Form No. 10-300 (Rev. 10-74)

PH0670855

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

Nashville

FOR NPS USE ONLY

DATE ENTERED

RECEIVED OCT 1 2 1976

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Tennessee

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SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

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REPRESEN	TATION IN EXIST	ING SURVEYS		
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—	see Historical and Arc	chitectural Survey		
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# 7<sup>c</sup> DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE		
X_EXCELLENT	DETERIORATED	X_UNALTERED	X ORIGINAL SITE		
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FAIR	UNEXPOSED				

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Thomas Crutchfield, after conferring with the directors of the Nashville and Chattanooga Railroad who agreed to erect the Chattanooga Union Station across 9th Street, built the Crutchfield House on this site in 1847-48. Shortly after the Civil War, the Crutchfield House was razed to provide space for a three-story office building. Dr. Read purchased the incomplete structure and had the plans changed enough to convert the office building into a hotel. The first Read House opened its doors on January 1, 1872. With the addition of a three-story frame wing the hotel occupied nearly the entire block.

The second, and present, Read House was designed by Martin Roche of Holabird and Roche, a Chicago architectural firm. The ten-story, brick Georgian Revival hotel, which occupies half of the block bounded by 9th, Chestnut, Broad, and 8th streets, was built at a cost of \$2,500,000 and opened on July 4, 1926. The overall plan of the building is symmetrical and E shaped, with the horizontal bars of the E oriented along a north-south axis and the main facade facing south. The predominant structural material is brick laid in the common bond pattern; cut and dressed stone is used in the major decorative elements, such as quoins, pilasters, window surrounds, and balustrades and terra cotta for the festoons, frieze disks and other minor decorative elements. The two-story, projecting frontispiece has cut, beveled, and coursed, stone pilasters topped with urns, and the large roundarched window is surmounted with a keystone and cartouche. A flat-roofed glass and ornamental iron marquee protects the recessed entrance foyer. Ornamental iron is also found in the lion's head marquee support plates and in the broken pediment window surrounds and balustrades. A single-story block of store fronts extends to and joins with similar units in each projecting wing; these are decorated with pilasters, cut stone balustrades, and urns. The roofs of the connecting blocks provide space for a terrace. Quoins accent the outlines of the projecting wings, and stone, continuous sills emphasize the horizontal lines. Diverse fenestration decoration focuses attention on the center section which projects slightly. The recessed ninth and tenth floors allow the south walls of the outer wings to be aligned with the center wing; the remaining walls of the upper story wings are dramatically set back. The tasteful arrangement of varying styles of window surrounds with such elements as plain and segmental, pedimented arches; keystone and festoon lintels; quoin and molded trim sides; and plain, continuous, and festooned sills enhance the appearance of the building. Except for the marquee on the east wall, the west and east elevations are identical; both continue the several motifs found in the main facade. The Read House Motor Inn, a six-story, modern building with a parking garage was recently built on the lot adjacent to the unadorned north wall of the hotel, however, because of its greater scale, the 1926 Read House overwhelms this recent addition.

The grand, two-story, rectangular lobby may be entered from the east or west via long corridors, which extend around the long sides of the space, or by the main entrance, which opens directly into it. Great columns and round-arched openings on the east and west sides enclose the central part of the lobby; these are decorated with festoons and cartouches which bear the coats of arms of the Crutchfield and Read families. The north entrance has a square arch flanked by fluted pilasters and a delicately turned balustrade encloses the south end of the lobby. The east and west sides of the space have a mezzanine which features slightly vaulted and decorated ceilings and ornate brass railings. **CONTINUATION SHEET** 

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The lobby ceiling features an ornate crown molding and gilded geometric patterns with the focal point being three floral clusters. The two chandeliers and the side lights are bronze. The lobby is finished with quarter-sawn American black walnut paneling and has a grey terrazo floor which is partially covered with Persian rugs.

The Green Room, or main dining room, which seats 220, is entered from the north end of the lobby. Plain black pilasters, which contain either figured gold damask-draped windows or large, ornamental mirrors in gilt frames and crystal lighting fixtures, are inter-spersed along the blue-green walls. The decorative ceiling has medallions and cornices, and the floor is greenish terrazo separated into squares with brass strips.

The Silver Ballroom measures 36 by 120 feet and will accommodate a 475-person banquet. The silver-gray walls are accented with fluted pilasters located between tall arches which enclose large mirrors. Three crystal chandeliers are suspended from silver-leaf medallions in the twenty-six foot ceilings.

#### AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW PERIOD \_\_\_LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE \_\_\_RELIGION \_\_\_COMMUNITY PLANNING \_\_ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC \_\_\_PREHISTORIC \_\_\_CONSERVATION \_\_LAW \_\_SCIENCE \_\_\_ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC \_\_1400-1499 \_\_ECONOMICS \_\_\_LITERATURE \_\_SCULPTURE \_\_\_AGRICULTURE \_\_1500-1599 \_\_\_SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN \_\_\_MILITARY \_\_EDUCATION \_\_\_1600-1699 \_\_MUSIC \_\_\_THEATER \_\_\_ART \_\_\_ENGINEERING 1700-1799 \_\_\_EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT \_\_\_PHILOSOPHY \_\_\_TRANSPORTATION \_\_1800-1899 X\_COMMERCE \_\_\_POLITICS/GOVERNMENT \_\_OTHER (SPECIFY) **X**\_1900-\_\_COMMUNICATIONS \_INVENTION BUILDER/ARCHITECT SPECIFIC DATES 1926 Holabird and Roche

#### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

**8 SIGNIFICANCE** 

The Read House is the third hotel erected on this downtown site. Located directly across the street from the Chattanooga Union Station, which was built in 1858, enlarged twentythree years later, and razed in ca. 1972, The Crutchfield House House and the two Read Houses served as major hostelries and convention centers for countless thousands of visitors to the city and provided accommodations for Chattanoogans. That railroads were still an important mode of transportation in the twenties doubtless influenced the decision to replace the 1872 Read House with a modern, ten-story hotel. Despite the development of the interstate highway system linking Chattanooga with most major southern cities and the increasing competition from the growing number of motels in the vicinity, the Read House continues to attract visitors to the city and to serve local needs.

Martin Roche, a principal in the Chicago firm of Holabird and Roche, designed the Read House since he died on June 6, 1927, this was probably one of Roche's last buildings. Together with Chicago architects Louis Sullivan, John Wellborn Root, and Major William LeBaron Jenny, William Holabird and Roche wrestled with the knotty aesthetic question of the 1880s: How may multistory buildings be designed, using nineteenth-century materials and technology, which are sound, useful, and beautiful? During the eighties and nineties Holabird and Roche designed buildings which employed columns and large windows to convey the concept of lightness without sacrificing structural integrity; the design stressed utility over beauty. Root and Sullivan successfully combined both of these elements in their work. The Read House is the only known building designed by Holabird and Roche in Tennesse

The architectural style of the Read House is transitional as well as one which characterize its era. While not so effusively ornamented as buildings designed according to the tenets of L'Ecole des Beaux-Arts, neither does it appear so decoratively subdued as the Modernistic-styled edifices of a somewhat later period. A compromise between the horizontality of the earlier style and the verticality of later designs, the Read House contains elements of both in the use of quoins and double window surrounds to emphasize height and by employing the two-story frontispiece and connecting terraces to stress width. Some of the ornamentation assists in defining the sections of the building, and the use of projections and setbacks, which were typical of the twenties, further conveys this concept.

The fifty-year-old Read House has reached a precarious time in its history. Hotels built in the twenties and thirties are closing their doors in other southern cities and eventually fall prey to the wrecking crews. Today many travelers prefer the convenience and economy of the aluminim, glass, and plastic motels, and conventions are being held in contemporary-styled motels which appeal to the tastes and cater to the lifestyles of the 1970s. It is indeed significant that the Read House, with its sumptuous Green Room, elegant lobby, and opulent Silver Ball Room, continues to operate in burgeoning Chattanooga the fourth largest city in the state.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Burchard, John, and Bush-Brown, Albert. <u>The Architecture of America: A Social and</u> <u>Cultural History</u>. Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1966.

Information provided by Julian B. McQueen, Director of Sales, The Read House, January 30, 1976.

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