

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



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

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

1. Name

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historic City Hotel

FEB 08 1982

and/or common City Hotel

OHP

2. Location

street & number 145 South Washington St.

n/a not for publication

city, town Sonora

n/a vicinity of

congressional district 18

state California

code 06

county Tuolumne

code 109

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name M. E. Freeman

street & number P. O. Box 536

city, town Mi Wuk Village

n/a vicinity of

state California 95346

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Tuolumne County Recorder's Office

street & number 2 South Green St.

city, town Sonora

state California 95370

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title none has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date n/a federal state county local

depository for survey records n/a

city, town n/a state n/a

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		date <u> n/a </u>

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The City Hotel was built in 1852 at the southeast corner of South Washington St. and Theall St. in Sonora as a two-story slate building with bricks squaring up door and window openings and accenting the structure's four corners. The ends of bricks are used in double rows in an arched pattern over the door and window openings. The exterior walls were originally plastered to protect the adobe mortar used to bond the two-foot thick slate walls. In the late 1880's a two-story addition was added to the east (back) end of the building, thereby increasing the number of hotel rooms. The addition is wood frame construction with stucco exterior. Sometime between 1890 and 1896, according to photographic evidence, a gable roof was added to the entire structure, thus enabling the addition of more rooms (5). To accomplish this expansion, the tops of the north and south walls were spanned with big beams to support the gable roof and new floor area. A large redwood water tank, six feet in diameter and five feet tall, was installed under the eave area as a **source** of water. It remains in its original location.

The west elevation faces South Washington St. and is the front of the building. Originally, the first floor level of this elevation was the location of four pairs of double doors (eight or twelve panes of glass per door on the upper two thirds and a solid wood panel making up the lower third) providing street level entrances to the lobby, saloon, sample rooms, dining room and stage office. When the front portion of the first and second floors was converted into shops and offices, these openings were modified by the removal of the original doors and the substitution of metal frame doors and large panels of glass. A door at the south end of this elevation leads upstairs. In addition, ceramic tile was added to some areas of the facade. The second floor of the original building had three windows above the first floor

and a door at the southern end to allow access to a balcony which spanned the entire west elevation. The balcony was supported by posts and covered with a shed roof the width of the balcony. A remodeling begun four years ago resulted in a new balcony which is similar to the old. In addition, the remodeling also resulted in the removal of the plaster on the west elevation and all elevations with stone underneath, thus revealing the stone work and brick around door and window openings. In two places on the west elevation where stone had been removed for the insertion of air conditioners, wood in a decorative pattern was placed over these openings. The gable end rises above the second floor and is punctuated by two double hung windows and a wooden vent.

The north elevation reveals the greatest expanse of stone work. It is apparent that skilled hands were at work in 1852 laying the native schist forming this wall. This elevation also features the stucco addition of the late 1880's. At street level the stone portion of the building has five window openings; the one at the northwest corner was originally a door. All have brick arches accenting them. The stucco portion of the first floor of the north elevation contains two doors and a window. The second floor level of the original portion of the north elevation is notable

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for a row of eight windows and the ends of several reinforcing rods that stretch between the north and south walls. The second floor level of the stucco additon has a row of three windows.

The east elevation is the east end of the stucco addition. At street level are three double hung windows. At the second floor level is a row of five double hung windows with original cornices and a vent area above. The recent remodeling revealed no evidence of the original east elevation wall, thus indicating it was completely removed when the stucco addition was built.

Very little of the south elevation is visible because of an adjacent building. However, the rear portion of the stucco addition is visible. It is reached via a ramp which was added during the recent remodeling for handicapped access. It appears from evidence uncovered during the recent remodeling that a good portion, if not all, of the south elevation wall of the original structure is solid adobe and not stone, although a complete investigation was not undertaken. A wall of similar material appears about mid-structure and at right angles to the north elevation wall. It is an interior wall.

The roof is now covered with composition shingles but corrugated metal and wooden shingles were found during remodeling. Three roof vents are atop the roof.

Very little, if any, of the original configuration remains inside the building. Prior to the recent remodeling there were fifteen hotel rooms on the second floor and five on the third floor. Bathroom facilities on the second floor served these 20 rooms. All of the second floor interior walls were removed in the recent remodeling to make way for office space. The third floor is intact. The first floor remains as it was prior to the recent remodeling, having been converted into retail and commercial rental space many years ago.

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

Specific dates 1852-1896 **Builder/Architect** Unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The significance of the City Hotel in Sonora lies in its method of construction and its importance in the community life of Tuolumne County. In addition, the City Hotel survives today, 130 years after it was built, one of Sonora's oldest buildings and certainly an example of a very early building still standing in California's Gold Rush country.

It is a rare surviving example of stone building construction dating from the early days of the California Gold Rush. Carefully laid blocks of locally quarried slate and locally made bricks compose the exterior walls of the original portion of this local landmark. These building materials were impervious to fire and explain why the City Hotel survived a disastrous and widespread fire in Sonora in October, 1853. A hotel of less durable materials was the first building on the site and it perished in the great conflagration of June 18, 1852. The original hotel's owner, Alonzo Green, joined forces with Judge James Lane later that year to rebuilt the hotel and today's City Hotel is the result. The hotel's construction coincided with a time of considerable rebuilding and expansion using fireproof materials such as slate, brick and adobe. At the time and for many years thereafter, the City Hotel was the largest building at the south end of Sonora's business district and its most prominent hotel. When it was constructed in 1852 and until 1896, the City Hotel was the chief hostelry in Sonora, the crossroads of California's southern gold mining region, the county seat and the commercial center of Tuolumne County. All of the stagecoach lines stopped there and its dining room was a favorite of local residents as well as the traveling public. Although there were other hotels in Sonora, the City Hotel was the most popular and offered the best accommodations. In addition to a saloon, billiard room and dining room, it had several sample rooms where drummers or traveling salesmen could show their wares to local merchants. An 1882 account indicates there were 20 private rooms; an 1890 account indicates 30 rooms, 10 gained from the late 1880's stucco addition. The construction of the Hotel Victoria in 1896 gave the City Hotel its first real competition. Although its spacious public rooms on the first floor gave way to retail and office usage and the upstairs hotel rooms were rented to boarders and eventually office tenants, the City Hotel building remains a prominent local landmark and a reminder of Sonora's colorful history. Remodeling has characterized the exterior and interior of this historic structure but it continues to convey its original design intent. Its resemblance to its original appearance is readily apparent when viewing historical photographs.

9. Major Bibliographical References

- Lang, Herbert O. History of Tuolumne County. B.F. Alley (New York, 1882).
- Howell, T.C. State Resources. Vol.1 No. 6, April and May, 1890. Heizer, Robert F., and Franklin Fenenga, "Survey of Building Structures of the Sierran Gold Belt, 1848-70," in Geologic Guidebook Along Highway 49, California Division of Mines, Bulletin 141, September 1948.

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property .17
 Quadrange name Sonora, California Quadrange scale 1:24000

UMT References

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E	<u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>	F	<u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>
G	<u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>	H	<u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>

Verbal boundary description and justification Assessor's parcel 01-201-01. Property is a 66'x 116' lot on the Northeast corner of South Washington St. and Theall St. in Sonora. This is the historic lot on which the building is located.

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

state	n/a	code	county	n/a	code
state	n/a	code	county	n/a	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Sharon Marovich, Director
 organization Tuolumne County Historical Society date February 1, 1982
 street & number P. O. Box 695 telephone (209) 532-1733
 city or town Sonora state California 95370

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 K M Elton
 title State Historic Preservation Officer date 5/18/83

For HCRS use only
 I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register
 Kept of the National Register for Sharon Marovich Entered in the National Register date 6/30/83
 Attest: _____ date _____
 Chief of Registry _____

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

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The stone and brick architecture of the Mother Lode was largely a response to the danger of fire in the early years of the Gold Rush; Sonora itself suffered disastrous fires in 1849, 1852 and 1853 which destroyed the more ephemeral wood frame and canvas structures. Local stone quickly replaced the more flammable building materials, and was used in the construction of the town's earliest permanent buildings. Schist was quarried adjacent to the townsite and had the advantage of possessing well-defined horizontal cleavage planes which allowed it to be split into large, even-surfaced slabs with little need for extensive dressing or shaping. Stone buildings are among the oldest remaining structures in the region; as local brickyards were established, brick quickly replaced stone as the major building material for commercial buildings. Never large in number, the early stone buildings have gradually disappeared over the years. The City Hotel is one of the largest and most impressive examples of early stone construction in the region, and is a rare surviving example of its type and period in the State of California.

The City Hotel's method of construction was extremely labor intensive and lacking the tools and time saving devices that characterize modern construction techniques. The sheer embankments rising above Sonora Creek, just three blocks to the west of the City Hotel, were the source of the slate-like schist used for the building's exterior walls. Quarry workers loaded the rock on sled-like drays or stone boats for hauling by mule or oxen the short distance to the building site. There, most likely Mexican, Italian or French masons working on platforms used an improvised derrick with boom to hoist the stones and bricks to the elevation where they were working. The City Hotel was built during a three-month period from August to October of 1852.