

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For HCRS use only
received **SEP 2 1980**
date entered **DEC 2**

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

1. Name

historic Van Gilder Hotel (AHRIS Site No. SEW-160)
and/or common The Office Block, Van Gilder Bldg/Block, Renwald Hotel

2. Location

street & number 307 Adams Street (907) 224-3079 not for publication
city, town Seward vicinity of Alaska, at large
state Alaska code 02 county Kenai Peninsula Boro code 210
Seward Division

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name Frank Trick (907) 224-3079
street & number 307 Adams Street
city, town Seward vicinity of state Alaska 99664

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. District Recorder (907)
street & number Box 596
city, town Seward state Alaska 99664

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Alaska Heritage Resource Survey
title (AHRIS) has this property been determined eligible? yes no
date April 15, 1968 federal state county local
depository for survey records Alaska Division of Parks
619 Warehouse Avenue, Suite 210
city, town Anchorage state Alaska 99501

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Van Gilder Hotel is a 3-story reinforced concrete building with full basement. The building measures 34' x 85'. There are 2,890 square feet on each floor, totalling 11,560 square feet. The concrete perimeter walls are 12" thick. The foundation is concrete and railroad ties. The exterior is stucco on the south (front) and west side; north and east sides are painted concrete; presently painted white with deep maroon trim.

The floors are constructed of laminated 2x10's, resulting in solid 10" wood floors. The basement floor is of concrete. Room height is 8' and hall ceilings are 10' high.

A new account description of the building, when it was opened in 1916, reads:

"The first two floors contain twelve office suites with hot and cold running water and lavatories in every suite. The hall partitions and doors are of non-transparent glass. The third floor is being fitted up for lodge purposes and will be second to none in Alaska. All exterior doors and windows are to contain wired plate glass. The windows are the celebrated Whitney windows and the building will be heated by an "Ideal" down draft boiler of 3750 feet capacity, with a Honeywell automatic temperature regulator. The radiators are of the "Peerless" screw nipper type. On the whole the building is one of the finest in Alaska...

It is one of three fine concrete buildings which have just been completed but it is the largest of the three...

Mr. Van Gilder deserves a tremendous lot of credit for giving a building like this to Seward. He came in a stranger and seeing that Seward must grow he set to work unostentatiously to erect The Office Block. It is an enforced concrete building eighty-four by thirty-four feet in dimension. On the first and second floors it has twenty-seven rooms. The basement is large enough to house the whole plant of the Gateway and on the third story, in addition to all the rest, are splendid lodge rooms.

At present there are 31 rooms available for rental. Six more rooms make up the manager's apartment and lobby. The basement contains 7 rooms and 2 bathrooms."

After 1921 the Masonic and Odd Fellows Lodge rooms on the third floor became "The Ballroom", after the two lodges constructed their own buildings. As the Van Gilder changed from a professional office building to a hotel, the third floor was for hotel guests. The front entrance was built as an archway, with stairs within the perimeter. The arch entrance now supports a canvas canopy, stretching out over the sidewalk. Under the cornice is a decorative wood trim unaltered.

In early photos a name on the front appears under the cornice and above the third floor windows. After 1921 the name Van Gilder is embossed on the face between the third and second floor windows, and Hotel between the second and first floor windows. Also a large sign was placed on the roof at an angle toward Fourth Avenue at this time.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1916;1921 **Builder/Architect** Van Gilder/Kingsley

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Van Gilder is not only the oldest surviving hotel in Seward, it also was the largest "and finest" of Seward's first three buildings of reinforced concrete. It retains the original quality appearance and integrity of design. The history of the building brings out the important role played by a major office building and fine hotel during the formulative years of Seward, after the government took over the building of the Alaska Railroad in 1916. Van Gilder has been a vital part of Seward life for 64 years, a landmark structure significant both in local, and State history. Van Gilder is associated with persons and events which made a significant contribution to local and State history; and it possesses integrity of location, setting, materials and workmanship that represent a distinguishable entity in Alaska's past, present and future.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE:

The Van Gilder Hotel was built as a modern office-motel building, completed in October, 1916. In February of that year, E. L. Van Gilder purchased the property, behind the Bank of Seward, from T. W. Hawkins (Brown and Hawkins) for \$4,000.00. Back in Kellogg, Idaho, he arranged for materials, then returned to Seward aboard the steamer Evans with his wife Sarah, and daughter Florence, in late May. He began construction of a 2-story office building. In August, during construction, the decision was made to add a third floor, for lodge rooms. William Kingsley, local architect, drew the plans for the addition. After completion, Van Gilder was in a serious financial condition. Undercapitalized he found it necessary to sell the building to Charles E. Brown of Brown and Hawkins bank and store on December 29, 1916. Van Gilder remained in Seward only until his only daughter completed her school year. Then he and his family reluctantly departed Seward. A letter from Florence Cutting (Mr. Van Gilder's daughter), in 1964, stated:

"I don't know why I should care so much about Seward. I lived there only one year; when I was thirteen years old. My father had become interested in the town by reading about the building of the railroad; and many people at that time thought Seward was (certain) to be a big city. We lived in Kellogg, Idaho, at that time. Father spent everything he had in putting up that building. It was (originally) planned as a two-story office building. While it was under construction, local lodge members persuaded him to add a third floor as a lodge room. Well, the development of Seward was very slow, particularly when Anchorage (instead) began to build up. And my father -- having exhausted his assets -- could not wait. So he sold the whole thing for less than he paid for the lots. We picked up and took the boat back to the States. At Ketchikan, while looking over the town, my parents were both offered jobs. So we hastily removed our belongings from the ship and stayed there a year. I worked part-time, too. We made enough (at Ketchikan) to invest in a small business in St. Helens, Oregon. That is my total experience in Alaska...I can see now that had my father been able to wait awhile

9. Major Bibliographical References

1. Cutting, Florence Letter Apr. 1964. Manuscript collection, Seward Community Library
2. Deed Records, Seward Recording District.
3. Interview: Virginia Darling, owner Brown & Hawkins, Seward, by M. Deck Apr. 1980.
4. Polk & Co., Inc. 1923-24; 1917-18.
5. Seward Weekly Gateway & Daily Gateway, Feb 29, 1916; May 19, 29, 1916; July 31, 1916; Aug 26, 1916; Sept 1, 1916; Oct 6, 28, 30, 1916; Nov 1, 11, 14, 17, 20, 29, 1916; Dec 2, 4, 20, 29, 30, 1916;

10. Geographical Data

July 2, 1921; Aug 6, 1921; Nov 19, 1921; Jul 21, 28, 1921; Apr 13, 1924; 6. Van Gilder Hotel Register Nov 1, 1921 to 1927. Property of Resurrection Bay Historical Soc.

Acreege of nominated property -1
 Quadrangle name Sew-A7, Alaska USGS

UTM NOT VERIFIED
ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

Quadrangle scale 1:63 360

UMT References

A	<u>0 6</u>	<u>3 6 4 4 5 5</u>	<u>6 6 6 4 7 4 0</u>	B			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C				D			
E				F			
G				H			

Verbal boundary description and justification

Lots 18, 19, 20 Blk 15 Original Townsite of Seward

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

state	code	county	code
state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Margaret Deck, Librarian/assisted by Pam Goodall & Helen Irick 5/2/80

organization Seward Community Library date 5/2/80

street & number Box 537 telephone (907) 224-3646

city or town Seward state Alaska 99664

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Douglas R. Rezer

title Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer date 8-21-80

For HCERS use only

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

James W. Ray date 12/2/80
 Keeper of the National Register

Attest: Linda Flint McCullen date 12.2.80
 Chief of Registration