

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

OCT 27 1989

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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

### 1. Name of Property

historic name The Golden Hotel  
other names/site number NEHBS # HT13-003

### 2. Location

street & number 406 East Douglas Street n/a not for publication  
city, town O'Neill n/a vicinity  
state Nebraska code NE county Holt code 089 zip code 68763

### 3. Classification

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

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

### 4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.  
James A. Hanson October 13, 1989  
Signature of certifying official Date  
Director, Nebraska State Historical Society  
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

### 5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:  
 entered in the National Register.  
 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:)

Delores Byers Entered in the National Register 11/27/89  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

## 6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic/Hotel

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic/Hotel

Commerce/Professional

## 7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Colonial Revival

Other: Georgian Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

walls Brick

Concrete

roof Asphalt

other Concrete

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Golden Hotel is located in the central business district of O'Neill, Nebraska, at the junction of U.S. Route 20/275 and 4th Street (U.S. Highway 281). The three-story brick-faced hotel was completed in 1913. Although both interior and exterior alterations have occurred through time, the building's integrity is good; it retains some characteristics of a rear light court hotel type in the Georgian Revival architectural style. The nomination consists of one contributing building--the hotel--and a non-contributing annex which is connected to the main building by a covered, second-floor walkway.

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The Golden Hotel is located at a prominent downtown junction in O'Neill, a north-central Nebraska sandhills county seat community of approximately 4,000 people. The Holt County courthouse (NEHBS: HT13-53) is located one block north of the hotel on 4th Street. The hotel occupies the northeast corner of O'Neill's major intersection--U.S. Highway 281 and U.S. Route 20.

The Golden Hotel is a three-story, brick-faced rear light court hotel which exhibits characteristics of the Georgian Revival architectural style. When completed in 1913, the building's fireproof construction was emphasized; the only lumber used in the structure was in the doors and windows, making destruction by fire "practically impossible" (The O'Neill Frontier, Febr. 13, 1913).

The hotel's two main facades--south and west, front U.S. Route 20 (Douglas Street) and Highway 281 (4th Street) respectively. The building forms a rectangular mass measuring approximately 66 x 82 feet. The south facade features an art moderne style neon and painted aluminum sign, c. 1935 with the hotel's name in green and gold. The main facade also provides the

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hotel's name in a simple concrete panel imbedded in the cornice above the third floor.

The southwest corner of the building, which has been altered to accommodate professional offices, was originally the hotel dining room; the large plate glass windows have been filled in. Original fenestration on the second and third floors, however, is intact. The hotel retains window surrounds of concrete, decorated with centered keystones. The combination of brick and concrete, symmetrical fenestration and classical details are characteristics of the Georgian Revival architectural style.

The interior of the hotel has been altered through various remodellings, but it retains characteristics which distinguish it as a rear light court hotel. A property type associated with urban areas and the first quarter of the 20th century, rear light court hotels are one of several possible types designed to provide adequate light and ventilation in a multiple-story, urban building. These hotel types are also associated with fireproof construction; namely, brick and steel, a minimum height of three stories, and the presence of a mezzanine and "light court" (Murphy, 1989).

The rear light court type is generally located on a corner lot; major facades, which add substantially to the urban character of the building, conceal the large, rear light court. The type is generally an "ell" shape with double-loaded corridors, although other configurations are possible. An example of a rear light court hotel, the Golden retains double-loaded corridors of 23 rooms on the second and third floors, which surround the light court on three sides. Located above the first and second floors, the light court with four skylights is concealed by the building's two main facades, resulting in a "U" shape configuration.

The first floor main lobby retains its original main staircase with marble steps and cast iron banisters. The south side of the lobby, however, has been altered through the addition of a wall, and dropped ceiling in the southwest corner; at the site of the original dining room and mezzanine. The lobby retains original art deco light fixtures and patterned ceramic tile floors. Other alterations have been limited to the provision of bathrooms in some rooms and cosmetic changes such as lowered ceilings; the building's steel and concrete construction, however, renders many of the changes reversible.

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A two-story brick-faced annex is located immediately north of the hotel, and is connected to the main building by a 12-foot covered skywalk. Available Sanborn fire insurance maps indicate that the annex building originally housed the Post Office and Telephone Exchange, and was constructed some time before the main hotel. The date of conversion of the two-story building into hotel rooms has not been determined, but it occurred after the construction of the Golden Hotel and has, therefore, been determined to be non-contributing to the hotel's period of significance as identified under Criterion A.

With the exception of a brief period in the mid 1980's, when it changed ownership, the Golden Hotel has been in continuous operation.

**8. Statement of Significance**

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

nationally     statewide     locally

Applicable National Register Criteria     A     B     C     D

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

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Commerce  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Period of Significance

1913-1925  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Dates

NA  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Cultural Affiliation

NA  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Person

NA  
\_\_\_\_\_

Architect/Builder

The Crosby Company  
\_\_\_\_\_

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

The Golden Hotel, constructed in 1912-1913 in O'Neill, has been compared to similar properties on a statewide basis and is significant on a regional level under Criterion A. It has been evaluated under the Retail Commerce context for the Lower Niobrara Region and found to be significant for its association with the commercial development of O'Neill and with the building boom of second generation hotels that was occurring on a statewide basis during the first quarter of the twentieth century. The hotels built during this period, as exemplified by the Golden, were multi-floor, brick buildings that offered the most modern conveniences and catered especially to the businessmen who travelled on the railroad. Aside from providing pleasant quarters for travellers, the new hotels became the symbol of a prospering community with a bright future. For this reason, towns and cities of all sizes thought it was important to showcase a "modern" hotel as an indication of their prominent standing in the state. It is within this context that the importance of the Golden Hotel is realized. The period of significance begins in 1913 when the hotel opened and ends in 1925, which, despite the hotel's continued significance in the commercial development of O'Neill, marks the end of the period of the building boom of second generation hotels.

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Although O'Neill had several hotels, by 1910 some of the local business leaders began to make known their desire to have a new "modern" hotel built in their town. The local newspaper, The O'Neill Frontier, began to air these views through its support for a new sewer system. The paper ran an editorial that stated "a modern sewer system for O'Neill means a modern hotel building before the year 1911 passess..." (The O'Neill Frontier, April

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

Miller, Greg. "Retail Commerce: Towns in the Lower Niobrara Region." Historic Context Report 12.02.03.03. Lincoln, NE: Nebraska State Historical Society, 1989.

Murphy, David R. "Hotels." Property Type Analysis 12.3.1. Lincoln, NE: Nebraska State Historical Society, 1989.

Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey (NEHBS). "Reconnaissance Survey Final Report of Holt County, Nebraska." Lincoln, NE: Nebraska State Historical Society, 1988.

The O'Neill Frontier, 1912-1913.

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of property Less than one acre.

UTM References

A 

1	4
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5	2	9	0	3	0
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4	7	0	0	4	8	0
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 Zone Easting Northing

C 

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B 

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 Zone Easting Northing

D 

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary encompasses all land historically associated with the property, and which includes all of the physical connected buildings that serve the hotel today.

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Carol Ahlgren, Architectural Historian/Greg Miller, Preservation Historian  
 organization Nebraska State Historical Society date August 1989  
 street & number 1500 R Street telephone (402) 471-4787  
 city or town Lincoln state NE zip code 68501

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28, 1910.) T. V. Golden used the occasion of the dedication of a recently constructed St. Patrick's Church to voice his views on the subject of a new hotel. He said that since the people of O'Neill had demonstrated their ability to complete large projects, they should work together to build a modern hotel. He concluded by stating that such a building was needed to accommodate the travelling public and distinguished guests that visited their town (The O'Neill Frontier, Oct. 20, 1910).

In the spring of 1911, it appeared that O'Neill was on the verge of having the hotel built. On March 2, the newspaper reported that an anonymous person drew up, but had not yet signed, a contract with T. V. Golden to buy land for a hotel. The deal presumably fell through because nothing more was mentioned of it.

Despite this setback Golden was not to be deterred in his efforts to have a hotel built. It seems that he made a modest attempt towards this end when he had a two-story building constructed in the summer and fall of 1911. The first floor was occupied by the land office while the upper level contained four or five "modern" (with steam heat and electric lights) sleeping rooms. These rooms were then leased to W. T. Evans, the proprietor of the Evans Hotel, who began renting them out early in 1912.

But Golden was not satisfied with the size of the just completed project. In February 1912, he ran an advertisement in the newspaper stating that he would sell a corner lot for \$5,000 "for the purpose of building a hotel containing not less than thirty sleeping rooms and costing not less than \$20,000" (The O'Neill Frontier, Feb. 25, 1912). In the same issue, the paper reported that following a banquet, Mayor Biglin suggested that a Commercial Club be formed. He said such an organization would unify the businessmen and allow them to properly look after the interests of the city. He concluded by saying that O'Neill needed many improvements including a new hotel. This idea was warmly received, and the Commercial Club was formed. The first action taken by the Club was the formation of a ten-member executive committee of which Golden was a member.

All who spoke after Mayor Biglin praised the idea of a Commercial Club and said that the greatest need was a hotel. Several of the speakers claimed they would buy stock in a hotel

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building company or "make substantial donations to any person who would build the kind of a hotel necessary for the needs of the city." Mr. E. F. Gallagher then came forward and claimed that if the people of O'Neill would raise \$8,000 he would contribute \$12,000 and build a \$20,000 hotel. The proposition was well received and people immediately began pledging money. Before the night was over, \$4,000 had been raised (The O'Neill Frontier, Feb. 15, 1912).

The following week at the Commercial Club meeting, S. J. Weeks, a member of the executive committee who was absent from the previous meeting, said that if the townspeople were willing to raise such a large sum of money, he would build a hotel on a corner lot he owned. Golden, realizing that he could lose the opportunity to build the hotel, made a counter-proposal. He stated that if \$5,000 could be raised, he would build a \$20,000 hotel (exclusive of land costs) on his corner. The Commercial Club seemed to favor this proposal and pledged to raise the balance of the money in hopes that work could begin as soon as weather permitted (The O'Neill Frontier, Feb. 22, 1912).

Within about three weeks, businessmen had raised \$6,170, which exceeded the required amount. In addressing the Commercial Club, Judge Harrington said that by raising the money the businessmen demonstrated they "were all desirous of having a good hotel in the city." Golden then presented a general idea of the type of hotel he expected to built but said he did not have any definite plans (The O'Neill Frontier, March 14, 1912). Although ground was broken for the new hotel on April 22, the plans were not complete and the total cost was unknown. It would not be until about one month later (May 23, 1912) when Mr. P. Holmquist, representing the Crosby Company, architects and builders from Kansas City, met with T. V. Golden and presented him with plans of the hotel. On May 29, Golden let the contract to the Crosby Company for the construction project, at which time they agreed to have the building ready to open by September 1, 1912.

The plans, approved by the executive committee, called for a three story building plus a basement, forty-nine sleeping rooms, a parlor, lobby, bath, toilet, and "other rooms necessary in a modern first-class hotel." Built of brick and steel, the hotel would be completely fireproof. The architect claimed "that with the exception of an elevator it will be as modern and up-to-date



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as any hotel in any of the large cities." The estimated cost was \$25,000 without furnishings (The O'Neill Frontier, May 30, 1912).

As the construction project got underway, the newspaper made regular reports on the progress. In several articles, the paper interjected their own thoughts on the hotel and its impact. In the June 13th edition, an article observed that as the building was going up many townspeople, who previously were skeptical of the hotel's progress, realized that it would indeed be completed. The same issue also reported that about twelve houses were being built and a new library was in the planning stages. These projects, along with the major addition of the hotel, all indicated that O'Neill was "enjoying a good healthy growth."

The September opening date passed and by mid-December, it became evident that a projected January 1, 1913, completion date would also be missed. But as construction was nearing an end, news of the hotel began to spread. The local newspaper reprinted an article that had appeared in the Niobrara Tribune on February 13, 1913. The article reported the cost of the new hotel to be nearly \$50,000 and that the "steam heat, hot and cold water in every room, tile floor(s), bath rooms and connection with the sewer system, makes this the finest hotel in the state for a city the size of O'Neill."

In late February, Golden announced that the construction was completed and the hotel was ready to be furnished. Two weeks later W. T. Evans became the proprietor of the new hotel after signing a lease with Golden.

Reported to be "unequaled by anything in any size town within the confines of the state" (The O'Neill Frontier, May 15, 1913), the hotel had forty-six rooms each with a private telephone and hot and cold water. Fourteen rooms contained private baths. The final cost was \$50,000, more than double the original projected cost. On May 17, 1913, the Golden Hotel held its formal opening.

The enthusiasm with which most of the business leaders accepted the idea of a new hotel demonstrates the importance placed on having such a facility. To have missed an opportunity of having a new hotel at a time when hotel construction was occurring throughout the state, would have been an admission that the town was economically stagnant. Although O'Neill had several

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existing hotels, T. V. Golden believed that the town was "censured because of its poor hotels" (The O'Neill Frontier, May 15, 1913). This being the case it was especially important for O'Neill, located on the railroad line, to be considered a good business community. Furthermore, at the time, O'Neill was in the midst of a moderate construction boom, and it accepted the challenge of building a modern hotel. Given these circumstances, it is evident that the Golden Hotel contributed to the continued economic and commercial development of the town and is therefore significant on a regional level under Criterion A. Having been evaluated under the Retail Commerce context for the Lower Niobrara Region, the hotel's importance for its association with the commercial development of O'Neill and with the expansion in hotel construction that was occurring on a statewide basis during this period is unmistakable.

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**Verbal Boundary Description**

Commencing at the Southwest Corner of Block 15 in the Original Town of O'Neill, Holt County, Nebraska, running thence North 121.6 feet, running thence East 90 feet, running thence North to the South line of the public alley running East and West through said Block 15, running thence East 22.5 feet, running thence South 88 feet, running thence West 46.5 feet, running thence South 82 feet, and running thence West to the point of beginning; (and the right to use for light, ventilation, and the erection of a building to be used as a refrigerator, the following real estate: Beginning at the Northeast Corner of the Golden Hotel building; thence East 5.5 feet, thence South 10 feet, thence West 2.5 feet, thence South 18 feet, thence West 3 feet, thence North 28 feet to the place of beginning).