

Exemptive Review

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

received **OCT 12 1983**  
date entered

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

**1. Name**

historic Hotel Townsend

and/or common Fireproof Building, the Townsend

**2. Location**

street & number 115 North Centre Street not for publication

city, town Casper vicinity of N/A

state Wyoming code 056 county Natrona code 025

**3. Classification**

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

**4. Owner of Property**

name Townsend & Associates Limited Partnership Centre Street Properties

street & number Star Route Box 363B

city, town Jackson vicinity of N/A state Wyoming

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Natrona County Courthouse, Assessor's Office

street & number 200 North Centre Street

city, town Casper state Wyoming

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title N/A has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records

city, town state

## 7. Description

### Condition

excellent  
 good  
 fair

deteriorated  
 ruins  
 unexposed

### Check one

unaltered  
 altered

### Check one

original site  
n/a moved date

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Hotel Townsend at 115 North Centre is a five story structure at the core of the Casper business district. It occupies its entire site - 70' frontage and 140' depth and is located on the east side of Centre Street. The Townsend is a hotel building with related dining, lounge and dancing/meeting facilities. It also has a full basement which extends 9' under the sidewalk. The rectangular shape changes to a "W" shape at Level 2. Two similar north facing light wells divide Levels 2 through 5 into thirds. Each lightwell is approximately 11" wide (east/west) and 56' deep (north face to south).

The basement level is 10' below Level 1 with an 8' finished ceiling height. Level 1 to Level 2 is 14'8" with a 13' finished ceiling height. Levels 2, 3, & 4 are each 10' floor to floor with an 8' finished ceiling height. Level 5 is 14' to the roof deck and has a 9' finished ceiling height. A 3' parapet gives the building a 61' 8" height above street level (plus/minus). Three brick mechanical penthouses; each 8' x 6' x 11' high and an elevator/frontstair penthouse top off the building. Prominent to the building configuration is the abutting Masonic Temple on the south. It abuts the structure for 100' (west face to east) and to a height of approximately 53'. Its facade has been lapped into the Townsend facade (see photographs).

The structure is reinforced concrete columns and foundation walls with a one-way joist floor slab system. The Hotel Townsend was constructed with three bays north to south, and eight bays west to east. The north, east and south exterior walls are exposed ends of the concrete columns and slabs with reddish-brown brick infill panels backed with "hollow tile" masonry. The infill panels on the north and east have wooden double hung windows with brick sills. Windows at Level 5 have concrete lintels. The west elevation has a facade veneer of brick, cast stone and some plaster. The cast stone is a natural grey and the brick is two colors - red and a darker burgundy.

The west facade is broken into the traditional three parts - a base (Levels 1 & 2), the shaft (Levels 3, 4, & 5), and the capital. The base is cast stone with infill of glazing of three bays at Level 1. Originally the infill was painted wood and/or metal glazing system. Over the years it has been "modernized" with aluminum storefront and stained barn wood on the north bay. A metal canopy over the centre bay projects over the sidewalk and is supported by three metal tie rods.

At Level 1 are four double decorative pilaster columns of a modified doric style. These support a frieze panel. The frieze is plain except for a projected horizontal band and a rectangular decorative panel over each column. The panel is a crest and garland design. The frieze is topped by a projected cornice. On the cornice (Level 2) is a plain typanum with a running board pattern. It is pierced by eight double hung windows, each setting on a decorative grille. The cast stone is capped (at Level 3) with a narrow elaborate decorative horizontal cornice. This decoration is pierced by a shield over each window.

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

**Specific dates** ca. 1923–1948      **Builder/Architect** Garbutt, Weidner & Sweeney

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Hotel Townsend is important both for its historic association with the oil industry and for its unique architectural character. Since its construction in 1923, the Townsend has been a focal point in the business district and a hub of social and political life in Casper. The five story concrete structure (fireproof building), along with brick and cast stone facade, and marble, ornate brass and plaster moldings is a rare example of the technology, craftsmanship and architectural expression of the period. In 1923, Charles H. Townsend, an original Casper pioneer, banker and businessman, contracted Barbutt, Weidner and Sweeney architects to design the hotel with the finest dining, meeting and dancing facilities in the area. The Townsend is the only one of three "grand" hotels left serving the City of Casper and the region at that time. The other two were the Henning and the Gladstone. The Henning has been torn down and the Gladstone was partially torn down, added onto, and completely altered on the inside. The Townsend retains integrity and embodies the distinctive characteristics of type, period and method of construction for grand hotels during the "roaring 20s." Additionally, its construction was directly related to energy exploitation, which has long been a significant contributor to the broad patterns of Wyoming and United States economic and political history, and is particularly important in regard to Casper's social and political history. The Townsend was Casper's favorite place for concerts by popular local artists, gala dances, fine dining, service club meetings, political rallies and campaign headquarters, private clubs, a base operation for visiting journalists and dignitaries into the 1960s, and was used by the commissioned officers and USO during World War II. By the 1970s however, it began suffering neglect, serving more and more as a residence for transients and lower income facility. Faced with massive heating bills and extensive deterioration of the interior, it finally closed in 1982.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

SEE ADDENDUM

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property less than 1 acre

Quadrangle name Casper, Wyoming

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A 

1	3	3	9	1	7	9	10	4	7	4	4	6	6	10
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** This nomination includes only the hotel building described in the nomination. Located at 115 N. Centre Street or more specifically the South 10' of Lot 5 and all of Lot 6, Block 10, Casper Addition. There is no need to include any other property.

**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 Thomas M. Vaughn, Architect/Mike Gorman

organization Prescott Muir Associates/WRC date March 7, 1983/August 1983

street & number 235 West Fourth South/1920 Thomes telephone 801-521-9111/307-777-7697

city or town Salt Lake City/Cheyenne state Utah/Wyoming

# 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 Alvin J. Baston

title State Historic Preservation Officer date 9/28/83

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

Alvin J. Baston date 11/25/83  
Keeper of the National Register

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

Chief of Registration

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The shaft (Levels 3-5) is framed by stack bond and soldier course of the darker brick. It is pierced by six vertical rows of double hung windows. Each window sets on a cast stone sill. All windows at Levels 3 & 4 are capped with a brick arch which includes a cast stone keystone. Rectangular decorative treatment between the columns of windows is achieved by projecting alternating rows of bricks slightly forward from the plane of work.

The capital is an extended three band cornice beginning immediately above the windows at Level 5. Each column of windows is capped in the cornice with a brick and plaster arch. The first band of the cornice is a diamond pattern of the lighter colored brick projecting slightly forward from the darker colored brick background. The second band is corbelled forward. It contains a continuous series of 54 cast stone and brick arches and pendants. The top band is a dentil brick work, soldier course and cast stone coping.

The interior has suffered extensively over the decades. Virtually all ceilings, doors, moldings, floorings, fixtures, etc., have been lost, removed or defaced beyond repair. In contrast, the Level 1 lobby and foyer areas have been protected somewhat over the years. There are large decorative plaster and grey marble columns (similar to exterior) supporting a coffered ceiling. The beams of the coffering sport elaborate and varied moldings. There is a marble staircase to Level 2 with a marble wainscot and brass railings. The front stair goes to the roof. A rear stairway on the south wall is from Level 1 to Level 5. With the exception of the front marble faced stair, all other stairs are exposed concrete pan and metal railings. Originally, skylights were at each lightwell into the dining areas. These have been covered, painted over and removed. Another original feature now gone, was thick purple glass in the sidewalk to "light" the basement area.

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ADDENDUM

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The development of Casper and Natrona County is intimately related to the discovery and subsequent exploitation of energy related resources, primarily oil. The aridity of the area imposed barriers on the growth of the livestock industry and in 1910 Casper's population was only 2,639 and Natrona County had the second smallest population in the state, 4,766. Attempts to mine both gold and silver proved less than lucrative but the oil industry began to boom once the transportation and refining difficulties were overcome.

As early as 1851, Cy Iba, Thomas Fitzpatrick and other mountain men reported the presence of oil near Fort Casper. Some sold it to passing wagon trains as lubrication. The first real discovery of the black gold of Casper occurred in 1889 when Pennsylvania oilman Phillip M. Shannon filed a claim on the north edge of Salt Creek and drilled a thousand foot well. He built three more wells and a small refinery in Casper over the next six years, but hauling the crude oil to Casper with string teams of horses and marketing the finished product inhibited further expansion.

The Midwest Oil Company finally constructed a pipeline from Salt Creek to Casper in 1911, as well as a more efficient refinery in 1912. The increased value and demand for oil during World War I improved the marketing phase of the industry and Casper entered a boom cycle. In 1912, the area produced approximately one million barrels of oil per year and the population of Casper was approaching 4,000. By 1923, thirty-six million barrels of oil a year were leaving Casper and the population was just over 26,000.

The Townsend Hotel was constructed during the peak of the boom cycle and reflects the social and commercial development of the frontier oil community. The small town couldn't absorb the rapid influx of newcomers. Communities of rental tents surrounded the city and cots were let by the hour in upstairs halls of the Henning Hotel. Crowds packed the intersection of Second and Center streets when a "curb-market" in oil stocks opened in a ground floor window of the Grand Central Hotel. Fortunes were easily made and lost in those days and the Townsend was an appropriate place to spend the wealth. Fine wine, dining, dancing and living facilities were provided by the Townsend as well as meeting rooms and message services.

Unfortunately, the boom was short in duration. The Salt Creek field produced a mere ten million barrels in 1930 and the population quickly dropped to just over 16,000. In the first nine months of 1923 building permits in the city totaled three million dollars but in all of 1930 they totaled only \$110,877. The assessed valuation of the city fell from 27 million dollars in 1924 to less than nine million in 1930 as people jacked up their homes and carted them away. When new fields began opening in Texas and Oklahoma where production and drillings costs were lower, wells in Wyoming were capped and employees began moving South.

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Unlike the oilmen, the farmers and ranchers couldn't simply shut off their pumps, pull up their stock and head for better ground. Casper suffered through the depression but the hotel continued its grand tradition up through World War II and into the days of the second more stable oil boom. By 1948, Casper had once again established itself as oil center for Wyoming and to a lesser extent the Rocky Mountain region.

Only a very few of the grand homes and businesses associated with Casper's early oil period remain. The Townsend is the only hotel which has survived with the major portion of its historical and architectural integrity intact. Nomination to the National Register would doubtless serve as an incentive for further preservation, restoration and appreciation of a structure which has served a community through two cycles of economic boom.

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Continuation sheet **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

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