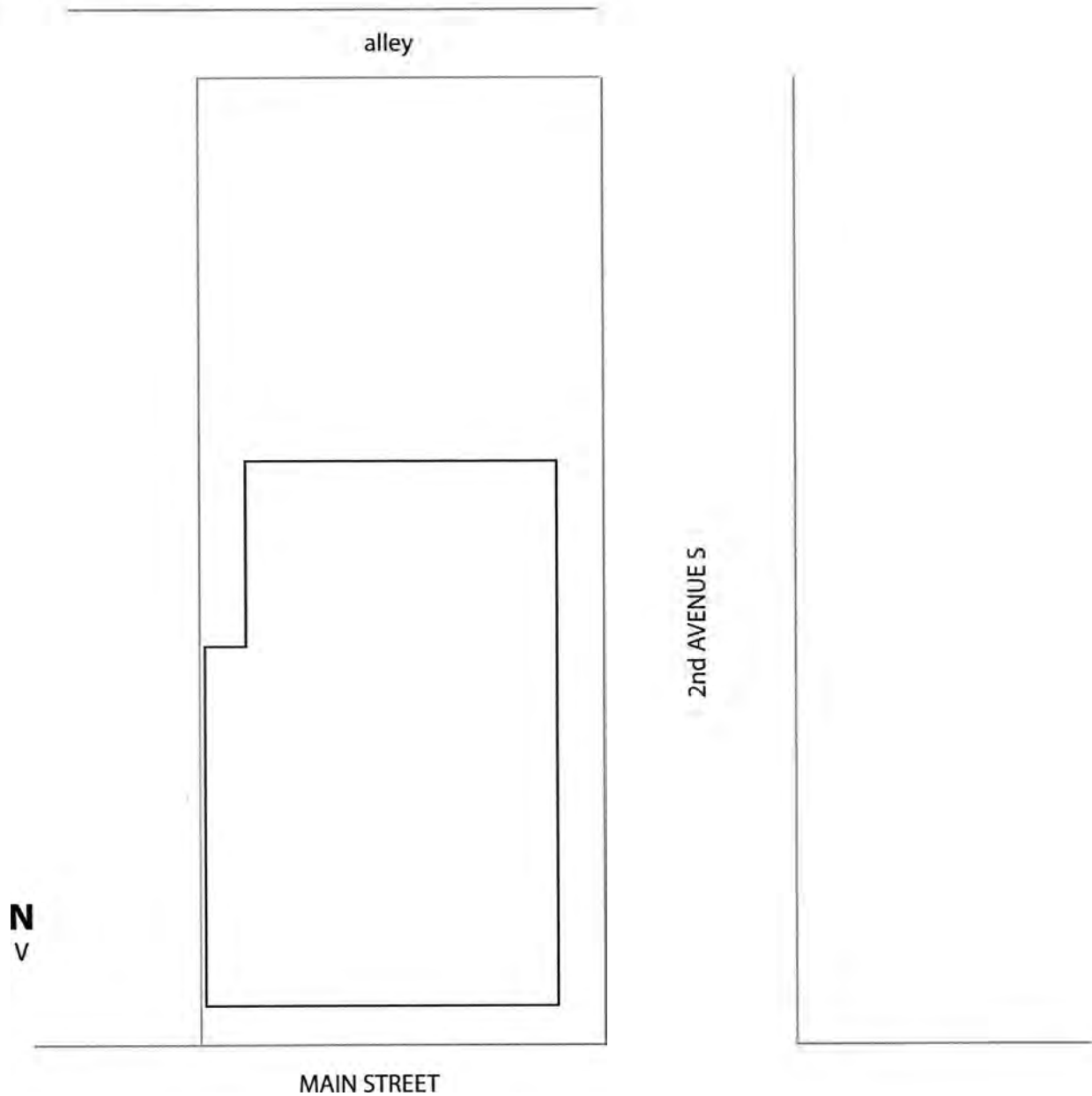
Name of Property: C. Berg's Hotel

County and State: Brown County, MN

Section number: Additional Documentation page: 1

Name of Multiple Property Listing (If applicable)

SITE PLAN:



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

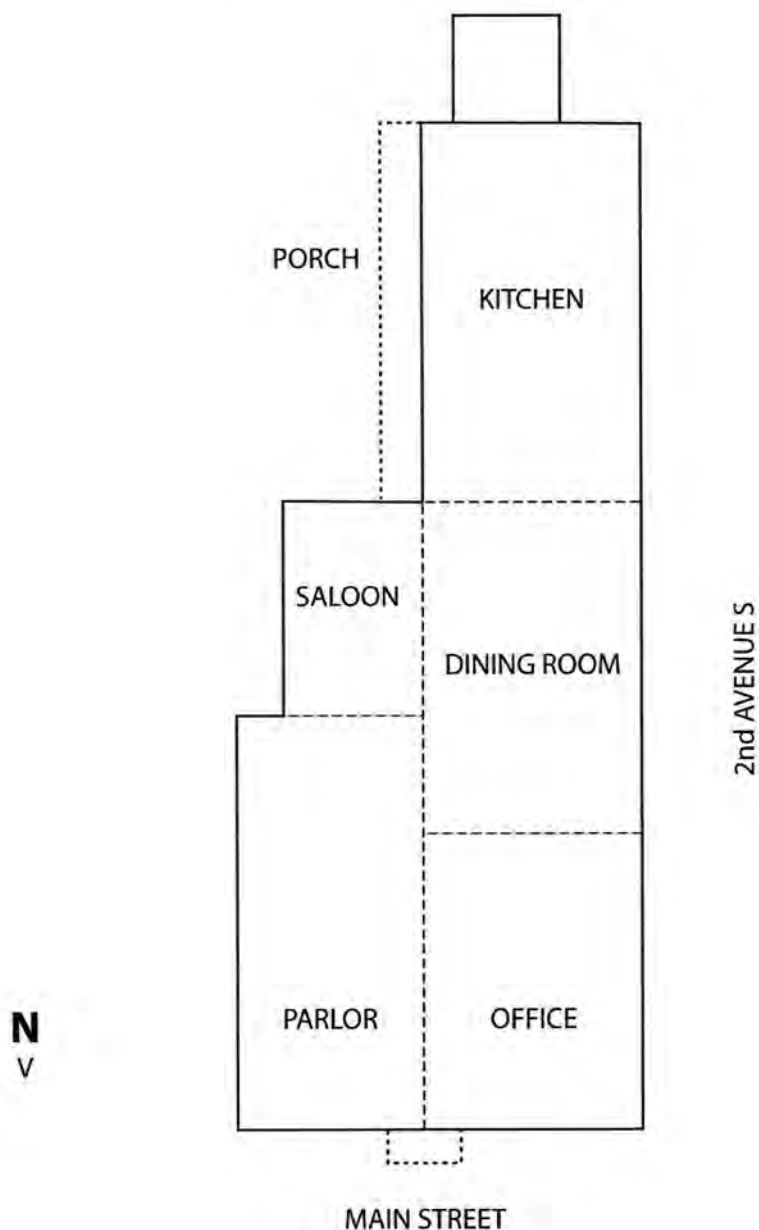
Name of Property: C. Berg's Hotel

County and State: Brown County, MN

Section number: Additional Documentation page: 2

Name of Multiple Property Listing (If applicable)

FIRST FLOOR PLAN, 1899 SANBORN MAP



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Name of Property: C. Berg's Hotel

County and State: Brown County, MN

Section number: Additional Documentation page: 3

Name of Multiple Property Listing (If applicable)

PHOTOGRAPH, C. BERG HOTEL, CA. 1900.
ORIGINAL AT BROWN COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY, NEW ULM, MINNESOTA



**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Name of Property: C. Berg's Hotel

County and State: Brown County, MN

Section number: Additional Documentation page: 4

Name of Multiple Property Listing (If applicable)

PHOTOGRAPHS:

Name of Property: Berg Hotel

City or Vicinity: Sleepy Eye

County: Brown County

State: MN

Name of Photographer: Daniel J. Hoisington

Date of Photographs: June 2010

Location of Original Digital Files: 122 Demont Avenue E, Little Canada, MN

Photo #1 (MN_Brown County_Berg Hotel_0001)

North elevation, camera facing southwest.

Photo #2 (MN_Brown County_Berg Hotel_0002)

North elevation, upper façade, camera facing southwest.

Photo #3 (MN_Brown County_Berg Hotel_0003)

North elevation, street level, camera facing south.

Photo #4 (MN_Brown County_Berg Hotel_0004)

West elevation (left), camera facing northeast.

Photo #5 (MN_Brown County_Berg Hotel_0005)

West elevation, window detail, camera facing east.

Photo #6 (MN_Brown County_Berg Hotel_0006)

South elevation, camera facing northeast.

Photo #7 (MN_Brown County_Berg Hotel_0007)

Interior view, first floor, stairwell, camera facing west.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Berg's, C., Hotel

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: MINNESOTA, Brown

DATE RECEIVED: 12/23/11 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 1/19/12
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 2/03/12 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 2/07/12
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 11001084

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

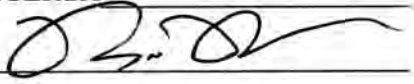
APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: Y SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

☒ ACCEPT ☐ RETURN ☐ REJECT ☐ DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

RECOM./CRITERIA

REVIEWER  DISCIPLINE History
TELEPHONE _____ DATE 2/6/12

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.



MN BROWN COUNTY BERG HOTEL 0001



MN BROWN COUNTY BERG HOTEL 0002



MN BROWN COUNTY BERG HOTEL 0003



MN BROWN COUNTY BERG HOTEL 0004



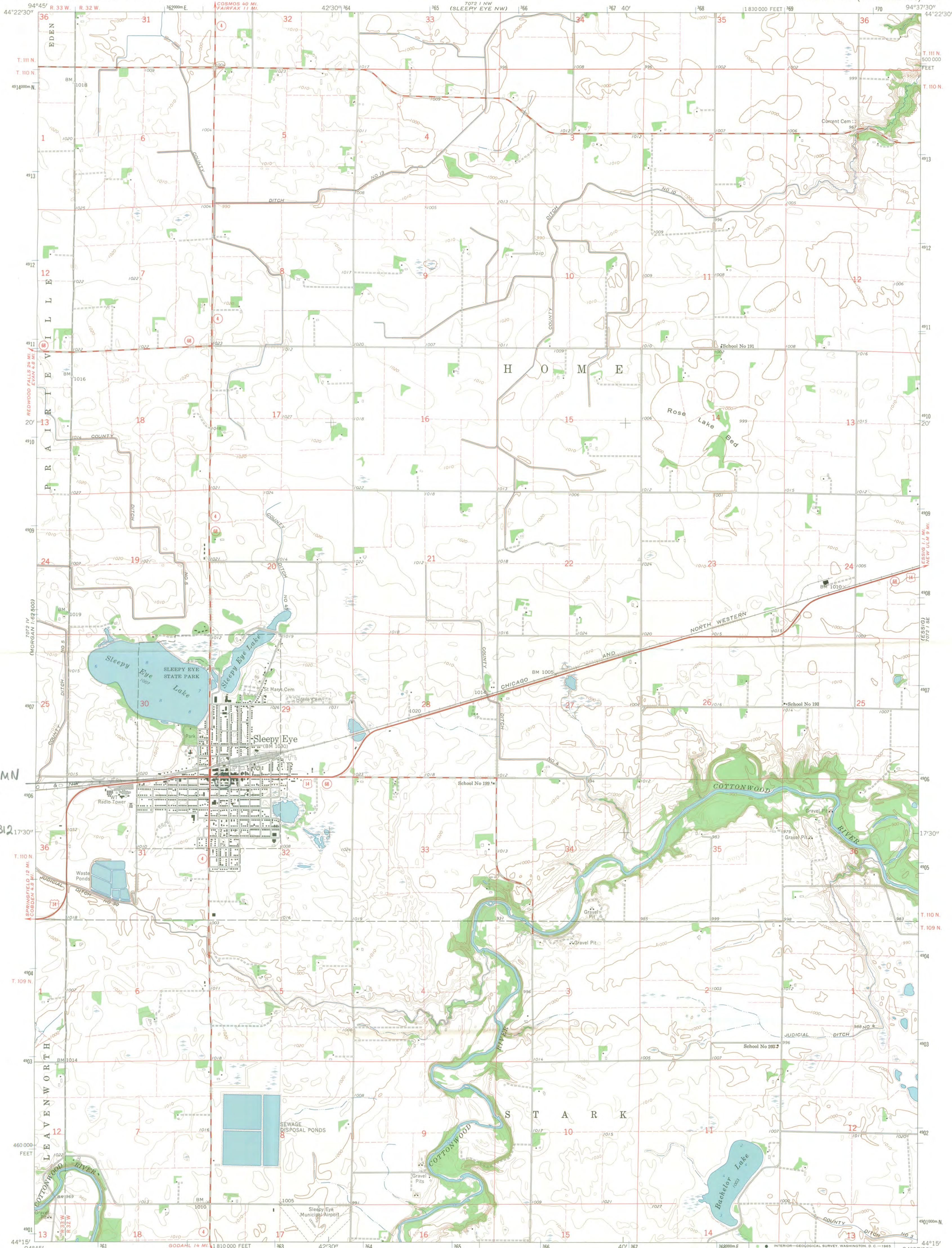
MN BROWN COUNTY BERG HOTEL 0005



MN BROWN COUNTY BERG HOTEL 0006



MN BROWN COUNTY BERG HOTEL 0007



Berg Hotel
Sleepy Eye,
Brown County, MN
UTM
15 362463 4906312

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey

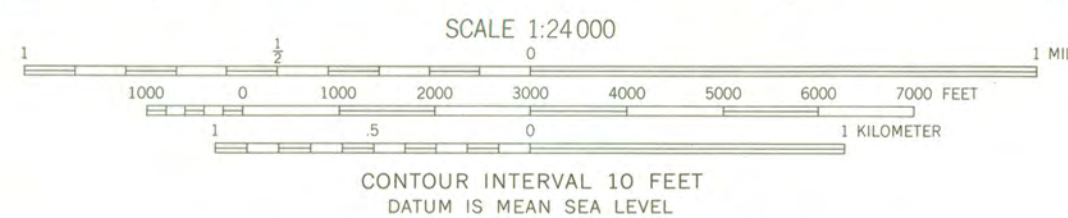
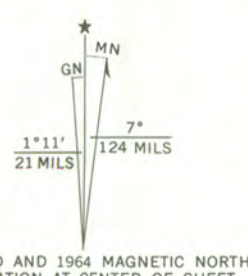
Control by USGS and USC&GS

Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs taken 1963. Field checked 1964

Soundings compiled from charts furnished by Minnesota Department of Conservation

Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grid based on Minnesota coordinate system, south zone
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,
zone 15, shown in blue

Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence and field lines where generally visible on aerial photographs. This information is unchecked



ROAD CLASSIFICATION	
Heavy-duty	Light-duty
Medium-duty	Unimproved dirt
U. S. Route	State Route

SLEEPY EYE, MINN.
N4415—W9437.5/7.5

1964

AMS 7072 1 SW—SERIES V872

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR WASHINGTON, D. C. 20542
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

Minnesota Historical Society
State Historic Preservation Office
345 Kellogg Blvd West, St. Paul, Minnesota 55102
651/259-3451



TO: Carol Shull, Keeper
National Register of Historic Places

FROM: Denis P. Gardner, National Register Historian

DATE: December 13, 2011

NAME OF PROPERTY: C. Berg's Hotel

COUNTY AND STATE: Brown County, Minnesota

SUBJECT: National Register;
☒ Nomination
☐ Multiple Property Documentation Form
☐ Request for determination of eligibility
☐ Request for removal (Reference No.)
☐ Nomination resubmission
☐ Boundary increase/decrease (Reference No.)
☐ Additional documentation (Reference No.)

DOCUMENTATION:

☒ Original National Register of Historic Places Registration Form
☐ Multiple Property Documentation Form
☒ Continuation Sheets
☐ Removal Documentation
☒ Photographs
☒ CD w/ image files
☒ Original USGS Map
☒ Sketch map(s)
☐ Correspondence
☐ Owner Objection
The enclosed owner objections
Do ☐ Do not ☐ constitute a majority of property owners

STAFF COMMENTS: