

(Oct. 1990)

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**



1. NAME OF PROPERTY

HISTORIC NAME: Gunter Hotel
OTHER NAME/SITE NUMBER: N/A

2. LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER: 205 East Houston Street
CITY OR TOWN: San Antonio
STATE: Texas **CODE:** TX **COUNTY:** Bexar **CODE:** 029
NOT FOR PUBLICATION: N/A
VICINITY: N/A
ZIP CODE: 78205

1. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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.)

[Signature] 11-3-06
Signature of certifying official Date
State Historic Preservation Officer, Texas Historical Commission
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

4. 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] 1.9.07
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action
Elson A. Beall

5. CLASSIFICATION

OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY: Private

CATEGORY OF PROPERTY: Building

NUMBER OF RESOURCES WITHIN PROPERTY:	CONTRIBUTING	NONCONTRIBUTING
	1	0 BUILDINGS
	0	0 SITES
	0	0 STRUCTURES
	0	0 OBJECTS
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	1	0 TOTAL

NUMBER OF CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES PREVIOUSLY LISTED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER: 0

NAME OF RELATED MULTIPLE PROPERTY LISTING: NA

6. FUNCTION OR USE

HISTORIC FUNCTIONS: Domestic/hotel

CURRENT FUNCTIONS: Domestic/hotel

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: Late 19th and Early 20th Century American Movements: Skyscraper

MATERIALS: FOUNDATION CONCRETE
WALLS METAL/steel, BRICK
ROOF ASPHALT
OTHER TERRA COTTA, TILE

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION (see continuation sheets 7-5 through 7-14).

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**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

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Gunter Hotel
San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

The Gunter Hotel is a 12-story building with a basement and detached parking garage. The original, 8-story hotel was constructed in 1907-09. The hotel was extensively remodeled and expanded in 1926 when a new mezzanine was built overlooking the lobby and three stories were added to the top of the hotel. The Gunter's 1-story convention hall built in 1913 and 1-story annex and roof garden built in 1921 both stood north of the hotel. They were demolished c. 1920 and 1980 respectively. A 2-level parking structure was built on the annex site in 1985. The hotel is constructed of beige brick with white terra cotta, red brick, and mosaic tile detailing. A balcony runs the full length of the south and west elevations at the second floor level, and arched windows distinguish the third floor from the remainder of the building.

The Gunter Hotel was built in the first decade of the 20th century when new construction and infrastructure improvements reshaped downtown San Antonio. It was designed by Ernest J. Russell of the St. Louis firm, Mauran, Russell and Garden. Herbert Green was the architect for the major 1926 remodeling and expansion. The hotel's last major remodeling took place between 1980 and 1985. Street-front retail spaces were closed and converted to hotel-related functions, wood sash windows were replaced with metal sash of matching profile, and the exterior balcony was enclosed with glass. Though the hotel's public spaces and guest rooms have been remodeled many times to keep pace with advances in the hotel industry, the lobby remains largely intact to its 1926 appearance. Today, the lobby, restaurant and bar occupy the first floor, while the second and third floors contain meeting, ballroom and office facilities, and the upper nine floors contain 322 guest rooms. With the exception of the balcony enclosure and storefront modifications, the Gunter Hotel's exterior remains largely unchanged from its 1926 appearance. The parking garage at the northwest corner of the site is attached to the hotel by a brick porte-cochere and is a non-contributing structure.

The Gunter Hotel is located in downtown San Antonio at the northeast corner of East Houston and North St. Mary's Streets (figure 1). The 1.181 acre site is comprised of two tracts bounded by Travis Street on the north, East Houston on the south, Peacock Alley and Lot 7, NCB 407 on the east, and North St. Mary's Street on the west. The footprint of the hotel measures approximately 152-feet on the north and south and 165-feet on the east and west. The parking garage, built in 1985, measures approximately 155 feet (north and south) by 125 feet (east and west). The vehicular/pedestrian easement separating the hotel and parking structure is covered by a porte cochere. Like the garage, the porte cochere was built in 1985.

The Structural Evolution of the Gunter Hotel

The Gunter Hotel: 1909-28

The original 8-story hotel was completed in 1909 (figure 2). It was designed by Ernest J. Russell of the St. Louis firm, Mauran, Russell and Garden. The firm produced both preliminary and final plans for the hotel and these drawings are now part of the Kuhlmann Collection housed at the Missouri Historical Society. The only major, discernable difference between the hotel's early and final plans is the elimination of a large glass dome over the 2-story tall lobby. It is assumed that this change was made for budgetary reasons. Generally, the hotel was built in a "U" shape with interior rooms opening onto an airshaft. A 1-story salon east of the lobby filled the "U" at the first floor level.

The Gunter's developers, L.J. Hart and the San Antonio Hotel Company, made various additions to the hotel between 1909 and 1924. In 1913, a free-standing ballroom designed by Atlee B. Ayres was built north of the hotel facing on St. Mary's Street. This was later demolished and a 1-story annex with rooftop garden was constructed in 1921. The annex, designed by the firm of Phelps and Dewees, was expanded in 1928 and demolished c. 1980 (figures 3 & 4).

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The 1909 hotel had two entrances—the primary entrance on Houston Street and a “ladies’ entrance” on St. Mary’s Street—both covered by iron porticos. The ladies’ entrance was topped by a porch that overlooked St. Mary’s Street and opened to an interior parlor. A continuous copper canopy was constructed c. 1913 between the hotel’s primary entrance and the “ladies entrance.” The canopy was supported by tie rods that connected to the building just below the second floor level (figure 5).

The Baker Hotel Company, which purchased the Gunter in 1924, undertook a major renovation and expansion in 1926-28. The architect for this project was Herbert S. Green. Green’s design added three stories to the top of the hotel and a new “convention floor” above the lobby, bringing the hotel to its 12-story height (figure 6). (The tall base of the hotel, which originally contained two floors, had three floors following completion of the convention level.) The Gunter’s 1909 second floor (which became its third floor) originally featured parlors overlooking the lobby on its north, south and west sides, with guest rooms opening onto the parlors. The 1926 remodeling converted these guest rooms into meeting rooms and offices. The project also included construction of a functional balcony that replaced the hotel’s old copper canopy. The second (convention) floor meeting rooms opened onto the new terrace. An entrance leading from Houston Street to the basement was constructed at the southwest corner of the hotel.

The Gunter: 1928-85

Renovations and modifications to the Gunter between 1928 and 1980 were limited to interior finishes and the ground floor storefronts. Plans in the collection of HDR (formerly W.E. Simpson Company) indicate that the Gunter balcony was extended to the northwest corner of the hotel in 1949. Detailing matched the 1926 design. Other plans document modifications to stairways and mechanical systems.

A 5-year remodeling project was begun in 1980. The project included demolition of the 1-story annex along St. Mary’s and Travis Streets and construction of a 2-story parking structure attached to the hotel by a porte-cochere. The St. Mary’s Street lobby entrance and Houston Street basement entrance were closed and ground floor storefronts were converted to various hotel uses. The ground floor façade, already modernized in previous remodelings, was partially faced in red brick. The hotel’s double-hung, wood sash windows were removed and replaced with metal clad, double-hung windows matching the original profile. Finally, the open-air balcony was enclosed with a metal and glass canopy set inside the 1926/1949 railing. Apart from ground floor modifications, the balcony enclosure, and enclosed fire stairs on the east elevation, the hotel’s exterior has remained unchanged since 1926.

The Gunter Hotel in 2006 (photo 1)

The Gunter Hotel’s exterior is organized into three horizontal parts.

- 1) the 1909 building base (floors 1, 2 and 3)
- 2) the 1909 hotel tower (floors 4 through 9)
- 3) the 1926 addition (floors 10 through 12)

As explained above, while the exterior appearance of the hotel indicates an 11-story structure, the hotel is referred to as a 12-story building. This acknowledges the convention floor that was added in 1926. The south (primary) elevation of the

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hotel faces on Houston Street, while the secondary (west) elevation faces on St. Mary's Street. The east elevation abuts the adjoining structures and property line, and the north elevation is generally utilitarian, providing access to the motor entrance and parking structure situated north of the hotel. Since the hotel's opening in 1909, the primary entrance has been from Houston Street.

The Houston Street (south) Elevation (photo 2)

Ground Floor

The Gunter's ground floor has been remodeled several times since 1909, most recently c. 1980. White travertine covers the ground floor from the southeast corner (Houston and St. Mary's Street) to the main entrance. Show windows for the former lease spaces are framed in bronze anodized aluminum. These finishes pre-date the 1980 remodeling. The lease spaces are no longer functional and are now used for storage and other utilitarian purposes. Stairs leading from Houston Street to the basement arcade near the southwest corner were closed as part of the 1980-85 remodeling.

The hotel's main entrance is in its 1909 location. Modern glass and metal doors lead into a vestibule and a second set of doors opens into the lobby. East of the hotel entrance, and extending to the southeast corner of the building, the exterior ground floor façade is faced in red brick. This treatment was added during the 1980-85 remodeling.

A 2-story, 23-foot wide structure is attached to the east elevation of the building (photo 3). This 1909 structure originally included a retail space and narrow passageway leading to the hotel's first bar. The passageway was abandoned when the hotel was remodeled in 1926. Today, the south (Houston Street) portion of this space is used as the hotel's retail bakery, while the north portion is incorporated into the service area. The entrance to the bakery is covered by a striped, canvas awning.

The Second Floor (called the "convention floor" in 1926)

As previously explained, when the Baker Hotel Company renovated the Gunter in 1926, a new "convention floor" was introduced below the original second floor. This was possible because the height from ground level to the third floor plate was approximately 36-feet. The convention floor contained meeting rooms that opened onto the new balcony that was used for outside dining and parade watching. (Houston Street was used as a parade route until the street was narrowed in 1989-90.) The balcony, also called the "sidewalk terrace" or "promenade," was enclosed with an iron railing and plain balusters with the Baker Company's "B" insignia inset at regular intervals. The railing was preserved in place when the balcony was glassed during the 1980-85 renovation.

The balcony's glass enclosure intersects the face of the building just below the third floor level (photo 2). A terra cotta and cast stone coping originally extended from the northwest to southeast corner of the building just below the third floor. A portion of the coping remains intact at the northwest corner of the building and along the west side within the enclosed balcony. The coping is not visible along the south (Houston) elevation and it assumed it was removed to accommodate the enclosure. Sometime after 1985, the "B" insignias in the iron railing were replaced with the letter "G" to signify "Gunter."

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Third Floor (known as the second floor from 1909-1926)

The third floor façade is the building's most distinct exterior feature (photo 4). The façade is faced in buff brick set in Flemish bond. It is decorated with raised horizontal banding and window surrounds of red brick and white terra cotta. This same pattern was used on the 2-story storefront/passageway at the southeast corner of the hotel.

The third floor of the south elevation has two distinct parts—the main hotel structure and the 2-story storefront/passageway structure. The second floor of this structure was originally designed as an open-air roof garden, but it was later enclosed with multi-light wooden windows. It is now used for storage.

Two projecting bays rise from the hotel's third to the eighth floor level and divide the south elevation into three parts. The 3-sided bays have rectangular, double hung windows. The remaining second floor fenestration consists of small rectangular windows (a) and paired, arched windows (b). Beginning at the southwest corner (St. Mary's Street) and proceeding east, the fenestration pattern is as follows: a:b:a:b; projecting bay; b:b; projecting bay; b:b:a:b:a. The second floor of the passageway structure has a b:a:b pattern. A round terra cotta medallion is centered over each set of paired windows.

The paired, arched windows are individually framed with white terra cotta and separated by a rounded pilaster with simple capital. They are joined within a surround of raised red brick and topped with a white terra cotta arch supported by a central keystone. The space above the windows within the outside arch is decorated with red, blue and beige mosaic tile. A round terra cotta medallion is centered over and between the paired windows.

Decorative, rectangular panels are set above each window in the projecting bays. These panels are framed in white terra cotta and inset with bands of blue and red mosaic tile on a beige tile background. A round medallion with the Texas star is centered in each panel. A round medallion of red brick and white terra cotta is set between the red brick banding over the small, rectangular windows. The third and fourth floors are separated by a decorative terra cotta coping. The coping consists of two parts—a band of egg and dart molding and a flat panel with rounded edge.

Floors 4-8

Above the third floor, the main body of the hotel tower is simple in design. As stated above, the two projecting bays rise from the third to the eighth floor height, separating the south elevation into three parts. The fenestration on floors 3,4,5,6, 7 and 8 is comprised of small rectangular windows (a) and paired, flat-arched windows (b). The pattern is as follows: a:b:a:b; projecting bay; b; projecting bay; b:a:b:a. The pattern remains the same on the ninth floor with the exception that there is a paired rectangular window above each of the projecting bays. All windows are inset in the face of the building and have flat brick headers and slightly projecting brick sills. The brick headers are incorporated into continuous bands of lighter beige brick that begin at the southeast corner of the building and wrap around the northwest corner on each floor. The bands reinforce the building's horizontal arrangement.

The eighth and ninth floors are separated by a terra cotta belt course. The belt course consists of a double rope molding pattern with raised medallions at regular intervals. Another projecting band of terra cotta molding extends above the ninth floor windows. It is decorated with pairs of faux capitals between each set of paired windows. The coping above the ninth floor windows dates to 1909.

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As originally constructed, the hotel was topped with a copper cornice supported by decorative copper brackets. Patterned mosaic panels formed a frieze below the cornice. Plans for the 1926 addition specified retention of the terra cotta coping above the ninth floor windows. Plans also indicate a "cast iron cornice" to separate the 1909 structure from the new addition. The cornice that is in place today is sheet metal, and it is assumed that this was substituted for cast iron. A flat terra cotta frieze separates the ninth floor coping from the cornice.

Floors 9-11

The 1926, 3-story rooftop addition is built of steel rather than reinforced concrete. The floors are gypsum block on reinforced steel mesh. It is assumed that these materials were selected for both their cost and lighter weight. On the south elevation, the addition is faced in white terra cotta and contains seven bays separated by flat pilasters. The pilasters are topped with simple capitals decorated with egg and dart molding. A molded belt course separates the floors. The bays at the southwest and southeast corners each contain three windows, while the remaining five bays contain four windows. The building is capped with a projecting, molded sheet metal cornice.

The St. Mary's Street (West) Elevation (photo 5)

Like the Houston Street ground floor elevation, the St. Mary's Street ground floor has been remodeled several times since 1909. The original entrance from St. Mary's Street was moved slightly to the north in 1926 and was closed at the time of the 1980-85 remodeling. Today, white travertine covers the ground floor exterior from the building's northwest to southwest corner (Houston and St. Mary's Street). Show windows for the former lease spaces are framed in bronze anodized aluminum. The lease spaces are no longer functional and are now used for storage and other utilitarian purposes.

The Second Floor

The portico over the original, 1909 entrance was removed during the 1926 remodeling, and the continuous balcony and railing was added. As already stated, the balcony was extended to the northwest corner of the hotel in 1949 and enclosed during the 1980-85 remodeling. The terra cotta and cast stone coping separating the second and third floors is preserved within the enclosed balcony and is visible at the northwest corner of the building where it wraps around to the north elevation.

Third Floor (known as the second floor from 1909-1926)

The west elevation of the third floor is identical in detailing to the south elevation with the exception of the fenestration pattern. The pattern from the southwest to northwest corner reads as follows: b:b:a:projecting bay: b:b:b:b:b: projecting bay: b:b:a. ("a" specifies small, rectangular windows, while "b" signifies paired, arched windows.)

Floors 4-8

The main body of the hotel tower above the third floor level is also identical in detailing to the south elevation with the exception of the fenestration pattern. The fenestration is comprised of small rectangular windows (a) and paired, flat-

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arched windows (b). Beginning at the southwest corner proceeding north, the pattern reads: b:b:a:projecting bay: b:b:b:b: projecting bay: a:b:b.

The terra cotta coping that separates the seventh and eighth floors on the south elevation extends along the west elevation and wraps around the building's northwest corner, as does the metal cornice that separates the 1909 structure from the 3-story, 1926 addition.

Like the south elevation, the projecting bays end below the eighth floor. While the finish and detailing matches the south elevation of the eighth floor, the fenestration pattern differs. From the southwest to northwest corner, it reads: b:b:a:b:b:b:b:b:b:a:b:b.

Floors 9-11

The west elevation of the 3-story, 1926 addition is identical to the south elevation. The projecting metal cornice extends around the building's northwest corner.

The North Elevation (photo 6)

The first and second floors of the north elevation were refaced during the 1980-85 remodeling in the same red brick used on the west and north ground floor elevations. The building's original (1909) ground floor base was apparently constructed of a somewhat lighter, red brick which can still be seen on the pilaster at the building's northwest corner. The red brick banding and terra cotta coping seen on the south and west elevations extends across the north elevation.

The arched window motif used on the third floor of the south and west elevations is used only in the northwest bay of the north elevation. There, the double-arched window (b) is flanked on each side by a small, rectangular window (a) and plain terra cotta medallions. The remaining fenestration consists of small rectangular (a), double rectangular (b), and singular rectangular windows (c) windows as follows: b:b:b:a:b:b:b:b:c:b. This fenestration pattern is repeated on floors 4-8. Floors 9-12 are faced in buff colored plaster, rather than terra cotta. All but two bays of the north elevation contain single rectangular windows. Two bays contain double, rectangular windows. The 12th floor culminates in an undecorated parapet wall. The service elevator projects above the hotel at its northeast corner.

The East Elevation (photo 2)

The hotel's east elevation is "U" shaped. The south portion of the elevation (one leg of the "U") is largely obscured by a full-height, enclosed fire stair. The stair enclosure is plastered. The cornices at the ninth and twelfth floor levels wrap slightly around the east elevation. The terra cotta belt course separating the eighth and ninth floors and the coping that caps the ninth floor extend the full width of the east elevation.

The small structure at the southeast corner of the hotel rises to the full height of the building's decorative base. It is set back slightly from the face of the hotel tower, allowing the red brick banding to wrap a short distance around the east face. The single bay between the southeast corner and the fire stair contains one rectangular window on floors 4-9, and no openings on floors 10-12.

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The north portion of the elevation (the north leg of the "U") contains two pairs of rectangular windows separated by a small rectangular window on floors 4-9 and a pair of rectangular windows and single rectangular window on floors 10-12. The service elevator is located within this portion of the hotel and the north half of this elevation therefore contains no windows. Mechanical equipment is housed in a structure that projects above the roofline.

The building's original elevator tower, as well as a full-height, modern fire stair, are located in the airspace within the "U." Interior rooms face onto the airspace. The brick facing of floors 4-9 matches that of the remaining hotel, but the three floors added in 1926 are plastered rather than faced in terra cotta.

Parking Structure (photo 7)

The 2-story parking structure is built of steel and concrete.

It was constructed in 1985 and designed by architect Gustav Heye. A porte-cochere faced in red brick connects the garage to the hotel and extends east to support a small swimming pool. A driveway enters from St. Mary's Street, passes under the porte-cochere, and exits onto Travis Street. Vehicles can also enter the garage from the driveway and exit onto Travis Street.

Other site features

The hotel is built to the property line along both Houston and St. Mary's Street. The wide sidewalk, shaded by the continuous canopy, is covered with red brick pavers. A portion of the sidewalk from the Houston Street entrance to the hotel's southeast corner is used for outdoor dining. A simple iron railing separates the seating from the street. The driveway that passes under the porte-cochere on the north side of the building is also paved with red brick and glazed tile pavers.

The Interior

The interior of the Gunter Hotel has been remodeled numerous times since its construction in 1909. The hotel's interior appearance today dates almost entirely to the 1926 and 1980-85 remodeling projects. There is only limited documentation of other projects related to the building's mechanical systems and room finishings. In order to understand the hotel as it is configured today, particularly on the first, second and third floors, it is helpful to explain the hotel's 1909 plan.

The First and Second Floors: 1909

As previously explained, in 1909, the first and second floors formed the building's decorative base (figure 7). On the south (Houston Street) side of the first floor were seven, 50-foot deep storefronts—three to the west (left) of the entrance and four to the east (right). A tiled vestibule and corridor led from Houston Street into the 30-foot tall lobby. Passing from the corridor into the lobby, the hotel desk was located to the right and the news and cigar stands to the left (figure 8).

On the west side of the lobby, the "ladies entrance" led from St. Mary's Street to the ladies reception room (figure 9). The baggage room was located across from the reception room. Two full height elevators and a stairway to the second floor

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were located on the lobby's west side. Second floor parlors overlooked the lobby on the north, south and west sides, and guest rooms opened onto these parlors.

On the east side of the lobby, 1-story writing and bar rooms were lit by skylights. A narrow, covered corridor along the building's east side provided access to the bar from Houston Street. The dining room extended the entire width of the lobby's north side and opened onto an exterior brick terrace.

A 2-story structure formed an "L" at the hotel's northeast corner. The hotel kitchen occupied the first floor, while small guest rooms and the laundry were located on the second floor. This structure was demolished during the 1980-85 remodeling.

The First Floor/Lobby: 2006 (photo 8)

Today the lobby is entered from both Houston Street on the south and the motor entrance on the north. Visitors enter from Houston Street through modern metal and glass doors that lead into a vestibule and in turn, to the 2-story tall lobby. The vestibule is 3-bays deep and has a low ceiling framed by paneled beams resting on wood paneled columns. To the left, along the west wall, double glass and wood doors open into a meeting room. The restaurant is to the right. The west wall also contains lighted display windows.

The wood paneled columns continue from the vestibule into the lobby. As configured today, the lobby contains six bays on its west and east sides. Entering from the vestibule and proceeding along the west wall, the first bay contains a stairway leading to the second floor mezzanine. The third bay, originally the "ladies entrance," contains the elevators, restrooms and service areas. As originally constructed, the hotel had two elevators which opened to the south. In 1926, a third elevator was added and the opening reoriented to the north. This necessitated closing the old "ladies entrance" and creating a new St. Mary's Street entrance slightly to the north. This St. Mary's Street entrance was closed permanently during the 1980-85 remodeling.

Continuing along the west side of lobby, the fourth bay contains the main stairway to the mezzanine. The balusters and railing are iron and the stairs are carpeted. The balusters appear to match those on the 1909 drawings, and it is possible that they were reused in the 1926 remodeling. The fifth and sixth bays house the hotel bar which is separated from the lobby by modern leaded glass windows and a paneled door.

The north side of the lobby consists of glass and anodized bronze windows and doors that date to the 1980-85 remodeling. The 1909 dining room located on the lobby's north side was removed during the 1926 remodeling and replaced by the coffee shop (figure 10). A passageway led to the hotel annex constructed north of the hotel during the 1920s. The annex was demolished and the new auto entrance constructed as part of the 1980s project.

Proceeding around the lobby to the east wall, the first bay provides access to the service area. The second bay contains a stairway leading to the second floor. Bays three and four contain the hotel desk, bay five is paneled and the sixth bay has been incorporated into the restaurant platform which projects into the lobby. The restaurant is separated from the lobby by a wooden railing and turned balusters. The hotel desk has been located on the east wall at least since 1926. The current desk matches detailing seen in c. 1935 photographs.

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The hotel's restaurant and pastry shop are located in the southeast corner of the lobby. They occupy the space originally allocated to four of the 1909 Houston Street storefronts. The restaurant is situated on a slightly elevated platform that projects into the lobby. The foyer ceiling is coffered and the floor is carpeted.

The Second and Third Floors: 2006

The lobby's square columns support the second and third floors (photo 9). The columns are wood paneled to the second floor height. The paneling is capped by a molded plaster capital. Above the capital, the columns are smooth finished plaster to the third floor height where they culminate in elaborate molded capitals. The coffered ceiling is decorated with molded plaster in elaborate classical motifs and friezes. The ceiling is divided into ten sections, each decorated with a large plaster medallion. Ten crystal chandeliers hang from the center of each medallion. These apparently replaced hanging metal and glass chandeliers that are seen in the hotel's c. 1940 promotional brochure. Modern sconces mounted on the columns provide additional lighting in the lobby.

As previously explained, the second floor was built in 1926 as the hotel's "convention" floor. Though it is not formally called the "mezzanine," it overlooks the lobby. The railing and balusters are carved wood. The low ceiling is coffered and framed with simple plaster moldings. Beams along the east and west sides have elaborate plaster decoration. Meeting rooms are arranged on the east, west and south sides of the second floor. A door on the north side leads to the hotel swimming pool, built over the auto entrance during the 1980-85 remodeling. The main stairway and a stairway at the east side of the lobby connect the first, second, and third floors, while a secondary stair at the southwest corner of the lobby leads to the second floor. The 1909 iron balusters were reused only on the main stairway, while the other stairs have wood railings and balusters.

The 1926 ballroom (first called the Rose Room) occupies the majority of the east side of the second floor (figure 11). As originally constructed, a balcony at the south end of the ballroom overlooked the space from the third floor. The balcony was eliminated during the 1980-85 remodeling. In 1926, the Rose Room foyer opened onto the balcony or "sidewalk terrace," as did a large lounge. These spaces today have been converted to meeting rooms. The enclosed balcony overlooking Houston Street is also used for meetings and special events. From 1926 through the 1970s, the west side of the second floor was used for various purposes including the offices of KTSA radio, hotel offices, a beauty parlor and meeting rooms. Today it is used for service areas, restrooms and meeting rooms.

As originally built, there were meeting rooms on the south side of the third floor and offices on the west and north sides. KTSA radio had its broadcast studios on the west side of the third floor. The third floor was extended over the 2-story tall lobby in 1926, necessitating the addition of columns in the center of the lobby. (Steel beams spanned the original 1909 lobby, precluding the need for columns.) Today the third floor contains meeting rooms, the executive offices, and the hotel's health club. The former Rose Room balcony was incorporated into the executive offices.

The Hotel Tower

The hotel today contains 322 rooms. While the layout of rooms and suites has changed over the years, it is thought that the overall arrangement of rooms and corridors is the same as in 1926. Finishes and furnishings have been updated many times, most recently in 2006.

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The Basement

The basement contains the barber shop, laundry, pastry kitchen, offices, employee cafeteria, and boiler room. In 1926, stairs were built at the southwest corner of the hotel leading from Houston Street to the basement. At that time, the barber shop was located on the west side of the basement. The Caveteria, a large cafeteria, was also located in the basement. The old barber shop and Caveteria spaces are used today for hotel support services. The current barber shop is located on the east side of the basement's wide, central hallway. The 1926 shop had 18 chairs, while the shop today contains only four chairs. The Gunter barber shop remains popular among long-time San Antonians and downtown businessmen.

Remnants of historic finishes can be seen in various areas. Some of the old barber shop's white marble flooring with black edging and marble and mirror clad columns can be seen in the hotel laundry. White, hexagonal tile flooring and red, hexagonal brick pavers can also be seen in the basement.

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

APPLICABLE NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA

- 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: N/A

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: Architecture, Commerce, Performing Arts

PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE: 1909-1956

SIGNIFICANT DATES: 1909, 1926, 1936

SIGNIFICANT PERSON: N/A

CULTURAL AFFILIATION: N/A

ARCHITECT/BUILDER: Mauran, Russell and Garden/Westlake Construction Company (1909);
Herbert S. Green (1926)

NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (see continuation sheets 8-15 through 8-31).

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

BIBLIOGRAPHY (see continuation sheets 9-32 through 9-33).

PREVIOUS DOCUMENTATION ON FILE (NPS): N/A

- 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 (*Texas Historical Commission*)
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository:

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Gunter Hotel
San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Gunter Hotel was constructed in 1907-09 by the San Antonio Hotel Company, a syndicate of investors led by real estate developer Lawrence J. Hart. It was named for Jot Gunter, a rancher and real estate investor who helped finance the hotel but died before its completion. Envisioned as “a large tourist hotel for the city,” the Gunter officially opened on November 21, 1909. The original 8-story, 301-room hotel was designed by the Ernest Russell of the St. Louis firm, Mauran, Russell and Garden. The Gunter and nearby St. Anthony were the first of numerous multi-story hotels built in San Antonio in the first two decades of the 20th century. The San Antonio Hotel Company sold the Gunter in 1924 to T.B. Baker, who subsequently became a legend among hotel operators. Baker expanded and remodeled the hotel in 1926. The project, designed by Herbert Green, added a mezzanine and 3-stories, bringing the hotel to its present 12-story height. After T.B. Baker experienced financial difficulties, the hotel was taken over by his nephew, Earl, who sold it in 1952.

From the time of its opening, the Gunter served as a popular convention and banquet site and a stopping place for cattlemen, politicians, entertainers and military personnel. Throughout the Depression and World War II, open air dances drew throngs to the Gunter roof. The United Services Automobile Association (USAA), today one of the country’s leading insurance companies, was founded at the hotel in 1922. In 1936, blues legend Robert Johnson, held one of only two series of recording sessions at the Gunter. The hotel has been in continuous operation since 1909, and remains a destination for conventioners, businessmen, and leisure travelers.

The Gunter Hotel is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A (state level) in the areas of commerce and the performing arts because of its 97-year history as a leading San Antonio hotel and as the site where Robert Johnson made some of his rare and most famous recordings. The building is also eligible under Criterion C (local level) in the area of architecture as an intact example of early structural steel construction and a representative example of the work of Mauran, Russell and Garden. The period of significance extends from 1909 to 1956.

The Intersection of Houston and St. Mary’s Streets: The 100% Corner

When the Gunter Hotel opened at the northeast corner of Houston and St. Mary’s Streets in 1909, the intersection had been a prominent downtown address for over 50 years. The hotel site was bounded on the north by Travis Street, on the south by Houston Street, on the east by adjoining buildings and on the west by St. Mary’s Street.

Houston Street had been known from the 18th century until 1851 as *Paseo* (passageway or driveway) or *Paseo Hondo* (ditch or deep gully). During heavy rains, *Paseo* drained lands to the north and east into the San Antonio River located one block west of the hotel site (Steinfeldt: 66). The street was named for United States Senator Sam Houston in 1851, the same year a bridge was built across the river (Heusinger:63). St. Mary’s Street, which defines the hotel site on the west, was named for the school and church built nearby in 1852 and 1857 respectively.

In 1851, the year that Houston Street was named, San Antonio’s residential and commercial development was still concentrated around the town’s plazas and along Commerce Street—a pattern that had not changed since the 18th century. Houston Street was only sparsely developed at that time.

The first large structure on Houston Street was constructed by John and William Vance in 1855 on the site of the future Gunter Hotel. The brothers had purchased the property in early 1851 shortly after arriving in San Antonio (BCDR

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G2:310; I2:240). They constructed a 2-story stone building and leased it to the United States Army (Steinfeldt, 121). General Persifor Smith and Colonel Albert Sidney Johnston officed here as did Lieutenant Colonel Robert E. Lee, commander of the Department of Texas prior to his resignation to join the Confederacy. During the Civil War, the Vance Building was used by Confederate forces. It was vacated in 1865 when the United States government moved its military headquarters to the French Building on Main Plaza.

With the exception of the Vance building, there was no significant development along Houston Street until well after the Civil War. Long-time San Antonian, Fred Mosebach recalled that even in the 1870s Houston Street "represented a row of 1-story frame and ironclad shacks interspersed with vacant lots" (San Antonio *Express*, July 10, 1938). When the street finally began to develop in the 1880s, it was due largely to the efforts of the Maverick family whose members owned much of the abutting land. Structures built along Houston Street in the 1870s and 1880s by George M. Maverick and his brother, Albert, assured that it would equal, and later surpass, Commerce Street in commercial importance.

The San Antonio *Daily Times* reported in 1886:

"The Maverick brothers...are responsible for the rapid strides which have taken place on Houston Street. Their real estate interests were mostly in that direction, and they set to work to enhance the value of their property, which they did sensibly as any enterprising, progressive and liberal citizen would do....this street is now beginning to be regarded as the principal business street in the city, and will eventually be the business stronghold." (San Antonio *Daily Times*, December 19, 1886)

St. Mary's Street, bordering the Gunter Hotel on the west, remained a secondary thoroughfare until after the turn-of-the 20th century. The 1873 Koch bird's eye view map of the city illustrates few structures along St. Mary's north of Houston Street. Development accelerated after a bridge was built to connect St. Mary's and Commerce Streets in 1890.

Hotels in 19th Century San Antonio

San Antonio was a crossroads for travelers from its founding days but offered little in the way of lodging. Early visitors typically stayed in private homes and modest boarding houses. When travel and trade increased after Texas' entry into the Union, larger hotels began to open, clustering near Alamo Plaza to the east and Main Plaza to the west. After the railroad arrived in San Antonio in 1877, growing numbers of visitors and permanent residents were attracted to the city. These new arrivals came for a variety of reasons including ranching and cattle related businesses, real estate opportunities, and the healthy climate.

Main Plaza, located west of the river near the market house and freight yards, was already a destination for working class visitors. The Plaza House, purportedly the city's first 3-story structure, opened on the north side of the plaza in the late 1840s. After the Civil War, the Hord House (1877; later called the Southern Hotel), St. Leonard (1883) and Central Hotels all clustered around the dusty plaza at the commercial and governmental heart of the city.

More sophisticated travelers tended to stay east of the river, considered a quieter part of town. The Menger Hotel (Alamo Plaza NR District, 1977), which opened on Alamo Plaza in 1859, grew from a small boarding house to become San

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Antonio's grandest hotel. It was enlarged many times after the Civil War and remains today the city's oldest continually operating hotel. The Maverick Hotel opened on Houston Street two blocks west of the Menger in 1882.

The Vance House: Predecessor to the Gunter Hotel

John and William Vance's stone building at the corner of Houston and St. Mary's Streets stood between Alamo and Main Plazas. The complex consisted of the 2-story corner building and a barracks-like structure to the north on Travis Street. When the building was vacated by the military in 1865, it remained empty for several years.

In 1872, the Vance brothers leased their property to William G. Tobin. Tobin opened the city's newest hotel, the Vance House, November 12, 1872, and operated it until 1879. The Vance House was described as "fitted out in fine style, neat, but not gaudy."

"Travelers will please remember that we now have two hotels of which we are proud, and either of which would be an honor to any city in the state—the Vance House and Menger Hotel."
(San Antonio *Daily Herald*, November 13, 1872)

In 1886, Stephen Gould described the Vance House in *The Alamo City Guide*.

"[The Vance House is a] strictly first class hotel and very favorably located...handy for those who come here for business or for pleasure; quiet and cool, yet central; near all the churches; it combines all the elements needed in a hotel home...The table has the reputation as being one of the best provided and served in Western Texas." (Gould, 1886)

L.A. Trexler, former manager of the St. Leonard Hotel on Main Plaza, and local politician, Ludwig Mahncke, assumed management of the Vance House in 1886. They renovated the building and renamed it the Mahncke Hotel. Trexler and Mahncke catered to commercial travelers and advertised their rooms as:

"...airy, comfortable and cleanly. It has all the modern conveniences. Its table is bountifully supplied with everything in season and everything first class. Its rates are particularly reasonable."

Ludwig Mahncke was a popular local figure. He entered politics, was elected to the city council, and as parks commissioner, was given the responsibility of laying out the parkland donated to the city in 1899 by his friend, George W. Brackenridge. (Brackenridge later donated another tract of land that he directed be named in honor of Mahncke.) Mahncke died of pneumonia on March 27, 1906, at his hotel. At the time of his death, it was reported that the hotel was "one of the best known in this part of the Southwest." (San Antonio *Daily Express*, March 27, 1906)

The Mahncke Hotel continued to operate until April 30, 1907. Announcing the hotel's closing, the San Antonio *Express*, wrote "...out of the ruins will rise a palatial structure of ten stories, the most modern hotel between New Orleans and Los Angeles" (San Antonio *Express*, May 1, 1907). The new hotel would later be named "The Gunter."

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Hotels in Early 20th Century San Antonio

The Gunter Hotel was one of several new lodging facilities constructed in San Antonio in the first two decades of the 20th century. Whereas the city's 19th century hotels were built of timber, brick or limestone and were no more than 4-stories tall, modern construction techniques using structural steel and reinforced concrete allowed for taller buildings. The modern hotels also contained amenities such as elevators, heating and electrical systems, and by the 1930s, air conditioning.

San Antonio's economy and population grew rapidly in the years following 1900, fueled by increased rail and automobile travel, military expansion during the World War I era, and real estate speculation. This prosperity created a competitive climate among hotel developers that continued until the Depression (figure 12).

The 8-story St. Anthony Hotel was the first of the city's new hotels to be completed, opening on January 4, 1909 (NR 1986). The St. Anthony was financed by A.H. Jones and B.L. Naylor, both prominent Texas cattlemen. Within a year, of the hotel's opening, construction was begun on an 8-story annex east of the first building. The expanded hotel, with 430 rooms, was completed in January 1910 (unpublished history, St. Anthony Hotel). The hotel would be expanded again in 1935 and 1940.

Construction of the Gunter, which opened on November 20, 1909, was already underway when the St. Anthony opened in January of that year (*San Antonio Light and Gazette*, November 21, 1909). Over the next two decades, numerous new hotels offered travelers a range of lodging choices. These included:

Crockett Hotel	5 stories	(1909; enlarged in 1927; Alamo Plaza NR District, 1977)
Travelers Hotel	6 story	(1914)
Lanier Hotel (White Plaza , Travis Plaza)	7 stories	(1916; demolished)
Robert E. Lee Hotel		(1923; NR 1996)
Plaza Hotel	14 stories	1927
Blue Bonnet Hotel	12 stories	1929 (demolished)

Building the Gunter Hotel: 1904-1909

L.J. Hart and the San Antonio Hotel Company

The Gunter Hotel was conceived by real estate developer Lawrence J. Hart. Hart was born in Dubuque County, Iowa in 1862, and raised on his father's farm. He graduated from Dubuque College and in 1887, left Iowa for Denver, Colorado, where he entered the real estate business (*Men of Affairs*, 3). When the real estate market in Colorado began to change, Hart joined other Denver speculators who moved to San Antonio to purchase and develop land (*Davis and Grobe*, I:314).

Soon after his arrival in San Antonio, Hart became "...identified with a progressive movement to promote the growth of the city..." (*Men of Affairs*, 3). It was written that "Mr. Hart's chief pleasure is helping to make San Antonio a better and larger city." Hart was an organizer of the San Antonio Chamber of Commerce in 1894, and a charter member of the San Antonio Country Club and San Antonio Club. He also served on the board of directors of Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas (Texas A & M) for fourteen years.

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L.J. Hart and his partner, T.C. Lambeth, concentrated on development of residential real estate in San Antonio during the 1890s. After Lambeth's death in 1900, Hart changed his focus to commercial real estate and spent the rest of his life developing projects in downtown San Antonio (San Antonio *Express*, March 6, 1928). Hart's important role in downtown development was summarized at the time of his death in 1938:

He frequently has been called the "Builder of St. Mary (sic) Street" and to that thoroughfare, together with a section of East Houston Street, he devoted his efforts. Soon after the turn of the century, being convinced that San Antonio needed a modern hotel, he organized the Gunter Hotel Company and, in the face of many difficulties, the hotel was erected and opened, starting the modern building development of the downtown area which has been followed by more than a score of other business buildings." (San Antonio *Express*, July 9, 1938)

Hart's other major projects include construction of the Gunter office building (1910; demolished) and the Travis Building (1923). L.J. Hart began seeking support for "a first class tourist hotel" in 1904, enlisting subscribers from among his friends and business associates. Hart raised money for the hotel for almost two years. He named his enterprise the San Antonio Hotel Company, finalized the stock subscription list in November 1906, and acquired a \$5,000 option on the Mahncke Hotel site.

Subscribers to the hotel project met on March 5, 1907, and pledged an initial capitalization of \$400,000. They also agreed to the site selected by L.J. Hart—the old Vance House/Mahncke Hotel property. On March 9, 1907, Mary Vance Winslow, whose family had owned the site since 1851, sold the property to the San Antonio Hotel Company for \$200,000 (San Antonio *Express*, March 6, 1907; BCDR 265:158). It was reported that the hotel would cost \$800,000 and contain 200 to 250 rooms. The project represented "...a movement for more rapid development of the possibilities of this city as a commercial and tourist center."

Jot Gunter: Cattleman and Real Estate Investor

Investors in the San Antonio Hotel Company included Jot Gunter, a wealthy rancher and cattleman who had moved to San Antonio in 1901. (Gunter's given name of Jonathan only appears on the Federal Census.) Jot Gunter was the son of Lemuel and Rebecca Gunter. He was born in Georgia in November 1845, and came to Texas with his family c. 1860 at the age of 14 (United States Federal Census, 1850 & 1900). The family was enumerated on the 1860 census in Wood County, Texas, where Lemuel Gunter was a farmer.

By 1860, Jot Gunter was a clerk in the dry goods store operated by his brothers, Addison and William. Gunter is said to have attended school in Gilmer, Upshur County, immediately east of Wood County. He joined the Confederate Army in 1861 and served with Dick Dowling's company (Tyler, 3:388). For most of his adult life, Gunter was called "Colonel Gunter," presumably a reflection of his military service.

After the war, Gunter studied law with Oran Roberts, and in 1873, formed a partnership in Sherman with William Munson and John Summerfield (Tyler, 4:889-90). The men purchased and surveyed large tracts of land that included the town site of Denison and the T Anchor Ranch, site of one of the largest cattle drives in Texas history (RTHL 1967; Tyler, 6:189).

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Jot Gunter and William Munson dissolved their partnership in 1883, and Gunter entered the cattle business, purchasing ranch land in Duval and McMullen counties. In 1888, Gunter, his wife, Roxana, and daughter, Eula, moved to Dallas where he reportedly "helped build the first interurban trolley line" and "conducted a pioneer real estate business" (San Antonio *Daily Express*, July 18, 1907; Tyler: 4:889-90; Texas Pioneer, December 1929). When the depression of the early 1890s created economic uncertainty, Gunter returned to Sherman in 1892 and partnered with T.B. Jones in the ranching business. In 1901, the Gunters moved to San Antonio (Grobe and Davis, 3: 1542-43).

Jot Gunter was a wealthy man by the time he moved to San Antonio and purchased a house in the stylish Laurel Heights neighborhood (117 West Craig; contributing structure, Monte Vista NR District, 2000). Gunter's neighbor on West Craig, L.J. Hart, enlisted him as an investor in the San Antonio Hotel Company. The vice president of the company was George M. Maverick who was largely credited with developing Houston Street. When Maverick died in 1913, it was reported that he "...took particular pride in the development of Houston Street, and by many was called the father of Houston Street" (San Antonio Express, September 18, 1913).

Jot Gunter lived for only six years after moving to San Antonio. He reportedly contracted "brain fever" at his ranch in June 1907, and died a month later on July 19, 1907 (San Antonio *Daily Express*, July 18, 1907). His funeral was attended by his personal friend, Governor Tom Campbell, who ordered the flag at the state capitol flown at half-mast.

Building the Gunter Hotel: 1907-09

Only three weeks before Jot Gunter's death, the San Antonio Hotel Company retained the St. Louis firm of Mauran, Russell and Garden to design its still-unnamed facility. The firm was established in 1900 by John Lawrence Mauran (1866-1933), Ernest John Russell (1870-1956) and Ernest Gordon Garden (1871-1924).

Firm founder, John Mauran, was born in Rhode Island and graduated from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1889. While employed by the firm of Shepley, Rutan and Coolidge, Mauran was transferred to Chicago in 1892 to supervise construction of the Chicago Public Library and Art Institute of Chicago. He became a partner in 1893 and later transferred to St. Louis. Mauran left the firm in 1900 to form a partnership with Ernest Russell and Ernest Garden who he had worked with at Shepley, Rutan, Coolidge and Mauran.

Mauran, Russell and Garden became prolific designers of residential and commercial structures in the academic tradition. Following Garden's retirement in 1909, William de Forrest Crowell joined the company in 1911, and it became known as Mauran, Russell and Crowell. When W. Oscar Mullgardt became a partner in 1929, the firm became Mauran, Russell, Crowell and Mullgardt.

Ernest John Russell was likely the partner who established the relationships that led to the firm's Texas commissions. Writing in 1954, W.O. Mullgardt recounted that Russell promised to design a house for a friend after her marriage. She resided in Texas and while there to inspect the completed house, Russell "...was introduced to a prominent citizen who became not only a warm friend, but also a client for whom his firm built several buildings costing several millions of dollars" (St. Louis *Daily Record*, June 1, 1954). The client's identity is not known, but the introduction apparently served Russell's firm well. Other examples of the firm's work in Texas (primarily Mauran, Russell and Crowell) include:

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Brady Building	San Antonio, 1909	NR 1999
Galvez Hotel	Galveston, 1911	NR 1979
DePelchin Faith Home	Houston, 1913	NR 1984
Rice Hotel	Houston, 1925	NR 1978
Blackstone Hotel	Fort Worth, 1929	NR 1984
Butler Brothers' Building	Dallas	

Like other projects by Mauran, Russell and Garden and Mauran Russell and Crowell, the San Antonio Hotel Company's project was built by Westlake Construction Company of St. Louis. The Mahncke Hotel was demolished and excavation begun for the new structure on September 28, 1908 (San Antonio *Daily Express*, November 21, 1908).

Before construction began on the hotel, shareholders met and voted to name their project after their deceased friend and shareholder, Jot Gunter. Gunter's widow, Roxana, remained closely involved in the project, and later constructed the Gunter Building, just west of the hotel.

The 8-story, 350-room Gunter Hotel was built of structural steel, concrete and tile and faced with brick (figure 13). Though a complete inventory has not been compiled, the Gunter Hotel, together with the Brady Building just across Houston Street to the south, are thought to be the oldest, multi-story steel frame structures remaining in downtown San Antonio. The Gunter Building (1910; demolished), which stood west of the hotel across St. Mary's Street, was another notable example of steel construction.

Completion of the Gunter Hotel was celebrated on November 20, 1909, at a grand dinner attended by 382 local leaders who lauded L.J. Hart for his commitment to completing the lengthy project. In the spirit of boosterism that inspired and sustained the 5-year effort, one speaker boasted that "...San Antonio had the world beaten in three hotels, the Gunter, the St. Anthony and the Menger." Another remarked that "San Antonio is sure to be a rival of Los Angeles. The way visitors and tourists are coming and the need of all the hotels we have and more, is proof of that." (San Antonio *Light and Gazette*, November 21, 1909) (figure 14)

The Gunter Hotel: 1909-1924

The San Antonio Hotel Company recruited a staff of seasoned hotel professionals. While the hotel was still under construction, the company signed a 15-year lease with H.H. Franks of Houston. Franks was reported to be "one of the best known and most successful hotel men in the south" with an interest "in a number of hotel ventures throughout the south" (San Antonio *Light and Gazette*, November 21, 1909).

The 1909 Gunter Hotel lease is detailed and provides interesting insights into hotel operations of the period. H.H. Franks was to pay the San Antonio Hotel Company \$50,000 annually for the first five years of the lease, and \$55,000 per year for the remaining ten years. He assumed the responsibility of furnishing the hotel in a manner "suitable and in keeping with the architectural design and finishings of the public spaces on the first and second floors" (BCDR 309:270).

The lease was explicit as it related to the nine commercial spaces. While the Hotel Company retained the right to lease these stores, tenants on either side of the hotel entrance were prohibited from selling cigars, smoking articles, or cold

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drinks. None of the remaining seven spaces could be occupied by tenants selling souvenirs, curios, newspapers or other periodicals, or be occupied by a barber shop, saloon, restaurant, butcher shop or vegetable stand. The Hotel Company promised that its tenants would not "interfere with the peaceful enjoyment and successful operation of the hotel."

Finally, the lease provided a \$1,000 per month reduction in rent if alcohol consumption was prohibited by law. This clause apparently anticipated ratification of the Eighteenth Amendment in 1919.

H.H. Franks' contract was apparently terminated within three years. He was succeeded in February 1912, by Charles A. Gonder, who had managed properties in Chicago and Denver. Gonder resigned after only nine months due to his wife's ill health, and the San Antonio Hotel Company hired Percy Tyrrell as manager in January 1913. Tyrrell, the former manager of the Stratford Hotel in New York, had "come to Texas with a view to going into the hotel business for himself" (San Antonio *Express*, January 1 & 3, 1913; Grobe and Davis, 4:2503-04). He was described as "one of the leading hotel men of the South." Tyrrell served as president of the Hotel Men's Mutual Benefit Association and the Texas State Hotel Association. Tyrrell later became chairman of the company that opened the Robert E. Lee Hotel in San Antonio in 1923 (NR 1996).

Percy Tyrrell marketed the Gunter with the slogan "nearer than anything to everything." (San Antonio *Express*, January 12, December 2, 1913). Advertisements called the hotel "a home for the commercial traveler, tourist and headquarters for Texas people." (figure 15)

The local papers reported that L.J. Hart would "cooperate with Tyrrell in formulating hotel policies" and that "improvements started by Gonder will be pushed to completion as rapidly as possible" (San Antonio *Express*, January 3, 1913). Shortly after Tyrrell's arrival, Atlee B. Ayres was hired to design a free-standing ballroom north of the hotel. Tyrrell, who was familiar with the best hotels in the country, no doubt understood that a ballroom was necessary in order to compete with the St. Anthony which had added a ballroom in 1910. The ballroom, located north of the Gunter, was connected to the main dining room by an open air patio (San Antonio *Express*, April 20, 1913). The new space was completed in time to host local royalty during San Antonio's annual Fiesta celebration.

On October 1, 1913, only six months after the ballroom was completed, a devastating flood caused extensive damage to the Gunter Hotel and other downtown buildings (figure 16). The Gunter's basement filled with water, damaging the hotel's power plant. Quick action by Percy Tyrrell and his staff prevented further damage. "Manager Percy Tyrrell and the hotel staff got busy so that by the time the water came everything removable in the basement was high above the reach of the water." (San Antonio *Light*, December 5, 1913). A second flood on December 2, 1913, also flooded the basement.

Percy Tyrrell managed the Gunter until 1919 when L.J. Hart and the San Antonio Hotel Company once again leased the property to H.H. Franks. Hart and his partners continued to invest in updating and expanding the Gunter. In 1921, a 1-story annex was attached to the north side of the ballroom, extending to the corner of Travis Street and along Travis to the east property line. The annex contained dining facilities and shops. Plans in the collection of HDR (formerly W.E. Simpson Company), indicate that this addition was designed by the firm of Phelps and Dewees. In later years, the annex was modified to include a motor entrance, and most notably, an open air, roof-top area that became one of the city's most popular gathering places.

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Just as the Gunter ballroom was flooded shortly after its completion in 1913, the new annex was devastated by an even larger flood on September 9, 1921, that filled the hotel lobby to the mezzanine level. Stories still abound of people diving and swimming in the Gunter lobby in the floor's aftermath. The San Antonio Hotel Company made repairs quickly and continued to operate the Gunter for another three years.

The Baker Hotel Company Era: 1924-1952

Theodore Brasher Baker: The Leading Host of Texas

No indication has been found as to why the San Antonio Hotel Company decided to sell the Gunter Hotel in 1924. L.J. Hart and his investors had built the hotel with the goal of developing San Antonio's visitor and tourist business. By 1924, the city was booming and new tall buildings were being erected throughout the downtown area (figure 12). Perhaps the investors felt they had achieved their goals. Whatever their motivation, Hart and his partners sold the Gunter to the Baker Hotel Company on October 1, 1924, for \$1,400,000 (BCDR 787:399).

The Baker Hotel Company had owned or leased hotel properties in San Antonio since 1914 when T.B. Baker visited the city and invested in the St. Anthony Hotel. Theodore Brasher (T.B.) Baker (1875-1972) was the youngest of five children born to William A. and Lourena Baker, (Federal Census, various years). William Baker was farmer in Washington County, Iowa, but moved his family to Kansas by the time T.B. Baker was four (1880 Federal Census). William Baker and T.B. Baker leased the Greenwood Hotel in Eureka, Kansas in 1899, purchased it in 1901, and sold it in 1907. (The Greenwood was nominated to the National Register in 2005). T.B. Baker also leased and/or owned hotels in Kingfisher, Oklahoma, and Emporia and Fort Scott, Kansas. In 1910, he acquired the Connor Hotel in Joplin, Missouri (E-mail correspondence, Perkins to Pfeiffer, May 31, 2006; Dallas *Morning News*, October 11, 1925).

T.B. Baker came to San Antonio in 1914. (One source indicates that he was vacationing in the city.) While in San Antonio, Baker organized the Baker Hotel Company and leased the St. Anthony Hotel, the city's premier lodging facility (Grobe and Davis, 4:2503; Dallas *Morning News*, October 11, 1925). Baker's involvement with the St. Anthony marked the beginning of his long career in the Texas hotel business. By 1925, he was described in the Dallas *Morning News* as "the leading host of Texas" and was said to have attained "the position as one of the largest individual owners and operators of hotels in the United States." (Dallas *Morning News*, October 11, 1925)

When T.B. Baker purchased the Gunter Hotel in 1924, downtown San Antonio was in the midst of a robust building boom that preceded the Depression. Downtown was also enjoying the added benefits of long-awaited flood control projects. In the wake of the devastating floods of 1913 and 1921, the city constructed Olmos dam (1926) above the city and a flood bypass channel (1928) below Commerce Street. These projects increased protection for downtown San Antonio and encouraged investment.

The boom affected both residential and commercial sectors, including hotels. In early 1926, in addition to the Gunter project, the 12-story Plaza Hotel was under construction and an addition to the St. Anthony was announced (though it was not built until 1935). The 12-story Blue Bonnet Hotel was completed in 1929 (Dallas *Morning News*, March 1, 1926). San Antonio's hotel business was clearly thriving.

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By 1930, in addition to his other holdings, T.B. Baker controlled San Antonio's three leading hotels—the Gunter, Menger and St. Anthony. He had also leased the newly constructed Aurora Apartment Hotel north of downtown and purchased Fernridge, the 103-acre estate built by George W. Brackenridge (BCDR 1233:125; Dallas *Morning News*, August 12, 1930, December 17, 1930).

In addition to the Gunter, Baker's properties, their locations, and dates of lease or acquisition (if known) are listed below.

St. Anthony Hotel	San Antonio	1914	NR 1986
Menger Hotel	San Antonio	1915	NR 1977 (Alamo Plaza NR District)
Hotel Texas	Fort Worth	1921	NR 1979
Stephen F. Austin	Austin	1923	NR 1978 (Congress Avenue HD)
Baker Hotel	Dallas	1925	demolished
Baker Hotel	Mineral Wells	1927	NR 1982
Edson Hotel	Beaumont	1929	standing
Galvez Hotel	Galveston	1929	NR 1979
Thomas Jefferson Hotel	Birmingham	1929	standing
R.S. Sterling Hotel	Houston	1929	
Goodhue Hotel	Port Arthur	1929	demolished
Davidson Hotel	Amarillo	1929	
San Luis Hotel	Galveston	1929	
Aurora Apartment Hotel	San Antonio	1930	standing
Detroit-Leland	Detroit	1931	

(Dallas *Morning News*, June 22, 1928; December 17, 1930; Grobe and Davis, 4:2503).

T.B. Baker, who never married, involved other family members in his hotel enterprises. Fenton J. Baker, son of T.B.'s brother, William, became manager, and later, owner, of the Baker Hotel in Dallas. Earl M. Baker, son of T.B.'s brother, Martin, managed, and later owned, both the Gunter and the Baker Hotel in Mineral Wells (<http://users3.ev1.net/~bakerhotel/history.html>). T.B.'s sister, Myla, lived at both the Gunter and Baker in Mineral Wells. She organized charity events and traveled to Europe to buy furnishings for Baker hotels.

The 1926 Addition

T.B. Baker made plans to expand and remodel the Gunter Hotel shortly after purchasing the property. In April, 1925, he announced that he would invest \$1,000,000 in the hotel. Baker selected English-born architect, Herbert S. Green (1874-1957), to design the project and W.E. Simpson Company as the structural engineering firm.

It is planned to put three stories and a roof garden on the present building and generally remodel the structure into one of the largest and finest hostelrys in the south" (San Antonio *Light*, April 9, 1925).

The 3-story addition added 200 rooms to the hotel. It was constructed of steel rather than reinforced concrete with floors of gypsum block on reinforced steel mesh. These materials, which were both strong and light, were relatively new at the

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time the addition was constructed (San Antonio *Express*, March 28, 1926). It is possible that the original hotel structure was not designed to accommodate three additional stories and that light materials were used out of necessity.

Baker's plans also included the foundation for an 8-10 story addition at the corner of Travis and St. Mary's streets (presumably on the site of the annex). This ambitious plan was never realized.

T.B. Baker, who lived in a suite at the northwest corner of the 11th floor, took great interest in his new property. He personally designed the layout for the hotel lobby by constructing a full-sized model in a wagon yard south of Military Plaza (San Antonio *Light*, June 29, 1925). The model, built of old lumber and cheesecloth, allowed Baker to plan and arrange the new arcade, booths, stores and colonnades (figure 17).

The redesigned lobby, double the size of the old one, included an arcade connecting Houston and Travis Streets and two entrances from the St. Mary's Street side of the building. Twenty-eight retail spaces were built to open onto Houston, St. Mary's and Travis Streets and into the lobby. The coffee shop was relocated (and enlarged) on the Houston Street side of the lobby and the dining room was placed on the north end of the lobby, extending into the annex. A cafeteria was added in the basement. The barber shop, baths and clubrooms were also located in the basement.

A mezzanine was added within the tall lobby space, creating a second floor, and the hotel's old second floor (now the third floor) was converted from guest rooms into a convention floor "one of the greatest civic assets of the city" (San Antonio *Light*, June 28, 1925). There was a 78' X 120' "convention hall," with stage and adjoining wings that could seat 1,250 persons. Plans also called for a special club room for army officers. The convention facility and club room for officers helped shape the reputation of the Gunter Hotel in the coming years.

Finally, Herbert Green designed a promenade around the entire building that became a signature feature of the hotel. The iron railing was decorated with medallions featuring the initial "B." The promenade opened into the mezzanine which contained a large lounge and private banquet rooms.

Herbert Stanley Green

Herbert Green began his architectural career in London, but left there at the turn-of-the-century to take a job with Alfred Giles, the English architect who had come to Texas in 1873 (Jutson:2). He worked as Giles' chief draftsman in Monterrey, Mexico, from c. 1900 to 1905, and then transferred to the San Antonio office (Jutson:131).

Green's career in San Antonio spanned some 65 years (San Antonio *Light*, April 9, 1926; San Antonio *Express*, October 10, 1957; Herbert S. Green, application for A.I.A. membership). He established his own practice in 1920, was elected to membership in the Texas Chapter of the American Institute of Architects in 1921, and served as chairman of the organizing group of the West Texas Chapter of the AIA in 1924. (AIA Archives, Washington D.C.) While the majority of Herbert Green's work in Texas is located in San Antonio, it is also found in Marlin, Laredo, San Diego and Corpus Christi. Notable examples of Green's work in San Antonio include:

- Robert E. Lee Hotel (NR 1996)
- numerous residences in the Monte Vista neighborhood (NR 1998)
- structures for the San Antonio Machine and Supply Company (Southern Pacific Depot NR District 1979)
- Central Fire and Police Station (Alamo Plaza NR District 1977)

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- San Antonio Express-News Building (1929)
- San Antonio Public Library Building (1930)

Herbert Green continued to practice architecture throughout the 1930s and 1940s. He died in 1951 at the age of 87. At the time, he was working as a draftsman in the office of Leo M.J. Dielmann.

The Gunter: The Center of Everything

Percy Tyrrell's advertisement of the Gunter as "nearer to anything than everything," and a later slogan, "the Gunter: the center of everything," were not greatly exaggerated. While the St. Anthony Hotel was considered grander and more elegant, the Gunter established its niche as a meeting place for local clubs and a destination for travelers including cattlemen and conventioners. A diverse array of visitors and events melded together to create the Gunter's distinct identity.

The Gunter's first documented attempt to attract convention visitors occurred in 1912 when the San Antonio Hotel Company invited members of the National Association of Advertising Men to visit following a meeting in Dallas (San Antonio *Light*, October 10, 1954). It was reported that 1,387 visitors accepted the invitation.

By 1913, the local newspaper reported, "The Gunter Hotel has long been known as one of the political centers of the state. In this building many of the biggest political conferences in the State's history have been held." The 1921 annex and guest rooms, meeting rooms and ballroom constructed in 1926, expanded the hotel's capacity to attract visitors from throughout the state and beyond. By c. 1935, the Gunter was being marketed as "the convention headquarters of the South" (undated promotional brochure).

The hotel today remains a destination for regional and national meetings.

From the 1930s through 1970s, numerous civic and professional organizations maintained offices at the Gunter. These included the Lions Club of San Antonio, the Kiwanis Club, the Texas Automobile Dealers Association, the Texas Land and Cattle Company, and the Texas Live Stock Marketing Association. Both Braniff Airways and American Airlines maintained offices at the Gunter as early as 1936 (figure 18). The San Antonio Club, a private dining club, was located at the Gunter before moving to the Alamo National Bank building in about 1976(NR 2006).

A Gathering Place for Cattlemen

Ranching had been important to the San Antonio economy since Spanish colonial times. After the railroad arrived in 1877, the city became a shipping point for cattle from throughout South Texas, and the Union Stock Yard was established in 1889. San Antonio became a center for ranchers and cattle raisers who traveled to the city for both business and pleasure.

After its completion in 1909, the Gunter became a regular gathering place for cattlemen. Buck Pyle, a rancher who was a permanent resident of the Gunter from 1952 to 1982, described the hotel. "It was a home away from home for ranchers. That was what we all thought" (San Antonio *Express*, June 22, 1982).

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This reputation attracted a variety of groups and visitors. The Old Time Trail Drivers Association (later called the Old Trail Drivers Association), organized in 1915, held its second annual meeting in 1917 at the Gunter Hotel. The Association established its headquarters in San Antonio, and the Gunter continued to be the site of the annual meeting for many years (figure 19).

The Gunter attracted the likes of Roy Rogers, Will Rogers and John Wayne, who headquartered here while filming "The Alamo." During the annual stock show and rodeo, it was not uncommon to see livestock displayed in the Gunter Hotel lobby (figure 20).

Headquarters of the Old Spanish Trail

In 1919, the Gunter was selected as national headquarters for the Old Spanish Trail Association, an organization formed to promote construction of a paved automobile highway across the southern United States. Harral B. Ayres, was recruited by the local Chamber of Commerce to promote the highway and became the first field director of the group's San Antonio division. Ayres, who became the association's managing director, maintained his office at the Gunter for ten years. The successful completion of the Old Spanish Trail highway was celebrated with a cross-country motorcade from Florida to California on October 2-14, 1929. When the 35-car motorcade passed through San Antonio on October 7, 1929, the Chamber of Commerce hosted a gala banquet at the Gunter Hotel (San Antonio *Express*, October 8, 1929).

A Military and Financial Center

San Antonio had been both a center of military activity and trade and commerce since its earliest days as a Spanish outpost. Soon after the Gunter opened, the United States prepared to enter World War I, bringing an influx of both enlisted men and officers the city. Many of these individuals remained in San Antonio following the war and, like the population at large, began purchasing automobiles in growing numbers.

In 1922, 25 Army officers met at the Gunter Hotel to discuss the difficulties they faced securing automobile insurance due to frequent moves. The group resolved to form a "reciprocal interinsurance exchange" whose member-owners would insure each other. The United States Army Automobile Association was renamed United Services Automobile Association (USAA) after Marine and Naval officers were admitted in 1924. Still headquartered in San Antonio, USAA, which now offers life and homeowners' insurance, has grown to become one of the nation's largest insurers (Tyler, 6:615-16). The company's founding at the Gunter is recognized by a plaque in the hotel lobby.

In addition to its role in the founding of USAA, the Gunter was a traditional gathering place for stock traders. Bache and Company was noted for its lighted display of market prices that was visible from St. Mary's Street. Traders from other nearby firms gathered in the Gunter's coffee shop and dining room. In recognition of its strong identity with the stock market, the Gunter opened the Bull and Bear Club in 1966 (San Antonio *Light*, May 11, 1966).

The Gunter Roof

The Gunter's grand ballroom was used both for meetings and dinner dances featuring orchestras and jazz bands. The greatest attraction, however, was the open air Japanese roof garden on top of the Gunter annex (figures 3 & 21). Locals simply called it the "Gunter roof." During the summer season, the Gunter offered dinner and dancing every night except

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Sunday. During the summer of 1926, Alphonso Trent's orchestra played "syncopatin', palpitatin', agitatin'" tunes that were broadcast over WOAI, one of the country's early broadcasting stations (*Southwest Texans*, 92-93; *San Antonio Express*, June 10, 1926). From c. 1934 until 1948, KTSA radio maintained its offices and broadcast studio at the Gunter. The Gunter roof remained an attraction until the late 1940s.

Celebrities: From Calvin Coolidge to Mae West

Like other San Antonio hotels of the era, the Gunter hosted a diverse array of political, sports and show business personalities. While many of these visitors might have stayed at any of the city's better hotels, others were drawn to the Gunter's less formal atmosphere.

Texas governors including James and Ma Ferguson and Ross Sterling were hotel guests. Banquets honored the likes of General John Pershing, Calvin Coolidge and Douglas "Wrong Way" Corrigan. President Harry Truman spent a night on the 12th floor and Congressman Sam Rayburn met with local business leaders to discuss Depression recovery programs. First Ladies Nancy Reagan and Lady Bird Johnson were guests.

Former heavy weight champion, Gene Tunney, spoke to local liquor dealers as chairman of the American Distilling Company, and Mae West, Joe Dimaggio and Jane Withers spent time here. The Circus Fans of America held an annual meeting at the hotel, and circus star, Tom Mix, registered at the Gunter while mounted on his horse.

Robert Johnson (1911-1938)

Blues' aficionados might argue that a single event eclipses all of the noteworthy civic and patriotic endeavors and famous individuals associated with the Gunter's long history: the first recording sessions of Robert Johnson. Details on Robert Johnson's early life are sketchy. He was probably born on May 8, 1911, near Hazelhurst, Miss, the eleventh child of Julia Major Dodds. By about 1920, he lived with his mother and her new husband Dusty Willis in the vicinity of Robinsonville and Tunica, Mississippi. As a teenager, Johnson played a second-hand guitar, and in his early twenties, Johnson began to play at popular juke joints around southern Mississippi. Through the 1930s, Johnson traveled throughout the United States, often with fellow musician Johnny Shines, playing wherever he could find a crowd. He was especially known for incorporating a wide range of popular music - ranging from the hits of crooners such as Bing Crosby to Hollywood cowboy songs, along with current blues numbers - into his repertoire. By the mid-1930s, Johnson began adapting many popular musical genres into original signature pieces, and became a popular performer in the mid-south.

In 1936, Johnson met with H.C Speir, a furniture, photograph, and record retailer in Jackson, Miss., who recommended Johnson to Ernie Oertle, an agent for the American Record Company (or ARC, Brunswick Record's chain-store budget line of recordings). The Brunswick Record Company had opened a recording studio at the Gunter Hotel in 1932, and in December of that year, recorded native Mexican tunes (*San Antonio Light*, December 1, 1932) (figure 22). In 1936, producer Don Law booked two adjoining rooms in the Gunter, with the recording equipment in one and the artist in the other, with the running cables in between. Beginning on November 10, 1936, and continuing for several weeks, the team ran a marathon series of recording sessions. On November 11, 1936, the *San Antonio Light* carried a photograph of Brunswick's chief engineer, Vincent Liebler, and head recorder, Ralph Perez, inspecting a "new thin type of master record being used for recordings here for the first time in the United States" (*San Antonio Light*, November 11, 1936). On November 23, the *Light* reported: "[The] Brunswick recording crew here figures it set a record when it got under the wire

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with 105 recordings made in the first three days of its San Antonio setup” (San Antonio *Light*, November 23, 1936). Bands such as W. Lee (Pappy) O'Daniel and his Hillbilly Boys, Al Dexter, and Hermanas Barraza cut finished masters at the all-day sessions.

The brief article includes no mention of Robert Johnson, the only blues performer to record at the Gunter during the November 1936 sessions. On Monday, November 23, Johnson entered a studio for the first time to record eight songs: *Kindhearted Woman Blues*, *I Believe I'll Dust My Broom*, *Sweet Home Chicago*, *Ramblin' on My Mind*, *When You Got a Good Friend*, *Come on in My Kitchen*, *Terraplane Blues*, and *Phonograph Blues*. Later that night, Johnson was arrested downtown on vagrancy charges, and Law bailed him out. On Thanksgiving Day, Johnson returned to the studio, to record one song: *32:20 Blues*. He finished his sessions at the Gunter on Friday, November 27, recording seven songs: *They're Red Hot*, *Dead Shrimp Blues*, *Cross Road Blues*, *Walkin' Blues*, *Last Fair Deal Gone Down*, *Preachin' Blues (Up Jumped the Devil)*, and *If I Had Possession Over Judgment Day*. Brunswick released eleven Robert Johnson 78 rpm records on the Vocalion label during Johnson's lifetime (and one posthumously). His first release, "Terraplane Blues" was his most popular, selling between 3,000 and 4,000 copies. Like most rural recording artists, Johnson was probably paid one lump sum – about 200 dollars - and never received royalties. Law recorded Robert Johnson again in Dallas in June 1937, at the Brunswick Studios at 508 Park Avenue. Johnson continued his life as traveling musician, but in August 1938, he was reportedly poisoned by a jealous husband while playing a gig in Greenwood, Mississippi (Dallas *Morning News*, March 2, 2006). He died August 16, 1938; the location of his grave is disputed, with markers at cemeteries in Quito and Morgan City, Mississippi.

Law's recordings were the only ones ever made of Johnson's now legendary music. The Gunter sessions represent a major part of this small, and now-famous body of work. Johnson did not achieve anything close to stardom in his lifetime, and had limited influence on blues musicians in the two decades following his death. It was not until 1961, when his Vocalion sides were reissued on the LP *King of the Delta Blues Singers*, that Johnson and his music came to the attention of a wider audience of (mostly) white blues aficionados. This release popularized Johnson's music and influenced numerous British performers, including the Rolling Stones, Eric Clapton, and Led Zeppelin. Clapton later wrote "I have never found anything more deeply soulful than Robert Johnson. His music remains the most powerful cry that I think you can find in the human voice." ("Discovering Robert Johnson," in *Robert Johnson: The Complete Recordings*, liner notes).

The End of the Baker Era

T.B. Baker had borrowed heavily to finance his many hotel investments. On March 9, 1926, when he transferred the Gunter to the Gunter Hotel Company, outstanding notes totaled \$1,300,000 (BCDR 871:266). The Depression compounded Baker's financial problems and he was never able to pay his debt on the Gunter. (He experienced similar problems with other hotel properties, notably the Baker Hotel in Mineral Wells.) After Baker failed to meet extended deadlines for note payments, the Gunter was conveyed to Massachusetts Mutual Life Insurance Company (BCDR 1678:601-02). The company then sold the Gunter to T.B. Baker's nephew, Earl Baker (Dallas *Morning News*, January 14, 1939).

Like his uncle, Earl Maynard Baker (1894-1967) was a veteran hotel operator. Eighteen years apart in age, the T.B. and Earl became partners in 1914 with the founding of the Baker Hotel Company and leasing of the St. Anthony Hotel (Dallas *Morning News*, December 4, 1967). Earl's cousin, Fenton J. Baker, was vice president and general manager of the

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company in the late 1920s (Dallas *Morning News*, June 22, 1928). Both Earl and Fenton managed hotels for their uncle, and when T.B. began to experience financial difficulties in the early 1920s, they assumed ownership of the Gunter and Baker hotels in Mineral Wells and Dallas. Though T.B. Baker did not die until 1972 as the age of 96, he passed control of the Baker Hotel Company to Earl in 1952.

The Gunter- Decline and Renovation: 1952-1980

Earl Baker sold the Gunter in 1952 shortly after taking over the hotel company. The new owners were Dallas investors, Neely Landrum and John Mills. During Landrum and Mills' 26-year ownership, the Gunter, and downtown generally, began to decline. By the late 1960s, long-time downtown retailers had established suburban locations and new hotels built for San Antonio's world's fair, HemisFair '68, competed with the Gunter, St. Anthony and Menger.

Landrum and Mills made only limited improvements. In 1966, the lobby was remodeled and the Bull and Bear Club opened to cater to nearby brokerage firms (San Antonio *Light*, May 11, 1966).

It was announced in March 1977, that a consortium of downtown businessmen planned to purchase the Gunter and remodel it in "Western style," but the plan did not materialize (San Antonio *Light*, March 29, 1977). The following year, the local press reported that Mills and Landrum were considering an \$8 million renovation of the Gunter including a 300-400 car parking garage (San Antonio *Light*, May 24, 1978). Instead, in April 1979, the Gunter Hotel was sold to a Swiss investment firm, the Seiterle Group, for approximately \$2 million. The Gunter was described as "the only hotel on the main downtown business street and its presence helped make the Houston/St. Mary's Street intersection become regarded as the center of the city" (San Antonio *Light*, April 1 & 11, 1979).

At the time the Seiterle Group purchased the Gunter, it was estimated that only 375 of the hotel's 550 rooms were rentable. Some rooms had been damaged in three recent fires and others were badly in need of renovation. The new owners initially announced that they would spend between \$4 and 6 million to remodel the hotel (San Antonio *Light*, October 16, 1978; November 29, 1979). One later account placed the figure at \$25 million and another reported that the owners had executed a \$19.5 million note in late 1983 (San Antonio *Express-News*, October 20, 1984; February 9, 1988).

The remodeling plans for the Gunter were ambitious, including construction of a 12-story tower at the corner of St. Mary's and Travis Streets on the site of the 1921 annex. The tower was never built, however, and a 2-story, steel frame parking deck and swimming pool replaced the annex. The hotel was renovated and the number of rooms reduced from 450 to 330. The architect for the renovation was Robert V. Buck and the parking structure was designed by Gustav Heye. The 1980 remodeling necessitated the eviction of long-term Gunter tenants including six permanent residents, Alterman's Men's Store, located in the hotel since 1913, Shaw's Jewelers, the Foto Center, and several airline and tourist agencies.

In January 1984, the Seiterle Group sold a 25% interest in the Gunter to the Lincoln Hotel Group, but repurchased it shortly before the hotel became affiliated with the Radisson Hotel Corporation in April 1986. The hotel became known as the Radisson Gunter. When the Seiterle Group defaulted on its \$19.5 million note in early 1988, the Mutual Benefit Life Insurance Company threatened foreclosure (San Antonio *Express-News*, February 9, 1988). To avoid foreclosure, Seiterle filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy on February 29, 1988 (San Antonio *Express-News*, November 8, 1988). A reorganization plan allowed the Gunter to remain open under the management of the Sheraton Corporation which invested approximately \$1.5 million in improvements, primarily for fire safety systems and amenities (San Antonio *Light*, July 21, 1989).

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The Seiterle Group retained ownership until 1996 when the Gunter was sold to the Camberley Hotel Company of Atlanta and La Salle Partners, Limited, of Chicago (BCDR 6770:1184). The hotel operated as the Camberley Gunter until April 1999, when it was sold to Houston Street Hotel Partners of New York (BCDR 7920:1879). The new owners entered into an operating agreement with Host Mark Hospitality Group of Illinois (San Antonio *Express-News*, April 15, 1999).

Today, the Gunter is owned by Gunter Hotel Ventures LP and is operated by American Property Management Corporation under a license issued by the Sheraton Corporation. An \$8 million renovation of Sheraton Gunter Hotel is scheduled for completion in the summer of 2006. The Gunter Hotel has functioned continuously since its opening in 1909, and though it has been remodeled many times during its 97-year history, retains a high degree of integrity. The Gunter Hotel is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A (local level) in the areas of Commerce and the Performing Arts because of its 97-year history as a leading San Antonio hotel and as the site where Robert Johnson made some of his rare and most famous recordings. The building is also eligible for the National Register under Criterion C (local level) in the area of architecture as an intact example of early structural steel construction and a representative example of the work of Mauran, Russell and Garden. The period of significance extends from 1909 to 1956.

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10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF PROPERTY: 1.181 acres

UTM REFERENCES	<u>Zone</u>	<u>Easting</u>	<u>Northing</u>
	14	549363	3255367

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION: The site is comprised of two tracts that form the western portion of NCB 407, Block 17. The tracts are bounded by Travis Street on the north, East Houston on the south, Peacock Alley and Lot 7, NCB 407 on the east, and North St. Mary's Street on the west. Tract 1 consists of .735 acres and includes the hotel and the vehicular/pedestrian easement that separates the hotel and parking garage. This tract encompasses Lots 1 and 3 and parts of lots 2,4,5 and 6, NCB 407, Block 17. Tract 2, the parking garage site, comprises .446 acres and includes the north 125.6 feet of Lots 2,4 and 6, NCB 407, Block 17.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION: Nomination includes all property historically associated with the building

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME/TITLE: Maria Watson Pfeiffer, with assistance from Gregory Smith, National Register Coordinator

ORGANIZATION: ReSearch

DATE: June 26, 2006

STREET & NUMBER: 213 Washington St.

TELEPHONE: (210) 222-1586

CITY OR TOWN: San Antonio

STATE: Texas

ZIP CODE: 78204-1336

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

CONTINUATION SHEETS

MAPS

PHOTOGRAPHS (see continuation sheet Photo-59)

ADDITIONAL ITEMS (see continuation sheets Figure34 through Figure-58)

PROPERTY OWNER

NAME: Gunter Hotel Ventures LP (Debbie Gonzalez)

STREET & NUMBER: 205 E. Houston

TELEPHONE: (210) 554-1730

CITY OR TOWN: San Antonio

STATE: Texas

ZIP CODE: 78205

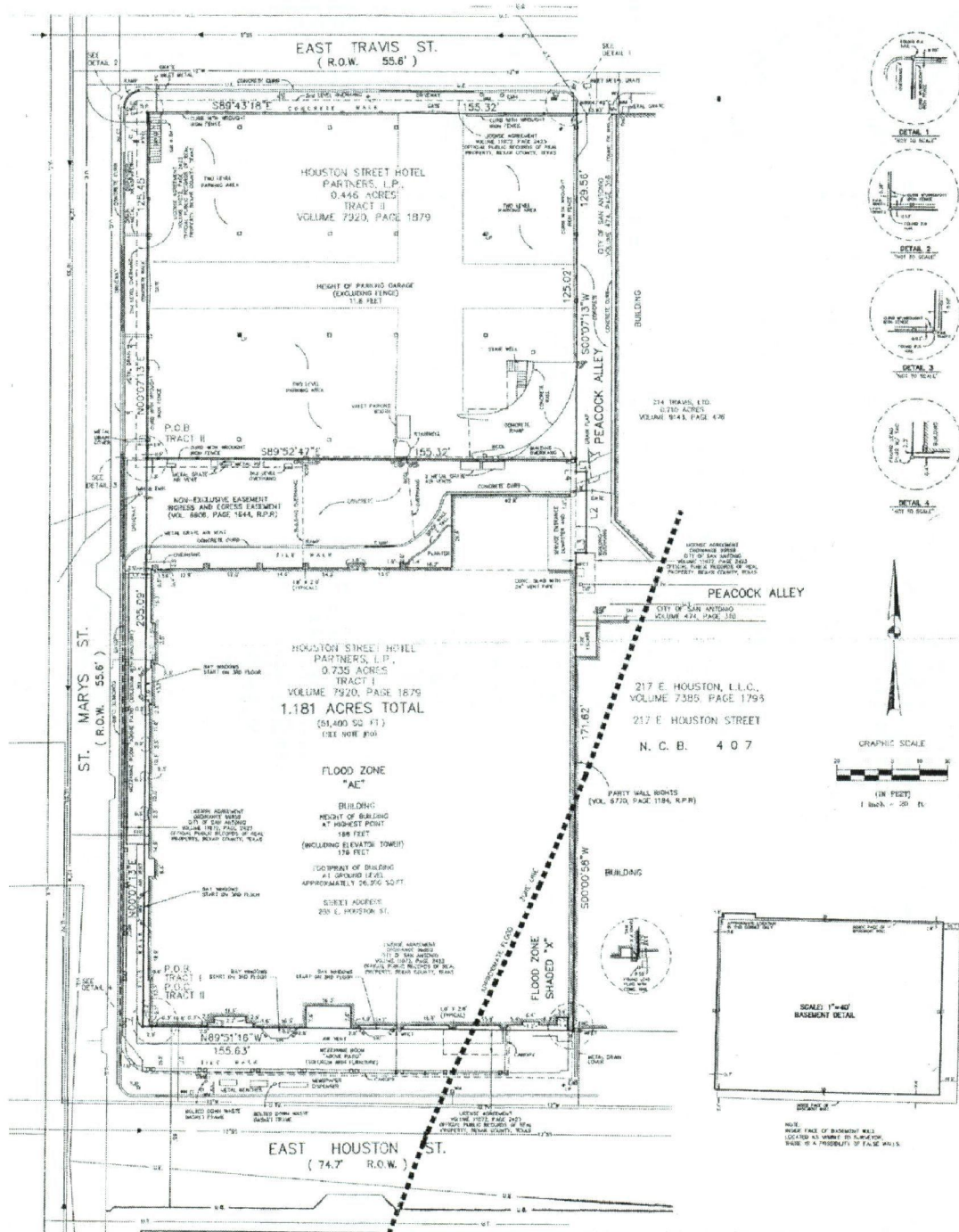
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FIGURE 1. Gunter Hotel property survey, July 2005



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FIGURE 2. Gunter Hotel, c. 1909, *Picturesque San Antonio*, p. 20



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FIGURE 3. Gunter Hotel, c. 1927-30
San Antonio *Express-News* Collection, Institute of Texan Cultures, 069-8317



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FIGURE 4. Gunter Hotel, c. 1980
Institute of Texan Cultures, Z-980-28905



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FIGURE 5. Gunter Hotel
City of Destiny and of Your Destination (1923), p. 52



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FIGURE 6. Houston Street looking east (Gunter Hotel on left), c. 1935
Photograph by Zintgraff
Collection of Maria Watson Pfeiffer



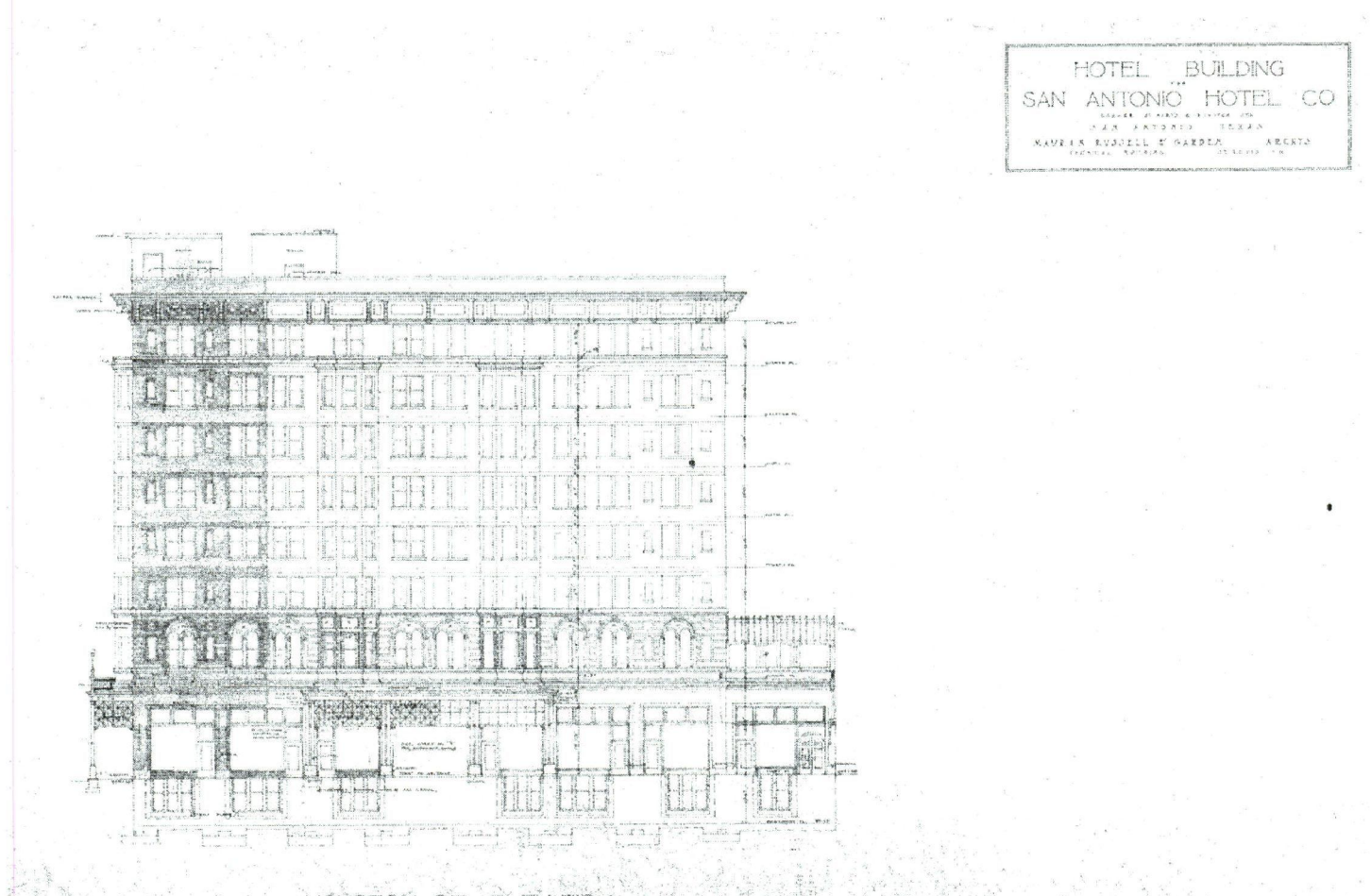
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FIGURE 7. Gunter Hotel, Houston Street elevation
Mauran, Russell and Garden, 1909
Kuhlmann Collection, Missouri Historical Society



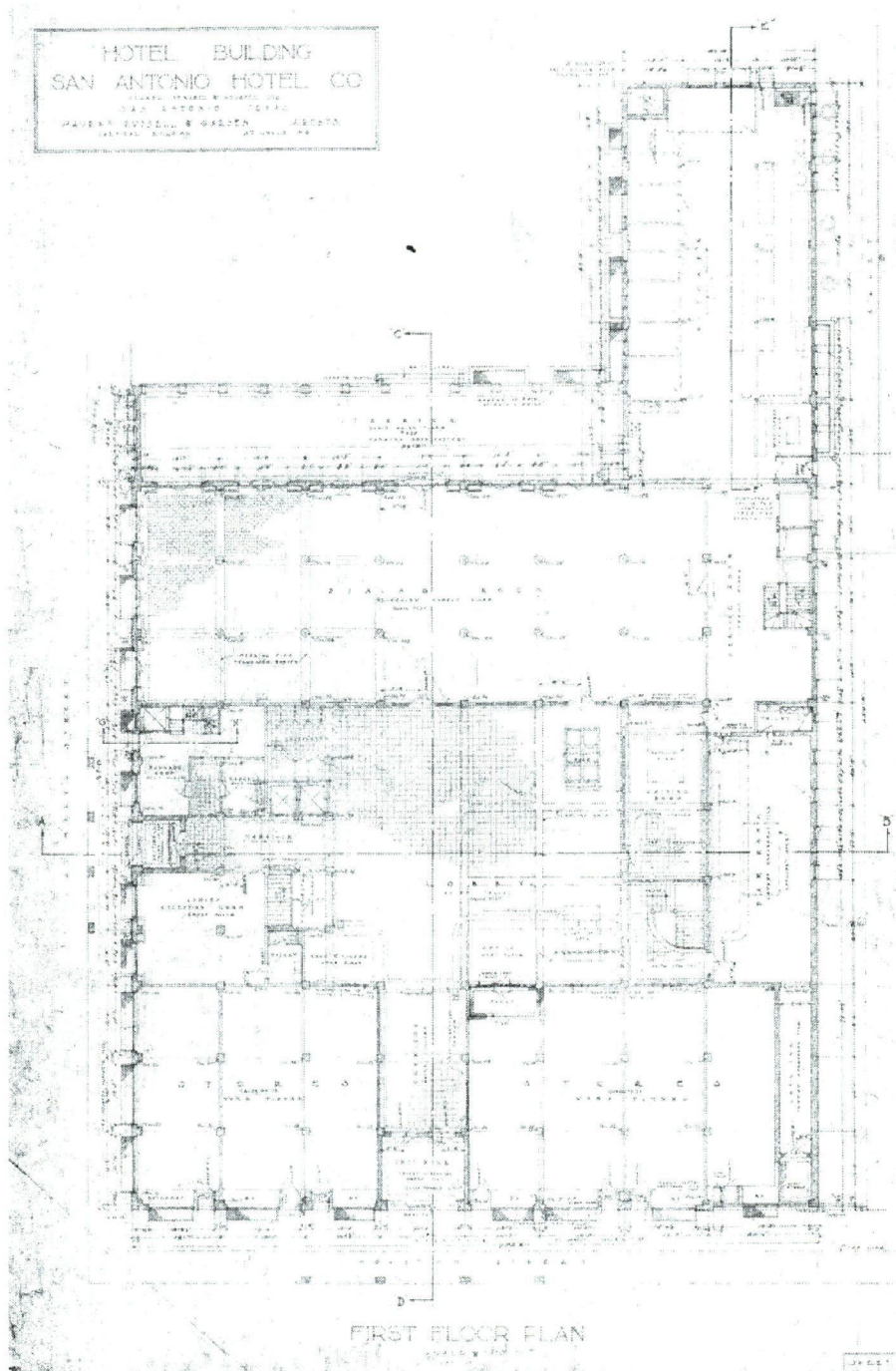
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FIGURE 8. Gunter Hotel, first floor plan
Mauran, Russell and Garden, 1909, Kuhlmann Collection, Missouri Historical Society



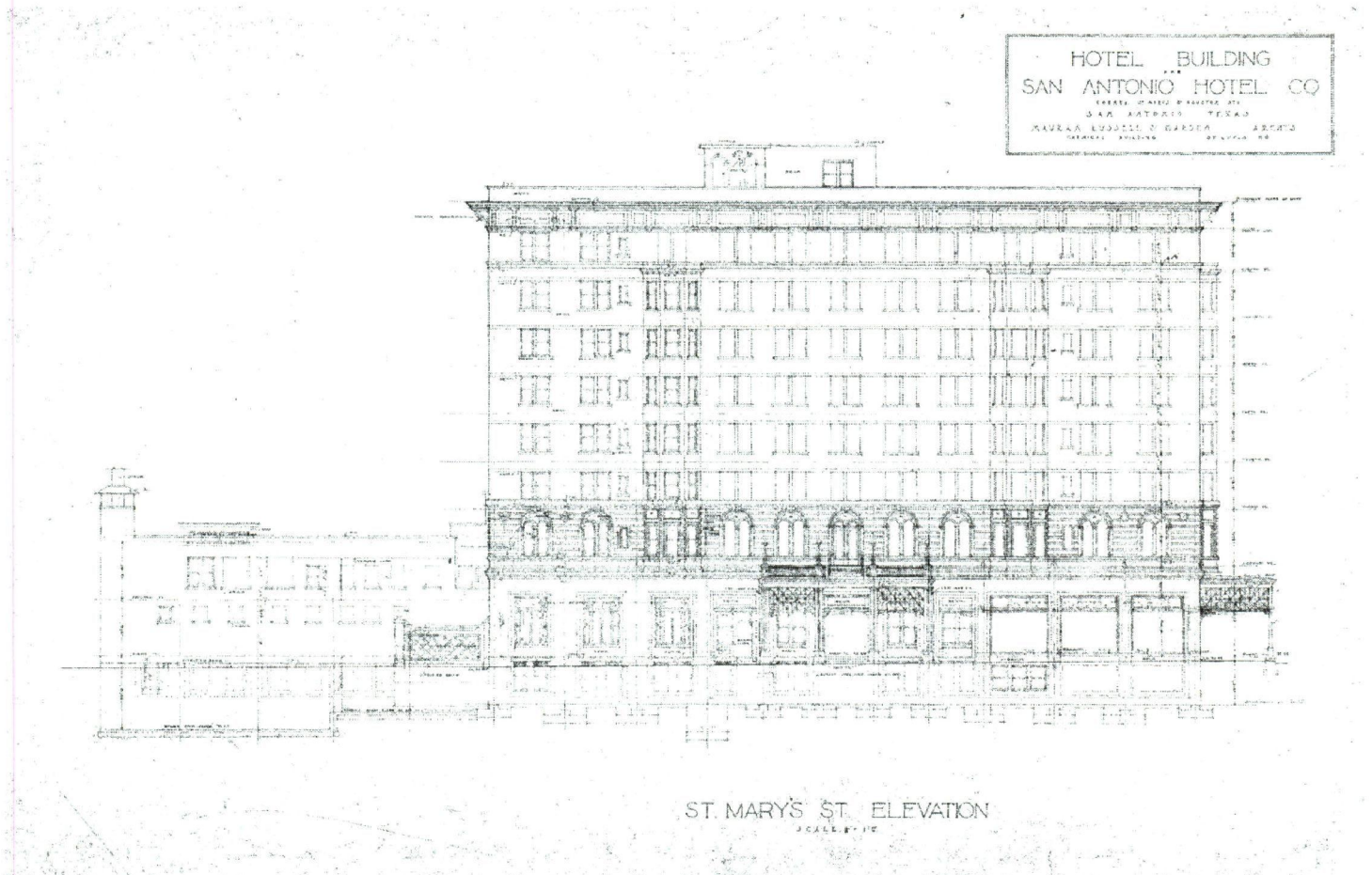
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FIGURE 9. Gunter Hotel, St. Mary's Street elevation
Mauran, Russell and Garden, 1909
Kuhlmann Collection, Missouri Historical Society



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FIGURE 10. Gunter Hotel lobby, c. 1936
Institute of Texan Cultures, 092-0148



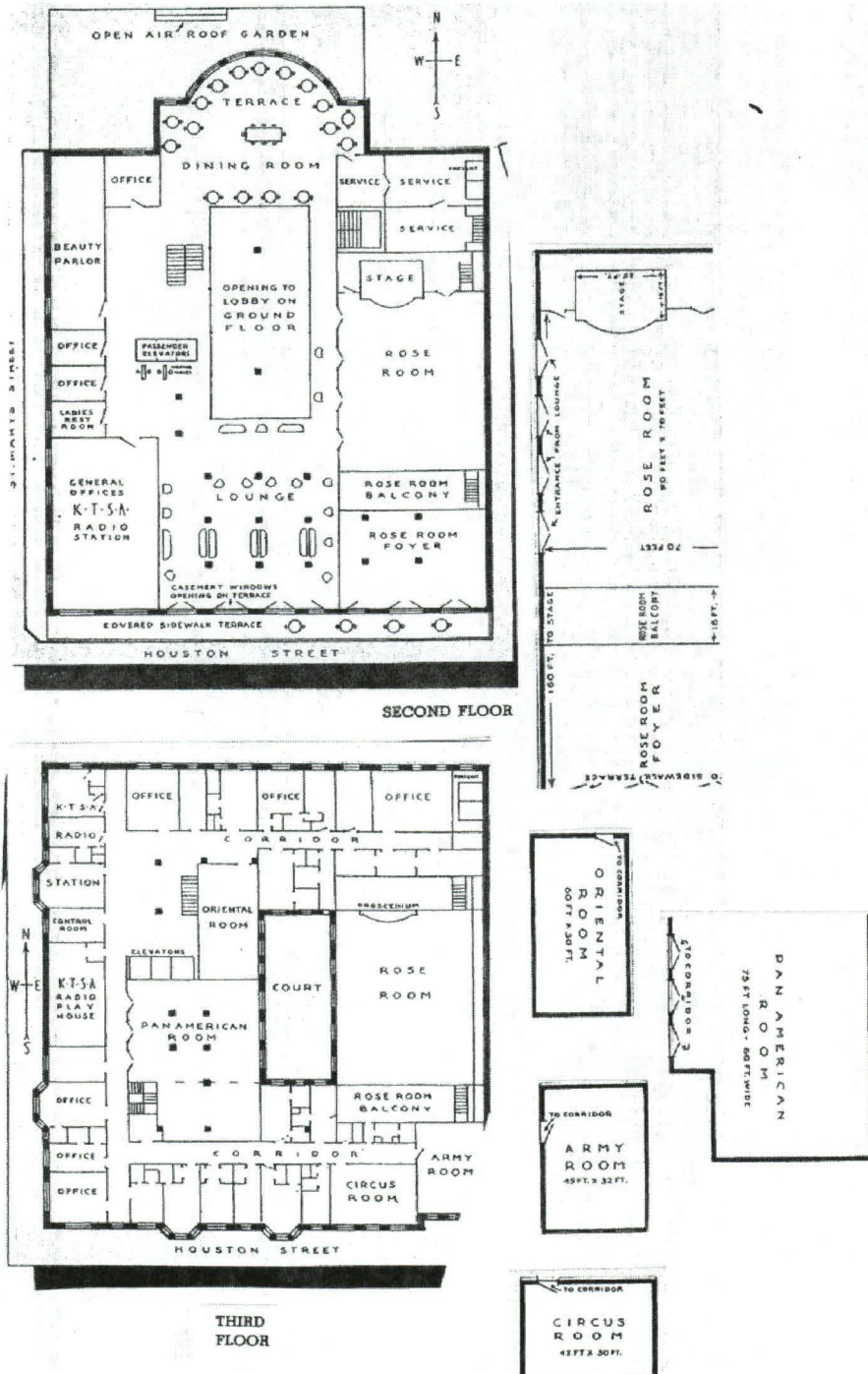
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Gunter Hotel
San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

Section FIGURE Page 44

FIGURE 11. Gunter Hotel, floorplan c. 1940, Gunter Hotel promotional brochure



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National Park Service

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Section FIGURE Page 45

Gunter Hotel
San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

FIGURE 12. San Antonio looking northeast, 1927, Gunter Hotel in center
Institute of Texan Cultures, 083-1044



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National Park Service

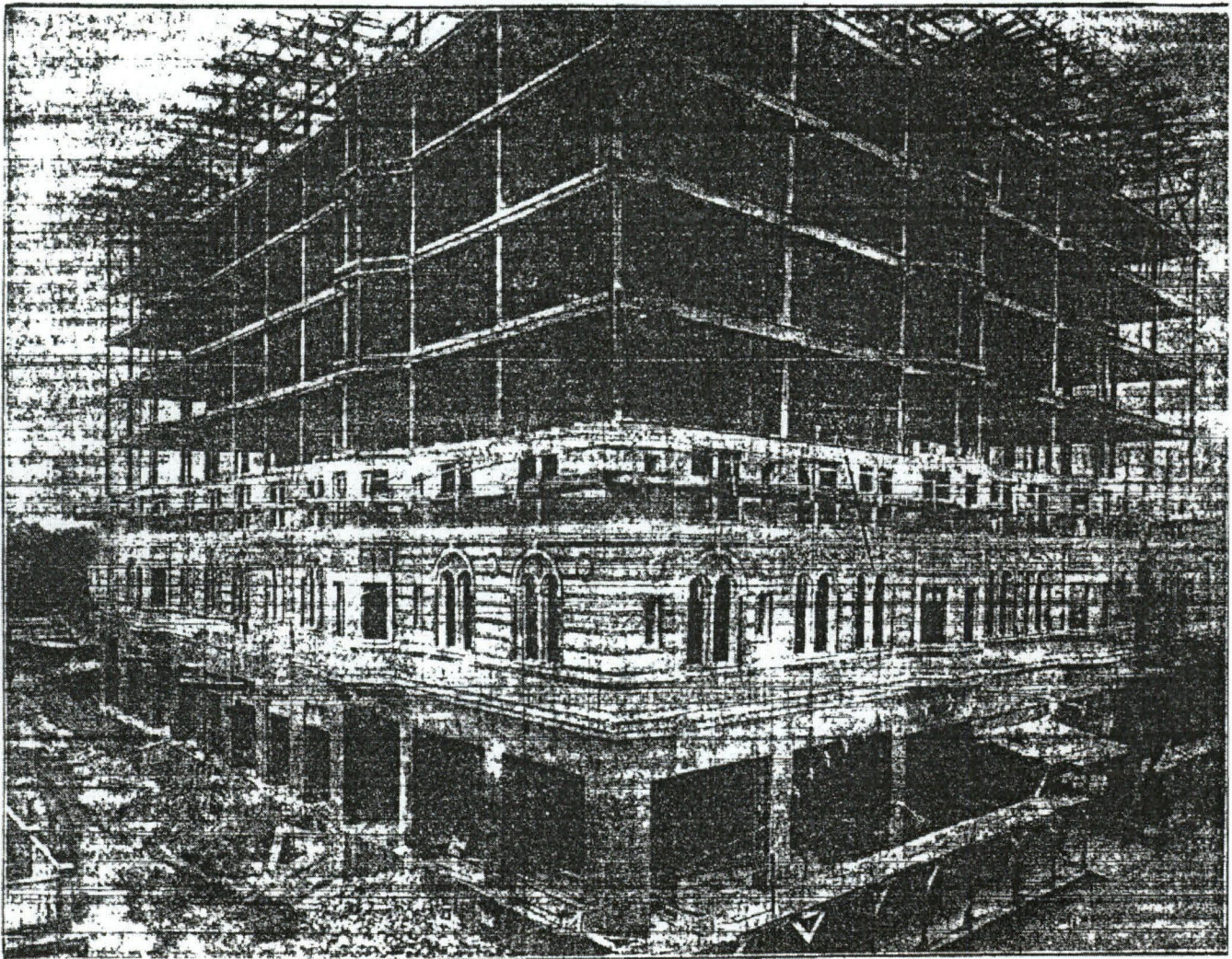
National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section FIGURE Page 46

Gunter Hotel
San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

FIGURE 13. Gunter Hotel under construction
San Antonio *Express*, May 2, 1909, p. 44

HOW SAN ANTONIO'S MILLION-DOLLAR HOTEL, THE GUNTER, LOOKS AT THIS TIME



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Section FIGURE Page 47

Gunter Hotel
San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

FIGURE 14. Gunter Hotel opening
San Antonio Light and Gazette, November 21, 1909

SUNDAY, SAN ANTONIO LIGHT AND GAZETTE, NOVEMBER 21, 1909

GUNTER HOTEL, OPENED LAST NIGHT WITH BANQUET, UNIQUE AMONG SOUTHERN HOSTELRIES

MILLION DOLLAR BUILDING IS ADDED TO THE LIST OF SAN ANTONIO SKYSCRAPER STRUCTURES.—THE STORY OF ITS CONCEPTION



The new Gunter Hotel, the result of the work of L. J. Hart, Otto Koehler, Lewis Maverick, George Tallaferro, and the other officers and stockholders of the San Antonio Hotel company.



The lobby in the new Gunter Hotel, the largest hotel lobby in the south.

Facts About the Gunter Hotel

- L. J. Hart of this city is the principal promoter of the enterprise. Its inception first considered in 1901.
- First site chosen: Southwest corner of Houston and Navarro streets. Chicago capitalists fell down on the proposition.
- L. J. Hart makes tentative agreement for its building with Jot (Gimble) and George M. Maverick in fall of 1906.
- First fund raised on November 26, 1906.
- San Antonio Hotel company organized March 5, 1907.
- Point of 1907 delayed start of work.
- Initial expenditure \$650,000.
- Site ours occupied by United States army barracks and was headquarters of General Robert E. Lee, Sidney Johnston and many other civil war heroes.
- Ground broken September 28, 1908.
- First steel column set on January 19, 1909.
- First concrete floor laid on February 19.
- Masonry work commenced February 12.
- Steel work finished April 25.
- Brick work finished October 1.
- Structure turned over to H. H. Franks November 1.
- Hotel has largest lobby in the south.
- There are 311 bedrooms and 157 bathrooms.
- Dining room will seat 150 without crowding.
- The hotel is self-contained; the establishment having its own artesian well and a complete power plant.
- Value of property today \$1,100,000.
- As proposed as business construction can make any building.
- Will have private park.
- Is architecturally monument worthy of the biggest city.



Photo by Coak.



Photo by Coak.

As far as this was possible legal material was employed in the construction of the building. While the steel had

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Section FIGURE Page 48

Gunter Hotel
San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

FIGURE 15. Gunter Hotel, advertisements
San Antonio *Express*, January 12 & December 2, 1913

THE GUNTER HOTEL
Absolutely Fireproof
Three hundred and fifty large and well-ventilated rooms with high ceilings—a home for Commercial Traveler, Tourist and headquarters for Texas people. The Gunter Cafe is high-class, with reasonable prices, music, luncheon, dinner and after theater.
San Antonio Hotel Co., Owners
PERCY TYRRELL, Mgr. Phone Crockett 3992

Gunter Hotel
Nearer Than Anything to Everything
PERCY TYRRELL, Manager.

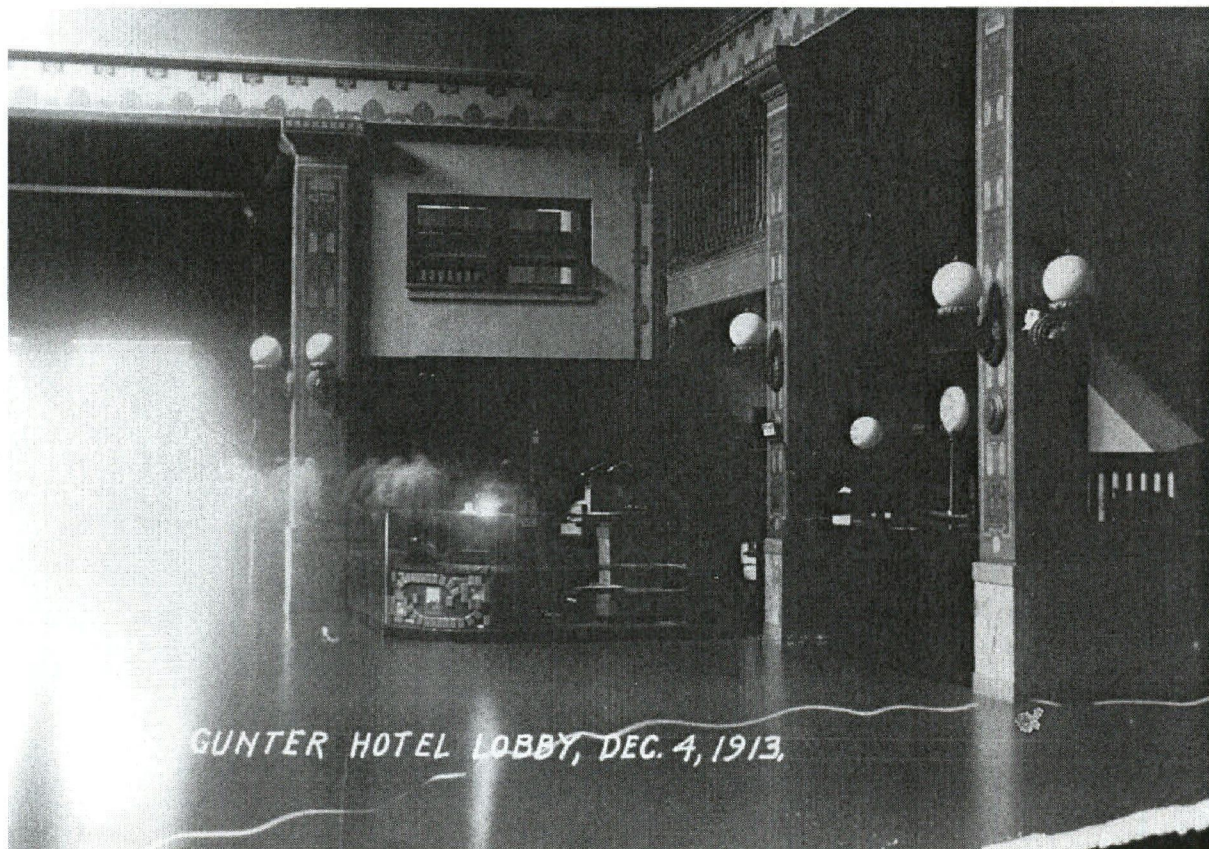
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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Continuation Sheet

Section FIGURE Page 49

Gunter Hotel
San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

FIGURE 16. Gunter Hotel lobby, December 4, 1913
Witte Museum



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National Park Service

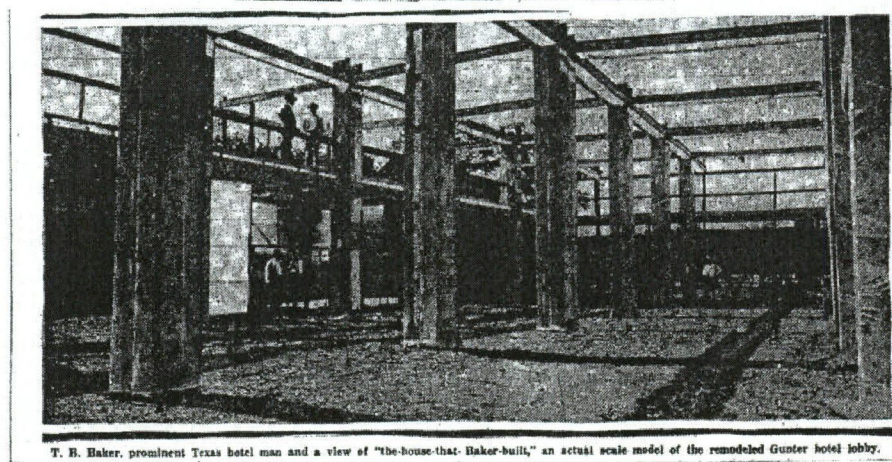
National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section FIGURE Page 50

Gunter Hotel
San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

FIGURE 17. Gunter Hotel, remodeling by T.B. Baker
San Antonio *Light*, June 29, 1925

FIGURE 17



San Antonio *Light*
June 29, 1925

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National Park Service

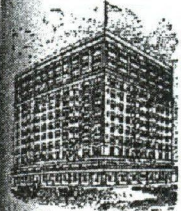
National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Gunter Hotel
San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

Section FIGURE Page 51

FIGURE 18. Gunter Hotel, advertisement
San Antonio City Directory, 1938-39, p. 49

49 HOTELS



VISITORS
and
SAN ANTONIANS

The GUNTER

SAN ANTONIO'S LARGEST HOTEL
Center of Everything

550 Modern Rooms
550 Baths
Circulating Ice Water
Servidor System
300 Air-Conditioned

ALL PUBLIC ROOMS AIR-CONDITIONED

<p><i>Service Departments:</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Barber Shop 18 Chairs</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Beauty Parlor</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Turkish Bath</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Valet</p>	<p><i>Four Restaurants:</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">English Grill</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Terrace Dining Room</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Coffee Shop</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Caveteria</p>
---	---

HEADQUARTERS:

KIWANIS CLUB OF SAN ANTONIO
LIONS CLUB OF SAN ANTONIO
SAN ANTONIO OPTIMIST CLUB
SAN ANTONIO OPTIMISSUS CLUB
SAN ANTONIO ADVERTISING CLUB
SAN ANTONIO BREAKFAST CLUB
SAN ANTONIO EXECUTIVE CLUB
SAN ANTONIO TRAFFIC CLUB
SAN ANTONIO SALES MANAGERS CLUB

ARTIE COMPTON, *Managing Director*

Member of the Chamber of Commerce

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section FIGURE Page 52

Gunter Hotel
San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

FIGURE 19. Old Trail Drivers' Association, 19th Convention, 1934
San Antonio *Light* Collection
Institute of Texan Cultures, L-0353-A



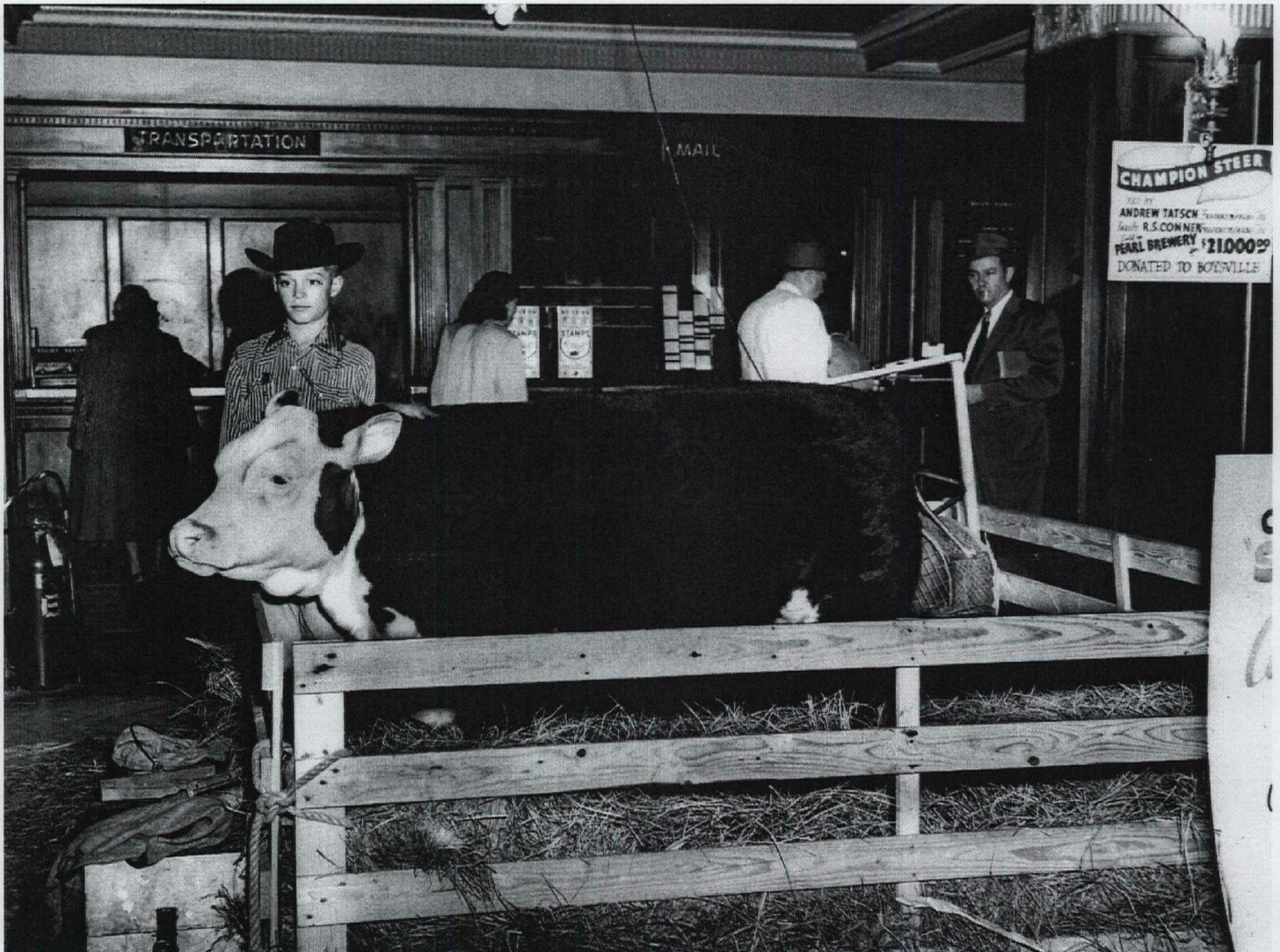
United States Department of the Interior
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National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section FIGURE Page 53

Gunter Hotel
San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

FIGURE 20. Gunter Hotel, stock show exhibit, c. 1950
Institute of Texan Cultures, Z-977



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National Park Service

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Section FIGURE Page 54

Gunter Hotel
San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

FIGURE 21. Gunter Hotel, advertisements
San Antonio *Light*, November 29 & 30, 1917

A Whirl of Pleasure
at the Gunter Hotel Thanksgiving
DINNER DANCE 7 to 12
That Jazz Band

A delicious dinner served in the Grand Ballroom.

For reservations,
Crockett 3992.
Per Person, \$1.50.

Percy Tyrrell, Manager.

The Gunter

The best dance orchestra in the Great Southwest.

If you have never attended a SUPPER DANCING at the Gunter Hotel you have a real pleasure in store.

Drop in Saturday evening, any time between 8 and 10 o'clock. Don't be later than 10 though for at that hour we serve a delicious repast—just a taste of this and that to delight the palate and add zest to the remainder of the evening.

Don't Forget the Evening or the Hour.

PERCY TYRRELL, Manager.

Phone Cr. 3992
or
Reser-
vation
Sup-
per \$1
Per

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National Park Service

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Section FIGURE Page 55

Gunter Hotel
San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

FIGURE 22. S.A. Campbell, chancellor at Mexican Consulate,
Gunter Hotel recording session, December 1932
San Antonio *Light* Collection
Institute of Texan Cultures, 1411-B



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Section FIGURE Page 56

Gunter Hotel
San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

FIGURE 23. Robert Johnson, studio portrait, 1935
Hooks Brothers, Memphis
Courtesy of Delta Haze Corporation (Copyright 1989, used by permission)



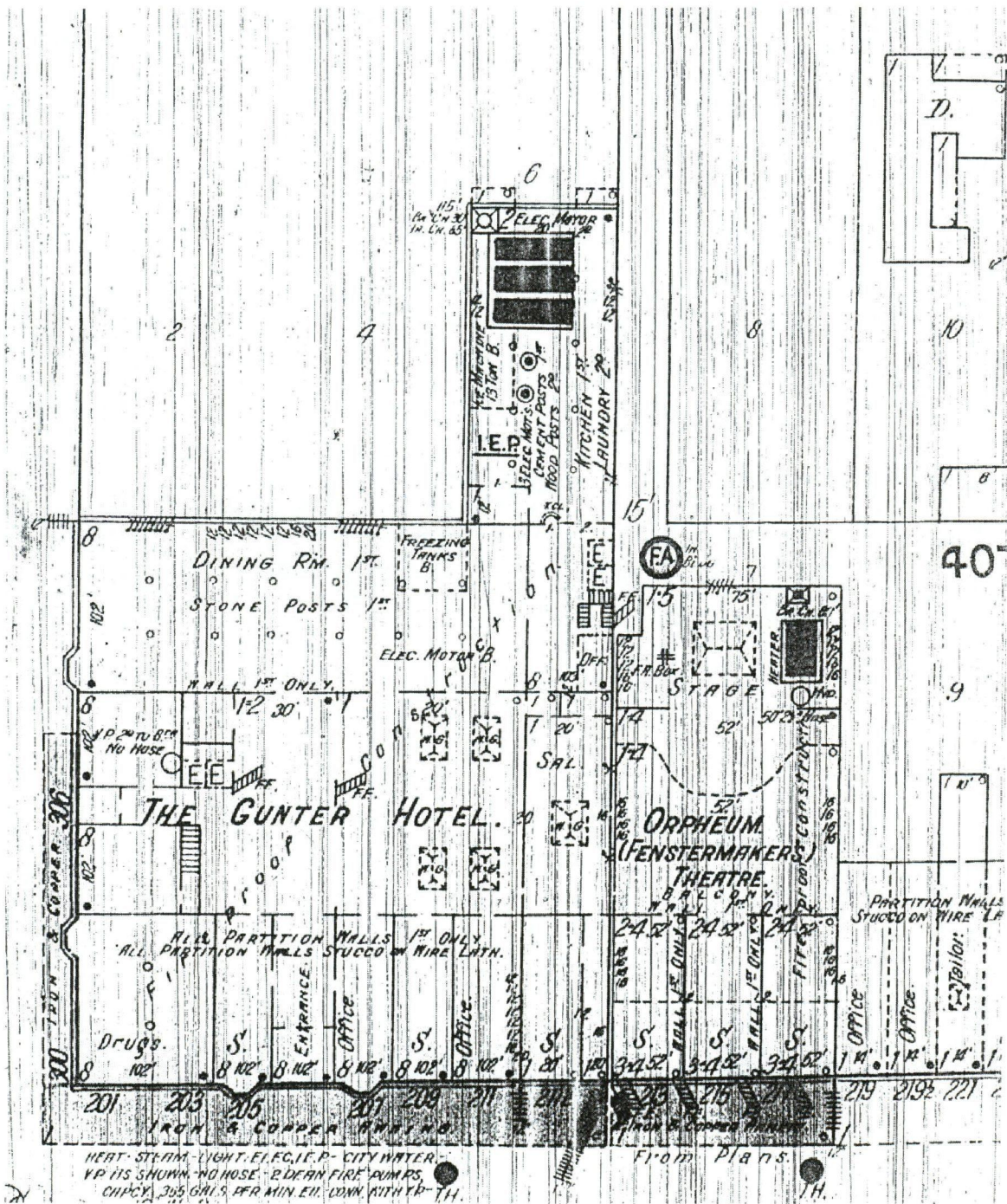
United States Department of the Interior
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Continuation Sheet

Gunter Hotel
San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

Section FIGURE Page 57

1912 Sanborn Map



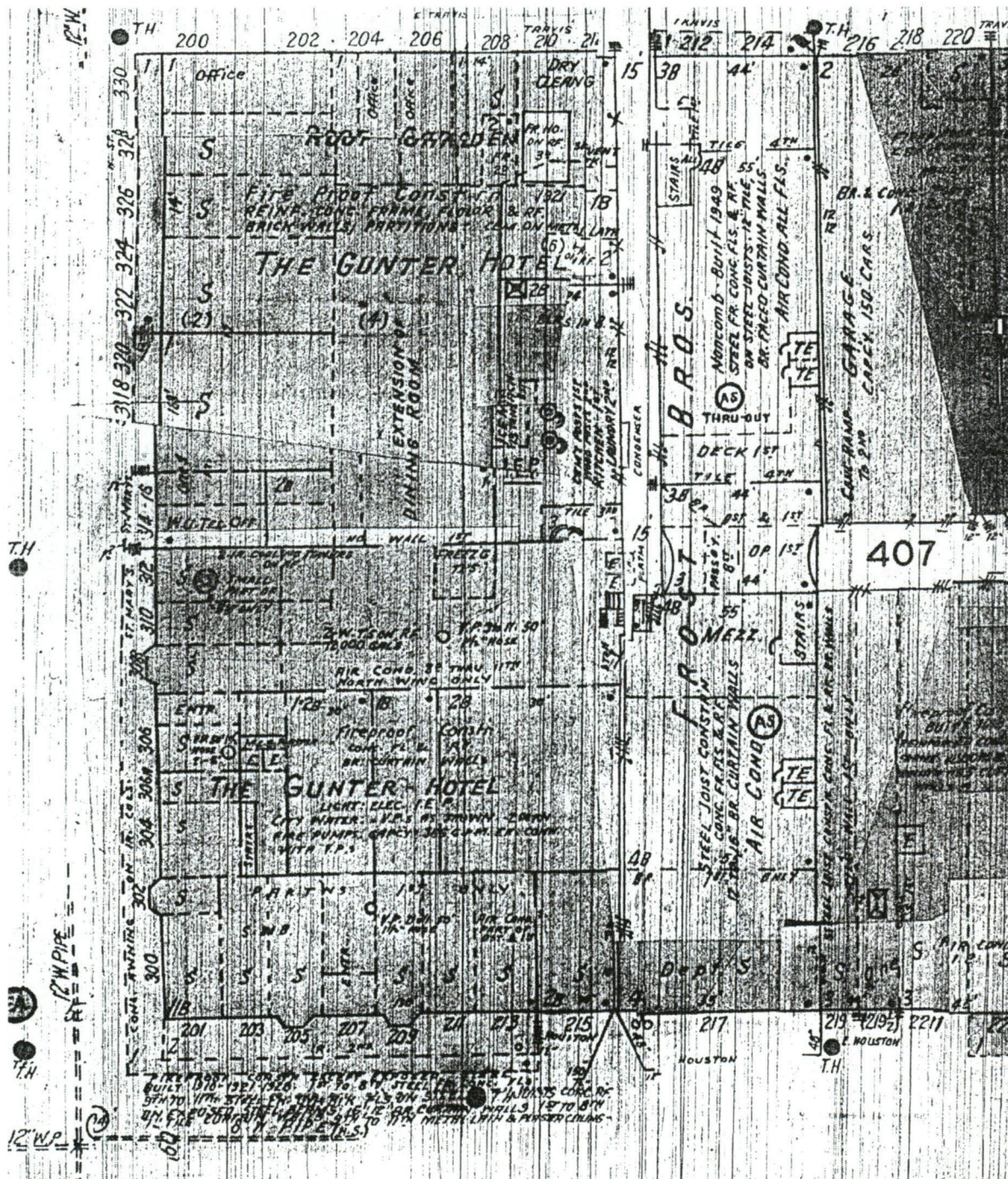
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National Park Service

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Section FIGURE Page 58

Gunter Hotel
San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

1912-1951 Sanborn map



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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Continuation Sheet

Section PHOTO Page 59

Gunter Hotel
San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

PHOTO LOG

Gunter Hotel
205 East Houston Street
San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas
Photographed by Al Rendon, April 2006

Photo 1
South and west elevations looking northeast

Photo 2
South elevation looking northwest

Photo 3
South elevation (east corner) looking north

Photo 4
Third floor detail

Photo 5
West elevation looking southeast

Photo 6
North elevation looking south

Photo 7
Motor entrance looking east

Photo 8
Lobby looking southeast

Photo 9
Lobby looking southeast from mezzanine

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Gunter Hotel

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: TEXAS, Bexar

DATE RECEIVED: 12/01/06 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 12/20/06
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 1/04/07 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 1/14/07
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 06001233

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 1.9.07 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in the
National Register

RECOM./CRITERIA _____

REVIEWER _____ DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.



Photo 1
Gunter Hotel
San Antonio, Bexar Co. Texas



Photo 2
Gunter Hotel
San Antonio, Bexar Co. Texas



© 2006 AL RE-CON 84 0 16 16

Photo 3
Gunter Hotel
San Antonio, Bexar Co. Texas



©2006 AL RENDON 73 0 16 16

Photo 4
Gunter Hotel
San Antonio, Bexar Co. Texas



Photo 5
Gunter Hotel
San Antonio, Bexar Co. Texas



©2006 AL RENDON 82 0 16 16

Photo 6
Gunter Hotel
San Antonio, Bexar Co. Texas



Photo 7
Gunter Hotel
San Antonio, Bexar Co. Texas



MAJESTIC
NIGHTS



DINNER & DRINKING
MAJESTIC AT 40 LEVELS

©2006 AL RENJON 64 0 16 16

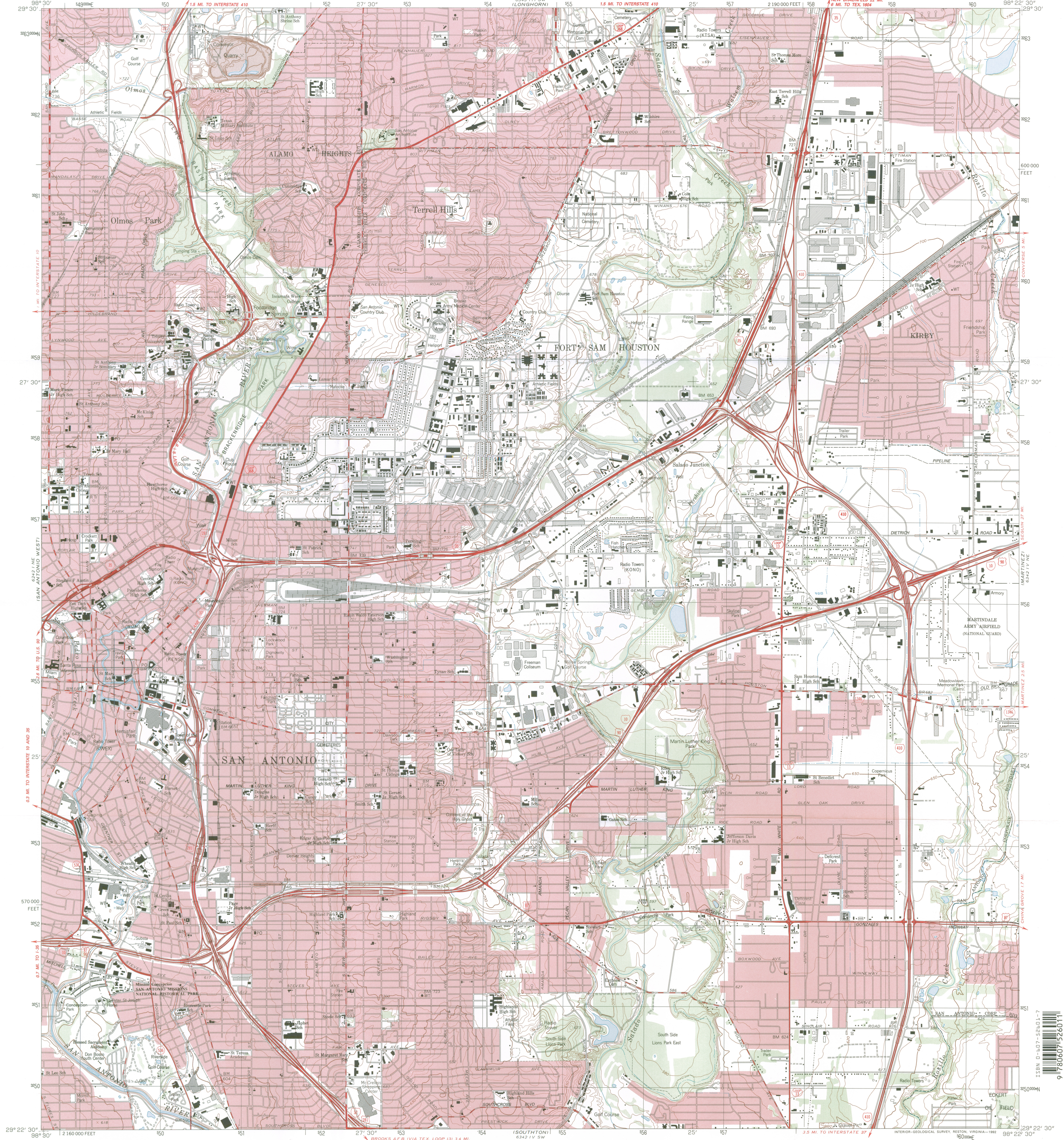
Photo 8
Gunter Hotel
San Antonio, Bexar Co. Texas



© 2006 AL RENNIN 67 0 16 16

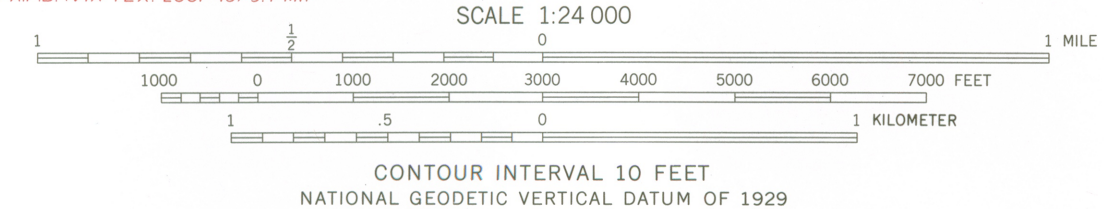
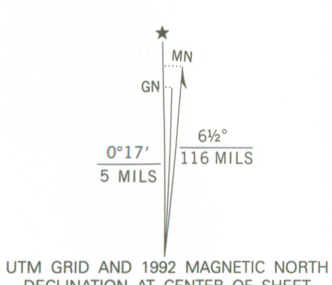
Photo 9
Gunter Hotel
San Antonio, Bexar Co, Texas

GUNTER HOTEL
 SAN ANTONIO, BEXAR CO., TEXAS
 ZONE 14 549363E 3255367N



Produced by the United States Geological Survey
 Control by USGS, NOS/NOAA and USCE
 Compiled by Defense Mapping Agency from aerial photographs
 taken 1952. Revised from aerial photographs taken 1986
 and other source data. Field checked 1987. Map edition 1992

North American Datum of 1927 (NAD 27). Projection and
 10 000-foot grid ticks: Texas Coordinate System,
 south central zone (Lambert Conformal Conic)
 1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid, zone 14
 The difference between NAD 27 and North American Datum of
 1983 (NAD 83) for 7.5 minute intersections is given in USGS
 Bulletin 1875. The NAD 83 is shown by dashed corner ticks
 There may be private inholdings within the boundaries of the
 National or State reservations shown on this map
 Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown



CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET
 NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929



ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Primary highway, hard surface	Light-duty road, hard or improved surface
Secondary highway, hard surface	Unimproved road
Interstate Route	U. S. Route
	State Route

SAN ANTONIO EAST, TEX.
 29098-D4-TF-024

2998-133

1992

DMA 6342 IV NW-SERIES V882



ELMENDORF 6341 IV SE



TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Rick Perry • *Governor*
John L. Nau, III • *Chairman*
F. Lawrence Oaks • *Executive Director*

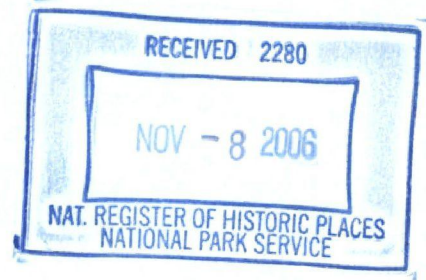
The State Agency for Historic Preservation

TO: Linda McClelland
National Register of Historic Places

FROM: Gregory W. Smith, National Register Coordinator
Texas Historical Commission

RE: Gunter Hotel, San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

DATE: November 6, 2006



- The following materials are submitted regarding the Gunter Hotel:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Original National Register of Historic Places form
<input type="checkbox"/>	Resubmitted nomination
<input type="checkbox"/>	Multiple Property nomination form
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Photographs
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	USGS map
<input type="checkbox"/>	Correspondence
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other:

COMMENTS:

SHPO requests substantive review

The enclosed owner objections (do) (do not) constitute a majority of property owners

Other: