

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of 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 any 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 Graystone Hotel
other names/site number Graystone Complex

2. Location

street & number 119 Pioneer Street
not for publication N/A
city or town Detroit Lakes vicinity N/A
state Minnesota code MN county Becker code 005 zip code 56501

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Ian R. Stewart Signature of certifying official 5/25/99 Date
Ian R. Stewart, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer
State or Federal agency and bureau Minnesota Historical Society

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

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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 7-1-99

Edson H. Beall
Signature of Keeper

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>2</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>2</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: DOMESTIC

Sub: hotel

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: DOMESTIC

Sub: multiple dwelling

COMMERCE/TRADE

business

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

NO STYLE

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE; STONE

roof UNKNOWN

walls BRICK; STONE; CONCRETE

other BRICK; GLASS

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

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.)

- 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)

ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION

Period of Significance 1916-1949

Significant Dates 1916

1927

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)
N/A

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder Architect: Broomhall, Edward F.
Contractor: Randolph, August S.

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

(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. Part 1 certification date: 4/20/99
 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: Midwest Minnesota Community Development Corporation

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one acre

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet) Detroit Lakes, Minn., 1959, photorevised 1982

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	<u>15</u>	<u>282900</u>	<u>5188800</u>	3	_____	_____
2	_____	_____	_____	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 Denis P. Gardner and Charlene K. Roise
organization Hess, Roise and Company
street & number 100 North First Street
city or town Minneapolis state MN zip code 55401
telephone (612) 338-1987
date January 1999

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 the SHPO or FPO.)

name Midwest Minnesota Community Development Corporation
street & number 803 Roosevelt Avenue telephone (218) 847-3191
city or town Detroit Lakes state MN zip code 56502

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 the 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 Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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name of property
Becker County, Minnesota
county and state

Description

The Graystone Hotel is located in northwestern Minnesota in the city of Detroit Lakes, the governmental seat of Becker County. The hotel has a prominent downtown site fronting on U.S. Highway 10, a major arterial that cuts diagonally through north central Minnesota, connecting Moorhead on the North Dakota border with Minneapolis and Saint Paul to the southeast. The building's front facade extends east from the southeast corner of the intersection of Pioneer Street and Lake Avenue, separated from Highway 10 by a small triangle of land. When Pioneer Street terminates at Highway 10, the building angles to the southeast to parallel the highway. Sidewalks edge the building's north and west sides. It abuts another building to the east. A large parking lot fills the area behind the Graystone.¹

The building consists of two sections, the main hotel and the annex, now known as the Markland Building. The main hotel, built in 1916, is to the west, terminating just east of the angle at the Pioneer Street/Highway 10 junction. The annex was actually built in the early twentieth century, then extensively remodeled in 1927 to conform to the appearance of the 1916 structure. Both sections rise three stories above a full basement. The foundation of the main hotel is concrete, and projects beneath the sidewalk. The sidewalk was originally glass blocks, which provided light to the basement; the blocks have been replaced by concrete. A concrete frame rises above the concrete foundation, with interior partitions of clay tile and exterior walls of brick. Wood trusses support a flat roof. The roof of the annex is also flat. Brick bearing walls originally extended two stories above a stone foundation. It is not known what structural changes were introduced in 1927 when the ceiling of the second floor was lowered and a third floor added.

The Graystone's primary facades disguise the structure's episodic evolution, although the sections are clearly distinguishable upon close inspection. Second- and third-floor exterior walls fronting

¹ The description of the building is based on a site visit conducted by Charlene Roise on December 30, 1998.

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Lake Avenue, Pioneer Street, and Highway 10 feature beige brick with gray pebble aggregate. The brick is laid in double-Flemish bond with carefully tooled, terra-cotta-tinted mortar. Storefronts and building entrances fill the first floor. On the main hotel, this level is faced with fine-grain, off-white ashlar that extends to the second-floor windowsills. Just below the sills, the ashlar is trimmed with Greek fretwork. Brick piers divide storefronts on the annex; a plain brick frieze runs above these storefronts, with a denticular brick cornice below the second-floor windowsills. The storefronts on both sections have been significantly altered from their original appearance. Windows and doors have been replaced. Wood and metal panels cover transoms and a pair of semi-circular-arched windows that highlighted the hotel's main entry and lobby window. A canopy over the entry and lobby window is supported by chains attached to the wall above. A canopy historically protected this entrance, but if the existing metal-edged canopy is the original, it has been substantially altered. A small signboard is suspended below the canopy, perpendicular to the building. Boxes for mechanical equipment rest atop the canopy. Above the canopy, extending from the building's second floor, is a marquee announcing the "Graystone Complex, V. Carlson, Inc." It originally read "Graystone Hotel." The streamlined design suggests that the sign dates from the 1950s.²

The entry is incorporated in one of the two bays that project slightly from the hotel's front (north) facade. Each bay is marked by a low, shouldered gablet that rises above the parapet wall encircling the roof. Stone coping protects the parapet. The bays hold two windows on the second floor and two on the third floor. The windows on the two floors are vertically aligned. Each set is separated by a recessed spandrel ornamented with a stone diamond and is outlined by a continuous stone band. Two pairs of rectilinear stone brackets above each third-floor window support a stone cornice formed from flat bed molding, a square-section fascia, and a projecting fillet. The cornice terminates at each end of the bay, then resumes again without the fillet across the remainder of the facade. Widely space dentils decorate the cornice.

² Undated photographs in the collections of the Becker County Historical Society also support a circa 1950s date.

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Stone also trims three blind rectangular apertures below the gablet.

Five windows are arranged symmetrically, but are not evenly spaced, between the projecting bays on both the second and third floors. A single window appears on these floors between the east projecting bay and the point where the building angles to the southeast. Two windows appear on each floor west of the west projecting bay, but the wall of the western-most window is stepped slightly back from the main facade to visually balance the design of the east end.

Two windows separated only by a wood post appear on both the second and third floors of the main hotel's short wall edging Highway 10. On the annex to the east, a change in fenestration hints that this section was constructed at another time. All of the main hotel's upper windows are six-over-one. The top sash is comprised of a large square light with smaller square lights in the upper corners and narrow rectangular lights to the sides and above. Window frames, sashes, and muntins are wood. Slightly projecting stone sills match the material facing the first floor. In the annex, however, the sills are brick, and the windows are one-over-one sash behind aluminum combination windows. The placement pattern is also different, with the eight windows on each of the second and third floors following a regular rhythm: windows are paired, with the windows of each pair separated by an expanse of brick. Above the pairs on the east and west ends, gablets echo those on the main hotel. On the annex, though, the gablet bays do not project, and their only ornamentation is a diamond-shaped stone set flush in the parapet wall beneath the gablet's apex. The line of the main hotel's stone cornice is continued across the annex by a molded brick band.

The east end of the annex's front facade, originally part of the adjacent building, has been completely remodeled. The wall recedes at a sharp angle for several feet, then jogs to the east again. On the first floor, this section holds the entry to the annex, a glass door flanked by plate-glass windows, all framed in aluminum. A canopy edged with scalloped metal bands is cantilevered above. Glazed brick lines the walls. Large fixed windows on the second and third floors have six lights in aluminum frames.

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The east end of the annex abuts an adjacent structure. The main hotel's west end faces Lake Avenue and repeats many features of the front facade. Plans for the building by architect E. F. Broomhall indicate that the three bays on the first floor were to hold storefronts, but brick fills most of the two northern bays.³ The brick appears to be original, however, one of several features of the building that do not match the plans. Wood-frame fixed-light transoms extend above the brick panels. Awnings shield the transom in the center bay and two windows on the mezzanine level of the southern bay. The later includes a street-level entry, approached by two steps, with a wood-frame door and a plate-glass window. To the right, an opening has been filled in with modern masonry panels and horizontal windows.

Common brick forms the walls of the main hotel on the building's rear (south) facade. A wing projects to the south near the section's east end, establishing an off-center T-shaped plan. Window openings are rectangular on the mezzanine level and second floor and have segmental-arch heads on the third floor. Most retain the original six-over-one sash of the same design as the windows on the front facade. An exception occurs on the wing, where smaller one-over-one windows were inserted when the mezzanine was extended to this area.

The openings on the first floor have experienced more alteration. Some windows have been replaced or filled in with brick, solid panels, or glass blocks. An aluminum-and-glass enclosure protects a door into the rear of the lobby.

Tile coping on top of the parapet wall west of the wing is interrupted by an elevator shaft, which rises above the parapet. A window lights the elevator's upper housing, and one window illuminates the elevator shaft at every floor. Paired windows to the left of the elevator shaft indicate the location of the hotel's main stairwell. A chimney extends above the roofline at the

³ Plans by Broomhall, a Duluth architect, are undated; a copy is in the possession of the Midwest Minnesota Community Development Corporation, Detroit Lakes. There are several examples of the building not matching the plans. The building's rear wing, for example, does not extend as far south as is indicated in the plans.

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southwest corner of the wing. A metal fire escape is attached to the south wall of the wing. A small concrete-block shed is appended to the wing's southeast corner. The main hotel's south wall between the wing and the annex holds a single-story shed-roofed addition.

The division between the main hotel and annex is quite apparent at the rear. The annex walls are concrete block and extend further south than the south end of the main hotel's wing. Windows are mostly one-over-one sash covered by combination windows. Window and door alterations are numerous on the first floor. A pent roof above the first floor extends across the south facade. A narrow light court creates a U-shaped plan on the building's second and third stories.

The principal entrance to the interior of the main hotel is beneath the canopy on the north facade. A modern aluminum frame holds glass double doors flanked by glass sidelights and a glass transom. This leads to a small vestibule separated from the lobby by a wood and glass partition. The lobby is about half its original size. A partition wall perpendicular to the street creates an office to the west. Projecting from the west wall of this office is a large brick fireplace trimmed with oak woodwork, stone blocks, and two sconces, reflecting the influence of the Arts and Crafts Style. The fireplace is the only significant artifact to remain from the original lobby, which once held a reception area and manager's office in the southwest corner. Plans for the building specify six-by-six-inch tile for the floor, with marble wainscoting on the walls. The floor is now carpeted and the walls are painted. A dropped ceiling hides the lobby's original height. The same treatments prevail throughout the remainder of the first floor, which once housed a barbershop in the building's northwest corner; a writing room behind the fireplace; a dining room immediately east of the lobby; a cafe beyond the dining room; and shops in the building's two east bays. A kitchen, pantry, cooler, and laundry occupied the rear wing. The cooler was supplied directly with ice by a door in the wing's east wall. Numerous partitions have been added throughout the first floor, making a maze of small rooms.

The rear (south end) of the lobby is occupied by the original main stairway. The stairway treads and risers are surfaced with terrazzo. Railings between the first floor, mezzanine, and second

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floor are comprised of metal spindles and posts with wood handrails. Although not as elaborate as conceived on the original plans, the railings display an aesthetic intent, with groups of five evenly spaced, square-section spindles alternating with elongated open ovals. Railings to the third floor and basement are of solid concrete trimmed with recessed panels and wood coping. Another narrow service stairway is located to the east, providing direct access to the north end of the wing.

Immediately east of the main stairway is the elevator shaft. An elevator was not initially installed in the shaft; the existing elevator was added in the 1930s. Doors and the operating panel have been replaced.

The main stairway rises from the first floor to a small mezzanine that once held a ladies lounge and toilets. Both areas have been converted into apartments. An opening on the north side of the stair landing overlooking the lobby has been enclosed. At some point, the mezzanine was extended east, filling in the high ceiling of the first-floor kitchen. This area, too, has been developed for residential use.

The configuration of the second and third floors is essentially identical. A T-shaped corridor is lined by doors, some of which retain their original wood transoms. Some of the hotel rooms had private bathrooms, but communal toilet facilities for the remainder of the rooms were located near the intersection of the main (east-west) and wing (north-south) corridors. These now serve as laundry and utility rooms. The west end of the main corridor terminated in a window, and the east end provided a link to the annex. The ends of the corridors were converted into rooms for apartments, however, when the hotel's use changed. A window still remains at the south end of each wing corridor, giving access to the fire escape.

The rooms retain some features from the hotel's construction. Original doors, doorframes, and picture rails are of dark-stained wood. Early twentieth-century doorknobs and other hardware remain as well. In the process of adapting the hotel rooms into apartments, however, partitions, doors, kitchen facilities, bathrooms, and other elements were added.

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Statement of Significance

I. Introduction

The Graystone Hotel in Detroit Lakes, Minnesota, is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its significance in the area of Entertainment/Recreation. The property reflects the historical patterns identified by the Minnesota historic context "Northern Minnesota Resort Industry." Constructed in 1916-1917, the hotel fostered the development of the region's tourism industry. The Graystone was an unusual hybrid of city hotel and rural resort, offering modern, urbane lodgings with access to the area's abundant natural attractions.

II. The Development of Tourism in the Detroit Lakes Region

To understand the history of the Graystone Hotel, it is useful to briefly review the evolution of tourism in northern Minnesota and, specifically, the Detroit Lakes region. The tourism trade in Minnesota did not begin in the northern reaches of the state, but rather in the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and Saint Paul. White Bear Lake and Lake Minnetonka became popular destinations for those who could afford to occasionally escape the trials of the city and reside in the opulence provided by fine hotels or cottages along the lakes. These hotels catered to an upscale clientele by offering gourmet meals, theaters, orchestras, yachts and more. By the mid-1850s, Lake Minnetonka was nationally known as a prestigious tourist attraction, drawing individuals from both in and out of the state to experience its scenic pleasures and luxurious hotel accommodations.⁴

Entrepreneurs in northern Minnesota were slow to realize the commercial value of recreational tourism. Instead, they were more interested in exploiting the area's natural resources, such as lumber and ore. Consequently, visitors were usually in the territory because their vocation required it. This was reflected by

⁴ Eileen Patricia Walsh, "The Last Resort: Northern Minnesota Tourism and the Integration of Rural and Urban Worlds, 1900-1950" (Ph.D. thesis, University of Minnesota, 1994), 62-64.

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the sparse lodgings available to travelers, who frequently were housed in private homes or remote camps. Towns with a railroad depot, however, were often fortunate enough to have a small commercial hotel, although it primarily housed railroad employees and traveling salesmen. While the community of Detroit Lakes was no exception to this trend, many of its early civic leaders realized the recreational potential of its scenic landscape.⁵

The history of hotels in the Detroit Lakes area dates back more than one hundred years. In mid-summer 1870, drawn by the natural splendor of the land, Merwin M. Tyler established a home in Section 34 of Detroit Township, just east of the present city of Detroit Lakes. One year later the Northern Pacific Railroad reached the area, and by October 1871 trains were stopping regularly. Railroad personnel and early settlers to the territory had no place to stay, and so Tyler's small 12- by 14-foot log cabin became a common lodge for the new arrivals. With travel to the region increasing, Tyler soon had to erect an addition to the structure to house all the guests. The building became known as Tyler's Hotel, and the small community that sprang up around it was called Tylertown.⁶

Tylertown's initial prosperity proved fleeting. By 1872, Colonel George H. Johnson, a recent arrival from the East, had already established a new townsite a short distance west of the community. The new townsite was named Detroit (renamed Detroit Lakes in 1926) and it soon gained favor among recently arriving settlers. Over the next few years Tylertown's residents also began relocating to the new site. With migration away from Tylertown, Tyler's Hotel suffered. Although it continued to operate for a number of years, by 1891 the hotel had crumbled into disrepair.⁷

Although the location of Tyler's Hotel proved poor, the location of the Commercial Hotel was favorable. The Commercial Hotel was erected not long after Tyler's Hotel, but it was constructed at

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ken Prentice, *Horse and Buggy Days at Detroit Lakes* (Detroit Lakes: Lakes Publishing Company, 1971), 9.

⁷ Ibid; "Service of Northern Pacific Recalled by H. L. Bridgeman," in "Early History of Detroit Lakes, 1871-1971," *Becker County Record*, May 1971.

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Detroit Lakes. While Tylertown floundered, Detroit Lakes prospered, and while the life span of Tyler's Hotel was brief, the Commercial Hotel's was relatively long, lasting until the late 1930s. The success of the Commercial Hotel reflected the community's growth in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁸

In the late nineteenth century, forward-thinking individuals at Detroit Lakes realized the town could further prosper by taking advantage of the region's natural surroundings. With inviting woodlands and over 400 lakes within a twenty-five mile radius of the town, the region appeared tailor-made for recreational tourism. In addition, with the arrival of the Northern Pacific Railroad in the early 1870s, the metropolitan cities of Minneapolis and Saint Paul were within easy traveling distance of the town. In the early 1880s, noting these advantages, Elon Galusha Holmes, a local merchant, formed the Hotel Minnesota Company. The business was a stock company designed to raise capital for the construction of an elaborate hotel that would rival any found in either Minneapolis or Saint Paul.⁹

Ground for the new hotel was broken in June 1884, and in little more than two months the structure was completed. At a cost of \$20,000, the wooden, four-story Hotel Minnesota was elaborately ornamented by verandas and balconies, and an observatory tower that afforded an excellent view of the village and nearby lakes. It was an impressive facility, and local promotional literature from the period noted that "except the big hotels on Lake Minnetonka, there is no other summer resort house in Minnesota that can compare with the Hotel Minnesota in respect to size and appointments." The hotel was soon joined by others as Detroit Lakes rapidly progressed into a vacation village. The Colonial Hotel was erected a short time after the Hotel Minnesota and the Lewis Hotel soon followed, although neither was as grand as the structure created by the Hotel Minnesota Company. In the ensuing years several more hotels were

⁸ Lynnette Potisk, "Hotels Will Be A Thing of the Past in Detroit Lakes," *Becker County Record*, January 7, 1980.

⁹ Prentice, 11; *Detroit Lakes Minnesota: The Outing Paradise of the Northwest* (N.p.: 1930), n.p.; Richard Carlson, "The Graystone Hotel," unpublished history located in "Hotel File," Becker County Historical Society, Detroit Lakes.

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constructed. By the early 1900s, a dozen or more such facilities were operating in the Detroit Lakes vicinity, catering to the tourist in search of fun and recreation.¹⁰

III. The Graystone Hotel's Early History

The Graystone Hotel site was part of the community's first plat. In 1873, George H. Johnston, acting as Trustee of the Western Land Improvement Association of the New England Military and Naval Bureau of Navigation, conveyed Lots 1 through 6 of Block 6 of the Original Townsite of Detroit to E. G. Holmes and R. L. Frazee. Pieces of the property changed hands several times before coming under the control of the Hotel Minnesota Company in 1916. In the decades prior to the erection of the Graystone, the property was occupied by various, simple structures. In 1899, for example, two small buildings were located on the property, with the smaller of the two utilized by a cobbler. By 1914, these two early buildings had been removed and four new structures were established on the property, one occupied by a tin shop, another by a furniture and undertaking concern, and a third by a cigar factory. Ultimately, all of these buildings were removed to make room for the Graystone.¹¹

The Graystone was born out of the destruction of the Hotel Minnesota. In 1915, the elegant landmark was consumed by fire, apparently after hotel employees accidentally ignited some clothing on an oil stove. One of the guiding forces behind the hotel's original construction, Elon Galusha Holmes, had sold his interest in the business and had moved to California six years earlier. When the Hotel Minnesota was lost, community leaders were insistent that a similar grand facility be built to replace it. Holmes moved back to the area, probably at the request of community leaders, to help

¹⁰ Potisk; Fraternal Order of Eagles, *Park Region Pictorial Souvenir* (Detroit [Lakes]: n.p., 1912), n.p.; untitled article on the Hotel Minnesota in an unknown newspaper, July 5, 1884, located in "Hotel File," Becker County Historical Society, Detroit Lakes; *Hotel Minnesota* (N.p.: ca. 1889), n.p.

¹¹ County Deed File, Register of Deeds office, Becker County Courthouse, Detroit Lakes; *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Detroit [Lakes]* (Pelham, N.Y.: Sanborn Map Company, 1899 and 1914).

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formulate a plan for a new hotel.¹²

Holmes was the obvious choice to lead such an endeavor, as his standing in the community was virtually unparalleled. A former Civil War veteran, Holmes married Lucy Sherman of Saint Cloud in 1869. After spending two years in Saint Paul where he worked as a clerk in a mercantile exchange, the couple moved to the northwest region of the state. Holmes set up a store and newspaper in Ottertail City to the south of Detroit Lakes. One local history notes that Holmes tried to speculate where the railroad would go. Guessing incorrectly, he uprooted his interests at Ottertail City and moved north to Detroit Lakes in Becker County. By 1872, he was operating a store in Detroit Lakes out of the first frame building erected in the county. He had also reopened his newspaper, naming it the *Detroit Record*. In 1874, Holmes entered the banking business, becoming cashier for the Bank of Detroit. He assumed the presidency of the bank in 1884, and renamed it the First National Bank of Detroit one year later. Extending his commercial endeavors, Holmes accepted large contracts to provide lumber and ties for the Northern Pacific Railroad. He realized large sums of money from these contracts, and the influx of laborers needed to fulfill the obligation contributed to the swelling population of Detroit Lakes.¹³

By the end of the 1880s Holmes was one of the most prominent men in northwestern Minnesota, owning approximately 17,000 acres of land in Becker County. He was also a significant contributor to the growth and development of Detroit Lakes, platting four additions to the town. He founded the community's first light company, which he later sold to the city. In addition, he constructed much of Block 6 of the Original Townsite by adding some stores and an opera house. On September 14, 1888, the block was destroyed by fire, but the following year Holmes rebuilt it. Two years later it was again

¹² Carlson, n.p.

¹³ "Elon G. Holmes Passes Away Early Today at His Summer Residence," *Detroit Lakes Tribune*, September 24, 1931; *Album of Biography of the Famous Valley of the Red River of the North and the Park Regions, Including the Most Fertile and Widely-Known Portions of Minnesota and North Dakota* (Chicago: Alden, Ogle and Company, 1889), 724-725; Carlson, n.p.

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destroyed by fire, and again rebuilt. It appears that at least one of the block's present structures date from the second rebuilding phase.¹⁴

Holmes achieved further regional success as a civil servant. From 1876 to 1880, he served as clerk of district court. In 1883, he was elected to the county board where he was named chairman. As such he was instrumental in procuring funds for the erection of the courthouse and jail. He reached the pinnacle of his public service with his election to the state legislature in 1889, becoming Becker County's first senator.¹⁵

Upon his return from California, Holmes reestablished the Hotel Minnesota Company, and sold stock to raise capital for a new hotel. In late July 1916, the Hotel Minnesota Company selected Edward F. Broomhall from Duluth as the Graystone's architect.¹⁶

Although limited information is available concerning Broomhall, he resided in the city of Duluth for some time. From 1915 to 1920, he made his residence at the Saint Louis Hotel, and from 1921 to 1943 he was living at 2732 London Road. For at least some of this time he maintained an office at the Alworth Building, a sixteen-story structure considered one of the city's first skyscrapers, and a prominent locale for a number of architectural firms. He apparently was unmarried, but his stenographer, Elizabeth Broomhall, was likely a relative. Elizabeth's stay in the city seems to have been brief, since the city directories show her residing in Duluth for only two years, 1916 and 1917.¹⁷

¹⁴ Ibid.; Prentice, 31; microfiche copies of the additions platted by Holmes are on file at the Register of Deeds office, Becker County Courthouse, Detroit Lakes.

¹⁵ "Holmes Passes Away."

¹⁶ Potisk; "Architect is Selected," *Detroit Record*, July 21, 1916.

¹⁷ R. L. Polk and Company, *Duluth Directory*, from 1915 to 1943 (Duluth: Duluth Directory Company, Publishers, 1916-1944); telephone interview with Patricia Maus, Curator of Manuscripts, Northeast Minnesota Historical Center, Duluth, by Denis Gardner, January 4, 1999.

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Unlike the Hotel Minnesota, the Graystone was engineered to be fireproof. This particular structural characteristic was probably a direct result of the Hotel Minnesota's fiery ending. During the initial planning stage for the Graystone the local newspaper stressed the fireproof nature of the building. Subsequent advertisements for the hotel would also note this safety feature.¹⁸

The plan for the building called for a three-story, rectangular structure measuring 142 feet in length and 50 feet in width, with a basement throughout. It was also designed to feature a 42- by 50-foot "T" wing at the facility's rear that would house the kitchen, culinary department, and laundry. Furthermore, the building would also have indoor plumbing, a well-appreciated luxury in the early 1900s. The building was scaled back slightly from its original plan, however, when bids for contracting exceeded expectations. While the architect estimated the general contract at between \$55,000 and \$60,000, the actual bids ranged from \$75,000 to \$90,000. After the plans were revised, bids were again called for. Contractor August S. Randolph of Detroit Lakes presented the low bid for the general contract and Dawley and Son were low bidders for the heating system; an Alexandria interest offered the low bid for plumbing. One week later, Randolph and his crew commenced excavation work at the hotel site.¹⁹

Born in Onestad, Sweden, in August 1877, Randolph became a prominent general contractor in the Detroit Lakes area. He moved to Detroit Lakes around the turn of the century, marrying Hilma E. Turnblad in the fall of 1905. He remained active in the general contracting business for more than 55 years, forming a partnership with his son, Willard, in 1938. He is credited with having constructed numerous buildings in the city. Besides the Graystone Hotel, he also erected structures for Boggs Manufacturing Company, Kandt Garage, Super Value, Brekken Store, and the Laundry Bar. In addition, he built the State and Lakes theatres, as well as the

¹⁸ Numerous copies of promotional advertisements for the Graystone Hotel can be found in the "Hotel File" at the Becker County Historical Society, Detroit Lakes; "Architect is Selected."

¹⁹ "Hotel Bids Are Opened," *Detroit Record*, September 8, 1916; "Work Begun on New Hotel," *Detroit Record*, September 15, 1916.

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public library and the municipal pavilion for the city. Furthermore, he is recognized as having constructed the greater portion of the municipal power plant.²⁰

The city was quite enthusiastic when Randolph and his crew broke ground for the new hotel. Having a contemporary hotel in the city was viewed as commercially essential. One local newspaper noted that the "construction work begun on the new hotel is very gratifying to every Detroit resident, for the city has been without suitable and modern hotel facilities for many years." Convinced that the structure would be one of the finest hotels in the Northwest, many individuals looked forward to the increased visitation to the community that such a facility would bring, not only by recreational tourist but also by traveling salesmen.²¹

From the beginning, the plan of those involved was to push construction as swiftly as possible to put the facility into service quickly. Since construction of the building was not begun until mid-September, Randolph was determined to complete much of the first and second floor before freezing temperatures arrived. Such an accomplishment would afford the work crew the luxury of completing the interior work during the winter months. Work moved rapidly, and by early November Randolph's crew began pouring concrete for the second story. Less than a month later the south wall on the ground floor was completed and the first floor was essentially enclosed. Randolph, however, was unsuccessful in completing as much of the structure as he would have liked before the frigid weather struck. At some point he erected a tent around the building so work could continue through the winter.²²

²⁰ "A. S. Randolph, Pioneer Builder in City, Dies," untitled newspaper, unknown date, located in "Clippings File," Becker County Historical Society, Detroit Lakes.

²¹ "Hotel Bids Opened"; "Work Begun on New Hotel."

²² A circa 1916 photograph taken during the Graystone's initial construction shows the building's first floor surrounded by a large tent-like structure. The photograph can be found in the "Photographs Collection" at the Becker County Historical Society, Detroit Lakes; untitled newspaper articles in the *Detroit Record*, dated November 10, and December 8, 1916, located in "Clippings File," Becker County Historical Society, Detroit Lakes; John Meyer,

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It is unclear precisely when the Graystone was completed, but it appears that the building was ready for occupancy by either August or September 1917. In July of that year finishing touches were being made to the interior of the hotel, with a painter completing a mural in the dining room and café area. Additionally, the marble work had yet to be completed; a misunderstanding in shipping orders brought the work crew the wrong materials.²³

Although the original plan of the building had been scaled back, it seems as though the primary alteration was to the dimensions of the "T" wing, which was reduced in size to 30 by 41 feet. Nevertheless, the completed hotel was an impressive facility, containing sixty rooms on the second and third floors, most with baths. The lobby featured a terrazzo floor and marble wainscoting. A dining room, writing room, barber shop, manager's office, and café occupied much of the first floor. A ladies parlor was located on a mezzanine constructed above the first floor and situated towards the rear of the hotel. The basement was large enough to allow ample storage area, as well as space for sample rooms for traveling salesman. The exterior of the building was comprised of Bedford stone on the first floor and local "cement" brick for the balance. Costs for constructing the hotel and furnishing the interior amounted to approximately \$100,000, including about \$50,000 for the general contract, and \$16,000 for plumbing, heating and electric wiring.²⁴

Not long after construction of the hotel was complete, Holmes became its sole manager. Resolving to stay in Detroit Lakes, he bought out the other members of the Hotel Minnesota Company, leaving his interests in California to be managed by relatives.²⁵

"Graystone to Discontinue Hotel Accommodations," *Becker County Record*, January 10, 1973; "Work Begun on New Hotel."

²³ "More Locals," *Detroit Record*, July 13, 1917.

²⁴ Plans by Broomhall; "Work Begun on New Hotel."

²⁵ Carlson, n.p.; Potisk.

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IV. An Urban Resort

Once completed, the Graystone was promoted extensively as one of the finest hotels in the state. Its modern European design and many conveniences were offered as proof of its prestigious stature, and the Graystone Café was touted as having "The Best Food in Minnesota." One state tourism brochure remarked that the Graystone was a "first class" hotel, a modern, fireproof facility conveniently located near railroad stations. Indeed, the Northern Pacific Railroad Depot was situated directly across the road from the hotel, and another depot for the Winnipeg branch of the Soo line was located just to the west. Visitors arriving in town were immediately greeted with the impressive visage of the hotel, assuredly a beckoning sight to the weary traveler.²⁶

The Graystone was unlike most traditional urban hotels like the Lakes and Commercial Hotels in Detroit Lakes, which catered primarily to traveling merchants and other business-oriented individuals. From its inception, the Graystone was in part designed with the tourism trade in mind. Located in the center of a lake district known as the "Park Region of Minnesota," the Graystone offered much more to travelers than simple hotel rooms. Advertisements for the facility noted the area's appealing geography, promoting a stay at the Graystone for those interested in fishing, hunting, or sun-bathing. The hotel even provided fishing and hunting guides, as well as access to a private beach heralded as the "finest bathing beach in Detroit Lakes." Furthermore, the hotel was prominently featured in regional and state tourism literature such as *Recreation Days*, which noted that the hotel arranged tours to nearby lakes. In addition, the local population utilized the Graystone's "club rooms" for banquets and parties.²⁷

²⁶ "Detroit Lakes Given Publicity in Booklet," *Detroit Lakes Record*, July 7, 1927; site visit by Denis Gardner, December 14, 1998; promotional advertisements.

²⁷ Examples of the types of parties given at the Graystone can be found in the "Local News" section of the *Detroit Record*, dated December 3, 1926, January 7 and February 18, 1927; *Detroit Lakes, Minnesota* (N.p.: 1937), n.p.; Earl V.

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The Graystone was unique among resort hotels as well. Most structures of this type were located at or near lakes. The St. Louis Clubhouse, for example, was situated on the east shore of Detroit Lake. The Park Hotel and the Fairhaven were also located next to the lake. Although the Graystone was within easy traveling distance of area lakes, it was still essentially an urban lodge. The Graystone had created a niche by offering its clientele the experiences of a relaxed, small town atmosphere in an elegant environment, yet also providing the means to enjoy the region's natural aesthetic pleasures. Fisherman, hunters, or sightseers could spend the day in the "wilds," and then return in the evening to exquisite accommodations in more domesticated surroundings.²⁸

Although the hotel readily accommodated recreational tourism, the management also made allowance for those not on holiday. The original building design took into account the traveling merchant, as demonstrated by the sample rooms in the facility's basement. Salesmen could set up displays in the hotel, inviting local area retailers to visit and possibly purchase a line of goods for their store. It was not uncommon for these salesman to stay one or two nights at the hotel before moving on.²⁹

V. The Graystone Annex

The Graystone was constructed at the northwest corner of Block 6. Immediately east, and contiguous with the eastern wall of the Graystone, is another building currently known as the "Markland." Although the Markland received its moniker in 1963, the building was actually constructed between 1904 and 1909. At some point between 1917 and 1927, the structure began serving as the annex to

Chapman, *A Guide to Northwestern Minnesota and Southern Manitoba* (N.p.: 1946), n.p.; promotional advertisements; *Outing Paradise of the Northwest*; Potisk; "Detroit Lakes Given Publicity."

²⁸ Michael Koop, "Becker County Historic Sites Survey," July 1987, cultural resources survey, prepared for the State Historic Preservation Office.

²⁹ Plans by Broomhall; interview with Marie Wright, former owner of the Graystone, by Denis Gardner, December 15, 1998.

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the hotel. According to Marie Wright, a former owner of the Graystone, the annex was used to house individuals who were in town for extended stays. It was not unusual for some guests staying at the annex to remain for as much as a year or more.³⁰

After the close relationship between the two buildings was established, Holmes decided to alter the annex to make it more compatible with the hotel. Since the Graystone was a three-story structure and the Markland only two stories, the Holmes Loan and Realty Company contracted with Fred Sedberg to add another story to the annex. In addition, Sedberg also made alterations to the second floor, which included the creation of hotel rooms and apartments. Furthermore, to complete the ties between the two structures, the facade of the annex was changed to match that of the Graystone.³¹

Work on the annex began in mid-October 1926. Towards the end of that month, one local newspaper noted that the contractor was rushing to complete the project. In early April 1927, the crew began working on the building's facade, installing the face brick that would match the Graystone. By the end of April the additional rooms were nearing completion. The construction was probably finalized in spring or early summer 1927.³²

One local history notes that it was about this time that the ground floor of the annex was modified to accommodate storefronts. This assessment is incorrect, however. A circa 1910 photograph, prior to

³⁰ In a letter to Denis Gardner dated January 7, 1999, the Becker County Historical Society explained that a former owner of the annex, Milton Swedberg, was the person who gave the building its current name. For other references, see *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Detroit [Lakes]* (Pelham, N.Y.: Sanborn Map Company, 1904 and 1909); Wright interview.

³¹ Letter to the city from the Holmes Loan and Realty Company expressing their interest in remodeling the annex, located in "Detroit Lakes Records, 1881-1942," Minnesota Historical Society, Saint Paul; "Will Bid Strong for Tourist Trade," *Detroit Record*, April 8, 1927; "Graystone Hotel Building Now Getting Brick Facing," *Detroit Lakes Tribune*, April 14, 1927; "Local News," *Detroit Record*, October 29, 1926; "Local News," *Detroit Record*, April 8, 1927.

³² Ibid.

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the Graystone's construction, as well as a circa 1920 photograph, before the annex's alteration, clearly depict a base floor occupied with storefronts.³³

VI. A Period of Change

When Holmes died in 1931, ownership of the Graystone transferred to his niece, Grace Wright. She, in turn, passed possession of the hotel to her son, Frederick H. Wright. By this time, Frederick had already been managing the hotel. One year earlier, after having been away from Detroit Lakes for several years, he returned to the city at the request of Holmes. Holmes, who was in failing health, had asked Frederick to care for his estate, including the Graystone.³⁴

Not long after he acquired control of the Graystone, Wright also bought the Edgewater Beach Hotel located on Detroit Lake. With his wife Marie, who he married in 1937, he ran both the Graystone and the Edgewater. It was not uncommon for guests at one of the hotels to visit the other as well. For a period of time the Wrights provided a shuttle bus for guests from one facility to the other.³⁵

Under the Wrights' guidance more improvements were made to the Graystone. Sometime in the 1930s, they constructed an elevator inside the hotel. The elevator shaft had been designed into the building from the beginning, but for some reason, possibly cost, the elevator itself was never installed. The elevator was electrically operated and spanned all four floors of the building. It was viewed as a "great convenience," especially for hauling freight to the upper levels. The improvements continued when, in 1938, they erected a storage shed/ice house behind the hotel. At a cost of \$1,000, the stone structure measured 40 by 34 feet. Later,

³³ The circa 1910 photograph can be found in the photographic archive at the Minnesota Historical Society, Saint Paul; a copy of the circa 1920 photograph is on file at the Becker County Historical Society, Detroit Lakes; Carlson, n.p.

³⁴ "Fred Wright is Dead at 61," *Detroit Lakes Tribune*, January 9, 1963; Wright interview.

³⁵ Ibid.

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the building was used as a garage and living quarters for some of the hotel's employees.³⁶

In 1937, the Wrights granted a lease to the Montgomery Ward Company. The lease, which included the ground floor at the northeast corner of the hotel, lasted until spring 1941. Around the same time, the Wrights accepted a contract to operate a bus depot in the lobby of the hotel, making the Graystone the official Detroit Lakes stop for Greyhound Bus Lines. Frederick Wright was honored in 1953 with an award of merit from Greyhound for his fifteen years of service to the company.³⁷

At some point, possibly in the 1940s, a city off-sale liquor store began operating out of the ground floor of the hotel towards its northeast corner. It appears as though the liquor store continued operation at least into the mid-1960s. In late summer 1951, the city seriously contemplated opening a new on-sale liquor lounge adjoining the off-sale store. The city's plan was to operate the lounge out of the former Graystone coffee shop/café. It is unclear, however, whether or not the plan was ever implemented.³⁸

Innkeepers, Incorporated, purchased the Graystone Hotel and annex from Frederick and Marie Wright in 1961. The Wrights were convinced that the glory days of the Graystone had passed. The development of the interstate highway system in the 1950s gave Americans much more freedom of movement throughout the country. More people were taking

³⁶ "Another City Landmark Joins Passing Parade," *Detroit Lakes Tribune*, June 12, 1963; "Graystone Hotel is Installing Elevator," *Detroit Record*, March 28, 193-; building permit, located in "Detroit Lakes Records, 1881-1942," Minnesota Historical Society, Saint Paul.

³⁷ County Deed File; "F. H. Wright Gets Award of Merit from Greyhound," untitled newspaper, April 15, 1953; Wright interview.

³⁸ A circa 1940 photograph of the Graystone shows the municipal liquor store. An original print is on file at the Becker County Historical Society, Detroit Lakes. For other references, see "City Hotel Picks Graystone Hotel Site for New On-Sale Liquor Store," *Detroit Lakes Record*, August 23, 1951; "Annex to Graystone Hotel is Sold; Development of Block Planned," *Detroit Lakes Tribune*, May 15, 1963.

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to the nation's roads in search of a vacation experience. With the increased travel came a proliferation of motor lodges. Travelers often found the rates and convenience of location offered by motels more appealing than that offered by hotels, especially hotels situated in urban centers. As a result, the reconstruction of Highway 10 through Detroit Lakes in 1957, rather than bringing more visitors to the Graystone, encouraged the opposite. In addition, as more and more auto camps and cottages were constructed near the lakes, increasingly transient Americans preferred them over downtown hotels. The Graystone suffered from such competition and its business steadily dropped away.³⁹

Innkeepers, Incorporated, considered adding a motel and swimming pool to improve flagging business. The company secured the services of Kegel Associates, Architects, to plan the anticipated expansion and remodeling. Kegal Associates proposed that the motel and swimming pool be behind the hotel, with the motel building facing Lake Avenue. By spring 1963, the plan had changed somewhat. The new manager of the hotel, F. A. Squires, explained that the Graystone would be converted into a drive-in motor lodge, with a drive-in entry constructed at the rear of the lobby. Although alterations to the facility were underway at this time (possibly the construction of the south entrance), the grand strategy of the developers did not materialize, as the hotel was never converted into a motor lodge.⁴⁰

In early 1963, Innkeepers, Incorporated, sold the annex to Milton Swedberg, principal of the Swedberg Construction Company of Detroit Lakes. Swedberg remodeled the upper two floors, converting the annex hotel rooms into full apartments. Also in 1963, the Swedberg Construction Company knocked down the stone garage constructed by Frederick Wright behind the Graystone in 1938, as well as a neighboring warehouse. The vacated space was then incorporated into a large parking lot comprising about half the city block, providing room for more than sixty vehicles. The lot was black-topped by the

³⁹ Wright interview; County Deed File; Potisk; "Fred Wright Dead."

⁴⁰ "Inkeepers, Inc. to Build Motel, Swimming Pool at Graystone Hotel," *Detroit Lakes Tribune*, January 9, 1963; "Annex Sold."

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Blacktop Surfacing Company of Detroit Lakes.⁴¹

It is not known exactly how long Innkeepers, Incorporated, owned the Graystone Hotel, although by 1969 the facility was owned and managed by Robert Nelson. At some point, Nelson changed the hotel's name to the Graystone Manor Complex. In 1972, citing the faltering hotel trade, Nelson began a major interior remodeling project, converting the hotel rooms into apartments. That year he created nine one- and two-bedroom apartments on the second and third floors; the following year he constructed thirteen more and hotel operations were completely discontinued. In addition, the ground floor was converted into office space. Later in 1973, with remodeling recently completed, Nelson sold the property to Vern and Chris Carlson of Minnetonka, Minnesota.⁴²

The Carlsons held the property for a little more than six years before selling it to Russell and Liz Lindblad of Chetek, Wisconsin. The Lindblads encountered financial difficulties and control of the Graystone reverted to Vern Carlson in the early 1990s. In 1998, Carlson sold it to Midwest Minnesota Community Development Corporation, which plans to improve the first floor commercial space and renovate the second and third floors into affordable rental housing.⁴³

VII. Conclusion

The Graystone Hotel stands today as a physical reminder of the early development of the tourism/travel industry in northwestern Minnesota. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, city hotels like the Graystone generally served one primary purpose, accommodation of business travelers such as railroad

⁴¹ "Graystone Annex Has New Owner," *Becker County Record*, May 15, 1963; "New Downtown Parking Lot Completed," *Detroit Lakes Tribune*, September 18, 1963; "Another City Landmark" and "Annex Sold."

⁴² Ralph Anderson, "Graystone Manor Sold," *Becker County Record*, May 2, 1973; "Graystone Complex Sold to Wisconsin Couple," *Detroit Lakes Tribune*, June 21, 1979; Meyer.

⁴³ *Ibid.*; County Deed File.

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employees and traveling merchants. The Graystone, though, was designed from its inception to cater not only to the traditional business traveler but also to a new breed of visitor: the recreational tourist. The Graystone followed in the footsteps of its predecessor, the Hotel Minnesota, which was created to compete with the lavish resort hotels found near Minneapolis and Saint Paul. Like the Hotel Minnesota, the Graystone provided elegant lodging with the finest amenities in a small town, urban setting, while also furnishing and promoting recreational access to the region's attractive natural resources. For its significant contribution to the development of the tourism industry in Detroit Lakes, the Graystone Hotel is eligible for the National Register under Criterion A.

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Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property occupies Lots 1 through 9, of city block 6, of the Original Townsite of Detroit (now Detroit Lakes).

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the city lots that have historically been associated with the property.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

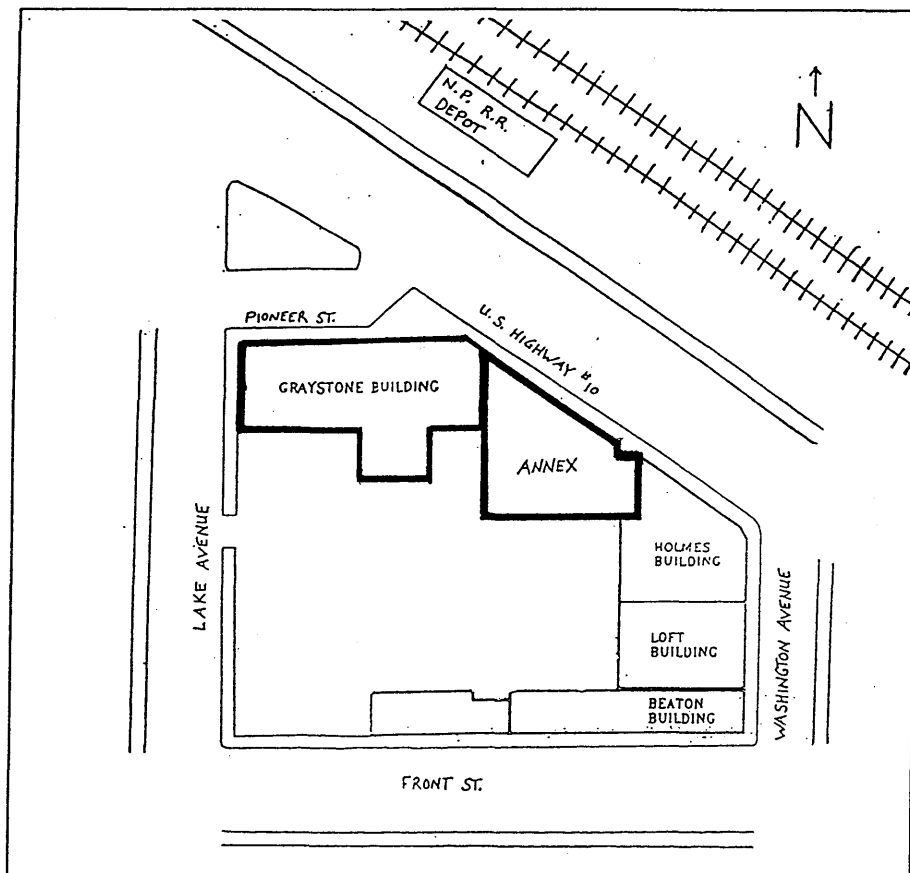
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 10

Page 2

Graystone Hotel
name of property

Becker County, Minnesota
county and state



Site map of city block 6, of the Original Townsite of Detroit (now Detroit Lakes). The map was adapted from a 1998 construction drawing by Baker, Hogan and Houx, Architects.