

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received **SEP 2** 1983
date entered

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

1. Name

historic The Mentone Springs Hotel

and/or common The Mentone Hotel

2. Location

street & number AL 117 N/A not for publication

city, town Mentone N/A vicinity of

state Alabama code 01 county DeKalb code 049

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 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
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: presently not used

4. Owner of Property

name Ray and Sandra Padgett

street & number P. O. Box 23

city, town Mentone N/A vicinity of state Alabama

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. DeKalb County Courthouse

street & number

city, town Fort Payne state Alabama

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Alabama Inventory has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1970-present federal state county local

depository for survey records Alabama Historical Commission

city, town Montgomery state Alabama

7. Description

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

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Mentone Hotel, built during the late 1880s, is of the Queen Anne style, characterized by turrets, verandahs, dormers, and varied texture. It is of frame construction resting on a foundation of rough-cut stone gathered from the surrounding area. The steeply pitched roof is highlighted by seven gables--one at each of the structure's ends, and three and two respectively on the front and rear elevations. There is a projecting hipped dormer on either side of the front center gable. Each rear roof plane on either side of the central gable has three hipped dormers. Originally, a single-tiered veranda with square posts and verticle board skirt extended across the front and around the sides.

The facade today is dominated at the center by a concrete block structure, a recent addition built within the dimensions of the original porch. Two original octagonal turrets with bellcast roofs flank the building. Most of the structure is sided with clapboards, - highlighted at the turret and gable tops by "fish-scale" shingles. The inner court between the two rear ells is of board and batten siding. The windows are 4/4, except on the rear court and front addition where they are 6/6 and 8/8. Three double doors, one at the center of each front gable, provided access to the hotel when the porch was in existence. Five doors open to the rear, two of which are double. In addition, there are four doors in the foundation, providing access to various basement areas.

Interior: The guest accommodation layout consists of interconnected rooms flanking either side of narrow hallways. The average room size is 14' x 12'. The central portion of the main floor is occupied by a single large room with a four-sided, three box fireplace. This was originally divided into four rooms and served as the lobby. To the east is the dining and ballroom. To the west are guest rooms.

The second floor consists of a central hallway flanked on either side by guest rooms similar to those on the first floor. There are 18 extant rooms on this level. The third floor is much smaller, due mainly to the slope of the roof, and is not partitioned.

The vast majority of the rooms have walls and ceilings of two to three inch beaded tongue and groove boards, placed horizontally. The main floor lobby, however, is panelled with vertical pine boards.

Alterations: In the 1960s, the hotel was converted to a private residence. At that time, the encircling verandah was removed to construct a two-story concrete block addition on the front, and the rear east wing was dismantled.

The walls of the front and rear lobby area were removed. A section of the west lobby floor was cut away and stairs added for interior access to the basement. To the rear of the dining room a staircase to the second floor was added. This staircase was taken from the central stairs between the second and third floors. Another staircase between the second and third floors on the east end of the building was also removed.

The current owners are working to restore the building to its original condition and plan to restore the verandah when funds permit.

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) social/recreational
<input type="checkbox"/> invention				

Specific dates 1884-1887 **Builder/Architect** Unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Social/Recreation:

The Mentone Springs Hotel is significant as the state's only remaining example of the large-scale resort hotels which flourished during the last three decades of the 19th century. Of the two dozen or so resort hotels constructed in Alabama during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, only the smaller and simpler 1909 Clairmont Springs Hotel and the Mentone Springs Hotel are known to remain. Although the latter has lost its original encircling veranda, a portion of its interior detailing and one of its rear wings, sufficient documentation exists to restore the building to its original appearance. The building retains its basic massing, its location, setting, and associations and a good portion of its original detail and design.

* * * * * * *

9. Major Bibliographical References

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property .93

Quadrangle name Valley Head

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

1	6	6	2	9	3	0	0	3	8	2	7	1	2	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H

Zone		Easting				Northing								

Verbal boundary description and justification

Lot 7, block 16 of Mentone Hotel subdivision, 135' X 333' -- See attached map

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

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Ray & Sandra Padgett & Ellen Mertins

organization Alabama Historical Commission

date September 15, 1983

street & number 725 Monroe Street

telephone (205) 832-6621

city or town Montgomery

state Alabama

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 National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date September 15, 1983

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Keeper of the National Register

Entered in the
National Register

date 10/20/83

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

HISTORICAL SUMMARY
"MENTONE HOTEL: HISTORIC STRUCTURE REPORT"

The beginnings of the hotel date to 1872 when the Mason family of Iowa settled in what is now Mentone. The Masons were attracted to the area by the pleasant climate and healthful mineral springs. These attractions would eventually bring the Mentone Hotel and thousands of tourists to the area. In 1884, Dr. J. Frank Caldwell of Pennsylvania arrived at the mountain and boarded with the Masons. Dr. Caldwell was so impressed with the region that he stayed. In the summer of 1884 he purchased the mineral springs and land nearby to begin construction of a health resort. The hotel was completed between 1884 and 1887. The hotel and the community were named after Mentone, France, a mountain spring resort patronized by Queen Victoria. In 1890 the hotel was purchased by Charles Loring and became known as the Loring Springs Hotel. This appears to be the period when the hotel first became popular for its scenic location and mineral springs.

The Mentone Hotel was a very well-known and popular resort, rivaling those on Lookout Mountain near Chattanooga. It attracted guests from as far away as New Orleans, Atlanta, Birmingham, Mobile, Philadelphia, and New York. The vacationers were often fleeing from the stifling hot summers in cities, and heading to the cooler temperatures of Mentone. Many of these were honeymooners seeking quiet retreat in the mountains.

A number of things attracted people to the Mentone Hotel and made it such a popular resort. The most important among these were the natural wonders of the Mentone area, especially the mineral and beauty springs. These springs, located on the hotel property, were well known for their "curative powers." The springs were referred to as "ever oozing, life restoring fluids" that could "restore a rundown patient to health and strength in a remarkably short time."

Mentone, being 2000 feet above sea level, was among the coolest spots in the state of Alabama. The area surrounding Mentone is and was an attraction in

itself, boasting a number of sites that served as drawing cards for the hotel. The best known of these was Desoto Falls, located six miles from the hotel and named for the explorer who is reputed to have discovered them. The Little River which passes over the falls provided hotel guests with excellent fishing, swimming, and boating. Nearby Signal Point and Eagle's Nest provided magnificent views of the surrounding countryside.

The hotel itself provided guests with many opportunities for recreation, including tennis, croquet, bowling and a large two-story gazebo used as a viewing and band stand. The rest of the hotel's facilities were quite good even though they may seem simple by today's standards.

The Mentone Springs Hotel and Realty Company renovated the hotel in 1915. At this time there were fifty-seven guest rooms, each with hot and cold running water, oak furniture and carbide lights. The hotel was on the "American Plan", which included meals, for a daily rate of one to three dollars.

In 1915, an annex was built to accommodate the ever increasing number of guests at the hotel. The annex had twenty-seven rooms, each containing a private bath. It is believed that a now-missing building, which housed bowling alleys, was converted to a bunk house for male employees at this time.

The Hotel's dining area was a lavishly decorated room. The hotel was famous for its food, which included vegetables grown on the hotel's own farm. The waiters, dressed in red vests and black bow ties, gave an elegant air to the dining room. A five-piece band provided lively entertainment for diners. The kitchen staff consisted of at least one cook and a pastry chef. Other staff members of the hotel included maids and bellhops, totaling about thirty in 1919. A very important factor in the hotel's development was its accessibility. The

Queen and Crescent Line of the Southern Railroad stopped four miles from Mentone at Valley Head, where taxi service to the hotel was provided.

In 1915, the hotel's season was from June through September. Opening day of the hotel seems to have been a very important event in the area. A governor of Alabama and several millionaires were known to have been lodgers in the summer season.

In 1921 the Alabama Baptist Convention started using the hotel for its summer encampments. Due to a provision in the Baptist Charter which prevented them from purchasing the hotel, eight Baptist leaders formed the Mentone Springs Company. The company allowed the Alabama Baptists to use the hotel for several weeks each year over a seven year period, through 1931. Use of the hotel by the Baptists was discontinued after 1931 because of the Depression. The hotel was also patronized by other guests during the years the Baptists used it.

The hotel's business declined through the 1930s and early 1940s until 1946 when the Mentone Springs Company sold it to Edward H. Moore to cover debts. During the last two years of company ownership the hotel had been leased to Norville Hall. Mr. Hall was able to continue his lease until 1950, when it was sold and ceased to be used as a hotel. In 1950 the hotel went through four changes of ownership. In 1961, Norville Hall purchased the hotel. He used the hotel as a residence and a home for his organ repair business until his death in 1979. The property is currently owned by Ray and Sandra Padgett of Atlanta. The new owners are presently in the process of restoring and adapting the hotel to give it a new life.

FHR-8-300A
(11/78)

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

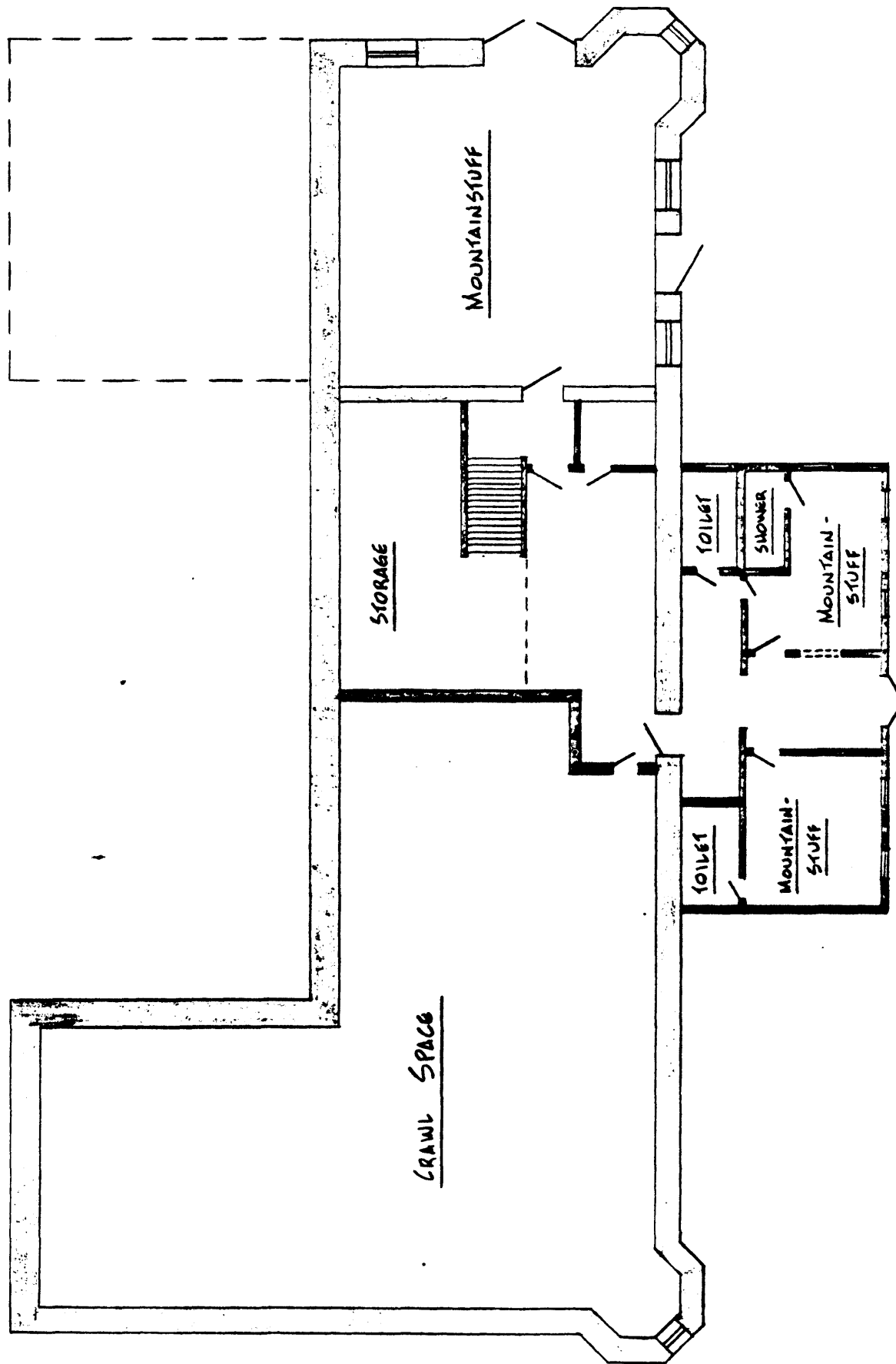
CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 9

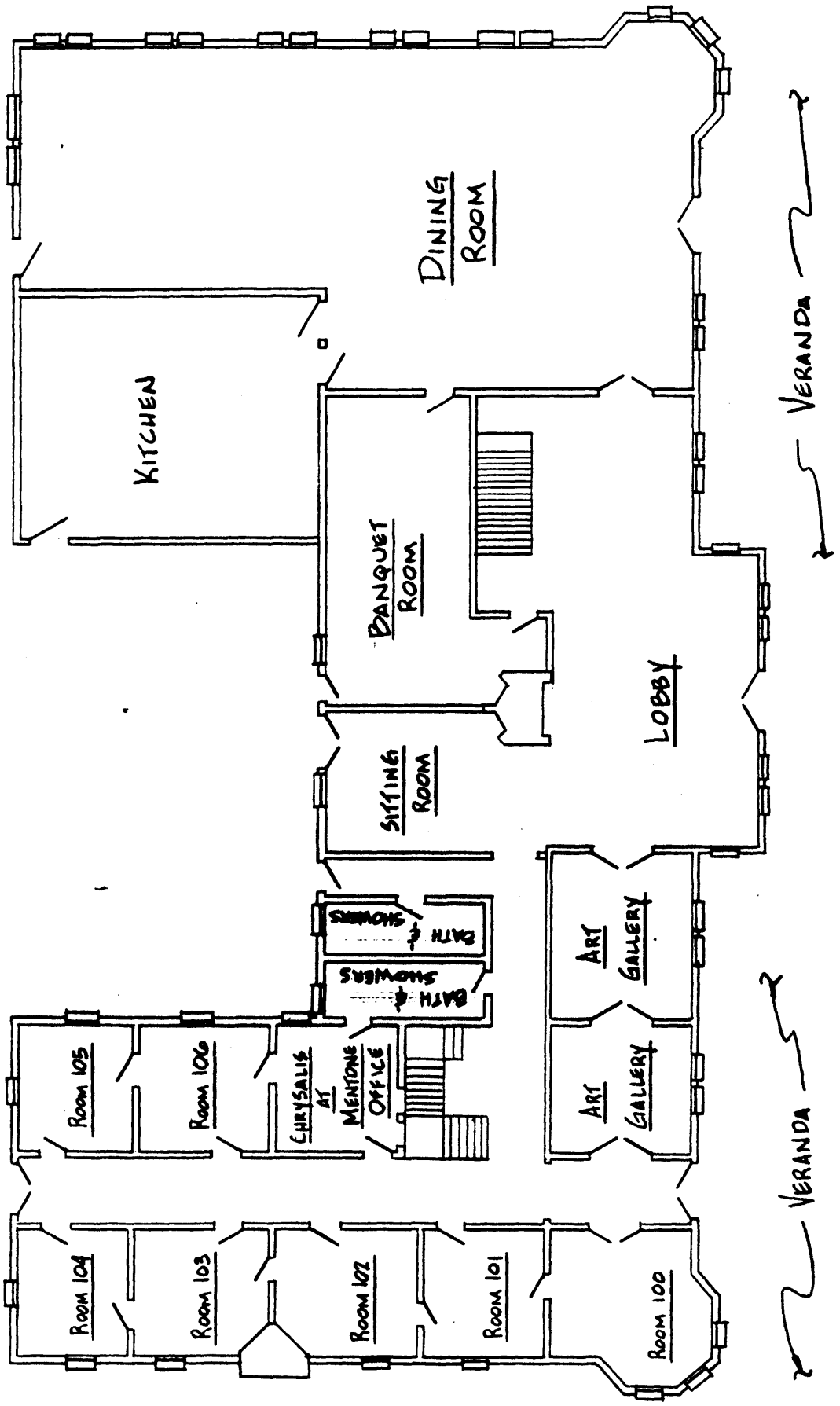
PAGE 1

Annable, E. C., Jr., D. M. Bone, J. B. Cooper, L. M. Jackson, C. T. Jones,
M. R. O'Neal and T. T. Potterfield, Jr. "The Mentone Hotel: Historic Structure
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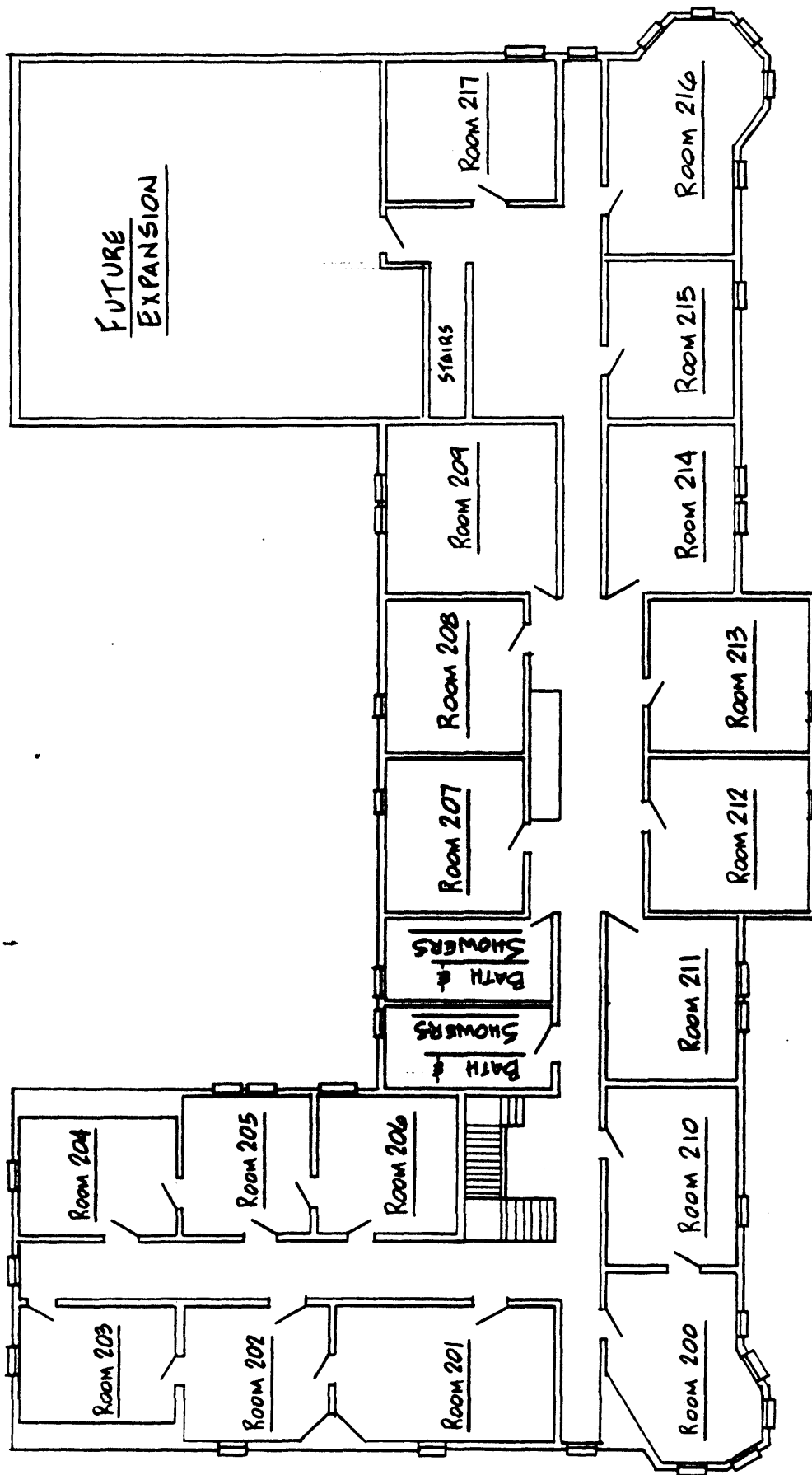
Sulsby, James F. Historic Alabama Hotels and Resorts University of Alabama Press,
1960.



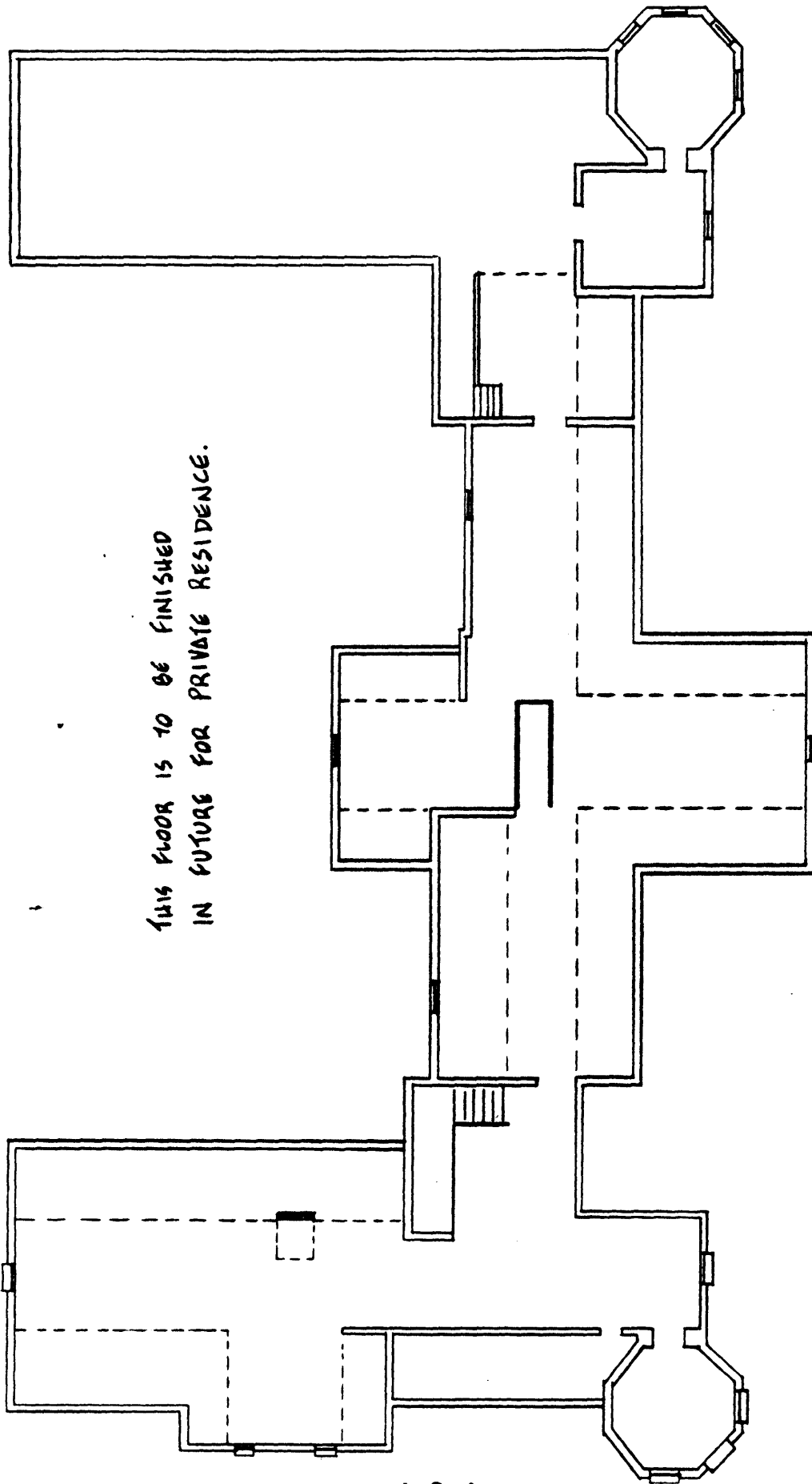
BASEMENT FLOOR PLAN



FIRST FLOOR PLAN



SECOND FLOOR PLAN



THIS FLOOR IS TO BE FINISHED
IN FUTURE FOR PRIVATE RESIDENCE.

THIRD FLOOR PLAN

