

1992

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

NATIONAL
REGISTER

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

1. Name of Property

historic name Southern Hotel
other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 445 D Street not for publication
city, town Perris vicinity
state California code CA county Riverside code 065 zip code 92370

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	_____ buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____	_____ structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	_____	_____ objects
		<u>1</u>	_____ Total

Name of related multiple property listing: NA
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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. See continuation sheet.
Stacie K. Craig Apr 11, 1992
Signature of certifying official Date
California Office of Historic Preservation
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.
Signature of commenting or other official _____ Date _____
State or Federal agency and bureau _____

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:
 entered in the National Register. Entered in the National Register
 See continuation sheet. for 10/15/92
 determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.
 determined not eligible for the National Register.
 removed from the National Register.
 other, (explain:) _____
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic: Hotel

Commerce/Trade: specialty store

Social: Meeting Hall

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Commerce/Trade: Business

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Italianate

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

walls Weatherboard

roof Asphalt

other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Southern Hotel is a Victorian era vernacular style structure, rectangular in plan, with some Italianate features and decorative elements. The two story wood frame commercial building is located on a main street in the City of Perris. Today the structure stands alone, but it has always been located adjacent to other office and commercial buildings. An 1891 photo of downtown Perris clearly shows the Southern Hotel flanked by other commercial buildings including a hardware store and real estate business.

Though the building was badly damaged in two fires in 1987, the City of Perris Redevelopment Agency, Riverside County and private parties decided to continue to utilize grant funds provided by the Historic Preservation Grant Program (awarded on 3/4/1985) and matching local funds to restore the building. Carefully using documented historical and architectural surveys done in 1981 and 1984, as well as early photographs, maps and documents, architects carefully rehabilitated the building according to a detailed master plan. Today, the Southern Hotel is one of the three oldest buildings preserved in the City of Perris.

The front of the building faces west and is primarily horizontal wood drop siding. The front facade fenestration is symmetrical. The single center front wooden door is slightly recessed, has sidelights, transom light, traditional rectangular frames, and decorative slanted wood boards below the sidelights. Flanking the main entrance are two matching bay windows with decorative crowns. These windows are clearly marked in an 1892 Sanborn map. Later changes to the building show that the bay window to the left of the front door had been converted to a french door. During the rehabilitation work on the building (completed 2/18/1990), owners opted to put back the bay window in order to bring back the original symmetry and design of the structure. The entire first floor entrance is crossed by an open wooden porch. There are four square wooden support posts topped with distinctive brackets. These new reproductions were designed from similar brackets shown in early photographs and from some of the original ornamental details that were documented in a 1984 architectural study. Note: At some time during the 20th century the balcony columns and associated jigsaw-work had been removed and the second floor balcony was inadequately supported by wood kickers that went from the outside of the balcony back to the front wall. During rehabilitation the owners chose to rebuild the support posts, jigsaw-work brackets and to put in a wooden porch.

 See continuation sheet

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Area of Significance (enter categories from instructions)
Commerce

Period of Significance
1886-1919

Significant Dates
1886

Transportation
Exploration/Settlement
Architecture

Cultural Affiliation

Significant Person

Architect/Builder

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

The formation of many new towns in Southern California in the 1880s is clearly repeated in the development of Perris in 1886. As one of the first commercial buildings to be constructed in town, as a transportation stop, a lodging and even a social gathering place, the Southern Hotel played a significant role in the town's early development. The hotel's significance as a thriving local business is also shown in the variety of services it offered to the area's inhabitants. Mrs. Bernasconi, like other women of the time, instinctively knew how to work hard to make ends meet and succeed. Yet unlike many other women of this period, she not only continued to raise a family and run a house, but took on the task of opening and running her own business. Her business acumen and ability to adapt to her environment helped her to succeed. She cleverly situated the hotel on a major street, a block away from the depot, and as a drop off point on the San Jacinto-Perris stage line. With her husband she designed and built a hotel whose simple but pleasant architectural features attracted customers and were often depicted in early photographs advertising the development of the new town.

The 1880s were a period of prosperity for many United States citizens and the boom development in Southern California attracted speculators, farmers and even health seekers. The Perris Valley, though poorer than the citrus developments surrounding it in Redlands and Riverside, was able to easily attract settlers because of the fertile soil, temperate climate and beautiful scenery. Prior to 1880 the land was used to pasture sheep, but by 1885 some local developers persuaded the California Southern Railroad to put in a switch line to their property. They quickly built a depot and named the town PERRIS in honor of Fred T. Perris Chief Engineer of the California Southern Railroad. By January 1886 the town was surveyed and subdivided and lots and blocks were offered up for sale. The new development caught the eye of Marcellini Bernasconi.

Hardworking entrepreneurs, Bernardo and Marcellini Bernasconi were already developing their hot springs in the San Jacinto Valley. They also decided to purchase land on the main street in the new town of Perris and to build a hotel. Mrs. Bernasconi was already well known for her business

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

- Bernasconi, Marcellina. Personal letter, date April 1935. Perris, CA: Perris Historical Society.
- The great Perris Valley! Southern California: its history, resources, development. Perris, CA: The Perris Printing Co., 1891.
- Guinn, James Miller. A history of California and an extended history of its southern coast counties... Los Angeles, CA: Historic Record Co., 1907.
- Holmes, Elmer Wallace. History of Riverside County, California. Los Angeles, CA: Historic Record Co., 1912.
- Newspaper advertisement. The Perris Progress, June 13, 1907.
- Newspaper advertisement. The Perris Valley Leader, vol. 1, no. 4, December 18, 1886.
- Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, San Francisco, CA: Sanborn Map Co., 1890 and 1892.
- Tigner, J.H. The Italy of America...Riverside County, California. Los Angeles, CA: Home Printing Co., 1908? See continuation sheet

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

Specify repository:

Riverside County Dept. of Parks & Rec. History Div.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property Less than one acre

UTM References

A 11 478920 3737810
 Zone Easting Northing

C _____

B _____
 Zone Easting Northing

D _____

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Lots Six (6) and Seven (7) in Block Twenty-one (21) of the City of Perris, according to map thereof on file in the office of the County REcorder of San Diego County, California, in Book 5 of Maps at page 270 thereof.

See attached Riverside County Tax Assessor's Parcel Map Book 313, page 10. See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary comprises rectangular lots established by legal recordation in map book 5/270 County of San Diego*, Town of Perris (1886). *Note: In 1892 Perris became part of the newly created County of Riverside. These are the lots historically associated with the property.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Vincent Bautista, Director of Planning Service; Gloria Scott

organization Smith, Peroni & Fox date 3/9/92

street & number 3800 Orange St., Suite 150 telephone 714/276/3038

city or town Riverside, state CA zip code 92501

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The front facing second floor has a narrow balcony which extends across the front of the building. The balcony rail is probably original. A wooden center door also has a decorative rectangular crown and transom light. On either side of the door are paired rectangular windows with a distinctive pediment. Windows, doors and moldings appear to be original. The front facing centered gable is part of an Italianate false front. The wide eave overhang/cornice has thirteen brackets. The wide eave overhang ends at the north and south sides with a triangular shaped decoration.

The rest of the building's north and south sides are relatively plain, and the fenestrations have plain wood pediments and moldings. The wide eave overhang does not have any brackets. The walls are finished in beaded horizontal wood siding. Replication of the south slope interior brick chimney was not part of the building's rehabilitation. The chimney was in a state of collapse and its replication was not recommended in a 1984 architectural survey.

The east or back end of the building was badly damaged in two fires in 1987. The three rear one floor additions to the building were also badly damaged. These additions had a gable roof, board and batten siding, and single wall construction. The rooms had been used for storage, additional sleeping quarters and a kitchen. These additions were not replicated during the rehabilitation work as recommended in the 1984 survey. The walls are again beaded horizontal wood siding, but there is no wide eave overhang on this rear wall.

A 1988 architectural blueprint shows that the Southern Hotel is of balloon frame construction. The roof framing is rafters and carpenter built trusses. The roofing material was asphalt over original wood shingles. This has been completely replaced with composition shingles over plywood. Walls are of wood stud construction, plywood and gypsum board. The interior of the structure has an extensive series of crosswalls which adequately brace the structure for wind and seismic forces. All of these walls were rebuilt after the fire and during the rehabilitation with the same dimensions of the original walls. The interior space is approximately 2700 square feet with about 1400 square feet on the first floor, the remainder on the second.

The main front door leads to a central foyer that has doors on either side to offices, and a center door leading to a foyer, hallway, and a staircase to the second floor. The foyer and hall constitute a central spine which divides the building longitudinally. On the north side are two rooms, on the south side three. Over the years these rooms have been used for storage, a drugstore, an office, parlor, apartment, dining room and kitchen. During rehabilitation bathrooms were added to the back or east end of the structure.

The 1984 study show the stairwell leading up to a central hallway, seven bedrooms and bathroom. Today the second floor is divided up into 7 offices, a kitchenette and a bathroom.

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competence. In a 1935 letter she wrote that she was persuaded to rent out the new hotel at \$30 per month to a Mr. Bevier who had the contract to run the stage from Perris to San Jacinto. A December 18, 1886 advertisement in the Perris Valley Leader reads: Bevier Hotel... new house, just furnished... in the best style... San Jacinto stage leaves this house daily. In 1891 the Bernasconi family decided to move into the hotel so that their six children could more easily go to school. Mrs. Bernasconi continued to run the Southern Hotel. Sometime in the late teens or early twenties the family ceased to run the hotel and retained the building purely as a residence.

The Southern Hotel's significance is three fold. First it played a vital role in the settlement of the town of Perris. Second, Mrs. Bernasconi deserves enormous credit as an Italian/Swiss immigrant who was able to make it as a prominent business woman at a time when men played the predominant role in this field. Finally, the hotel and depot are the only two significant buildings of their period left in Perris, and the Italianate architecture and simple lines of the building still act as a focal point in town.

The building is located almost squarely in the center of town on the main road and quickly became a focal point in the settlement of the town. Businessmen getting off the stage or arriving by train soon learned to use the parlor "of the better hotel in town" for social gatherings and business dealings. The hotel was the only stop on the daily stagecoach run, and was just one block from the depot. As a nice, clean, well run establishment it quickly became the place to rest, socialize or dine. The popularity of the hotel is shown not only in the early written accounts of the town, but in the photographs of this period in which the building usually stands at the center of the print advertising the new town.

Little is known of Mrs. Bernasconi's early years in the Swiss Alps. Born in 1857 she arrived in New York at 18 years of age. Shortly thereafter she traveled to San Francisco to be with her brother. It was there that she met and married Bernardo Bernasconi, 18 years her senior. They soon left to live and work in the San Jacinto Valley where Bernardo had been living since the late 1850s. Mrs. Bernasconi's talent and hardwork were clearly seen by all around her. In Holme's History of Riverside County Mrs. Bernasconi's name is prominently placed among the other male business leaders of the town of Perris. Her letter's, newspaper advertisements, and historical accounts clearly show that the success of the hotel was due solely to her efforts. Her ability to adapt to her new country and to build a successful business in a fledgling western town, and to manage a large family is certainly a major commendation for a businesswoman well ahead of her time.

The architecture of the Southern Hotel is significant for the following reasons. First, it is one of the two remaining buildings of

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historical value and 19th century vintage left in the City of Perris. Second, its Italianate architecture and simple vernacular lines stand out as clearly today as they did in the 1890s. Third, this building is one of the few remaining small hotels of its vintage in Riverside County. It is an excellent example of an early hotel constructed during the boom years in Southern California in the 1880s. Fourth, the commercial revitalization of downtown Perris is centered around the recent rehabilitation of the depot and the Southern Hotel. These two buildings played a vital role both in the town's early development and again in the late 20th century. The Southern Hotel's Italianate facade graces Perris' main street and it is an excellent example of late 19th century architecture in a western frontier town.

Despite past threats to raze the building, two devastating fires and some vandalism, the City of Perris has actively sought to preserve some of its historical heritage. The beautiful and painstakingly accurate rehabilitation of this commercial office building on "D" Street is a nice testimonial to a small town that is conscious of its historic past and willing to preserve it. The importance of the hotel's role in the town's settlement, its significant ties with a courageous, hardworking 19th century business woman, and a 19th century architectural design that stands out as a model both in the city and in the county, are all points that show this buildings ability to meet the National Register's criteria for historical significance.

The period of significance has been ended at the time the building ceased to be used as a hotel and was converted to a private residence, approximately 1919.

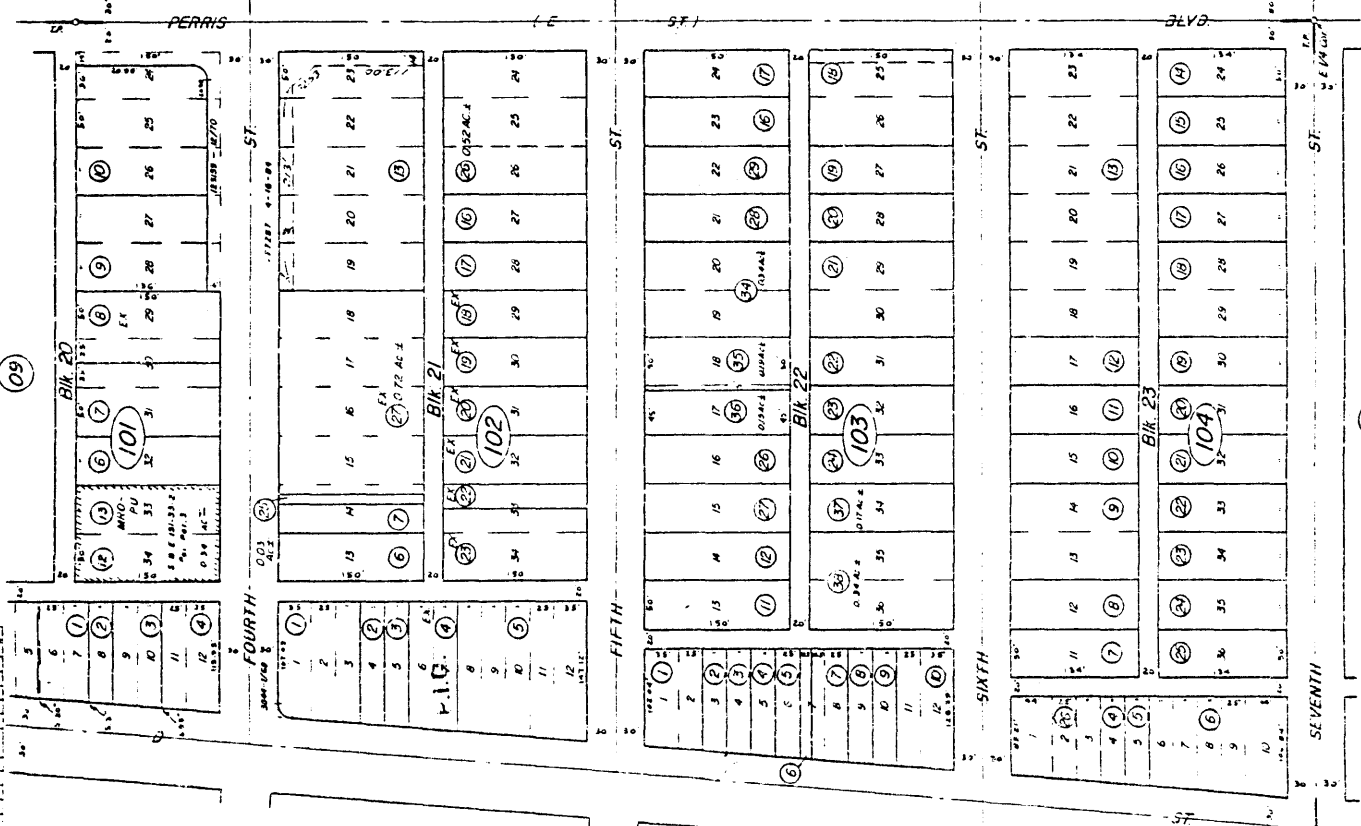
313-10

T.R.A. 309-029

POR. NE 1/4 SEC. 31, T.4S., R.3W.

THIS MAP IS FOR
ASSESSMENT PURPOSES ONLY

310
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1	2	3	4
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17	18	19	20
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M.B. 5/270 S.D. Town of Perris

Date 9/5 1972

142 37

11

ASSESSOR'S MAP BY 313 PG. 10
RIVERSIDE COUNTY, CALIF.

Southern Hotel
Perris, California
Riverside County