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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

21 1994

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National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

INTERAGENCY RESOURCES DIVISION

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an 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 entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Hotel Covell

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 1023 J Street N/A not for publication

city or town Modesto N/A vicinity

state California code CA county Stanislaus code 099 zip code 95350

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 nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature] 11/17/94
 Signature of certifying official/Title Date
California Office of Historic Preservation
 State of Federal agency and bureau

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

 Signature of certifying official/Title Date

 State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

- I hereby certify that the property is:
- entered in the National Register. See continuation sheet.
 - determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.
 - determined not eligible for the National Register.
 - removed from the National Register.
 - other, (explain:)

[Signature] for Signature of the Keeper Entered in the National Register. Date of Action
Edson B. Beall 12-29-94

Hotel Covell
Name of Property

Stanislaus, CA
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	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

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/hotel
RECREATION/theater
COMMERCE/business

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Vacant/not in use

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th and 20th century Revival:
Beaux Arts
Italian Renaissance

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick
walls Brick
roof _____
other Plaster

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Hotel Covell
Name of Property

Stanislaus, CA
County and State

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 of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

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 # _____

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance

1924

1928

Significant Dates

1924

1928

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Cornelius, A. W.

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Hotel Covell
Name of Property

Stanislaus, CA
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property less than one

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	10	676520	4167690
Zone	Easting	Northing	
2			

3			
Zone	Easting	Northing	
4			

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Sally Melgard

organization _____ date April 29, 1994 - Revised 9/29/94

street & number 18307 Woodham Carne Road telephone (209) 928-3504

city or town Sonora state CA zip code 95370

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

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.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional Items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

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

name Gerald J. Grudzen

street & number 325 S. First Street telephone (408) 279-5115

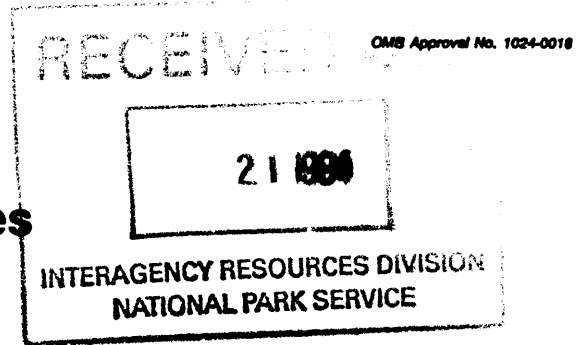
city or town San Jose state CA zip code 95113

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. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 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 Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet



Section number 7 Page 1

Hotel Covell
Stanislaus County, CA

Description

The Hotel Covell is a four story building constructed of steel and reinforced concrete, faced with brick laid in Flemish bond. The building is a restrained example of Beaux Arts Classicism with Italian Renaissance influences. The first portion of the building, fronting on J Street, was constructed in 1924. The second section of the hotel, completed in 1928, faces 11th Street and abuts the original rectangular segment of the building creating an L-shape plan. The hotel is located in the downtown business and commercial district of the City of Modesto. Although currently vacant, the Covell was a focal point of the community from the time it opened to the public in 1924 until it closed in the 1980s. In 1924, the building consisted of 70 guest rooms on the upper three floors, with a mezzanine, a lobby, eight retail stores and a theater on the ground level and a full basement below. The 1928 annex provided an additional 50 rooms bringing the total number of guest rooms to 120. The dimensions of the ground level are approximately 142 feet by 175 feet. The basement is similar in size.

Early photographs of the building are too indistinct to provide an accurate description of the original street level store fronts. All of the original eight retail stores were substantially altered during remodeling projects undertaken in the early to mid 1950s. The ground level store fronts presently consist of expansive plate glass windows with aluminum framed doors and modern masonry extending from the sidewalk to the bottom of the display windows. With the exception of these modifications to the street level facade, the building is essentially intact and appears as it did when construction was completed in 1928. A metal canopy projects over the public sidewalk (above the store fronts and theater) along the J Street facade. The canopy continues around the east corner of the building, extending over the 11th Street entrance and then terminates. The canopy is arched over both the J Street and 11th Street entrances. Original plans show an arched canopy over the theater entrance as well, however, this is no longer in

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Hotel Covell
Stanislaus County, CA

Description (continued)

existence. Above the canopy is a series of 18 transoms which provide light and ventilation to the mezzanine level. The bottom line of the transoms is defined by the arch of the canopy.

A belt course consisting of a dentil band below a projecting molding separates the first and second stories along the J Street and 11th Street elevations. The brick walls of the upper three stories are now painted a pale ivory-yellow. A paint analysis has not been done, however, photographic evidence indicates that the building was probably painted a pale color originally. The walls of the upper three stories are pierced by symmetrically spaced wood framed, one-over-one double hung sash windows. Each window is approximately 4 feet wide and 6 feet high and is capped by a flat arch composed of vertical bricks with a prominent scroll key console.

The building is crowned by an elaborate projecting cornice featuring finely detailed medallions, pendants and a dentil band. All of the applied decoration is of plaster. Above the cornice is a parapet wall which masks the low pitched hip roof of the hotel and the barrel roof covering the theater portion of the building.

Substantial steel fire escapes connecting the upper three floors are located on the 11th Street facade and on the alley (southwest) side of the building.

Although the street level store fronts suffer from a 1950s era remodeling, the upper three stories of the Hotel Covell are very much intact on both the J Street and 11th Street elevations. The original structural system, massing, proportions and pattern of fenestration are still in place. The three upper stories also retain key exterior surface materials as well as ornamental details dating from the hotel's period of historic significance, 1924-1928. Many interior features, particularly in the lobby area and on the

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Hotel Covell
Stanislaus County, CA

Description (continued)

mezzanine level, are also intact. Among these features are the handsome pillars and pilasters with their richly ornamented capitals, in addition to a number of decorative plaster medallions and corbels as well as the fine oak wainscoting, staircases and much of the original terraza floor.

Today the interior space of the first floor is divided into retail shops with entrances to the main lobby. The lobby features a lofty ceiling, approximately 18 feet high, accented by crown moldings and two prominent skylights framed by decorative wood trim. Other notable interior details include massive square pillars and pilasters with recessed plaster panels and decorative capitals. Oak wainscoting surrounds the lobby and two handsome staircases with turned oak balusters and molded handrails lead from the ground level to the mezzanine and upper floors. The mezzanine is enriched by a number of ornamental plaster medallions and corbels.

Although some of the hardwood flooring and high baseboards as well as a smattering of plumbing and lighting fixtures remain, most of the original interior features on the upper three levels of the building are either missing or have significantly deteriorated.

The floor of the lobby was originally paved with white hexagonal tiles framed by colorful marble terraza borders. Some of the original lobby floor remains as well as the floor of the recessed 11th Street entrance which contains the words "Hotel Covell" spelled out in small square black tiles surrounded by the same ornamental borders as in the lobby. If a similar floor existed at the J Street entrance it has been replaced by four inch square red tiles.

The theater, located in the southwest portion of the original hotel building, was refurbished in 1949. Its Art

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Hotel Covell
Stanislaus County, CA

Description (continued)

Moderne style interior which includes a lobby, stage,
balcony and 700 theater seats remains substantially intact.

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Hotel Covell
Stanislaus County, CA

Statement of Significance

The Hotel Covell is significant in the area of architecture as a good vernacular expression of Beaux Arts Classicism and as one of the best surviving examples of the style in the City of Modesto. Since 1924, when the first phase of the building was completed, the Covell has been a prominent architectural feature in Modesto's downtown center.

Beaux Arts elements are displayed in the clearly articulated separation of the ground level from the upper floors of the building as well as in the decorated colossal pilasters, enriched moldings and pronounced cornice. Although the Hotel Covell lacks the grandiose combination of arches and columns, effusive applied decoration and variety of finishes seen in more high style examples in major metropolitan areas, the Covell does illustrate how Beaux Arts Classicism was interpreted in Modesto.

When the Covell officially opened to the public in May of 1924 this stately hotel was proclaimed by the Modesto Herald newspaper to be "a monument of municipal pride." Both the original portion of the building constructed in 1924, fronting on J Street, and the later 11th Street annex, completed in 1928, were designed for owner, George F. Covell, a wealthy Modesto rancher and developer, by A.W. Cornelius, a prominent San Francisco architect, and built by contractors Hansen and Buchen. An article in the Modesto Herald stated that the four story structure of steel, reinforced concrete and brick was "constructed with the sturdiest materials that modern engineering has to offer. It is fireproof and substantial and its appearance materially adds to the attractiveness of Modesto." The article went on to say that this hotel is "the equal or probably the superior in class of construction to any building in Modesto..and one of the finest in California."

In 1929 the Modesto Morning Star newspaper declared the interior of the Hotel Covell to be "a worthy example of

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Hotel Covell
Stanislaus County, CA

Statement of Significance (continued)

decorations and choice of artistic and elegant furnishings." The bedrooms were papered with imported English wallpaper which "blended harmoniously with the carpets and furnishings." The floors of all the hallways and bedrooms were covered with the "finest of Axminster carpets, of a medium dark red shade."

According to the Modesto Herald, "the new hotel boasts furnishing of the best grade" including "ultra comfortable Simons steel furniture." High quality appointments were in evidence throughout the building. The spacious lobby was finished in oak with a marble terraza floor and furnished with overstuffed chairs and lounges, "giving a wonderful appearance and revealing the comfort that awaits those who stay at the Hotel Covell." A mezzanine containing approximately 3200 square feet offered a "comfortable writing and lounging space for the convenience of guests."

All of the latest features were incorporated into the building, including indirect lighting from bracket fixtures, "all shaded so as to shed a soft glow over the room," an automatic steam heating system, and 70 telephones, modern vacuum cleaner system" and hundreds of smaller amenities which afforded the "best to be had in service as well as comfort."

On each of the floors huge steel fire doors were installed to contain any fire ridden portion of the hotel. Hallways connected all parts of the building with exterior steel fire escapes.

Located in the downtown center of the city, the Hotel Covell did much to boost Modesto's economy during its years of operation, years which represented a period of growth and commercial expansion as well as a more sophisticated way of life for Modesto. Although Modesto remains an agricultural community it has grown from 2,000 inhabitants in the 1920s to a population exceeding 175,000 . The boundaries of the

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Hotel Covell
Stanislaus County, CA

Statement of Significance (continued)

city have also expanded from one square mile in 1869 to include over 29 square miles of land. Much of Modesto's early construction was lost in the post World War II decades when many old buildings were replaced with new structures to meet modern needs and codes. The Covell is now surrounded by bland commercial buildings dating from the 1950s and 60s. Once again a proposed expansion of the downtown redevelopment area threatens one of the city's few extant historic buildings, the Covell, a once grand hotel noted for its beauty and elegance.

Even though the expression of Beaux Arts Classicism was somewhat diluted in Modesto compared to more sophisticated examples, it was nevertheless, an important style in the architectural evolution of the city. During the early years of the twentieth century through the late 1920s, a total of six buildings were constructed in downtown Modesto in a variety of classical revival styles. Two of these buildings have been lost to redevelopment and commercial expansion. Of the four remaining buildings which exhibit classical influences, the Hotel Covell is the most fully developed stylistically.

Directly across J Street from the Covell is the Beaty Building, a four story office building faced with brick laid in English bond with ornamental quoins at the corners of the building. Fenestration consists of paired double hung windows with flat brick lintels and a recessed entrance sheathed in black marble. A plaster string course divides the ground level from the upper stories. The building is capped by a cornice featuring an ornamental plaster swag above a dentil band. Retail shops and offices on the street level have been remodeled with a variety of modern materials. Although there are obvious similarities between the Beaty Building and the Hotel Covell, the decorative details of the Covell, such as the belt course and cornice as well as the window surrounds, are more elaborate in the Covell. The craftsmanship and execution are also more

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Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 8 Hotel Covell
Stanislaus County, CA

Statement of Significance (continued)

refined and of higher quality in the Covell than in the Beaty Building.

The old Elk's Hall, currently the Teamster's Union Building, located at 1222 I Street, is a three story building, which like the Covell, is faced with brick laid in Flemish bond. The upper two stories and the recessed arched entrance are intact while the remainder of the ground level has been altered with aluminum framed glass doors and windows. The original steel framed windows on the third story are capped by round arches embellished with plaster shields. Flat brick pilasters with foliate plaster capitals flank the windows. Between the first and second stories is a band of plaster panels depicting small shields surrounded by a foliate motif. There is a small dentil band below the third story windows and a low parapet wall at the roof line. Even though the Elk's Hall has many formal elements integrated into its design, the Hotel Covell exhibits a more balanced composition of decorative features. In addition, the organizational separation of the various parts of the building is more clearly articulated in the Covell than in the Elk's Hall.

The Old Telephone Building at 1012 11th Street is a three story office building faced with red brick in Flemish bond. The wood framed windows are topped by flat arches with keystones. An entrance vestibule at the right front corner of the building features classical molded trim and consoles supporting a cornice with flat modillions. A smooth plaster water table extends from the ground level to the bottom of the first floor window sills. A string course with a Greek key design and a band of small dentils separates the second and third stories. Below the parapet is a classical cornice with flat modillions, bed molding and dentils. While the Old Telephone Building displays a number of classical elements, the studied formalism has neither the

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Hotell Covell
Stanislaus county, CA

Statement of Significance (continued)

variety nor the elaboration of ornamental detail seen in the Hotel Covell.

The Covell was acclaimed as one of the finest hotels of its era, and today it still reflects many significant aspects of its time and place. The overall integrity of the Hotel Covell is substantially intact. The building retains a majority of the elements that illustrate its style including symmetrical elevations and elaborately treated windows as well as the bold cornice with its finely detailed ornament and the crisply drawn belt course separating the ground floor from the upper stories. All of these features are fully integrated into the lines and massing of the building creating a cohesive whole.

While Beaux Arts Classicism was not a prevalent style in Modesto, surviving examples are now extremely rare and the Covell is one of the best of the few that remain. This handsome old building is a promising candidate for adaptive use. The Hotel Covell could function well in the future providing a tangible link with Modesto's past and serving as the cornerstone of downtown revitalization.

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Hotel Covell
Stanislaus County, CA

Bibliography

Books

Gauvreau, Robert. Modesto: Images of Yesterday Images of Today. Modesto, California: McHenry Museum Society Press, 1984.

Maino, Jeannette Gould. One Hundred Years. Modesto, California: Belt Printing and Lithograph, 1970

Newspapers

Modesto Herald, May 1, 1924.
Modesto Morning Star, May 29, 1929.

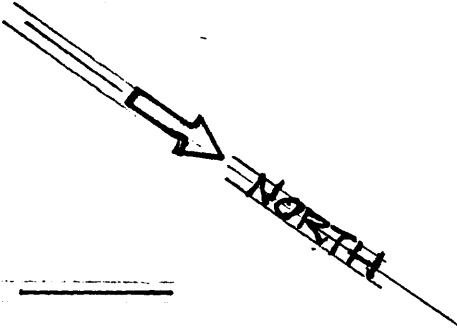
Verbal Boundary Description

City of Modesto, County of Stanislaus, State of California. Described as follows; Lots 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, and 16 in Block 67 of the City of Modesto, as per Map filled December 21, 1942, in Volume 15 of Maps, Stanislaus County Records.

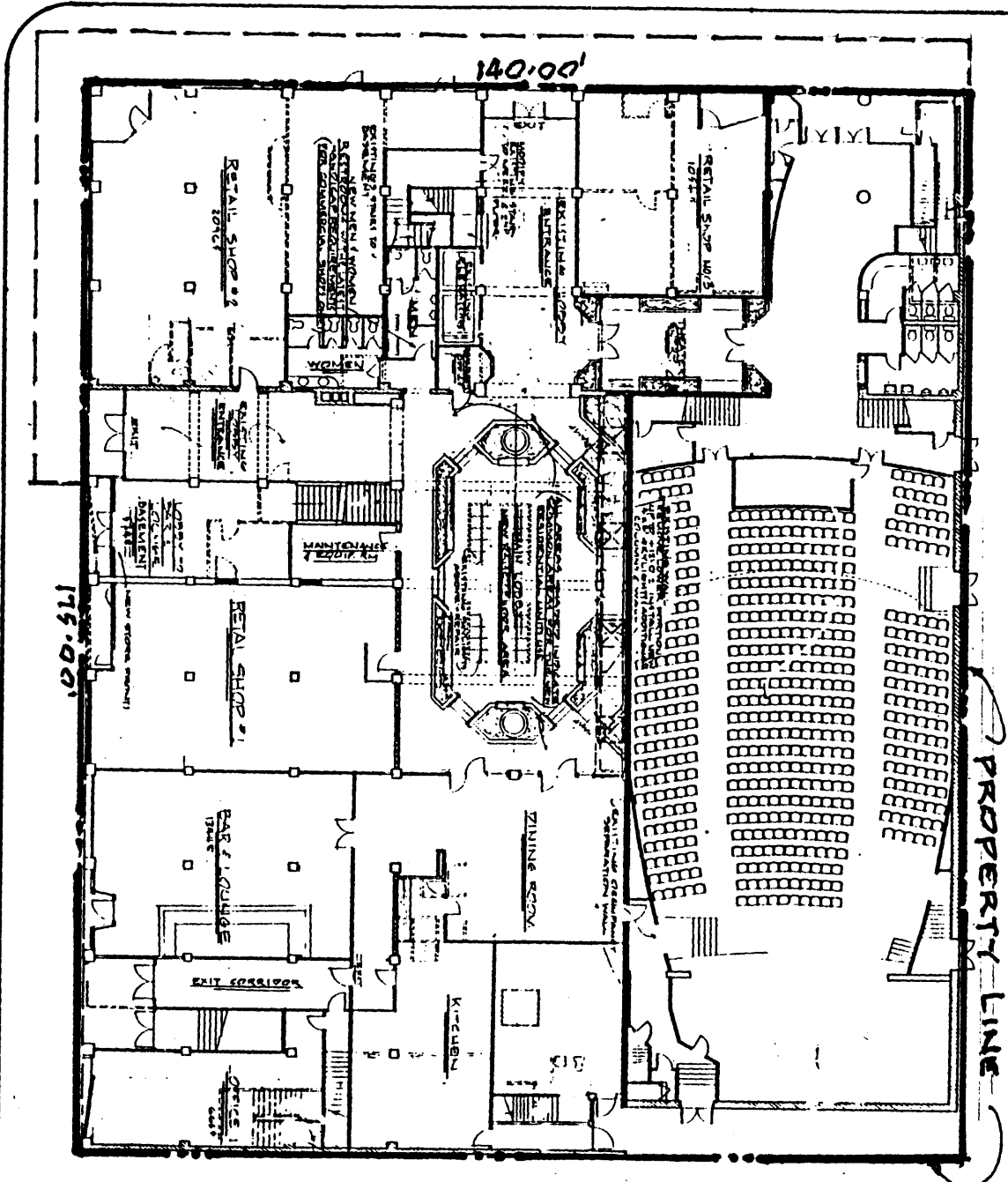
Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the entire parcel that has been historically associated with the Hotel Covell.

J STREET



0' 10' 20' 30' 40' 50' 60' 70' 80' 90'



ALLEY

PROPERTY LINE

11TH STREET

SITE & FIRST FLOOR PLAN

Hotel Covell
1023 J Street
Modesto, CA
Stanislaus County

PHOTOGRAPHS - CONTINUATION SHEET

PHOTOGRAPHER:

Kelly Brown
1623 Honeysuckle Drive
Modesto, California 95350
Photographer for all photo's shown

DATE PHOTO'S WERE TAKEN:

March 1994

NEGATIVES ARE STORED AT:

1623 Honeysuckle Drive
Modesto, California 95350

DESCRIPTION OF VIEW, INDICATING DIRECTION OF CAMERA:

1. View - West across "J" Street
2. View - North across "J" Street
3. View - North/West across "J" Street
4. View - North/West typical window
5. View - North across "J" & 11th. Street intersection
6. View - South along 11th. Street
7. View - South/West at alley
8. View - North/West corner of Cornice
9. View - North/East corner column
10. View - North/East across "J" Street above canopy
11. View - South/West mezzanine level interior at canopy
12. View - North/West/East lobby interior
13. View - North basement interior column
14. View - West mezzanine level East lobby entrance
15. View - North/East ceiling interior main lobby
16. View - South stairs at South lobby entrance
17. View - East main lobby stairs to mezzanine floor
18. Ornamental relief - typical on all interior columns below capital
19. Ornamental relief - interior below mezzanine windows "J" Street lobby
20. Typical bracket
21. View - North/East theater interior from balcony
22. View - West/East side lobby entrance
23. View - West/East side lobby entrance showing decorative tile
24. Tile Floor - Typical corner design in lobby areas
25. View - South/East adjacent room to South lobby entrance