

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM**

(Rev. 10-90)  
RECEIVED 2280  
**OCT 12 2001**  
NAT. REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
RECEIVED NAT. PARK SERVICE

1251  
12/20

**FEB 26 2002**  
NAT. REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**1. Name of Property**

historic name Hotel Metropolitan  
other names/site number (MC-NP-751)

**2. Location**

street & number 724 Jackson Street not for publication N/A  
city or town Paducah vicinity N/A state Kentucky code KY  
county McCracken code 145 zip code 42003

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets        does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant        nationally        statewide X locally.

David L. Morgan  
Signature of certifying official      David L. Morgan, SHPO and Executive Director, KHC

10-3-01  
Date

Kentucky Heritage Council, State Historic Preservation Office  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property        meets        does not meet the National Register criteria.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official      Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I, hereby certify that this property is:      Signature of the Keeper      Date of Action

- entered in the National Register      Beth Boland      4/12/02  
           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): \_\_\_\_\_

**5. Classification**                      **Category of Property**  
**Ownership of Property**                        X   building(s)  
  X   private                                             district  
       public-local                                     site  
       public-State                                     structure  
       public-Federal                                     object

**Number of Resources Within Property**  
                    Contributing              Noncontributing  
buildings   1                                  1    
sites                                                     
structure                                                     
objects                                                     
Total   1                                          1  

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**   0                        **Name of related multiple property listing** N/A

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions** (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat:   DOMESTIC                        Sub:   hotel  

**Current Functions** (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat:   WORK IN PROGRESS                        Sub:         
  RECREATION AND CULTURE                          museum    
  DOMESTIC                                          hotel  

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification** (Enter categories from instructions)

  LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS: Classical    
Revival       

**Materials** (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation   BRICK    
roof   ASPHALT: Shingle; WOOD: Shingle    
walls   METAL: Aluminum; Asphalt: Shingle;    
  WOOD: Weatherboard    
other   WOOD  

**Narrative Description** (see continuation sheets)

**8. Statement of Significance**  
**Applicable National Register**  
**Criteria**

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property 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.)

- a owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- b removed from its original location.
- c a birthplace or a 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.

**Period of Significance** 1909-51

**Significant Dates**

N/A

**Significant Person**

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Areas of Significance**

BLACK ETHNIC HERITAGE

TRANSPORTATION

**Architect/Builder**

unknown

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (on continuation sheets.)

**9. Major Bibliographical References** (on 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 # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary Location of Additional Data**

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

**Name of repository:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreeage of Property** less than one acre

**UTM References**

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing	
1	16	375 860	4104 710	3	—	—	Paducah East
2	—	—	—	4	—	—	Quad

Verbal Boundary Description and Justification (on continuation sheet.)

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Sharon Poat, Secretary  
organization Upper Town Heritage Foundation date August 1, 2001  
street & number 446 Kinkead Street telephone (270) 443-9229  
city or town Paducah state KY zip code 42003

**Property Owner**

name Upper Town Heritage Foundation  
street & number 724 Jackson Street (PO Box 7602)  
telephone (270) 443-7918  
city or town Paducah state KY zip code 42003

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**Description**

The Hotel Metropolitan (MC-NP-751) is located in Paducah, seat of McCracken County, Kentucky, at 724 Jackson Street. It is a long, narrow, two-story wood-frame building constructed on piers. It is located in the middle of an African-American residential block once tightly packed with houses and just around the corner from a business row with mixed two-story brick commercial buildings and frame houses. There are three houses remaining on the same side of the street as the hotel. Across the street, vacant lots make it easy to see the remaining commercial buildings on South 7th Street.

This north-facing building was constructed in 1909. It measures 26' x 65'6". The hipped roof, originally covered with wooden shingles, is now covered by gray asphalt shingles. The roofline currently sags in the middle, the result of settling of some of the interior support piers and of deterioration of some of the rafters. From the front, the hotel appears much as it did in a 1915 photo. The one-story front porch has four Corinthian columns and its original beadboard ceiling. The porch's hipped roof has a small central gable with decorative trim. These Classical Revival details comprise the building's exterior ornamentation. The sides are very plain: architectural ornamentation would have been unnecessary since the 26-foot-wide weather boarded building sat on its 30-foot-wide lot originally wedged between two shot gun houses. Architectural ornamentation in less-visible areas would also have been a luxury to the hotel's original owner, a woman of very modest means.

Inside the front door of the Hotel building is a small foyer with a check-in room to the left. To the right is a door that opens into a larger public space/hallway. From this public space, a door opens into the owners' quarters, which run along the left side of the building. Straight ahead is a short hallway that passes a 1950s bathroom and into two other rooms. The original guest rooms are up the L-shaped steps that run along the right wall and turn into the center of the building to open into a central hallway. This upper hallway runs from the front of the building to the back with doors to the guest rooms on either side. A total of eleven guest rooms are on the second floor. The second floor also retains the one original guest bathroom with its clawfoot tub and double sink. The guest rooms upstairs were heated with individually-flued stoves--several

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mid-century gas stoves are still in place. And transoms above each door improved ventilation of these second-floor rooms. Upstairs and down, the millwork is of plain milled boards and the walls were wallpapered lathe and plaster.

The non-contributing building is located about 20 feet behind the Hotel building. It is an L-shaped concrete block building, constructed ca. 1955, covered by a gabled and asphalt-shingled roof, with main doors opening to north and east and three metal-framed windows along the west side.

Changes in Building Fabric and Rehabilitation Plans

The hotel was in operation most of the twentieth century, and it was updated several times. However, the building's footprint remains basically unchanged, the striking, original details on the front facade remain, and inside and out most of the improvements have simply been layered over the original surfaces. The rehabilitation currently being planned for the hotel will consist in uncovering and restoring these original surfaces whenever possible. This rehabilitation will also address problems with deterioration and the structure which led, in part, to the City's 1999 condemnation of the building.

On the exterior, the hotel's original weatherboard has been well-protected by an earlier siding of brick-look asphalt shingles and the current sheathing of aluminum siding. The longer original one-over-one windows have been replaced with 1950s-vintage windows with horizontal muntins. In the planned rehabilitation, the windows will be replaced with one-over-one sashes of the original dimensions. The weatherboard also will be exposed. At the rear of the structure, a large two-story covered porch was enclosed in the 1950s, providing a storage porch on the lower floor and two extra guest rooms on the upper floor. This porch's historic appearance will also be restored.

On the lower floor, rooms in the owners' quarters have been paneled and ceilings have

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been dropped. The two bathrooms and the kitchen on the lower level are modern. Several rooms still have individually-flued, free-standing gas heaters. On the upper floor, the hallway has been covered with paneling. Several of the rooms have been similarly treated. However, others retain original plaster and vintage wallpaper, linoleum or rugs, and heaters. From inside the rooms original transoms are visible. The bathroom still has the original clawfoot bathtub and double sink. In the rooms that are in the center of the building, where the structural sag is the worst, water has leaked around the chimneys causing plaster damage.

Integrity Evaluation

This property's basis for eligibility is that it meets the terms of Criterion A, where it is significant for its association with Paducah's African American community. The most important integrity factors which allow the building to convey these historic associations are integrity of location, setting, and association.

The property is evaluated to have integrity of location simply because it has not been moved.

The property is evaluated to have integrity of setting. The setting of the property was evaluated on two levels: the setting of the property itself and the way that the property fits within the setting from which it derives its meaning, Paducah's African American community. Within the property itself, there is very little setting. Most of the land proposed for listing was covered by the building itself. Historically, two buildings stood very near on either side, so that little yard surrounding the building could be seen. Behind the Hotel was enough room to place a concrete block building after the Period of Significance. Because this building could not be seen from the public views of the property, i.e., from the street, its presence does not greatly damage the historic view of the property's individual setting. The property's community setting, however, has been greatly changed. One of the adjacent houses has been removed, and other buildings in this African American community have been either lost or greatly altered. Because the greatest intactness of setting is confined to the Hotel Metropolitan's immediate property, this nomination

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is for that area alone.

The integrity of association is also evaluated to be intact. Of all integrity factors for a property meeting Criterion A, integrity of association is the most important. While changes have been made to the building fabric which altered the building's design and materials, the basic identity of the building remains. The building historically was plainly designed, eschewing ornament, and defined by its massing and contours. Those design elements are present even today, so that its identity is not concealed even under layers of material.

Rehabilitations such as that planned for the Hotel Metropolitan will enhance the significant associations of Paducah's African American community in a two-fold way. First, removal of non-historic building fabric will clarify the individual historic identity of this building as an important site of African American accomplishment in Paducah. As its integrity of materials is revealed and its integrity of design is restored, it will become an even more tangible marker of its own important past.

In addition, the location of the building in proximity to other buildings within Paducah's African American community enables the Hotel Metropolitan to reinforce those important associations of the entire African American community. Sufficient loss of historic buildings has occurred, making listing of a historic African American district less feasible at present. However, the heightened identity of Hotel Metropolitan can only strengthen local awareness of the presence of that entire African American community today, the community which the Hotel Metropolitan served.



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**Statement of Significance**

The Hotel Metropolitan (MC-NP-751) meets National Register Criterion A and is historically significant within the context of "Building an African-American Community on the South Side of Paducah, KY, 1865-1950." This hotel was built in the heart of an African-American neighborhood that began developing immediately after the Civil War. Constructed for a young African-American woman in 1909, it served as the first hotel operated by and for African-American people in Paducah, Kentucky. Its success signals the beginning of greater migration among Blacks both within and through the area to greater employment opportunities, oftentimes, in more northern states. The forced racial segregation in the hotel business means that the Hotel Metropolitan provided a vital service for Blacks traveling through Paducah, while evidencing the accomplishments of the African-American community within that town.

Building an African-American Community on the South Side of Paducah, KY, 1865-1950

The building of the Hotel Metropolitan was an important milestone in the development of a thriving African-American community in Paducah. Even before the Civil War, this community began developing, at what was once the southern edge of Paducah. In the 1850s two churches were built to serve slaves and freed people. Washington Street Baptist Church and the Methodist church, now known as Burk's Chapel AME (MC-NP-106), are only four blocks apart along South 7th Street. In coming years, these churches would anchor the Black residential neighborhood that grew between them and just to the south of Burk's Chapel.

The 1870 Census shows that after the Civil War there were households of freed people living in an L-shaped area where Union forces had been encamped only a few years before. This area ran from the 700 block of Washington Street west to the edge of town and from the 700 block of Washington Street south past Tennessee Street. The largest clusters of families lived at the very southern end, from the 600 to the 800 block of Tennessee Street. (See map next page.)

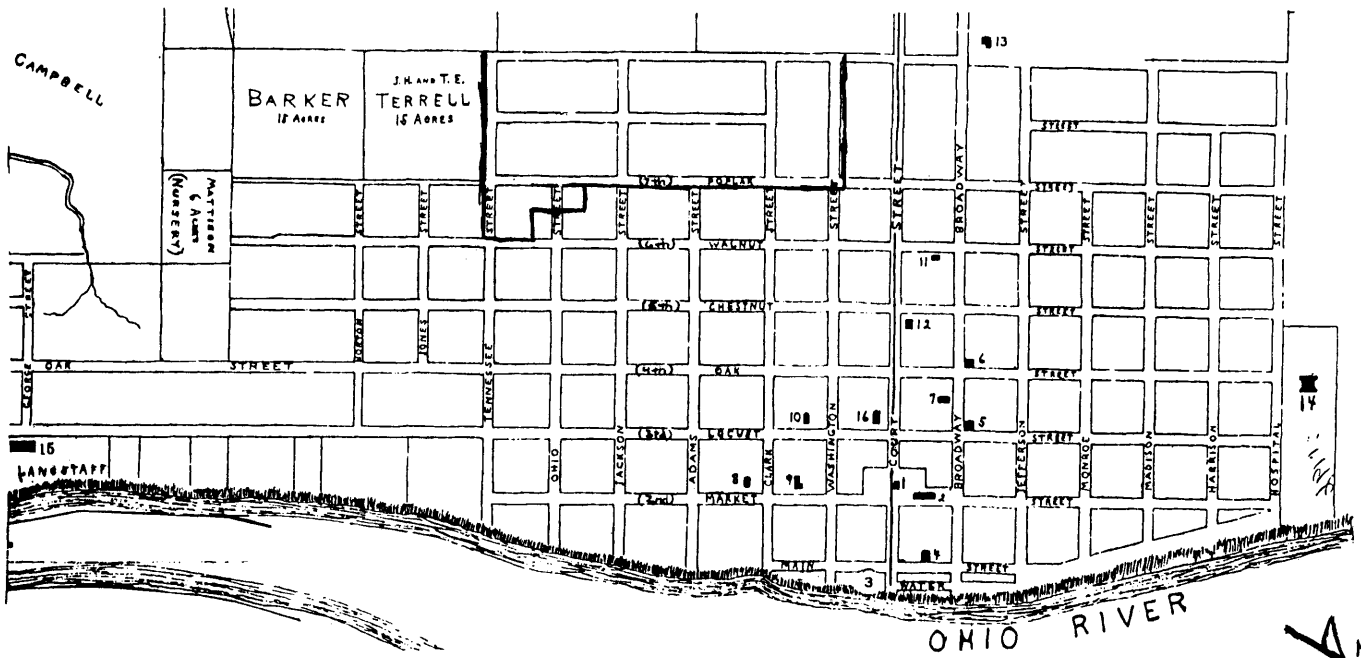
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Map reprinted from Fred Neuman's *The Story of Paducah*.



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THE STORY OF PADUCAH

MAP OF PADUCAH IN 1856.

- 1. Courthouse. 2. Market House. 3. Marine ways. 4. Branch Bank of Louisville. 5. Commercial Bank of Kentucky. 6. Broadway Methodist Church. 7. First Baptist Church. 8. First Christian Church. 9. Grace Episcopal Church. 10. Cumberland Presbyterian Church. 11. St. Francis de Sales Catholic Church. 12. Female Seminary. 13. Paducah Male University. 14. Marine Hospital. 15. Site of old Langstaff mill. 16. First Presbyterian Church. Note on railroad track on Kentucky Avenue to river.

The families who lived in this neighborhood worked in river-related businesses, on the construction of roads, on the railroad, in the tobacco warehouses and foundries. They worked as domestics, washerwomen, seamstresses, and nurses. The Census reports that 158 of them attended school; in *A History of Blacks in Kentucky*, Marion Lucas notes that the Freedmen's Bureau and the Chicago-based Northwestern Freedmen's Aid Commission both opened schools

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in Paducah. Their households were often made up of at least one traditional husband-wife-children family. Often additional people lived in the household: a young couple, several unrelated young adults, a woman with several children, or simply several children apparently from different families. Paducah had no municipal structure of social services to take care of families broken by death and/or poverty, and certainly many people helped friends, family, and community in various ways until the establishment of city institutions such as the Home of the Friendless (listed 11/15/00).

By the early 1880s, a few of the residents of this area had become entrepreneurs, opening barbershops and bathhouses in Paducah's central business district. Colored lodges of Masonic and Odd Fellow organizations had also formed and were meeting in rented rooms downtown. Within ten years, though, the center of the African-American community shifted. While some entrepreneurs continued to work downtown, this neighborhood would, by the end of 1880s, have enough economic power to support its own small businesses on the south side.

In the twenty-five years since the end of the Civil War, the development of this Paducah neighborhood was typical of that of African-American communities described by Victor Howard in the introduction of Black Liberation in Kentucky,

As slavery collapsed, the blacks moved to the cities or created communities on the outskirts of county seats. Wages earned by labor or from army service during the Civil War were translated in time into institutionalized wealth in the form of schools, churches, fraternities, and small businesses such as boardinghouses and barber shops. The developing middle class supplied leadership in the struggle for equal rights and suffrage (2).

Between 1890 and 1910 this community matured as social institutions began to dot Paducah's landscape. Several new churches were added. Many schools arose, few of which survive today. Lincoln High School (MC-NP-184, demolished 1999), which stood only a block-and-a-half from Burk's Chapel, began graduating students in 1895. The many schools built for the African American community are detailed in the nomination form for the Augusta Tilghman High School, listed 4/03/95.

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The residential part of the neighborhood grew far beyond its original southern boundary, reaching its current limit by the turn of the century: it stretched an additional four blocks along 7th and 8th Streets and then continued an additional five blocks along 8th, 9th, and 10th Streets to the edge of Cross Creek. This thickly populated neighborhood supported a thriving business district in the heart of the original community.

The Odd Fellows completed a three-story brick building on one corner of 7th and Adams (midway between the two anchoring pre-Civil War churches) in the late 1880s. The Masons laid the cornerstone for their building--which still stands on another corner of 7th and Adams Street--in 1904 (MC-NP-105). These buildings provided meeting space for the fraternal lodges, for affiliated women's organizations, and even other civic groups--including youth groups and the Black branch of a group of Union veterans. These buildings also provided much more: they housed shop fronts and office space. In fact, along the gravel of South 7th Street from Washington Street to Jackson Street, there were grocery stores and druggists; restaurants, lunch stands, and saloons; barbers, cobblers, and a funeral home. There were the offices of physicians, dentists, lawyers, and insurance agents. Nearby, there were blacksmiths, bakers, and seamstresses. Brick business fronts crowded against tightly packed weatherboard houses of all shapes and sizes.

Most of these buildings are now gone; however, the Masonic Lodge still stands at 501 South 7th Street. Less than a block to the north, the Hamock-Bowles Funeral Home has been serving the community from that location since 1937. Two blocks to the south congregants at Burks Chapel AME have been worshipping in the current building since 1909. In between the Masonic Lodge and Burks Chapel and half a block down Jackson street past three early twentieth century homes, sits another 1909 building: the Hotel Metropolitan.

The hotel's contribution to the community was an important one, because the thriving neighborhood attracted newcomers and visitors. In the following years, the hotel would play host to traveling entertainers who could not find lodging in smaller surrounding towns. Thus, the hotel strengthened and enriched Paducah's South side African-American community.

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By 1910, there was easy access to this bustling neighborhood for newcomers and visitors. There were passenger train depots only a few blocks away in either direction. And trolleys ran along 6th Street and 10th Street, bringing passengers from either train depot or from steamboat packets at the riverfront. However, African-American visitors to Paducah would not have been welcomed at any of the hotels that served White patrons. White visitors to the city had at least two choices of hotels as early as 1859, according to the City Directory of that year. City Directories from the first decade of the twentieth century show between six and eight hotels serving White visitors. Most were located on or directly off Broadway, in Paducah's business district. A couple were located in more residential neighborhoods, on both the north and south sides of town. These ranged from the modest to the splendidly modern Palmer Hotel.

There were, however, no hotels listed which served the needs of African-American travelers. Before 1909, African-American newcomers and people just passing through would have stayed with friends or family. Those who arrived without prior arrangements might have found someone who could point them toward one of several African-American women who took boarders into their homes. Several African-American women did that as an alternative to domestic or laundry work. Census information shows that as early as 1870 accommodating lodgers had been a viable way to make money and provide a needed service for the community.

Until 1908, a young woman named Maggie Steed had been one of many folks taking lodgers into her home. In 1909, she realized her goal of building a hotel--a business that would serve those just passing through as well as those just arriving and trying to get on their feet in Paducah. In a description of herself printed in a 1915 publication from the General Association of Colored Baptists, Maggie Steed writes "being economical and having a business mind, [Mrs. Steed] saw the need of a modern hotel in the city to accommodate her people" (Parrish, 211).

Mrs. Steed not only saw the need, she was also able to effectively fill it. In 1904 Henry Steed had purchased a small frame house at 724 Jackson Street. This location was just around the corner from the African-American business district that was thriving along 7th street, and this is the house where they accepted boarders. Henry Steed died a year and a half later, and the house was deeded to his wife, Maggie. She was not yet 30 years old.

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She continued taking boarders for three years. In the fall of 1908, she approached the Langstaff-Orm Lumber Company, a sprawling plant along the Ohio riverfront on Paducah's south side which dominated the lumber industry from before the Civil War until the 1937 flood. Maggie Steed gave the lumber company title to her property as security for the lumber she would need to build a hotel. The house was razed in the fall of 1908 and the Hotel Metropolitan was completed by the spring of 1909. At the end of five years, when she had paid \$1,250 plus interest, she regained the full title to the property.

During this time, the Hotel Metropolitan saw sporadic competition from the Burlington Hotel and Saloon. Albert Strauss ran this establishment, which was located about twelve blocks away, near the riverfront in an old commercial building. Throughout the 'teens, it operated as a hotel and saloon, before becoming an establishment dedicated to selling "soft drinks." Police reports listed in the local newspaper of the day suggest that the Burlington offered a rowdy atmosphere. The Hotel Metropolitan was seen to offer a modest but respectable alternative in a good neighborhood.

In 1917 Mrs. Tenie Brown built another hotel for Black visitors just around the corner from the Hotel Metropolitan. It was built following the same basic floor plan as the Metropolitan--owner's apartment and public space downstairs and rooms off a central hallway with a shared bath upstairs. Due to financial difficulties, this building was repossessed and never accepted visitors until Lula and James Hodge opened the Jefferson Hotel there in 1923. The Jefferson Hotel and the Hotel Metropolitan were the only hotels continuously catering to Black visitors in Paducah until the late 1940's.

According to Reverend James Hodge, son of the Jefferson Hotel's original owners, these two establishments--and the Black community as a whole--survived by cooperation as well as competition. The hotel's owners were friends and neighbors. When one was booked or had a larger reservation that they could not handle, they called the other. When both hotels were full, they had a network of women in the community who accepted visitors, and they called on them.

Reverend Hodge also notes another survival strategy for these Black hoteliers: they each

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kept a few rooms for regular boarders to provide a steady income stream, reserving the remaining rooms for more temporary visitors. The 1920 U.S. Census records make a clear distinction between the four "roomers" and the one "boarder" at the Hotel Metropolitan (Ward #9, Sheet 4A).

Little has been discovered about the hotel's earliest guests. It housed participants in the 1911 convention of the General Association of Colored Baptists in Kentucky. It would have served other conventioners as well, and it would have been packed during 8th of August festivities when special excursion trains brought visitors to town. Some of the guests during the early decades of the hotel's operation might have been moving North, part of the Great Migration of Black men, women, and children from the rural South to the urban North. Between 1910 and 1930, many made the trip, and for men especially it was common to make extended stops in towns along the way to earn money.

As early as the 1920s, teams from baseball's Negro Leagues came to Paducah to play at Hooks Park during 8th of August. Teams continued to come to Paducah throughout the 1940s and the '50s to play exhibition games at Hooks Field or Brooks Stadium. The Harlem Globetrotters came to town twice, playing just down the block from the hotel at Lincoln High School's gymnasium. Richard Bell, an entertainment promoter with ties to Louisville, moved here and began to bring in well-known musicians: Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Cab Calloway, and Chick Webb's orchestra. Later came BB King, Bobby "Blue" Bland, and Ike and Tina Turner. All of these traveling performers stayed at either the Hotel Metropolitan or the Jefferson Hotel. Although several of them had fame and money enough to merit better accommodations, nothing fancier was available.

Fifty years ago Lester and Olivia Gaines bought the forty year old Hotel Metropolitan and refurbished it, making it an attractive place for these now-famous visitors and for another extremely important group of guests: men that flooded into Paducah to work on construction at the nearby atomic energy plant and dams at the Cumberland and Tennessee Rivers. These workers kept rooms full and inspired several other short-lived Black hotels during the late 1950s and early '60s. When the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was passed, hotels were officially

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desegregated. Within the next decade, most of the Black-owned hotels in town ceased operation. However, the Hotel Metropolitan continued to operate until the death of Mrs. Gaines' sister, Ms. Nancy Strickland, in 1996. During its final years of operation, it continued to serve out-of-town construction workers needing affordable accommodations.



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**Verbal Boundary Description**

Book 2, Page, 18, Parcel 3, City of Paducah Property Records.

This is the same property described as "Tract II" in the Deed recorded in Deed Book 932, page 387, McCracken County Clerk's office:

Being a part of Block No. 26 of Addition 'C' or Upper Town of Paducah, and beginning at a point on the south side of Jackson Street 80 feet eastwardly from the southeast corner of the intersection of Jackson Street and 8th Street; thence eastwardly along the south line of Jackson Street 30 feet; thence at right angles and towards Ohio Street 163 feet to an alley; thence at right angles west and along the line of said alley 30 feet; thence at right angles 163 feet to the point of beginning.

**Boundary Justification**

The nominated property includes the 30' x 163' parcel historically associated with the hotel.

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Same information for all photographs:

Property name: Hotel Metropolitan  
Location: 724 Jackson Street, Paducah, McCracken County, KY  
Date of Photograph: July, 2001  
Photographer: Sharon Poat  
Location of Negatives: Photographer

Photo-specific information

Photo 1: east side and north (front) facade, camera facing to the southwest  
Photo 2: front facade and west side, camera facing to the southeast  
Photo 3: front facade, camera facing to the south  
Photo 4: south (rear) and east sides, camera facing to the northwest