

DEC 28 1986

NPS Form 10-900  
(Rev. 8/86)  
NPS/CHS Word Processor Format  
(Approved 03/88)

OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable". For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries. Use letter quality printers in 12 pitch. Use only 25% or greater cotton content bond paper.

**1. Name of Property**

historic name: Avoca Lodge

other names/site number: Molly Brown Summer House, 5DV696

**2. Location**

street & number: 2690 South Wadsworth Boulevard (N/A)not for publication

city, town: Denver (N/A)vicinity

state: Colorado code: CO county: Denver code: 031 zip code: 80227

**3. Classification**

| Ownership of Property                      | Category of Property | No. of Resources within Property |                          |
|--|----------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------|
|  |                      | contributing                     | noncontributing          |
| (x) private                                | (x) building(s)      |                                  |                          |
| ( ) public-local                           | ( ) district         | <u>1</u>                         | <u>0</u> buildings       |
| ( ) public-State                           | ( ) site             | <u>      </u>                    | <u>      </u> sites      |
| ( ) public-Federal                         | ( ) structure        | <u>      </u>                    | <u>      </u> structures |
|  | ( ) object           | <u>      </u>                    | <u>      </u> objects    |
|  |                      | <u>1</u>                         | <u>0</u> Total           |
| Name of related multiple property listing: |                      | No. of contributing resources    |                          |
| <u>N/A</u>                                 |                      | previously listed in the         |                          |
|  |                      | National Register <u>0</u>       |                          |

**4. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this (x) 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 (x) meets ( ) does not meet the National Register criteria.  
( ) See continuation sheet.

*Barbara Sudler*

Signature of certifying official

*12-21-89*

Date

State Historic Preservation Officer, Colorado Historical Society  
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of Commenting or Other Official

Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

**5. National Park Service Certification**

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

**Entered in the  
National Register**

entered in the National Register.  
( ) See continuation sheet

*Andrew Byers*

*1/26/90*

( ) determined eligible for the National Register. ( ) See continuation sheet

( ) determined not eligible for the National Register.

( ) removed from the National Register.

( ) other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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**6. Functions or Use**

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**Historic Functions**  
(enter categories from instructions)

**Current Functions**  
(enter categories from instructions)

Domestic - single dwelling  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Commerce/Trade  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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**7. Description**

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**Architectural Classification**  
(enter categories from instructions)

**Materials**  
(enter categories from instructions)

Other: Foursquare  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

foundations Sandstone  
walls Brick  
\_\_\_\_\_  
roof Wood shingle  
other N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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**Describe present and historic physical appearance.**

Avoca Lodge, constructed in 1897, is two stories high, has a basic rectangular plan with a long one story addition extending to the east rear and a projecting two story bay on the south side with a one story bay window. The addition was added shortly after the completion of the main house. The building measures approximately 90 feet from the west front to east rear and varies from 15 to 30 feet in width. The house is sited on a corner plot and fronts very close to Wadsworth Boulevard. Originally, the house had much more land in front, but successive widening of Wadsworth over the years has greatly diminished the size of the front yard. The early landscape plan is not known. There is a large side yard bordered on the south by South Yale Avenue which was not there when James Joseph and Margaret Brown owned the house. The yard is informally landscaped with mature Colorado blue spruce, maple, ash and apple trees and shrubs. There was a fountain fed by an artesian well in the center of the south yard. The fountain is no longer in existence. Avoca is currently used as an art gallery.

Avoca was originally developed by the Browns into a 240 acre ranch. They began to purchase parcels of land in 1895. Much of the produce from the ranch, such as milk, butter, chickens and fruit, was sent into the Brown's Denver house at 1340 Pennsylvania Street. The farm contained orchards, fields of grain and a lake for fishing. Among the outbuildings was a large and impressive red brick barn with a gabled roof and cupola and a round arched entrance door with round arched

(x) See continuation sheet

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 7 Page 2

Avoca

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windows on each side. The barn was demolished in the 1960s. Neither the outbuildings nor the farm lands surrounding the house remains today. The house now sits on less than an acre. Even though the farm land is gone, the house still retains a high degree of integrity of design, materials, feeling and association and is an excellent representation of a rural Foursquare style house which is more elegant than most farm houses in the area.

The exterior design of the house is unaltered with well preserved walls of red pressed face brick showing the very thin white mortar joints of white lime and sand typical of that period of construction. A foundation of rusticated sandstone blocks extends 3 1/2 feet above grade. The main roof of the house is a wood shingled hip, truncated at the rear of the house, with a partial hip on the south bay. There are elliptical eyebrow windows on the front, north and south sides of the roof. The one story addition on the rear has a gable roof also faced in wood shingles.

On the south side and west front elevations there are 8 foot deep porches with shed roofs. The front porch wraps around to the south side and ends at the projecting bay. The rear porch extends the length of the south wall of the addition. The space beneath the porches is open with the porch floor supported by nine sandstone block piers 3 1/2 feet high placed at the porch corners and the center of the front and rear porch floors. There are also two piers supporting the bay window. The open space under the porch floor allows light into the basement windows. At the southwest corner of the porch there is a sandstone block inscribed with "J.J. Brown, 1897".

The front porch entrance, on the north side of the front, has a gabled roof supported by Doric columns grouped in threes at the entrance, on the southwest corner and south side of the porch. The gable face over the entrance is decorated with small decorative wood panels. On top of the gable peak there is a galvanized tin ball finial or dragon-tail. There are also the heavy ball-like finials on the rear gable and the corners of the truncated hip roof. Both porches have a wooden railing done in a chinoiserie pattern. At the rear of the addition, there is a small wooden back porch with clapboard siding on the lower portion and screened openings above. The back porch was added in recent times. There are three chimneys. Two are topped by corbelled brickwork and the third is plain due to repairs made a few years ago.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 7 Page 3  
Avoca

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The south bay window is a prominent feature of the exterior. It has three sides with a flat roof and plain overhanging eaves. All of the windows throughout the house are one-over-one double hung wood sash, but those in the bay are wider than the rest. There are also small rectangular basement windows in the foundation. All of the windows have heavy rusticated sandstone sills and lintels.

The interior of the house retains much of its original integrity and has had few changes since the Brown's ownership. The prominent interior feature is the use of hand grained golden oak woodwork, a characteristic feature of Foursquare houses during the late 1800s. The west front door is original with panels in the lower portion and an arched window above. There is a transom over the door. The front hall contains the stairway to the second floor which is along the north interior wall and has a hand-grained newel post and turned balusters and handrail. The main portion of the house has a library and two sitting rooms; one on the north side, and one on the south which contains the bay window. The library has a built-in closet with double doors and book shelves and a fireplace ornately decorated with a bronze front surrounded by glazed blue and white ceramic tiles with hummingbird and floral designs. There is a golden oak surround, a mantel, and an over-mantel supported by oak pillars on either side and a mirror below. In the addition there is a dining room and kitchen. The kitchen was remodeled in 1946, but retains the original tongue and groove wainscotting. The present sink and cabinet unit was added ca. 1937-1940. The dining room fireplace is white painted brick. The kitchen, dining room and south sitting room are separated by oak pocket doors. The sitting room on the north has a built-in china cabinet and may have been used as the dining room originally. The woodwork consisting of baseboards, doors and door frames, window trim and picture rails are hand-grained oak in the south sitting room and library. The floors throughout the house are hardwood, the ceilings are high and the walls plastered. In the basement the tongue and groove hardwood floor is still intact and is laid directly on the surface of the soil.

In 1934, the top three stairs of the straight-run stairway were turned to make room for a second floor bath. There were originally four bedrooms on the second floor. The closets were removed to combine two bedrooms into one large room ca. 1975-1976. The original master bedroom is separated from the dressing room by an arch decorated with plaster corbells. The interior is in good condition and retains most of its original integrity.

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**8. Statement of Significance**

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Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:      ( ) nationally      ( ) statewide      (X) locally

Applicable National Register Criteria      (X) A      ( ) B      (X) C      ( ) D  
Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)      ( ) A      ( ) B      ( ) C      ( ) D      ( ) E      ( ) F      ( ) G

**Areas of Significance**

(enter categories from instructions)

| Areas of Significance | Period of Significance | Significant Dates |
|-----------------------|------------------------|-------------------|
| <u>Architecture</u>   | <u>1897</u>            | <u>N/A</u>        |
| <u>Social History</u> | <u>1897-1906</u>       | <u>N/A</u>        |

\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Unknown

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State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

Avoca Lodge meets National Register criterion C for its architectural significance. An excellent example of a Foursquare style dwelling, it is the only 1890s period building in the vicinity of southwest Denver. It now stands surrounded by new condos, apartments, shopping centers and office buildings, as a vivid reminder of a time past. Avoca meets criterion A because it is also significant for its association with the history of the lifeways of the wealthy segment of Denver's citizens. Its construction may have set the trend for other weekend country homes that were built in the area in the early 1900s.

In more recent years Molly Brown has become known across the country as the "Unsinkable Molly Brown" following the movie and musical productions of the story of her life, although locally she was known as Maggie during her lifetime. Molly was born Margaret Tobin in Hannibal, Missouri and came to Leadville, Colorado when she was only fifteen years old. Within a year she had met and married James Joseph Brown, who was almost twice her age. Brown was typical of the many men who came to Colorado seeking gold and silver in the late 1800s with little or no money and a little knowledge of minerals or mining. Through hard work and luck many of these men became overnight millionaires. J.J. Brown's success was due partially to luck and hard work but also to the extraordinary genius Brown developed in a short time for finding and evaluating mineral lodes. This ability not only made Brown's fortune, but added to that of other well known men in Colorado's mining history such as David H. Moffat, John Campion, and Eben Smith. Brown later became involved in other mining enterprises elsewhere in Colorado and the West. He is best known for his association with the Little Jonny, sometimes called Jonny Mine, in Leadville.

(x) See Continuation sheet

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 8 Page 2

Avoca

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After a few years in Leadville, at Molly's insistence in 1894, the couple moved to a house at 1340 Pennsylvania Street in Denver. The house was originally designed by noted Denver architect William Lang for Isaac Large and was completed in 1892. When Large lost his money in the Silver Crash in 1893, the house was put up for sale. The Molly Brown House was listed in the National Register in 1972.

After she moved to Denver, Margaret Brown, longed to belong to Denver's high society. She furnished her Pennsylvania Street house with lavish and ostentatious furnishings and decorations and began inviting Denver's social set to parties. The purchase of Avoca may have been an additional attempt to woo Denver's Sacred Thirty-Six, as the social set was known. Molly, however, was more or less snubbed and she began a series of trips to the cultural capitals of the world, New York, Paris and London, where she studied art, languages, music, design and fashion. Molly became well-known in international society and when she was in Denver, a parade of visiting royalty and international figures was made welcome at the Pennsylvania Street house.

Molly earned the title "unsinkable" in 1912 when she was returning from Europe on the Titanic. The boat began to sink and Molly became a heroine after she took charge of one of the life boats full of survivors and kept up their courage with her humor, toughness and singing. Molly was also noted for her charitable contributions including leading the relief effort for miners and their families after the "Ludlow Massacre" in 1914, her hospital work in World War I, and for leading the successful movement to preserve the Denver house of Eugene Field, the well known poet. J.J. Brown died in 1922 and Molly died in 1932. Both are buried in New York state.

In 1897, while Denver was still feeling the economic shock of the 1893 silver collapse, architects were designing homes in a mode more conservative than the preceding Victorian styles. The Foursquare house was among the new styles to appear after 1893 along with the Colonial and Dutch Colonial Revivals, and the Classic Cottage. While research has not uncovered an architect for Avoca Lodge, its style is simpler, more boxy, and more appropriate to the country life and times of the late 1890s and the early 1900s than the elaborate Victorian mansions of Capitol Hill that had been built just a few years earlier.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 8 Page 3

Avoca

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Avoca Lodge has architectural significance because it represents one of the early examples of the 19th century Foursquare style in the Denver area. Virginia and Lee McAlester in A Field Guide to American Houses describe houses similar to the style of Avoca as a subtype of the Colonial Revival style. This subtype is two stories with a hipped roof and a full width porch with classical columns. Sometimes referred to as the classic box, these houses have a square or rectangular plan with dormers and Colonial Revival or Neoclassical ornamentation. Avoca has many of these elements but instead of dormers, Avoca has small elliptical shaped windows on the roof. In addition, the chinoiserie pattern of the porch railings, a departure from the Foursquare tradition, adds a touch of special interest to an otherwise plain building. Avoca Lodge was built in two sections, the one story portion was added almost immediately after the two story portion was completed. It is of identical materials to the two story structure. The foundation of the addition is on Colorado Lyons sandstone mortared with colored beaded joints.

Avoca Lodge is significant for its association with the history of the lifeways of Denver's high society. Acquisition of 240 acres of farm land beginning in 1895 and construction of the house in 1897 by James J. and Molly Brown may have set the trend in the early 1900s among Denver's wealthy class to build country homes and develop the rural area 10 or 12 miles southwest of the city. Avoca Lodge, described as a summer home, is where Molly continued to strive for acceptance into Denver society by entertaining with large, lavish parties often associated with some socially acceptable charity work. Her guests were carried to the farm by horse-drawn vehicle from the railroad station at South Pierce and Hampden. Guests remained overnight to dine and dance in the large red brick barn which had a hardwood dance floor in the loft. The barn, demolished in the 1960s, spanned what is now Yale Avenue. Stately cottonwood and maples trees surrounded the house and shaded the gatherings on the lawn around the artesian fed fountain in the south garden. Party goers had uninterrupted views to the south and west of the green fields of Bear Valley and the mountains above Morrison from the long porches and bay window.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 8 Page 4  
Avoca

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Rather than participate in the social life of his wife, J.J. preferred the company of his farm hands, and he remained in the stables and refused to attend these parties. His bountiful crops of alfalfa and corn were made possible by irrigation ditches tapping the water from Bear Creek some miles west of the farm. J.J. Brown's correspondence shows additional purchases of shares in the Simonton and Pioneer Union Ditch water rights providing the water that enabled him to grow lush crops, raise fine horses, dairy cattle, poultry, and fruit.

The property was annexed to Denver in 1966 during a spurt of the city's rapid growth and expansion. Today the house remains as it was originally built, a landmark distinctively reflecting an innovative use of a second home and a productive gentleman's farm at the turn of the century.

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**9. Major Bibliographical References**

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Abstract of Title. Years 1897 and following. Jefferson County Records

Bancroft, Caroline. The Unsinkable Mrs. Brown, 1963. Boulder, CO:Johnson Publishing Co.

(X) See continuation sheet

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> preliminary determination of individual listing ( 36 CFR 67) has been requested | Primary location of additional data:<br><input type="checkbox"/> State Historic Preservation Office<br><input type="checkbox"/> Other State agency |
| <input type="checkbox"/> previously listed in the National Register                                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Federal agency<br><input type="checkbox"/> Local government   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> previously determined eligible by the National Register                         | <input type="checkbox"/> University<br><input type="checkbox"/> Other  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> designated a National Historic Landmark   | Specify Repository:<br>_____   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____                          |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____                        |  |

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**10. Geographical Data**

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Acreage of property: less than one acre

**UTM References**

|   |   |
|---|---|
| A <u>1</u>   <u>3</u> <u>4</u>   <u>9</u>   <u>3</u>   <u>1</u>   <u>0</u>   <u>0</u>   <u>4</u>   <u>3</u>   <u>9</u>   <u>0</u>   <u>7</u>   <u>2</u>   <u>0</u>                  | B <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>   <u>  </u> |
| Zone    Easting                      Northing   | Zone    Easting                      Northing   |
| C <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>   <u>  </u> | D <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>   <u>  </u> |
| Zone    Easting                      Northing   | Zone    Easting                      Northing   |

( ) See continuation sheet

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**Verbal Boundary Description**

From the SW corner of the SE 1/4 of Sec. 26, T4, R69W proceed east 16 feet to the E boundary of South Wadsworth Blvd. and N 175 feet along that boundary to the

(X) See continuation sheet

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**Boundary Justification**

The boundary includes Avoca Lodge and the surrounding land that is under a single ownership, but is only a portion of the land originally associated with the property. The rest of the original property has been subdivided, contains contemporary buildings and is under multiple ownership.

( ) See continuation sheet

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**11. Form Prepared By**

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Name/Title: Jane Garland

Organization: N/A

Street & Number: 7190 West Vassar

City or Town: Denver

Date: Aug. 29, 1989

Telephone: 989-8378

State: CO Zip Code: 80227

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 9 Page 2

Avoca

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Brettell, Richard. Historic Denver, Its Architects and Architecture, 1858-1893.  
Denver: Historic Denver, Inc., 1973.

J.J. Brown correspondence and legal papers. Colorado Historical Society Library.

Kings and Queens of the Range. 1899 Annual Supplement, p. 50. Slopes of Sangre  
de Cristo. Denver and Rio Grande Railroad, Part I, Carlson-Harper Co.

McAlester, Virginia and Lee. A Field Guide to American Houses. New York: Alfred  
A. Knopf, 1984

National Register Nomination. "Molly Brown House," Office of Archaeology and  
Historic Preservation, Colorado Historical Society.

Western Collection. Denver Public library, newspaper clippings and photographic  
collection.

Whitacre, Christine. Molly Brown, Denver's Unsinkable Lady. Denver: Historic  
Denver, Inc., 1984.

NPS Form 10-900a  
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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 10 Page 2

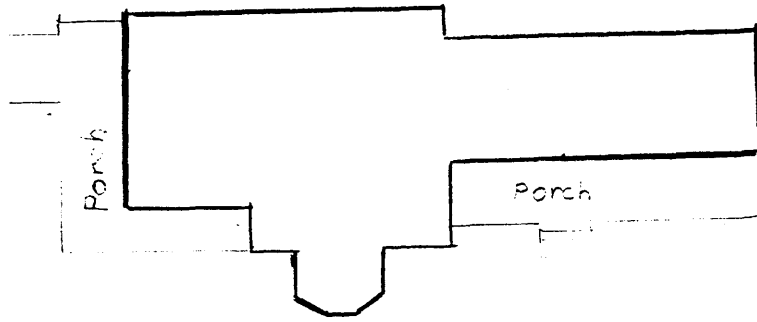
Avoca

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true point of beginning; thence E 125 feet parallel to W. Yale Ave; thence S 75 feet; thence W 125 feet parallel to W. Yale; thence N along the E boundary of South Wadsworth to the true point of beginning.

So WADSWORTH

2690



AVOCA LODGE

DENVER, COUNTY OF DENVER COLORADO

West Yale Ave.



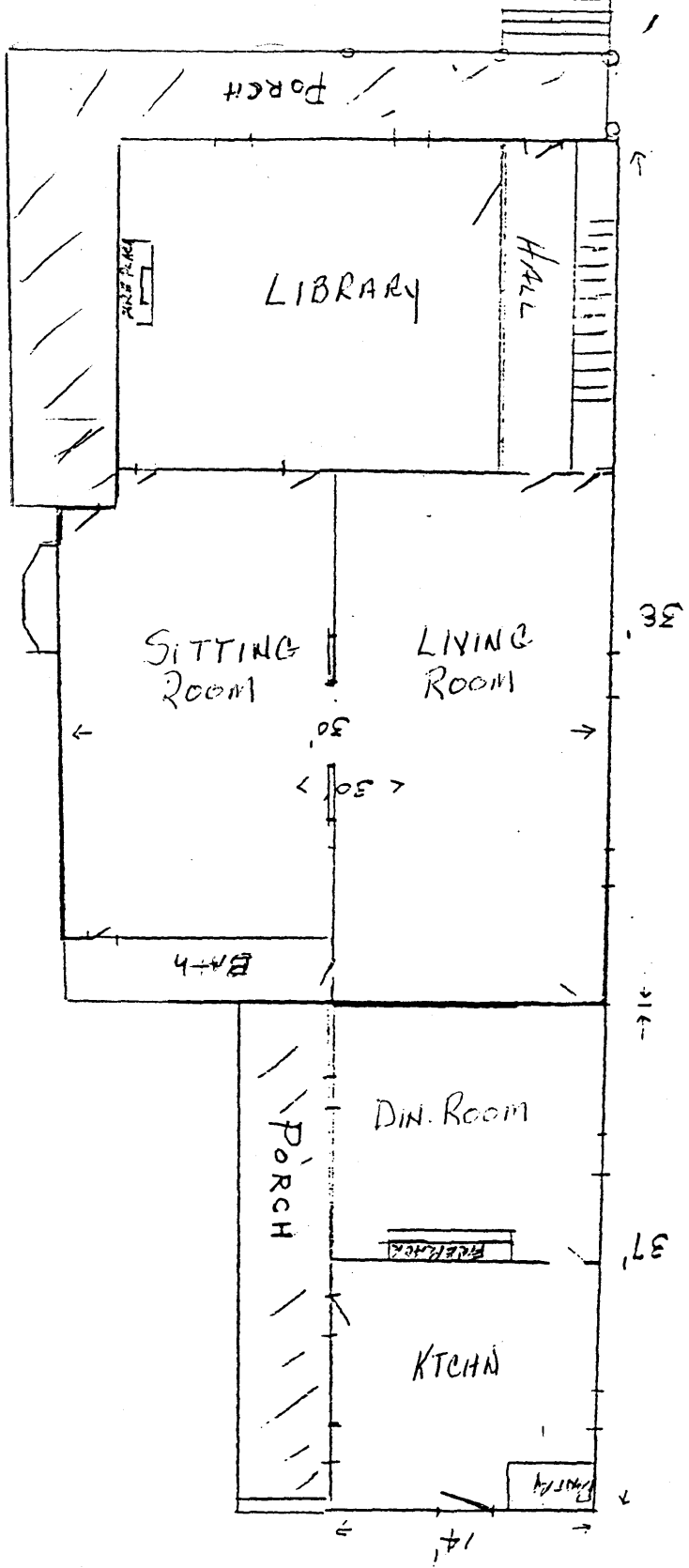
S.W. corner  
SE 1/4 Sec 26

SKETCH MAP Section 1781

Jane Garland  
7190 W. Vassar

Scale = 1" = 25'

ADDEN LODGE  
LOWER  
J. CARLAWD

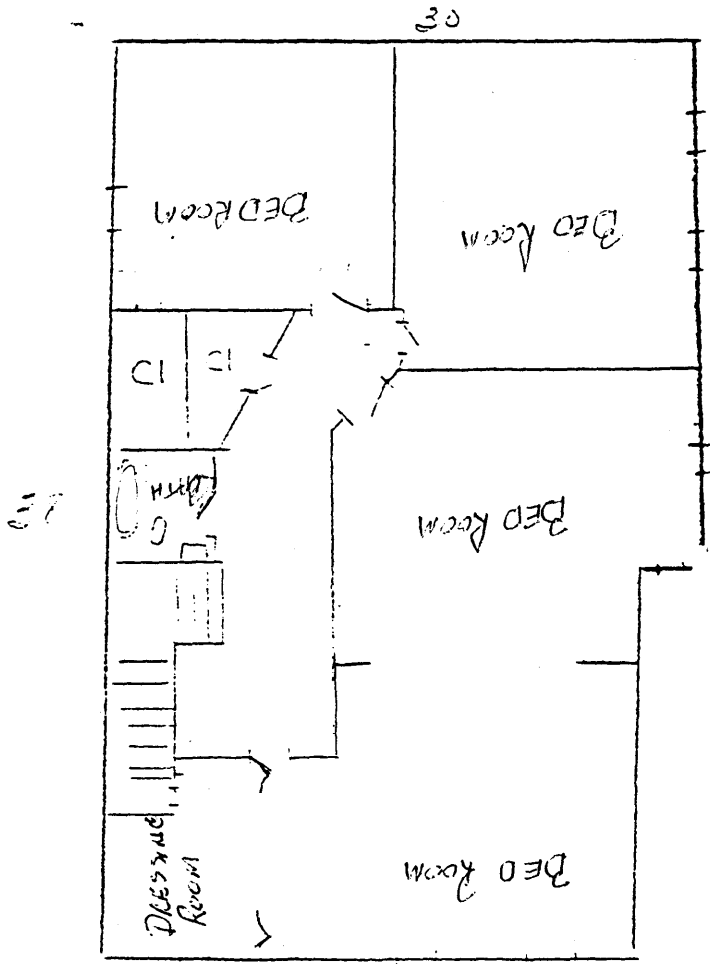


AN

1/11

EP

N  
A



Upper

AVOCALODGE  
J. GARLAND