

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

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

1. Name of Property

historic name Clarke Hotelother names/site number NeHBS#ADo4-22

2. Location

street & number 233 North Hastings AvenueNA not for publicationcity, town HastingsNA vicinitystate Nebraska

code

NEcounty Adams

code

001zip code 68901

3. Classification

Ownership of Property

☒ private☐ public-local☐ public-State☐ public-Federal

Category of Property

☒ building(s)☐ district☐ site☐ structure☐ object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

10001

Noncontributing

0 buildings0 sites0 structures0 objects0 Total

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/ANumber of contributing resources previously
listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this
☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the
National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.
In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

☐ entered in the National Register.☐ See continuation sheet.☐ determined eligible for the National
Register. ☐ See continuation sheet.☐ determined not eligible for the
National Register.☐ removed from the National Register.☐ other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/hotel

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Work in Progress

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Renaissance Revival

- Romano-Tuscan Mode

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

walls Brick

roof Concrete

other Terra Cotta Entablature

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Clarke Hotel is a six-story rectangular building of Renaissance Revival Style architecture in brick with terra-cotta trim. The 120-room hotel was constructed in 1914, with a 50-room matching extension added in 1916. Structural and historical integrity has been preserved except for minor modifications made to the street level facade and interior spaces on the upper floors. The nomination consists of one contributing building.

The principal street facades of the 170-room Clarke Hotel have the typical high-rise base-capital-shaft composition of many early Twentieth Century commercial buildings. The building is constructed of steel and concrete columns with concrete beams and floors and masonry walls. The long main facade of the building faces north along Hastings Avenue and the short side faces east on Third Street. It is bounded by a parking area followed by commercial buildings to the South and a two-story commercial building to the west.

The Clarke Hotel is characterized by its ornate terra cotta cornice and entablature and the contrasting color and treatment of the brickwork of the street facades. The entablature consists of an architrave with dentils, a heavy frieze bearing low relief medallions, and a modillioned cornice. The corners of the original building and the annex have heavy brick pilasters, each highlighted by stylized terra cotta cartouches descending vertically from the architrave. Pairs of small grotesques ornament the top of the cornice directly above the frieze medallions.

The building is visually divided by contrasting brick patterns and colors with red-hued bricks in a rusticated pattern on the two lower floors and orange-hued common bond bricks on the upper floors. A heavy terra cotta belt course also divides the building between the second and third story windows.

Large plate glass windows with three-light sidelights are located at the street level along the north and east facades. Some of these windows have been covered with plywood which will be removed during current renovation work. The north and east

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facade entrances originally had revolving doors which have been replaced by aluminum and glass doors. The original crested iron marquee remains in place above the north doorway. The east facade initially had a matching marquee. All except one of the original second story plate glass windows which have two-light sidelights and three-light transoms remain intact.

The fenestration of the upper floors of the building is varied between vertical columns of pairs and single large one-over-one windows and small one-over-one bathroom windows. Some of the original windows have been replaced through time with metal framed windows. The careful arrangement of the windows maintains symmetry in the overall effect of the building. The building is fourteen bays wide and five bays deep.

The public spaces of the interior of the Clarke Hotel retain their original integrity. The lobby has beautiful mosaic tile floors which remain in excellent condition. Marble-based square-paneled columns rise from the lobby floor ascending two stories to elaborately decorated ionic capitals and coffered ceilings. The walls are adorned with marble wainscoting, and a marble staircase with iron balustrade and brass rails leads to the second story mezzanine. The original base of the hotel registration desk remains intact. Other classical details in the lobby area include elaborate moldings, chandeliers, dentils, and decorative plaster panels. The letter "C" has been used as a decorative motif for both the mosaic floors and the iron balustrade of the stairs and mezzanine.

The lobby opens into the impressive dining room which has two-story ceilings. Ornate Louis XVI plaster relief borders were selected to adorn both the ceiling and walls. Sections of the decorative plaster on the wall panels were removed when a low ceiling was put in the dining room. This plaster work will be replaced in the renovation currently in progress. Elaborate pilasters and heavy ceiling moldings divide the room into four parts each having in its center a large skylight almost the entire width of the room. The skylights are framed with beautiful plaster work adding to the rich classical emphasis of the room. There are no floors above the dining room so that the skylights open directly outside and the upper floors of the hotel form a U shape around the dining room. This design was selected so that each hotel room would contain an outside window. A marble-framed opening in the north east corner of the dining room opens onto the mezzanine to allow simultaneous orchestral music in the lobby and the dining area and to save space for banquet tables.

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The Clarke Hotel's famous grill room has a series of life-size murals with the theme "Wine, Women and Song" depicting 17th Century European tavern scenes. These dark oil paintings cover all four walls of the room and reach from the ceiling to a wooden framed section of glazed bricks about five feet from the floor. The original red mosaic tile floor remains intact in the grill room. The remaining portions of the first floor are divided into a kitchen, storage and service areas.

The hotel rooms on the upper floors of the Clarke did not contain significant architectural detailing. These floors have been altered through time by the addition of modern fixtures including HVAC units and ducts. Many of the original doors and transoms are still in place on these floors. A portion of the third floor remains in its original condition including louvered doors used for ventilation.

The 1914 portion of the hotel included 120 rooms. An annex of 50 rooms and a ballroom was added to the west side of the original building in 1916. The 1916 west addition is evidenced on the north facade by the extra pilaster at the end of the original building. The large wooden-floored ballroom, located on the sixth floor of the annex remains in its original condition. The low-arched roof has ceiling beams and decorative pilasters are set into the walls. The proscenium of a stage at the south end of the room is outlined by plaster rosettes with inset light fixtures.

The full basement was once used for such purposes as a billiard room, a bake shop, public rest rooms, a trunk room and a barber shop. The basement elevator lobby has terrazzo floors and plaster walls.

The Clarke Hotel has been changed over time primarily in the upper floors which were not rich in architectural detail. The public spaces of the interior including the lobby, dining room, ballroom, and grill room, as well as the exterior facades of the building continue to retain their structural and architectural integrity.

8. Statement of Significance

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

☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally

Applicable National Register Criteria ☐ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D

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

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance

1914-1916

Significant Dates

1914

1916

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Way, Charles W.

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

The Clarke Hotel is architecturally significant (Criterion C), on a local basis, as an excellent product of the Renaissance Revival Style being designed by the prominent Hastings architect, Charles W. Way. The hotel is an early illustration of the trend for small communities to invest in the construction of a major hotel during the 1920's. The period of significance is derived from the original construction date of the building (1914), and significant later additions (1916).

Architecture

The Clarke Hotel was designed by a locally important architect, Charles W. Way. Born in Michigan in 1870, Way studied architecture at Michigan State University. He came to Hastings in 1906 and established an architectural practice which led to contracts for most of the prominent buildings in Hastings. The Clarke is one of the most significant examples of the architectural design talents of Charles W. Way.¹

Besides the Clarke Hotel, Way also designed the Strand Theatre, the Victory Building or Dutton-Lainson Company Building (NRHP Listed 3-31-87), the Ford Building, St. Cecilia's Catholic Church, Fleete Foote Service Station, the A.H. Jones Company Building, the Hastings Daily Tribune Building, and the Madgett building. All of these structures collectively comprise the historic fabric of downtown Hastings. In addition, Charles Way ran advertisements for floor plans of his house designs in local publications and was the architect for many of the private residences in the city.

The Clarke is a good example of Way's versatility as an architect. He concentrated his practice primarily in Hastings so that it was necessary that he have the ability to design a wide array of structures ranging from gas stations to churches. In the case of the Clarke Hotel, Charles Way used the ideals of the Renaissance culture and architecture to create a feeling of importance and permanence for the promotion of a luxury hotel in a small town.

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The hotel is a good illustration of the Romano-Tuscan mode of the Renaissance Revival Style. The massive cornice, the flat facades of the building, the low roof and the rusticated ground stories, are distinct elements of this style. The Clarke also illustrates the Romano-Tuscan mode in the large and more elaborate design of the second story windows which is a carry-over from window treatments for the state rooms in the Italian city palace.² The use of brick rather than stone masonry illustrates the American trend to adapt Revival styles to modern construction techniques and materials.

The public spaces of the Clarke hotel represent a stark contrast of stylistic elements. The lavishly ornate decoration of the lobby and dining room are in direct opposition to the simple grace in the design of the ballroom. The Louis XIV influences of the dining room are also juxtaposed with the Italian tavern scenes of the grill room.

The unusual wall murals in the grill room of the Clarke set it apart from most other luxury hotels of this era. The life-size oil paintings depict Italian scenes of gentlemen drinking and courting damsels or barmaids. The murals were painted by Signor A. Aprea, a member of the Royal Academy of Arts. They were designed to feature the room "in such a way as to make it a lasting talking point for the Clarke Hotel."³ The paintings have had a direct influence on the popularity of the Clarke Hotel and remain in an excellent state of preservation.

History

The early development of the hotel industry in the United States followed a three stage period of growth characterized by the late 19th Century inns, the early 20th Century large luxury hotels in the major cities, and the 1920's luxury hotels in the smaller communities. This pattern is clearly reflected in hotels in Nebraska listed on the National Register by the early two-story frame hotels such as the Phelps Hotel (1885), followed by the big city hotels including the 250-room Blackstone in Omaha (1916), and finally the smaller community hotels such as the 11-story Yancey Hotel in Grand Island (1923). The Clarke Hotel, constructed in 1914, was an early example of the third stage of hotel development when small towns united to capitalize upon the period of growth catalyzed by the wide influence of railroads.

Hastings, the county seat of Adams County (1925 pop. 11,647), was an important regional rail center having branches of five major railroads running through the community. Hastings experienced a surge of growth and became a major statewide center for conventions and travellers after the turn of the century. Responding to great demand, the Chamber of Commerce began exploring the potential for building a new fireproof hotel in 1910. In February 1912, a committee was formed to organize a Hotel Company and solicit local subscriptions for the project. By July of that

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year the entire cost of the property and building, \$175,000, had been subscribed by local citizens. The local newspaper recognized the fact the "there are few cities of our size in this or any other state wherein this enterprise could be duplicated."⁴ The hotel was to be named for one of Hastings' prominent citizens and President of the Hotel Company, Alonzo L. Clarke, who was also a large subscriber to stock in the Hotel Company.

Construction of the Clarke began in 1912 and culminated in 1914 with a grand Open House to "show off the splendid facility to the townspeople."⁵ By 1916, the popularity of the hotel for travellers, and its success as a local social center spurred the construction of a 50 room annex with a banquet room complete with a stage, dance floor, and seating for 300 people. The hotel was the scene of many colorful events throughout its history including hosting circus elephants, cattlemen's banquets, and presidential candidate campaign speeches. The Clarke Hotel continued in active use as a hotel longer than many early luxury hotels having only been closed in March 1987. The hotel is currently undergoing renovation for retirement housing.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Hastings Daily Tribune, (September 24, 1948).
- 2 Whiffen, Marcus, American Architecture Since 1780, (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1969), p. 75-77.
- 3 Hastings Daily Tribune, (February 7, 1914), p.1.
- 4 Ibid., p. 4.
- 5 Ibid., p 1.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Creigh, Dorothy Weyer. Adams County: The Story 1872-1972.
Hastings, Nebraska: Hastings Centennial Commission. 1972.
Denney, James. Sunday World Herald Magazine of the Midlands.
May 17, 1987.
Hastings Daily Tribune. February 7, 1914. September 24, 1948.
Hotel Redbook and Directory. New York: Official Hotel Redbook &
Directory Company. Selected Volumes 1915-1930.
Past & Present of Adams County. Burton & Lewis. Volume I. S.J.
Clarke Publishing Company. 1916.
Whiffen, Marcus. American Architecture Since 1780. Cambridge:
Massachusetts Institute of Technology. 1969.

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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

Specify repository:

Nebraska State Historical Society

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property Less than One

UTM References

A 14 551630 4492760
Zone Easting Northing
C

B
Zone Easting Northing
D

☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The property is described as, "All of Lots One (1) through eight (8), inclusive, Block Nineteen (19), Original Town of Hastings, Adams County, Nebraska."

☐ See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the entire town lots that have historically been associated with the property.

☐ See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Dana L. Pratt / Preservation Planner
organization The URBANA Group date September 3, 1987
street & number 110 South Race Street P.O.Box 1028 telephone (217)344-7526
city or town Urbana state Illinois zip code 61801

View looking SW showing N & E facades
Photo by Dana L. Pratt, Urbana Group, Inc., July 16, 1987



View looking SW showing E façade
Photo by Dana L. Pratt, Urbana Group, Inc., July 16, 1987





View looking SW showing N façade
Photo by Dana L. Pratt, Urbana Group, Inc., July 16, 1987

View looking NW showing S & E facades
Photo by Dana L. Pratt, Urbana Group, Inc., July 16, 1987



View looking NW showing S & E facades
Photo by Dana L. Pratt, Urbana Group, Inc., July 16, 1987

