

1408

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

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1. Name of Property

=====

historic name Aldridge Hotel

other names/site number N/A

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2. Location

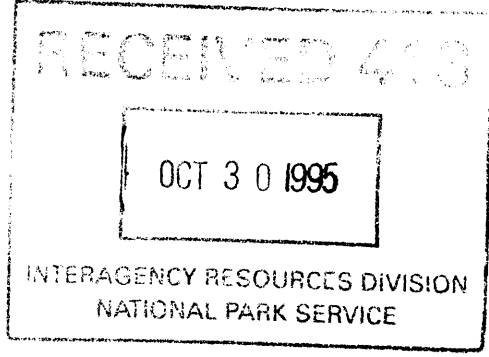
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street & number 200 East Carl Albert Parkway not for publication N/A

city or town McAlester vicinity N/A

state Oklahoma code OK county Pittsburg code 121

zip code 74501



RECEIVED 413  
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OCT 30 1995

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

INTERAGENCY RESOURCES DIVISION  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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. I recommend that this property be considered significant      nationally      statewide x locally. (N/A See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Blake Wade  
Signature of certifying official

October 19, 1995  
Date

Oklahoma Historical Society, SHPO  
State or 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 commenting or other official

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this 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): \_\_\_\_\_

Edson H. Beall 12.7.95

Entered in the National Register

Beall  
Signature of Keeper

12.7.95  
Date of Action

=====  
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

| 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      |

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.) N/A

=====  
6. Function or Use  
=====

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

|                       |                                 |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------|
| Cat: <u>DOMESTIC</u>  | Sub: <u>hotel</u>               |
| <u>COMMERCE/TRADE</u> | <u>restaurant</u>               |
| <u>COMMERCE/TRADE</u> | <u>specialty store</u>          |
| <u>COMMERCE/TRADE</u> | <u>business</u>                 |
| <u>COMMERCE/TRADE</u> | <u>financial institution</u>    |
| <u>TRANSPORTATION</u> | <u>road-related (vehicular)</u> |
| <u>INDUSTRY</u>       | <u>communications facility</u>  |
| _____                 | _____                           |
| _____                 | _____                           |

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

|                               |            |
|-------------------------------|------------|
| Cat: <u>VACANT/NOT IN USE</u> | Sub: _____ |
| _____                         | _____      |
| _____                         | _____      |
| _____                         | _____      |
| _____                         | _____      |
| _____                         | _____      |
| _____                         | _____      |

=====  
7. Description  
=====

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY  
AMERICAN MOVEMENTS  
Sullivan-esque  
LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS  
Second Renaissance Revival

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE  
roof CONCRETE  
walls BRICK  
METAL/aluminum  
other \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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

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8. Statement of Significance

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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.)

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a 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.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE  
ARCHITECTURE  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Period of Significance 1930-1945  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Dates 1930  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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8. Statement of Significance (Continued)  
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Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder Reid, Guy C., architect

Harmon and Mattison Construction Co., builder

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

=====  
9. Major Bibliographical References  
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(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 # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary Location of Additional Data

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

=====  
10. Geographical Data  
=====

Acreage of Property less than one acre

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

|   | Zone        | Easting       | Northing       | Zone | Easting     | Northing    |
|---|-------------|---------------|----------------|------|-------------|-------------|
| 1 | <u>15</u>   | <u>247300</u> | <u>3868820</u> | 3    | <u>    </u> | <u>    </u> |
| 2 | <u>    </u> | <u>    </u>   | <u>    </u>    | 4    | <u>    </u> | <u>    </u> |

N\A 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.)

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11. Form Prepared By  
=====

name/title Dr. Mary Jane Warde  
organization \_\_\_\_\_ date April 7, 1995  
street & number 2806 W. 18th telephone (405) 377-0412  
city or town Stillwater state OK zip code 74074

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Additional Documentation  
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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 the SHPO or FPO.)

name 1st National Bank  
street & number P.O. Box 948 telephone (918) 426-0211  
city or town McAlester state OK zip code 74501  
=====



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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

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Aldridge Hotel  
name of property  
Pittsburg County, Oklahoma  
county and State

=====

**SUMMARY:**

The Aldridge Hotel is an eleven-story, rectangular brick-veneered concrete building with a small pent house and full basement. It has a one-story extension on the east and south with access to a basement parking garage. Built in 1929-1930, the generally Sullivan-esque hotel was designed by architect Guy C. Reid. From its location on U.S. Highway 270 and two blocks from historic U.S. Highway 69, it dominates McAlester's central business district. It is an excellent example of the large commercial hotel designed to play a prominent role in the economic and social life of southeastern Oklahoma.

**DESCRIPTION:**

The Aldridge Hotel is located on the southeast corner of East Carl Albert Parkway (formerly East Grand Avenue) and North Second Street in McAlester's central business district. East Carl Albert Parkway is also U.S. Highway 270. Two blocks west of the intersection is U.S. Highway Business Route 69 and the Missouri-Kansas-Texas Railroad line. Streets in this section of McAlester are laid out parallel or perpendicular to the railroad. North-south streets such as North Second Street actually lie approximately twenty degrees east of north. Adjacent to the Aldridge Hotel on the east is a modern two-story parking garage. Otherwise the hotel is surrounded by substantial business and public buildings representing a variety of time periods and styles. Diagonally across the intersection is the Pittsburg County Courthouse. The clustering of the Aldridge Hotel, courthouse, high school, churches, and Scottish Rite Masonic Temple in the immediate vicinity mark this as one of the most important locations in town. In turn, McAlester is the most important city in the southeastern quadrant of Oklahoma.

The Aldridge Hotel, built in 1929-1930, dominates McAlester's central business district visually. It is rectangular in shape, approximately 135 feet by 150 feet. The built-up roof is concrete, as is the foundation. Wall construction is reinforced concrete with a polychromatic veneer of red and dark grey brick accented with white cast stone. Above the seventh floor on all except the south elevation, the brick is a lighter shade of red. Generally Sullivan-esque in style, the hotel, designed by Oklahoma architect Guy C. Reid, consists primarily of an eleven-story tower with a small penthouse and full basement. On the first floor is the centrally-placed lobby. Surrounding it but also opening onto the street are several commercial spaces. On the east is a one-story extension housing the coffee shop and, at one time, the bus station. The one-story extension continues around the south elevation completing an L-shape. It houses the ballroom, dining rooms, and kitchen. The hotel sits on a southwestward-facing moderate slope, which allows street-level access to the basement parking garage on the southwest corner of the hotel. Almost all windows, originally wood-frame with multiple lights, have been boarded over

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DESCRIPTION (continued)

above the third floor. Large display windows are covered in aluminum. Almost all windows have cast stone sills. The lintels center a cast stone keystone between soldier courses of dark grey brick. Towering over the northwest corner of the building is a large electric scaffold sign that reads "HOTEL ALDRIDGE."

The north elevation of the Aldridge Hotel faces East Carl Albert Parkway. It provides primary access to the building and establishes the decorative motifs repeated on the west and east elevations. Architect Guy C. Reid emulated the Sullivanesque style in his design for the Aldridge Hotel by dividing the building into distinct zones at the ground floor, intermediate floor, and top floor levels. But he also included some design elements more common to the contemporary Second Renaissance Revival. For example, the eleventh floor is topped by a coping and simulated balustrade of cast stone. At each corner, the segmented balustrade is topped by two pairs of urn-shaped finials at each end of the first segment. The use of dark grey brick at the corners of the building creates the effect of quoins, reinforcing the vertical lines begun by the finials and continued on this floor by pairs of inserted cast stone rectangles. At the extreme left and right of the eleventh floor are single windows set into elaborate cast stone surrounds and arches topped by a key-stone. In each arch is a scarab flanked by stylized cornucopias, vines, and flowers. Both windows have a small metal railing. On either side of each arched window is inset a cast-stone circle and bas-relief finial. Between the arched windows are six pairs of single windows. Between the arched window and the first pair at either end of this elevation, dark grey brick creates a pilaster effect that adds vertical definition. Just above each pair of windows are cast stone bas-relief urns set in rectangles. Below the windows on the eleventh floor is a cast stone belt course, setting the top floor apart from the zone of intermediate floors. From the tenth floor to the third floor a new window pattern is established. At each end of this elevation, a pair of single windows replaces the arched single windows on the eleventh floor. Between floors, above these single windows is inset a cast stone rectangle. All other windows from the tenth through the third floor repeat the basic design of cast stone sills and brick soldier course lintels with a cast stone keystone. The third floor windows, still open, have metal replacement frames. The second floor on this elevation also shows the influence of the Second Renaissance Revival in eight pairs of arched windows. Each window, which has a new metal frame, has a brick soldier course surround with a cast stone insert at each corner. Inserts at the lower corners depict bas-relief finials. Above the lintel is a brick soldier course arch with a cast stone keystone. In each arch is a frieze of cast stone which includes a stylized urn and cornucopia. Beneath each window is inset a stylized cast stone chain between small engaged columns. Below the second floor windows is a cast stone belt course, setting the tower apart from the first floor. Centered beneath the tower on this floor

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DESCRIPTION (continued)

is the recessed primary entrance. It consists of two single glazed wood doors which have been boarded over. Each door has a cast stone surround consisting of engaged Classical columns topped by a keystone arch. In each arch is a scarab flanked by stylized cornucopias, vines, and flowers. Flanking the single doors are single windows, now boarded over. Each window has a cast stone surround and lintel, featuring a prominent keystone, flanked by bas-relief finials. Above the recessed entrance is an ornate canopy suspended from the wall on chains. It has a pressed metal roof membrane, copper fascia, and glass trim. At either end is a painted sign reading "Hotel Aldridge." On either side of the primary entrance are two store fronts. The display windows and transoms, set beneath brick soldier courses, have been boarded over. In the store front immediately right and left of the primary entrance are single doors. The one on the left is modern aluminum and glass. The one on the right has been boarded over. Also boarded over beneath the display windows are eight small rectangular openings that provided light and ventilation to the basement. To the left of the tower section and connected visually to it by the cast stone belt course is the one-story east extension. It continues the first-floor pattern in its three display windows and transoms, but all have been boarded over except for small rectangles in the upper left corners of the first and third. The penthouse and elevator shaft, in the southeast corner of the building, are not visible from street level on either this or the west elevation.

The west elevation of the Aldridge Hotel, facing North Second Street, also presents a public facade. On the eleventh floor, the pattern of simulated balustrade, finials, inset cast stone rectangles, and arched windows at either end is duplicated, although this elevation is only five bays wide. The right arched window retains its iron railing. The cast stone arches over both windows enclose a scarab with stylized cornucopias, vines, and flowers, while the largest centered rectangle holds a bas-relief urn. Between the arched windows is a large single window flanked by two much smaller single windows. The largest of the three repeats the basic pattern of a cast stone sill and a brick soldier course lintel with a cast stone keystone. The two smaller windows have only cast stone sills and brick soldier course lintels. Below the eleventh-floor windows, the cast stone belt course demarcates the top floor from the zone of intermediate floors. On the tenth floor, single windows, with cast stone sills and brick soldier course lintels with cast stone keystones, replace the arched windows. Otherwise, this elevation repeats the window pattern established on the eleventh floor. Dark grey brick at the corners and between the first and second and fourth and fifth windows create the effect of quoins and pilasters, respectively. The second floor also repeats the window pattern and design established on the north elevation. There are arched single windows in the first, third, and fifth positions. These have cast stone sills

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DESCRIPTION (continued)

and brick soldier course surrounds and lintels. There are cast stone rectangular inserts at each corner, with the two lower inserts showing bas-relief finials. Above are brick soldier course arches with cast stone keystones. Inset into each arch is a bas-relief urn. Below each arched window is a stylized cast stone chain between small engaged columns. The pattern of smaller, plainer windows in the second and fourth position, established above, is repeated. Below the second floor windows the cast stone belt course is continued from the north elevation. On the first floor on this elevation, the complex nature of the Aldridge Hotel becomes more obvious. That level extends southward above the semi-exposed, concrete-walled basement. Beneath the tower section are three large display windows with transoms. The second is completely blocked, while the original wood frame is visible on the first, showing the transom to consist of triple lights in each of three frames. The third display window is partially open in the upper right corner. Extending downward from the lower left corner is a single door that has been boarded over. Beneath the first and second display windows are two small rectangular openings. Beneath the third display window is a single rectangular opening. All are now boarded over. To the right of the first floor tower section is a door with a transom, now boarded over. Beyond lies the first-floor southern extension. It has a cast stone coping and belt course. On the extreme left of this section is a side entrance with a chain-suspended metal canopy in the style of that on the north elevation. This recessed entrance, having a double door approached by two concrete steps, has been boarded over. To the right of this secondary entrance and still on the first floor is the hotel ballroom. It features three groups of triple windows. Each window has a cast stone sill and is topped by a brick soldier course arch with a cast stone keystone. All the windows have been boarded over, but the arched transoms over the first and third groups are open to show original wood frames with two lights. Below these windows the sloping ground exposes the basement, which has a parking garage in this southwest corner. The regularity of the three groupings of triple windows is continued at the basement level. Below the first set is a group of three smaller windows. The middle group has a single window on the left and large opening in the remaining space. Beneath the third group of first-floor windows is a single door, added about fifteen years ago, and a new metal overhead door. Each opening except the garage door is boarded over, and each has a brick soldier course lintel with a cast stone keystone. The smaller windows have cast stone sills, while the large window has a brick soldier course sill. At the roofline on the southwest corner of this extension is a neon sign reading "Hotel Storage."

The south elevation of the Aldridge Hotel may be divided into three sections and presents a more utilitarian facade. On the left side of the eleven-floor tower, the decorative elements of the north and west elevations continue

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DESCRIPTION (continued)

briefly. Over a space two bays wide, the simulated balustrade, finials, and cast stone inserts are repeated. However, there is only one arched window, at the far left, at the eleventh-floor level. It has a cast stone surround and arch with a keystone. Beneath the arch is a cast stone scarab with stylized cornucopias, vines, and flowers. To the right of this space are a single door, originally glazed, and six equally spaced single windows. Each of these openings has a cast stone sill and a brick soldier course lintel with a cast stone keystone. The first three of these windows are open, showing original wood frames with three-over-one lights. The door, now boarded over, provides access to a metal fire escape that extends down to the roof of the one-story south extension. On the tenth floor, the arched window is replaced by two single windows with cast stone sills and brick soldier course lintels with cast stone keystones. Above each window a cast stone rectangle is inset. At the left and right of these windows, dark grey brick creates a quoin and pilaster effect, respectively. On the tenth through the second floors in this section on this elevation, the pattern of window and door openings is repeated. Almost all window openings have been boarded over. On the second floor, the decoration of the first two windows on the left repeats the pattern set on the north and west elevations. These two windows are set into brick soldier course surrounds with cast stone inserts at each corner. Beneath each brick soldier course arch and cast stone keystone is a bas-relief urn. To the right of this eleven-story section is another eleven-story section topped by the small penthouse and flue. On the penthouse level are two widely-spaced small windows with three-over-one wood frames. Each has a cast stone sill and brick soldier course lintel with a cast stone keystone. The eleventh through the second floors share a common window arrangement and decoration. On the left are two single windows. On the right are a small one-over-one window in a wood frame and two single windows. Each window has a cast stone sill. The four larger windows have brick soldier course lintels with cast stone keystones. The smaller windows are unadorned. Most of these windows are boarded over. Those remaining open suggest that they were originally three-over-one in wood frames. The second window in this section on the eleventh through the seventh floors has a metal awning. The third section on this elevation is the one-story south extension and exposed basement, which face a ten-foot wide paved alley. The roofline is topped by a brick coping, and four metal drain pipes carry water from the flat roof. There is a fire escape approximately one-third of the way from the right end. The ballroom extends approximately half the length of the extension on the left side. Four groups of three arched openings repeat the pattern established on the west elevation at this level. Each window is eight-over-eight in a wood frame. Each has an arched transom with two lights. Sills and arches are brick soldier courses. The third opening in the grouping on the extreme left is a single glazed wood door with twelve lights. To the right of the four groupings are eight window openings of varying sizes in wood

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DESCRIPTION (continued)

frames. The fifth and sixth contain large exhaust fans. The seventh is blocked. On the basement level on the left are three large sixteen-light awning windows in metal frames. To the right, below the fourth grouping of three arched windows, is a new wood overhead door. To its right are two four-over-four windows with metal frames. To their right is a double metal door. To its right are two small blocked windows. To their right is a wood enclosure for trash containers. Behind the enclosure are two blocked windows, originally with frosted reinforced glass.

The east elevation also combines utilitarian and public facades. Visible on this elevation is the flue and small penthouse, both extending above the eleventh floor on the left side. On the right side at this level, the simulated balustrade, finials, cast stone inserts, and other decorative elements established on the north elevation are continued across a space one bay wide. To the right of the flue are five single windows. The second and fourth are small, wood frame one-over-one, and unadorned except for brick soldier course lintels. The first and third have brick soldier course lintels with cast stone keystones. All have cast stone sills. The fifth window at this level is set into a cast stone surround and beneath a cast stone keystone arch. In the arch is a scarab. Above the third window is a bas-relief urn in a cast stone rectangle. Between the fourth and fifth windows and down the extreme right, dark grey brick creates the effect of a pilaster and quoins, respectively. From the tenth through the second floors, this window pattern is repeated, except that the fifth position window duplicates the first and third. On the second floor the fifth position window is set into a brick soldier course surround and arch with a cast stone keystone. There are cast stone inserts at the corners. The lower inserts depict a bas-relief finial. In the arch is a cast stone bas-relief urn. Most windows on this elevation have been boarded over. On the roof of the one-story east extension is a small metal building. The east elevation of this extension has only a centered single door, now boarded over. Other openings have been filled in, leaving a plain brick wall bare except for metal gutters.

**INTERIOR**

The basement of the Aldridge Hotel contains heating units and laundry facilities on the north side of the building, with the parking garage occupying the south side. On the first floor are the public rooms. The main entrance, on the north elevation, provides access to the lobby, with the registration desk on the south wall. Skirting the lobby on the west and north are small commercial spaces. On the east is the elevator and the entrance to the coffee shop/bus station. On the second floor are meeting rooms, the King Koal Room, and, on the south above the parking garage, the ballroom, which has a wood

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INTERIOR (continued)

floor and small stage at the east end. Guest rooms occupy the other floors.

**ALTERATIONS:**

The primary alteration to the Aldridge Hotel is the boarding over of window and door openings. This is a reversible preservation measure most evident on the first floor display windows. Some openings on the east elevation of the east extension have been bricked in. New metal windows have been installed on the second and third floor on the north elevation. Both overhead doors, in original openings, are new. The hotel has been redecorated many times. While the terrazzo floors in the lobby are unchanged, the decorative detail has been painted over. A toilet was added in one stage wing while the ballroom was serving temporarily as a dormitory. These alterations have not impaired the architectural or historic integrity of the building. It appears much as it did on its opening day in 1930.

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**SUMMARY:**

The Aldridge Hotel, built in McAlester, Oklahoma in 1929-1930, is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A because, as the only large full-service hotel in the region, it played a leading role in the economic, political, and social life of the southeastern quadrant of Oklahoma. Designed by Oklahoma architect Guy C. Reid, it is generally Sullivanesque in style with decorative elements from the contemporary Second Renaissance Revival. Its fine style and construction make it eligible under Criterion C as an excellent example of early twentieth century commercial architecture.

**HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE:**

When the Aldridge Hotel was built in McAlester, Oklahoma in 1929-1930, city fathers believed it represented the passage of their city into a new era of permanency and growth. The town, located in the old Choctaw Nation in the Indian Territory, endured a somewhat unsettled existence until the 1890s. The first settlement, known as North McAlester, was founded after the Civil War by J. J. McAlester, a white trader married to a Chickasaw citizen. As such, he was entitled to work mineral deposits, sharing one-half the royalties with the Choctaw and Chickasaw governments through their reciprocal treaties. McAlester located his trading establishment on the Texas Road (present U.S. Highway 69) at a spot he knew contained valuable bituminous coal seams and through which the Missouri-Kansas-Texas Railroad built its line in 1871-1872. Although, according to Indian custom, he could not own the land, by the late 1880s he conducted prosperous commercial, mining, and agricultural enterprises and controlled several hundred thousand acres in the mountains of present southeastern Oklahoma. When in 1888 the Choctaw Coal and Railway Company tried to negotiate with J. J. McAlester for a right of way for an intersecting line through his holdings, his high asking price led to a relocation of the route. South McAlester, a mile and a half away on a rocky hillside, was born as evidence of the conflict. By 1889 South McAlester claimed not only the intersecting line but also the seat of a new federal court. Residences, churches, hotels, banks, and other businesses gravitated to the new town, so that within a decade the population stood at five thousand. Even though early settlers appreciated the possibilities for a future based on commerce, transportation, mining, agriculture, and developing Indian lands, they felt their progress to be impeded by their inability under Choctaw law to organize municipalities or own land. Those problems were not remedied until 1899 when the Curtis Act allowed city incorporation in the Indian Territory and began dismantling the Indian national governments. South McAlester gradually absorbed its older rival to become "McAlester." By the early statehood period, with the establishment of the Oklahoma State Penitentiary northwest of town, McAlester, now the seat of Pittsburg County, became the predominant city in southeastern Oklahoma.<sup>1</sup>



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HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE (continued)

Through the 1920s, though still small, McAlester retained its position as the economic and political center of the primarily rural, mountainous region. That Oklahoma's Scottish Rite Masons also convened in McAlester added to its social importance. However, inadequate hotel facilities, according to A. U. Thomas, Masonic Inspector General, had begun attrition in consistory attendance by 1929. McAlester's tenure as a Masonic center was in jeopardy. When in June 1929 the city council and Chamber of Commerce announced that a big new hotel might be built in McAlester, there was considerable excitement over the reinforced status and potential growth it would bring.<sup>2</sup>

The hotel project was proposed by E. C. Aldridge of Wewoka, Oklahoma, and George B. Sherritt, managing director of the Aldridge family interests, which included large hotels in Ada, Wewoka, and Shawnee, Oklahoma. Having studied the accommodations available in southeastern Oklahoma, they advanced the idea of a ten-story, \$400,000 hotel to be built on the intersection of East Grand Avenue (present East Carl Albert Parkway) and North Second Street. They chose that location because of its relation to existing rail, interurban, and highway transportation, traffic patterns, and the attractive setting provided by adjacent buildings. Aldridge and Sherritt asked that the people of McAlester provide building lots to the project for the sum of \$100 and other considerations, the minimal price serving as a bonus to the hotel builders. The City of McAlester already owned one lot in Block 348 at the selected intersection. An additional corner lot, owned by Mayor J. B. McAlester, could be purchased for \$17,500, less than the market value. Although there was some negative speculation that the proposal was a bluff aimed at the town of Wewoka by the Aldridge interests, the McAlester Chamber of Commerce quickly began a subscription drive to raise the funds needed. W. H. Goodner, vice-president of the Chamber, Ray Delamater, and George Miller were named as trustees holding the bonus deeds in escrow, while the Aldridge-Sherritt interests made bond for their promise to build a hotel with not less than 150 guest rooms. That they proceeded vigorously with their plans was reassuring to McAlester. They selected architect Guy C. Reid of Oklahoma City to design the building and asked for plans to be completed within six weeks. Harmon and Mattison Construction Company of Oklahoma City contracted to build the hotel. By the end of June the bonus fund drive was well launched in spite of some lingering criticism of the cost of the lots. Through July contributions accumulated, perhaps inspired by Reid's sketch of the proposed hotel and published details of its accommodations: eleven floors, an imposing lobby, dining rooms, a theater, cold storage and ice-making plants, and a number of commercial spaces. By late August orders for freight car loads of materials had been placed. The ground-breaking ceremony took place on August 26, 1929.<sup>3</sup>

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HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE (continued)

Actual construction got underway by early September under the direction of construction superintendent F. J. Glaser. By mid-September the basement had been excavated and foundations set on bedrock. A work force of seventy-five men was in place, undeterred by a recent three-inch rain. McAlester citizens were particularly impressed that one of their own, Ed Dismuke, supervised the laborers. Dismuke had lost both arms at the shoulders in an electrical accident. Progress continued to be good through December, slowing in January as winter weather set in. But by late May 1930 it was possible to plan the formal opening of the Aldridge Hotel.<sup>4</sup>

Opening day, Saturday, June 21, 1930, was a great occasion in McAlester. Local and out-of-town visitors listened to a dedicatory speech by President Henry G. Bennett of Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College (presently Oklahoma State University); enjoyed "Ishtiopi," a performance including Indian songs and dances; dined on barbecued buffalo imported from the 101 Ranch near Ponca City, Oklahoma; and danced to the music of Roy Mack and his eleven-piece orchestra from Chicago. Hundreds toured the three floors of the Aldridge Hotel that were opened to the public. E. C. Aldridge pronounced it the most complete unit of the Aldridge Hotel chain and forecast a fine future based on McAlester's strategic location and potential for growth.<sup>5</sup>

The new Aldridge Hotel lived up to McAlester's expectations. Built at a cost of more than \$750,000, the eleven-story building with its 156 guest rooms was the largest such facility in southeastern Oklahoma. The handsome red and dark grey brick facade, accented with white cast stone, was the most impressive in McAlester. The centrally-placed lobby was decorated in orange, green, and silver. Moldings on columns and beams were picked out in light green and tan with rosettes painted gold and silver. Terrazzo floors were inlaid with brass stripes, and a brass-railed stairway led up to the second floor. Opposite the entrance was a large registration desk. It and the lobby furniture were walnut. Two high-speed elevators took guests to their rooms or down to the coffee shop, dining rooms, and ballroom with its stage. Opening off the lobby were commercial spaces, serving both hotel guests and McAlester residents. On the southwest corner, nearest the intersection, was a drug store and soda fountain. The Vanity Beauty Shoppe, with two operators "skilled in Beauty Culture," was decorated in pastel pink and green, and the walls were hung with Godey prints. The Aldridge Barber Shop and Shine Parlor, to the right of the entrance off North Second Street, boasted three Paider chairs with ivory trim and the same green leather upholstery as Rolls-Royce automobiles. Built-in cabinets, painted green, had arched mirrors and marble slab work surfaces. Pedestal lavatories, light fixtures with crystal pendants, and telephones and sterilizers for each chair were the pride of barber A. C. Grimes. Other guest facilities included laundry and dry cleaning, a haberdashery, a public steno-

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HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE (continued)

grapher, and a house physician.<sup>6</sup>

Although the construction of the hotel and its grand opening were contemporary with the beginning of the Great Depression, the Aldridge Hotel weathered the financial adversities of the 1930s. The penitentiary, county offices, federal offices, Indian agency, mining, and diversified industries stabilized the local economy. The McAlester Scottish Rite Temple was built about the same time as the hotel, and it continued to draw visitors to town. No other McAlester hotel was in the same league with the Aldridge for service and accommodations. Two private dining rooms that served excellent food, and the King Koal Room made the Aldridge the site for civic club meetings, social club meetings, recitals, weekly dances, proms, and other social occasions. Fred Waring, Duke Ellington, and Arthur Fiedler stayed at the Aldridge Hotel while playing engagements in McAlester. With the only meeting rooms and banquet facilities in southeastern Oklahoma able to handle five hundred guests, the Aldridge served as the location for political rallies for favorite-son candidates Congressman Carl Albert (later Speaker of the House) and Governor George Nigh. Various businesses occupied the commercial spaces in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s. Besides the barber and beauty shops, these included an investment office, a watch repair shop, an insurance office, a taxi stand, and radio station KTMC. The Union Bus Station occupied the east extension near the coffee shop. It was rumored that a bootlegger operated out of the basement. Although most guests were transient, several families, retired people, and single people became permanent residents of the hotel. One of the most noted was Mark Sexson, founder of the International Order of Rainbow Girls.<sup>7</sup>

World War II brought an influx of new residents to McAlester and new customers to the Aldridge Hotel as a large ammunition plant was built on the southwestern outskirts of town. Unfortunately the end of the war brought about a gradual decline in the Aldridge Hotel. In 1945 the Alsonett Hotel chain of Chicago purchased the hotel. Under the ownership of C. H. Alberding of Alsonett, the Aldridge Hotel slipped into the gradual decline that affected so many large hotels in the 1950s and 1960s. Alberding closed the Aldridge Hotel in April 1989. After four and one-half years the First National Bank and Trust of McAlester assumed ownership in lieu of taxes. Though the Aldridge Hotel remained closed, it remained a reminder of the potential of the McAlester central business district.<sup>8</sup>

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**ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE:**

The Aldridge Hotel was designed in 1929 by Guy C. Reid (1892-1962). Reid studied architecture at Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College (Oklahoma State University), graduated in 1916, and entered private practice in Oklahoma City after World War I service. Reid was highly respected among Oklahoma architects and served as president of the Oklahoma Chapter of The American Institute of Architects. Reid designed the Oklahoma City Public Library, the Ponca City Junior High School, dormitories at the University of Central Oklahoma, Agricultural Hall and Bennett Hall at Oklahoma State University, and a number of churches, schools, and hospitals throughout the state.<sup>9</sup>

In the Aldridge Hotel Reid generally emulated the style of Louis Sullivan by dividing the tower facade into distinct zones: the ground floor, intermediate floors, and top floor. The influence of Sullivan may also be seen in the arched windows, windows arranged in vertical bands on the intermediate floors, and bas-relief sculptural ornamentation using chains, urns, and stylized vines and flowers. Reid departed from Sullivan's style in substituting a balustrade, simulated on the Aldridge Hotel, for the projecting eaves common on the Sullivanesque building. He also varied decorative elements such as window surrounds from zone to zone. These touches suggest that Reid referred to the Second Renaissance Revival style contemporary with the Sullivanesque.<sup>10</sup>

The use of polychromatic brick and cast stone ornamentation combined with the sheer size of the Aldridge Hotel make it a striking component of McAlester's central business district. Its fine design and construction make it an excellent example of an early twentieth century commercial building and qualify it for the National Register under Criterion C. Its long tenure as the primary site of commercial, political, and social functions in McAlester and southeastern Oklahoma make the Aldridge Hotel eligible under Criterion A.

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NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Arrell Morgan Gibson, Oklahoma: A History of Five Centuries (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, second edition, 1981), 161; "Early History of South McAlester" and South McAlester in 1904, "McAlester--South," Vertical File, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

<sup>2</sup>McAlester (Oklahoma) News-Capital, June 11, 28, 1929.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., June 11, 20, 27, 28, August 6, 21, 1929.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., September 1, 12, 15, October 6, December 1, 1929, January 29, May 27, 1930.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., June 23, 26, 1930.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., undated, special edition; Program, Aldridge Hotel Grand Opening, collection of Sabra Tate, McAlester, Oklahoma.

<sup>7</sup>Souvenir of McAlester, Oklahoma, "McAlester," Vertical File, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, McAlester, Oklahoma, 1927, 1945, microfilm, Edmon Low Library, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma; interviews, Sabra Tate, Franke Rayburn, and Bill Rayburn, McAlester, Oklahoma, February 9, 1995.

<sup>8</sup>Interviews, Franke Rayburn, Bill Rayburn, Sabra Tate, McAlester, Oklahoma, February 9, 1995.

<sup>9</sup>"Guy Clifford Reid," The Chronicles of Oklahoma 41 (Summer 1963):228-231.

<sup>10</sup>John J.-G. Blumenson, Identifying American Architecture: A Pictorial Guide to Styles and Terms, 1600-1945 (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1981, second edition), 42-43, 64-65.

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**GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Lots 4 and 5, Block 348, City of McAlester, formerly South McAlester

VERBAL BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

This is the boundary recorded at the Assessor's Office, Pittsburg County Courthouse, McAlester, Oklahoma and that historically associated with the nominated property.