

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

JUN 15 1987

For NPS use only

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

received APR 28 1987  
date entered

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

**1. Name**

historic Robbins Hotel

and or common

**2. Location**

street & number Highway 265 NA not for publication

city, town Beatrice NA vicinity of congressional district 1

state Alabama code 01 county Monroe code 099

**3. Classification**

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

**4. Owner of Property**

name Robbins Hotel Partnership

street & number Post Office Box 38

city, town Beatrice NA vicinity of state Alabama 36425

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Monroe County Courthouse

street & number Courthouse Square

city, town Monroeville state Alabama

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Alabama Inventory has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1970-present  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Alabama Historical Commission

city, town Montgomery state Alabama

## 7. Description

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

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Robbins Hotel is located on a large rectangular lot in the center of Beatrice which is a town about 20 miles north of the Monroe County seat of Monroeville. Louisville and Nashville Railroad tracks form the eastern boundary of the property passing about 200 feet to the rear of the hotel. The hotel faces Highway 265 which was the old thoroughfare through town until interstate highway connectors diverted traffic east of Beatrice.

The Robbins Hotel is an approximately 40' x 50' two-story, hipped-roof structure with a one-story gabled extension to the southeast. The primary mass rests on brick piers and new timber pilings.

Built about 1840 the earliest portion of the house was a primitive six-room dwelling with wide central dogtrot. Its wide, pine board construction (10"-18" random width wall and ceiling boards) is still evident as are crude dado, four panel interior doors, 6 1/2" pine floors and two original Carpenter lock sets. Three country interpreted Federal mantels also remain. The only exterior evidence of the original nucleus is, however, random first floor 9/9 wooden sashed windows.

About 1905 when the Robbins home evolved into a boarding house/hotel, a second floor was added to the building which gives it its present identity. Beaded pine walls, 3" pine flooring and brick mantels characterize the interior of the addition. It was perhaps at the same time that the kitchen/dining room wing was added.

This two-room addition extends approximately 40' south from the southeast corner of the house and is positioned so that it seems to face the railroad tracks to the east, although two gable dormer windows added in the early 1950s seem to reorient the wing to the west. The addition rests on timber pilings with brick piers around the periphery.

The exterior of the three-bay hotel is characterized by full two-story porches at the front and rear with double-door openings at both levels, in the front and on the first floor in the rear. One interior brick chimney survives on the south side of the house and serves four fireplaces. The twin brick chimney on the north side of the house has been capped in the attic. Most of the windows have 6/6 and 9/9 wooden sashes but there are a few 4/4 placement windows.

# 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 type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–1937	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

**Specific dates** c. 1902      **Builder/Architect** unknown

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

Criterion A - Transportation

The Robbins Hotel is locally significant for its associations with early 20th-century transportation. It is an excellent surviving example of a small privately-owned southern hotel which opened as a direct result of the completion of the railroad connecting west Alabama and the Gulf Coast in 1899. It served the rail and subsequently the automobile traveler.

\* \* \* \* \*

The Selma to Pensacola rail line was chartered in 1858 but construction was barely completed 40 miles south of Selma when the Civil War broke out. Intermittent postwar construction and financial entanglements left a 45-mile gap through rural Monroe County in the line's completion that was not completed until 1899. The Daniel Robbins farm, with the exception of the Robbins House, was among land purchased by railroad contractor Robert M. Quigley for purposes of establishing the railroad right-of-way which subsequently passed approximately 200 feet east of the house. The Robbins House immediately became a haven for railroad people, commercial travelers, sportsmen and other guests brought to town by the new railroad. It was this close proximity to the railroad line that necessitated the c. 1905 enlargement of the Robbins House and gave it its present identity. The Robbins House turned hotel, served the rail traveler and subsequently the automobile tourist of the 1920s-1930s.

Statement of Integrity

The Robbins Hotel, which is significant for its associations with 20th-century transportation has retained its location, design, workmanship, material, feeling and association despite the addition of asbestos siding. A physical inspection of the property reveals the original weatherboard beneath the asbestos siding and it does not appear as if any important architectural ornamentation was destroyed. The structure contains the majority of its features that are essential to illustrate massing, spatial relationship, proportion, pattern of windows and doors, texture and ornamentation.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

# 10. Geographical Data

Acree of nominated property less than 1 acre

Quadrangle name Beatrice

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

### UTM References

A 

1	6	4	8	0	1	5	0	3	5	1	0	9	8	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

### Verbal boundary description and justification

Lot measuring approximately 280' x 332'.  
Boundary corresponds to present ownership. See attached plat map.

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

state NA code county code

state code county code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Marilyn B. Sullivan/Consultant, Point of Reference  
Steven Kay/Historian

organization Alabama Historical Commission date May 15, 1986

street & number 725 Monroe Street telephone 205 261-3184

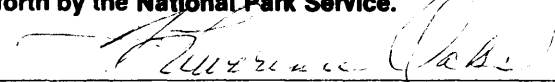
city or town Montgomery state Alabama 36130

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

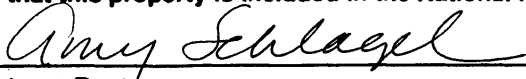
As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature 

title State Historic Preservation Officer date 7-16-87

### For NPS use only

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

 date 8/26/87

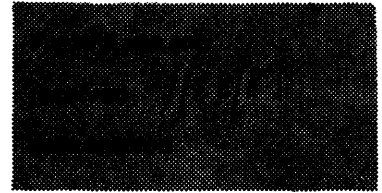
Keeper of the National Register

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

Chief of Registration

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Historical Summary

While Monroe County was created in 1815 and general settlement in the county was very early by Alabama standards, there were several communities that were not born until the railroad bisected the county in 1899. Beatrice, Alabama is one of them.<sup>1</sup>

The rail line which would ultimately connect west Alabama to the Gulf Coast at Pensacola was actually chartered in 1858 but construction was barely completed 40 miles south of Selma when the Civil War broke out. Intermittent postwar construction and financial entanglements left a 45-mile gap through rural Monroe County in the line's completion when it finally defaulted in 1879. Purchased by the Louisville and Nashville Railroad in 1880, it was not until 1899 that the line was finished between Pineapple and Repton.<sup>2</sup>

In January of that year (1899) the line was chartered between the two towns and Robert M. Quigley, contractor for the road bed set about buying land for the right-of-way. Among other property he purchased, in his own name, was the

"W 1/2 of NW 1/4 of Section 19 Township 9 Range 9 and the NW 1/4 of the SW 1/4 of Section 19 Township 9 Range 9 except a certain parcel thereof described as follows commencing at a point 233 feet due South of the S.W. Corner of the N.E. 1/4 of said Section 19 thence due west 500 feet, thence due South 500 feet, thence due East 500 feet, thence due north 500 feet to point of beginning,"<sup>3</sup>

or the Robbins parcel excluding the Robbins home.

Barbara Robbins retained the home she and husband Daniel had purchased in 1860 from George W. and Mariam Dubose Davison.<sup>4</sup> Little is known about the Davisons at this writing except that there were apparently two George W. Davisons in Monroe County at the time. It is certain, however, that George W. and Mariam married in 1853<sup>5</sup> short-

<sup>1</sup> Monroe County Records, Deed Bk. 50 p. 499, Bk. 51 p. 213.

<sup>2</sup> Owen, Vol. II pp.906, 1164-1165, 1239-1240. The Eagle, Oct. 28, 1899, p. 1. Dec. 20, 1899, p. 1.

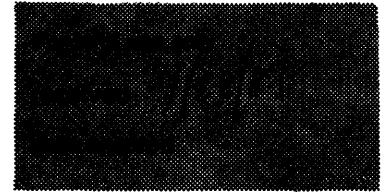
<sup>3</sup> Monroe County Records, Deed Bk. 50 p. 499.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., Deed Bk. 10 p. 431. (Deed not recorded until 1874.)

<sup>5</sup> Monroe County Marriages, 1830-1880.

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ly after G. W. Davison began buying up the 40-acre parcels surrounding the house site in Section 19, 23 and 24.<sup>6</sup>

William A. Hutto, listed in the Lowndes County Census of 1830, purchased the 40-acre house site from the U. S. Government in 1836.<sup>7</sup> He subsequently appears in the 1840 Census of Monroe County but not in the 1850. Interestingly, it was not until about 1850 that the surrounding parcels were sold by the government. No record is found of Hutto's sale or any other transfer of the property to G. W. Davison but some kind of exchange apparently took place since the parcel is included in Davison's sale to the Robbins in 1860.<sup>8</sup>

Carpenter lock sets manufactured before 1844, floor plan and construction materials as well as historical circumstance thus seem to indicate that the one-story, six-room house which forms the nucleus of the Robbins place was built by William Hutto sometime around 1840.

By the time Davison sold the property in 1860, appurtenances included a gin to the north of the house which the Robbins subsequently operated.

While relatively little is known about this early period of the house, the dwelling's "second life" began with Mr. Quigley. Reselling a portion of his Robbins purchase on October 25, 1899, to the L & N Railroad, Quigley filed on October 26, 1899, a plat for the town of Beatrice, drawn from Robbins' lands. Central to the new town and approximately 200 feet west of the railroad tracks was the Robbins Home.<sup>10</sup>

The Robbins house situated thus and the Robbins family having consisted of some 19 children, it is not surprising that they soon gained a reputation for taking in and "feeding railroad men." In fact, by January 23, 1902, the Monroe Journal records that an "oyster supper to benefit Quigley Institute" will be held at the Robbins House, just the first of such social events recorded over the next 60 years.

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<sup>6</sup> Monroe County Records, Tract Book.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., certificate #32976.

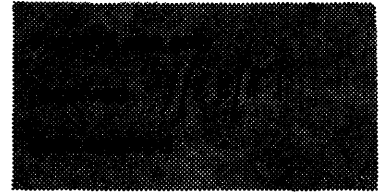
<sup>8</sup> Monroe County Records, Deed Bk. 10 p. 431. (Deed not recorded until 1874.)

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. Interview with Daniel L. and Rebecca Robbins.

<sup>10</sup> Monroe County Records, Deed Bk. 50 p. 499, Bk. 51 p. 213.

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The Robbins House apparently developed into a full-fledged hotel between Barbara Robbins' death in 1906 and 1910 when the newspaper begins recording hotel guests for the week. Family tradition and physical evidence indicate that a second story was added to the house at that time to accommodate the ever-growing number of guests.<sup>11</sup>

Quigley developed two other towns along the Pineapple to Repton line. Kempville (renamed Tunnel Springs in 1902) and Monroe (commonly called Monroe Station) were to the south of Beatrice. Kempville received the most advertisement and boomed between 1900 and 1905; Beatrice for some reason lagged behind. Perhaps the troublesome "element" referred to in the Monroe Journal of February 9, 1905, had some bearing on growth.

"Our town is very quiet now, there have been no disturbances here lately. Beatrice has quite a reputation for brawls, but it is made by people who do not live here. So many from the surrounding country come here for different purposes. The residents are peaceful law abiding citizens."

And too, Pineville, a few miles west of Beatrice was an established agricultural community by 1840, so it offered some competition to the new hamlet.<sup>12</sup>

Whatever the case, by 1905 exuberant descriptions of construction and commercial activity were being reported from Beatrice. As the newspaper editor had put it in 1901 "the construction of the Selma and Gulf railroad marks a new era in the history of Monroe, and as an instrumentality is a vigorous factor in promoting a new life and energy upon the eastern border..."<sup>13</sup>

Reports of timber camp production, new businesses, new residences and new churches emanated from Beatrice. The Peoples Exchange Bank was established; a Stave Mill was opened; the Knights of Pythias and Masons "finished a nice hall" and telephones came to Beatrice all before the end of 1910.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Interview with Daniel L. and Rebecca Robbins. C. 1915 photograph from Monroe Journal Centennial Edition, Supplemental Issue, 1969.

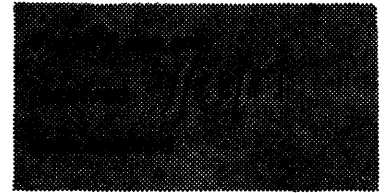
<sup>12</sup> Brantley, p. 70.

<sup>13</sup> Monroe Journal, Editorial, Feb. 14, 1901.

<sup>14</sup> Monroe Journal, July 24, 1902, May 30, 1907, July 29, 1909, July 21, 1910 (and other newspaper accounts).

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It is no wonder then that the Robbins Hotel register was crowded with commercial travelers: Mr. B. F. Hale, Cudahy Packing Co., Mobile; Mr. William M. Weaver, purveyor of farm implements, Selma; and, of course, Mr. C. E. Jones, engineer with L and N from Montgomery, for example. Visitors from as far away as St. Louis, Nashville and New Orleans stayed at the hotel.<sup>15</sup>

In addition, the Robbins Hotel harbored residential guests like Mr. and Mrs. W. R. Sawyer who lived at the hotel c. 1907 when he came to town as Vice President of the Peoples Exchange Bank. The Deasons from Hopkinsville, Kentucky, stayed at the "celebrated Robbins House" when they came to Beatrice to open the Stave mill in 1908.<sup>16</sup> The hotel was also residence to school teachers and ministers. As one Beatrice native recalls,

"the Robbins Hotel, especially in the 1930s, as I remember it best, was the epitomy of old Southern hospitality and culture, with 'Miss Minnie' (Aunt Minnie to me - my great-great aunt), as the gracious hostess, its wide verandas with swings and rocking chairs, inviting friendly fellowship among the guests; its beautifully-appointed dining room, with white table cloths, flowers on each table . . . and delicious meals . . . It was such a delightful place to be that even the young Baptist minister and his wife chose to live there rather than find a home of their own and so did the principal of the high school and his wife. I remember lovely teas and receptions being held there during that period."<sup>17</sup>

In fact, the hotel was of such a fine reputation even when it was sold to Mr. O. B. Finklea in 1948 that his plans to resell the property changed and he made "improvements" instead.<sup>18</sup>

A 1954 article from the Ford Times, a magazine for "your motoring pleasure and information," captures the essence of the hotel in its golden years. Entitled "the Hotel Nobody Runs," the article describes a visit to the Robbins.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., July 2, 1910, July 28, 1910, August 14, 1910. Mobile, Montgomery and Selma City Directories, 1910.

<sup>16</sup> Monroe Journal, June 5, 1908, July 28, 1910. Monroe Journal Centennial Edition, 1969 p. 10G. Interviews.

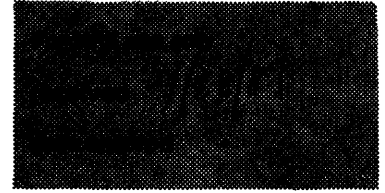
<sup>17</sup> Letter written by Marion Stallworth Barnes, January 18, 1986.

<sup>18</sup> Interview, Mary Elizabeth Stallworth.



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"No doorman greets you as you alight here. No bellboy reaches for your luggage as you enter the lobby. No room clerk stands behind the huge oak table that serves as the desk. You call for service and your echo comes back at you, rollicking through high-ceilinged empty rooms and halls. Then it begins to dawn on you that you may be the sole guest.

You find out from the lady who lives down the street (she has nothing to do with the hotel) that you must sign "the book" and select any room, upstairs or down, which is not occupied.

The vast rooms are always ready for occupancy. Under the quilted counterpanes of sumptuous four-poster beds, the linens are snow-white, immaculate. There are flowers in the vases. On each giant bed the coverlet is turned back a little in a gesture of warm and homey welcome.

In the lobby, a newcomer to the place eventually observes a small sign on the wall saying, "See Nellie." But he does not see Nellie who is virtually invisible. One can remain here for days without catching a glimpse of Nellie.

Another scrawled message on the desk reads, "Leave Your Dollars On The Bed When You Check Out." This guests faithfully do, after consulting the blotter on the table to see if they have occupied a \$2.50 or \$3.00 room. . . ."<sup>19</sup>

In 1954, however, the colorful Robbins Hotel's days were numbered just like so many other small wayside hotels. New highway systems were bypassing small towns and passenger train service was diminishing.<sup>20</sup> By 1962, the Robbins Hotel was threatened with demolition when it was purchased instead by a group of hunters who had grown to love the Robbins. The building has served as their lodge and a cherished community gathering place since that time.

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<sup>19</sup> Ford Times, "The Hotel Nobody Runs" by Allen Rankin, 1954, p. 44-46.

<sup>20</sup> NR Nomination for the Hotel Thompson.

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Books

Brantley, Mary E. From Cabins to Mansions. Strode Publishers, Huntsville, 1981.

Griffith, Lucille. Alabama, A Documentary History to 1900. University of Alabama Press, 1972.

Jackson, Walter M., The Story of Selma.

Moore, Albert Burton, History of Alabama and Her People. American Historical Society, Inc., Chicago. 1927. Vol. I.

Monroe County Marriages, 1830-1880. Archives Library.

Owen, Thomas McAdory. History of Alabama and Dictionary of Alabama Biography. S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., Chicago 1921.

Timber Pines of the Southern United States. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C., 1897.

Manuscripts

Marion Stallworth Barnes Papers. Miscellaneous research, records and recollections in possession of Mrs. Barnes, Hattiesburg, Mississippi.

Minutes of the Concord Baptist Church, Buena Vista, Alabama, 1832-1916. Archives Library.

County Records

Lowndes County Census Records for 1830 and 1840.

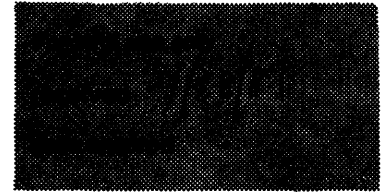
Monroe County Census Records for 1830, 1840, 1850 and 1860.

Monroe County Records of Conveyance, Monroe County Courthouse, Monroeville, Alabama.

Monroe County Wills, Monroe County Courthouse, Monroeville, Alabama.

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Periodicals

Ford Times, April 1954.

Monroe Journal, Monroeville, Alabama. Oct. 1899–Dec. 1910. Archives Library.

The Eagle, Kempville, Alabama. Oct. 1899–March 1904. Archives Library.

Interviews

Daniel L. and Rebecca Robbins, April 1986.

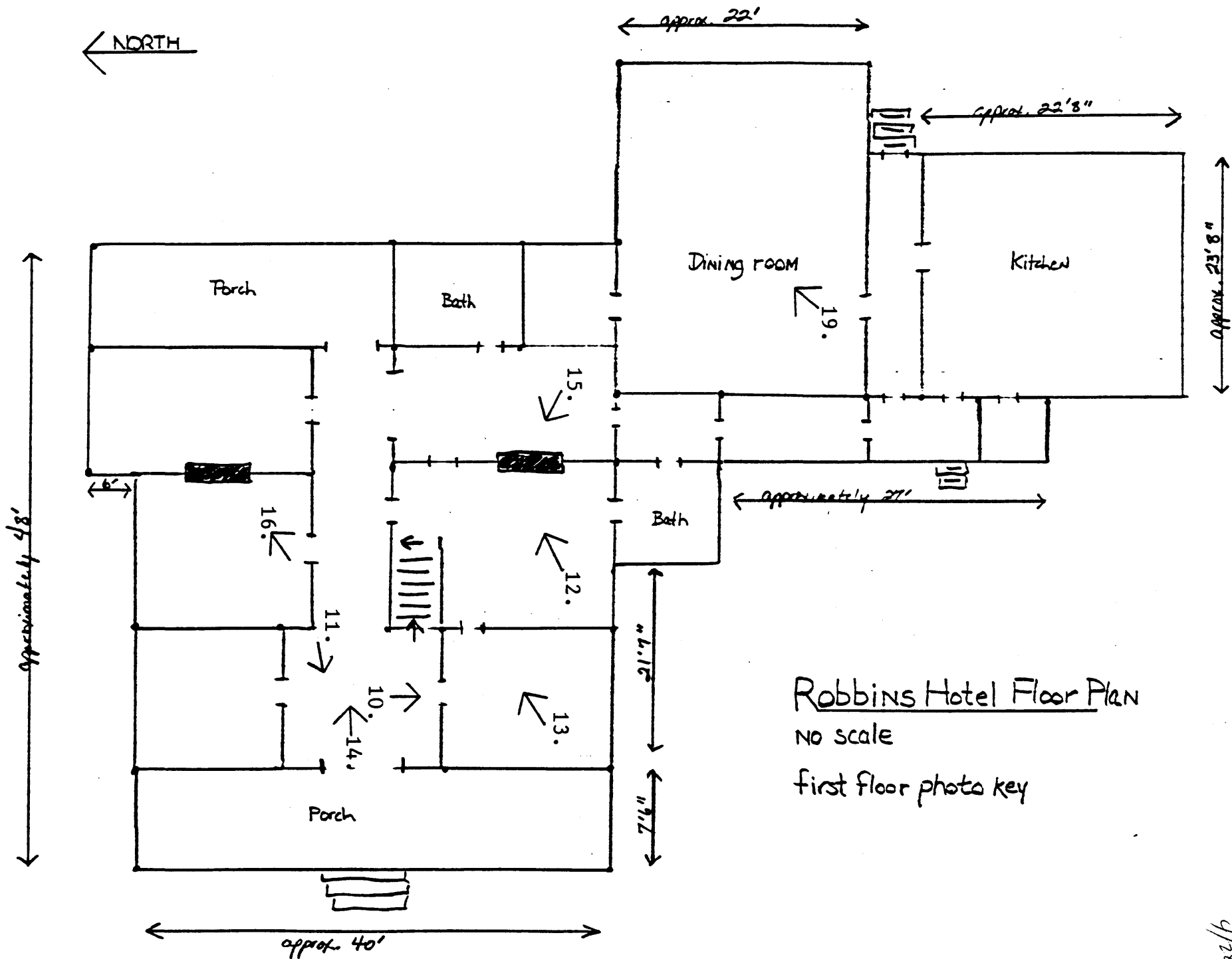
Mary Elizabeth Stallworth, April 1986.

"The Robbins Hotel Hunters" March 1986.

Miscellaneous

Hotel Thompson, Arab, Alabama, nomination to the National Register of Historic Places, June 1985, reviewed and approved by Alabama State Review Board February 1986.

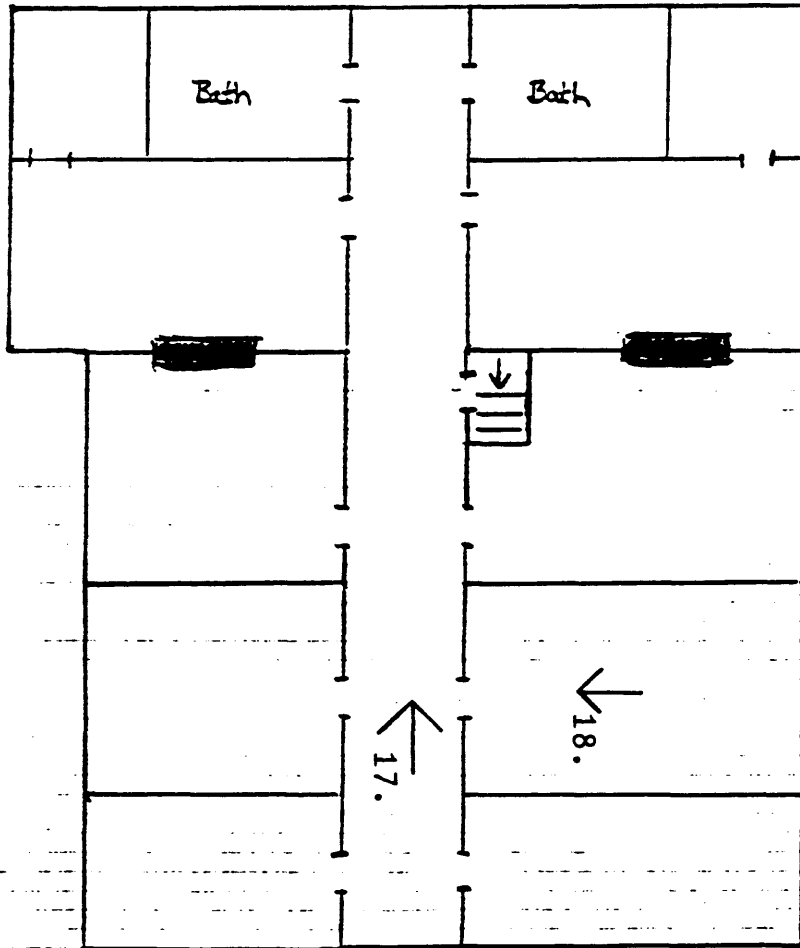
Mobile, Selma and Montgomery City Directories for 1910.



Robbings Hotel Floor Plan  
 no scale  
 first floor photo key

4/28/17

NORTH  
←



Robbins Hotel Floor Plan

No scale

second floor photo key

1/24/16