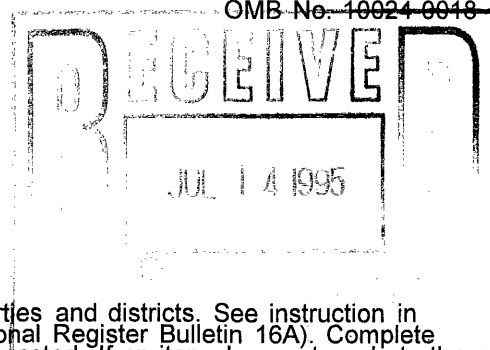


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determination for individual properties and districts. See instruction 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 Rossonian Hotel

other names/site number Baxter Building; Baxter Hotel; 5DV65

2. Location

street & number 2650 Welton Street [N/A] not for publication

city or town Denver [N/A] vicinity

state Colorado code CO county Denver code 031 zip code 80205

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 [].)

[Signature] State Historic Preservation Officer July 10, 1995 Date

State or 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

See continuation sheet [].

[Signature] Signature of the Keeper Date 8.15.95
Edson H. Beall
Entered in the _____
National Register _____

Rossonian Hotel
Name of Property

Denver County, CO
County/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 count previously listed resources.)

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.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register.

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Function
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/hotel

COMMERCE/restaurant

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/business

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY

AMERICAN MOVEMENTS/

Commercial Style

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation BRICK

walls BRICK

roof SYNTHETIC

other CAST IRON

TIN

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

Rossonian Hotel
Name of Property

Denver County, CO
County/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 Bibliographic 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)

SOCIAL HISTORY

ETHNIC HERITAGE/BLACK

RECREATION/ENTERTAINMENT

Periods of Significance

1929-1945

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person(s)

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Bettcher, George Louis

Primary location of additional data:

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State Agency

Federal Agency

Local Government

University

Other:

Name of repository:

Black American West Museum

Rossonian Hotel
Name of Property

Denver County, CO
County/State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1. 13 501900 4400270
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 Nancy R. Lyons, owner

organization Preservation Partnership date August 12, 1994

street & number 1540 Cook Street telephone 303-399-4550

city or town Denver state CO zip code 80206

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 Rossonian Limited Partnership

street & number PO Box 300548 telephone _____

city or town Denver state CO zip code 80203-0548

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 Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 1

Rossonian Hotel
Denver County, CO

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

SUMMARY

The most distinguishing feature of this three-story commercial building is its triangular plan with corner entrance. The form was dictated by its location on a wedge of land at the five corner intersection of Welton Street with Washington Street, 26th Avenue and 27th Street. The building dominates the center of what historically has been known as Five Points community. The area lies a short distance east of downtown Denver's commercial center. The Rossonian fronts onto both Welton and Washington Streets.

Stylistically, the structure owes most to Renaissance Revival with rusticated quoins in contrasting brick, simple square-top windows on the upper stories which are arranged to visually reinforce entrances at the commercial street level story. The neon signage and glass block door surrounds on the first floor are dominate features which introduce a 1930's character superimposed on the otherwise turn-of-century structure.

The simpler, three-story building which adjoins the Rossonian Hotel has been recently modified with the addition of two upper levels and with several interior connections to the Rossonian.

DESCRIPTION

Form

The unique triangular form of the Rossonian main building is comprised of the Welton Street facade, the Washington Street facade, and the rear facade which adjoins the secondary building along its full length. The buff-color brick of the street facades is accented with contrasting lighter-toned brick and limestone at quoins, base, and upper floor windows. The rear facade is common brick without detail. The first story retail space is taller than the upper stories with recessed storefront entrances. The two upper stories are identical and reflect their hotel use with one-over-one double hung windows.

Cornices

The main building cornice which extends the length of the street facades is deeply detailed with brackets and dentils. The frieze below this main cornice is a band of rectangular recessed panels which are ventilation openings with decorative grilles at intervals along the full length of the frieze. A secondary metal cornice, approximately eighteen inches deep, caps the first floor, terminates the quoins, and is continuous with the metal soffits at recessed entries.

Welton and Corner Facades

Two major entrances are articulated at the street level: the corner entrance and the main Welton Street entrance. The corner entrance is most prominent with a single bay of windows above, the name "Baxter" in the frieze below the main cornice, and the metal canopy with neon lighting directly over

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Rossonian Hotel
Denver County, CO

the doorway. The main Welton Street entrance is deeply recessed and highlighted with a bracketed wood hood and with open balconies with decorative cast iron railings at the two upper floors above. The soffit of this entrance is finished with decorative pressed metal with a turn-of-the-century motif. The doorways for both of these main entrances are of a 1930's character utilizing wood doors with a single, round light and glass block surrounds which tie them visually to the prominent neon "Rossonian" sign on Welton and the smaller "Grill" neon sign and canopy over the corner entrance.

The Welton Street main entrance is flanked by a storefront with recessed entry on the south and by a storefront and separate entry door with transom on the north. Storefronts are comprised of clear-glazed panels with narrow metal frames over a plain kickpanel with stucco finish. Muntins divide the storefront windows into approximately 3-foot widths horizontally and into lower and upper transom panels vertically. The larger storefront nearest the corner is articulated with two cast iron columns which extend out in relief from the face of the kickplate.

Washington Facade

The Washington Street facade has six masonry openings with storefronts identical to the Welton Street facade. Two openings are storefront windows only, two are storefront with center recessed doorway and one is a single glazed entrance door with transom. Upper floor windows are double hung and identical to the Washington facade except for the southmost two windows which are fixed six-pane and a smaller one-over-one.

Lincoln Liquors Building

The smaller three-story commercial building to the south abuts the main Rossonian building along its full length of the rear facade. The Lincoln Liquors building (so called because it was Lincoln Liquors as far back as anyone can remember) is primarily new construction built over the original one-story retail building. These improvements were designed with appropriate consideration of the adjoining historic structure and were approved by the National Park Service along with the *Part 2 Historic Preservation Certification* of the Rossonian rehabilitation in 1993. This building was included in the review of the rehabilitation because its modifications included openings between this building and the Rossonian building at three points in the interior.

The street facade is finished with a reddish-brown brick on the upper stories and a stucco finish at the street level. The facade is accented with a cornice at the parapet and a stucco reveal over the street level. The storefront openings are smaller in scale than the Rossonian with flush wood doors. Two one-over-one windows on each upper floor are similar in scale to the Rossonian windows but without detail.

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Rossonian Hotel
Denver County, CO

SIGNIFICANCE

The Rossonian Hotel is eligible for the National Register under criterion A for its association with the significant local pattern of events in the areas of social history, black ethnic heritage, and recreation and entertainment. The Rossonian Hotel was one of the most important jazz clubs between St. Louis and Los Angeles from the late 1930's to the early 1960's. Jazz greats such as Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong, Count Basie, Nat King Cole, George Shearing, and Dinah Washington stayed at the Rossonian Hotel and entertained at the Rossonian Lounge between major engagements in Denver or enroute to other cities. These major African American entertainers were denied lodging in most Denver hotels due to the racial segregation practices of the period. The Rossonian Hotel welcomed the entertainers who not only stayed in the hotel but performed in the main floor Rossonian Lounge. These shows were often staged after the performers finished their scheduled commitments at the same Denver hotels who were unwilling to offer them lodging.

The Rossonian building and site at the intersection of Welton, Washington, and 27th, was the physical, social, and commercial center of the Five Points community, the primary black community of Denver since the 1920's. Every long-time resident seems to have a story about the Rossonian, and these oral histories are the primary source of information. The majority population has traditionally given scant coverage to the events and developments in this community. The Rossonian building is the best remaining physical symbol of an important chapter in Denver's cultural history.

THE FIVE POINTS NEIGHBORHOOD

Denver's Five Points neighborhood is one of city's oldest. The area was included in the original congressional land grant that eventually became part of the city of Denver. The original residential development of the area was complete by 1914, housing moderate income families: railroad workers, teacher, and business people. The first streetcar line, the Denver Horse Railroad Company, opened its first one tract line from downtown Denver to the neighborhood in 1871. The new line originated at 7th and Larimer streets (in Auraria) and continued out Champa Street to 27th Street. The restructured public transit company, the Denver City Railway Company, replaced the horse-drawn cars with cable cars. By 1890, the Welton Street route was purported to be the world's longest cable car line. The intersection of 27th and Welton became known as Five Points after this name was adopted as the streetcar designation in lieu of the cumbersome alternative (Washington Street, 26th Avenue, 27th Street, Welton Street).

The 1920's saw a transition to a Black majority in the Five Points area which has continued to the present. In 1920, Denver's 6,075 African-Americans comprised only 2.4 percent of the city's population of 256,491, a proportion far below that of other major U.S. cities such as New York and Chicago. Compared to the minorities massed in those places, Denver's blacks were well educated and moderately prosperous. More than 222 of the city's 5,442 blacks owned their own homes in 1920, nearly five times the percentage in New York State. But the color lines were clearly drawn in Denver. At the Tabor and other theaters, blacks were ordered to sit in the balcony. When African American

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Rossonian Hotel
Denver County, CO

soldiers were stationed at Fort Logan south of town, nearby merchants objected. Blacks were expected to eat in black restaurants and to swim separately from whites at the Curtis Park pool, which was open to African Americans only twice a week. Many Blacks fought back. George Ross, a lawyer, and his wife, Gertie, edited the *Denver Star*, the city oldest black newspaper, which, with other papers such as the *Colorado Statesman*, championed minority rights. By the 1920's the black community had shifted northeast from segregated areas along Larimer and Blake Streets, centering much of its commercial activity in the Five Points area at Welton Street and 26th Avenue. The black residential neighborhood extended east from Five Points from about a mile, but whites in east-central Denver used custom, pressure, and restrictive real estate covenants to keep African Americans west of Race Street. During this time, many of the early white residents moved out of the area as the black community became the majority population.

The *Statesman* newspaper ran editorials about "Negro Suffrage" and the importance of not letting the Denver government deprive them of their constitutional rights. Most men were employed as janitors, shoeshine boys, Pullman porter, railroad cooks, dishwashers, pimps, and gamblers. Some had the courage to enter the professional ranks. Women worked in the domestic services, and some had office jobs Downtown. Five Points boasted an all black fire department thanks to Benny Hopper, although they had the oldest fire engine in the city. Benny Hopper, known unofficially as the "Mayor" of Five Points, ran the Ex-Servicemen's Club across Welton from the Rossonian. Hooper's generosity is well remembered with the recounting of his acquiring rabbits from hunters in Denver which he set out on the sidewalk in front of his club during the Depression for anyone who needed to avail themselves. The YMCA was the salvation of many children, with its numerous programs and activities it offered local youths. The largest employer was American Woodsman Insurance Company-an insurance company for Blacks still existing in Denver today, it provided man with opportunities to enter a professional career.

A 1940 snapshot view of the businesses in the immediate vicinity of the Rossonian and provide an indication of the character of the community and patterns of residential and business use. Most store owners lived walking distance from their shops and often within the same building. Many homes had sprouted businesses with the addition of a new storefront structure attached to the front of the house extending to the sidewalk. The area was not exclusively black. Most of the groceries, liquor stores, and bakeries were owned by Jewish grocers who lived on the west side of town and who were willing to extend credit to people when needed. The white community patronized black restaurants and night clubs. During the war, soldiers from the Lowry Air Force Base and Camp Carson flocked to the clubs, bars, and after hours jazz spots and Five Points established a reputation as Denver's music mecca.

From residential segregation much else flowed. In 1930-1950, a separate black culture in Five Points coalesced, developing a strong sense of community and cultural identity- a largely self-contained community with services and commercial establishments catering to African-Americans as well as other ethnic groups in the area. This culture centered along Welton Street which became the neighborhood's "Mainstreet" between 22nd and 29th Streets. As the jazz phenomenon of the late 1930's spread in

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Rossonian Hotel
Denver County, CO

popularity across the county, the loose and rhythmic music was alive and bopping in Five Points-and the Rossonian was the place for jazz in Denver.

THE BAXTER HOTEL (1912-1929)

The building at 27th and Welton was designed by architect George Louis Bettcher in 1912 for Robert Y. Baxter and first called the Baxter Hotel. Louis Bettcher (1862-1952) was born in Jersey City and moved to Denver in 1895 where he resided for the rest of his life. A member of the American Institute of Architects and the Unitarian Church, he was best known for his residential design work, primarily in the Denver County Club area. He also designed the Turnverein Building at Colfax Avenue and Clarkson Street. Mr. Baxter was owner of the Baxter Cigar Company.

In 1912, the Baxter Hotel stood as the most lavish of a small group of buildings at the Five Points intersection, surrounded by modest residential structures. This commercial node expanded through the years, particularly in the 1930-40's, to become the larger commercial strip that is seen today, often with stores built in front of the original houses.

THE ROSSONIAN HOTEL AND LOUNGE (1929-1945)

The "Rossonian" name was adopted in 1929 after Mr. AWL Ross who managed the building along with Mr. Kigh and a small group of African American men who worked as railroad porters and waiters. Ross was an attorney and newspaper publisher associated with the property throughout the 1930s. Mrs. Mary E. Baxter owned the building in 1932, followed by the Metropolitan Real Estate & Investment Company within which Ross served as attorney. Ownership and management changed many times during the period 1929-1945, but the individuals were all within a group of people known to each other. In the 1940s, Quentin Harrington and John Kigh managed the Rossonian and it was during this time that the club was most active and successful. In 1957 the building owner of record was Metropolitan Real Estate & Investment Corporation whose principals were Quentin Harrington, John Kigh, Mrs. Harold Brown, and Glen Davis.

During the 1935-45 heyday of the Rossonian, the Denver black community was socially, residentially, and commercially segregated from the majority population. The Rossonian gained its reputation for "authentic" jazz largely because of the big name black musicians who were drawn to Five Points. Despite their national stature as jazz musicians, they were not welcome at white owned and managed hotels in the city. They often came to the Rossonian Hotel and played at the Lounge between larger Denver engagements. The Rossonian did not discriminate and welcomed a mixed clientele of music lovers who enjoyed popular jazz by black and white musicians in the same venue.

The use of the structure, as recounted by longtime residents, included the Grill on the corner, serving food and drink, and the Lounge in the smaller south portion of the first floor, featuring live music. The Hotel lobby consisted of a registration desk at the top of the stairs which led from the Welton Street main entrance. For dancing, the place to go was Benny Hooper's Casino across the street.

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Rossonian Hotel
Denver County, CO

Duke Ellington later described the special place of jazz music in social history,

I pick a trumpet player to fill a spot because I think he's the right man for the spot in my band....But beyond that, we don't care what he looks like, what color he is, what race he belongs to or even what language he speaks best. Music is bigger than all those things and the successful band has but one requirement for its personnel: can it play the music?...There are jazz bands that achieve that so essentially different sound made up of a polyglot of racial elements...All harmony, too, for they have freed themselves from the suspicions of racial differences and dedicated themselves to the business of discovering, arranging, and playing of the different sound. The sound of harmony.

After World War II, Denver made strides towards reducing both legal and de facto racial segregation. Blacks and other ethnic groups increasingly found open doors at hotel throughout the city. The necessity of the alternative lodging provided by the Rossonian lessened. The lounge drew fewer traveling big name musicians as they found accommodations closer to their major engagements. While the hotel continued to be a center for jazz performances, the quality of the acts and the facilities both deteriorated as the 1950s gave way to the 60s.

The years from 1929 through 1945 are selected as the period of significance because this is the when the Rossonian Hotel and its lounge reached their peak as a center of black jazz in Denver.

EPILOGUE

Real estate in Denver opened to minorities in the 1950s, and there was an influx of African-Americans into other residential areas, notably Park Hill, with the result that the black community centered in Five Points became more dispersed. Elvin Caldwell, city councilman and former Manager of Public Safety in Denver, purchased the Rossonian in 1957 with the intention of a renovating the 35-room hotel as "the most luxurious establishment catering to visiting Negroes between Chicago and Los Angeles." The building was sold for back taxes in 1960 without improvements and has remained under-utilized and poorly maintained until recent years.

Beginning in 1991, rehabilitation of the Rossonian Hotel by Tom Yates, a private developer with AWL Financial Corporation, in partnership with the city of Denver, sought to preserve this important landmark structure and to return it to a state of utility. The work just completed in 1994 included extensive rehabilitation of exterior masonry, roof, cornices, doors and windows, historic signage, and building mechanical systems- under the purview of the National Park Service guidelines and certification review process. The upper floors are currently fully leased to the Denver Housing Authority and the first floor commercial space is being marketed to prospective restaurant/nightclub users who are attracted to the unique opportunity to step into a rich history that is the Rossonian.

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Rossonian Hotel
Denver County, CO

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Section number 10 Page 8

Rossonian Hotel
Denver County, CO

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Lots 4 through 8 inclusive, Block 184, Stiles Addition, City and County of Denver, State of Colorado.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundaries include all the land historically associated with the Rossonian Hotel. map 1943)

**United States Department of the Interior
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**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

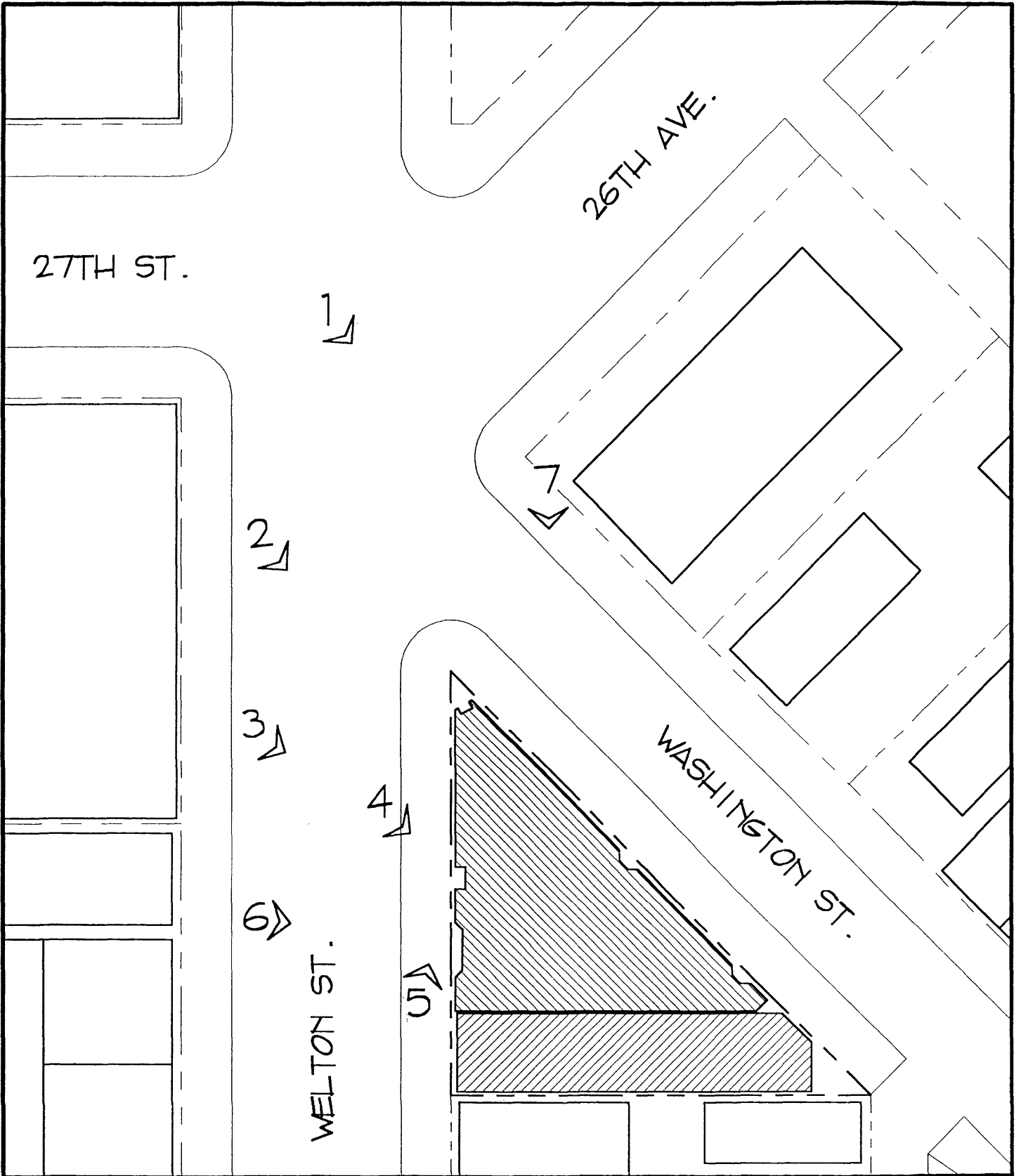
Rossonian Hotel
Denver County, CO

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LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS

All photographs below are of the Rossonian Hotel, 2650 Welton Street, Denver, Colorado

Ref.	Photographer	Date	Negative With	Description
#1	Nancy Lyons	7/94	Preservation Partnership, Denver	corner view with Welton and Washington Street elevations
#2	Nancy Lyons	7/94	Preservation Partnership, Denver	corner view with Welton Street elevation
#3	Nancy Lyons	7/94	Preservation Partnership, Denver	Welton elevation-Rossonian
#4	Nancy Lyons	7/94	Preservation Partnership, Denver	main Welton entrance
#5	Nancy Lyons	7/94	Preservation Partnership, Denver	storefront (typ.) Welton
#6	Nancy Lyons	7/94	Preservation Partnership, Denver	Welton elevation-Lincoln Liquors
#7	Nancy Lyons	7/94	Preservation Partnership, Denver	Washington elevation
#8	unknown	c.1945	Black American West Museum	Welton elevation
#9	unknown	1948	Black American West Museum	Lionel Hampton, "Dad" Hall, and Duke Ellington in front of Rossonian on Welton
#10	unknown	1932	Black American West Museum	Quentin Harrington (head shot)
#11	unknown	1948	Black American West Museum	Lionel Hampton and friends at Rossonian Lounge
#12	unknown	c.1948	Black American West Museum	couples at the Rossonian Lounge



Preservation
Partnership

Nancy R. Lyons
Denver, Colorado
(303) 399-4550

ROSSONIAN HOTEL

2640 WELTON STREET
DENVER, COLORADO

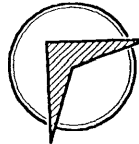


PHOTO KEY

1" = 40'