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

# **National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet**

National Register property file

Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD			
NRIS Reference Number: 78003065	Date of Listing: August 24, 1978		
Property Name: Hotel Irvin Cobb			
County: McCracken	State: Kentucky		
none Multiple Name			
nomination documentation subject to the followithstanding the National Park Service of documentation.  Signature of the Keeper	llowing exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, certification included in the nomination		
Amended Items in Nomination:			
to private residence. This reflects informati	I to occupied, and the present use is hereby changed on provided by the Kentucky State Historic g was renovated and converted into rental apartments		

Form No. 10-300 (Rev. 10-74)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

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021	McCracken	145
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#### CONDITION

CHECK ONE

**CHECK ONE** 

\_EXCELLENT

XFAIR

\_\_DETERIORATED
\_\_RUINS
\_\_UNEXPOSED

\_\_UNALTERED

X ORIGINAL SITE

\_\_MOVED DATE\_\_\_\_\_

#### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Hotel Irvin Cobb occupies the southwest corner of Broadway and Sixth Street in downtown Paducah, Kentucky. Broadway is the busiest thoroughfare in this city of 35,000, and those buildings immediately east of the Cobb Hotel form the core of Paducah's business district. Since its completion in 1929, this L-shaped, ninestory building has served as the most dominant element of the downtown district, and is visible from many blocks away—vision unobscured due to its being the tallest edifice in Paducah. Begun in 1927, the Hotel Irvin Cobb was built for Adolph Weil, who was one of Paducah's leading citizens and businessmen. The designs for the interior and exterior were executed by Walter Alschlager, a noted hotel architect from Chicago.

The construction is of warmly toned brick, and the first three floors of the two street facades are dressed with smoothly finished limestone. The main entrance, which has an Art Deco treatment, is on the Broadway facade facing north. A suspended heavy metal hood, also in the Art Deco mode, shelters this entrance whose frontispiece is of bronze that has become richly toned with age. The street level windows on the Broadway facade are of large dimensions and almost reach the sidewalk. Most are filled with large panes of glass and have transoms above. An exception is a window arrangement immediately east of the entrance which is composed of many small panes divided by heavy muntins and recessed bronze panels—the whole resulting in a Tudoresque effect.

Adding to the variety of treatments and textures on the Broadway side are projecting sections that imitate half-timbering (see photo 3) and which vary in height and width. The interstices of the heavy framework are filled with stuccoed brick. Multi-leveled parapets are at the corners. Between the parapets is a wooden pergola, and rising above the parapets are circular chimney pots.

The Sixth Street facade (see photo 1) is twice as wide. Near the northeast corner is a second entrance whose treatment is much like that of the one on Broadway. South of this opening is a five-bay colossal arcade. Accolades with ogee curves frame these window arrangements whose levels are separated by decorative bronze panels, and whose panes are divided into four sections by mullions of the same material. More projecting portions of imitation half-timbering appear on this facade, and there is a pergola separated by a high parapet with an arched opening at the top. Two three-tiered, four-sided chimneys and one circular chimney pot rise high above the flat roof. The southeast corner is crowned by a conical dome, and a two-story, square, battlement tower ascends on the western side to serve as a focal point.

A firm of general contractors from Memphis constructed the Cobb Hotel, but the Paducah painting firm of Sanderson and Hancock was responsible for remarkable interior

Form No. 10-300a (Rev. 10-74)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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DATE ENTERED

AUG 24 1978

Hotel Irvin Cobb

ITEM NUMBER

PAGE 2

Larry Baker 316 Fairview Drive Paducah, KY 42001

Walter Parr 316 Fairview Dirve Paducah, KY 42001

Tom Fielder, A.I.A. 443 South Ashland Avenue Lexington, KY 40502

### UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

#### NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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Hotel Irvin Cobb

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7

PAGE 2

decorations, working under the direction of a Memphis artist. O. E. Hancock stated that Alschlager, the architect, wanted an interior decor similar to that of the Medina Temple in Chicago. The supervising artist spent a week in Chicago and then came back to design, draw and cut all the stencils used for the ceiling paintings which...adorn the ballroom on the second floor as well as the lobby and dining room on the first floor. Among the designs used in the stencils were a number of coats of arms from many countries, giving a medieval effect to the general decoration (The Sun-Democrat, January 12, 1969).

Elaborate plaster moldings also play an important role in the décor of the lobby, dining room and ballroom. These embellishments include Byzantine capitals in the dining room's blind arcade, heavy, nonfunctional consoles, and massive "coffered ceilings" that are richly treated in the lobby and dining room. In addition, the lobby is paneled with warm oak and is illuminated by a huge brass chandelier. The plaster moldings were manufactured by Italian artisans who set up a combined studio and plant in the lobby's floor (Ibid.).

The remaining space of the building contained 199 guest rooms and several shops and service areas off the lobby. Atop the roof was a terrace that was the scene of many dances in warm weather. Although the stenciled decorations are mostly deteriorated, the plaster moldings are much intact and the exterior of this building that combines French Gothic, English medieval, and Art Deco elements is structurally sound.

PERIOD	AF	REAS OF SIGNIFICANCE CH	IECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW	
PREHISTORIC	_ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	COMMUNITY PLANNING	_LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	RELIGION
_1400-1499	_ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	CONSERVATION	_LAW	SCIENCE
1500-1599	AGRICULTURE	ECONOMICS	LITERATURE	SCULPTURE
_1600-1699	XARCHITECTURE	EDUCATION	MILITARY	_SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
_1700-1799	ART	ENGINEERING	MUSIC	THEATER
1800-1899 1900-	*COMMERCE _COMMUNICATIONS	EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENTINDUSTRYINVENTION	PHILOSOPHY POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	TRANSPORTATIONOTHER (SPECIFY)

SPECIFIC DATES 1927-29

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Walter Alschlager

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

For more than three decades, the Hotel Irvin Cobb in Paducah was the center of civic, business and social life for the entire region of Kentucky between Owensboro (100 miles northeast) and the state's far western boundary defined by the Mississippi River. Since its completion in 1929, the Cobb Hotel has ranked among the most substantial buildings in Kentucky west of Louisville, and its architectural qualities render it the honor of being Paducah's downtown landmark.

Paducah is the seat of McCracken County, and is the unofficially recognized "capitol" of the Jackson Purchase, a region encompassing eight counties in Kentucky's far west. Despite this status, Paducah's development has been slow and gradual. Its strategic location at the point where the Tennessee River empties into the Ohio has been an outstanding influence. The Illinois Central Railway located its repair shops there, so Paducah has had the claim of being both a river and a railroad town. Despite its advantages, however, the city has grown little since 1930 when its population numbered 33,451 (Bureau of Community Service, "Paducah: An Embryonic Metropolis," unpublished study, University of Kentucky, Lexington, Kentucky, 1952, p. 3).

Adolph Weil, for whom the hotel was built, was a member of one of Kentucky's leading Jewish families. Weil hired Walter Alschlager of Chicago to design the building. Alschlager had previously been responsbile for the famed Peabody Hotel in Memphis, and he came to Weil with high recommendations from the Peabody Hotel Corporation which leased the Cobb for many years (The Sun-Democrat, Paducah, January 12, 1969).

The building was constructed between 1927-29 during the era of a rollicking economy at a cost of \$400,000. During its period of operation, the Cobb drew more state conventions than any other place in western Kentucky before the development of state park resort centers at Lake Barkley and Kentucky Lake (The Courier-Journal, Louisville, October 29, 1974). Due to its reputation as one of the South's finest hotels, all Paducah civic clubs met there for many years, and the eighth-floor's Governor's Suite played host to numerous theatrical and political figures. Even during the Depression, the Cobb Hotel prospered. At its peak, formal attire was required for the evening in the dining room, and during warm weather renowned orchestras provided music for roof terrace dances--crowds gathering on the streets below for listening pleasure.

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	Louisville, Kentucky. October 29, 197	
Paducah: An Embryoni	c Metropolis. Lexington: The University	ity of Kentucky, 1952.
The Sun-Democrat. Pa	ducah, Kentucky. January 12, 1969.	
	tor. Dictionary of American Biography	, Supplement III, New
York: Charles Scri	bner's Sons, 1973, pp. 170-171.	
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and Sixth Street in 1	Paducah, McCracken County, Kentucky.	
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AUG 24 1978

#### NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

Hotel Irvin Cobb
CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8

PAGE 2

The establishment was named for Irvin S. Cobb, a native Paducahan who gained international fame as a writer, journalist and humorist. Cobb (1876-1944) began his literary career as a journalist, serving as a correspondent on the Chicago Tribune and syndicated columnist for the New York Evening Sun. He later became a contributor to several leading American journals, was a novelist. and one of the most widely read short story writers of his time. He died in New York City and was interred in Paducah (Dictionary of American Biography, Supplement III, 1973, pp. 170-171). Ironically, Cobb held a special dislike for the hotels of his day. In his satire entitled "Thank God for Modern Hotels," he described the majority of them as having "economically small guest chambers with shops encroaching on a scrimped lobby, and on the walls, such pictures as might have been selected by the same strange person who picks out the hats worn by Queen Mary of England." But speaking at ceremonies marking the Cobb Hotel's formal opening on May 1, 1929, he hailed the building as such: "From lobby to roof garden, there is no hotel on this continent nor in the world more exquisitely designed" (The Courier-Journal, date unknown). During the remainder of his life Irvin Cobb stayed and spoke in the hotel often, as did Alben Barkley, another native of Paducah, who served as President Harry Truman's Vice President from 1948-1952.

In 1959, Henry Weil, son of the original owner, sold the building to Associated Hotels, Inc., of Chicago. The 1960s witnessed a steadily declining patronage, and in February 1972, the hotel was closed following a fire that caused minor damage to a suite of rooms on the top floor.

The present owners, Irvin Cobb Associates, are formulating plans to renovate the building. The lobby, dining room and ballroom will be used for social events, and the remaining space will be converted into an 88-unit apartment house for the elderly.

Form No. 10-300a (Rev. 10-74)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

#### NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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Hotel Irvin Cobb

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER

8

PAGE

#### ADDENDUM

Architecturally, the hotel is a fine example of those "period revivals" that were in vogue between the 1890s-1930s. Essentially, the Cobb is eclectic, and Alschlager combined several stylistic features in an unabashed, yet successful manner. The exterior blends the French Gothic with English medivalism in a variety of materials to produce a unique western Kentucky edifice. The lobby and dining room carry on the eclectic character, and their plaster embellishments and other components represent high artistic values.

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

### National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

	SUPPLEMENTARY	LISTING RECORD
NRIS Reference Number	: 78003065	Date of Listing: August 24, 1978
Property Name: Hotel Irv	in Cobb	
County: McCracken		State: Kentucky
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nomination documentation	on subject to the follow	f Historic Places in accordance with the attache ing exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, action included in the nomination
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nomination documentation notwithstanding the Nation documentation.	on subject to the follow onal Park Service certif	ing exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, fication included in the nomination

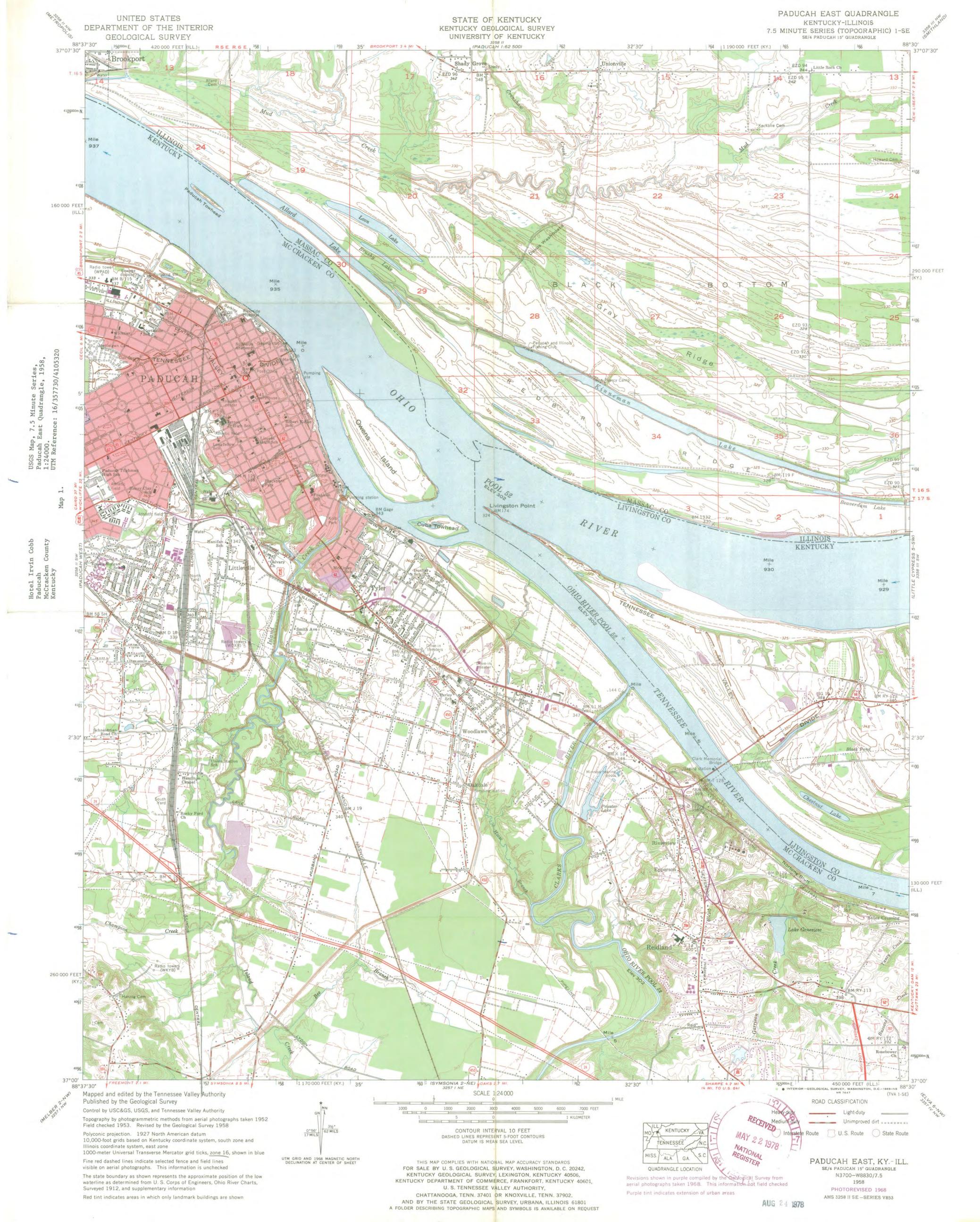
#### DISTRIBUTION:

National Register property file Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)









#### ENTRIES IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

STATE

KENTUCKY

Date Entered

AUG 24 1978

Name

Hotel Irvin Cobb

Location

Paducah McCracken County

Also Notified

Honorable Wendell H. Ford Honorable Walter (Dee) Huddleston Honorable Carroll Hubbard, Jr.

State Historic Preservation Officer Mrs. Eldred W. Melton Director Kentucky Heritage Commission 104 Bridge Street Frankfort, Kentucky 40601

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Gloria

## Fielder & Associates

Architects

443 South Ashland Ave.

Lexington, Ky. 40502 (606) 269-4664

7, April 1978

Mrs. Eldred Melton Executive Director Kentucky Heritage Commission 104 Bridge St. Frankfort, KY 40601

Cobb Hotel Re: Paducah, KY

Dear Mrs. Melton,

RECEIVED MAY 22 1978 NATIONAL REGISTER

APR 10 1978

KY. HERITAGE COMMISSION

I would like to thank you and your staff for the research and efforts you have put into the Irvin Cobb Hotel application. My partners Larry Baker and Walter Parr and I appreciate your good work and of course we support the application. We have received preliminary funding this week to renovate the building for elderly housing. The Irvin Cobb is an important and historical Paducah landmark and we would be proud to have it listed on the National Register.

Sincerely,

FIELBER & ASSOCIATES

Thomas E. Fielder Architect AIA

Larry Baker Walter Parr Dr. William Murtagh May 11, 1978 Page 2 Hotel Irvin Cobb, McCracken County, Kentucky

#### LIST OF ATTACHMENTS

National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form

3 Continuation Sheets

3 Photographs

1 Map

Copy of letter in reply to Notification letter





### Kentucky Heritage Commission 101 Bridge Street Frankfort, Kentucky 1060)

July 12, 1978

Dr. William J. Murtagh, Keeper National Register of Historic Places Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service 18th and C Streets, N. W. Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Dr. Murtagh:

Enclosed are additional statements of significance pertaining to the Hotel Irvin Cobb in Paducah, McCracken County, Kentucky, as requested by Ms. Lynn Beebe of your staff.

Please feel free to contact us if further information is needed.

Sincerely yours,

(Mrs.) Donna C. Hopkins

Deputy Executive Director

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

WASO-166 (August 1971)	U. S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE	DATE 2 2 2
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Straub in Alb W/SAPO coming to Myc - Public hearing applie to demo RCHHace. Thursday

# NATIONAL REGISTER DATA SHEET

ONAME as it appears on federal regi	ster: 2º	THER NAMES:			AUG 24 1978	a county code:
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□ ARCHEOLOGY - prehistoric - 2 □ COMMERCE - 6	□ ENGINEERING-11 □ LANDSCAPE ARCH. □ ENTERTAINMENT-26 □ LAW-16 □ EXPLORATION-12 □ LITERATURE-17	- 15 □ POLITICS / GOVT 21 □ RELIGION - 22 □ SCIENCE - 23	SETTLEMENT-29 URBAN PLANNING	'first'	S: explain	
☐ AGRICULTURE -3 ☐ CONSERVATION - 8 ☐ ARCHITECTURE - 4 ☐ ECONOMICS - 9	☐ HEALTH-27 ☐ MILITARY-18 ☐ INDUSTRY-13 ☐ MUSIC-19 ☐ INVENTION-14 ☐ PHILOSOPHY-20	SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAI SOCIAL/CULTURAL-3 TRANSPORTATION-25	N-24 OTHER (SPECIFY) 0	'oldest'		
WHEN HISTORICALLY SIGNIFICANT: CURRENTLY:		dates of initial construction major alterations: historic events:	n:		ETHNIC GI ASSOCIAT	ROUP
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andscape architect/garden designer	r: minterior decorator;	artist:	gartisan:	<b>₃</b> build	er/contractor:	
NAMES give role & date PERSONAL:						
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MATIONAL REGISTER WRITE-UP						