

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only  
received NOV 14 1984  
date entered DEC 13 1984

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

1. Name

historic The Hotel Yancey (HL06-14)

and/or common The Yancey Motor Hotel

2. Location

street & number 123 North Locust Street

N/A not for publication

city, town Grand Island

N/A vicinity of

state Nebraska

code 031

county Hall

code 079

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied, partially	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input checked="" 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"/> N/A 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
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Lincoln Benefit Life Company (Devco Investment Corporation, the developer, to take title approximately September 10, 1984)

street & number 134 South 13th Street

city, town Lincoln

N/A vicinity of

state Nebraska 68508

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Hall County Register of Deeds

street & number Hall County Courthouse Annex; 1st & Pine Streets

city, town Grand Island

state Nebraska 68801

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date on-going  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Nebraska State Historical Society  
P.O. Box 82554

city, town Lincoln

state Nebraska 68501

# 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved    date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		_____ N/A

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

The former Yancey Hotel is an eleven-story building of concrete post and beam construction with brick veneer exterior walls, having limestone and terra cotta trim. Above the three square-shaped lower floors, the L-shaped structure of the fourth through eleventh floors rim the north and west building exposures. Arched openings exist on the third and eleventh floors, with all other openings rectangular in shape. The Yancey is an expression of high-rise architecture in which a distinct base, shaft, and capital are evident in the design of the facade.

The former Yancey Hotel is an eleven-story building of concrete post and beam construction with brick veneer exterior walls, having limestone and terra cotta trim. Erected beginning in 1917 with completion in 1923, the Yancey's three lower floors of five bays each face north onto Second Street and west onto Locust Street. Above the three square-shaped lower floors, the L-shaped structure of the fourth through eleventh floors rim the north and west building exposures. Located on the southeast corner of Second and Locust Streets in Grand Island, Nebraska (pop. 38,000), the Yancey is contained within the boundaries of the City Central Business District Redevelopment Plan and within walking distance of City Hall, The Courthouse, the old Federal Building, the U.S. Post Office, the Liederkrantz and the Capitol Theatre.

The openings of the building are rectangular, except for five arched door openings off the west third floor ballroom which lead onto individual wrought iron railed balconies, five arched windows directly above at the eleventh floor level, and two arched windows on the eleventh floor north side. The wood windows are double-hung type.

The roof is flat with an elevator penthouse and stair leading up from the floor below. A continuous terra cotta parapet rims the north and west facades.

The architect, Francis W. Fitzpatrick, who designed the building to be a fire-proof structure, headed the architectural department of the Bankers Realty Investment Company of Omaha. His design is an expression of tripartite high-rise architecture whereby a base, shaft, and capital are evident. Although not laden with intricate decoration, the concept for the Yancey follows a Sullivan-type geometric composition of specific ground level, intermediate level, and roof level floors, with windows arranged in vertical lines and the building topped by a flat roof. Such skyscraper designs were typical of the day as evidenced by a 1915 article in Architectural Record on "The Work of Burnham & Root" (Rebori).

Although construction of the Yancey began in 1917 at an original cost estimate of \$300,000, the building was not completed until 1923. Due to apparent financial difficulties of the owners and shortages of both building materials and available manpower caused by World War I, major construction work stopped on the hotel as of May 28, 1918. The concrete structure sat unfinished for five years with final work completed due to the efforts of Mr. Herbert S. Daniels of Omaha. Leased by Mr. William Yancey, the hotel opened

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October 30, 1923, with 150 rooms, twenty shy of the original design. The hotel contained a cigar stand, billiard room, barber shop, sample rooms, pharmacy, main lobby, coffee shop, party and banquet rooms, ballroom, public bath house, laundry, and other amenities for guests.

During the Depression, Mr. Yancey sold the majority of the original hotel furniture and interior fixtures, and in 1933, Mr. Daniels took over the ownership and operation of the hotel. The northwest building corner entrance was eliminated and the pharmacy therein converted into additional lobby space during this period.

In 1969, a major renovation of the lower three floors was undertaken by the Second Island Development Corporation, owners at the time. Changes to the interior included expanding the mezzanine level by filling in the atrium space, blocking out all of the second and a portion of the first and third floor windows, a major remodeling of the restaurant and lobby spaces, conversion of second floor (mezzanine) to commercial space, and a major remodeling of the third floor ballroom and party rooms. Other "improvements" completed in the hotel rooms themselves, particularly the bathrooms, brought the total remodeling project to well over one million dollars. This project was intended to retain the hotel for possible convention usage and to better compete with motels built close to the interstate.

One of three known sets of wallpaper murals, printed from blocks designed about 1834 by Alsace artist Jean Zuber, adorned the Yancey's Scenic Room. The second set was a gift of Governor Al Smith of New York to his daughter. The final set of scenic panels once hung in the White House. Assumed to be removed in the 1969 remodeling project, the Yancey set have neither been, nor are they expected to be, located in the present work.

Other modifications to the building over the years include removal of the original storefront system and elimination of the awnings on the lower floors. The original character of the building facade, however, remains unchanged.

Hotel operations ceased in December of 1982, and the building is undergoing conversion today: fifty-seven rental residential units will occupy the upper nine floors, while commercial space will remain in use on the lower two floors. The windows on first, second, and third floors will be reopened and the storefront system will be replaced with wood units reminiscent of the early design. The details of the building rehabilitation are described in the Part 2 Historic Preservation Certification Application submitted to the National Park Service.

# 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 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-1982	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

**Specific dates** 1917-1923      **Builder/Architect** Bankers Realty Investment Company/  
Francis W. Fitzpatrick

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

The Yancey was built in the Midwest as part of the North American Hotel chain. From its opening in 1923, it served as the center of social and political activity for the City of Grand Island, Nebraska. An example of an early twentieth century high-rise structure, the Yancey is typical of the Renaissance Revival period of architecture.

Construction on the Yancey began April 6, 1917, financed by the Bankers Realty Investment Company of Omaha, Nebraska for the North American Hotel Company. The North American Hotel Company was building a chain of hotels in Nebraska, Iowa, and Kansas, accessible to the train depots and business districts of the day. This new "chain concept" allowing traveling salesmen to visit each hotel of the chain along his route, also permitted a standardization of service, bulk purchase of supplies, quantity discounts, and therefore, lower costs to the consumer, whether a salesman or local resident.

The Bankers Realty Investment Company employed its own architects, engineers, purchasing agents, laborers, and other professions required for completing large building projects. The construction engineer for the Yancey and the chief engineer for Bankers Realty was Mr. Lepper. In service with the federal government for twenty years, he had previously supervised the engineering and construction of the Chicago and Cleveland Post Office Buildings, the U.S. Department of Interior Building, and the Bureau of Engraving and Printing Office in Washington, D.C.

Mr. Fitzpatrick (1864-1931), the head architect for Bankers Realty, wrote numerous articles for architectural and engineering journals on building construction, the high cost associated with buildings and city blocks destroyed by fire, and on fire prevention. Although born in Canada, he began his career in Duluth, Minnesota, later practicing in the Chicago area, and then as a government architect in Washington D.C. He continued his work in the Omaha area and finally resided in the Chicago/Evanston vicinity prior to his death at the age of 68.

An accomplished watercolorist, Mr. Fitzpatrick's renderings at times accompanied the text of his writings. A rendering of the design for the Yancey appears in his article for a 1918 issue of Architect and Engineer (see F.W. Fitzpatrick, "Mid-west Building Activities", v. 52-53, pp. 91-97; also printed in Grand Island Independent, February 9, 1917). This article gives examples of recent work, including the Blackstone Hotel and the St. Regis Apartments in Omaha, Nebraska. Renderings for a North American Hotel in Sioux City, Iowa and a bank building in Omaha are also shown. In this article for Architect and Engineer Mr. Fitzpatrick wrote of the chain hotel concept:

"No part in the country is more in need of hotels than this Middle-West section. It is rich in territory, even the smaller towns support three and four banks, the people spend money readily, but,

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one

Quadrangle name Grand Island, Nebraska

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A	1 4	5 5 5 6 0 0	4 5 3 0 3 6 0	B			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C				D			
E				F			
G				H			

Verbal boundary description and justification

Gilbert's subdivision to the City of Grand Island, Nebraska, Block 79, Lots C, D, E, & F

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

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

state \_\_\_\_\_ code \_\_\_\_\_ county \_\_\_\_\_ code \_\_\_\_\_

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Virginia F. Duncan, Project Coordinator

organization Devco Inc.

date August, 1984

street & number 4616 Pierce Drive/P.O. Box 4500

telephone (402) 466-8541

city or town Lincoln

state Nebraska 68504

# 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

*Marvin D. Knell*

title Director, Nebraska State Historical Society

date

10/29/84

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

Entered in the  
National Register

date

12-13-84

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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so far, the hotel "accommodations" have been abominable. This hotel company has seen the need and is supplying the "long-felt want" just as fast as it can build. It has five structures now under roof, three others started, plans for a round dozen more, and there are demands, appeals from a hundred towns for still more."

Grand Island residents welcomed the idea as described in the February 2, 1917, edition of the Grand Island Independent:

"There has been 'hotel talk' in this city for the past eighteen months. It has been contended for a year or more that Grand Island was compelled to turn transients over to Hastings, Lincoln, or Omaha, for over Sunday entertainment, and has been embarrassed at other times, because of a lack of facilities. There has been a quiet effort for a year by several Grand Island parties toward interesting expert hotel people and proficient hotel builders in this city as a logical point for a new hotel."

With the customary means of conducting business through traveling salesmen at the time, the Yancey was required for the commerce of Grand Island. Beginning with the opening in 1923, it also served as a first-class continental restaurant, a hotel noted for its accommodations and service, a meeting place for civic, religious, and political groups, a honeymooners paradise, and a local night spot.

Situated at the corner of Second and Locust Streets where the downtown street grid shifts from a north-south to a northeast-southwest axis, the Yancey is a visual landmark. It is also the tallest structure in the city. Located near the Capitol Theatre, designed in the atmospheric style by theatre architect John Ebersson, the Yancey provided accommodations for Barbara Stanwyck (who also appeared in the film "Lost Lady" based on a Willa Cather work), Lillian and Dorothy Gish, and various entertainers who performed on the train circuit. Close to the Liederkrantz, other performers who stayed at the Yancey included John Philip Sousa and entertainers raising funds for war bonds. The first Grand Island radio station, which broadcast performances for the Capitol Theatre, had its studio in the hotel. The local telegraph office was located here, as well.

An example of early twentieth century high-rise architecture, the Yancey is typical of the Renaissance Revival period characterized by distinct horizontal building divisions, exterior ornamentation which varied from floor to floor, and rectangular and arched openings combined in the facade. L-shaped above the third floor level, the hotel provided natural light and ventilation to all sleeping rooms. The hotel's mezzanine floor with smaller windows is also typical of the Renaissance Revival style.

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Other fine hotels operated during the same era included the Fontenelle and the Regis in Omaha, the Cornhusker and the Capitol in Lincoln, the Paddock in Beatrice, the Pawnee in North Platte, and the Keystone in McCook, to name a few. Many of these have previously been torn down, destroyed by fire, or converted to another use. An article in the February 2, 1975, Lincoln Sunday Journal and Star describes the Yancey as one of the last outstate Nebraska facilities still offering accommodations as a hotel.

From the Gold, Emerald, and Rose Rooms, to the third floor ballroom and the Governor's Suite, to the doorman at the main entrance, the Yancey was a first-rate hotel. In the end, it, too, could not compete. With Interstate 80 traffic diverted around Nebraska's third largest city, the development of motor hotels such as the Holiday and Ramada Inns, the decline in railroad trade and the building of shopping malls away from the downtown business district, the Yancey finally closed in December, 1982. But for six decades, the Yancey served as the center of Grand Island's civic life.

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"General News Section", Grand Island Independent (May 21, 1918).

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