

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

SENT TO D.C.

12-14-05

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name **Kewanee Hotel**

other names/site number **Parkside Hotel**

2. Location

street & number **125 North Chestnut**

____ Not for publication

city or town **Kewanee**

____ vicinity

state **Illinois**

code **IL**

county **Henry**

code **073**

zip code **61433**

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant ____ nationally ____ statewide locally. (____ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Walter C. ... SHP
Signature of certifying official

12-13-2005
Date

Illinois Historic Preservation Agency

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register criteria. (____ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

American Indian Tribe

Name of Property **Kewanee Hotel**

County and State **Henry, IL**

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
<input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> other (explain):	_____	_____

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u> 1 </u>	<u> 0 </u>	buildings
<u> 0 </u>	<u> 0 </u>	sites
<u> 0 </u>	<u> 0 </u>	structures
<u> 0 </u>	<u> 0 </u>	objects
<u> 1 </u>	<u> 0 </u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register **N/A**

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)
N/A

Name of Property **Kewanee Hotel**

County and State **Henry, IL**

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Domestic/hotel

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Domestic/hotel

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Classical Revival

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation **Concrete**

Roof **Steel**

Walls **Brick**

other **Terra Cotta**

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

See Continuation Sheets

Name of Property **Kewanee Hotel**

County and State **Henry, IL**

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or a grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Commerce

Period of Significance Significant Dates
1916-1945 **1916, 1931**

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above) **N/A**

Cultural Affiliation **N/A**

Architect/Builder **Hewitt & Emerson, Peoria, IL (1916)**
B.K. Gibson, Chicago, IL (1930)

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.) **See Continuation Sheet**

Name of Property **Kewanee Hotel**

County and State **Henry, IL**

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.

previously listed in the National Register

previously determined eligible by the National Register

designated a National Historic Landmark

recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____

recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Name of repository **Kewanee Public Library; Henry County Housing Authority, Kewanee, IL**

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property **less than one acre**

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone Easting	Northing	Zone Easting	Northing		
1	16	254619	4569959	3	_____	_____
2	_____	_____	4	_____	_____	_____

See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

See Continuation Sheet

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

See Continuation Sheet

Name of Property **Kewanee Hotel**

County and State **Henry, IL**

11. Form Prepared By

name/title **Edward J. Russo, Curtis R. Mann**

organization **Sangamon Researchers** date **October 15, 2005**

street & number **P.O Box 5805** telephone **(217) 414-0052**

city or town **Springfield** state **Illinois** zip code **62705**

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:
Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name **Henry County Housing Development Group Inc.**

street & number **100 Fairview Jct.**

telephone **(309) 852-2801**

city or town **Kewanee** state **Illinois** zip code **61443**

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Kewanee Hotel, Henry County, Illinois

The Kewanee Hotel is one of the most prominent buildings in downtown Kewanee, Illinois. Kewanee is a community of about 13,000 people located in northern Illinois approximately 50 miles northwest of Peoria and about 130 miles southwest of Chicago. The city is on the main line of the Burlington Northern Railroad and on U.S. Highway 34 and State highways 78 and 81. Formerly an agricultural, coal mining and industrial center, Kewanee has declined in population and economy since the 1940s.

The Kewanee Hotel consists of a four-story structure with two additions, all occupying the north half of the block of Chestnut Street between West First and West Second streets. The original building and addition of 1931 are in a simplified Classical Revival design with typical three-part division of base, upper floors and deep cornice and modeled after the base, shaft and capital of a classical column. The projecting cornice is galvanized metal in a denticulated pattern. Symmetrically spaced windows and doors, corner quoins and keystone arches at the first level all express the use of this overwhelmingly popular style of the early 20th Century. The 1976 addition is a modified International Style design and non-contributing.

The original structure of 1916 consists of the elevation facing on Second Street and the first five bays of the facade on Chestnut Street. The first addition to the hotel (1931) continues the Chestnut street facade with an additional five bays to the south. These bays are all wider than those on the original building but are matched in design detail. The former ballroom addition, also built in 1931 and projecting south at the west end of the 1916 building, was demolished in 1975 except for its rear (west) wall. A two-story motel addition was constructed using this remaining wall and continuing south to the south boundary line. This motel addition is a non-contributing part of the building. The building and its additions form a U-shaped structure surrounding a landscaped courtyard open on the south except for a low brick wall.

The most striking element of the exterior is the strong contrast between the dark face brick of the walls offset with white brick bays on the north and south elevations of the 1916 building. Quoins on the original building and addition and other decorative elements are also of light-toned brick. This effect is further heightened by the texture of the dark "tapestry" face brick contrasting sharply with the smooth, glazed surface of the lighter colored accent brick. The main entrance is at the north end of the Chestnut Street elevation. A series of arches along this facade (wider on the addition than on the original building), form an arcade of business fronts along Chestnut Street at the first floor level. A more complicated and tighter arrangement of arched and square-headed openings, highlighted with light and dark brick patterning, defines the Second Street elevation facing north.

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Kewanee Hotel, Henry County, Illinois

FACADE.

The east facing façade on Chestnut Street consists of the original building and the 1931 addition incorporated into a single composition. The rectilinear building is divided into 10 bays varying slightly in spacing and proportion but which, overall, suggest symmetry and formal balance. At the first floor level each of the five bays of the addition on the south has a segmental-arch-topped opening outlined in light-colored glazed brick with limestone bases. Each unit contains a storefront and has a plate-glass display window and recessed entrance. The entrance doors alternate from right to left side of the display windows as they progress north. The upper sections of these bays were originally clear glass set in vertical metal muntins. These have since been covered over with wood and the original entrance doors have been replaced, circa 1960, with metal-frame glass-panel doors. Infill at the top of these bays is the same dark tapestry brick of the upper floors. The five bays of the original building on the north are much narrower in width and proportion but are also outlined in light brick. Their infill is of the same tapestry brick but this space is additionally ornamented with decorative circular panels of bas-relief. Upper sections of these arched openings have traditional fanlight design wood sash and panels of clear glass. These have been obscured by dark glass, wood-framed storm windows. The central bay in this section contains the hotel's main entrance and is covered with a marquee of wrought iron. Triple columns at curbside and paired columns next to the hotel support a flat roof and simple cornice design. These columns are joined with a pattern of wrought iron lattice.

The first floor is divided from the upper floors by a simple band of white brick, edged with limestone. The top course of this band forms sills for second floor windows. The addition has an asymmetrical arrangement of windows at the second and third levels. Beginning at the left (south) end is a large, single window centrally spaced in the bay. In the next bay is a pair of these windows spaced more closely together. This pattern is repeated in bays three and four. At the last bay, which adjoins the original building, narrower windows are joined as one unit. This arrangement visually reduces the apparent size of the windows as they move closer to the narrower windows of the original building. At the fourth floor five-paired sash, smaller in width than those below, are evenly spaced across the façade. On the original building five windows of equal size are evenly spaced across the façade on the second, third and fourth floors. All windows are ornamented with plain limestone sills, simple brick mold wood trim and stylized, flat decorative cornices suggesting keystones, also of limestone. The only window to receive more elaborate treatment on this façade is the one above the main entrance, which is trimmed out in a band of light-colored accent brick. This was clearly done to emphasize the entrance.

Corner quoins of light brick extend up the sidewalls ending at a band of white brick above the fourth floor. A galvanized metal, denticulated cornice surmounts this with a high brick parapet wall above. Along this parapet wall are two design panels in white brick of vertical bars and a horizontal band. The panel on the addition's parapet wall matches and balances the one on the original building. At the very top is a coping of aggregate.

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Kewanee Hotel, Henry County, Illinois

NORTH ELEVATION.

This elevation presents a complex surface design of contrasting brick at the first level. A complicated arrangement of segmental-arch-topped and square-headed openings alternate with florid design of contrasting brick and limestone bases. The effect is one of intricate design layout. Overall this façade follows the slight slope of the topography as it drops grade from east to west. The arched design of the openings found on the façade continues here, but these are interspersed with rectangular panels of dark brick outlined in light-toned brick. Beginning at the left (east) end of the façade, continuing about one third of the building length, are four arched openings serving variously as entrances or windows. They are evenly spaced and divided by the rectangular panels described above --with a small square on top of a larger rectangular one. The fourth arch contains the north lobby entrance. Surrounding this lobby door is a blind window frame in which a door and sidelights are cut. The original wooden French door of 1916 has been replaced with a metal-framed glass door of the 1960s. Moving west, four additional arched openings punctuate the remainder of the first floor. These arched openings have wider separations between than the previous four and exhibit a more complicated pattern of arrangement, including square-headed sash windows incorporated into the design. The arch in the center of the elevation is completely surrounded by light-colored brick to draw attention and balance the asymmetrical arrangement. The original arrangement of openings was changed in the 1931 and 1946 remodelings, with some windows becoming doors and the lower, rectangular section of the windows replaced with single sheets of plate glass. The final arched opening to the west was bricked shut, possibly in the 1960s and the one in the center is presently covered with plywood. Overall, however, their distinctive pattern maintains the feeling of the original design.

Above this level, the band of brick and limestone continues from the façade, setting off the second through fourth floors from the first level. The window placement at the second through fourth floors is asymmetrical but the architect made an effort to give a feeling of balance. Like the façade, this rectilinear elevation is flat, with the cornice being the only projection. To visually relieve this flatness and enliven the design, two bays, centered on each half of the building, are faced with the contrasting light-toned brick. This treatment makes them appear to project forward. Attention is also drawn to their symmetrical paired window placement on all three floors as opposed to the asymmetrical window arrangement of the dark-faced bays. The bays in between and on either side of the light colored ones have an arrangement of single windows, sometimes alone and sometimes in pair. The windows on this elevation, except for those in the light-colored bays, lack the noticeable, decorative design of stylized keystone arches at their top. Those in the dark brick bays have simple heads of brick set in soldier course. 14 windows form a band at each level and are repeated in the same pattern at all three levels. Light-toned brick quoins, top band, cornice and parapet cap of the façade are repeated here.

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WEST ELEVATION.

This service elevation faces the alley and has none of the decorative elements found on the more public sides of the building. The common brick wall rises from grade to parapet, unrelieved by trim except for a corbeled belt course at the line where the metal denticulated cornices terminate on adjoining elevations. A simple aggregate coping, matching that on the other elevations, tops the parapet wall. At ground level, on the north half of the elevation, are a six-over-six, double-hung metal sash window and large double door, raised to accommodate wagon and truck bed height. These are balanced on the south half of the elevation by a pair of openings that originally framed large windows lighting the hotel kitchen. The bottom three quarters of these openings were bricked in before 1946 and the top quarter fitted with exhaust fan grilles, which remain intact. A street-level entrance door with an exhaust fan grille in the transom is placed in the center of the first-floor elevation. Above this door are three one-over-one, double hung sash at a slightly lower level than flanking windows. These light the rear stairwell. To the left (north) is a small one-over-one double-hung sash window at the second, third and fourth floor levels and, further north, larger windows of the same design. To the right (south) of the center stairwell windows are paired, large windows matching those at the far left.

Continuing south at the first floor level is the rear of the original ballroom and back wall of the 1976 motel addition. A slightly recessed, brick faced bay, with terra cotta coping, joins the 1931 ballroom addition to the original building. The wall of this bay is completely unornamented except for paired, double-hung sash windows with limestone sills. Next, is the wall of the former ballroom, which is faced with the same brick as the joining bay. This ballroom wall is divided into four bays separated by projecting brick piers. Originally each bay contained a double, metal sash casement window. These windows were covered with metal siding when the ballroom was mostly demolished for the motel building in 1975. This wall is also the anchor for electric utility lines serving the building. To the south of this is a three-bay, concrete block section of wall serving as the rear wall for the remaining section of the motel.

SOUTH ELEVATION AND COURT.

This is the most complex elevation of the building and will be described as a unit rather than as individual elevations. The original building of 1916 and its two additions of 1931 and 1976 are visibly prominent here as well as the landscaped court formed by the building. The 1976 motel addition is a non-contributing part of the building, falling outside the period of historical significance. Beginning at the far left (west) the blind concrete block wall of the flat-roofed 1976 motel addition is visible. This building occupies and extends the space of the ballroom, which was part of the 1931 expansion of the hotel. The blind wall of this elevation is capped with simple wood band at the cornice level. The façade of this addition faces east and its most prominent feature is a roofed, open two-story porch supported by brick piers. This minimally International Style building features elongated brick in the piers, emphasizing the horizontal lines of its design. At the second level of the balcony/walkway a double row of horizontal boards form a simple balustrade. Alternate piers are decorated

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with tubular wall lights near the midway point. Entrances to individual rooms consist of simple, flush metal doors with a single plate glass window (alternating to the left or right of the door) with grilles for room air conditioning units below the windows. The inner wall containing room entrances is of white-painted concrete block construction. At the north end of the building, where it joins the original hotel, a pier wall projects eastward to join the enclosed dining porch of the older structure to the new. This pier terminates at the line of the motel's flat roof and has the same simple rough board trim for cornice.

The imposing south elevation of the original hotel forms the north wall of the court and towers over this entry area. This elevation duplicates the north elevation facing Second Street except for a slight change in fenestration pattern. Here single, one-over-one, double-hung sash are evenly spaced, two per bay, at levels two, three and four. The original, metal, denticulated cornice has been removed on this section of the building, but all other design work in light and dark brick and vertical bars in the parapet wall, matching those on the north elevation, remains.

At the first level the original open dining porch, which was enclosed in the remodeling of 1930-31, remains. Originally this porch consisted of a lean-to roof projecting from the main structure and accented with two front gables at the east and west ends, supported by brick piers. A segmental-arch opening was centered in each gable-end section while the openings in the lean-to, central section were flat-headed. The spaces between the piers were open to form a dining porch. The decorative elements around the openings on each end were similar to those on the rest of the building including light colored, brick quoins and light colored brick outline around the arches and supporting columns in the gable ends. These formed a Palladian-derived design still visible on the east gable front. The gable ends have limestone caps and projecting bricks form decorative elements suggesting dove-cote openings in the gable. This limestone parapet cap continues across the central bays. The central piers are of light colored brick with limestone capitals. A bracketed cornice runs across the central bays, connecting the two gable ends. In 1931 French doors and multi-paned sidelights and transom lights were set in the center openings. Stucco on metal lath filled in the space above these new doors and windows. In the arched openings at either end a pair of French doors was set and infilled with brickwork matching that of the adjoining piers. The open columns now form pilasters. Sometime in the 1970s the French doors and divided light surrounds were replaced with single sash, fixed frame windows. The projecting pier wall of the 1976 motel addition covers the gable-fronted entry on the west but the one on the east maintains its original design.

The east elevation of the 1931 addition forms the third wall of the courtyard. While it is, at first glance, modeled after the original building, the design is considerably simplified. Its north wall adjoins the east wall of the original dining porch and the south wall of the original building at the first level. On the upper floors, however, it joins the original building only on the east, one-room-deep. On the remaining area to the west the addition is set back to form a light court for the windows of the original building. Overall the rear (west) wall

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of this addition is a simple rectangle covered in face brick and decorated with the same light-colored brick quoins and metal cornice found on the rest of the structure. At the first level, on the north end, a pair of French doors with sidelights has been removed and the opening filled with brick, which contrasts slightly with the original. This work was done in the 1946 remodel. Continuing south are a row of six-light, single-sash windows with limestone sills set high above ground level. The original plans called for a pair of large, plate glass windows at the south end of this elevation but these appear to have been eliminated at the time of construction and replaced with the three smaller windows matching those on the north. No evidence in the brickwork indicates a later change. Like the windows above, these have no decorative heads. On the second through fourth floors, six single, one-over-one light, double-hung sash are spaced evenly across the façade in pairs. In between the far right (south) pair a door opens at each level, leading to the metal fire escape attached to this side of the building.

The south elevation of this addition has no openings of any kind. The metal cornice and parapet wall design continues from the east and west elevations but the quoins appear only on the east side of this wall. At the left (west) side only the alternating in/out pattern of the light colored brick from the quoins on the west elevation break the dark brick design. From grade to approximately midpoint on this wall a change in brick coloration and pattern mark a ghostline of the building, a former theater, which once adjoined the hotel building.

The courtyard proper was a grass lawn, edged with low-growing shrubbery and centered with a small concrete patio as late as 1950. During the years of ownership by the Summer family, a more elaborate design was installed consisting of large brick-paved terrace and a low brick wall enclosing the court on the south connecting the east and west wings. The small yew shrubs of 1950 have become medium-size trees and two of them act as sentinels near the opening entrance of the south brick wall. The brick terrace is mostly intact but has suffered some shifting due to weather and a section of it has been removed.

INTERIORS.

Interiors of the Kewanee Hotel reflect many layers of major and minor remodeling but important features, including the main stairway, remain in the 1916 building. Nearly all important remodeling took place in the historic period pre 1955. The hotel currently serves as an apartment building for low, or fixed-income tenants.

The original, main entrance remains on the Chestnut Street (east) elevation of the 1916 building. Upon entering, guests originally passed through a small vestibule and arrived in a room over 50 feet square, supported by columns forming a central walkway, running east to west, with open lounge spaces on either side. In the 1931 remodeling the lounges on either side were divided off by partition walls with the lounge on the south becoming office space and the one on the north changed to a commercial storefront. The office on the south has a barrel-vault ceiling intact but partially obscured by acoustical ceiling tile. The original "fumed oak," striated wall paneling was reused in 1931 to veneer the partition walls in the corridor to about nine feet with plaster

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ceiling above. The paneling was retained and lightened in color in the 1946 remodeling. Glass wall cases were installed on the south wall of the corridor and the vestibule remains in place although its doors are currently 1960s aluminum frame design. Casing was changed in 1946 to a simple, flat stock built up to suggest molding. Original mosaic tile floors are covered with linoleum in brick pattern.

At the west end of this central corridor is a second, smaller lobby or "lounge" with public entrance on the north from Second Street. This western room contains the original stairs and elevator and opens onto the once-open-air dining porch on the south. That porch was enclosed in 1931 and has served several functions, most recently a lounge. The elevator, described in opening day news accounts as running up to "one hundred feet per minute," is still in place. Public restrooms are located to the west of the elevator. The staircase has veneered marble treads and risers in the lobby area and is formed of poured concrete on the floors above. The stairs have a decorative wrought iron balustrade on all four floors. The north/south corridor from Second Street to the open porch is accented by a barrel-vaulted ceiling with ornamental plaster designs. The registration desk is located along the east wall. It was originally located along the south wall just inside this dining porch but was shortened and moved to its present location at the time of the 1931 addition. This west lounge was first decorated with false beams and wooden wall panels infilled with grass cloth. It has been remodeled many times and presently retains a 1970s use as a bar with "rustic" décor of antique brick and rough, dark-stained wood. To the north of the bar is a room opening onto Second Street that has served variously as commercial space, Chamber of Commerce office and dining area. Beyond the bar area, to the west, is the kitchen, still in its original location. Currently the kitchen has plaster walls and suspended grid ceiling with appliances from the 1950s and 1960s. At the west end of the 1916 section a poured concrete fire stair, with simple iron balustrade, rises the entire height of the interior. Next to this is an open-grille, freight elevator still in use.

Floors two, three and four retain their original configuration in the halls in typical hotel fashion of rows of evenly spaced doorways. At each of these levels the open stair well has been closed off from the halls by the use of glass block (1946) and aluminum-frame doors, which may date from the 1960s. The east ends of the original east/west corridors of the 1916 building are extended south in the 1931 addition. The doors in the 1916 section were one-panel, veneered with "mahogany" finish and these were used again in the 1931 addition. Several of these were changed in the 1960s and 1970s to flush, hollow-core doors. Casing in the 1916 section was flat stock with back band and an inner band of trim next to the jamb. Baseboards were capped with a simple molding. This stained and varnished wood has been painted in most places. Casing in the 1931 addition mimicked the 1916 casing on the first and second floors, eliminating only the inner band of trim. On the third and fourth floors of the 1931 addition a simpler casing was substituted as a cost saving measure. It is a simple, beveled trim approximately five inches across, resembling contemporary "Ranch" style casing. Doorways in both sections of the building have transom lights but these have been sealed closed with the glass painted over. Halls have painted plaster walls and ceilings and light fixtures are generally bare bulbs.

Some rooms have been joined together to make larger units in both sections of the hotel. Passageways have been opened to form larger apartments and private suites as well as housing for former owners and their

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families. Hall bathrooms, once shared by some single room guests, have been opened into the apartments and their hall access boarded over. However, it appears the majority of original walls remain intact with extremely few new partitions added. Plumbing fixtures date, variously, from the 1930s through the 1970s. There are at least two tubs and several sinks from the 1931 remodel. Partition walls have been installed to enclosed small kitchens, which were not part of the original 1916 building. Simple 1960s-era doors and casing have been used. Although the 1931 section contained some kitchenette permanent apartments, those kitchens have been similarly changed.

The basement, which contained staff locker rooms, toilets, billiard room, boiler rooms and barbershop in 1916, had plastered or exposed concrete walls, depending on area. It was extended in 1931 with large storerooms and dishwashing area. Beginning in the 1950s the basement spaces were updated and used for banquet/party rooms. The large storeroom of 1931 and the 1916 billiard room are carpeted, and have wood wall paneling and suspended, acoustical ceilings which were installed in the 1960s. Today the original steam boiler, manufactured in Kewanee, continues to serve the building.

In the 1931 addition the first floor has five storefronts with the one to the north originally serving as the coffee shop and, later, cocktail lounge. The interiors of these have been completely remodeled various times, most recently in the 1960s and '70s. All have false, suspended ceilings and wall surfaces range from plaster and drywall to simulated wood paneling and brick veneer. All units have aluminum frame glass doors installed across the once-open, inset entrances to form air-lock vestibules. Interior entrance doors vary in style, but at least one is padded with leather and studded with tacks in a diamond design reminiscent of 1940s nightclub décor. Within the last decade the partition walls dividing the four storefronts on the south were removed leaving a single, open space with conduit and other mechanicals hanging. Suspended grid ceilings remain in some sections. An original terrazzo floor remains in one of the storefront room.

INTEGRITY.

The Hotel Kewanee maintains excellent integrity, more than sufficient for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Overall the building in its exterior, scale and placement on the street, conveys the sense of its prominence and importance to the city of Kewanee for nearly a century, while its interior exhibits changing styles in the historic period 1916-1946. The original windows, trim, cornice and other detailing remain. Although the ballroom addition of 1931 has been demolished, its loss does not compromise the appearance of the hotel. As a one-story addition at the rear of the original hotel, it was not integral to the hotel's functioning. It was as much a popular restaurant, standing apart from hotel operations, as opposed to a crucial part of the hotel. It was not visible from the street and the remaining original hotel and its large addition of 1931 provide the primary sense of the building familiar to the public for over three generations.

Although there have been changes made to the guestrooms, the feeling of a hotel clearly remains in public spaces including lobby, lounge areas, stairs and upper hallways. Details from each era are clearly identifiable

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from available documentation including partial architect's plans for the 1916 building and full plans for the 1931 addition. There is also a detailed article with plans and illustrations in a 1946 *Hotel Monthly* magazine. At least half of the original doors remain on guestroom entrances and most interior casing is still in place. The physical appearance of the Kewanee Hotel as it was during its time as the city's leading hostelry remains intact.

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The Kewanee Hotel building is being nominated under Criterion A for its significance to the broad patterns of social and cultural history. The building has been, since its construction in 1916, the largest and most prominent structure in the downtown business district. Through the years it has functioned not just as a hotel but was long the location of one of the city's best restaurants, fashionable shops and a place for civic, business and social club meetings. For over 50 years it was the favored choice for public dinners, anniversary and graduation celebrations and other community and personal events. The hotel embodies characteristics commonly associated with the grand luxury hotel of the late 19th and early 20th century -- an important institution in American communities. These were places that inspired great civic pride for their architecture, atmosphere and modernity. Historian Molly Winger Berger, defines the importance of these institution to places like Kewanee.

...the modern luxury hotel appeared as a new institution in American cities. Far from being, simply a place to shelter and feed travelers, the modern luxury hotel filled an important symbolic role for American cities as an icon of political, economic and cultural achievement, and a force for shaping civic consciousness....They served as prominent landmarks and attractions as well as important sites for business and political transactions and the exchange of information.¹

The Kewanee Hotel was all this and more to the community during its years of greatest prominence, roughly 1916 until the mid-1970s.

Kewanee, Illinois, was founded in 1854 along the route of the new Military Tract Railroad line being built from Mendota to Galesburg. The village of Wethersfield, a few miles south, had been in existence since 1836 but was considered too far from the new rail line to benefit economically. Most of Kewanee's founders were Wethersfield citizens. Many Wethersfield residents purchased lots in the new village and built new or moved their old houses and commercial buildings to Kewanee. The two communities continued to coexist, often in bitter rivalry, until their boundaries met through physical growth and their governments were merged by popular vote in 1921. This merger did not end the rivalry between the residents however. Strong "cross town" factional feelings remained a part of community life. Political, social and cultural differences continued to divide residents of the former towns now joined as one.

Among the first buildings to go up in the new village in 1854 were commercial buildings on Main Street and the first hotel, called the Kewanee House. The hotel was an important institution in the new town where the railroad was the main feature of economic life. Comfortable accommodations were a necessary amenity for business travelers in any self-respecting community. And hostelryes were also important sources of civic pride. "Beginning in the 1820s," reports one cultural history, "each generation of city business leaders felt compelled to adorn their town with a state-of-the-art hotel -- usually larger and more lavish than strictly necessary -- to

¹ Molly Winger Berger, *The Modern Hotel Hotel In America: 1829-1929 Abstract* 1

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assure their city's regional or national stature."² The Kewanee House filled that need, giving the raw, new railroad town a touch of civilization and comfort. The old Kewanee House was much celebrated at the time and fondly recalled in city histories. The old Kewanee House continued to serve as a hotel, albeit in much reduced circumstances as a low end boarding house, until it was destroyed by fire in 1958.

By 1860 the population of Kewanee reached nearly 1,500 while Wethersfield had experienced a gradual decline. Kewanee's population and economy grew steadily from 1860 to 1890 when the city entered a period of massive industrial expansion. Between 1890 and World War II Kewanee experienced a heady era of prosperity and phenomenal growth, fueled by renowned industries and manufacturers like Kewanee Boiler Company and Boss Glove Manufacturing Company. The energy for these industries came from coal mined in the area, which reached 53,000 tons of coal annually by 1867. Over the next half-century coal mining would employ thousands of men in the area.

In 1868 the Anderson Feed Steamer Company opened. This firm produced steam heating systems for homes and businesses and, by the 1890s, employed over 2,000 workers. A subsidiary of the company became the Kewanee Boiler Company, which eventually occupied a building complex of 13 acres under roof and a property of 33 acres. Peak production in the 1920s gradually declined and, after passing through various corporate ownerships, Kewanee Boiler today still employs 200 people. Community business leaders in the 1890s began an aggressive campaign of promoting the town to industry.

The '90s were a decade of phenomenal progress for the city with founding and growth of the Boss Manufacturing Company which eventually sold its products all over the world. Kewanee's first telephone, first electric light, four new elementary schools, first sanitary sewer lines and paving of the business district – all outward signs of growth and prosperity – occurred in that decade. Rapid growth soon taxed the old village government and leaders called for an improved and more efficient form of local government. In 1897 Kewanee was re-incorporated as a city rather than a village and adopted the mayor-council form of government. Local attitudes generally reflected economic optimism and great hope for the future as a booming industrial city. Typical was a *Kewanee Courier* editorial in 1898 extolling Kewanee as

...one of the best business towns in the state aside from her manufacturing industries. We are situated in the center, so to speak, of a most beautiful and fertile agricultural district that is wealthy beyond compare. We have one of the richest coal fields, now only partially developed, right at our doors...Kewanee's freight business is enormous, many cars are loaded with our products and sent all over the world every day...this freight business is worth a great deal to the roads hauling it ...³

And the next year a promotional publication boosted in similar vein:

² Paul Groth, *Living Downtown: The History of Residential Hotels in the United States* (California University Press, 1994) 182.
³ *Henry County Illinois* (Turner Publishing, 2000) 22.

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For several months past John C. Quade, city engineer, has been busily engaged in running levels and establishing grades for the laying out of sidewalks, the building of sewers and the paving of streets... With the opening of spring will be commenced the work of putting in a complete system of sewerage. The plans and specifications call for some twenty-five or thirty miles... Our system of water works... is one of the best and most complete systems in the country... We have a good system of electric lighting and a complete plant for the manufacture of gas, both being largely used by our citizens.⁴

"Much has been done," the writer noted, but when improvements were completed, they "will add more to the reputation of the place for solidity and goaheaditiveness than anything which has heretofore been accomplished."⁵

These predictions proved to have a measure of accuracy and the population, which had been a little more than 4,500 in 1890, reached above 16,000 by 1920. The period between 1900 and 1930 was far and away Kewanee's greatest era of economic prosperity, physical expansion and civic improvement.

Kewanee of 1900, with its impressive new infrastructure, booming economy and increasing manufacturing base was poised to enter the new 20th century with the promise of unending progress. The city in the early years of the century boasted nearly 30 major employers including rolling mills, iron foundries, a brewery, stone works, pump company, water works, electric plant, lumber yards, planing mills and ice company. Over 20 wholesale firms operated in the town. The small agricultural village of an earlier generation was now a full-fledged middle sized American city and a place of urban amenities including theaters, an opera house, department stores, skating rinks and restaurants, a public library, YMCA, fraternal organizations, municipal police and fire departments and a street car system. Railroad connections made travel comparatively easy for the number of commercial travelers visiting the community on business every year. At the same time there was much local interest in the topic of "hard roads" being promoted statewide for the new automobile travel.

An economic snapshot of 1913 estimated Kewanee's population (including suburbs) at 20,000, it had four banks, 27 industrial plants employing nearly 10,000 people, two daily newspapers, parks, 55 secret and benevolent societies, 36 interurban trains and 16 passenger trains arriving daily. The only significant economic setback of the first decade of the 20th century was the national "panic" of 1907 which "was felt pretty hard by the city." But, according to the 1913 profile, "Kewanee's heart beat strong and with indomitable strength of purpose, [and] she is again enjoying the return of the olden golden days" economically.⁶ Manufacturers and industries had built modern, efficient plants, there were substantial downtown business blocks, schools,

⁴ *The Advantages of the City of Kewanee as a manufacturing center* (Kewanee Democrat) np

⁵ *The Advantages of the City of Kewanee as a manufacturing center* (Kewanee Democrat) np

⁶ Albert W. Lewis, *Kewanee, Henry County, Illinois* (Kewanee Print. & Pub. Co.) np

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churches and handsome residence districts -- all sources of pride for community members. But the city lacked first class hotel accommodations for the growing number of travelers. A new \$80,000 passenger depot for the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy railroad was to be constructed shortly but the arriving passengers had only second class hotel rooms awaiting them upon arrival.

The 1854 Kewanee House hotel had been updated and an addition built in the 1880s. Still, it was inferior to the new urban hotels in nearby places like Peoria or, especially those in Chicago, a little over 100 miles away. The recently built Hotel Main was charitably described as one of the "neatest, [and] coziest" of hostelrys, whose greatest feature was its varied meals. There were a few other hotels in town with substantial sounding names like the Saratoga and Livingston, but these were merely rooms on the second floors of downtown buildings.⁷ This lack of an impressive hotel was seen as a major drawback by city boosters.

The businessmen belonging to the Kewanee Civic Club were likely among the most concerned about this lack of modern accommodations. Frank M. Lay, community leader and owner of the city's leading department store, organized the Civic Club in 1913. Previously the Commercial Club, which had succeeded the old Retail Merchants Association, had been concerned almost exclusively with the protection of narrowly defined business interests. The new Civic Club, however, reflected a more liberal philosophy of general community improvement. Club membership consisted of nearly every civic and business leader in Kewanee. These men served on its standing committees for housing, transportation, public health and other tasks. One of their early projects was sponsoring a "Dandelion Day," where Kewanee children were offered a bounty of 25 cents for every bushel of dandelions weeded and brought to the club's headquarters in an effort to eliminate the plant from town.⁸

THE PARKSIDE HOTEL AND CIVIC IMPROVEMENT, 1915-1929

The new Civic Club met weekly in second floor rooms in a downtown business block and began ambitious plans for civic improvement far beyond Dandelion Days. Almost immediately they agitated and raised money for a new railroad station to give visitors a better impression of the community. Although plans for a new depot had been underway for some time, Civic Club members gave the project a boost and managed to get the plans enlarged to better suit their idea of a station worthy of a growing, modern city. "The new depot work is going on with such vigor," said the local paper in the summer of 1915, "that Kewanee people have almost recovered from their astonishment and are ready to spread the joyful tidings...it is understood that the depot that is planned is considerably larger than the one that was to have been erected a year ago."⁹ The Civic Club's most ambitious project though was the building of a new hotel comparable in service and style to anything found in a

⁷ *Samonson's Kewanee City Directory* 1915 (Charles M. Samson) 437.

⁸ *Kewanee Daily Star-Courier*, "Dandelion Crop Heavy Hundreds Claim Bounty," May 27, 1916.

⁹ *Kewanee Daily Star-Courier*, "Building Work Gives Kewanee Busy Atmosphere," July 10, 1915.

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far larger city. Even forty years later, when Kewanee celebrated its centennial, the local newspaper referred to this hotel as the club's "greatest accomplishment."¹⁰

On April 21, 1915, 28 members of the club met to charter the Kewanee Hotel Company and subscribed 500 stock shares among themselves at \$100 per share, raising \$50,000 that day. W. H. Lyman held the largest block of shares (115) with brothers H.T. and F.M. Lay together owning another 150 shares. E.E. Baker, Kewanee Boiler executive and one-time mayor, held 25 shares and W.E. Gould purchased 30. The rest were parceled in small increments of 10 or fewer. F. M. Lay was chosen president of the board and members approved purchase of a site on May 17, 1915. They spent the next year consulting with their architects and choosing a management company. The Elliot Hotel Company, originally chosen as manager, was unable to provide the necessary financial backing and was released from its contract. The Parkside Hotel Management Company was eventually formed with George D. Worthington, a long experienced hotel man, as manager.

The new hotel's downtown location, at Second and Chestnut Street, was an obvious choice because of its proximity to travelers arriving at the new depot nearby as well as interurban arrivals and streetcar connections to other parts of town. But there was an additional consideration for hotel guests in a new century -- the automobile. Car ownership in the United States skyrocketed between 1900 and 1910, going from 8,000 to a half million. In 1920 eight million cars were registered and 23 million only a decade later. Almost immediately announcement was made that the new hotel, which had been dubbed the Parkside, would have an automobile garage opposite on Chestnut Street with space for 65 automobiles.

This cluster of hotels, depots and auto garages was typical of downtown development in the first quarter of the 20th century. Keith Sculle, director of Education Services at the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency, refers to "the constellation of a nearby railroad station [and] hotel corridor" as a logical district for entrepreneurs to erect "parking facilities offering one-stop refueling, washing and mechanical services to patrons while they shopped, lodged or conducted business nearby."¹¹ The Parkside Garage, while not owned by the hotel, was clearly an important adjunct service associated with the hotel.

All of these forces -- social, cultural and technological -- had a direct effect on the design of the new Parkside Hotel. Hotel historian Lisa Pfueller Davidson documents these influences of the time:

Reinvention of the hotel building type in the early twentieth century created a structure that embodied the complexities and contradictions of the emerging modern culture...[specifically] the links between commercial architecture and cultural ideals regarding consumption, efficiency, and leisure...The emerging consumer culture promoted the growth of hotels while the ballrooms, restaurants, and guest

¹⁰ Kewanee Historical Society, Clipping File

¹¹ Curtis Mann, *Uptown Garage Landmarking Application* (Springfield, Illinois 2003) p. 15

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rooms of commercial hotels provided a significant venue for consumption and travel. The latest structural and mechanical technologies made the buildings physically possible, and in addition, modern amenities raised consumer expectations of comfort and safety. In order to create hotels catering to middle-class mass consumption, innovative hotel managers embraced an approach termed here "scientific service." "Scientific service" represents attempts to reconcile efficient modern business methods with the tradition of personal service.¹²

Within this culture the syndicate of Kewanee businessmen planned their city's new hotel. They chose as architects Hewitt & Emerson of Peoria, Illinois. The firm produced a first class building which was projected to cost far more than the original \$50,000 subscribed. During construction, newspaper stories now referred to it as "the \$100,000 hotel" and, at opening, as the "\$150,000 Fireproof Hotel." This additional cost was likely not an empty claim because, at opening, the list of stockholders had grown to include the local utility company and, more significantly, the local bank. The finished building was a grand civic monument in which citizens took great pride.

The three story structure was likely smaller than its owners originally anticipated when they purchased two lots fronting on Chestnut at 2nd Street. The new building occupied only one third of this space. The unoccupied lots to the south were landscaped and surrounded with brick piers infilled with lattice screening. A dining porch was attached to the building on the south and the hotel project, which had the working name of Kewanee Inn, was officially christened the Parkside Hotel. The old Kewanee House nearby still used the name Kewanee Hotel and owners wanted no confusion between the two. Architects provided detailed specifications for contract bidders. Typical were instructions like the following:

All cut stone is to be of finest quality of even and uniform color and free from all seams or other defects...all stone work must be carefully protected from injury while the work is going on, and must be properly covered by this contractor with boards and the protection maintained until the exterior of the building is completed. Sample of the stone shall be submitted to the architects for their approval and all stone furnished shall be equal to the architects' sample.¹³

These minute, detailed instructions ran to 65 typed pages specific to the building, three pages of addenda changes made to lower the cost of construction and two pages of standard printed "general conditions" expected. The resulting building awed Kewanee residents and from the spring through fall 1916 the local newspaper was filled with stories alternately detailing its construction and praising its beauty and modernity. Even though the new hostelry was clearly in the luxury category, it still shared similarities with its lower priced

¹² Lisa Pfueller Davidson, *Consumption and efficiency in the "city within a city": Commercial hotel architecture and the emergence of the modern American Culture, 1890-1930 abstract.* np

¹³ *General Specifications of The Kewanee Inn for The Kewanee Hotel Company at Kewanee, Illinois* (Hewitt & Emmerson Architects 1915) 10.

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competitors. Less than half of the guestrooms had private baths for example. "In small cities," says hotel historian Paul Groth, hotels like the Parkside, "often had to serve as the equivalent of the town's palace hotel as well as its best midpriced hotel." Thus, as late as 1930, design guidelines suggested that "if 20 percent of the rooms had private baths, that was sufficient."¹⁴

As early as July posters began appearing in the region surrounding Kewanee and proclaiming:

Hotel Parkside, Kewanee, Illinois, thoroughly fireproof, opened by Parkside Hotel company under the personal management of George D. Worthington, for the last three years manager of the Hotel Beardsley, Champaign, Illinois. To open on or before September 15, 1916. The Parkside will be a real homelike place where courtesy and every attention will not be forgotten. It is centrally located and still free from noise, insuring a quiet night's rest. Every minute detail covering completeness, in making the Parkside as thoroughly up to the minute as it is possible to make hotels, has been thought of – the latest type of fireproof construction, the furniture and equipment the best, every room an outside room, every bath an individual bath.¹⁵

This combination of the "homelike" with quality service and modern amenities reflects the "Scientific Service" identified by Lisa Davidson. News stories kept the public informed of nearly every significant trainload of woodwork, furnishings or mechanical equipment arriving in the city for the project. Delays were detailed as it became clear the complex construction would take builders, finishers and decorators much longer than anticipated. But opening day was finally set for Saturday, October 7, with a formal dinner, dance and public inspection of the building. "The affair will be an elaborate one," trumpeted the Kewanee newspaper.

There will be dinner and dancing. The dining room will be open from 6 until 9 o'clock. During dinner music will be provided by a local orchestra and a musical entertainment will be given by the Misses Hazel Heimbeck and Elma Adair, soloists at Hotel LaSalle, Chicago...As soon after 9 o'clock as possible dancing will begin and will continue during the evening. The committee is anxious that guests should not tarry in the dining any longer than is necessary; for if they do it will delay the entertainment which is to follow...The hotel building will be open for inspection from 6 until 10 o'clock. Visitors will be welcome in all parts of the building during these hours and uniformed maids will be stationed on each floor to direct the guests. All rooms which are not occupied will be open for inspection...Many local folk, as well as out-of-town visitors, expect to engage rooms at the hotel for the first night. It will be a sort of a house-party. The plan

¹⁴ Paul Groth, *Living Downtown: The History of Residential Hotels in the United States* (California University Press, 1994) 71.

¹⁵ *Kewanee Daily Star-Courier*, "Hotel Parkside to Open Says New Poster," July 25, 1916.

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is to attend the dinner and dance during the evening, sleep at the hotel over night and then have breakfast the following morning.¹⁶

It was clear this was to be an event for the entire community and not just business leaders and the socially prominent. Manager Worthington "wants it clearly understood that everybody is invited and will be cordially received whether they are in evening clothes or dressed informally. This dinner is for all, and no one should feel that one is excluded because one has not formal apparel."¹⁷ Predictably, when the doors were finally thrown open, the public was astounded at what they saw. The four-story, Classical Revival structure was described as "Spanish Renaissance" and thoroughly fireproof. Numerous public rooms with specialized uses dazzled visitors used to hotels with a lobby and dining room as the only public gathering spaces. The dining veranda was adjacent to a 35 by 50-foot lobby with three entrances. The impressive main dining room in blue and white was supplemented by a smaller private dining room. There was a barbershop, steward's office, drugstore, tearoom, coffee shop, soda fountain, pastry kitchen, men's lounge, ladies' parlor and bowling alley. Standard guestrooms (no two decorated alike) were comfortable in size. In addition "sample rooms" --suites with tables for salesmen to display wares--were available, as was a bridal chamber. Modern mechanical equipment included separate passenger and freight elevators, central vacuum system, patent locks, room telephones and "high power electric lights." To enhance a feeling of life in a high quality, private house, each guestroom, "whether it is the lowest priced or the highest," was given "the touch of home" and outfitted with "pin-cushion with pins, black and white buttons, black and white thread with needles, and a neat little dolly for each pincushion."

All the dresser and chiffonier drawers are lined with paper. A shoe cloth is found in every room. It is little things like this, scores of which are evident on every side wherever one goes throughout the large hotel building, which reflect the thoroughness of Mr. Worthington's method as a manager and his attention to every detail which will help to make his guests feel at home ...other things which are found in all the rooms are glass pitcher, candlestick and tumblers and match stand of colonial design, on a Japanese papier-mâché tray.¹⁸

A prominent guest at the opening dinner was John Willy, editor of *Hotel Monthly* magazine, whose report was only slightly less ecstatic than that in the local press. He found the service at the inaugural dinner only "satisfactory," but judged the hotel's features beyond reproach. He noted the anti-scald showers and sanitary glass rods and shelves of the bathrooms, as well as state-of-the-art kitchen equipment, including "...aluminum

¹⁶ *Kewanee Daily Star-Courier*, "Formal Dinner Dance Opens The New Hotel," September 18, 1916.

¹⁷ *Kewanee Daily Star-Courier*, "October 7 Date of Opening for Hotel Parkside," September 27, 1916.

¹⁸ *Kewanee Daily Star-Courier*, "Kewanee's New \$150,000 Fireproof Hotel Opens Tonight with 6 o'clock Dinner and Dance," October 7, 1916.

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utensils, Crescent dishwashing machine, Elgin butter cutter, Espy Curtis egg boiler, Blakcslec ice chipper and Sevger refrigerators." He complimented the tasteful quality of the guestrooms, noting especially their fine furnishings. These included mahogany furniture, box springs, lace and fabric hangings, Berlin shades, and Hartford-Saxony carpet "with five layers of padding." The staff especially were crucial to the hotel's success and the Parkside staff, Willy noted, were "'some punkins' and their names get in the papers."¹⁹ Both the Kewanee newspaper and *Hotel Monthly* magazine describe a hotel clearly modeled on "Scientific Service"--maintaining "the tradition of personal service" in the context of a modern, complex institution. These new hotels became, in Lisa Davidson's opinion,

...a site of cultural negotiation involving changing gender relations, class conflict, and corporate dominance. Early twentieth century commercial hotels exhibited a corporate vision of uniform management and consumer control well before the advent of standardized franchise hotel architecture. The "city within a city" urban commercial hotel of the early twentieth century signifies both continuity with the hotel industry of today and a seminal moment on the emergence of our modern consumer culture as expressed through architecture.²⁰

The main speaker at the opening dinner was hotel man and former Kewanee resident, E.A. Whitney, who urged citizens to support the new hotel in order to make it a success. The essence of Whitney's plea to the public was reported in *Hotel Monthly*:

The Parkside Hotel needs local boosting. Addressing Kewanee people in particular, he said, "This house has no bar; no sub-rents. You've got to get behind the people who run it. You must support Mr. Worthington. I've attended lots of opening and sheriffs' sales. I was at Muscatine [Iowa] when their house opened. There was a great deal of enthusiasm, but it died out, and the house went into receiver's hands. You must make this house of yours a matter of civic pride. Don't let your enthusiasm die out. Boost for it. This hotel will do more for your town than any other one thing."

Whitney's words reflected the precarious world of hotel profitability and proved eerily prophetic over the years of the Parkside's operation. But in the afterglow of grand opening and civic pride, all boded well to observers.

The Civic Club, which had now become the Kewanee Chamber of Commerce, moved its headquarters into the hotel and the building immediately became a business and civic gathering spot. As example, the Chamber's scrapbook for 1919 alone overflows with news stories of activities taking place at the hotel. Kewanee's rapid post-war population increase had caused a severe housing shortage and Chamber members subscribed funds to build modest housing to be sold to working class families. Public meetings on the program were held at the

¹⁹ *Hotel Monthly*, "The Parkside Hotel of Kewanee, Ill.," November 1916.

²⁰ Lisa Pfueller Davidson, *Consumption and efficiency in the "city within a city": Commercial hotel architecture and the emergence of the modern American Culture, 1890-1930 abstract*. np

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hotel where U.S. Chamber of Commerce head Colvin Brown spoke to the public about the importance of community spirit. A community music plan was organized at another of the hotel's public meetings. Community singing fests, city beautification planning sessions, Chautauqua organizing and road oiling committees all met at the new Parkside. And, perhaps most significantly, founding of the Kewanee Park District happened in the hotel that year. It was clear the Parkside was now the most popular club and social meeting place in the community.

Equally significant to its design was the hotel's growing relationship with the automobile. An undated newspaper advertisement, circa 1918 was aimed at residents of nearby small towns who would presumably drive to Kewanee to spend a pleasure week of shopping and entertainment. "Why not make the Parkside Hotel your home for a week and enjoy all the comforts of home?" the ad asked.²¹ And the 1916, 1917 and 1918 editions of the Rand McNally *Auto Trail Map* each carry a full-page ad for the Parkside. "Popular with tourists" proclaims one ad. "Newest, prettiest and most homelike hotel in Illinois...Service and courtesy are our slogans...Our own private park overlooked by a porch dining room," brag the others.²²

America's love affair with the automobile at first seemed to boost patronage for places like the Parkside as more of the public traveled by car and sought first rate lodgings overnight or longer. The country was caught up in a passion for road improvement and Illinois was the focus of much of this activity. The state had elected Len Small as the state's "good roads governor in 1921 and at Bates, Illinois, in Sangamon County a stretch of several experimental paving materials had been laid where trucks were driven over it 24 hours per day for several weeks to test their endurance. A national system of highways was planned and nearly every community, Kewanee included, had strong interest in improved roads. The Chamber sponsored a transportation committee and developed a series of "Good Roads Meetings" at the hotel. At these well-attended forums the public listened to predictable boosterism: "The people of this country are beginning to understand more and more that the great national highway is not the highway from New York to San Francisco, but the highway from farm to town."²³

The Parkside's initial success was partially due to its good fortune to be built between 1914 and 1919, a time when America's hotel trade was flourishing. Hotelkeeper E.M. Statler called the World War I era "the best five years American hotels ever had."²⁴

Wartime meant expanded employment. New hotels of all ranks were built or converted for war demands, and each wartime boom stretched all existing hotels to their maximum potential—and sometimes beyond. War industry workers packed into lodging houses and rooming houses while

²¹ Kewanee Historical Society, Clipping Files

²² Kewanee Historical Society, Clipping Files

²³ *Kewanee Daily Star-Courier*, "Government Man Tells Importance of Community Spirit," October 8, 1916.

²⁴ Paul Groth, *Living Downtown: The History of Residential Hotels in the United States* (California University Press, 1994) 181.

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the better hotels did thriving business with war-material brokers, production engineers, government officials, and military officers.²⁵

PARKSIDE HOTEL: DECLINE, EXPANSION AND RENEWAL. 1929-1946.

Amidst this auto enthusiasm and a prospering local economy, the Parkside's future seemed bright indeed. In fact, transportation excitement of all sorts blossomed in Kewanee's post-World-War-One years where talk of developing a municipal airport circulated among business leaders. This dream came to fruition in 1930 when 10,000 people attended the dedication of the Kewanee Airport.

Despite the generally robust prosperity of the 1920s, financial difficulties plagued the Parkside. Before the decade had gotten very far along, cracks began to appear in the relationship between owners and management. Complaints about service and upkeep surfaced along with weak financial returns. At the January 24, 1923, meeting of the board of directors President F.M. Lay brought up the question of complaints by the traveling public on bathrooms, sanitation, linens and food and Lay had not been able to get the Parkside management company to remedy these problems. He suggested some director might make it a hobby for a year to visit the hotel weekly or more often to check on complaints.²⁶

Apparently no director took this challenge upon himself or the management declined to make improvements. Unstated in the minutes, but clear nonetheless, was the board's dissatisfaction with management. Managers were key figures in the success of new hotels and historian Paul Groth defines their crucial roles.

No architect or real estate agent wanted to admit it, but the success of a hotel relied more on management than either ownership or architecture. Well into the twentieth century, hotel advertisements and facades listed the manager prominently. In the nineteenth century people held hotelkeepers to be consummate business operators. When Americans doubted someone's cleverness they would say, "He's a fine man, but he can't keep a hotel."²⁷

Whatever the reasons for the poor financial showing, by 1925 the directors were taking official action in an attempt to break the lease. The original lease of July 25, 1916, was to run for a period of 20 years for a total rent of \$129,000.²⁸ This threatened cancellation may have spurred the hotel management to correct some failings for the lease continued another four years before finally being terminated in 1929.

²⁵ Paul Groth, *Living Downtown: The History of Residential Hotels in the United States* (California University Press, 1994) 182.

²⁶ Kewanee Hotel Company, *Minutes*, January 24, 1923.

²⁷ Paul Groth, *Living Downtown: The History of Residential Hotels in the United States* (California University Press, 1994) 169.

²⁸ Kewanee Hotel Company, *Lease agreement with Parkside Hotel Company*, June 25, 1916.

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Apparently by the late 1920s, despite management difficulties, business had grown enough for the Parkside's management to propose an addition to the hotel. They presented this proposition to the board in June 1927.²⁹ But, while plans for this addition were underway, the Crawley and McCracken Hotel Company was engaged as new manager. George Brosius, of Crawley and McCracken, became the new President and General Manager of operations of the hotel. The new relationship began hopefully when Brosius agreed an addition was an excellent idea. A report in the minutes also noted that; "The new owners are conducting the operations of the Hotel in an apparently first-class manner and their service appears to be satisfactory to the traveling public, except only perhaps that for several days each year they are unable to accommodate all who come."³⁰

In those first months of 1930, what eventually became known as the Great Depression, was assumed by most people, to be only a temporary economic correction. Brosius and the re-energized Parkside Board of Directors steamed ahead with plans for an addition to double the size of the building and refurbish the original hotel structure. Amazingly, although architect's plans had already been prepared for the previous management, Brosius suggested new plans by architects of his choice, offering to have these made at his own expense.

During the past year your Building Committee has held a number of meetings and had hoped before the end of the year to be able to put into operation a program for the building of an addition to the Hotel. Early in the year plans for such an addition were secured from Hewitt, Bryce and Gregg [architects of the original building], of Peoria, Illinois. These plans did not meet the approval of the Parkside management, and they suggested that B.K. Gibson of B.K. Gibson Company, architects, 624 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois, who specialize in hotel work, be permitted to submit plans without cost to our Company. Your committee concurred in the suggestion and sketches were submitted by B.K. Gibson, which, with a few exceptions, met with the approval of the Parkside management and your committee and a contract was entered into with B.K. Gibson, which I will read to you.³¹

This addition was undertaken as much for marketing as for expanded guest space. Hotels, like retail stores and other fashion-driven businesses, quickly dated and lost their gloss for the public. As competition for patronage of the traveling public increased, hotel owners and managers "...came to rely more on the tools of high-style design, attention-catching interior decorating, spectacular cooking, and innovative engineering... Thus to remain in fashion, hotel managers had to search for better chefs constantly, redecorate about every ten years, and significantly remodel or add new wings at least once every twenty to twenty-five years."³² Writer and social observer Sinclair Lewis noted wryly that "next to love, nothing loses its rank so quickly as a leading hotel."³³ Also, by the late 1920s, "motels and auto courts were beginning to cut into the family travel market."³⁴

²⁹ Kewanee Hotel Company, *Minutes*. June 27, 1927.

³⁰ Kewanee Hotel Company, *Minutes*. December 31, 1929.

³¹ Kewanee Hotel Company, *Minutes*. December 31, 1929.

³² Paul Groth, *Living Downtown: The History of Residential Hotels in the United States* (California University Press, 1994) 182-183.

³³ Groth, *Living Downtown: The History of Residential Hotels in the United States* (California University Press, 1994) 183.

³⁴ Groth, *Living Downtown: The History of Residential Hotels in the United States* (California University Press, 1994) 184.

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During all of 1930, despite darkening economic clouds, plans for the large addition moved forward. The new building would have five storefronts along Chestnut Street, something that opening night dinner speaker E.W. Whitney had remarked was absent in the original building. Rents from these were expected to help recover costs of construction and operation. The oversize lobby of the old building was reduced in size and three more storefronts made from excess space. The exterior of the addition followed the original in size, scale and building materials. Every effort was made to carefully join the buildings in a seamless fashion. Even today it requires careful observation to discover where face brick of the addition is joined to the original building. The addition continued the original building south along Chestnut. At the back or west end of the original hotel a large, one story ballroom wing was constructed. The original landscaped lot or "park" to the south now formed a courtyard surrounded on three sides by the hotel building. The open dining porch was enclosed and a low brick wall built across the open south end of the courtyard. A new marquee covered the walk at the original lobby entrance on Chestnut. This wrought iron structure was designed in the smart modified Regency Revival style popular in the late '20s through the 1940s and ornamented with typical elements of stars and latticed iron grilles.

The interiors excited the most local press comment however. "A place for Kewaneeans to dine and dance - that's the beautiful new ball and banquet room of the Parkside hotel," declared one reporter.³⁵ The redecorated lunchroom came in for special praise. "Predominating colors of silver and black make the grill room an attractive place. This idea was taken from the fountain room of the Palmer House in Chicago..."³⁶ More significant though was a change in usage. Some of the rooms were outfitted with fold-down beds and kitchenettes and designed for long-term tenants.

Dining room, living room and bedroom are no longer a necessity when one has the opportunity to live in kitchenette apartments that are so conveniently appointed as the ten which have been built in the new Parkside hotel addition. A small kitchen, but great in detail, having a Frigidaire, gas stove, shelves, sink...a tiled bathroom, and beautifully decorated living room with in-a-door beds make up the skeleton of these small apartments. ...Elderly couples, girls who work during the day, and young married couples as well as many others find such apartments as these, which have daily maid service, and are so conveniently located, the ideal place to live.³⁷

This new décor and use notwithstanding, economic conditions kept many potential visitors and business travelers from occupying the more expensive rooms, or from even using the hotel at all. It was not long before these conditions were reflected in minutes from the directors' meetings. On a special meeting convened June 3, 1932 board members were asked to act on the situation.

³⁵ Kewanee Historical Society, Clipping Files

³⁶ Kewanee Historical Society, Clipping Files

³⁷ Kewanee Historical Society, Clipping Files

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... a letter [was received] from Hotel Parkside by George C. Brosius ... date May 27, 1932, wherein it is stated that the Hotel Parkside is operating at a loss; giving some figures on receipts and expenses and urging that for a trial period rental payments of \$1,000 per month be reduced. The matter was carefully considered and discussed by the Board – all members expressed the opinion that under the circumstances it would be advisable to afford some relief to the Hotel Parkside, but that nothing should be done that would in any manner alter any clauses or covenants contained in the lease with the Parkside Hotel Company.³⁸

The result was that, six months later, even with the strictest of economies, the hotel managed a profit of just \$141.50. The board reviewed the matter and concluded that “...rents in general, as we understand it, the country over, had been decreased; and perhaps, with these condition prevailing, we could not expect, for the present, the rent stipulated in the lease.”³⁹

Under these circumstances the hotel limped along, more or less paying its way throughout the rest of the decade. By 1937 the make up of the board had changed significantly from two decades earlier and new directors pressed for better profits. By the late 1930s, Ellis J. Waller, whose family owned a large share of stock, was made president of the board. At one of their meetings he and board members heard from manager George Brosius about conditions at the hotel.

George Brosius, President of the Parkside Hotel, made his report to the stockholders about the premises. In that report he pointed out that among other things six to eight thousand dollars had been spent by the Parkside Hotel Company on furnishings, carpetings, etc., that two rooms in the old part of the building, viz. formerly sample rooms, 312 and 412, had been converted into kitchenette apartments. He stated that as now constituted, the Hotel has [number?] guest rooms and 12 kitchenette apartments, that the apartments are all rented, and stated that their business had shown good improvement during the past year, though letting down some during the fall and from the month of October. He stated that many of the bathroom fittings in the old part of the hotel were not in good order and were not in keeping with the rooms...and that they hoped during the present year to have these all replaced... re-decorating of rooms was done regularly...[and] many favorable comments had been made in respect to improved dining room service...⁴⁰

Still, the directors and other stockholders remained dissatisfied with profit levels of their investment. A 1946 story briefly recounts the series of events beginning in the late 1920s that led to the eventual departure of Brosius at the end of his lease that year.

³⁸ Kewanee Hotel Company, *Minutes*. June 3, 1932.

³⁹ Kewanee Hotel Company, *Minutes*. January 4, 1933.

⁴⁰ Kewanee Hotel Company, *Minutes*. January 12, 1938.

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For some years the hotel was operated as a first rate property, ranking high in popularity, both in Kewanee and with the traveling public. Then, somewhere along the line, with changes in stock interests, a tendency developed to draw more and more returns out of the investment, and use less and less for maintenance. This was checked for a time when, in 1931, George C. Brosius invested \$100,000 under a 15-year lease in construction of an addition to the hotel, with arrangements providing for reimbursement through terms of the lease. The hotel company transferred ownership of equipment and furnishings and gradually became just the building and land owner. The wear and tear of the years, which had been halted for a time, gradually set in again, however...the owners of the building, the Kewanee Hotel Company, now headed by Harold E. Waller, were properly concerned with what had happened to their property through lack of foresight by other interests in earlier years.⁴¹ (*"Thirty Years of Wear Wiped Away"* Hotel Monthly, Oct. 1947 p 41)

In all fairness to Brosius, hotel management during the 1930s was an extremely difficult proposition. He was fighting a devastated economy and changing social conditions. "Managers," historian Paul Groth reminds us, "needed leadership ability, sound judgment, and good legal counsel for the daily demands of coordinating a complicated staff. At a polite hotel, that meant a 24-hour supply of maids, bellboys, elevator operators, kitchen assistants, janitors, and plumbers, along with a sizable number of clerks and midlevel supervisors."⁴² Groth also notes that hotel furniture often belonged to the manager, not the building owner and "change of management included the sale of interior furnishings."⁴³ In this case it seems that the owners clearly benefited as the departing manager ridded them of a hotel full of outdated furnishings at his own expense.

HOTEL KEWANEE, POSTWAR REBIRTH AND DECLINE 1946-1979.

In the years after World War II Kewanee entered a period of gradual economic decline lasting until the present day. This change was not initially apparent and conditions at first appeared similar to those in the years of prosperity following World War I. By the late 1930s the economy seemed to be improving and, despite lasting effects of the Great Depression, new school construction was given a boost with federal funds in 1938. The new schools were built to serve what was expected to be a continually growing population. At the same time the first federally subsidized housing also fueled the local economy and led to the founding of the Housing Authority of Henry County. The new authority now received federal funds as part of its annual budget.

Physically the town and its central business district had begun to deteriorate. During the Great Depression little building or remodeling was done, and during the war most building and renovation projects had been deferred. "The Great Kewanee Fire" of 1942 that destroyed 20 buildings and 50 stores and offices in three blocks exacerbated these conditions. The Parkside Hotel only narrowly escaped destruction.

⁴¹ *Hotel Monthly*, "Thirty Years of Wear Wiped Away," October 1947.

⁴² Groth, *Living Downtown: The History of Residential Hotels in the United States* (California University Press, 1994) 177.

⁴³ Groth, *Living Downtown: The History of Residential Hotels in the United States* (California University Press, 1994) 177.

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After the war citizens were in the mood for renewal in all things including buildings. They looked forward to a future in peacetime emphasizing modernity and mostly wanted to forget the difficult recent past. Kewanee experienced a short period of growth. Returning veterans, beginning families and eventually producing the baby-boom generation, needed places to live and the community responded. Kewanee leaders formed a not-for-profit Kewanee Homes Inc. even before the war had ended. With help from the new Henry County Housing Authority, Kewanee Homes built 72 two-bedroom homes, all completed and sold by the end of 1948.⁴⁴

Agriculture was still a source of much community wealth and, in 1948, the community was designated "Hog Capital of the World." This achievement reflected the growing efficiency in farming since the 1930s. While giant confinement operations across the country have since stripped Kewanee of this claim, the town still retains its pride in the title and celebrates with annual "Hog Days." But the post-war economic boom was not sustained and Kewanee lost ground in economy and population.

Kewanee's population apparently peaked at 18,000 in 1921 with the annexation of Wethersfield. The 1920 census showed almost 2,000 for Wethersfield. Added to Kewanee's 16,000 that gave the "new" Kewanee 18,000 people. After a small decline in 1930 to 17,093, Kewanee's population held steady until 1950 when the census showed 16,821 Kewaneeans... The 1960 and 1970 census reports each showed a loss of about 500. The 1980 decline was about 1,600 to a population of 15,700. In 1990 the drop was another 1,400 to a figure of 12,969.⁴⁵

However, this serious deterioration was far in the future in the last days of World War II when owners of the Parkside planned another major renovation – and change of management. The hotel building under Brosius' management had continued to suffer economically and physically and his lease expired in April 1946. At that time Harold Waller, majority owner, and the rest of the board engaged a lease with Hotels Inc. of Chicago to renovate and lease the aging building. The work was completed a year later and *Hotel Monthly* trumpeted the result. A new hotel had been "created from almost hopeless property through vision, faith and work." The dilapidated structure, claimed the article, "has been completely remodeled and modernized from the boilers to the roof."⁴⁶

There is virtually a brand new hotel in Kewanee, Illinois today that is an example of how 30 years of deterioration can be wiped away and an attractive modern hotel created from an almost hopeless property.⁴⁷

Hotels Inc. was headed by Chicagoans John J. Bickel, Jr. and J. Roy Hubbart who invested nearly \$250,000 in

⁴⁴ *Henry County Illinois* (Turner Publishing, 2000) 28.

⁴⁵ *Henry County Illinois* (Turner Publishing, 2000) 19.

⁴⁶ *Hotel Monthly*, "Thirty Years of Wear Wiped Away," October 1947.

⁴⁷ *Hotel Monthly*, "Thirty Years of Wear Wiped Away," October 1947.

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the renovation. The interior was transformed with a smart new look combining traditional and Moderne furnishings, mirrored columns, shining chrome-accented cocktail lounge and bar, glass block, tiled floors and freshly redecorated guestrooms. It gave war-weary citizens an escape into a new world of tomorrow with little of the old hotel except its tradition of quality. "All of the old furniture," continued the article "was removed by the former operators except for two chairs which Mr. Hubbard bought to have something in which to sit while preliminary construction work was being started...and the huge modernization program was begun."⁴⁸

"We were very glad at first that we had decided against using any of the old furnishings," Mr. Hubbard said. "Afterwards we were extremely glad." ...In beginning their modernization work, Mr. Hubbard and his associates felt that the size of the rooms was a factor in the hotel's favor, that there has been too great a tendency in recent years to make guest rooms too small. So, instead of gaining additional rooms, they decided against such a step and adapted their plans to fit the rooms. The kitchenette apartments with their alcoves also offered a problem, but removal of the alcoves and rearrangement of the space would have involved the expenditure of possibly another \$100,000. So a plan was agreed upon to lower the ceiling in the alcoves and use the space for the dressers, clearing the bedrooms of such furniture and putting it adjacent to the bathrooms where it would be more convenient for guests.

A new "garden lounge" appeared in place of the formerly open porch and a generally "streamlined renewal job" completely transformed the old building.

One of the outstanding transformations achieved was that on the ground floor, where a heavy appearing lobby, a small dining room, a corridor and store quarters were converted into a beautiful, modernized lobby, a garden lounge, a cocktail lounge and a striking dining room and coffee shop. Large plate glass mirrors are used extensively, on columns in the lobby and on columns on the walls of the dining room. The lobby, with soft, light colonial green walls has rugs and upholstered furniture of rust, tan and green shades and end tables of natural wood finish.⁴⁹

The latest in equipment, from light weight magnesium baskets for maids to a steam "laundry" for garbage cans, completed the renewal along with a new name. In an effort to stress that this was a completely new hotel, the former Parkside was now dubbed a "Smart, Modern House and Re-named as Hotel Kewanee."⁵⁰ The result, believed the owners, was that "the possibility of a new hotel has been completely eliminated in Kewanee,

⁴⁸ *Hotel Monthly*, "Thirty Years of Wear Wiped Away," October 1947.

⁴⁹ *Hotel Monthly*, "Thirty Years of Wear Wiped Away," October 1947.

⁵⁰ *Hotel Monthly*, "Thirty Years of Wear Wiped Away," October 1947.

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and probably also in such cities as Peoria, Galesburg and the Tri-Cities of Moline and Rock Island, Illinois, and Davenport, Iowa, which are getting some of the hotel business that used to go to Kewanee.”⁵¹

But all of the gloss and smart furnishings could not counter changing trends in the U.S. hospitality field. Private automobile ownership skyrocketed and, aided by the new system of interstate highways, people traveled greater distances by car than ever before. They stayed in new “motor hotels” or motels catering to the driving public typically located conveniently away from congested central business districts. Originally small operations developed from the tourist courts of the 1920s and 1930s, eventually the most successful motels were large complexes, usually part of national franchise chains like Holiday Inn. These places offered easy parking, clean facilities, futuristic architecture, good service and low prices and were soon favored by a majority of the traveling public. Large city hotels like the new Hotel Kewanee suffered accordingly in lost customers and revenue. Often their restaurants and bars, patronized by the local public, became their most reliable source of income. This was the fate that befell the “new” Kewanee Hotel, which proved a stunning disappointment to owners and managers.

A 1954 *Kewanee Star-Courier* story boasted that “From a commercial standpoint, an outstanding hotel is vital to a city, and since it was redesigned and remodeled, Hotel Kewanee affords city residents and traveling men a first rate ‘home away from home’.” It had also “become a center for civic gatherings and community functions. The court between the north and east wings of the hotel is one of the beauty spots of the city.”⁵²

The newspaper told a less happy story a few years later when it announced in March 1956 that “Kewanee’s top hotel” had been put in receivership.⁵³ Hotels Inc. had petitioned for voluntary bankruptcy and Harold Waller and others took over management of the Hotel. Al E. Paul, a hotel accountant, moved with his family to Kewanee from St. Louis to oversee day-to-day management.⁵⁴ Owners quickly placed an optimistic announcement in the local paper stating that “our future aim is to provide Kewanee with an efficient, well maintained hotel. Plans are being considered to expand and improve the operations of all departments to further justify our aim to give Kewanee the best hotel in this area.”⁵⁵

Outwardly the Kewanee Hotel continued to be the “best hotel in this area.” Civic groups continued to meet in its rooms, most notably the Chamber of Commerce, which had its headquarters there. Many of Kewanee citizens’ most memorable times still took place there – prom suppers, graduation celebrations, anniversary dinners, school dances and other gatherings. The restaurant was considered the best table in the community. In

⁵¹ *Hotel Monthly*, “Thirty Years of Wear Wiped Away,” October 1947.

⁵² *Kewanee Daily Star-Courier*, “Hotel Kewanee Has Become Center of Civic Social Life,” July 13, 1954.

⁵³ *Kewanee Daily Star-Courier*, “Hotel Files Petition of Bankruptcy,” March 10, 1956.

⁵⁴ *Kewanee Daily Star-Courier*, “Paul Named Manager of Local Hotel,” April 30, 1956.

⁵⁵ Kewanee Historical Society, Clipping Files

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many ways the Kewanee Hotel was like a private club open to the public. It was a place to dress up and go out for special occasions. The ballroom was used regularly for public meetings, banquets and dances. The city's leading dress store occupied the hotel's most prominent corner and the storefronts along North Chestnut Street continued to be popular leasing space throughout the late 1950s and early 1960s.

During the same period Kewanee's economy continued to experience stagnation or outright decline. One of the greatest setbacks of the decade was the announcement during the Christmas season in 1958 that the Walworth Manufacturing, one of the city's leading industries, would move most of its operations to its East St. Louis plant. Over 500 jobs were lost and there was a general pessimism about attracting replacement employment. This pessimism was largely well founded for, with the exception of the opening of the Pines Trailer Corporation plant in 1970, few blue-collar jobs came to the city in the next generation.

Meanwhile the Kewanee Hotel building was aging as were Harold Waller and other co-owners. The group found the operation of the hotel increasingly unsatisfactory. In the classified section of *Hotel World-Review & Hotel Management* magazine in 1960 an advertisement appeared offering a business opportunity:

ILLINOIS...FOR SALE. 100 Room Midwest commercial hotel. Extraordinary food and beverage operation. Located in city of 17,000. Building and mechanical equipment in top notch condition. Owners have other interests and will sell control very reasonably. Contact: H.E. Waller, Kewanee Hotel Company, and Kewanee, Illinois.⁵⁶

Waller and the other owners did not have far to search for an interested party. Charles Summers purchased the hotel and moved his family into several rooms converted for living quarters. He made the hotel (mostly) profitable by doing much of the work himself and enlisting his wife and children in the operation. His son, Charlie, grew up to become a successful politician in Maine where he was a state Senator from 1991 to 1994 and state staff director for Republican U.S. Senator Olympia Snowe from that state. He projected a folksy, down-to-earth demeanor and used his childhood experiences as grist for his campaigns, particularly the self-sufficient, make-do attitude he received from his parents while literally growing up in the Kewanee Hotel. At age 44 in 2004 he recalled for a Maine news reporter what life was like in the Kewanee Hotel in the 1960s and 1970s.

Charlie Summers grew up at the Kewanee Hotel, in Kewanee, Ill., a town of about 10,000 where most people made a living growing corn or making farm equipment at a local factory. His father and mother ran the hotel and raised five children in several rooms they converted into an apartment. Traveling salesmen and other characters came and went. Retired teachers and farmers' widows stayed for years, using the hotel as an assisted-living facility long before the concept became popular. Summers...saw his parents struggle when money was scarce and count

⁵⁶ *Hotel World-Review & Hotel Management*, February 6, 1960.

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their blessings when times were good. He and his siblings changed beds, cleaned toilets, ran the switchboard and bussed tables in the hotel's restaurant and bar.... "My parents worked 24 hours a day, seven days a week. They turned the crank and made it go and eventually made something of themselves," Summers says.⁵⁷

Summers, though Republican, was popular with constituents of both parties, and described as "dependable, hard-working and eager to help, regardless of party affiliation."⁵⁸ These were the very traits required for successful management of an aging city hotel in the mid 20th century. In those circumstances the elder Summers managed to make a living and even prosper. In 1976, thinking to capture some of the highway vacation and travel market, Summers demolished the old ballroom, except for the rear (west) wall, and built a typical contemporary glass-wall two-story motel in its place. These rooms replaced many of the older units on the second and third floors of the hotel. The new motel section overlooked the refurbished courtyard and by now, with several demolished nearby buildings, there was plenty of surface parking available for guests.

But even with thrifty management, changing conditions again worked against a successful hotel in downtown Kewanee. Ironically, the Wethersfield community, populated by many residents who still felt a long-standing rivalry with Kewanee, benefited from most of the new growth that came to Kewanee in those years. A recent Henry County history tells of this change.

While Kewanee as a whole has declined considerably in population since World War II, the "Wethersfield" portion of the city has actually grown, both numerically and commercially. From the late '40s to the early '70s almost all of the new housing development was south of Division Street, on both the southeast and southwest corners of the city. After a 20-year "depression" in home building, new houses are being built in the latter half of the '90s, still mostly in that portion of Kewanee that is in Wethersfield Township.⁵⁹

More significant for the hotel, the old central business district faced the same decline as downtowns in so many American communities. Chain stores forced the closing of many locally owned businesses and the new chains eventually located at the edge of town.

The retail business center of the city has moved from downtown to the south side, a movement that began in the '60s and was especially boosted in the 1970s by converting the Main Street-

⁵⁷ Kelley Bouchard, "Summers' values gained working at family hotel" *MaineToday.com* September 26, 2004, <http://www.maintoday.com/elections/2004/usrep/040926summers.shtml>

⁵⁸ Kelley Bouchard, "Summers' values gained working at family hotel" *MaineToday.com* September 26, 2004, <http://www.maintoday.com/elections/2004/usrep/040926summers.shtml>

⁵⁹ *Henry County Illinois* (Turner Publishing, 2000) 19.

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Tenney Street corridor from two lanes to four lanes. The building of Midland Plaza in 1970 and Wal-Mart in 1984 were major events in the business drift to the south.⁶⁰

These conditions led to the eventual closing of the building as a commercial hotel by the 1990s. Yet, even in its eventual demise, the Kewanee Hotel maintained its presence in the city longer than might be expected as it faced overwhelming economic obstacles. It remains in use as a long-term rooming house. This longevity is a testament to the importance of the hotel to the community and the community's longtime support of the hotel, its restaurants, bars and shops. Today (2005) the hotel still performs an important role as home for many retired and low-income residents of Kewanee. The Kewanee Hotel has been an important structure and commercial and cultural institution for nearly a century and reflects the changing fortunes of urban hotels in the United States.

⁶⁰ *Henry County Illinois* (Turner Publishing, 2000) 19.

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Kewanee Hotel, Henry County, Illinois

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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Section 10 Page 33

Kewanee Hotel, Henry County, Illinois

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Lots One (1) and Two (2); Block 20; in the Original Town, now City of
Kewanee, Henry County Illinois

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the hotel and the land historically associated with it.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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Section Photographs Page 34

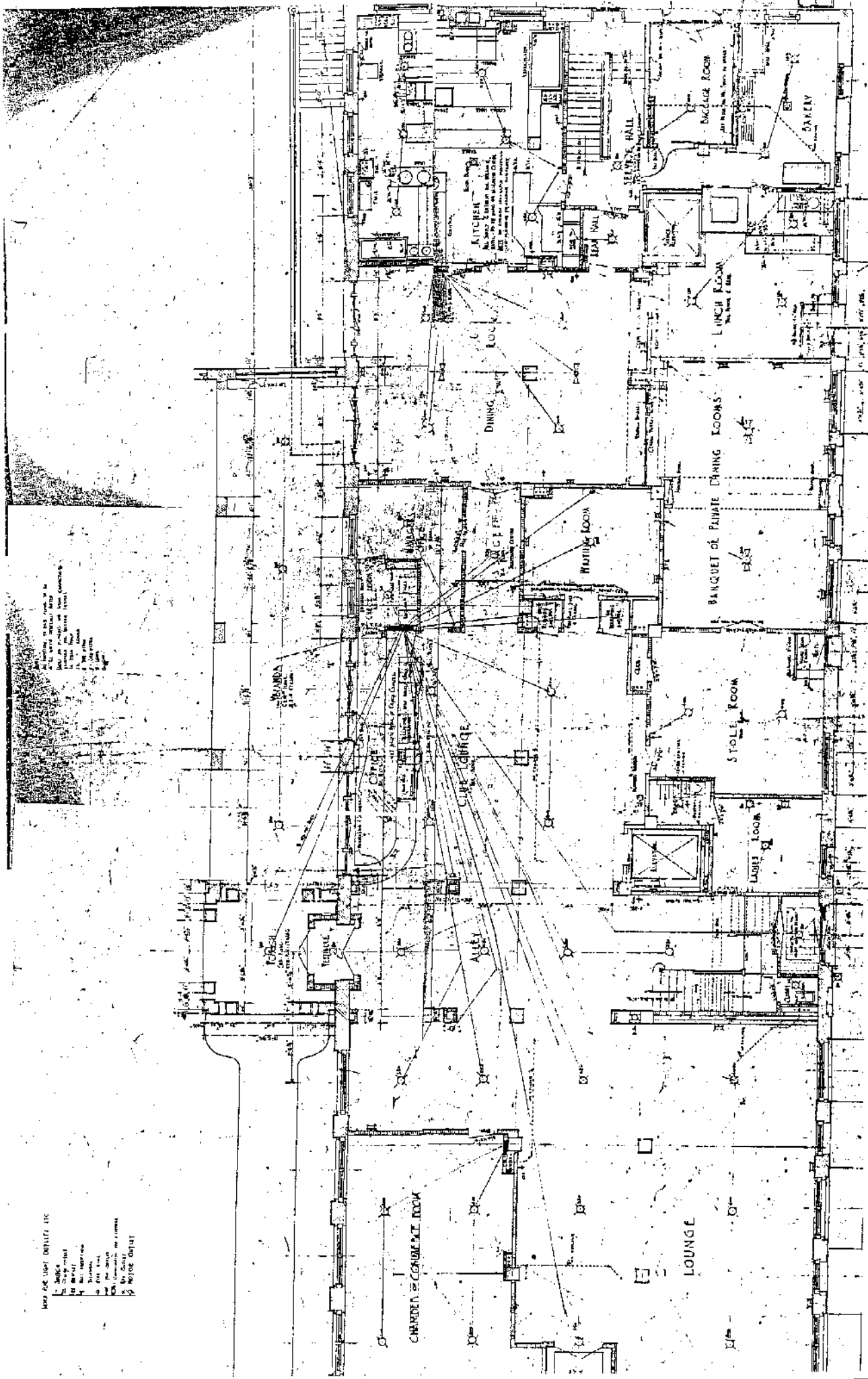
Kewanee Hotel, Henry County, Illinois

Kewanee Hotel
125 North Chestnut
Kewanee, IL

Photographer of the current photographs: Edward J. Russo, May 2005

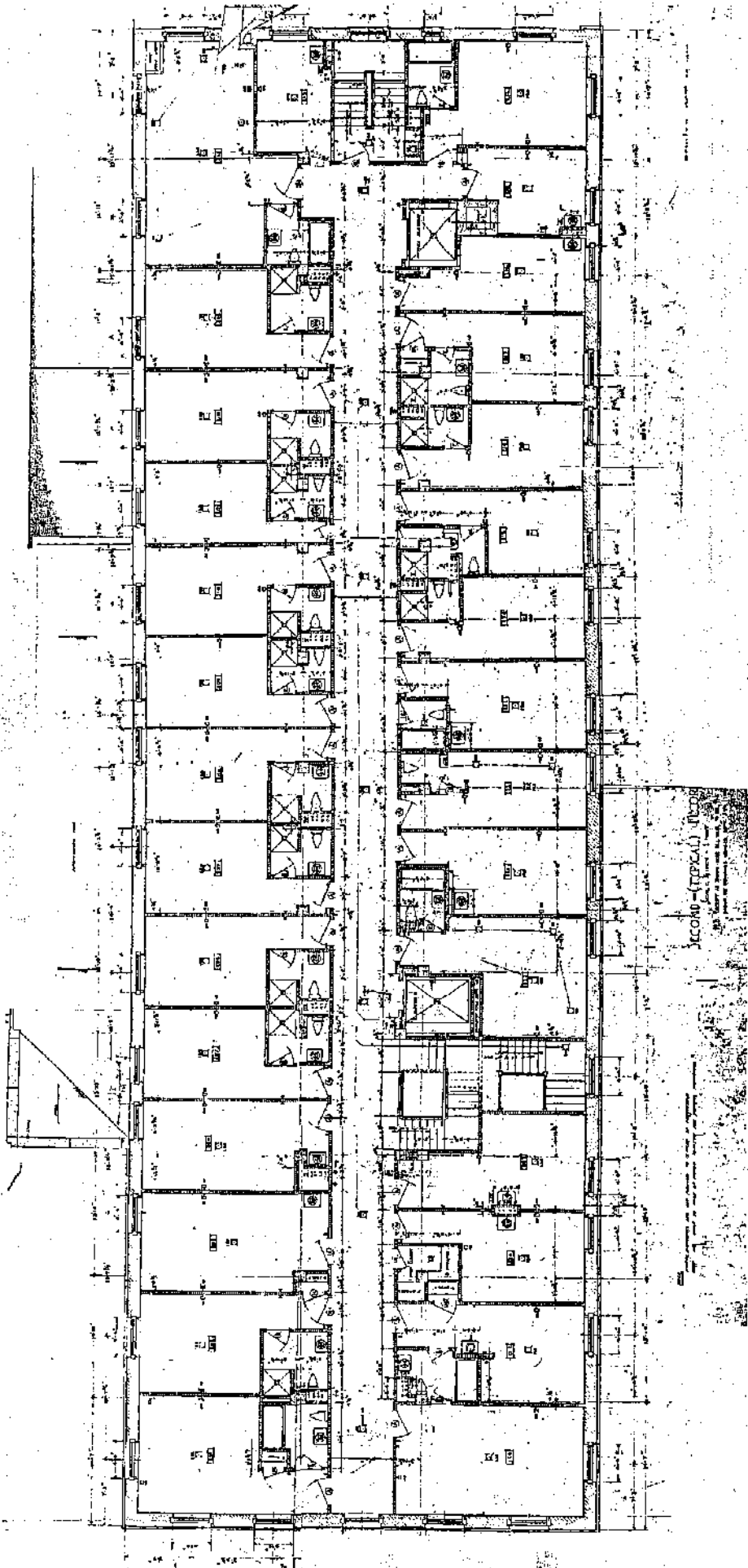
Photographer of historic photograph: unknown

1. East elevation showing 1931 addition at left with original 1916 building at far right. Camera facing northwest
2. Original 1916 entrance with 1931 marquee. Camera facing west.
3. North elevation of 1916 building. Camera facing south.
4. View facing north showing courtyard with 1976 motel addition (left), south elevation of 1916 building (center), and west elevation of 1931 addition (right).
5. Courtyard view showing south elevation of 1916 building at left with original open dining porch at first level (enclosed in 1931). At right the west elevation of the 1931 addition is shown. Camera facing northeast.
6. View facing west showing façade of 1976 motel addition.
7. West (rear) elevation of 1916 building. Camera facing southeast.
8. West (rear) elevation showing remaining wall of demolished 1931 ballroom. This remaining wall was extended (far right) and forms west (rear) elevation of 1976 motel addition.
9. Historical view of Kewanee Hotel in 1952. Camera facing southwest.

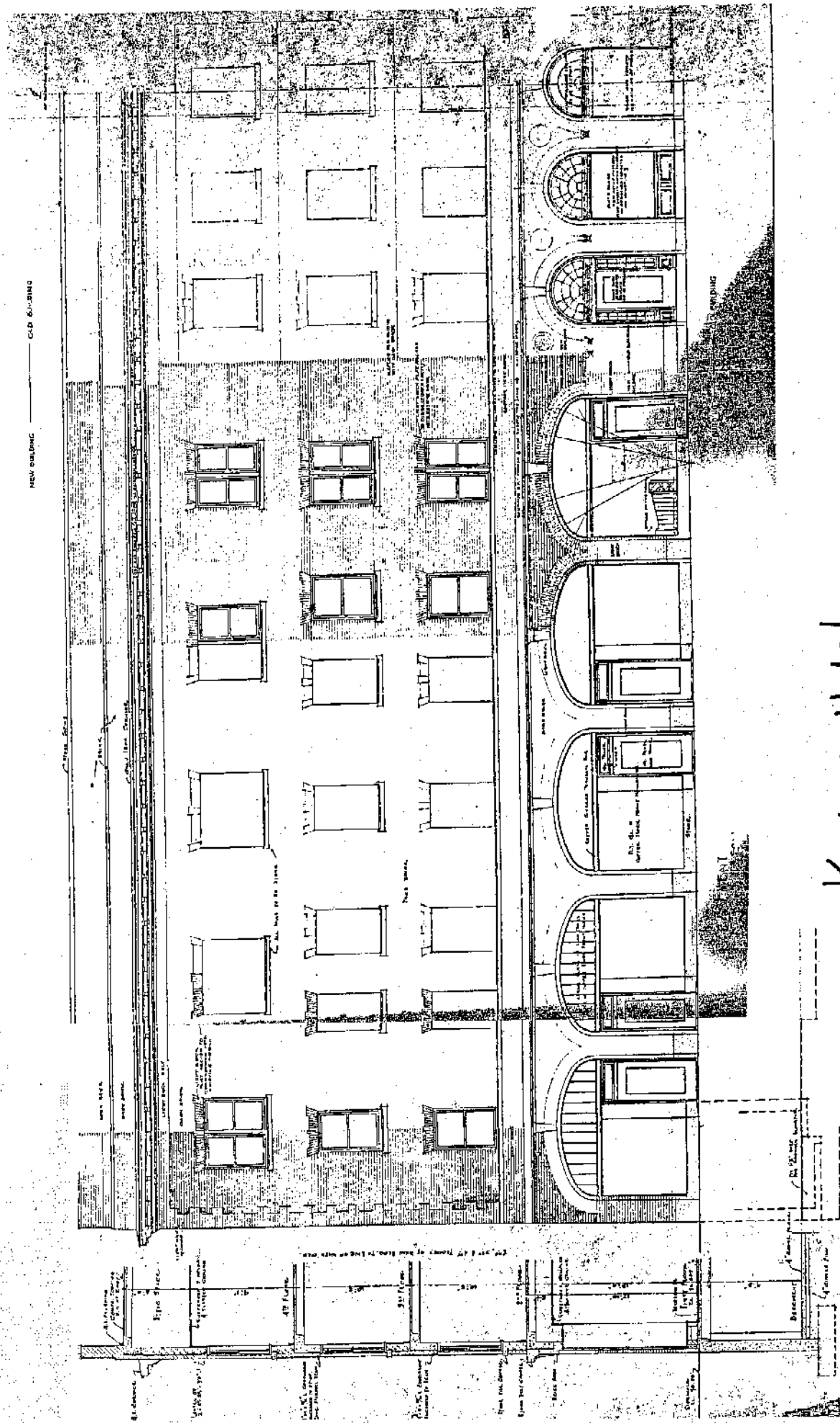


Kewance Hotel
1915 Floor Plan (1st Floor)

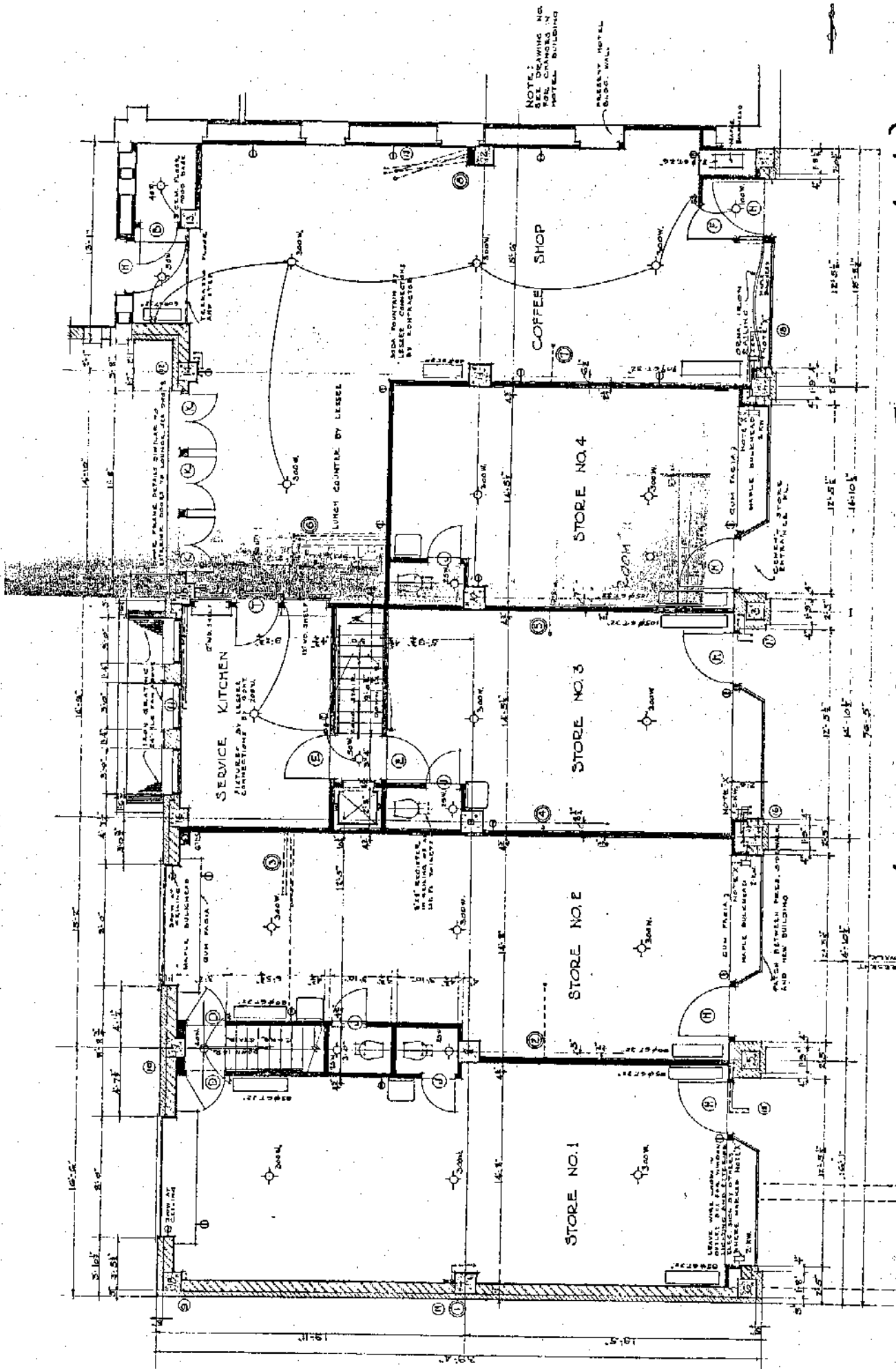
- KEY TO SYMBOLS, DETAILS, ETC.
- 1. SINK
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 - 3. CUPBOARD
 - 4. STOVE
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Kewanee Hotel
1915 Floor Plan



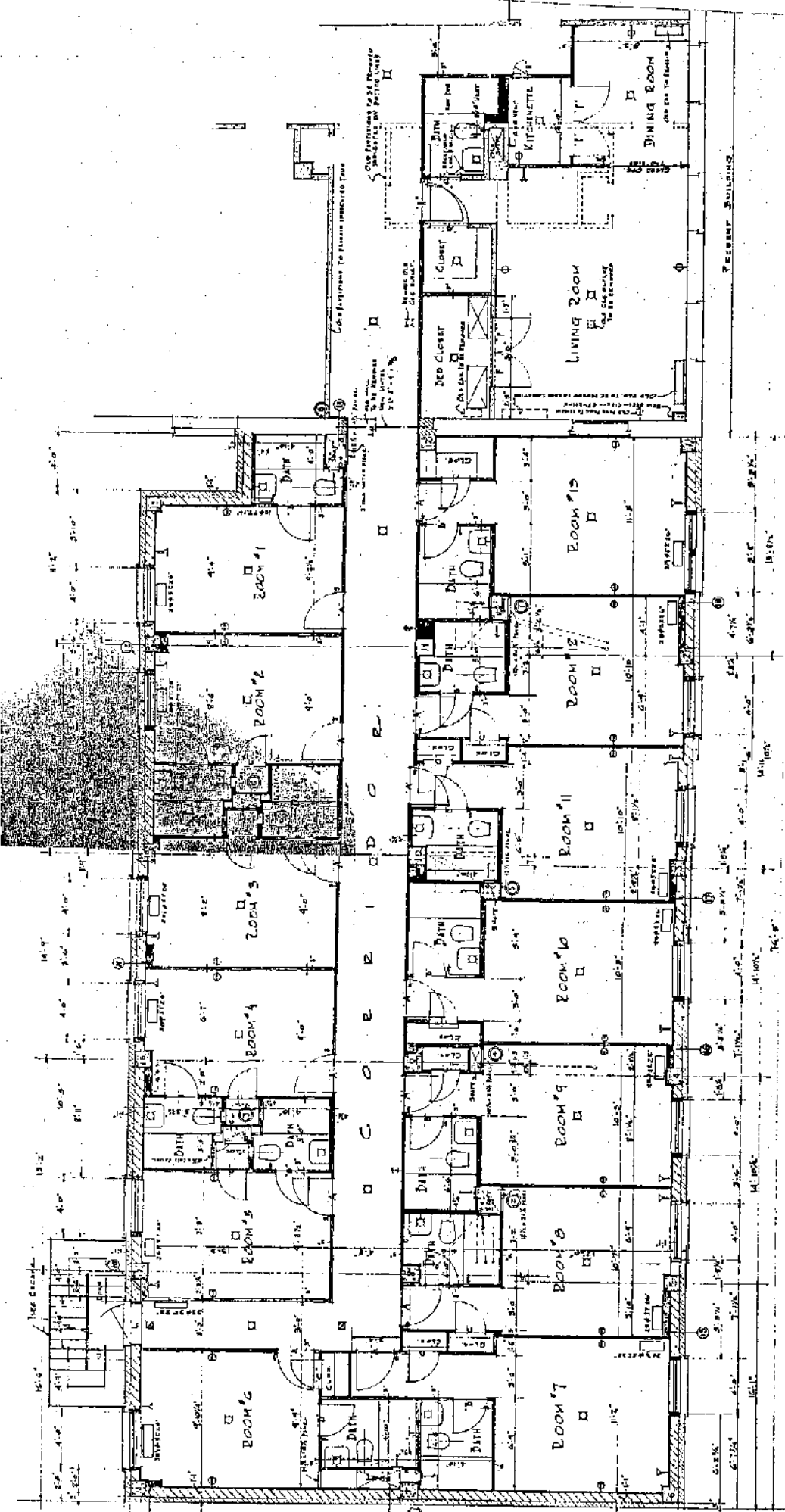
Kewance Hotel
1930 addition



NOTE:
SEE DRAWING NO.
FOR CHECKS
HOTEL BUILDING

PASSEY HOTEL
B.L.O.C. WALL

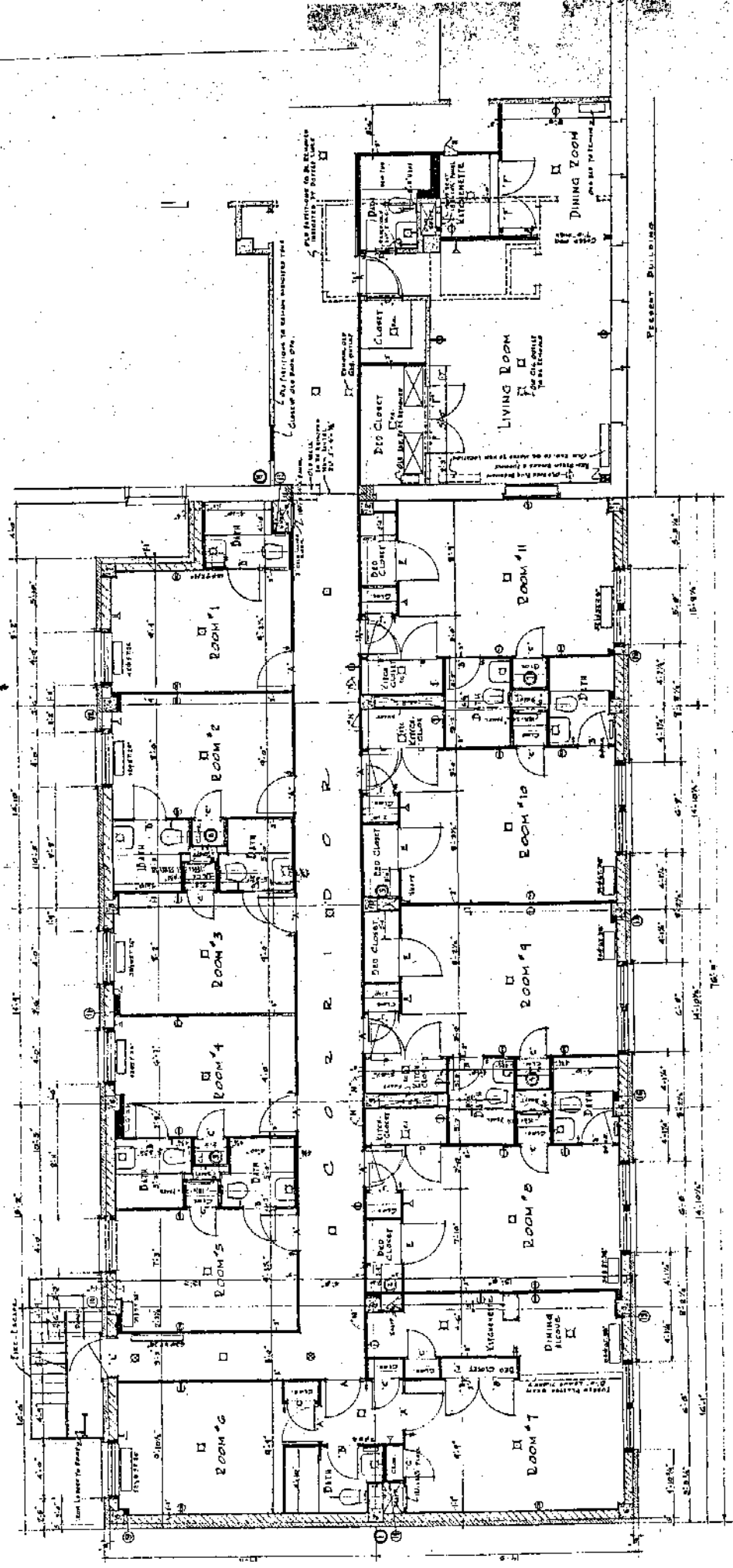
Kewance Hotel 1930 Floor Plan (1st)



2ND & 3RD FLOOR PLAN
SCALE 1/4" = 1'-0"

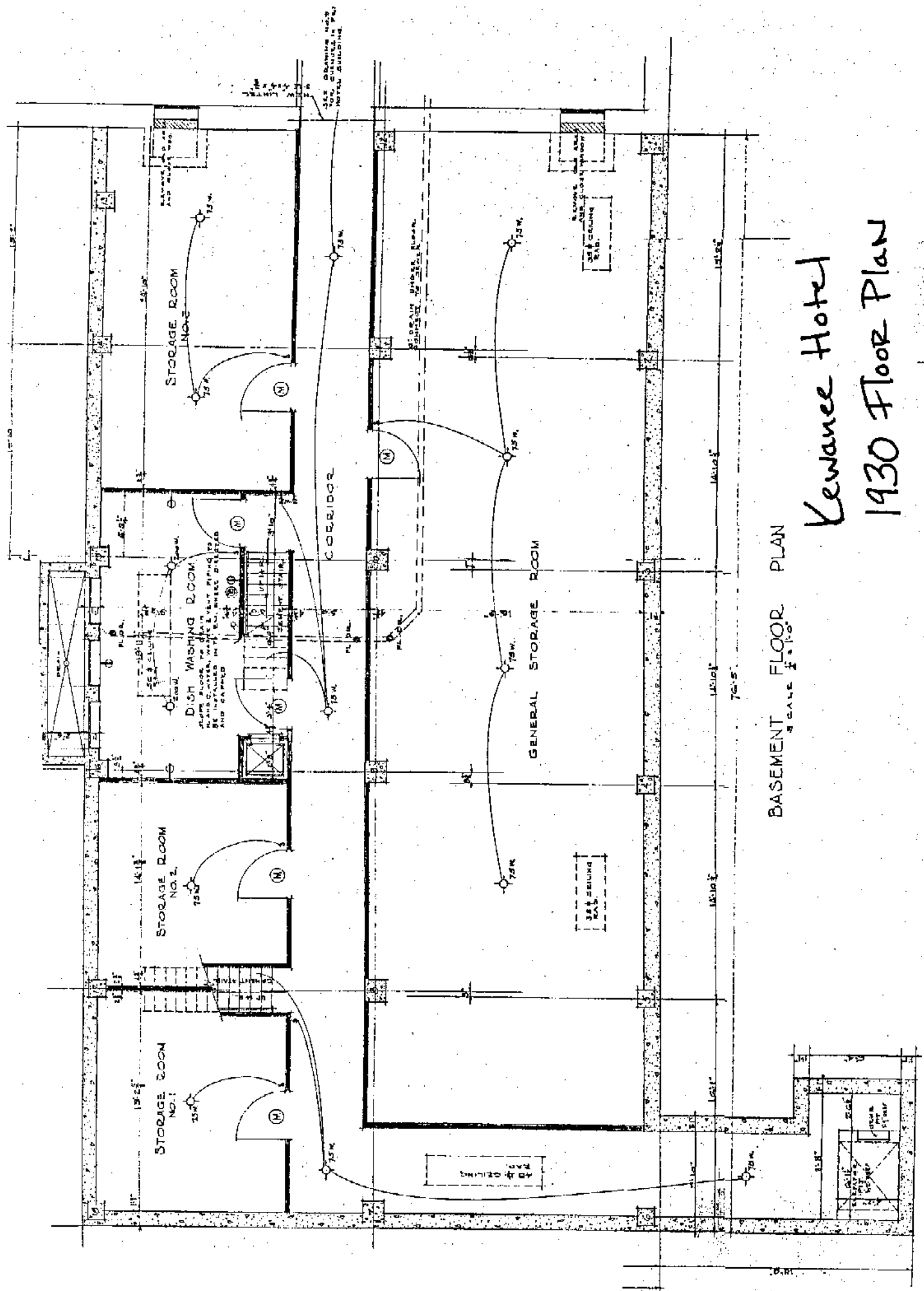
Kewanee Hotel 1930 Floor Plan

SEE ARCHITECT'S LUNGE PLAN
TO 4TH FLOOR 4TH FLOOR.



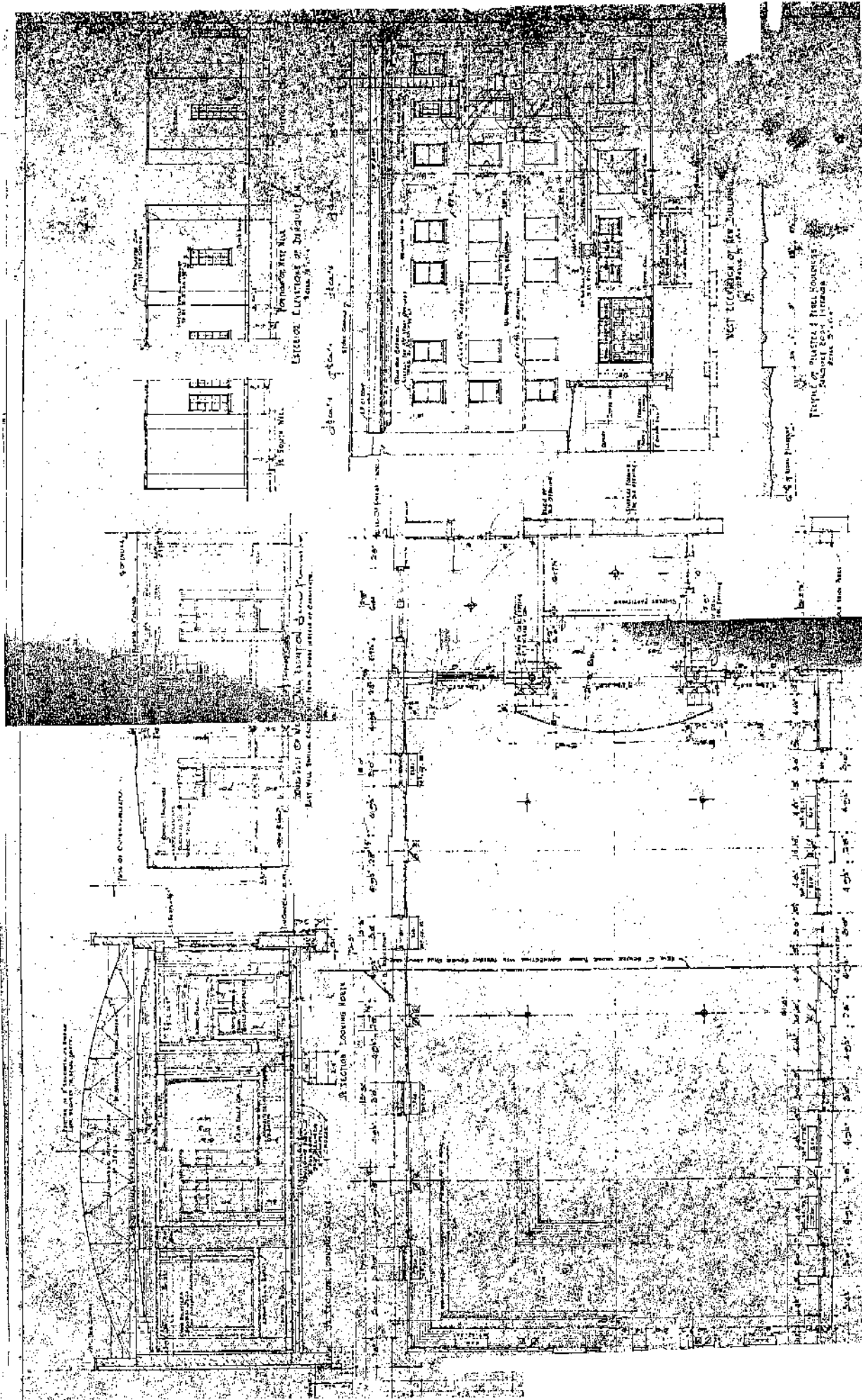
4TH FLOOR PLAN
Scale: 1/8" = 1'-0"
Kewanee Hotel 1930 improvements

4TH FLOOR PLAN
Kewanee Hotel 1930 improvements

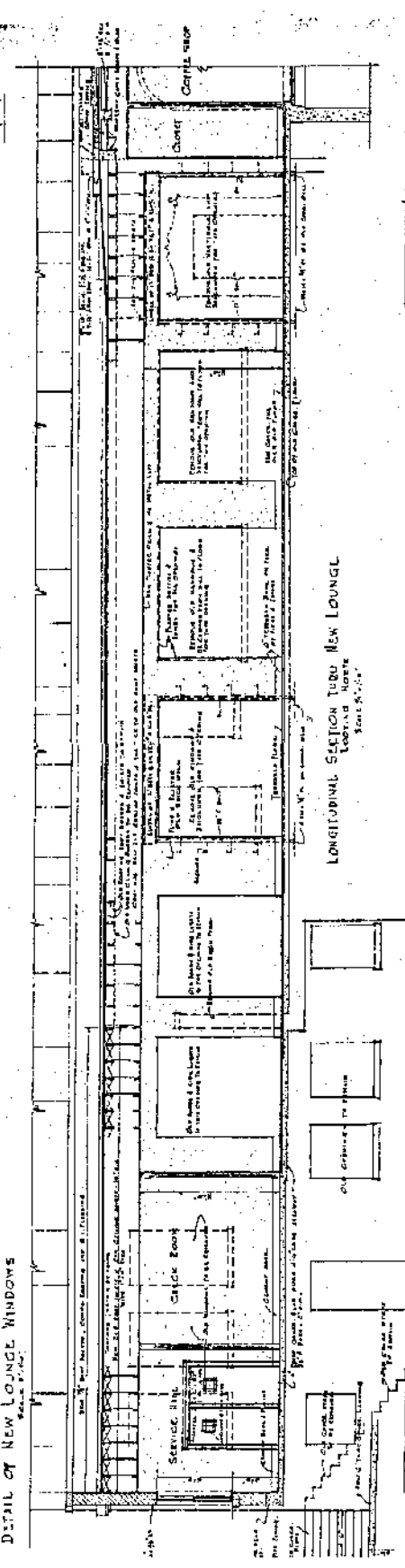
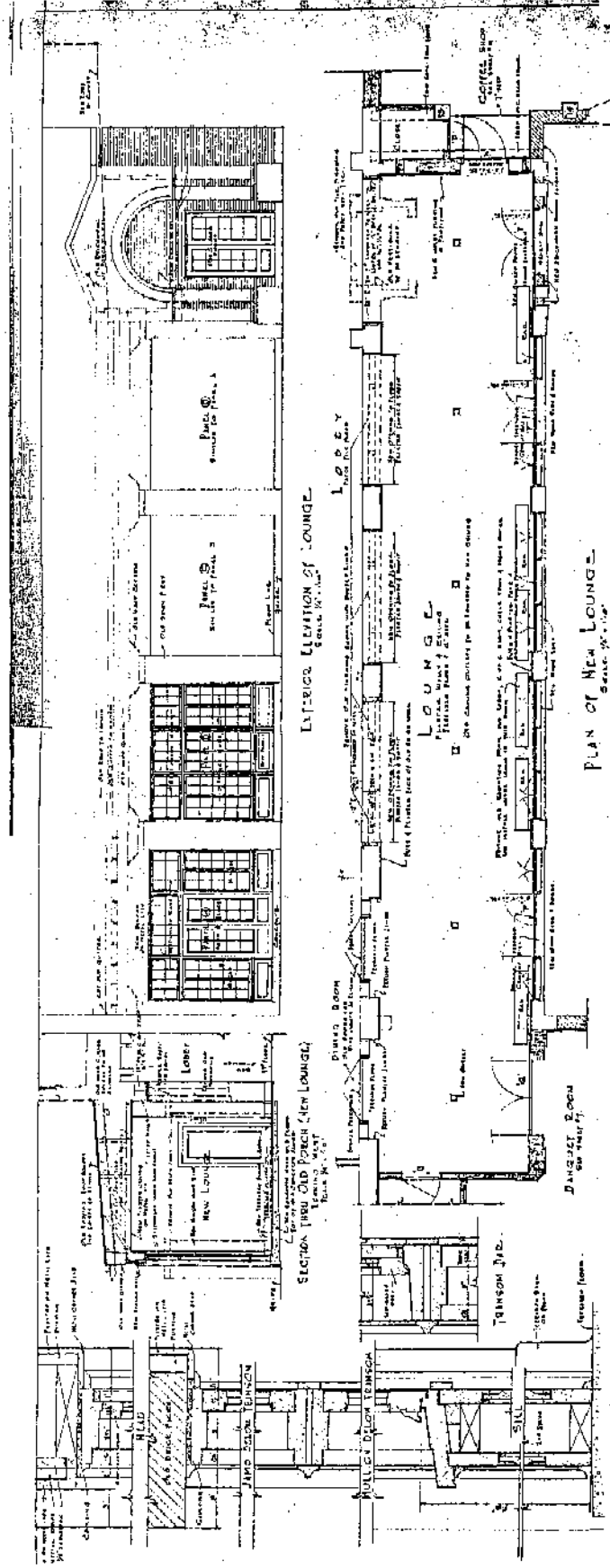


BASEMENT FLOOR PLAN
SCALE 1/8" = 1'-0"

Kewanee Hotel
1930 Floor Plan

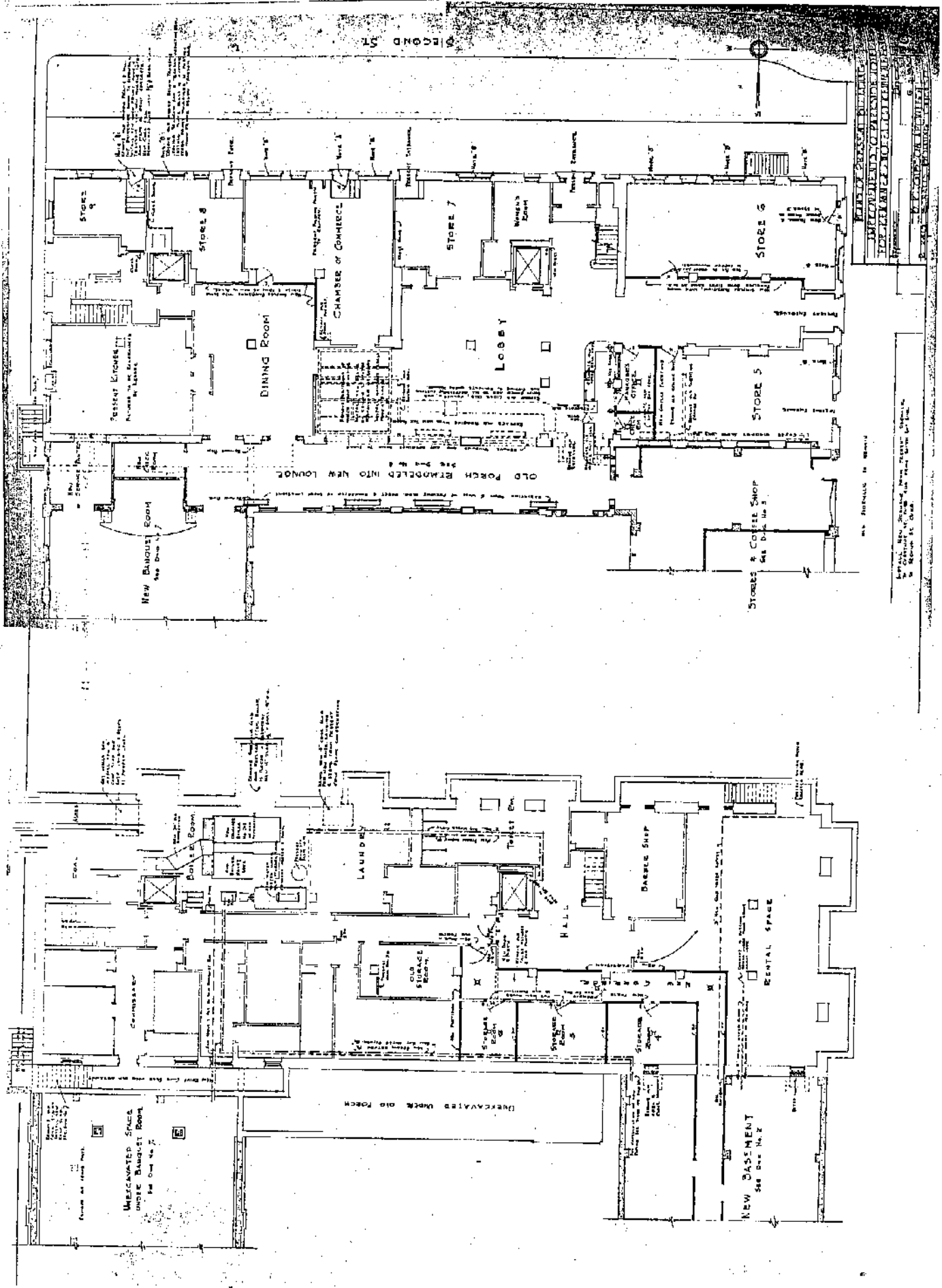


Lewance Hotel, 1930 addition



THESE CHANGES ARE MADE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE ARCHITECT BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE LEWANACE HOTEL COMPANY.

Lewanace Hotel 1930 improvements



Kewanee Hotel 1930 improvements