

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only
received MAR 21 1984
date entered

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

1. Name

historic Hotel Baxter

and/or common The Baxter

2. Location

street & number 105 W. Main st. n/a not for publication

city, town Bozeman n/a vicinity of

state Montana code 30 county Gallatin code 031

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name The Baxter (company)

street & number 105 W. Main

city, town Bozeman n/a vicinity of state Montana

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Gallatin County Courthouse

street & number 305 W. Main

city, town Bozeman state Montana

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title none 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Hotel Baxter, a seven story brick structure located on the northwest corner of Main Street and N. Willson Avenue, has served as the western anchor for the central business district of Bozeman, Montana since 1929. The building is in excellent condition. It has been renovated on the lower floors and is undergoing rehabilitation currently on the upper floors.

The building is set back 8' from the front lot lines to allow for a spacious entry and planting areas in front of the lobby windows. There is a rear yard on the north 30' deep which was originally landscaped with a lily pond and is now a grass-covered patio. The structural framework of the structure is a reinforced concrete column, beam and slab system. The building consists of two units: the seven story section on the south that housed the hotel proper and a two story section on the north that enclosed the kitchen, banquet rooms, and dining/ballroom.

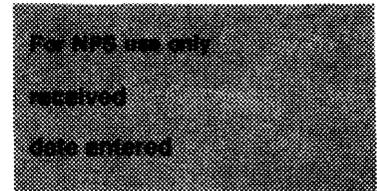
The exterior brick walls are made from Lewistown (Montana) Brick and Tile Co. and are light buff in color. A gray-green terra cotta trim outlines three arches on the front (south) facade that frame the semi-circular transom windows above the double entry doors and the large flanking windows. Above this there is a terra cotta belt course terminating at each end in a cartouche. The six center windows of the top floor have small iron balconies and are emphasized by a terra cotta arcade of arches. Three windows of the east facade of the dining room segment are also outlined by terra cotta arches. The building is topped with a receding terra cotta coping. The side entry to the building off N. Willson still features its original cast iron canopy. This entry leads to an east-west corridor that gives access to the dining room, lobby, etc. The windows of the upper floors are double-hung 1/1 wood units.

The main lobby is two stories in height. The mezzanine, with its decorative metal balustrade, opens into this space. There is a "false-beamed" ceiling of plaster painted and stained to resemble heavy wood construction. A stairway, curved at its base and upper portion, leads from the lobby to the mezzanine. A door opens from the lobby to the present "Bacchus Pub", formerly the hotel coffee shop. Originally the west half of the coffee shop housed a soda fountain. The former coffee shop/soda fountain has a decor reputed to be a reproduction of a medieval winery in Munich. The design was created by Willson as an original part of the hotel. At the ends of the beams (again plaster resembling wood) are six different monks' heads, each representing one of the monks who worked in the winery. They were carved by artist/craftsman Antone Lange.

Other doorways from the lobby give access to the dining room, now the "Rocky Mountain Pasta Company" restaurant, and to the bar. The bar was not included in the original design of the building which was constructed during the Prohibition era. Although this law was repealed in 1932, the bar was not put in until 1939. It was named "The Robin" for one of the sons of manager Robert MacNab. The Art Deco design was also the work of architect Willson who, incidentally, carried out numerous renovations and supervised upkeep on the building until his death in 1956. Above the bar (originally semi-circular, now straight) there is a ceiling of dark blue mirrored glass sprinkled with stars and a crescent moon. The most striking feature of the bar is the stained glass front window; it depicts a robin sipping from a champagne glass.

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The dining room was originally two stories in height with a balcony at mezzanine level on the south and east sides. A small dining room was located on the west side at mezzanine level with french doors opening to give a view of the two story ballroom/dining space. A long stairway from the south balcony led to the ballroom level below. In 1954 a need for more dining space caused the open space to be closed over, giving a dining room only one story in height and a second dining/ballroom space on the mezzanine. This is the most significant change that has been made in the building.

The hotel was designed with seventy-six rooms. Several apartments were included on the top floor for permanent residents. Space for two commercial stores was allowed on the main floor. One of these housed the Chamber of Commerce in early years and later became the Robin Bar. The other was a pharmacy acquired in 1931 by Mr. and Mrs. Heber Porter who operated the business for many decades while living in an upstairs apartment. This space now is used by a travel agency.

The basement included space for a barber shop, beauty parlor, kitchen storage and storage for the shops on the main floor.

The building no longer serves the traveling public but is still a vital part of downtown Bozeman. Renovation of the upper floors into condominium apartments began in 1981. The second floor (above the mezzanine) will become condominium office space in the future. In 1981, the lobby and mezzanine floors underwent extensive facelifting but not remodeling. The original mica and wrought iron lights were carefully cleaned. The lobby fountain was rebuilt so that water again flows through it. Walls were repainted using the same paint type and original colors as originally used and the plaster ceiling "beams" with stenciled-on designs were cleaned and touched up where necessary. The Robin Bar, Bacchus Pub, Rocky Mountain Pasta Company restaurant, and the ballroom and meeting rooms on the second floor are all centers of Bozeman's social life, now as in the past.

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 type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1929

Builder/Architect H.J. Hamill/Fred F. Willson

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Hotel Baxter has been a unique enterprise and a landmark in Bozeman, Montana since its opening in 1929. It was designed by Fred F. Willson, a local architect who did much to shape the appearance of the town during his fifty years of practice. The Hotel Baxter is an example of his work in the late 1920's while the Robin Bar (which was installed in 1939) typifies his Art Deco period. The building is straightforward in design and was planned to operate efficiently, both to serve the traveler and to serve the social needs of the people of Bozeman. The hotel was built with money raised by sale of stock to local investors and for fifty years was operated as a community hotel.

In 1927, a group of sixteen business and professional men led by Eugene Graf met to plan for a fashionable hotel for Bozeman. One of this group was local architect Fred F. Willson. The Bozeman Community Hotel, Inc. organization was formed on September 21, 1927. A goal of \$200,000 was set for constructing the planned hotel and stock was sold to the public to raise the money. The prospectus for the proposed hotel stated:

It will be throughout a community project, financed through community effort, owned by those who believe in the community, operated under community supervision, and by community cooperation.

Fred Willson drew up the plans and a group specializing in fundraising for community hotels, the Hockenberry System, was hired to raise funds by sale of stock to the citizens of Bozeman. The Hockenberry staff was only able to raise half the amount needed and resigned. The executive committee nevertheless voted to continue with the project and raise the rest of the money themselves. A bank loan enabled them to let the bids and start construction. Robert Baxter, a local rancher-entrepreneur, pledged the last \$50,000 needed for the building, and the Executive Committee named the hotel for him. Robert's son, George Baxter, and his family made their home in an apartment on the top floor of the hotel for many years.

The grand opening of the hotel was held on March 16, 1929 with a dinner dance headlined as the "Most Brilliant Social Affair Held in Bozeman." The attendees were the stockholders in the association, together with their guests. Some four hundred invitations had been sent out. A French cook was hired by the Roberts-MacNab Hotel Co. The Company, itself, would operate the hotel, saying that "Towns are judged by their hotels. . . and he believed Bozeman would become better known through the Community Hotel, the Hotel Baxter."¹

Established not only as a lodging place for travelers, the Hotel Baxter was also as the "in" place to hold numerous social functions, including those of the fraternities and sororities of Montana State College (now Montana State University).

¹Bozeman Daily Chronicle, March 17, 1929

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bozeman Daily Chronicle, March 17, 1929, pp. 1,6,17

Bozeman Daily Chronicle, July 9, 1964

High Country News, July 15, 1981

Community Hotel (Bozeman) Prospectus, "A Greater Bozeman"

See continuation

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than 1

Quadrangle name Bozeman

Quadrangle scale 1:62,500

UTM References

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Zone Easting Northing

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Verbal boundary description and justification

Property bounded by W. Main Street, N. Willson Ave. and alleys on west and north. Lots 1,2, and 3 east 18 feet of lot 4, Block B, Tracy Addition to Bozeman

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

state n/a code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title John N. DeHaas, Jr., Architect

organization date September 30, 1983

street & number 1021 S. Tracy telephone (406) 586-2276

city or town Bozeman state Montana

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Marcelle Shoff

title State Historic Pres. Officer date 3-16-84

For NPS use only

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

for Wilbur Byers
Keeper of the National Register

Entered in the
National Register

date

4/19/84

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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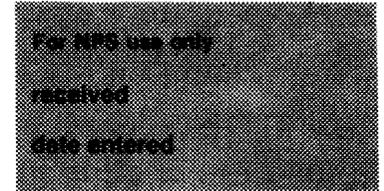
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The Community Hotel Association was long-lasting. The first major change in its executive committee occurred in 1960 when one of the first organizers, Eugene Graf, resigned as president after 33 years of service. The Roberts-MacNab Hotel Co. managed the hotel until 1947 when the lease was terminated and a new lease was given to Robert B. (Robin) MacNab, Jr. and his brother John. The Association was finally dissolved in 1980 when the building was purchased by the present owner.

Even though the hotel opened just prior to the national economic depression of the 1930's, it was a success from the beginning. Occupancy levels remained high, with some people returning year after year to spend their summers in the Gallatin valley, in addition to the more usual tourist and business traveler. The public spaces of the hotel also have been consistently used by the community.

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Dorothy May (Mrs. Heber) Porter, personal interview