

PHO 662984

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED FEB 15 1978

DATE ENTERED AUG 2 1978

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Southern Hotel

AND/OR COMMON

**

LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

~~Grand and W. London~~ (319 S. Grand) *lf*

CITY, TOWN

El Reno

STATE

Oklahoma

— VICINITY OF

CODE

40

— NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

No. 6

COUNTY

Canadian

CODE

017

CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

PRESENT USE

- AGRICULTURE
- COMMERCIAL
- EDUCATIONAL
- ENTERTAINMENT
- GOVERNMENT
- INDUSTRIAL
- MILITARY
- MUSEUM
- PARK
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- RELIGIOUS
- SCIENTIFIC
- TRANSPORTATION
- OTHER:

OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Mrs. Myrtle Jackson

STREET & NUMBER

3601 N. Roff

CITY, TOWN

Oklahoma City

STATE

Oklahoma

— VICINITY OF

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Office of the County Clerk

STREET & NUMBER

Canadian County Courthouse

CITY, TOWN

El Reno

STATE

Oklahoma

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Special Southern Hotel Survey

DATE

1977

— FEDERAL STATE — COUNTY — LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Oklahoma Historical Society

CITY, TOWN

Oklahoma City

STATE

Oklahoma

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 type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED (basically)	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The El Reno American for July 3 and July 5, 1909, announced that work was under way on the new Southern Hotel. Excavation had been completed for the full basement of the 85 x 125-foot structure. Construction was to be of brick and reinforced concrete, making the three-story building fireproof and modern throughout. It was to have 125 rooms - elegantly furnished, according to the newspaper - 80 baths, and a rotunda 40 by 75 feet. When finished, hopefully by fall, the Southern would be the second largest in Oklahoma, its builders boasted, and one of the state's finest. Total cost was estimated at \$75,000.

The new structure was joined over an open alley/passageway to an older three-story brick building erected in 1906. This 50 x 125-foot structure, stretched north along Grand to create a rather impressive west facade of more than 200 feet. A white colonnaded entrance portico, with second story balcony, extended across the sidewalk to give the new Southern a gracious, vaguely "southern" appearance. Inside the lobby was generous in size, pleasing to the eye. Along with its broad stairway it boasted an elevator that is still in service.

Transportation dictated the Southern's location and virtually guaranteed its early success. Across Grand to the west were the main line tracks (north-south, east-west) of the Rock Island Railroad. At its depot stopped as many as 23 passenger trains a day. And looping down Grand between the Southern and the depot were the tracks of the Oklahoma Railway Company, offering convenient interurban service to nearby state capital of Oklahoma City and, from there, to Norman and Guthrie. An ORC terminal was established in the "old" section of the Southern in 1909 and it remained there until the line was abandoned in 1946.

The Southern remains today basically unchanged. Somewhere down the line the large SOUTHERN sign atop the west front wall disappeared ... with the Rock Island passenger trains and interurbans cars. And much of the paint from the once handsome entrance portico. But structurally the hotel has been almost untouched, on the outside. Inside, in an attempt to increase profitability, a latter-day owner combined some of the rooms to create 14 apartments. The one-time dining room, off the lobby in the southwestern corner of the hotel, has also been given an outside door onto Grand. A succession of bars, cafes, and small shops have used various parts of the ground floor from time to time. Several are still in operation, although the upper floors are now largely unused. Until quite recently the south (newer) wing of the hotel has been fairly well maintained.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
___PREHISTORIC	___ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	___COMMUNITY PLANNING	___LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	___RELIGION
___1400-1499	___ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	___CONSERVATION	___LAW	___SCIENCE
___1500-1599	___AGRICULTURE	___ECONOMICS	___LITERATURE	___SCULPTURE
___1600-1699	___ARCHITECTURE	___EDUCATION	___MILITARY	___SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
___1700-1799	___ART	___ENGINEERING	___MUSIC	___THEATER
___1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	___EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	___PHILOSOPHY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	___COMMUNICATIONS	___INDUSTRY	___POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	___OTHER (SPECIFY)
		___INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1909 to present

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Southern Hotel is both the creation of an age and its victim. It was a prototype of the small town railroad hotel - serving the needs of the traveler primarily and then, by logical extension, acting as commercial and social center of the community itself. Oklahoma, as Territory and then as State, grew up in the Age of Steam. Then the course of the rail line determined the location of the towns and cities it was laid to serve. And the location of its depot, as noted in No. 7, dictated the site of a hotel to meet the needs of rail passengers and, assuming its competence, virtually assured its success.

The Southern was such a hotel. Even allowing for journalistic bombast, it was, when built in 1909, one of the state's largest and finest. It soon acquired the bulk of the patronage of rail passengers forced to lay over in El Reno between trains, along with much of the "drummer" trade. Before the Southern was built the Rock Island had established the Grier Eating House in two dining cars on its own property. But in 1922 the railroad discontinued this service, signing a contract with the Southern Hotel to take care of its passengers. A sidewalk ran from the south side of the depot east across Grand to the main entrance of the Southern. Much of this walkway was covered by a vine-covered arbor. A notable sight - and sound - of the 1920s and 1930s was the hotel porter coming out to the walkway and ringing his large bell to announce "Dinner now being served. Dinner now being served."

The El Reno community also accepted the Southern. The hotel was long an important social center for the town and county, hosting many banquets, political gatherings, and other special meetings. On one memorable occasion, when he was late to a meeting, Mayor Pete Duffy is said to have ridden his white horse into the hotel lobby.

World War I and World War II put extra burdens on the railroads. And on the railroad hotels. The Southern met the challenge. But World War II was the beginning of the end. The Rock Island withdrew rapidly from passenger service in the late 1940s. Transportation patterns began to change drastically and, as the family auto took over, the hotel began to give way to the more convenient motel. The Southern carried on into the 1950s and 1960s, but in a rather dispirited way. A latter-day owner combined hotel rooms to create fourteen apartments, occupied largely by the elderly. Even this use has dwindled in the past few years. Today the hotel, though still structurally sound, is faced with continuing deterioration and eventual destruction.

One glimmer of hope remains however. The Rock Island's large, tile-roofed brick depot across Grand from the Southern fell victim to the same changing economic factors. When the railroad's last passenger train ran Nov. 9, 1967, and the depot was ripe for razing, the Canadian County Historical Society rose to the occasion. Recognizing the fact that El Reno is one of the state's largest railroad centers (Rock Island maintains Southern Division offices as well as extensive yards and shops in El Reno, and with

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Miscellaneous materials put together by the Canadian County Historical Society and the Oklahoma Historical Society

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY c. one acre

UTM REFERENCES

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5	9	4	5	1	8
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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

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11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Kent Ruth, Deputy

ORGANIZATION

Oklahoma Historical Society

DATE

December 1977

STREET & NUMBER

Historical Building

TELEPHONE

405/884-5456

CITY OR TOWN

Oklahoma City

STATE

Oklahoma

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

Harry L. Keefee M.D.

TITLE

DATE

1977

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

W. Smith

DATE

8-2-78

DIRECTOR, NATIONAL HISTORIC PRESERVATION

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST:

Charles [Signature]

DATE

7-31-78

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8

PAGE 1

Southern Hotel

500 employes is the town's largest employer), it took over the depot, developed it as the Canadian County Historical Museum. The building itself is now in the National Register of Historic Places, as is the Red Cross Canteen, on the grounds between the depot at the hotel. The Canteen, one of the first in the United States, served tens of thousands of rail-borne service personnel in two wars. It is now the hope of the Society that the Southern Hotel - as a vital part of the depot complex - can be saved, restored, and used to further dramatize the historical heritage of El Reno and Canadian County.