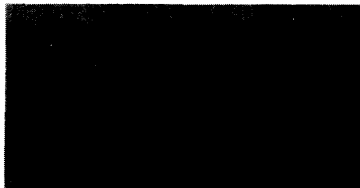


**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**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 Hotel Benton

and/or common Benton Hotel

2. Location

street & number 408 SW Monroe N/A not for publication

city, town Corvallis N/A vicinity of congressional district Fifth

state Oregon code 41 county Benton code 003

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 type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	N/A in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	N/A being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Alden J. Perrine

street & number PO Box 408

city, town Vancouver N/A vicinity of state Washington 98666

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Benton County Courthouse

street & number 120 NW 4th

city, town Corvallis state Oregon 97330

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Statewide Inventory of Historic Properties has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1982 federal state county local

depository for survey records State Historic Preservation Office

city, town Salem state Oregon 97310

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one	
<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 <u>N/A</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

General

The Benton Hotel, constructed in 1925 in the Italian Renaissance Style, is the largest hotel of first-class accommodation and the tallest building in the commercial core of Corvallis, governmental seat of Benton County, Oregon. Measuring 101 feet by 101 feet, the seven-story steel-reinforced poured concrete building was described as the city's first "fireproof" structure. The hotel occupies a prominent site of the south-west corner of Monroe Avenue and 4th Street, adjacent to the square occupied by Benton County Courthouse (1889). Owing to its exceptional height and prominent location in the downtown core, the Benton Hotel is visible from nearly every road leading into the city -- an important asset to any hotel in the motor age. No longer fully operating, the hotel building is to be converted with UDAG assistance to 53 units of one-bedroom efficiency apartments for low-to-moderate income residents.

The Portland, Oregon architectural firm of Houghtaling and Dougan was responsible for the design. Their partnership formed in 1914, Houghtaling and Dougan were awarded a number of important commissions in Portland: the Elks Temple (a National Register Property), 1923; Washington High School; the Medical Arts Building, 1926. The firm produced plans for numerous residential and commercial buildings also.

Chester Houghtaling was born October 27, 1882, in Cleveland, Ohio. Having studied construction engineering at Lewis Institute of Chicago, Illinois, he spent two years as a draftsman with Purdy and Henderson, engineers in Chicago. He later worked for J. S. Metcalf in the construction of grain elevators in Chicago, relocating in 1903 to Saskatoon, Canada. From 1906 to 1908 he was associated with the Spokane, Washington firm of Cutter and Malmgren. In 1908, he relocated to Twin Falls, Idaho and eventually back to Canada before finally arriving in Portland in 1913. Houghtaling is credited as the design engineer for the Burnside and Ross Island Bridges as well as the Fitzpatrick Building, all of which are located in Portland.

Leigh L. Dougan, the junior partner of the firm, was born in Princeton, Indiana, on July 28, 1883. Having received his general education in the Indiana Public School system, he prepared to enter the Armour Institute of Technology in Chicago. He studied also at the Art Institute of Chicago and Kansas State Agricultural College. Seeking practical experience in architecture, he served as draftsman for Thomas Campell in Vincennes, Indiana and J. J. Glanfield in Tulsa, Oklahoma before arriving in Portland in 1911. In 1925, L. L. Dougan commenced independent practice. Among his later works are the Medical-Dental Building and Studio Building in Portland and the Oregon State Tuberculosis Hospital in Salem.

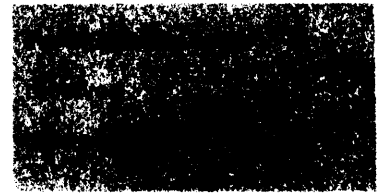
Exterior

Occupying a corner site, the seven story hotel is symmetrical with respect to street frontages. The lower two floors measure a full 101 feet by 101 feet, and the upper five floors are L-shaped in plan. The principal facade containing the main entrance marked by wooden marquee, is the north (Monroe Avenue) elevation facing the courthouse square. Access to the interior also can be gained from the east (4th Street) elevation.

Each ground story facade is organized into eight bays with entrances more or less

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centered in the frontage. Each commercial bay window has a generous three-light top light. The bays are framed by concrete piers with classical capitals and a "full" entablature.

The second and third floors are marked by string courses, and frameless trabeated window openings originally were fitted with casement windows. In fact, all windows above the ground story were of the casement type without transom bars or horizontal membering of any kind. Above the third story, fenestration is organized as a three-story arcade with pilasters rising to the sixth story, terminating with molding at the imposts of round-arched windows. Originally, the spaces between moldings of the pilaster "capitals" were painted with stylized foliate motifs simulating Corinthian capitals, and medallions were painted in the spandrels of the arcade. Spandrel panels of 4th, 5th and 6th stories are slightly recessed from the main wall plane and are unadorned. Seventh story windows are typical, though slightly shorter in height and have sills. The building is capped by a slab-like bracketed cornice which projects five feet beyond the exterior wall. The soffit of the cornice is decorated with painted medallions between each bracket. Painted cement stucco is the building's exterior finish. The steel fire-escape remains on the east elevation. An elevator super structure rises above the roof line near the northeast corner. There is a single chimney near the southwest corner of the building. The electric light-lined signs reading "Hotel Benton" which initially surmounted the roof in such a way as to be read from north or south, are no longer standing.

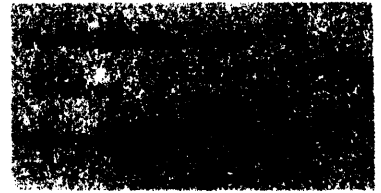
While the hotel's essential architectural characteristics are intact, the exterior has been modified in minor detail. All steel reinforced concrete structural members are intact. Generally, prior remodeling was limited to the first story commercial bays. While the entablature is unchanged, ground story piers no longer have their simple capitals. Several of the commercial bays of the 4th Street elevation were substantially altered. The southernmost four bays were bricked in. These bays may be reopened in the planned adaptive use rehabilitation. The main commercial frontage, located at the northeast corner (Monroe and 4th Streets) contains three bays on either street facade. Original shop windows and top lights were removed and replaced with aluminum framed plate glass with ceramic tile bulk heads. Access to the corner retail space is provided by a recessed corner entry somewhat like the original arrangement.

The north (Monroe Avenue) elevation is less substantially altered. As has been noted, shop window membering of the three bays at the corner of Monroe and 4th Streets was altered. However, the five commercial bays to the west are intact with top lights. The original wood marquee has been modified only slightly for the purposes of signage. The main entrance doors are now of aluminum frame construction.

There have been minor changes to the exterior above the ground story as well. All original wood casement windows were damaged and replaced in 1955 when the hotel served as a dormitory for basketball teams participating in the National Collegiate Athletic Association, Western Regional Tournament. Casement windows of aluminum construction, with transom bars and fixed top lights were fitted in the original wood casings. Painted decoration between string courses at the springing line of arched windows at the sixth story is missing, and spandrel medallions--also believed to have been painted rather than in relief, were painted over in later years.

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Interior

Access to the lobby can be gained through either the main entrance from the north elevation (Monroe Avenue) or east elevation (4th Street). The lobby contains four centrally located columns. Each concrete pier is two feet square and is elaborated by a pilaster with a simple capital at each face. Oriented on a north-south axis, the lobby measures 50 feet by 30 feet. Ceiling height on the first floor is 15 feet, while the ceiling height of the mezzanine floor is 10 feet for a combined lobby height of 25 feet. Pilasters aligned with the freestanding columns line the four walls of the lobby. Cast concrete corbels decorate piers supporting the mezzanine floor. Concrete ceiling beams are finished with simple moldings and inset panels. A lintel with simple molding separates the mezzanine and first floor in the lobby.

The finish applied to both the wall surfaces and pilasters is cement, pointed to resemble laid block. The floor in the lobby is terrazzo, while mezzanine flooring is hardwood. Marble is used as base trim in the lobby and first floor common areas, while vertical grain fir baseboards are used in all second floor common areas. The tops of the walls are trimmed with hardwood cornice molding.

A corridor leads to the center of the lobby from the east entrance. The corridor contains: an elevator serving upper stories, a marble staircase to the mezzanine, access to the commercial area in the northeast corner of the building, and a staircase leading to the basement. The basement contained twin boilers which fueled the steam heating system.

The dining room located in the southeast corner of the building is arranged on an east-west axis with access provided through the lobby. Measuring approximately 75 feet by 30 feet, the room also contained four columns identical to those described in the lobby. However, the columns are situated slightly east of the center. The west end of the dining area contains three large skylights providing additional natural light to the dining facilities. Finish details are similar to those of the lobby. A diningroom fireplace is described in contemporary references to the hotel opening. However, original plans show no such a feature, and no evidence of a fireplace remains today.

The southwest corner of the building was reserved for the kitchen facilities. Overall dimensions of the kitchen are approximately 25 feet by 40 feet on a north-south orientation. The kitchen contained all the latest equipment. Access from the kitchen to the ballroom on the mezzanine was provided by a rear staircase; a dumbwaiter assisted service during banquets or conventions. Floor and wall finish is of cement.

The northwest corner contained the coffee shop. Situated between the coffee shop and the kitchen was the hotel office, switchboard and telephones. Finish materials included hardwoods and terrazzo flooring. The coffee shop contained one central column, cement floors and plaster walls. The ceiling had a plaster finish with a molded plaster cornice.

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Access to the mezzanine was gained by the marble staircase, the elevator, or the service staircase near the kitchen. The mezzanine contains small commercial shops in the northeast corner, a women's cloak room, lounge and restroom, and the ballroom located in the northwest corner directly over the coffee shop. Measuring approximately 26 feet by 60 feet on a north-south axis, the room has similar finish details as the lobby. Pilasters line the walls and the ceiling is beamed. Hardwood floors are found throughout the room. A small kitchen is found to the south of the room.

The hotel units found on the upper five floors are all "exterior" units reached by central hallway. Obvious advantages in terms of ventilation and lighting are provided by this plan. Furthermore, vistas of surrounding mountains and the Willamette Valley provided incentives in terms of quality accommodations.

As a result of remodelings of recent years, the main lobby is approximately half its original size. Partitioning, however, is impermanent and readily reversible. The increasing dependence upon the commercial spaces to provide the income necessary to operate the hotel is apparent throughout the ground floor. The original dining area was converted to a bar, which has encroached upon lobby space by partitioning and a suspended ceiling.

The corridor extending east from the lobby to the 4th Street entrance and the marble staircase has also been partitioned off. Steel doors now open onto a hallway which completely encloses the original, open staircase. The main entrance to the lobby has been encroached upon by two shops extending into former lobby space. The result is a narrow entrance corridor much higher than it is long or wide.

The original coffee shop, located in the northwest corner of the hotel has been replaced by a beauty salon with suspended ceilings. The coffee shop is now situated where the hotel office and front desk existed, and projects into areas which were originally part of the lobby. Again, suspended ceilings with recessed lighting provide striking contrast to the original spaciousness.

An exposed sprinkler system was installed in response to concerns about fire protection. The floors are now completely carpeted.

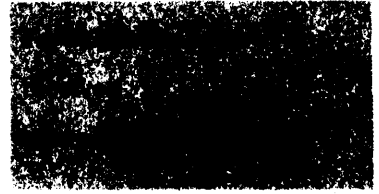
The Mezzanine has been completely walled off in conformance with fire and life-safety code requirements, but subdivision of the mezzanine space was held to a minimum. The ballroom ^{was} converted to a movie theater with removable banked seating, and all wall surfaces were painted a non-reflective grey.

Proposed Rehabilitation

It is clear that previous renovation of the hotel's public areas was conducted on a minimal budget with little or no attention given to architectural character. Fire and life-safety issues--of great importance in any hotel--were handled in the cheapest and most expedient manner. Consequently, the spaciousness of the lobby was reduced to poorly integrated commercial cubicles of contrasting materials and design. Fortunately, the permanent, load-carrying walls are intact with all original detailing.

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Discussions between fire officials, building officials and qualified representatives of the developers have resulted in acceptable alternatives to the temporary partitioning and suspended ceilings prevalent throughout the hotel's public areas. In addition, it is believed that the rehabilitation can be carried out in conformance with the Secretary's Standards for historic preservation projects.

Plans call for the replacement or retouching of exterior paint details including, cornice rosettes, spandrel medallions and pilaster "capitals." The federally sponsored Urban Development Action Grant requires compliance with energy conservation and noise levels standards in window treatment. Replacement of existing windows may be required, and if so, something more closely approximating original framing and membering can be achieved.

In an effort to attract quality commercial tenants necessary to the success of the project, plans currently call for reversal of the more misguided and disparate storefront alterations and the return to use of awnings on the east facade and the removal of existing aluminum frame doors from principal entrances. Rehabilitation of commercial spaces will be undertaken as current leases expire. Signage utilizing graphic styles appropriate to the period of the 1920s and 1930s will be considered for storefront facades.

The lobby is recognized as the single most important interior space of the hotel. Considerable emphasis is being placed on an accurate rehabilitation of it. All partitions and carpets are to be removed to expose the original ceilings, terrazzo floors, and wall finishes. The sprinkler system will be installed in a more sensitive manner. The retention of historic commercial uses, such as the barber shop and coffee shop, will be encouraged.

The mezzanine also will be rehabilitated to more closely approximate the original arrangement. Fire walls presently enclosing the lobby will be removed, and, where necessary, safety glass will provide the protection required by building and fire code officials. A second stairway is to be added to allow two avenues of escape from fire, and thereby allow the marble staircase to be reopened.

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

Specific dates 1925 **Builder/Architect** Lou Traver - builder
Houghtaling & Dougan - architects

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Hotel Benton, a seven-story building of reinforced concrete prominently sited adjacent to the courthouse square in downtown Corvallis, Oregon, was built in 1925 for a local corporation headed by Dr. Ralph Bosworth, whose house has been entered into the National Register of Historic Places. L. N. Traver, a local contractor, was the builder, and the architects were Chester A. Houghtaling and Leigh L. Dougan, whose Portland firm of Houghtaling and Dougan produced a number of substantial buildings in 20th century period styles, including the Elks Temple, Washington High School and Medical Arts Building in Portland and the Civic Center in The Dalles. Of these, the Portland Elks Temple and The Dalles Civic Center are listed in the National Register. With its formal facade organization, its restrained but unmistakably classical detailing, and its sixth story window arcade once punctuated with painted spandrel medallions, the hotel embodies the distinctive characteristics of the Italian Renaissance Style--one of a variety of styles based on historic periods popular in the 1920s and 1930s. In fact, Houghtaling and Dougan's Portland Elks Temple of 1923 is perhaps the most richly elaborated example of 20th century period architecture in the Italian Renaissance style in the state. The Hotel Benton, the largest project of its kind ever undertaken in Corvallis, was accomplished, in part, through public subscription. Like many similar projects up and down the West Coast launched in the early years of the automobile age, it was considered an outstanding civic achievement. The objective of its Kiwanis Club instigators and other backers was to provide a tourist hotel of first class accommodation and encourage new business. The Hotel was the first in the Benton County seat to be considered fully "fireproof," and it represents an early use of reinforced concrete in Corvallis building construction. As is typical of small-city hotels of this vintage, the beginning of a gradual decline in the hotel's prosperity is marked from the 1950s, following cancellation of railroad passenger service to Corvallis in the previous decade and the subsequent rise of motels. By the 1960s, the hotel was eclipsed in its original function and some impermanent revision of lobby space for commercial use, modification of ground story shop fronts, and conversion of ballroom space for movie theater use resulted. The hotel is now the subject of a HUD UDAG-assisted rehabilitation for low-income housing and is considered the key to the city's overall downtown revitalization efforts. The Hotel Benton was determined eligible for inclusion in the National Register by the Keeper on September 30, 1981. It possesses integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association with the progressive climate of the early 1920s. The hotel is significant also as the hub of community social life for thirty-five years.

It has been said that of all the commercial developments undertaken by a community, none is more important than a quality hotel. As a financial enterprise, its anticipation of future needs of the city must meet the exacting demands of the public. Each guest must be received as a prospective citizen. To the merchant guest hoping to expand market territory, the professional anxious to establish a practice, or businessmen hoping for first hand knowledge of a community, the welcome is generally first extended by a hotel. While the hotel industry has had a long and colorful history in Corvallis, no single establishment received a stronger outpouring of citizen support than

9. Major Bibliographical References

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

See Continuation Sheet.

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property less than one

Quadrangle name Corvallis, Oregon

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A 1 0 4 7 9 2 7 0 4 9 3 4 4 0 5
Zone Easting Northing

B
Zone Easting Northing

C

D

E

F

G

H

Verbal boundary description and justification The Hotel Benton occupies Lots 5 and 6, Block 23, Town of Marysville (now the City of Corvallis), in Benton County, Oregon. The nominated property is also described as Tax Lot 4800, Map reference number 11-5-35CD.

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

state N/A code county N/A code

state N/A code county N/A code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Rusty Gorman

organization Willamette Landmarks date January 20, 1982

street & number 330 SE Viewmont Street telephone 503/758-1300

city or town Corvallis state Oregon 97330

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

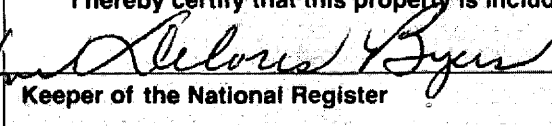
The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

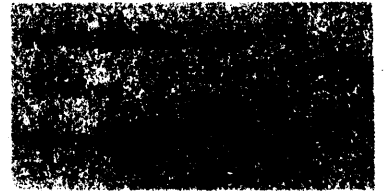
State Historic Preservation Officer signature 

title Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer date April 20, 1982

For HCRS use only	
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register	
	Entered in the National Register date <u>5/20/82</u>
Keeper of the National Register	
Attest:	date
Chief of Registration	

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the Hotel Benton.

With the first settler appearing in Marysville (Corvallis) in 1846, the community grew rapidly as marked by the docking of the first steamer, Canemah, in 1852. Soon, gold was discovered in California and Southern Oregon with Corvallis being swamped each night with overland travelers. As was custom at the time, it was necessary to . . . "keep strangers at any time they appeared, putting them in the attic, woodshed, stable or any place that protected them from the elements."¹

Corvallis' first hotel, a large wood frame structure named the City Hotel (owned by Dr. J. R. Bayley), was constructed in the late 1850s to act as a stage station, serve famous meals, and service the many overland travelers. An added benefit was realized by the citizens of Corvallis when this establishment housed many nationally famous personages within its rooms. In 1869, George Francis Train while residing at the hotel delighted the citizens with his inexhaustible wit and humor. It was quickly realized that the city had much to gain through the development of quality hotels. Besides the tax and employment considerations, honor could be brought to the city through events staged in hotels offering engagements billing famous personages.

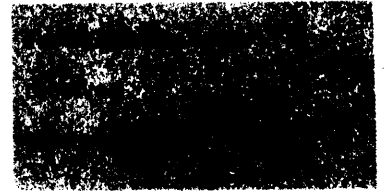
On March 29, 1873, the City Hotel in Corvallis was burned to the ground and at least one life was lost. The fire, while threatening other establishments in the downtown, was contained to just the hotel. The threat was clear that large wooden structures posed not only a fire hazard to other structures in the community, but a safety hazard to citizens' lives.

By 1880, three wood frame hotels were operating on Second Street in Corvallis: the Occidental Hotel (clearly the most important), the Vincent House, and I. J. Haskins. All were of wood frame construction. The Occidental, originally of minor size, grew to prominence with numerous additions only to be consumed by fire after the turn of the century. This three-story hotel had an exterior veranda at each floor, an obvious advantage in viewing the nearby countryside and sternwheelers operating on the Willamette River.

Similarly, the Hotel Corvallis (later named the Julian Hotel after Julian McFadden, a prominent Corvallis attorney and judge) was constructed in 1895 complete with a large wooden viewing platform above the four story brick hotel. As the first brick hotel in Corvallis, the structure contained a ballroom and famous dining establishment. By the turn of the century, the building served as an important hotel catering largely to the needs of astute Portland businessmen. Initially, the hotel was rented on weekends and transportation connections were facilitated by sternwheelers operating on the Willamette. With the advent of the automobile, motorcades would loudly announce their arrival from Portland much to the dismay of the local citizens, few of whom owned cars. Slowly, the reputation of the Julian Hotel began to suffer. Soon, clientele of "moral standing" would seek hotels in nearby cities thereby fueling numerous Corvallis discussions appraising the need for "quality hotel accommodations."

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For discussion purposes, it is important to note the development of a third prominent hotel constructed in Corvallis prior to 1930, namely the Corvallis Hotel (not to be confused with the earlier Hotel Corvallis). Expanding hotel trade associated with the success of Benton Hotel is believed to be the major incentive behind the development of the Corvallis Hotel. The four story brick building containing a ballroom and restaurant was built in 1928, only three years after the erection of the Benton Hotel.

With the decline of the Julian Hotel, Corvallis was once again faced with a lack of quality hotel, banquet, ballroom and dining facilities. Various community organizations were formed to investigate the tasks surrounding the development of such facilities. As a community-wide endeavor, the proposed name of the hotel reflected the county pride in the concept, the "Benton Hotel."

Such a development was envisioned as early as 1920. In an article appearing in the July 7, 1920, Corvallis Gazette-Times, reporter J. A. Bexell in travels to the east, related that construction of such a "...hotel marks in a very large degree, the progressiveness of the town".² The Kiwanis Club was responsible for the original hotel proposition. In point of fact, the Kiwanis Club was formed to "...do practical work, the first of which would be the erection of a hotel".³

Dr. Ralph Lyman Bosworth, first president of the Kiwanis Club, was clearly the driving force behind the development of the Benton Hotel. Born on September 20, 1890, in Orleans, Nebraska, Dr. Bosworth received his degree in medicine from the University of Colorado in 1912. Having relocated to Corvallis that same year, Dr. Bosworth's most obvious contributions to Corvallis came in the area of medicine. His private practice was almost immediately successful for, "...his ability and devotion to duty gained for him quick recognition and...a large and remunerative practice".⁴

During the period of 1920 to 1950, Dr. Bosworth was a catalyst in the development of a variety of Corvallis issues including political, medical and commercial enterprises. His tireless efforts resulted in the construction of many of the community's more important buildings. As the founding father of the Central Willamette Medical Society, he was the driving force behind the construction of Corvallis General Hospital. "He worked tirelessly selling the idea to the other local doctors and helping to raise the necessary money"⁵ resulting in the construction of "Corvallis General...(which) incorporated many modern facilities for the care of patients and at the time was looked upon as one of the finer hospitals on the west coast."⁶

Dr. Bosworth served as Corvallis City Councilman from 1920 to 1923. As a councilman, Bosworth was assigned to the Fire and Water, Sewer, and Health Committees. He was primarily responsible for the passage of a resolution to issue \$100,000 worth of bonds for the construction, expansion, repair and improvement of the water system in the city. Because of the constant threat of fire to the city, Bosworth personally sponsored a resolution for a \$10,000 bond to purchase a modern fire engine capable of expelling chemicals because of water shortages in the city during the summer. During his tenure the Council also improved and constructed a number of streets and sewers, resulting in Corvallis being associated with the stature of a "modern" city.

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Ralph Bosworth was also very involved with the commercial and economic development of Corvallis. He was director for the Benton County Bank, recently included on the National Register of Historic Places, which also housed the offices of his medical practice. He was responsible for the construction of, "...one of the most modern grocery store buildings in the northwest"⁷ on the corner of Fifth and Monroe Streets. The building, while substantially altered, still stands. The Bosworth family home, constructed in 1922 by Lou Traver, was recently relocated from 1109 NW 9th St. to 833 NW Buchanan St. in Corvallis to prevent its demolition and has been listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

Dr. Bosworth was concerned with many facets of his community. During the period of 1926 to 1937 he served as team doctor for the football and basketball teams at Oregon State Agricultural College (now Oregon State University). He was also involved in the activities of the Beta Theta Pi fraternity. Dr. Bosworth was a member of the Ancient Free and Accepted Masons, the Corvallis Elks Lodge number 1413, the Corvallis Commercial Club and the Corvallis Golf Club. He was president of the Corvallis Kiwanis Club and later a Kiwanis District Lieutenant Governor. In his community, Dr. Bosworth was referred to as, "a man among men, commanding respect by his innate force as well as by his superior attainments".⁸

The Kiwanis Club, under Dr. Bosworth's direction formed a corporation entitled "The Corvallis Hotel Corporation" for the purpose of having a legal and responsible body to conduct such business. The stockholders included Dr. Bosworth, Harry Felberbaum, L. N. Traver, Tom Nolan, Bob Hunter, C. E. Ingalls and Walter Taylor, all as prominent and astute a group of businessmen as Corvallis could offer. A contract was reached with Hottaling and Ferguson, a Portland development firm. This contract would require: The Corvallis Hotel Corporation to raise \$135,000 of capital; Hottaling and Ferguson were to furnish \$115,000 of which \$25,000 was to be their own capital investment, the remainder to be borrowed on a first mortgage, the \$135,000 on a second mortgage.

The Corvallis Hotel Corporation came within \$15,000 of the \$135,000 necessary to make the development materialize. Difficulties arose when "...the remainder could not be raised because of the fact that a number of people would not subscribe so long as the hotel was to be owned by Hottaling and Ferguson"⁹ from Portland. A mass meeting was called of the original bond buyers. Because of the strong support of the local citizens in terms of capital requirements, it was realized that a project of such magnitude should be owned by the local constituents. Accordingly, the Benton Hotel Corporation was formed with Hottaling and Ferguson transferring their contract to it.

The Benton Hotel Corporation was composed of Dr. R. L. Bosworth, Arthur Clarke, J. L. Gault, C. H. Woodcock, J. F. Brumbaugh, C. E. Ingalls and Bob Johnson. With this corporation went the responsibility of letting contracts, authorizing any or all construction changes or additions, securing a new manager for the hotel as well as raising the additional \$25,000 stock that the transfer, ordered by the second mortgage bondholders, made necessary. First mortgage bondholders were expected to provide the additional capital necessary to purchase the \$25,000 stock. The net effect of such a transaction was the ability to loan themselves \$135,000 on a second mortgage as it was "...scarcely

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likely that they will permit themselves to foreclose on themselves at any great financial loss".¹⁰

Various appraisals recognizing the success of the project placed the value of such a development at between \$300,000 and \$350,000. As a result "...Corvallis people have saved anywhere from \$50,000 to \$100,000" through construction of the Benton Hotel "...by building this hotel themselves and using local contractors who were interested as much in the success of the enterprise as they were in their own financial gain".¹¹

Contractor responsibilities were awarded to Lou Traver with work to commence in August, 1924. Since relocating to Corvallis in 1902, Mr. Traver was responsible for the construction of "...more business and private structures than any other person in Corvallis".¹² During the period of 1921 to 1925 he was responsible for the construction of over one and one-half million dollars worth of buildings in Corvallis and at Oregon Agricultural College. Various projects to his credit include the pharmacy building, commerce building and college science building, all on Oregon Agricultural College campus, as well as the Elks Temple and numerous private residences. Construction of the Benton Hotel went surprisingly fast, earning him a reputation as a man "...with a vision for the future and an eye for systematic work..."¹³ Being constructed from virtually all local materials and labor force, the building being described as Corvallis' first "fireproof" structure was officially opened on June 1, 1925.

Formal ceremonies announcing the opening of the hotel was not limited to a local event. Over 50,000 printed announcements in letters sent out by a local committee insured "...virtually every influential businessman in the state will receive a personal announcement of the hotel opening, a description of the hostelry and some of its and the city's features".¹⁴ On hand for the ceremony were numerous individuals from the Willamette Valley and Oregon as well as representatives from many eastern and southern states. Stockholders were treated to a banquet featuring speakers professing overwhelming support for the city and its accomplishment.

Special consideration was made with respect to interior furnishings and fixtures. Over 2,000 pieces of furniture were installed in the 120 room hotel, all but twenty-three of which contained a bath. Four thousand yards of Axminster carpet were utilized in the upper story floors and hallways. The lobby floor, while constructed of terrazzo, was carpeted in chenille carpets in plain colors. A large fireplace located off the lobby lounge was capable of seating thirty-five people. Furnishings in the lobby included four, eight-foot Coxwell davenports and numerous highbacked chairs and rockers. Bird cages, ferneries, mirrors and paintings contributed to the homelike, comfortable atmosphere. Furnishings found in the mezzanine were of the wicker variety trimmed in blue and gold.

Dining facilities are of particular note, as the hotel had a widespread reputation for quality. Capable of seating three hundred, the dining area was complete with French walnut tables and Windsor chairs. White linen and Gorham silverware served to finish each place setting. The kitchen facilities were described as "...the very latest thing in convenience and sanitation",¹⁵ and were designed by kitchen engineers from Nathan Dorman's of San Francisco. All kitchen equipment was constructed entirely of steel and was complete in terms of latest innovations. A large dishwashing machine capable of

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washing and sterilizing all dishes, as well as an immense range, refrigeration plant and special fish storage all contributed to fine dining pleasure at affordable prices.

Managerial responsibilities for the new hotel were awarded to Al Pierce. Mr. Pierce's first experience in hostelry occurred at Grand Haven, Michigan. He was also connected with the fine resort hotels in Grand Rapids and Mt. Clemens, Michigan, for many years. In 1910, Mr. Pierce was retained as manager of the Seward Hotel in Portland, a position he held for ten years. Employment experiences in Portland ended in 1920 when he became manager of the Marion Hotel, in Salem. As past president of Oregon's Hostelry and Hospitality Club, he "...set a precedent for accomplishments that has been recognized by high officials".¹⁶ Locally, Mr. Pierce was a member of the Rotary Club, the Masons and Shriners. At the time of his appointment as manager of the Benton Hotel, he was the vice-president of the Oregon State Hotel Association.

It is difficult to measure the impact the Benton Hotel has had on the social, commercial, political and cultural structure of Corvallis. Being located within one block of the Southern Pacific Railroad station, ten blocks from the university and in the heart of the commercial core of Corvallis, the building served as host to nearly every conceivable event or convention for over thirty years. At the time of construction, the population of Corvallis had only slightly exceeded eight thousand people. Furthermore, the local economy was somewhat depressed and while other similar communities were content in their respective status quo, the citizens of Corvallis were building what was at the time and still is the largest structure within the commercial district.

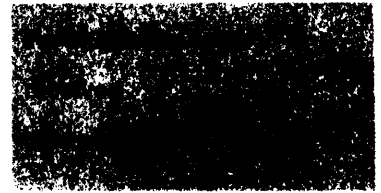
The Hotel Benton's contributions to the social life of Corvallis are well documented. Virtually every week between 1925 and 1960, some event of community interest took place at the hotel. As the ballroom could hold approximately three hundred people and since the dining room was clearly the best in the community, all major events were held there. The Commercial Club, which was the predecessor to the Chamber of Commerce, held its regular meetings in the hotel until only recently. Beside the Kiwanis Club, the Rotary Club has been historically one of the most influential groups in Corvallis. Each group has held weekly meetings at the hotel as did the Zonta Club, the local women's club. The Town Club, a social organization, met monthly in formal attire from 1925 to 1960. Dance groups found the ballroom to their advantage, including the Tillicums, a social dance club, as well as the Monads, a formal dance club.

Many college (later, university) activities took full advantage of the Benton Hotel as well. In particular, all fraternities and sororities held dances in the ballroom. The Thirty-Staters, the original Oregon Agricultural College alumni club, met there on a monthly or weekly basis.

Being situated across from Benton County Courthouse, the hotel had more than a casual role in the area's legal history. From 1925 to 1971, prisoners in the county jail were fed meals prepared by the hotel. Similarly, the sequestering of jurors, sometimes for several weeks as in the case of important murder trials, was accomplished by the Benton Hotel.

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Because of its large banquet and ballroom facilities, as well as the quality of its accommodations, the Hotel Benton had the advantage of other local hotels for major events. Conventions sponsored largely by the university as a vehicle for the exchange of ideas was an added benefit to the citizens of Corvallis. Clearly, the Benton Hotel became the outlet for such events as no other local hotels had comparable facilities. Scarcely a month went by from 1920 to 1950 when issues of local, regional and national importance were not expounded upon through public forums at the hotel.

Athletic events have clearly played an important role in the development of the Benton Hotel as well as the community of Corvallis. As might be imagined in a college town, visiting teams and sports personalities have resided in the Benton Hotel prior to appearances and contests. In October, 1943, world heavyweight champion, Joe Lewis, visited the hotel prior to speaking to soldiers stationed in nearby Camp Adair. The sport of basketball was responsible for many changes to the hotel. Because of the large size of many of the players, seven-foot beds were ordered and installed to encourage various athletic departments' business. In 1955, the National Collegiate Athletic Association, Western Regional tournament, was held in Corvallis. The finals saw University of San Francisco, behind center Bill Russell, defeat Oregon State University, 57-56 and go on to win the national title. All teams competing in the tournament were staying at the Benton Hotel. During a post-tournament celebration, chairs were thrown through the many windows and the police were called to quell the disturbance. Unable to do so, the local priest from the Catholic church held a midnight mass and order was restored. Subsequently, all the windows in the hotel were replaced with aluminum windows of the casement variety.

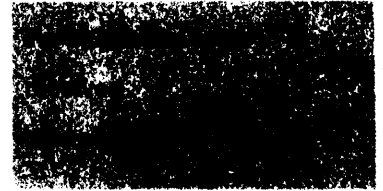
Various entertainers including musicians and opera personalities have performed or appeared at the hotel since its opening. Corvallis has had a fondness for the opera as exemplified by numerous Metropolitan Opera events staged in the Benton Hotel or community. A partial list might include: Richard Benelli, 1937, Charles Coleman, tenor, 1943, Gene Watson, contralto, 1944, Alexander Kipnis, baritone, 1945, Ann Kaskas, contralto, 1945, and Kirt Baum, tenor, 1948. Other musicians known to stay in the hotel include Vironsky and Babin (1944), duo pianists, and Virginia Morely and Livingston Gearheart (1945). A number of renowned Hollywood and Broadway actors and actresses utilized the hotel during visits to Corvallis, including Mary Astor and Shirley Temple during the 1940 s, Will Rogers, Jr. in 1943, and John B. Hughes, a well known radio and news commentator.

Political organizations were quick to recognize the resources provided by the Benton Hotel. Governor Dewey, a Republican presidential candidate, spoke at the hotel on his swing through the Pacific Northwest in 1948. John F. Kennedy and Robert F. Kennedy spoke at the hotel as well as Governor Ronald Reagan. Virtually every Oregon candidate for governor from 1925 to 1960 would either speak at or reside in the "Benton" while politicking in Corvallis. Others of note known to have stopped and spoken at the hotel during the period of 1940 to 1960 include vice-presidential candidate Richard Nixon; Governor John Rockefeller; Secretary of Agriculture Claude Wickard; and Representative Charles Hallick, Majority Leader of the 80th Congress.

Commercial involvement in the hotel was limited in a large part to the first story. First Federal Savings and Loan, now known as Cascade Federal Savings and Loan, operated one of its first and only offices from the hotel. Others known to have operated

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initially from the hotel include a druggist, beautician, restaurant and coffee shop.

In 1945, the Benton Hotel was purchased by H. Warren Taylor who sold the structure in 1951 to B. N. Woods. Taylor again purchased the building in 1953 on a partnership basis with Carl Doty. In 1956, Taylor again sold his half interest in the hotel to Cecil C. Bates and William Benson. Over the past twenty years, several individuals have held an ownership interest in the building.

Over the past several years, the hotel has continued to function in its original capacity. However, with the loss of passenger service to the Corvallis depot in the 1940s, the quality of clientele has suffered. Furthermore, the change of transportation attention toward the automobile, requiring parking facilities nearly impossible to obtain, has supported a more residential hotel function. Being in continual service for over fifty years has contributed to the hardships. Extensive rehabilitation is called for to bring back the elegance masked behind post-war partitioning and suspended ceilings. Fortunately, the quality of the "permanence" and soundness so important to the original builders and developers remains, thus satisfying their "...dream of years - a hotel in keeping with the college community in which it stands".¹⁷

FOOTNOTES

¹"First Corvallis Hotel Burns in Seventies", Corvallis Gazette-Times, 3 June 1925, page 1.

²"Bexell Writes of Hotels And Would Buy Park", Daily Gazette-Times, 7 July 1920, page 1.

³"Who Built The Hotel?", Corvallis Gazette-Times, 5 June 1925, page 2.

⁴"R. L. Bosworth, M.D.", History of the Willamette Valley, Oregon (1927), Vol. III, page 475.

⁵"Dr. R. L. Bosworth", Corvallis Gazette-Times, 18 September 1953, page 4.

⁶"We've Come A Long Way", Corvallis Gazette-Times, 23 October 1975, page 29.

⁷"Dr. R. L. Bosworth", loc. cit.

⁸"R. L. Bosworth, M.D.", loc. cit.

⁹"Who Built The Hotel?", loc. cit.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid.

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FOOTNOTES (cont.)

- 12"Traver Displays Much Ability On New Hotel", Corvallis Gazette-Times, 3 June 1925, page 1.
- 13Ibid.
- 14"Announcements of Hotel Opening Sent Over State", Corvallis Gazette-Times, 3 June 1925, page 6.
- 15"The Hotel Benton", Corvallis Gazette-Times, 3 June 1925, page 2.
- 16"Pierce Learns Game Back In Michigan", Corvallis Gazette-Times, 3 June 1925, page 1.
- 17"Hotel Gives New Glimpse Of City", Corvallis Gazette-Times, 3 June 1925, page 1.

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Houghtaling obituary: Portland Oregonian (April 2, 1940), 10.