

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

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



1. Name

historic DEATH VALLEY JUNCTION Historic District MAY 16 1980
and/or common OSP

2. Location

CA 127 and CA 190
street & number Junction of California State Hwys. 127 & 190 not for publication
city, town Death Valley Junction vicinity of 18th congressional district
state California code 06 county Inyo code 027

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Amargosa Opera House, Inc. (a Nonprofit California Corporation)
street & number P.O. Box B
city, town Death Valley Junction vicinity of 92328 state California

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Inyo County Recorder's Office
street & number 168 North Edwards Street
city, town Independence, vicinity of 93526 state California

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title has this property been determined eligible? yes no
date federal state county local
depository for survey records _____
city, town _____ state _____

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one	
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Death Valley Junction historic district encompasses twenty-six structures constructed by the Pacific Coast Borax Company, beginning in 1923, for the purpose of accommodating various Company operations, Company visitors and Company employees and their families (Fig. 1).¹ The buildings within the district are the most nearly intact remnants of a larger settlement (Fig. 2) which developed around the Junction of the Tonopah & Tidewater Railroad and the Death Valley Railroad built by Pacific Coast Borax in 1917 to transport borate ores from its mines to the Mill at Death Valley Junction.²

Sixteen of the major structures in the District were built, in a single campaign, from 1923 to 1925 and were designed by the Los Angeles-based architect, Alexander Hamilton McCulloch.

McCulloch's buildings at Death Valley Junction are all of similar construction and appearance. They employ concrete slabs on grade, load-bearing walls of adobe and flat wood-joint roofs with adobe parapets and built-up roofing. The exterior walls of the small garages and most of the interior partitions throughout the complex are of stud, lath and plaster construction. Window frames, sash and doors are wood and typically, are of either the awning or double-hung type. Steel-framed skylights of single or double pitch configuration are used throughout Building Group I and light various rooms, corridors, bathrooms and the shower stalls of the Hotel.(Plate I-1)

1. One exceptional structure, the wood frame residence, #22, was apparently not constructed on the site but was moved from Ryan sometime between 1923 and 1925.
2. Refer to Significance Section of this application
3. Personal correspondence: Mrs. Howard Sexton, 1975 (Appendix)
From the little information available regarding McCulloch and his other works, it appears that he was involved in a development project in the Walnut Park (Cudahy Ranch) section of Los Angeles, working for the developer Victor Girard, around 1920. A letter to us from his daughter mentions McCulloch's interest in Spanish Colonial architecture and his early efforts in developing a stabilized adobe block for use in the Walnut Park project. Shortly after his completion of the Death Valley Junction project, McCulloch departed for Florida on PCB business.

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Generally, these buildings have been designed in a simplified version of the Spanish Colonial style. The apparent emphasis on continuity of wall surfaces, crisp outlines, and simple fenestration is reminiscent of the work of Irving Gill in Torrance, California around 1913. The articulated masses of the corner towers (Nos. 2 & 6) (Plate I-2) remind us of similar considerations in Bertram Goodhue's Los Angeles Public Library of 1926. However, the shapely column caps of the East porch of the Hotel impart a softening effect which seems akin to the more decorative work of Southern California architects engaged more actively than either Gill or Goodhue (around 1923) in the Spanish Colonial revival. (Plate I-3).

The layout of the mostly single-storey buildings within the district is striking in its rigorously orthogonal composition. The buildings are divided into two distinct groups aligned along the West side of a roughly north-south axis running parallel to the T&T roadbed and the present highway 127.

A. Building Group I

The more prominent of the two groups; consists of three ranges of buildings connected by an adobe front wall which defines three sides of a plaza opening on the East side and measuring 410 feet by 206 feet (Plate I-4). The long West side of the plaza is bordered by a colonnaded porch, 11 feet in width, running the length of the largest building in the complex, the hotel block (No. 1) (Plate I-5). Across highway 127 to the East of the plaza, the remains of the T&T roadbed (No. 12) and depot (No. 11) can be seen to align with the extant railway platform (No. 10) forming what may originally have been conceived as the fourth side of the quadrangle.⁴ In any event, (Plate I-6), the plaza is divided into 2 sandy islands, defined by the high concrete curbs of paved streets which run through and around the open space. Ornate streetlight standards were located (Plate I-7) regularly on the periphery of the plaza. The only landscape features presently apparent are formally arranged groups of Athel Tamarisk trees on each of the islands.

B. Building Group II

In Building Group II, an axial composition lying to the North of Building Group I, a series of seven, single-storey cottages (Nos. 13-19) line an avenue which runs West from the highway to terminate before an imposing, two-storey structure, the Superintendent's Residence (No. 20). (Plate II-1).

4 - There is some evidence that the railway platform may have been constructed prior to 1923 but if our speculation is correct, the quadrangle would be nearly square, measuring 410 by 420 feet.

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To the North of the Superintendent's Residence is a relocated wood frame residence (No. 22) which presents the most prominent departure from the over-all symmetry of the original plan for this group.

Curbs and sidewalks in this area define the major East-West avenue and a short stretch of street running North-South in front of the Superintendent's residence. Garages (Nos. 23 & 24) at the rear cottage yards suggest former driveways running parallel to the central avenue on both sides of the building group.

C. Other Buildings in the District

Buildings not already mentioned include an adobe boiler house (No.26) and a sheet-metal laundry building (No. 25) served by a North-South access road running along the rear of the hotel and a large sheet metal and concrete garage and service station, which continues the South edge of Building Group I to the East of the highway. While the sheet-metal buildings and the frame residence mentioned with Building Group II are unrelated stylistically to the McCulloch Buildings, they must have been in place before the mine operation was shut down in 1927 and they do appear on the survey of the property dated 1935. (Figure 1).

BUILDING DESCRIPTION

Building Group I -

Hotel Block (No. 1) (Plate I-8) - the largest single building in the complex, it measures 390 feet by 56 feet with westward extensions at two points along its length and is divided into two major sections, Hotel and Dormitory.

Hotel: the southern 210 feet of the building contains 20 hotel rooms with private baths. Two unit types are arranged along a double-loaded corridor (Plate I-9). Rooms located on the East side of the corridor are 12' deep and have direct access to the East porch and plaza through a second entrance. Rooms to the West of the corridor are 24' deep and can be entered from the corridor only. A concrete utility trench, 3' in depth, runs directly beneath the corridor and accommodates plumbing services for the entire building. In the soffit above the corridor is the main trunk of the now defunct central evaporative cooling system. Other rooms include the following:

1. Entry Lobby: 24' x 37' with stone fireplace, wood banquettes, adjacent reception room (12'x15' and lavatories.

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2. Dining Room: 28' x 44' with skylit alcove at the Northwest corner and adjacent pantry with built-in ice-box (Plate I-10).

3. Staff Dining Room: 20' x 28' with double swinging doors to the Kitchen and sideboard/cupboard.

4. Kitchen Wing: 28' x 50' including Kitchen with skylight, larder with skylight, service passage with double doors to the outside at each end, and storage rooms.

The Hotel, which has operated under various managements in the years since the departure of the Pacific Coast Borax Company, was last operated in 1979 and could easily be made operational again with minor plumbing repairs and improvements.

Major alterations to the Hotel include the following:
Installation of glazed tile in all 20 of the Hotel lavatories (Plate I-11) in 1932.

A new electrical service and switchgear (300amp./Four-wire/3-phase) installed in 1974.

Concrete bulkhead at base of exterior walls as structural repair. Installed in 1975.

New Built-up roof in 1975.

Individual room air conditioners in 1975.

Murals painted by Marta Becket in the dining room and corridor (Plate I-12) started in 1975.

Provision of miscellaneous furniture and kitchen equipment (1975).

Condition: The Hotel is generally in sound structural condition with noticeable buckling in some floor slabs related to the high salt content of the soil in this region, some water damage in the lower 18" of the walls, and some ceiling damage due to roof leakage.

Dormitory: The Northern 180 feet of the building contains 26 rooms with lavatories, a small entry lobby on the East side and an adobe-supported porch along its entire West side (Plate I-13). Other areas include the following:

1. Washroom Section: 22' x 32' composed of communal showers with skylight, lavatories and toilets.

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2. Dining Room/ Day Room, 28' x 33' (including adjacent kitchen).

3. Equipment Room (roof access only) 35' x 24', location of original evaporative air conditioning unit, water heater, and electrical switchgear.

Alterations: For reasons of security the openings of the West porch have been enclosed with plywood panels. Conversion of Day Room into apartment with some partitions added.

Condition: The Dormitory section of the building is considerably more deteriorated than the Hotel section. Roof leakage has caused erosion of adobe walls and spalling plaster and some sections of the ceiling have fallen because of this water insult. Restoration is possible, however.

Towers: (Nos. 2 & 6) (Plate I-2) - 13' x 13', provide entry to the quadrangle from the West and terminate the colonnaded porch. The upper floor is unused loft space accessible only through hatches in the wood joist floor. Slit windows in the lofts are arranged in groups of three. Condition: Good.

South Dormitory: (No. 7) (Plate I-14) - 32' x 57' - 7 rooms off double-loaded corridor with bathroom facilities. Condition: Fair. Some water damage because of bad roof. Alteration: Fake wood paneling added (1964).

Store Block: (No. 8) (Plate I-15) - 148' x 32'-with Southward projections; the second largest building in the complex, it originally housed the following:

1. Barber Shop - 12' x 12'
2. Company Offices - 24' x 21'- Entry Porch, two built-in payroll safes (Plate I-16).
3. Post Office- 17' x 12'- Original Mail boxes in place (Plate I-17)
4. Company Store- 47' x 60' (Plate I-18) Storefront windows, skylit loft, storerooms, shelving, etc.
5. Originally office of chief clerk of T&T Railroad and altered in 1932 into Cafe (16' x 46') and Kitchen (13' x 22'); Wood-veneered counter with attached stools, kitchen equipment, etc. (Plate I-19). A mission tile porch and fieldstone veneer with wagon wheels added (Plate I-15). Condition: Roof leakage has caused much erosion of walls and spalling of plaster. The wood-frame support structure of the tile porch is showing evidence of its hasty construction and insufficient integrity.

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North Dormitory: (No. 3) (Plate I-20 and I-21)- (85' x 30') -
Eleven rooms on double-loaded corridor with dayroom.

Alterations: Two partitions removed to create two large rooms
from four original sleeping rooms.

Condition: Good.

Doctor's Residence and Hospital: (No. 4) (Plate I-22) - 38' x 51'
with projections: Two-bedroom apartment, two baths, living- room
with fireplace, reception room. No Alterations.

Condition: Good. The building is now used as apartment by Marta
Becket and Thomas B. Williams and also serves as office for
Amargosa Opera House, Inc. and gallery for Ms. Becket's paintings.
Note: The 15'-wide courts left between buildings on the plaza have
in some cases been developed as shaded patios separated from the
plaza by the continuous adobe wall.(Plate I-23).

Corkill Hall (Amargosa Opera House):(Recreation Hall)(No. 5)-
(32' x 75') - The largest interior volume of the complex with 18'
ceiling height, original stage, two loft storage rooms reached by
steep stairs at each wing, entry porch, elaborated entry portal,
double-panel doors.

Alterations: 13' thrust stage extension (1967), stage lighting(1967)
Murals and Ceiling paintings by Marta Becket (1968-1974).
(Plate I-25 and I-26).

Condition: Good; the Hall has served as the Amargosa Opera House
since February 10, 1968. Seating capacity: 105.

Building Group II -

Cottage:(No. 13) (Plate II-2) (32' x 36') - Two-bedroom, adobe
cottage with entry porch, living room, bath, kitchen, dinette and
service porch.

Alterations: 6' wide porch running the length of the south side,
and wood gable roof with asphalt shingles and wood-lath screen at
the gable ends. (Date unknown) Note: The addition of wood gable
roofs to the original flat-roofed, adobe structure is typical for
all the cottages (Plate II-3).

Condition: Poor.

Cottages: (Nos. 14, 15, 16) (Plate II-4) - (26' x 36') - Two-
bedroom cottages similar to No. 13 but without porch additions.

Alterations: Wood gable roof (date unknown).

Condition: Poor.

Cottages: (Nos. 17, 18, 19) (Plate II-5 & 6)-(26' x 27')-
One-bedroom adobe cottage with living room, bath, kitchen, dinette,
and service porch. Alterations:Wood gable roof. Condition: Poor.

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Garages: (No 23)(Plate II-7) (16' x 20') - Two-car garage with adjacent tool shed. Wood frame, gypsum lath, and cement plaster construction with flat roof, built-up roofing. Condition: very poor.

Garages: (No(s) 24) (Plate II-8) (8' x 20') - One-car garage with adjacent tool shed. Construction similar to No. 23. Condition: very poor.

Superintendent's Residence: (No. 20) (Plates II-9 & II-10) - (56' x 36'). The only major two-storey building in the complex and the most architecturally distinguished. Adobe construction, flat roof, interior partitions lath and plaster, walnut paneling or ceramic tile. In plan, the house is nearly symmetrical about the axis of entry (Center-line of the cottage avenue); with one-storey wings flanking the two-storey central volume.

1. Ground floor: entry terrace, living room (15' x 25') with brick masonry fireplace and wood wainscoting; south wing with dining room, kitchen, service porch; north wing with bedroom, bathroom, study; stair hall, stairs, back hall.
2. Upper floor: Two bedrooms, bathroom, stairhall and stairs.
3. Outbuilding: Laundry (No. 21.) (10' x 10') adobe shed;

Note: A two-car garage (now destroyed) originally was entered from a driveway passing through an adobe entrance gate which continued the front facade of the house.

Alterations: None
Condition: Good.

Residence: (No. 22) (Plate II-11) (28' x 62' with 10' x 15' front porch) - An elongated California Bungalow with large-scaled timber framing at the front, milled clapboard siding and gable roof. The floor of this one-storey house is raised 3' above grade. Rooms include living room, dining room with craftsman-detailed sideboard, two bedrooms, kitchen, service porch and other unidentified rooms. Alterations: Entire building moved to this site from Ryan between 1923 and 1926.

Condition: Fair: Roof leakage and broken windows and doors.

MISCELLANEOUS STRUCTURES:

Laundry: (No. 25) (Plate III-1) (48' x 30') Wood-framed, gable-roofed structure on raised concrete floor with corrugated metal siding. Double height space at boiler room. It houses industrial laundry equipment. Alterations: None. Condition: Good.

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Boiler House and Ice Plant: (No. 26) (Plates M-2 7 M-3) (29' x 34') - 16'-high adobe building with flat roof housing vestiges of boilers and a vehicle repair pit. Condition: Poor.
Alterations: Ice Plant addition (Before 1926) 34' x 14') Wood-framed, gable roofed, corrugated metal siding. Housed ice-making equipment. Condition: Poor.

Garage and Service Station: (No. 9) (Plates M-4 & M-5) (58' x 115')- The imposing Spanish Colonial-esque portico of the service station announces entry to the complex from the south. The tall, gable-roofed garage is of steel truss and corrugated metal construction. Alterations: None.
Condition: Good.

Railway Platform:(No. 10)(Plate M-6) (Platform 37' x 62' with 16' x 28' shed) - Platform is of heavy timber construction and shed of corrugated metal. Alterations: None
Condition: Poor/Fair.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1923-1926

Builder/Architect Pacific Coast Borax Co./A.H.McCulloch

Statement of Significance (In one paragraph)

The town of Death Valley Junction, California, first appeared on the map in 1907 upon completion of construction of the Tonopah & Tidewater Railroad by the Pacific Coast Borax Company. Originally, a spur of the T&T Railroad ran six miles to the southwest. At the distal terminus of the spur was the town of Ryan, the 'Lila C' mine, a roasting mill and assorted railroad equipment. In 1916, the Borax Company closed the 'Lila C' mine and moved the mill to Death Valley Junction, moved the town of Ryan ten miles to the Northwest on the West side of the Funeral Mountains, and extended the T&T spur as the Death Valley Railroad, a narrow-gauge railroad 16 miles long. With the mill located at Death Valley Junction the town suddenly became a village of some consequence. The population rose abruptly to about 300 housed in shacks and tents. In 1922 the Borax company acquired by purchase additional land (West of the present highway 127) and in 1923 began to construct the two groups of Buildings which remain at Death Valley Junction and which provide the focus of this application. Oddly enough, in 1927 the Borax Company began another mining operation in the Kramer district (between Barstow and Mojave, California) and as the mining there increased it diminished in the Death Valley area. By the early 1930's the mining was all but finished. In 1932, the Borax Company converted a portion of its adobe dormitory complex into a Hotel. In 1947 the Borax Company stopped mining and the mill at Death Valley Junction was dismantled.

The colorful rise and decline of the Borax mining industry in and around Death Valley has become, in the latter half on the 20th Century, a much romanticized tale, popular enough to have provided the basis of a television series. Many of the buildings and artifacts which remain from that period exist, in a museum-like atmosphere, at Furnace Creek Ranch and at other locations in Death Valley. But the surviving buildings at Death Valley Junction are most remarkable, within a more general context, for their success in making an ordered and very civilized place in the midst of the desert.

The continuous adobe walls linking the low buildings around the plaza, the carefully scaled East colonnade, corner towers, and recreation hall facade, and the overall strength of the formal arrangement result in an extremely skillful manipulation of traditional Spanish Colonial elements which recalls the powerful forms and arrangements of the California missions which confronted, on a similar scale, the problems of ordering and enclosing.

The construction of many of the buildings that make up the complex is unique to the Death Valley area. McCulloch appears to have been aware of the thermal transmission properties of adobe and his early work in 'stabilized' adobe (protecting the claybody from water penetration,

9. Major Bibliographical References

Glasscock, C.B. Here's Death Valley, New York, Bobbs-Merrill, 1940, Pg. 259.

(MORE)

UTM NOT VERIFIED

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 11.9

Quadrangle name Ash Meadows, NV/CA

Quadrangle scale 1:62,500

UMT References

*For UTM's A
see USGS map
dated 12/8/80*

A	11	55	30	00	4	0	17	5	00
	Zone	Easting			Northing				
B									
C									
D									
E									
F									
G									

B									
	Zone	Easting			Northing				
D									
F									
H									

Verbal boundary description and justification

SW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 14, T25N, R5E, S.B.B.&M. The Eastern boundary of the Death Valley Junction Historic District starts at the intersection of the center-lines of State Highway 127 and the Ash Meadows Road and runs North 443 feet.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Thomas B. Williams, President

organization Amargosa Opera House, Inc. date May 14, 1980

street & number P.O. Box B telephone (714) Death Valley Jct. #8

city or town Death Valley Junction state California 92328

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *Thomas B. Williams*

title SHPO date 8-13-80

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

Forrest W. Ray date 12/10/80
Keeper of the National Register

Attest: *Patricia* date 12/10/80
Chief of Records Administration

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probably by the addition of bitumin) produced a durable and environmentally correct choice of the basic building material - a fact borne out by the current renewal of interest in adobe construction throughout the Southwest. The evaporative cooling equipment, mentioned above, was considered an exemplary installation of that newly refined mechanical system. The vented, steel-framed skylights, installed only in high-bay spaces where the heat gain they induce can be efficiently exhausted with minimal effect on interior temperature is a similar progressive inclusion in the Spanish Colonial building model.

The ability of architectural form to remove us from the vastness of the desert which surrounds is most noticeable when one passes from the plaza through the corner towers to confront the plain and distant mountains to the West. The testament conveyed by the place is not only to McCulloch's artfulness but also to the enlightened corporate patronage (and perhaps the colonizing fantasy) of the British-owned Pacific Coast Borax Company. Indeed it is difficult to think of other developments in California which have so skillfully combined the need for corporate symbolism with civic gesture.

As an exercise in community planning, the complex is, in part, successful for its combination of two very different types of building groupings - the plaza formed by linking buildings and the avenue formed by a series of separate cottages. The varying requirements for community and privacy of different members of the Pacific Coast Borax group seem to have been satisfied within a small range of building types. The complex at Death Valley Junction strikes us today as a well planned town with its industrial and commercial buildings located in a clearly defined relationship with the former railroad and the present highway. The residential sections recede from this public zone with increasing privacy as one moves West. The various parts of the town, in spite of their relative proximity, appear as separated and distant. Movement from one part of the complex to another is defined in a variety of patterns- through the wall surrounding the plaza, up and down the avenue, and back and forth across the highway.

Today, large numbers of tourists (approximately 500,000 per year) pass through Death Valley Junction as this is the historic entrance to Death Valley itself. Death Valley Junction has become internationally known as the home of the Amargosa Opera House.

The Amargosa Opera House is the creation of Marta Becket and her husband, Tom Williams. In 1967 they discovered Corkill Hall (No. 5) while on a concert tour. With need to have a flat tire repaired they stopped in Death Valley Junction (March 1967) and while the tire was being fixed Ms. Becket wandered about the abandoned North end of the complex and

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came across the old recreation hall. At this point in their lives Ms. Becket and Mr. Williams were headquartering in New York and spending eight or nine months touring with Ms. Becket's concert program of Ballet/Pantomimes. They had agreed that the time had come to locate a place other than New York City for a headquarters and this frame of mind enabled them to reach a quick decision about trying to rent the old Hall as a Studio. They did this on Easter Sunday of 1967. After they completed the remainder of that Spring concert tour they ended a Summer tour in Death Valley Junction in August of 1967. By October of 1967 they had made the decision to abandon the touring life and concentrate on opening the old hall. Williams added the thrust stage, painted the inside and outside of the building and hand lettered the new name Amargosa Opera House on the exterior side wall. On February 10, 1968 Marta Becket gave her first performance in the little "Opera House in the Desert". Since opening night she has performed 1575 times for audiences numbering from Zero to Capacity, 105. In the early year or so the audiences were very small and so Marta Becket committed herself to a gigantic task...painting an audience on the walls of the auditorium. Beginning in September of 1968 and completing the work in September of 1974, Ms. Becket has created a 16th Century Spanish audience of 266 characters on the walls and on the ceiling has painted the Four Winds, bands of Cherubs either dancing or playing musical instruments, seven doves for 'Peace' and, in the optical center of the ceiling, a Dome containing sixteen figures playing antique musical instruments.

As the painted audience grew so did the live one. Now (1980) the Opera House is generally playing at capacity during the Winter tourist season. The fame of Marta Becket and her painted audience have spread all over the world. e.g. In 1979 three separate television production crews from three different German TV stations made films at the Amargosa Opera House. Both the BBC and the Independent Television Network in the United Kingdom have made films there. The Opera House has had stories written in publications as diverse as The Wall Street Journal, National Geographic, Der Stern (Germany), and The Age, Australia.

In 1973, finding that they could purchase the Opera House building, Ms. Becket and Mr. Williams formed a California nonprofit Corporation for the purpose of continuing the Opera House as a 'safe home for the classical arts' in Death Valley Junction. In 1980, with the town having been on the market for over a year, Amargosa Opera House, Inc. purchased the entire town of Death Valley Junction so that the town and the Opera House could be preserved. The plan for Death Valley Junction is to establish a Study Center and Desert Campus and thus provide a headquarters on the desert for the large number of field study groups, workshops and seminars which need such a facility.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Death Valley Junction Historic District is significant both for its association with the important Death Valley borax mining industry and as an embodiment of the distinctive characteristics of Southwestern adobe construction and Mission/Spanish Colonial Revival architecture of the 1920s. Developed as a "company town," Death Valley Junction represents a well-conceived and executed effort at community planning which, in its period of historical significance, provided an aesthetically pleasing and comfortable social environment in an isolated desert landscape, as well as serving as an industrial and transportation center.

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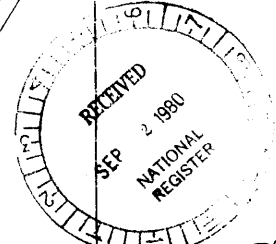
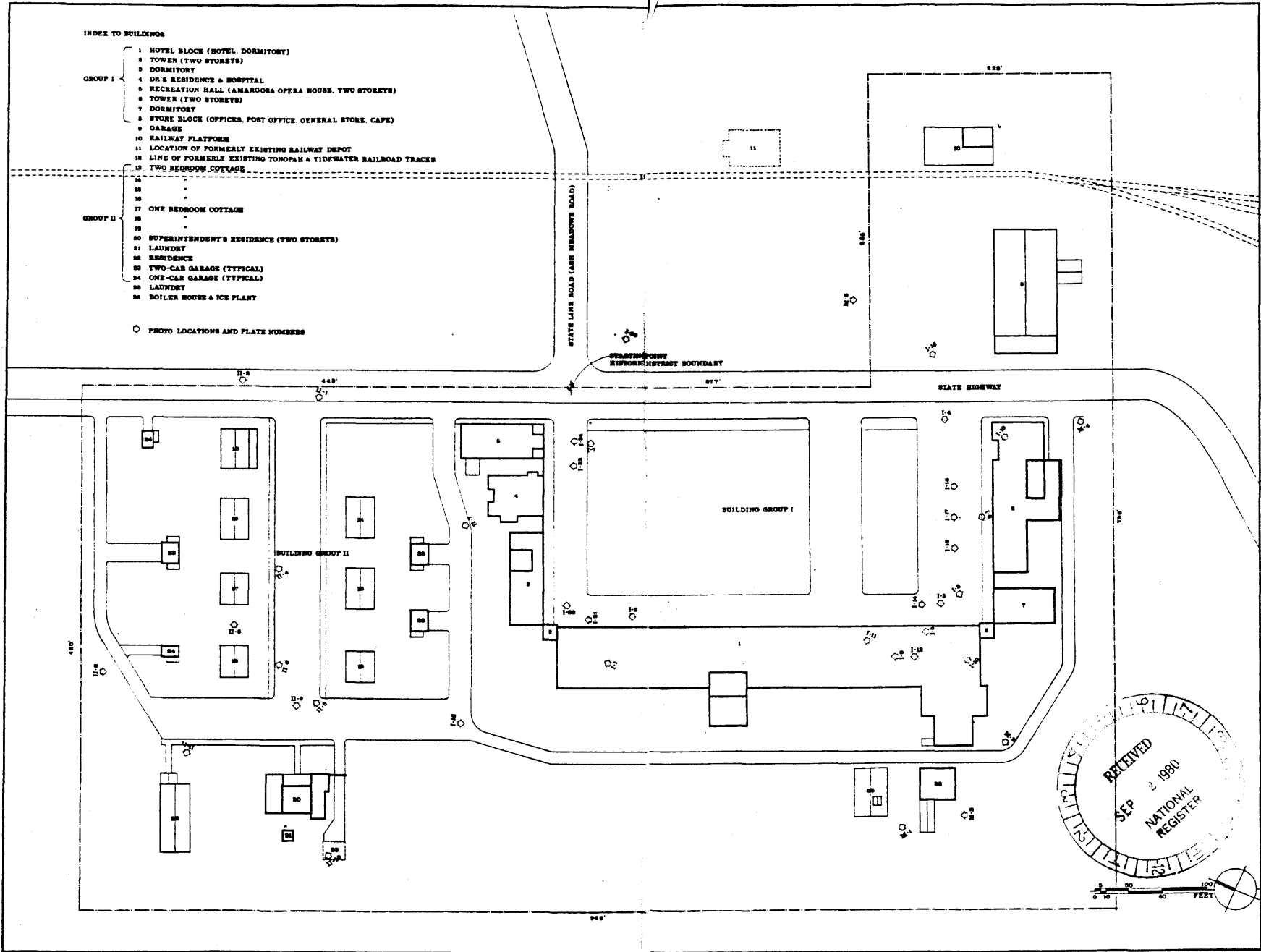
CONTINUATION SHEET Geographical ITEM NUMBER 10 PAGE 1

From this point it runs West 480 feet. From this point the boundary runs South 945 feet. From this point the boundary runs East 765 feet, then North 225 feet, then West 285 feet and returns 277 feet North to the beginning point.

INDEX TO BUILDINGS

- 1 HOTEL BLOCK (HOTEL, DORMITORY)
- 2 TOWER (TWO STOREYS)
- 3 DORMITORY
- 4 DR.'S RESIDENCE & HOSPITAL
- 5 RECREATION HALL (AMAROGOSA OPERA HOUSE, TWO STOREYS)
- 6 TOWER (TWO STOREYS)
- 7 DORMITORY
- 8 STORE BLOCK (OFFICES, POST OFFICE, GENERAL STORE, CAFE)
- 9 GARAGE
- 10 RAILWAY PLATFORM
- 11 LOCATION OF FORMERLY EXISTING RAILWAY DEPOT
- 12 LINE OF FORMERLY EXISTING TONOPAH & TIDEWATER RAILROAD TRACKS
- 13 TWO BEDROOM COTTAGE
- 14
- 15
- 16
- 17 ONE BEDROOM COTTAGE
- 18
- 19
- 20 SUPERINTENDENT'S RESIDENCE (TWO STOREYS)
- 21 LAUNDRY
- 22 RESIDENCE
- 23 TWO-CAR GARAGE (TYPICAL)
- 24 ONE-CAR GARAGE (TYPICAL)
- 25 LAUNDRY
- 26 BOILER HOUSE & ICE PLANT

○ PHOTO LOCATIONS AND PLATE NUMBERS



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DEATH VALLEY JUNCTION
 HISTORIC DISTRICT

1	1-1-80
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