

563

RECEIVED
MAR 07 1990

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

DIVISION OF
NATIONAL REGISTER PROGRAMS
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name The Commercial Hotel
other names/site number Verdigre Hotel; (KX14-006)

2. Location

street & number 117 Main Street na not for publication
city, town Verdigre na vicinity
state Nebraska code NE county Knox code 107 zip code 68783

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>3</u>	_____ buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____	_____ structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>3</u>	_____ objects
			_____ Total

Name of related multiple property listing: na
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this 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 meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.
James A. Hanson 02/20/90
Signature of certifying official Date
Director, Nebraska State Historical Society
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.
Signature of commenting or other official Date
State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:
 entered in the National Register. 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:)
Entered in the National Register
Allores Byer 4/5/90
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic/Hotel

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Not in Use

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

No style

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

walls Wood

roof Asphalt

other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Commercial Hotel is located at the northern edge of the central business district of Verdigre, a small northeastern Nebraska town. The two-story frame longitudinal block hotel, constructed in 1900, exhibits outstanding interior and exterior integrity. Within the Lower Niobrara geographic region, it is the best remaining example of a first generation, wood frame longitudinal block hotel. The nomination consists of three (3) contributing buildings; the hotel, a carriage house/garage, and a tool shed. The two outbuildings (c. 1900) are located at the southeast and northeast edges of the lot, respectively.

The Commercial Hotel is located at the north edge of Main Street in Verdigre, Nebraska, a small Knox County town (population 716, 1980 census) in northeastern Nebraska, less than 15 miles from the Nebraska/South Dakota border. Located in the Lower Niobrara geographic region, Verdigre is surrounded by steep hills characteristic of the area. Some residential properties are located on the hillsides, while the two block central business district runs north and south in a valley. The railroad tracks also extended north and south, parallel to Main Street, one block west.

When the Commercial Hotel was constructed in 1900, Verdigre was the northern terminus of the Fremont, Elkhorn, and Missouri Valley railroad line. Travelers and railroad workers used the two existing frame hotels, the Metropolitan and the Central House. Built in response to a need for additional lodging, the Commercial Hotel had an advantageous location one block west of the railroad depot. Today, the depot, the Metropolitan and Central House hotels, and even the railroad tracks are non-extant.

The Commercial Hotel is a two-story frame, hip roofed rectangular building which extends toward the back of the lot, characteristic of the longitudinal block hotel type. The main portion of the hotel measures 46 X 54 feet, which includes a one-story, frame, false front addition on the south side of the main facade.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

The main floor of the Commercial Hotel provided public, private, and commercial space. The two-story main portion of the building contains the original lobby, family quarters, dining room, and kitchen. The west half of the first floor is divided into two large rooms; one public and one private, separated and accessed through a small entry hall. The entry, which measures 4 X 6 feet, leads to the main staircase and the second floor hallway that extends toward the back of the lot, typical of the longitudinal block hotel type. The original lobby, 13 X 17 feet, is located on the south side of the entry hall; a former living room or bedroom, also 13 X 17 feet, is located on the north side.

The symmetry of the main facade is broken by a one-story false front addition which measures 14 X 20 feet. A former salesman's sample room, the area is accessed by a separate entrance on the main facade and one from the backyard. Inside the hotel, an archway separates the room from the main lobby. Following its use as a sample room, the space was divided into two rooms (c. 1935) for use as a bar and a beauty parlor, both operated by the owner's family.

The original dining room is located in the center of the building and forms a rectangular shape which measures 15 X 31 feet, extending north/south. Access to the dining room is possible through the former sample room in the one-story wing, which has a rear door opening into the back lot. Guests could also enter the dining room through the main lobby. The remaining first floor space contains a large kitchen, at the northeast corner of the building, with a one-story shed which extends from the back of the building. Two family bedrooms are located on the main floor at the southeast corner of the building, one is 11 X 15 feet, the other is 7 X 15 feet.

The second floor of the building exemplifies its longitudinal block hotel type. As defined in the NESHPO property type analysis "Hotels" (Murphy, 1989), the type is characterized by multiple story rectangular or predominantly rectangular buildings with rooms located above first floor public or commercial space. The type is further distinguished by the relationship between the hallway(s) and the main facade. As exemplified by the Commercial Hotel, sleeping rooms are located on both sides of the main corridor that

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

7

2

Section number _____ Page _____

extends from the main entrance on the narrowest facade of the building's rectangular form. Typical of first generation hotel construction throughout Nebraska, the longitudinal block type represents the most efficient use of urban land by permitting the greatest number of rooms possible while providing required access, light, and ventilation.

The Commercial Hotel's second floor corridor extends from the west to east toward the back of the lot; twelve rooms open into the hallway; each has one window and a bare light bulb suspended from the ceiling, added when electricity was installed in 1912. Typical of first generation hotels, none of the rooms contain a sink or toilet. One room on the north side of the hallway, however, was converted into a bathroom at an undetermined later date. Also, a communal sink was added at the east end of the hallway near the second floor exit. The rooms at each end of the hallway are slightly larger than those in the center of the hotel but the average dimensions are 8 X 12 feet. The hotel exhibits an exceptional degree of integrity; original woodwork, wainscoting, and many furnishings are intact throughout the building.

The nomination also includes two frame outbuildings (c.1900), a shed and a former carriage house/garage. The two outbuildings, located at the east edge of the backyard, convey a strong sense of the day-to-day operation of the hotel and contribute to the historic significance of the property as a whole. The backyard extends from the rear of the hotel to the east edge of the lot, where it meets the alley. The entire lot is enclosed by a simple unpainted wooden fence.

Two cement sidewalks lead from the hotel through the backyard to each of the outbuildings. The sidewalk leading to the tool shed was once bordered by extensive flower and vegetable gardens which are no longer evident. The unpainted frame tool shed, measures 8 X 10 feet and is located at the northeast edge of the lot. The former carriage house/garage, located at the southeast edge of the lot, is also an unpainted frame building, 18 X 24 feet, with a shed roof. A cement sidewalk leads from a doorway on the west side of the building directly to the hotel's former sample room. The main double entrance to the structure is located on the east side of the building, and opens into the alley.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 3

In its setting at the northern edge of Verdigre's business district, the Commercial Hotel with its remarkably unaltered interior and exterior, combined with its two outbuildings, is an outstanding example of a first generation frame hotel. The building had several different owners following its construction in 1900 until 1909 when it was purchased by the Tomslik family who operated the hotel until 1983 when it closed. Although the building has been vacant since that time, a former Verdigre resident who purchased it several years ago, plans to reopen for use as a hotel.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Commerce
Architecture

Period of Significance

1900

Significant Dates

1900

Cultural Affiliation

na

Significant Person

na

Architect/Builder

unknown

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Commercial Hotel, constructed in 1900 in Verdigre, has been compared to similar properties on a statewide basis and was found to be significant under Criterion C. The hotel is an excellent representative of first generation hotels, built between 1854 and 1900. The hotels constructed during this period were typically two-story frame buildings without "modern" convenience such as indoor plumbing and gas or electric lighting. In many instances these buildings were constructed in anticipation of the railroad passing through the community, or in response to business activity that resulted from an existing railroad line. Additionally, there is one extant example of a second generation hotel in Verdigre, the Queen, built in 1908 which provides a good contrast of the two periods of construction and illustrates the distinct differences that exist between them. The Commercial Hotel has also been evaluated within the Retail Commerce context for the Lower Niobrara Region and was found to be significant under Criterion A for its association with the commercial development of the village. The period of significance begins and ends in 1900 which is when the Commercial Hotel was constructed and marks the ending date for the construction period of first generation hotels.

As in many Nebraska communities, the people of Verdigre waited for the railroad to pass through their village in hopes of spurring economic prosperity. To help encourage the Fremont, Elkhorn and Missouri Valley Railroad Company pass through Verdigre, in 1887 the townspeople approved a bond issue that would aid in construction of the line. Taking advantage of this financial offering the company did lay track in the village and the first train passed through on November 7, 1888 (Dorby, Verdigre, p. 25).

See continuation sheet

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 1

Although the economic boost brought by the railroad appears to have been modest, commercial development did respond to its presence. Contributing to the economic expansion was the fact that Verdigre was the northern terminus of the railroad until 1902, and the village was also the point of origin for area hog shipments to Omaha. Due largely to the railroad traffic, by 1900 Verdigre had two hotels, the Central House and the Metropolitan. Still, the demand for rooms was greater than the space available in the existing accommodations. In response to this need Frank Jelinek, built the Commercial Hotel in 1900. Jelinek's new hotel was similar to the two other first generation hotels in that it did not have indoor plumbing and had only kerosene lamps for light. Eventually, the Commercial Hotel did install electric lights and indoor plumbing, allowing it to compete with the Queen Hotel which, when built in 1908, was constructed of brick and wired for electricity.

The first generation Commercial and the second generation Queen are the only hotels still extant in Verdigre. Although some modern conveniences were added to the Commercial, it still retains the appearance of a first generation hotel and contrasts sharply with the Queen Hotel. Its proximity to the site of the railroad tracks and depot indicate the importance of the railroad and the inseparable relationship between rail transportation, the hotel and commercial development in general. Given these circumstances and after having been evaluated under the Retail Commerce context for the Lower Niobrara Region, it is evident the Commercial Hotel contributed to the economic and commercial development of the village and is therefore significant on a regional level under Criterion A.

The Commercial Hotel is also significant under Criterion C on a state-wide level. Within the Lower Niobrara Region, it is the best remaining example of a frame, first generation hotel. The ongoing Nebraska State Historic Buildings Survey (NEHBS) which was completed for the Lower Niobrara Region, identified two additional first generation hotels. One, in Keya Paha County (KP02-7) was only tentatively identified as a former hotel, based on reconnaissance-level survey. The two-story frame building has been abandoned for many years. The other first generation hotel in the region is located in Ewing in Holt County (HT09-13). The two-story frame building has been stuccoed and has a wing-shaped addition;

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 2

it has also been closed for many years. The reconnaissance-level survey did not include interior documentation of either regional hotel to further determine degree of integrity. Based on available survey data, the Commercial Hotel is the best remaining regional example of an increasingly rare building type; a first generation frame hotel.

On a state-wide basis, three other first generation frame hotels are listed on the National Register: the Hendee Hotel in Cozad (DS02-4); the Hotel Defair in Hyannis (GT02-2); and the Pavillion Hotel in Taylor (LP03-1). Two of the listed hotels; the Hendee and the Defair, while associated with the settlement period and development of retail commerce in the Sandhills and Loess Hills regions, respectively, have been stuccoed. The Pavillion, located in the north central sandhills, derived significance for its construction in anticipation of rail service that never arrived. All three of the previously listed hotels have experienced some interior and exterior changes through time. The Commercial Hotel, in the Lower Niobrara Region of northeastern Nebraska, exhibits an exceptional degree of interior and exterior integrity. The Hotel, with its two original outbuildings, combined with its main street setting near the site of the former railroad tracks, imparts a strong sense of its historic function.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 1

Murphy, David R. "Hotels." Property Type Analysis 12.3.1.
Lincoln, NE: Nebraska State Historical Society, 1989.

Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey (NEHBS). "Reconnaissance Survey
Final Reports": Blaine, Brown, Keya Paha, Loup, and Rock
Counties. Lincoln, NE: Nebraska State Historical Society,
July 1989.

Niobrara Tribune, 1900.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

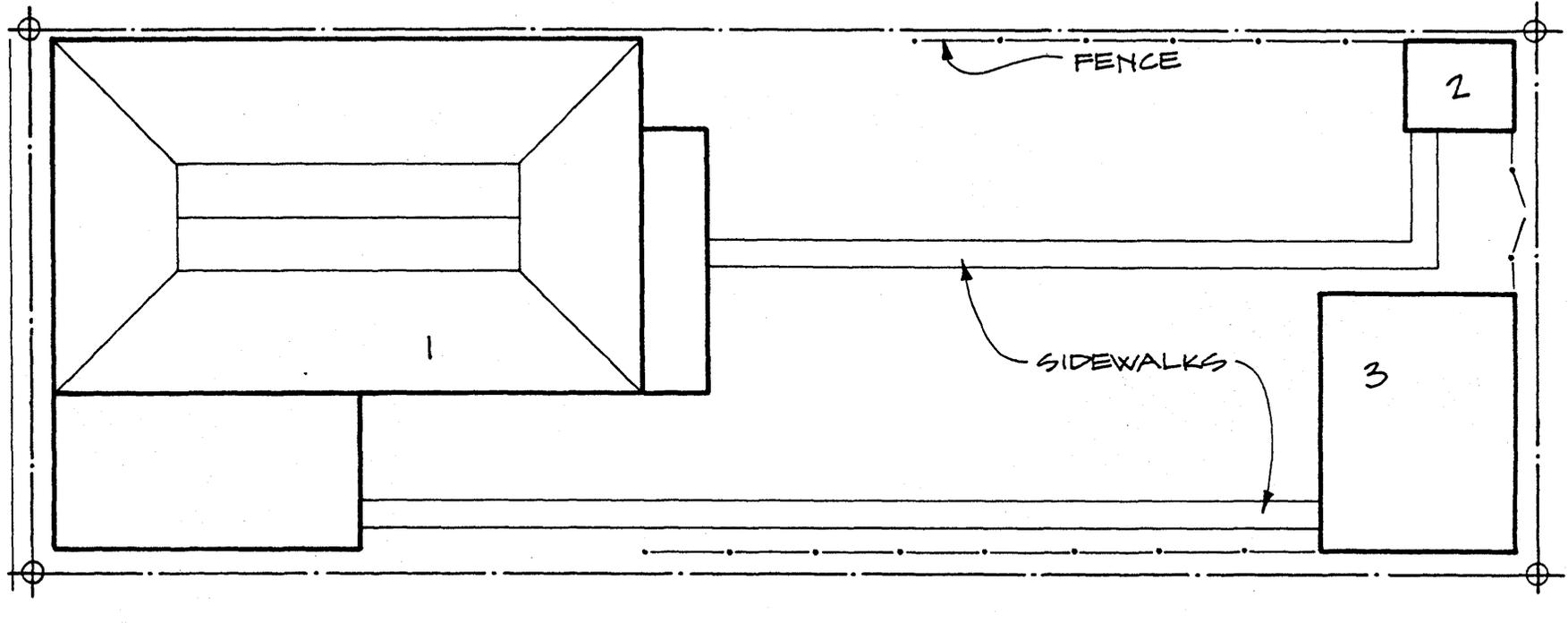
**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 10 Page 1

LATITUDE: 42° 35' 54"

LONGITUDE: 98° 1' 58"

MAIN STREET



COMMERCIAL HOTEL (KX14-6)
VERDIGRE, KNOX COUNTY, NEBRASKA

SITE PLAN - NO SCALE
DECEMBER 1989

KEY

- 1. HOTEL
- 2. TOOL SHED
- 3. CARRIAGE HOUSE / GARAGE

