

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

PH 0668230

FOR NPS USE ONLY **DATA SHEET**

RECEIVED **MAY 22 1978**

DATE ENTERED **AUG 24 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 Hotel Irvin Cobb

AND/OR COMMON Irvin Cobb Hotel

## 2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER  
Broadway and Sixth Street

CITY, TOWN  
Paducah

STATE  
Kentucky

— NOT FOR PUBLICATION  
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

— VICINITY OF 01

CODE  
021

COUNTY  
McCracken

CODE  
145 ✓

## 3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER: Vacant

## 4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME  
(See continuation sheet.)

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

— VICINITY OF

STATE

## 5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. McCracken County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER  
Sixth and Washington Streets

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Paducah

Kentucky

## 6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE  
Survey of Historic Sites in Kentucky

DATE  
1974

— FEDERAL  STATE — COUNTY — LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS Kentucky Heritage Commission

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Frankfort

Kentucky

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

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DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Hotel Irvin Cobb occupies the southwest corner of Broadway and Sixth Street in downtown Paducah, Kentucky. Broadway is the busiest thoroughfare in this city of 35,000, and those buildings immediately east of the Cobb Hotel form the core of Paducah's business district. Since its completion in 1929, this L-shaped, nine-story building has served as the most dominant element of the downtown district, and is visible from many blocks away--vision unobscured due to its being the tallest edifice in Paducah. Begun in 1927, the Hotel Irvin Cobb was built for Adolph Weil, who was one of Paducah's leading citizens and businessmen. The designs for the interior and exterior were executed by Walter Alschlager, a noted hotel architect from Chicago.

The construction is of warmly toned brick, and the first three floors of the two street facades are dressed with smoothly finished limestone. The main entrance, which has an Art Deco treatment, is on the Broadway facade facing north. A suspended heavy metal hood, also in the Art Deco mode, shelters this entrance whose frontispiece is of bronze that has become richly toned with age. The street level windows on the Broadway facade are of large dimensions and almost reach the sidewalk. Most are filled with large panes of glass and have transoms above. An exception is a window arrangement immediately east of the entrance which is composed of many small panes divided by heavy muntins and recessed bronze panels--the whole resulting in a Tudoresque effect.

Adding to the variety of treatments and textures on the Broadway side are projecting sections that imitate half-timbering (see photo 3) and which vary in height and width. The interstices of the heavy framework are filled with stuccoed brick. Multi-levelled parapets are at the corners. Between the parapets is a wooden pergola, and rising above the parapets are circular chimney pots.

The Sixth Street facade (see photo 1) is twice as wide. Near the northeast corner is a second entrance whose treatment is much like that of the one on Broadway. South of this opening is a five-bay colossal arcade. Accolades with ogee curves frame these window arrangements whose levels are separated by decorative bronze panels, and whose panes are divided into four sections by mullions of the same material. More projecting portions of imitation half-timbering appear on this facade, and there is a pergola separated by a high parapet with an arched opening at the top. Two three-tiered, four-sided chimneys and one circular chimney pot rise high above the flat roof. The southeast corner is crowned by a conical dome, and a two-story, square, battlement tower ascends on the western side to serve as a focal point.

A firm of general contractors from Memphis constructed the Cobb Hotel, but the Paducah painting firm of Sanderson and Hancock was responsible for remarkable interior

(continued)

# 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-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES    1927-29

BUILDER/ARCHITECT    Walter Alschlager

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

For more than three decades, the Hotel Irvin Cobb in Paducah was the center of civic, business and social life for the entire region of Kentucky between Owensboro (100 miles northeast) and the state's far western boundary defined by the Mississippi River. Since its completion in 1929, the Cobb Hotel has ranked among the most substantial buildings in Kentucky west of Louisville, and its architectural qualities render it the honor of being Paducah's downtown landmark.

Paducah is the seat of McCracken County, and is the unofficially recognized "capitol" of the Jackson Purchase, a region encompassing eight counties in Kentucky's far west. Despite this status, Paducah's development has been slow and gradual. Its strategic location at the point where the Tennessee River empties into the Ohio has been an outstanding influence. The Illinois Central Railway located its repair shops there, so Paducah has had the claim of being both a river and a railroad town. Despite its advantages, however, the city has grown little since 1930 when its population numbered 33,451 (Bureau of Community Service, "Paducah: An Embryonic Metropolis," unpublished study, University of Kentucky, Lexington, Kentucky, 1952, p. 3).

Adolph Weil, for whom the hotel was built, was a member of one of Kentucky's leading Jewish families. Weil hired Walter Alschlager of Chicago to design the building. Alschlager had previously been responsible for the famed Peabody Hotel in Memphis, and he came to Weil with high recommendations from the Peabody Hotel Corporation which leased the Cobb for many years (The Sun-Democrat, Paducah, January 12, 1969).

The building was constructed between 1927-29 during the era of a rollicking economy at a cost of \$400,000. During its period of operation, the Cobb drew more state conventions than any other place in western Kentucky before the development of state park resort centers at Lake Barkley and Kentucky Lake (The Courier-Journal, Louisville, October 29, 1974). Due to its reputation as one of the South's finest hotels, all Paducah civic clubs met there for many years, and the eighth-floor's Governor's Suite played host to numerous theatrical and political figures. Even during the Depression, the Cobb Hotel prospered. At its peak, formal attire was required for the evening in the dining room, and during warm weather renowned orchestras provided music for roof terrace dances--crowds gathering on the streets below for listening pleasure.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

The Courier-Journal. Louisville, Kentucky. October 29, 1974.  
 Paducah: An Embryonic Metropolis. Lexington: The University of Kentucky, 1952.  
 The Sun-Democrat. Paducah, Kentucky. January 12, 1969.  
 James, Edward T., Editor. Dictionary of American Biography, Supplement III, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973, pp. 170-171.

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY approximately 1/2 acre  
 UTM REFERENCES

A	1 6	3 5 7 7 3 0	4 1 0 5 3 2 0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

## VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

A rectangular lot of approximately 1/2 acre on the southwest corner of Broadway and Sixth Street in Paducah, McCracken County, Kentucky.

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE  
 Daniel Kidd, Architectural Historian

ORGANIZATION  
 Kentucky Heritage Commission

DATE  
 March 1978

STREET & NUMBER  
 104 Bridge Street

TELEPHONE  
 (502) 564-3741

CITY OR TOWN  
 Frankfort

STATE  
 Kentucky

# 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

*Clared W. Meeter*

TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE 5/15/78

### FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

*W. Meeter*

DATE 8/24/78

ATTEST:

*Charles A. ...*

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE 8-23-78

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Hotel Irvin Cobb  
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Larry Baker ✓  
316 Fairview Drive  
Paducah, KY 42001

Walter Parr ✓  
316 Fairview Dirve  
Paducah, KY 42001

Tom Fielder, A.I.A. ✓  
443 South Ashland Avenue  
Lexington, KY 40502

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decorations, working under the direction of a Memphis artist. O. E. Hancock stated that Alschlager, the architect, wanted an interior decor similar to that of the Medina Temple in Chicago. The supervising artist spent a week in Chicago and then came back to design, draw and cut all the stencils used for the ceiling paintings which...adorn the ballroom on the second floor as well as the lobby and dining room on the first floor. Among the designs used in the stencils were a number of coats of arms from many countries, giving a medieval effect to the general decoration (The Sun-Democrat, January 12, 1969).

Elaborate plaster moldings also play an important role in the décor of the lobby, dining room and ballroom. These embellishments include Byzantine capitals in the dining room's blind arcade, heavy, nonfunctional consoles, and massive "coffered ceilings" that are richly treated in the lobby and dining room. In addition, the lobby is paneled with warm oak and is illuminated by a huge brass chandelier. The plaster moldings were manufactured by Italian artisans who set up a combined studio and plant in the lobby's floor (Ibid.).

The remaining space of the building contained 199 guest rooms and several shops and service areas off the lobby. Atop the roof was a terrace that was the scene of many dances in warm weather. Although the stenciled decorations are mostly deteriorated, the plaster moldings are much intact and the exterior of this building that combines French Gothic, English medieval, and Art Deco elements is structurally sound.

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The establishment was named for Irvin S. Cobb, a native Paducahan who gained international fame as a writer, journalist and humorist. Cobb (1876-1944) began his literary career as a journalist, serving as a correspondent on the Chicago Tribune and syndicated columnist for the New York Evening Sun. He later became a contributor to several leading American journals, was a novelist, and one of the most widely read short story writers of his time. He died in New York City and was interred in Paducah (Dictionary of American Biography, Supplement III, 1973, pp. 170-171). Ironically, Cobb held a special dislike for the hotels of his day. In his satire entitled "Thank God for Modern Hotels," he described the majority of them as having "economically small guest chambers with shops encroaching on a scrimped lobby, and on the walls, such pictures as might have been selected by the same strange person who picks out the hats worn by Queen Mary of England." But speaking at ceremonies marking the Cobb Hotel's formal opening on May 1, 1929, he hailed the building as such: "From lobby to roof garden, there is no hotel on this continent nor in the world more exquisitely designed" (The Courier-Journal, date unknown). During the remainder of his life Irvin Cobb stayed and spoke in the hotel often, as did Alben Barkley, another native of Paducah, who served as President Harry Truman's Vice President from 1948-1952.

In 1959, Henry Weil, son of the original owner, sold the building to Associated Hotels, Inc., of Chicago. The 1960s witnessed a steadily declining patronage, and in February 1972, the hotel was closed following a fire that caused minor damage to a suite of rooms on the top floor.

The present owners, Irvin Cobb Associates, are formulating plans to renovate the building. The lobby, dining room and ballroom will be used for social events, and the remaining space will be converted into an 88-unit apartment house for the elderly.

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ADDENDUM

Architecturally, the hotel is a fine example of those "period revivals" that were in vogue between the 1890s-1930s. Essentially, the Cobb is eclectic, and Alschlager combined several stylistic features in an unabashed, yet successful manner. The exterior blends the French Gothic with English medievalism in a variety of materials to produce a unique western Kentucky edifice. The lobby and dining room carry on the eclectic character, and their plaster embellishments and other components represent high artistic values.