

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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NATIONAL REGISTER

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for 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 an 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 Polk Hotel

other names/site number Palm Crest Hotel

2. Location

street & number 800-810 Hinson Avenue N/A not for publication

city or town Haines City N/A vicinity

state Florida code FL county Polk code 105 zip code 33845

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)
George W. Ruff 1/27/94
Signature of certifying official/Title Date
State Historic Preservation Officer, Division of Historical Resources
State of Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the 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 Signature of the Keeper Date of Action 3/17/94

Entered in the National Register

Polk Hotel
Name of Property

Polk, Florida
County and State

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
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

Historic and Architectural Resources
of Haines City

**Number of contributing resources previously listed
in the National Register**

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Hotel

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Vacant

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Italian Renaissance Revival

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

walls Stucco

roof Composite

other Concrete: Porch

Narrative Description

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

Polk Hotel
Name of Property

Polk, Florida
County and State

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.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or 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.

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(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
- 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 # _____

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Commerce

Period of Significance

1926-1941

Significant Dates

1926

1930

1938

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Wallick, Frederick (Architect)

Stevenson and Cameron (Builders)

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Polk Hotel
Name of Property

Polk, Florida
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1

1	7	4	3	8	6	8	0	3	1	0	9	0	0	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

3

Zone		Easting				Northing								

2

Zone		Easting				Northing								

4

Zone		Easting				Northing								

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 W. Carl Shiver, Historic Sites Specialist

organization Bureau of Historic Preservation date December 21, 1993

street & number 500 South Bronough Street telephone (904) 487-2333

city or town Tallahassee state Florida zip code 32399-0250

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 SHPO or FPO.)

name Robert C. Nettleton

street & number P.O. Box 277 telephone (813) 422-6484

city or town Haines City state Florida zip code 33845

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 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 Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 1

Polk Hotel
Description

Summary Paragraph

The Polk Hotel is a nine-story, masonry, Mediterranean Revival style building constructed in 1926. It overlooks a busy thoroughfare at 800 Hinson Avenue (U.S. Highway 17/92), in a commercial area located just two blocks east of downtown. The hotel occupies the south third of a city block and is bounded on three sides by city major city streets and bordered on the rear by a narrow alley. The building has an irregular ground plan but features a symmetrical main (south) facade that is defined on the east and west by one-story wings that create a formal courtyard at the main entrance of the structure. This courtyard is raised and is marked by curved steps and a balustrade that further link the wings with the main building. The seven-story main shaft rests on a base that contains the lobby mezzanine and is defined at the top by a heavy masonry cornice. A hip roof ballroom pavilion occupies the main roof of the structure. The building is presently vacant and in fair condition, but retains most of its original fabric and decorative elements.

Supporting Narrative

Exterior

The main block of the hotel and its wings are constructed of a steel frame with hollow tile infill that has been stuccoed. The base of the hotel portion the of structure contains the lobby mezzanine, the main entrance to which is found on the south facade at the rear of a raised patio or courtyard. Arched window openings flank the central entrance, and French doors marking the mezzanine level are accented by balconets (Photo 6). Secondary entrances are found within arched openings flanked by Corinthian columns located on the east and west sides of the patio (Photo 8). The main entrance is found in the center of the facade and is sheltered by a one-bay, arched porch that rises to the full height of the mezzanine. The porch has a flat roof and is decorated with a bas-relief frieze on the parapet and a label molding that frames the archway.

The main shaft of the hotel terminates in a large cornice composed of a series of small arches. There is also a plain, narrow cornice that separates the top story of the shaft from the one immediately beneath it. Also, large corbels in the center of the main facade support a balcony located at the front of the roof pavilion that once contained a ballroom. The pavilion is

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Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 2

Polk Hotel
Description

two stories in height and has a hip roof surfaced with clay tile. Its broad eaves are adorned with carved wood modillions and a frieze composed of decorative cast brackets and rectangular panels (photograph 10). Three arched windows separated by Corinthian columns and linked by cast concrete balusters embellish the north and south elevations of the roof pavilion. Elevator and stairwell shafts and a large chimney flank this roof structure. Historic photographs indicate that the flat roof originally served as a large patio protected by an elaborate loggia with arched openings, Corinthian columns, and an entablature that extended around the east, south, and west elevations.

Nearly all of the hotel's original metal frame, four light casement windows have been replaced with metal awning windows. This alteration occurred about 1965, at which time the original entrance doors were also replaced. The window lintels are made of brick. Seven bays of windows extend across the north and south facades and three bays occupy the east and west elevations.

The hotel complex contains eleven commercial stores, a feature of the original design. The commercial blocks on the south, or front, facade are each divided into three sections (Photos 3 and 7). Partitions have been constructed within the store units to create small offices. Most of the stores are presently vacant, but the one found on the northwest elevation complex is still in use.

The retail store wings have gable main roofs covered with clay tile and flat, built-up secondary roofs (Photo 7). The center bays of the stores facing Hinson Avenue feature Palladian openings containing Tuscan columns and arched, multi-light transoms. Although the exteriors of two of the storefronts have been altered, the rest remain largely in their original condition. The Ninth Street side of the east commercial block has been enclosed (Photo 3), but the Eighth Street side of the west commercial unit still has some of its original metal transoms and fixed windows (Photo 2).

At the northwest corner of the hotel/commercial complex is a third commercial block. This unit is smaller than the ones along Hinson Avenue. One-story, flat roofed extensions found at the east and north elevations of the complex contain the original hotel dining room and kitchen (Photos 3-4). The dining room features large arched openings containing the original metal frame, multi-light windows and arched transoms.

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Section number 7 Page 3

Polk Hotel
Description

Interior

The hotel still largely retains its original floor plan. The lobby (Photos 11-15) is dominated by rows of square columns that rise the full height of the mezzanine. A registration area and manager's office lie immediately to the right of the entrance. Original light fixtures are still found on the ceiling of the lobby. To meet standard fire proof codes established in the 1920s, the architect and builder used wood only for some trim details, such as moldings for baseboards and door surrounds. Plaster covers most wall and ceiling surfaces.

The lobby area contains stairwells and elevators that provide access to the upper floors. Stairwells are located at the east and west ends of the lobby. A passenger elevator is located at the west end and a freight elevator is found on the east. Small corridors connect the hotel with the dining room and the retail stores (Photos 16 and 21). Metal French doors open from the corridors into those areas. The mezzanine level at both ends of the lobby contain small public areas. Those areas are open to the lobby below and are protected by wrought iron balustrades (Photos 11, 14, and 15). The mezzanine openings that overlook the dining room have been enclosed (Photo 16). Many original ceiling and stairwell light fixtures are still in place.

A central corridor runs the length of the building on each of the guest floors (photograph 17). The hotel contains seventy-two guest rooms. Windows located at each end of the corridors admit natural light. Paneled wood doors with hopper transoms open into the guest rooms (photograph 18), each of which has its own bathroom (Photos 19 and 20). The interior of the roof pavilion is essentially a large open space that served as a ballroom (Photo 22). An eight foot high partition presently divides the area into two sections. The interior spaces rise to the full height of the hip roof. Doors at both ends of the pavilion provide access to the roof patios.

The hotel is vacant, but local plans are being developed for the rehabilitation and reuse of the structure. The hotel and commercial shops have suffered water damage in some areas, and the entire structure shows signs of neglect and deterioration. The overall structure, however, remains structurally sound.

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Section number 7 Page 4

Polk Hotel
Photograph List

List of Photographs

1. Polk Hotel
2. 800-810 Hinson Ave., Haines City (Polk County), Florida
3. Sidney Johnston
4. 1992
5. Historic Property Associates
6. Main (South) Facade, Looking North
7. Photo No. 1 of 22

Numbers 1-5 are the same for the remaining photographs.

6. Main (South) Facade and West Elevation, Looking Northeast
7. Photo No. 2 of 22
6. Main (South) Facade and East Elevation, Looking Northwest
7. Photo No. 3 of 22
6. Rear (North) Elevation and East Elevation, Looking Southwest
7. Photo No. 4 of 22
6. Rear (North) Elevation, Looking South
7. Photo No. 5 of 22
6. Main Entrance and Courtyard, Looking North
7. Photo No. 6 of 22
6. East Commercial Block, Looking North
7. Photo No. 7 of 22
6. Secondary Entrance from Courtyard, Looking Northwest
7. Photo No. 8 of 22
6. Rear Entrance, Looking South
7. Photo No. 9 of 22
6. Eaves Detail, Roof Pavilion, Looking East
7. Photo No. 10 of 22
6. Interior, Lobby Columns, Looking East from Mezzanine
7. Photo No. 11 of 22
6. Interior, Column Detail, Looking East
7. Photo No. 12 of 22

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Polk Hotel
Photograph List

- 6. Interior, Registration Desk, Looking Southeast
- 7. Photo No. 13 of 22

- 6. Interior, Stairwell, Looking Northeast
- 7. Photo No. 14 of 22

- 6. Interior, Mezzanine, Looking Southwest
- 7. Photo No. 15 of 22

- 6. Interior, Dining Room, Looking Southwest
- 7. Photo No. 16 of 22

- 6. Interior, Typical Central Corridor, Looking West
- 7. Photo No. 17 of 22

- 6. Interior, Typical Room, Looking Northwest
- 7. Photo No. 18 of 22

- 6. Interior, Typical Bed Presently in Some Rooms
- 7. Photo No. 19 of 22

- 6. Interior, Guest Bathroom
- 7. Photo No. 20 of 22

- 6. Interior, Central Hall in West Commercial Block, Looking East
- 7. Photo No. 21 of 22

- 6. Interior, Ballroom, Looking Southwest
- 7. Photo No. 22 of 22

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Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 1Polk Hotel
SignificanceSummary Paragraph

The Polk Hotel is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places at the local level under criteria A and C in the areas of Commerce and Architecture. The 1926 building was one of the first "skyscrapers" erected in Polk County and is still one of the largest buildings in Haines City. The building serves as a reminder of the high water mark of economic development of Haines City during the Florida Land Boom of the 1920s. The hotel is a monumental example of the Mediterranean Revival style employing restrained Italian Renaissance details. The building was designed by architect Frederick Wallick. The building contributes to the "Historic and Architectural Resources of Haines City" multiple property group as defined under sections E and F of the cover document

Supporting Narrative

The Polk Hotel derives its name not from the county in which it is located but from the last name of Ralph B. Polk whose brainchild was the construction of a large luxury hotel in Haines City. Polk was an Indiana businessman and winter resident of Miami who had been born into a wealthy family in 1875. His father, James T. Polk, had made a fortune in canning foodstuffs, and after completing his education, Ralph Polk joined his father in business in the 1890s. He became an officer in several of his father's companies, including the J.T. Polk Company, the Polk Farming Company, and the Polk Sanitary Milk Company. Following World War I, Ralph Polk became interested in canning citrus products in Florida, and in 1921, he established a grapefruit cannery in Miami and built a winter residence there. The success of the enterprise prompted Polk to erect canning plants in other parts of the state, and by there 1924 were seven in operation, including one in Haines City. Polk was a leader in the canned fruit industry and served as a director of the National Cannery Association in 1923. The Polk Company continued to produce canned citrus through the late 1930s.

At the height of the 1920s land boom, and flushed with the success of the Florida canning business, Polk became attracted to the prospect of constructing a large hotel and commercial property in Haines City. The largest and most elaborate hotels erected in Florida during the early 1920s had been located in the coastal cities, but Polk believed that tourists could be attracted to Haines City, whose vigorous economy, fine transportation facilities, and beautiful lakes would induce

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Section number 8 Page 2

Polk Hotel
Significance

tourists and prospective winter residents to flock to the area. Polk presented his vision of a grand hotel to prominent local businessmen, in 1925 forming with several of them the Development Company of Florida as a subsidiary of the Polk Company.

Polk hired Frederick Wallick, an architect from Indianapolis, Indiana, to design the hotel complex. Wallick had a reputation for designing fine residences for wealthy patrons in the Indianapolis area. In 1925, Wallick established a winter residence and branch practice in Winter Park, Florida, where he designed several important residences. The Polk Hotel remains the only hotel or commercial building attributed to Wallick in Indiana or Florida. The plans for the hotel were complete by May 1925, and shortly thereafter Polk contacted the Adair Realty and Trust Company, an Atlanta firm, about financing construction of the hotel. Although Polk sought \$500,000 to cover the cost of construction, the Adair Company agreed to issue bonds amounting to only \$275,000, along with a commitment to finance the remaining \$225,000 at a later date. Polk then sent bid requests to prominent contractors throughout Florida. In August, he awarded the bid to construct the hotel to Stevenson and Cameron, a New York contracting firm that had a branch office in Sarasota.

Construction on the hotel began in August of 1925 and the building was ready for occupancy by July of the following year. The project was completed at a cost of \$500,000, and the new facility was billed as "the most distinctive hotel in the Scenic Highlands of Florida." Even while the building was under construction, however, Polk's hotel venture began to unravel. The boom had crested in 1925 and developers in Florida began to lose confidence in the projected success of new ventures. New investment began to decline rapidly in late 1926 after newspapers suggested widespread fraud in Florida real estate dealings, and tourism was dealt a severe blow by a hurricane devastated South Florida in October of the same year.

Polk had also overestimated the importance of Haines City as a growing transportation and industrial center. Still, the few guests that registered at the new hotel in 1927 received posh accommodations and treatment. The hotel staff included a surfeit of clerks, bellhops, and maids. The fine dining room featured elegant cuisine served by eager waiters. The hotel boasted a billiard parlor and even a professional tailor, but the adjoining shops constructed to cater to the various needs of hotel guests remained unoccupied, although a real estate firm and the chamber of commerce did lease offices there. Eventually, the payroll and

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Polk Hotel
Significance

maintenance requirements proved too costly, and in 1930, after four years of struggling to make interest bond payments and earn a return on his investment, Polk closed the doors of the hotel.

Beset with difficulties keeping his Indiana and Florida canning plants in operation with the onset of the Great Depression, Polk sought ways to divest himself of the hotel to free himself from any further bond debt and taxes associated with the property. In 1933 and 1934, he offered the building to the Knights of Columbus and other non-profit organizations, but to no avail. His attempts proved futile and in 1938 the municipal government of Haines City acquired the building in a settlement with the Polk Company for unpaid property taxes. Later that same year, the City sold the Polk Hotel to M.J. Palakow and Associates, a company with headquarters in Milwaukee and Chicago, who reopened the hotel for business on July 30, 1938, nearly eight years after the Polk had closed its doors.

The newly reopened hotel attracted few patrons, so in 1939 the City and new hotel operators persuaded the "Kansas City Blues", a minor league baseball team, to hold its spring training in Haines City. The management offered to provide room and board to the team members at generous rates in the hope that the presence of the baseball team would draw fans and tourists to Haines City, as well as the team members, officials, and newspapermen. The city government offered the team the use of an improved athletic field located near Lake Tracy. The "Blues" returned to Haines City in 1940, but could not agree with the hotel on terms for future use of the facility. The hotel company was able to contract with a Baltimore minor league team to use the hotel in 1941, but the association of the hotel and minor league baseball ended thereafter. The hotel was renamed "Palm Crest" when a new owner acquired the property after World War II. The current (1993) owner of the hotel is Robert C. Nettleton, a local attorney. The hotel at present stands vacant.

Architectural Significance

The Polk Hotel is a restrained example of the Italian Renaissance variation of the Mediterranean Revival style, which was popular in the United States between 1890 and 1935. The Italian Renaissance styling of the hotel is expressed in the use of arched window openings, elaborate cornices, Palladian window forms, and decorative classical motifs and relief work. The building is typical of high-rise hotels built in Florida during the 1920s, many of which embodied Mediterranean Revival styling.

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Section number 8 Page 4

Polk Hotel
Significance

The structure was a Polk County landmark and unique in Haines City when completed in 1926. The building epitomizes the Florida building boom of the 1920s, which was also the period marking the transformation of downtown Haines City.

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 1 Polk Hotel
Bibliography

Bibliography

- Barber, Bernice. From Beginnings to Boom: A History of Northeast Polk County. Haines City, 1975.
- Beede, G., comp. Directory of Polk County. Mulberry, 1913.
- Frisbie, Louise. Yesterday's Polk County. Miami, 1976.
- "Groves Hotel: Forerunner of Florida Military Institute." Polk County Historical Quarterly. 8, (September 1981): 2-7.
- Haines City, Florida. Minutes, Ordinances, Plat Books, Resolutions.
- Hetherington, M.F. History of Polk County, Florida. St. Augustine, 1928; facs. ed., Chuluota, 1971.
- McNeely, Ed. Century in the Sun: A History of Polk County, Florida. Bartow, 1961.
- Polk County Courthouse. Bartow, Florida. Deed Records, Plat Books, Property Appraiser Records.
- Polk County Historical and Genealogical Library. Bartow, Florida. Haines City Photograph Collection.
- Sanborn Map Company. Fire Insurance Map of Haines City, Polk County, Florida. New York, 1917, 1923, 1929, 1939.

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 1

Polk Hotel
Boundary Description & Justification

Verbal Boundary Description

Lots 8-11, Block 73 of the Town of Haines City Subdivision

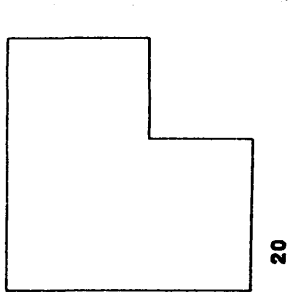
Boundary Justification

The above boundary encloses all of the property and resources associated with the historic Polk Hotel.

POLK HOTEL SITE PLAN



26

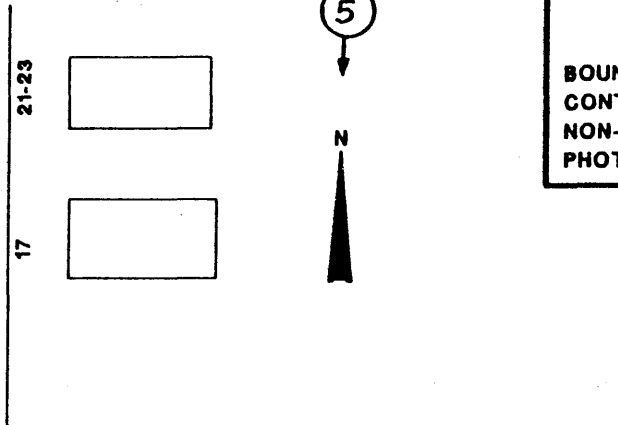


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714

N. 8TH STREET




21-23


17

5

N

LEGEND

BOUNDARY 

CONTRIBUTING BUILDING 



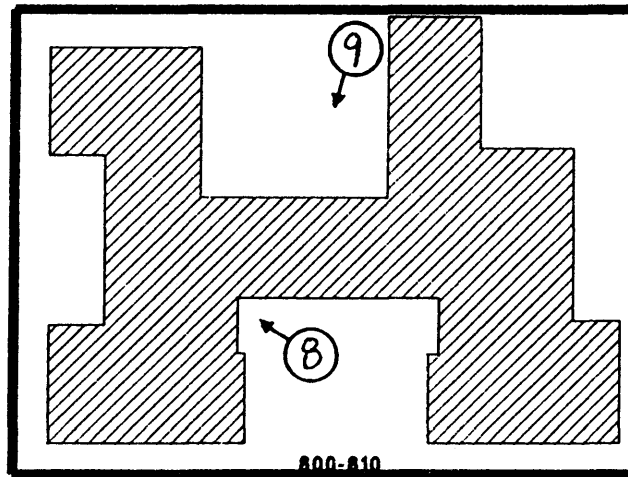
NON-CONTRIBUTING BUILDING 

PHOTO LOCATION 



800-810

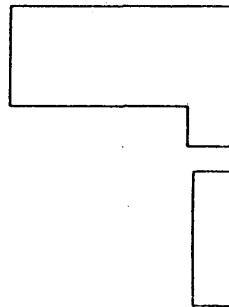
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7

HINSON AVENUE

N. 9TH STREET

19

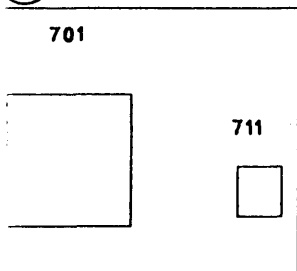


904



SCALE IN FEET

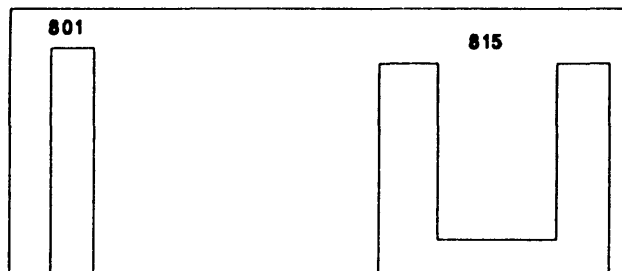
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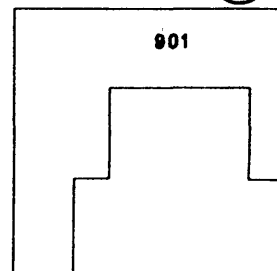
1



801

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3



901

POLK HOTEL FLOORS 2-10

