

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form**1. Name of Property**historic name Blackstone Hotelother names/site number Jewell Building**2. Location**street & number 817 Cherry Street [ N/A ] not for publicationcity or town Kansas City [ N/A ] vicinitystate Missouri code MO county Jackson code 095 zip code 64106**3. 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 of certifying official/Title

Mark A. Miles  
Mark A. Miles/Deputy SHPO

Date

08/28/03Missouri Department of Natural Resources  
State or Federal agency and bureauIn my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria.  
(See continuation sheet for additional comments ☐.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

State or Federal agency and bureau

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that the property is:

Signature of the Keeper

Date

☐ 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  
See continuation sheet ☐.

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**5. Classification**

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
		Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)		
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>2</u>	<u>                    </u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site		<u>                    </u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure		<u>                    </u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object		<u>                    </u> objects
		<u>2</u>	<u>                    </u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing.

n/a

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register.

n/a

**6. Function or Use****Historic Function**

DOMESTIC: Hotel

TRANSPORTATION: Road-related (Vehicular)

**Current Functions**

Vacant

TRANSPORTATION: Road-related (Vehicular)

**7. Description****Architectural Classification**

LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> & EARLY 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

AMERICAN MOVEMENTS: Colonial Revival

**Materials**

foundation Concrete

walls Brick

roof Asphalt

other Terracotta

**Narrative Description**

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

## 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

Property is:

☐ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

☐ **B** removed from its original location.

☐ **C** a birthplace or grave.

☐ **D** a cemetery.

☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

☐ **F** a commemorative property.

☐ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

### Areas of Significance

COMMERCE

### Periods of Significance

1925-1953

### Significant Dates

1925 -1926

### Significant Person(s)

N/A

### Cultural Affiliation

N/A

### Architect/Builder

Drotts, Phillip T. (architect)

Jewell Realty Company (builder)

## Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

## 9. Major Bibliographic References

### Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

#### Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

☐ previously listed in the National Register

☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register

☐ designated a National Historic Landmark

☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey

# \_\_\_\_\_

☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record

# \_\_\_\_\_

#### Primary location of additional data:

☐ State Historic Preservation Office

☐ Other State Agency

☐ Federal Agency

☐ Local Government

☐ University

☒ Other:

Name of repository: Missouri Valley Room, Kansas City  
(Missouri) Public Library

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**10. Geographical Data**Acreage of Property less than 1 acre**UTM References**

A. Zone 15 Easting 363755 Northing 4329460

B. Zone Easting Northing

C. Zone Easting Northing

D. Zone Easting Northing

[ ] See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

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

**Boundary Justification**

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

**11. Form Prepared By**name/title Elizabeth Rosin, Partnerorganization Historic Preservation Services, LLC date April 30, 2003street & number 323 West 8<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 112 telephone 816-221-5133city or town Kansas City state MO zip code 64105**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets****Maps**

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

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

**Photographs**

Representative black-and-white photographs of the property.

**Additional Items**

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

**Property Owner**

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

name Eichenbau Construction & Property Development, LLCstreet & number 4330 Shawnee Mission Parkway, Suite 105 telephone 913-677-4242city or town Fairway state KS zip code 66201

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**SUMMARY**

The Blackstone Hotel is a four-story commercial building with Colonial Revival styling located at the northeast corner of 9<sup>th</sup> and Cherry streets in the "close-in" East Side neighborhood of the Kansas City, Missouri Central Business District (Figure 1).<sup>1</sup> The brick building exhibits the general form and configuration of two-part blocks constructed in neighborhood commercial districts during the early twentieth century. The Blackstone Hotel has an L-shaped footprint and a flat, tar and gravel roof. The short arm of the L, facing East 9<sup>th</sup> Street, is nearly 76 feet long. Along Cherry Street, the long arm of the L, which includes the entrance to the hotel lobby, is 90 feet long. Adjoining the hotel on the north and east is a one-story, flat-roofed, L-shaped garage that interlocks with the hotel to create a rectangular footprint measuring 79 feet by 138 feet. Textured brown brick clads the primary façades of the steel-

reinforced concrete buildings. Cream-colored terracotta ornamentation on the primary façades (west and south) includes keystones in the lintels of the second and third-story windows; an ornate cornice band embellished with garlands and pale blue medallions; and a beltcourse above the first-story transom windows, which extends north to become the cornice on the garage. The terracotta embellishments and the keystones centered in the upper-story window lintels convey simple Georgian styling. The architect used the continuous terracotta ornament to unify the Cherry Street facades, emphasizing the integral plan of the two buildings. Although the windows have been replaced and the canopy at the hotel entry is missing, very few changes have been made to the property since its original construction. It retains all of its significant exterior ornamentation; the general configuration of the hotel lobby, commercial storefronts, and parking on the first story; and the

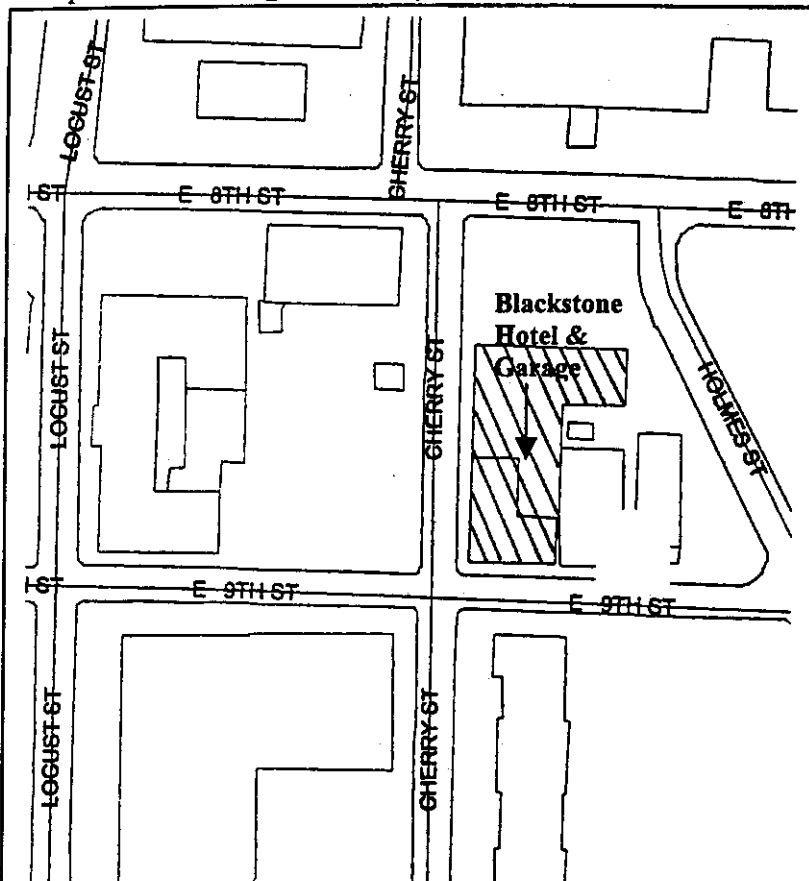


Figure 1: Blackstone Hotel Vicinity, Not to Scale

<sup>1</sup> Early twentieth century sources describe mixed-use commercial and residential neighborhoods ringing the city's central business and convention district. The moniker "close-in" East and West Side neighborhoods distinguishes them from similar neighborhoods developing further out from downtown, especially to the east along Independence Boulevard and to the south in the vicinity of Westport and the Country Club Plaza.

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double-loaded corridor layout of the upper stories. Together, these elements clearly convey the property's original function as a second-tier neighborhood hotel that included retail services and parking. New owners, who anticipate restoring the hotel building and garage for residential and commercial use, recently purchased the property.

## ELABORATION

### Building Exterior

The dark brown brick of the primary façades is laid in common bond. The walls are unarticulated with the only relief provided by the terracotta ornamentation at the top of the first and fourth stories and the keystones above the upper-story windows. The motifs presented in the cream-colored terracotta convey the Colonial Revival style of the property. The terracotta includes urns flanked by cloth swags and floral rosettes, continuous floral swags punctuated by floral medallions, fan motifs above the upper-story windows, and circular medallions with floral centers. However, the most distinctive ornamental elements are the medallions punctuating the upper cornice that feature cream-colored dancing figurines on a light blue background, a motif inspired by the architectural ornament and decorative arts of the late eighteenth century English Georgian period.<sup>2</sup>

In contrast to the ornamented primary façades, the secondary elevations (east, north) are unembellished. The wall cladding switches from the brown face brick to common red brick. Plain tile coping caps the parapet walls of these elevations. A metal fire escape rises on the east façade. Painted at the top of the north façade is a sign that reads, "FREE PARKING BLACKSTONE HOTEL /\$1<sup>50</sup> / UP."

Fenestration includes one-over-one, double-hung windows set in a regular rhythm of nine bays on the west and seven bays on the south. Glazed terracotta sills and soldier brick lintels with terracotta keystones highlight each window opening. On the secondary façades, the windows have header brick lintels and sills. The lintels are flush with the building wall, while the sills project slightly and slope outward for drainage.

The treatment of the fourth-story windows on the primary façades is more elaborate. These openings feature blind arches filled with "fan light" terracotta panels, as well as floral keystones and corner blocks connected by double rows of header bricks. Circular terracotta medallions flank the blind arches between each bay and a course of soldier bricks links the corner blocks at the top of each window.

Brick piers with terracotta capitals divide the first-story storefronts into regular bays. A continuous terracotta band wraps around the building above the storefront transom windows. In addition to the corner storefront, there are four bays on the south elevation and five bays on the west elevation. The central bay

<sup>2</sup> Stephen Calloway and Elizabeth Cromley, *The Elements of Style*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991), 146-151.

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on the west contains the main entrance to the hotel. At each storefront, painted brick bulkheads support wood-framed display window systems. The easternmost storefront on 9<sup>th</sup> Street is recessed. The corner storefront has large display windows with a slightly recessed single entrance at the corner, facing 9<sup>th</sup> Street. The remaining storefronts are smaller and feature asymmetrical arrangements with entrances on one side and single display windows on the other. The storefront windows, doorways, and transoms are extant but covered with plywood on the exterior.

Building Interior

The first floor retains the essential layout of the original design. Storefronts flank the hotel lobby and occupy the remainder of the first floor. These spaces have evolved over time with internal consolidations and the introduction of partition walls. The lobby and original café space to the north retain the original terrazzo flooring, which is partially covered by non-historic vinyl tile. Non-historic partition walls divide the hotel lobby to form a manager's office and a service window. Non-historic wood paneling covers original plaster on the walls, and suspended ceilings hide extant crown molding. A security door leads to an interior elevator/stair lobby from which one can enter the laundry room, the basement, the elevator, or the stairwell. The elevator/stair lobby has paneled wood wainscot and a terrazzo floor. The terrazzo and concrete stairs retain a historic iron railing on one side.

The three commercial spaces retain their original plaster walls and ceilings, some behind furred-out drywall and suspended ceiling systems. Square concrete piers sheathed in plaster punctuate the interior space at regular intervals. Non-historic partition walls form storage spaces within these areas. Carpet and vinyl tile cover the concrete floors.

The upper floors contain double-loaded hallways flanked by guest rooms. Typical units include a sleeping area, a non-historic kitchenette, and a bathroom. The bathroom fixtures appear to date to the original construction of the building. The metal cabinets in the kitchenettes and the kitchen fixtures suggest an addition date in the 1950s or 1960s. Carpet and vinyl tile covers the hallway and guestroom floors. The walls are painted plaster with some non-historic base and crown molding. In some locations, the ghost of a tall chair rail is visible. Acoustical tile drop ceilings have been installed the length of the corridors. The guestrooms have paneled wood doors with brass knobs set in delicately molded surrounds.

Garage

The terracotta beltcourse above the first-story transom windows of the hotel extends to form the decorative cornice band on the garage block, visually unifying the façades of the two buildings. As further embellishment, rising above the parapet wall are eight regularly spaced flame-shaped terracotta finials. The fenestration of the garage's primary (west) façade includes two vehicular bays with metal overhead doors flanked by pairs of sixteen-pane industrial steel windows with operable hoppers and

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security bars. The decorative window treatment matches that above the fourth-story windows on the main block. Square concrete piers punctuate the interior of the otherwise open floor plan of the garage.

Setting

The Blackstone Hotel and garage occupy a rectangular corner lot in the "close-in" East Side neighborhood of downtown Kansas City. Concrete sidewalks run the length of the block along both primary façades. To the east of the hotel is a one-story concrete block building. To the south, across 9<sup>th</sup> Street, is a 1960s-vintage motel. The lot to the north of the Blackstone Hotel is vacant, and the property to the west (across Cherry Street) is paved for surface parking. Within two blocks to the west are the National Register-listed old Kansas City Public Library, the new Federal Courthouse, and the new offices of the Federal Aviation Administration.

Integrity

As described above, the types of changes made to the Blackstone Hotel, primarily to its first-story storefronts and interior spaces, do not inhibit the viewer's understanding of its historic function, form, or architectural style. The significant character-defining elements of the Blackstone Hotel remain intact, including the exterior decorative treatments; the configuration of first-story spaces, which conveys the original mixed-use of the property; the double-loaded upper-story corridors; and most significantly, the integral relationship with the adjacent parking structure. The only other alterations of note are the replacement of the upper-story windows and the removal of the entry canopy. Architectural plans reveal that the original windows were multi-light steel casements. While the current windows do not match the configuration of the original windows, there have been no alterations to the size, arrangement, or rhythm of the openings, and the current owners propose restoring multi-light casement windows to the building. Neither the replacement of the windows nor the changes to the storefronts inhibit the ability of the building to convey its original function or its significance as a rare surviving example of the second-tier neighborhood hotel property type. The Blackstone Hotel substantially retains the integrity required for listing in the National Register.

*National Register Bulletin 15* states, "The evaluation of integrity... must always be grounded in an understanding of a property's physical features and how they relate to its significance."<sup>3</sup> The integrity of the Blackstone Hotel is strong in five of the seven aspects, and has been only partially compromised in the remaining two aspects.

- *Location:* The building has not been moved and its integrity of location remains fully intact.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Interagency Resources Division, *National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*, 1997 (rev), 44.



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- *Design:* The design of the building, its organization of spaces, scale, construction technology, ornamentation, and materials were minimally impacted by the replacement of the upper-story windows, and the size and shape (proportions) of the original window openings remain intact. More significantly, the spaces that define the property's function – the storefronts, lobby, upper-story corridors, and parking garage – all remain intact. The Blackstone Hotel's integrity of Design remains largely intact.
- *Setting:* While the Blackstone Hotel's site and relationship to historic sidewalks and streets remains intact, its integrity in this aspect has been somewhat compromised by the loss of other historic commercial buildings in the immediate vicinity. There is a one-story concrete block building adjacent to the east and a three-story motel that dates to the 1960s to the south, while vacant lots and surface parking have replaced buildings to the north and west.
- *Materials:* As described above, the only significant loss of materials is the replacement of the upper-story windows. The removal of the entrance canopy represents a less significant loss of materials.
- *Workmanship:* Workmanship, the physical evidence of labor and skill, is especially evident in the fine masonry and terracotta exterior that remains fully intact, and is evident to a lesser degree in the first-story terrazzo flooring and in the plaster walls and ceilings. The Blackstone Hotel retains a high level of integrity in the area of workmanship.
- *Feeling:* The Blackstone Hotel clearly continues to convey "the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time," and retains a high level of integrity in the area of feeling.
- *Association:* To an observer, the original function of the Blackstone Hotel as a second-tier hotel located in a neighborhood business district is readily apparent. The property retains a high degree of integrity in the area of association.

Furthermore, according to *National Register Bulletin 15*, "Ultimately, the question of integrity is answered by whether or not the property retains the identity for which it is significant."<sup>4</sup> The most significant alteration to the Blackstone Hotel has been the replacement of the original window sash in the upper stories. This replacement does not diminish the ability of the property to convey its significance as a second-tier neighborhood hotel, and the spaces that define the property's historic function – the storefronts, lobby, upper-story corridors, and parking garage – all remain intact. Additionally, other Kansas City buildings with similar alterations have previously been listed in the National Register as

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<sup>4</sup> *National Register Bulletin 15*, 45.

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individual landmarks. Recent examples include the Western Union Building (100 East 7<sup>th</sup> Street); Kirkwood Building (1737-1741 McGee Street); and the Townley Metal and Hardware Company Building (200-210 Walnut Street).

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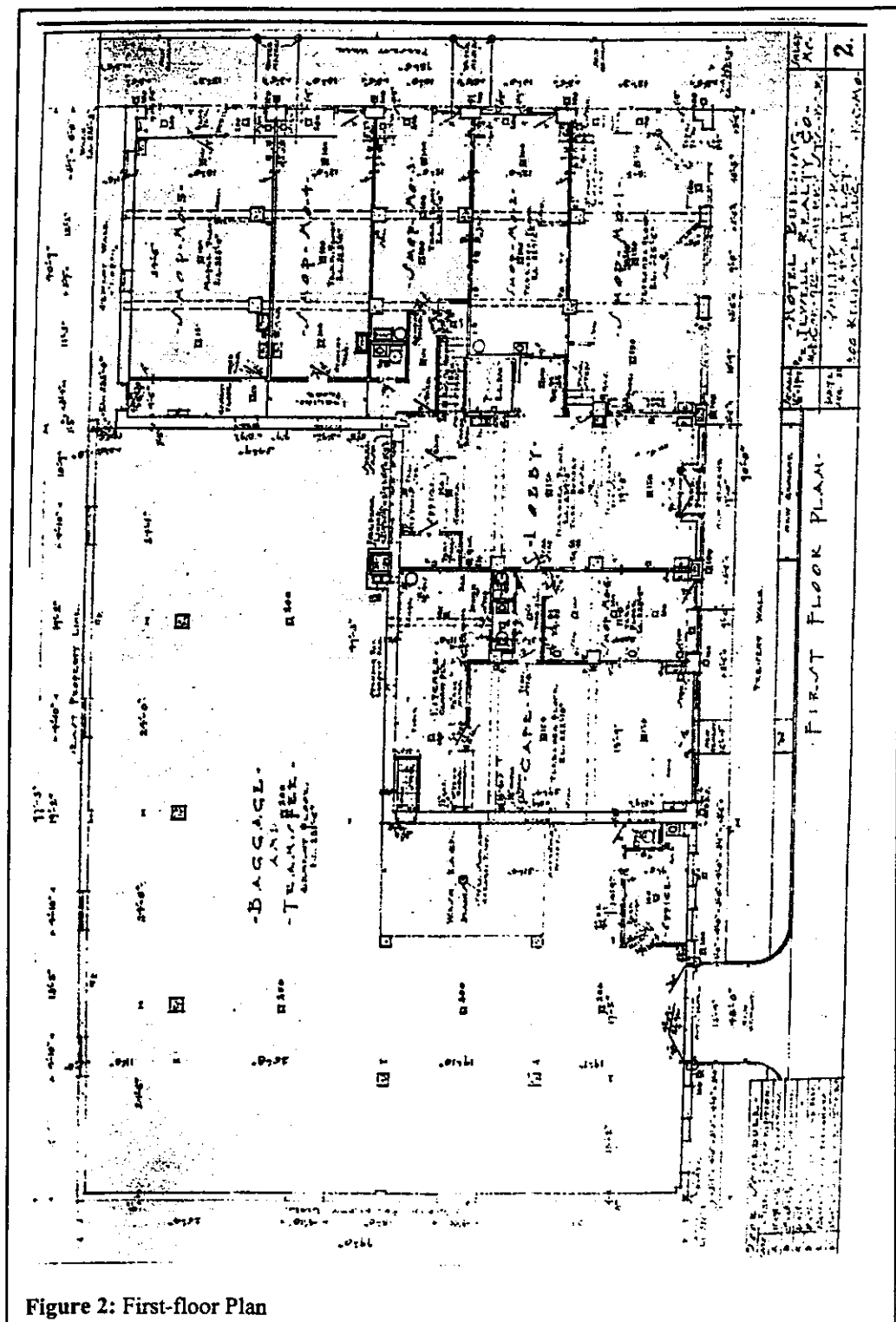


Figure 2: First-floor Plan

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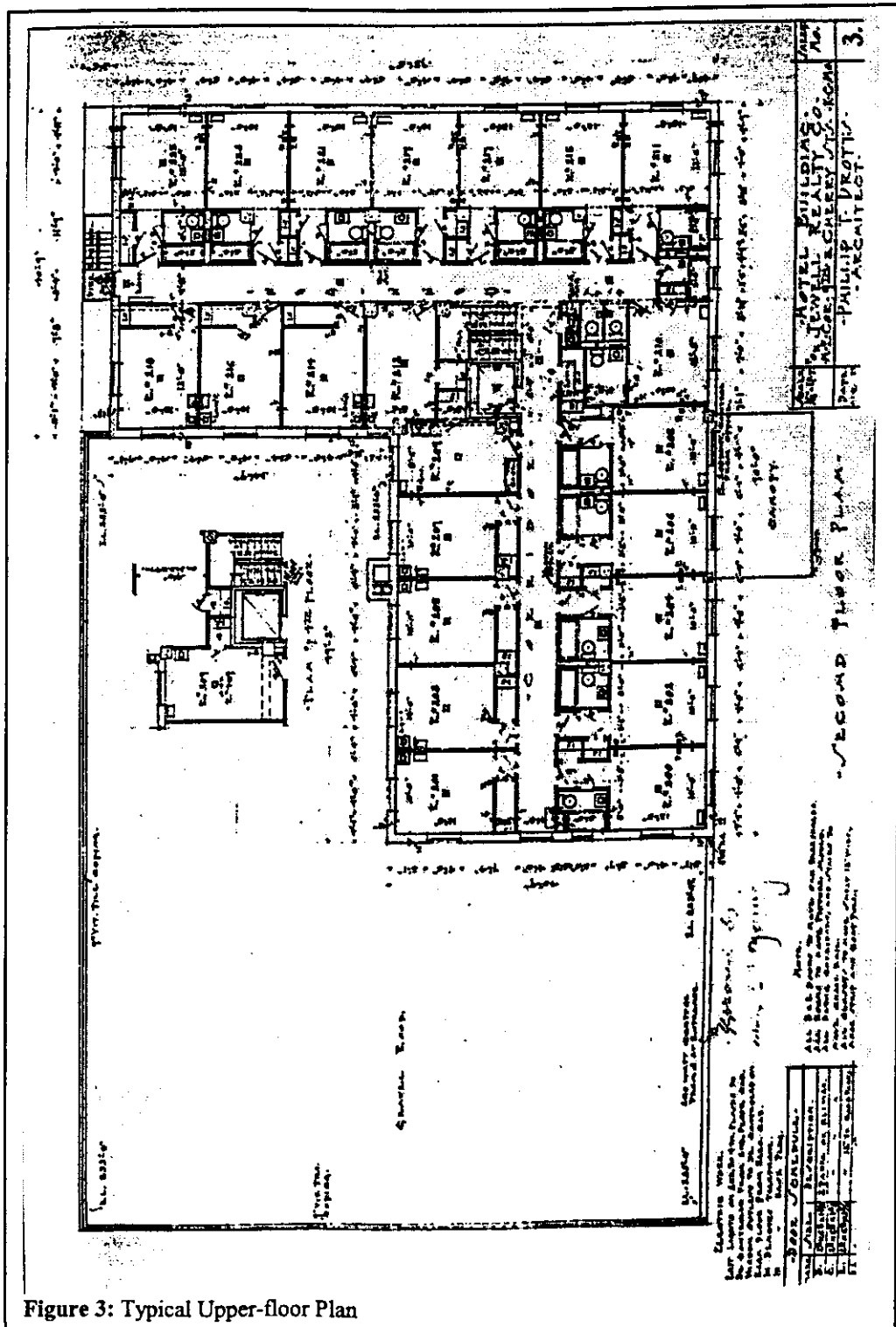


Figure 3: Typical Upper-floor Plan

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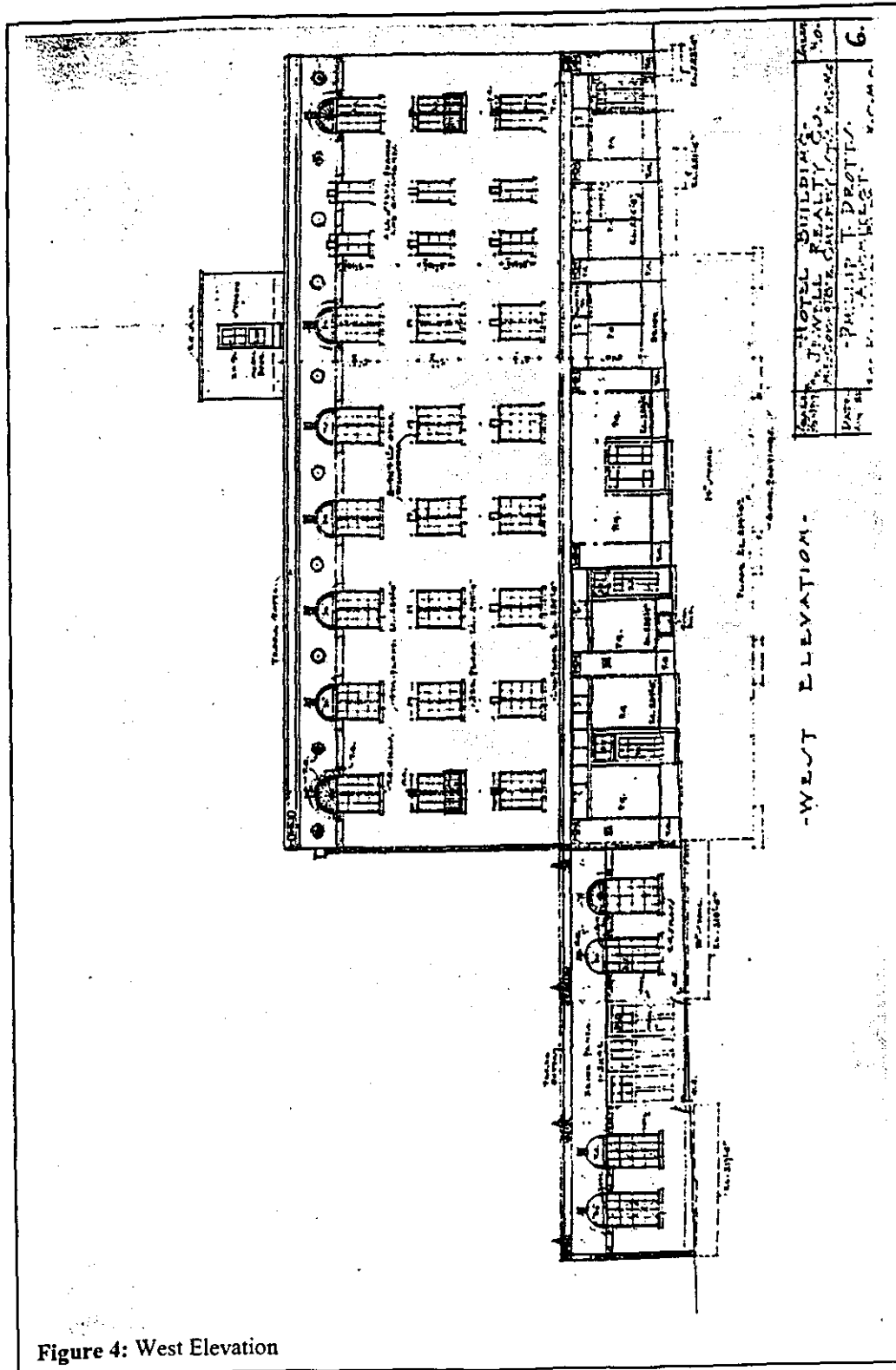


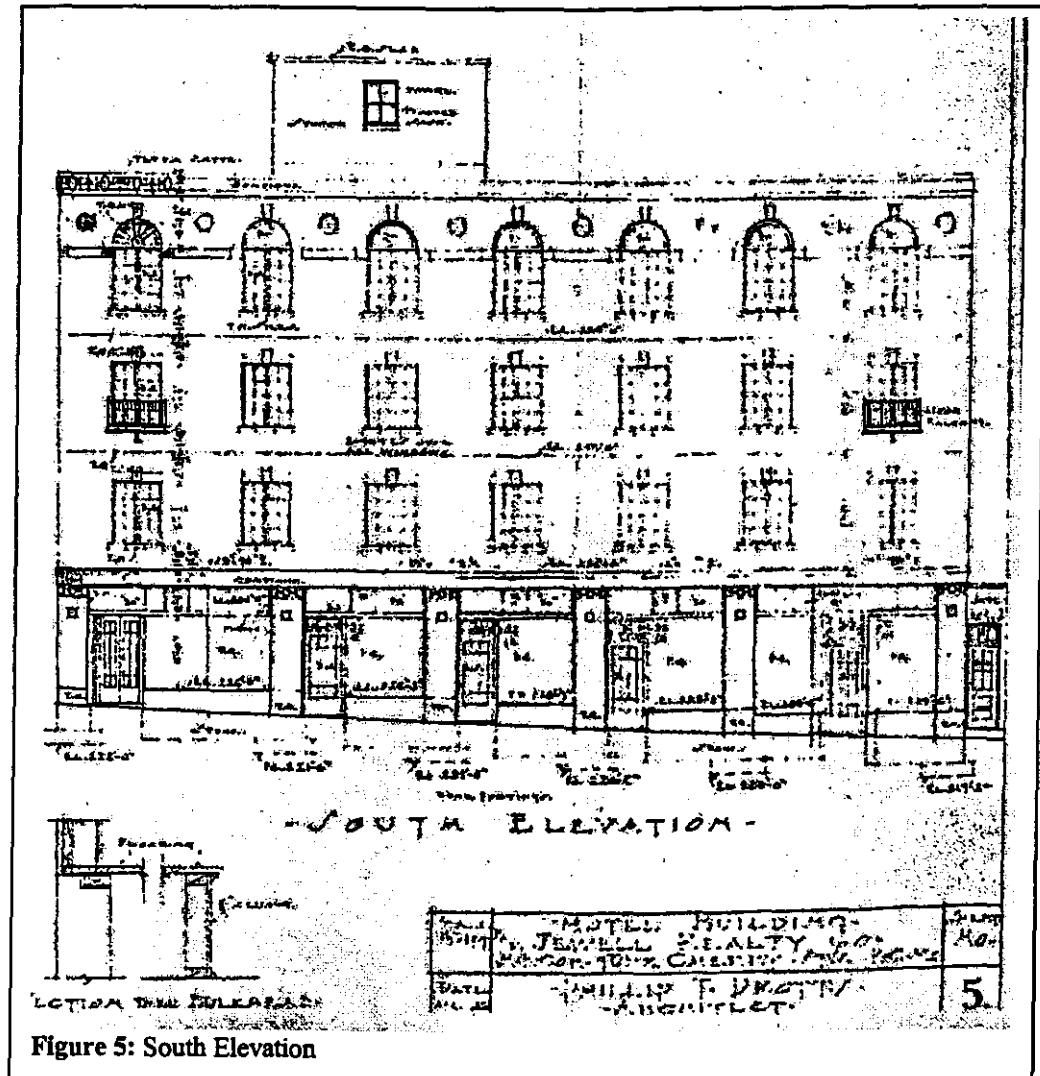
Figure 4: West Elevation

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## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Blackstone Hotel is locally significant under National Register Criterion A for the area of COMMERCE. Constructed in 1925-1926, it is an extremely rare surviving example of the second-tier urban hotel, a property type once prevalent in the vicinity of 9<sup>th</sup> and Locust streets, within the "close-in" East Side neighborhood of downtown Kansas City. Typical of hotels of its class, the Blackstone Hotel housed sixty-five guest rooms, a café, and six commercial businesses that served guests as well as the surrounding neighborhood. The adjacent garage, designed as an integral element of the hotel project, enhances the significance and uniqueness of the hotel property, as its owners endeavored to build a facility that responded to the demands of the emerging automobile age. The Blackstone Hotel's design, by architect Phillip Drotts, deftly melds the vernacular commercial building form, common to urban neighborhoods in the 1920s, with Georgian-influenced Colonial Revival terracotta ornamentation that lends the building an air of elegance. By physically linking the hotel and the garage with a continuous terracotta band, Drotts emphasized the intrinsic relationship between the buildings. The period of significance for the property begins with its construction in 1925-1926 and continues to 1953, the arbitrary fifty-year cut-off date established by the National Register program.

## ELABORATION

### The Hotel in America

Early examples of urban American hotels first appeared in East Coast cities in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, following models popular in Europe at the time. As the nation developed and expanded, transient lodging facilities became increasingly common. In newly established communities of the American West, the construction of taverns, saloons, and hotels signaled the permanence and stability of the town.<sup>5</sup> During the railroad era, in particular, a modest hotel often appeared shortly after the announcement designating a railroad stop. A tangible symbol of investor confidence in the community's future, the hotel soon became a nucleus for growth, creating a commercial center that helped focus development activity.<sup>6</sup>

In the late nineteenth century and into the twentieth century, the American hotel mirrored the development of the nation as it evolved from a modest tavern into a grand lodging establishment. New hotels sought to embody the maturing, modern spirit of their communities as they competed to attract tourists, business

<sup>5</sup> Karl B. Raitz and John Paul Jones, III, "The City Hotel as Landscape Artifact and Community Symbol," *Journal of Cultural Geography* 9 (Fall/Winter 1988): 18.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 19.

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travelers, and much sought after conventioners.<sup>7</sup> By this time, hotels in urban centers were typically architect-designed in the popular styles of the day, ranging from Queen Anne in the late nineteenth century, to Colonial Revival and Beaux Arts at the beginning of the twentieth century, to Jacobethan and Art Deco as the new millennium progressed. New hotels vied for guests through their increasingly elegant appearance and plethora of amenities. In addition to the well-appointed guestrooms that now often featured private bathrooms, hotels offered opulent ballrooms and dining rooms and housed a variety of commercial businesses in their first-story storefronts.

In urban settings, the array of services offered by a hotel fostered a relationship with the surrounding neighborhood as well as to the broader city. Coffee shops, barbershops, drugstores, and clothing shops were typical of the first-story retail businesses that catered to both guests and neighbors. In addition to convention activities, hotel ballrooms hosted social functions such as weddings, balls, birthday parties, social club parties, graduation celebrations, and business meetings for local residents. The practice of dining out for special family events and holidays originated with hotel restaurants rather than local coffee shops.<sup>8</sup> Through these amenities and opportunities, the hotel conveyed a sense of importance to the local community.

In smaller communities and in neighborhoods outside a city's convention district, second-tier hotels served the salesmen who traveled a regular circuit from town to town. Slightly smaller and less ornate in design than the grand convention hotels, the second-tier hotels emulated their larger counterparts, offering similar amenities and a variety of retail services. Although typically lacking grand ballrooms, these hotels provided a similar function for the neighboring community that shopped in their stores and celebrated family events in their dining rooms.

The Blackstone Hotel is an excellent example of a second-tier urban hotel. Located well outside the Kansas City convention district,<sup>9</sup> the Blackstone Hotel features the straightforward massing and scale typical of commercial buildings constructed in Kansas City's neighborhood shopping districts during this period. Elegant Georgian terracotta forms the cornice, a beltcourse, and window treatments that ornament an otherwise plain brick façade. Located on a corner lot, the hotel boasted six first-story storefronts in addition to a café and the hotel lobby. The original tenants in these spaces included a millinery, beauty shop, barbershop, cleaners, and delicatessen, all of which catered equally to residents of the surrounding neighborhood and to hotel guests. However, with only sixty-five guest rooms, a small lobby, and no

<sup>7</sup> John A. Jakle, Keith A. Sculle, and Jefferson S. Rogers, *The Motel in America*, (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press), 25.

<sup>8</sup> Raitz and Jones, 27.

<sup>9</sup> The Kansas City Convention Center occupied the block bounded by 12<sup>th</sup> Street, Wyandotte Street, 13th Street, and Baltimore Avenue, roughly nine blocks southwest of the Blackstone Hotel. The 1983 thematic National Register nomination "Hotels in the Downtown Area of Kansas City Historic District" recognizes the surviving convention hotels constructed in this vicinity.



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formal ballroom, the status of the Blackstone Hotel was clearly a rung below the city's grand convention hotels.<sup>10</sup>

By the 1920s, while the grand hotels continued to thrive with the convention trade, second-tier urban hotels began to lose ground. This period coincided with the increased popularity of the automobile. While automobiles allowed freedom of movement, city hotels were typically locked in congested downtowns lacking sufficient parking. The automobile age enabled hotel development in areas away from traditional transportation centers and streetcar corridors. Parking for existing hotels was usually found on the street or in a garage located a distance from the building. Where space allowed, newer hotels incorporated garages to better serve their patrons and increase their marketability.<sup>11</sup> The availability of integral off-street parking distinguished the businesses that were designed to serve patrons with automobiles.

The Blackstone Hotel is significant for its illustration of these trends. The original design for the Blackstone Hotel featured a substantial parking garage with areas for parking, car washing, and valet services. A large painted wall sign, still visible on the north side of the building, advertised this amenity as "FREE" for guests. This attribute set the Blackstone Hotel apart from the grand hotels in the Kansas City convention district, as well as most other second-tier hotels in the "close-in" East Side neighborhood that lacked on-site parking facilities.

Speculative investment financed a national surge in hotel construction in the decade prior to the Great Depression. The seemingly limitless need for lodging resulted in a glut of hotel rooms. Resulting from a combination of overbuilding and reduced travel budgets, hotels began experiencing a drop in occupancy rates in 1928. Four years later, 80 percent of all hotel mortgages were in default and 15 percent were unable to meet payroll. The American Hotel Association reported that three-quarters of all hotels in the country operated at a deficit.<sup>12</sup>

Compounding the problem of over construction, the off-the-beaten-path freedom encouraged by auto travel led to the rise of a new kind of lodging. The tourist cabin court evolved from the campground to offer low-cost accommodations with ample room for patrons' vehicles and easy access to the highway. Usually found on the outskirts of a city or town, cabin courts swiftly gained popularity during the Great Depression. In addition to significantly lower costs, cabin courts offered travelers a more relaxed atmosphere than the formality encountered at even a second-tier city hotel. The cabin courts were family-

<sup>10</sup> "Kansas City is Fifth in Hotels," *Kansas City Journal-Post*, 27 August 1922 (Newspaper Clipping File. Kansas City: Kansas City, Missouri Public Library, Missouri Valley Room), Microfilm.

<sup>11</sup> Raitz and Jones, 30.

<sup>12</sup> Warren James Belasco, *Americans on the Road: From Autocamp to Motel, 1910-1945* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979; reprint, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 146.

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friendly places with no dress codes and no leering salesmen in the lobby. Kitchenettes allowed guests to cook their own meals instead of eating the heavy food served during the limited hours of the hotel dining room.<sup>13</sup>

Competition between the tourist court and the hotel remained intense through the 1930s. Hotel associations warned travelers of lax health regulations at tourist camps, as well as unscrupulous owners and unsavory guests. In contrast, hotels, they argued, were well-maintained, fireproof buildings staffed by professionals who would not only serve their guests; they would also protect their guests. At the same time, cabin owners offered increasingly more hotel-like amenities to attract customers. Cabins soon included private bathrooms with hot and cold water, good mattresses, and free soap and towels.<sup>14</sup> However, in order to remain competitive, city hotels still felt obliged to lower costs, which for many sped up their deterioration and decline.

After the Great Depression, business and pleasure travel resumed with a vengeance. By 1935, Americans had more disposable income to spend on travel than they had since 1929. Hotel occupancy rates, which had dropped from 70 percent in 1929 to a low of 51 percent in 1932-1933, returned to 66 percent in 1937. Food and liquor sales, always critical to the financial solvency of city hotels, surged with the repeal of Prohibition in 1933.<sup>15</sup>

The battle between hotel and tourist court continued. A campaign by the American Hotel Association in 1938-1939 stressed the prestige, service, comfort, central location, and professionalism offered by hotels. At the same time, the *Tourist Camp Journal* urged owners to rename their establishments "courts" instead of "camps" and to offer patrons amenities like tiled bathrooms, twin beds with thick spreads, carpeting, air conditioning, and swimming pools.<sup>16</sup> However, the popularity of the cabin court had taken hold. By the end of World War II, it was increasingly common to find the individual cabins constructed as a single building, and the term "motor hotel" or "motel" soon replaced "court."<sup>17</sup> Within a decade, the modern motel chain was born, and the smaller urban hotels were largely transformed into low-rent apartments in neglected neighborhoods on the fringe of bustling urban centers.

#### Hotel Development in Kansas City's "Close-in" East Side Neighborhood

When construction on the Blackstone Hotel began in 1925, Kansas City was enjoying the building boom sweeping the nation. In addition to the completion of significant commercial buildings downtown during

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 146-47.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 146-150.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 143, 155.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 156.

<sup>17</sup> Chester A. Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile*, (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1985), 182.

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this era, the construction of residences, apartment buildings, and hotels in the surrounding neighborhoods "[proceeded] at a record pace."<sup>18</sup>

In 1922, the city's 86 hotels placed it fifth in the nation, behind only New York, San Francisco, Chicago, and Los Angeles.<sup>19</sup> The following year, Kansas City had 171 hotels, offering visitors over 12,000 rooms. An article in the *Kansas City Times* noted that the hotels in downtown Kansas City "form a circle around the business district," which was centered at 11<sup>th</sup> and Main streets at the time.<sup>20</sup>

By the end of 1924, hotel construction continued unchecked. Kansas City's Superintendent of Buildings, Russell H. Clark, reported several large hotel projects under construction, ranging in cost from \$100,000 to \$500,000.<sup>21</sup> The following spring, the *Kansas City Star* announced "[A] Big Crop of New Hotels" planned for Kansas City.<sup>22</sup> The twelve projects, expected to be under construction by April, represented 1,500 new guest rooms, 635 kitchenette suites, and a private investment of \$10 million. Several of the projects were planned in the East and West Side neighborhoods, "close-in" to the business district but well outside the convention center. Other hotel projects were located in outlying residential areas, near the suburban Country Club Plaza and Westport commercial districts. Yet, more hotel projects, such as the Blackstone Hotel, remained on the drawing board.

By the end of the decade, three grand hotels and four second-tier hotels, including the Blackstone Hotel, had been added to the downtown streetscape. All of the smaller hotels were located in the vicinity of 10<sup>th</sup> and Cherry streets.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>18</sup> "Three Big Projects Start," *Kansas City (MO) Star*, 30 July 1922 (Newspaper Clipping File. Kansas City: Kansas City, Missouri Public Library, Missouri Valley Room), Microfilm.

<sup>19</sup> "Kansas City is Fifth in Hotels."

<sup>20</sup> "Kansas City Ranks Fifth," *Kansas City (MO) Times*, 26 March 1923 (Newspaper Clipping File. Kansas City: Kansas City, Missouri Public Library, Missouri Valley Room), Microfilm.

<sup>21</sup> *Kansas City (MO) Star*, 24 December 1924 (Newspaper Clipping File. Kansas City: Kansas City, Missouri Public Library, Missouri Valley Room), Microfilm.

<sup>22</sup> "Big Crop of New Hotels," *Kansas City (MO) Star*, 29 March 1925 (Newspaper Clipping File. Kansas City: Kansas City, Missouri Public Library, Missouri Valley Room), Microfilm.

<sup>23</sup> City of Kansas City, Missouri Landmarks Commission, "Central Business District Survey Report," 1981, 20.

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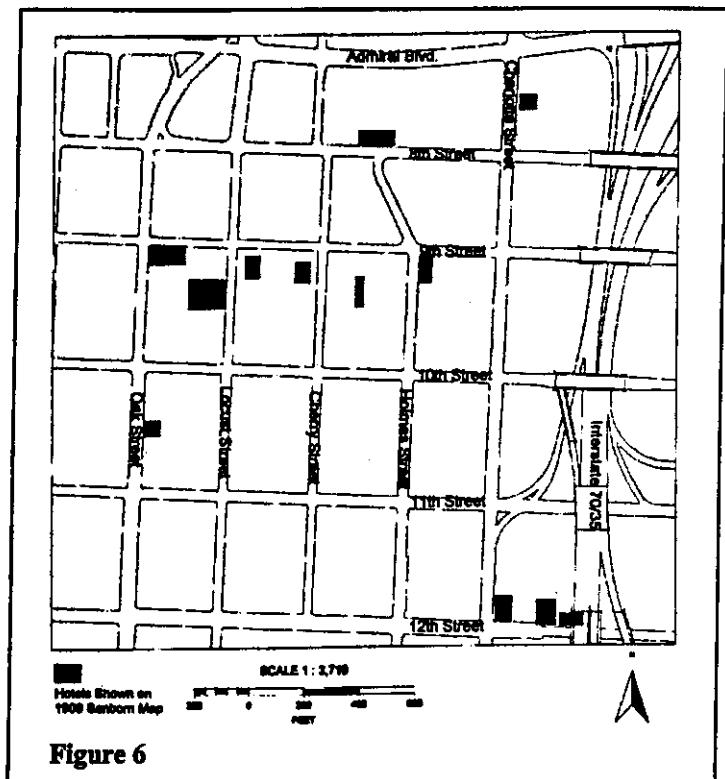
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The Kansas City "Historic Resources Survey Plan" identifies the Hotel property type as a distinct commercial functional building type. The plan notes that hotel designs adapted simple commercial building forms with ornamentation reflecting the popular styles of their period.<sup>24</sup> The simple form of the Blackstone Hotel, ornamented with elegant Georgian terracotta, is an excellent example of the Hotel property type in Kansas City.

The Blackstone Hotel's neighborhood, the "close-in" East Side of downtown, witnessed significant hotel development during early twentieth century. The mixed-use neighborhood of working- and middle-class residents was surrounded by the turn-of-the-century business district, the nineteenth century Old Town civic core, growing communities of Italian and Jewish immigrants, and an African-American neighborhood. A series of civic and social buildings constructed between 1890 and 1910 attest to the fashionable character of the neighborhood by this time. These included the Kansas City Public Library (500 East 9<sup>th</sup> Street), the YWCA (404 East 10<sup>th</sup> Street), and the Masonic Building (903 Harrison). Affordable land prices and proximity to the business and civic districts as well as to public transportation made the "close-in" East Side neighborhood attractive for the development of second-tier hotels for the numerous salesmen and jobbers visiting Kansas City. After World War II, this area lost its cache as residents flocked to the new suburban neighborhoods being developed throughout the Kansas City area. Many buildings were demolished through urban renewal programs for the creation of surface parking and the general removal of "blight."

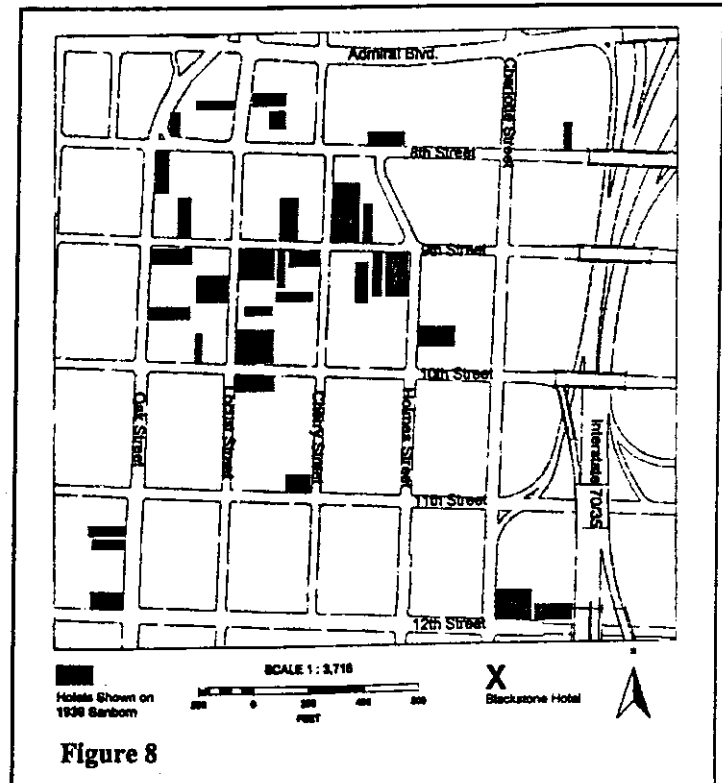
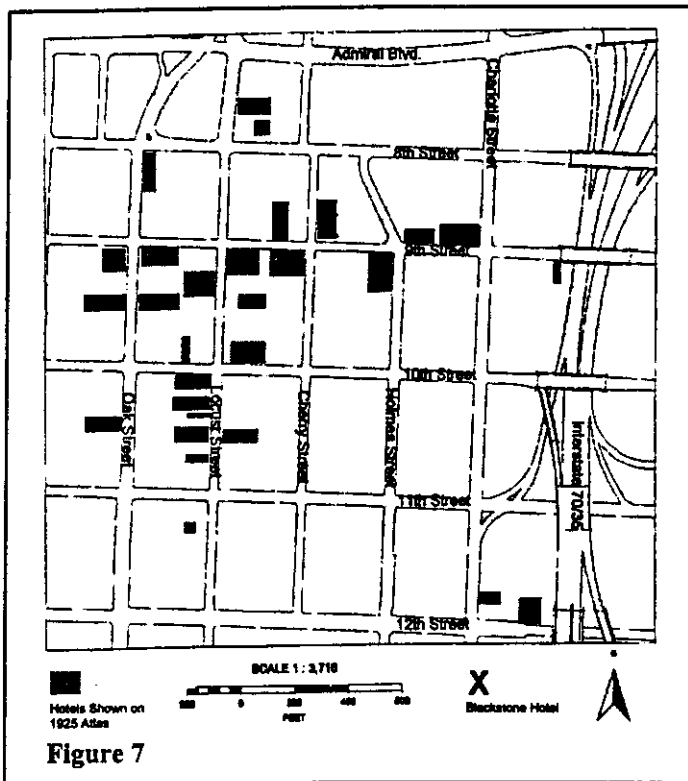


Review of an area bounded by Admiral Boulevard on the north, Campbell Street (Interstate 35) on the east, 12<sup>th</sup> Street on the south, and Oak Street on the west illustrates these patterns. The 1909 Sanborn Map

<sup>24</sup> City Planning and Development Department, Historic Preservation Management Division of Kansas City, Missouri in association with Thomason and Associates Preservation Planners and Three Gables Preservation, "Historic Resources Survey Plan of Kansas City" (Kansas City: Kansas City, Missouri Landmarks Commission) September 1992, 184.

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shows 12 hotels in this area (Figure 6).<sup>25</sup> Half of these were located within one half-block of 9<sup>th</sup> Street, between Holmes and Oak streets. Additional hotels were located at 8<sup>th</sup> and Holmes streets, on the 1000 block of Oak Street, and the 700 block of Charlotte Street. There was also a cluster of three hotels on 12<sup>th</sup> Street, between Charlotte and Campbell streets, in what was a predominantly African-American neighborhood.



Hotel size and room price illustrate the differences between the grand hotels and the second-tier hotels found in downtown Kansas City during this period. A document on file at the Kansas City Public Library lists hotel rooms and prices for downtown Kansas City Hotels in 1925. Although published before the construction of the Blackstone Hotel, the differences between the hotels in Kansas City's convention district (centered roughly at 12<sup>th</sup> and Wyandotte streets) and the hotels in the "close-in" East Side downtown neighborhood are clear. The eight hotels in the convention district average 288 rooms each, while the four East Side hotels each offer an average of 138 rooms. Rooms in the convention district range in price from \$1.50 per night for a single without a bath to \$15 per night for a double room with a

<sup>25</sup> Sanborn Map Company, *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Kansas City (Missouri) and Its Environs*, (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1909), (Kansas City: Kansas City, Missouri Public Library, Missouri Valley Room), Microfilm.

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bath. By contrast, on the East Side room prices began at \$1.00 for a single without a bath, and top out at \$5 for a double with a bath. Comparing the average prices for similar rooms, those in the convention district are roughly double those on the East Side. The average price of a single room with a bath in the convention district was \$4.14 per night, while the average price of a single with a bath on the East Side was \$2.22 per night. Rooms in the convention district exhibit a greater range in price, acknowledging the presence of some smaller, second-tier hotels in this neighborhood. For instance, while a double room without a bath in the convention district might cost guests between \$2.50 and \$5.00 per night, on the East Side, the same room would cost between \$2.00 and \$2.50 per night. At the least expensive convention district hotel, the room cost the same as at the most expensive East Side hotel.<sup>26</sup>

When the *Kansas City Star* announced the construction of a new apartment hotel in the ten hundred block of Locust Street in June 1925, it noted that there was an existing "close-in" apartment hotel district [already] established" in this vicinity.<sup>27</sup> The 1925 Tuttle-Ayers-Woodward Atlas clearly illustrates the trend toward hotel and apartment hotel construction.<sup>28</sup> The Atlas shows 29 hotels in this area (excluding specifically designated apartment hotels), including the Blackstone Hotel, the majority of which are clustered along 9<sup>th</sup>, Locust, and Oak streets (Figure 7). A few additional hotels were found to the north along 8<sup>th</sup> Street, and two remained at the corner of 12<sup>th</sup> and Charlotte streets.

In 1931, as new hotel construction waned, Kansas City ranked seventh in the nation in the number of hotel rooms among cities with populations over 250,000. The city's 210 hotels boasted over 16,000 rooms and total annual receipts approaching \$9 million.<sup>29</sup> The 1939 Sanborn map shows 32 hotels in the "close-in" East Side neighborhood (Figure 8).<sup>30</sup> Again, the majority of hotels are clustered along 9<sup>th</sup>, Locust, and Oak streets.

<sup>26</sup> "A List of Kansas City Hotels, September 30, 1925," (Kansas City: Kansas City, Missouri Public Library, Missouri Valley Room), Vertical File.

<sup>27</sup> "The Drake Apartment Hotel Which will Replace a Drab Old House at 1016-18 Locust Street," *Kansas City (MO) Star*, 14 June 1925 (Kansas City: Kansas City, Missouri Public Library, Missouri Valley Room), Microfilm.

<sup>28</sup> Frank W. Tuttle et al, *Atlas of Kansas City, Missouri and Environs*, (Kansas City: Tuttle-Ayers-Woodward Company, 1925).

<sup>29</sup> "K.C. Ranks 7<sup>th</sup> Among Cities of One Half Million," *Kansas City (MO) Star*, 13 November 1931. (Kansas City: Kansas City, Missouri Public Library, Missouri Valley Room), Microfilm.

<sup>30</sup> Sanborn Map Company, *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Kansas City, Missouri* (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1939) (Kansas City: Kansas City, Missouri Public Library, Missouri Valley Room), Microfilm.

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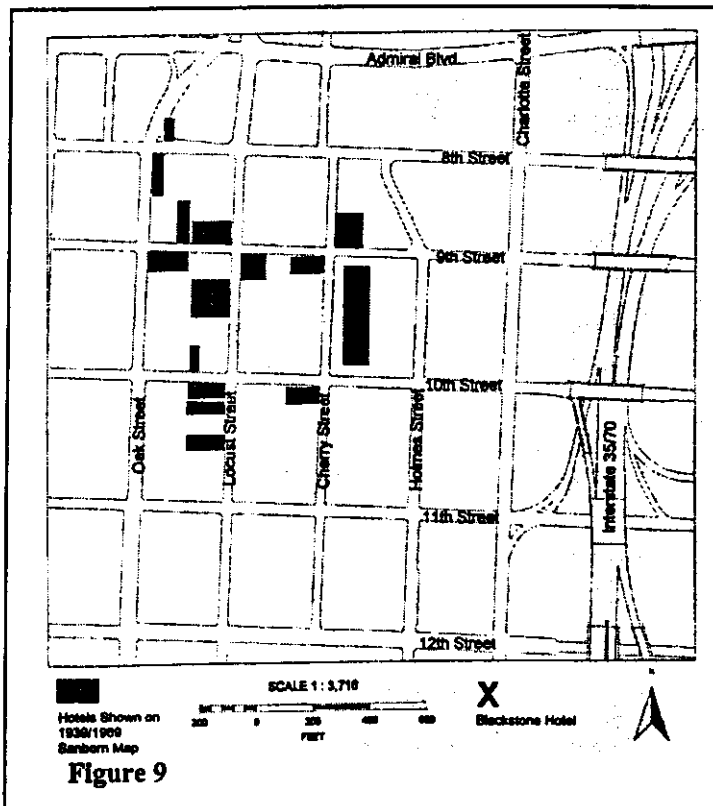
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By 1969, the date of the next available Sanborn map, the area had changed considerably.<sup>31</sup> Only fifteen hotels appear, including the recently constructed Travel Lodge Motel, which occupies the length of the 900 block of Cherry Street (Figure 9). The remnants of the earlier 9<sup>th</sup> and Locust streets hotel district remain visible, in the few additional properties scattered on adjacent blocks.

Today, only the Blackstone Hotel and the Travel Lodge (now the Cherry Street Inn) are extant. The hotels on the blocks between Oak and Locust streets were removed in the 1990s, prior to the construction of the new Federal Courthouse (completed in 1998) and the Ilus Davis Civic Mall (completed in 2002). The remainder had been previously demolished to create surface parking lots.

The Blackstone Hotel

Construction of the Blackstone Hotel began in the late summer of 1925. In August, the Jewell Realty Company received a permit for the construction of a four-story, 79-by-90-foot, brick and concrete hotel with a tar and gravel roof from a design by Phillip Drotts.<sup>32</sup> With an estimated price tag of \$90,000, the work was underway by September 2, when the project was listed in the *Western Contractor*.<sup>33</sup> Approximately one year later, *Western Contractor* noted that construction was underway on a 50-by-132-foot, fireproof brick, steel, and concrete public garage at 809 Cherry Street at a cost of \$10,000.<sup>34</sup> The inclusion of a garage in the original design was an important concession to the increasing popularity of the automobile as a means of transportation, and it set the Blackstone Hotel apart from most other hotels in its class and vicinity.



<sup>31</sup> Sanborn Map Company, *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Kansas City, Missouri* (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1939 Corrected to 1969) (Kansas City: Kansas City, Missouri Public Library, Missouri Valley Room), Microfilm.

<sup>32</sup> City of Kansas City, Missouri, Building Permit number 14435. Kansas City: City of Kansas City, Missouri Landmarks Commission, 1925). The building permit incorrectly identifies the architect as Phillip "Pratts."

<sup>33</sup> *Western Contractor*, 2 September 1925, 34.

<sup>34</sup> *Western Contractor*, 29 September 1926, 40.

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The first resident manager of the hotel was Mrs. Elizabeth L. Young.<sup>35</sup> Along with her husband, William, Mrs. Young held this position until the late 1930s. During the pre-World War II period, the commercial tenants at the Blackstone Hotel epitomized the services associated with second-tier neighborhood hotels. The 9<sup>th</sup> Street storefronts consistently housed a deli, beauty shop, barbershop, and tailor shop/dry cleaners through 1945. It is also interesting to note that until World War II, most of the shop owners lived within a few blocks of the Blackstone Hotel, suggesting that the neighborhood character was strongly middle class. It is only after World War II that records begin to show the hotel manager as well as the shopkeepers living in neighborhoods south and east of downtown, signaling a change in the character of the neighborhood and ultimately of the hotel.

Along Cherry Street, the storefront nearest the garage appears to have served a more industrial function from an early point in the Blackstone Hotel's history. By 1935, it housed a warehouse of the Missouri District Telegraph Company (later the American District Telegraph Company), whose main office was located a few blocks away at 102 East 9<sup>th</sup> Street. The company was described in the 1950 city directory as a manufacturer of burglar and fire alarms.

In addition, in 1935, the manager of the Blackstone Garage, Carl Olson, also operated the Strup and Olson Auto Repair business from the garage with his partner, Hughie Strup. Five years later, Strup operated the parking garage and auto repair business by himself.

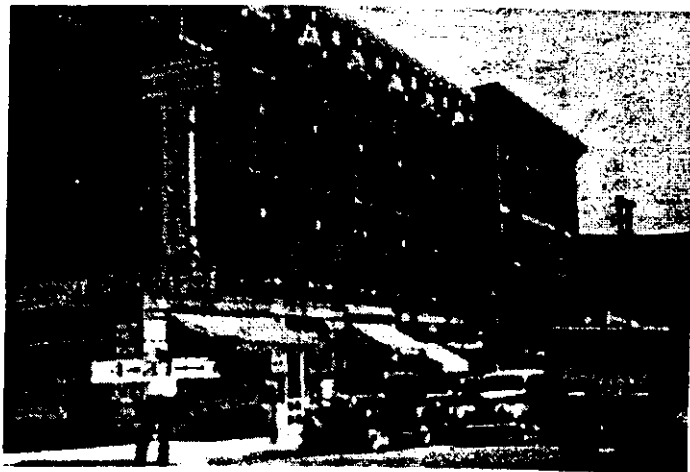


Figure 10: Jackson County Tax Assessor's Photograph, c. 1940

When Investor Leonard Kushell purchased the Blackstone Hotel in 1942, the neighborhood was bustling. The Jackson County Tax Assessor's photograph (Figure 10), taken approximately two years earlier, shows the building with lively storefronts adorned with striped canvas awnings and a large sign at the corner advertising double rooms for one dollar. At that time, the *Kansas City Star* reported that the fireproof hotel offered "sixty-six rooms, seven ground floor shops and a garage."<sup>36</sup>

<sup>35</sup> All information about building occupants comes from the *Polk's Kansas City (Jackson County, Missouri) Directories* for the years between 1926 and 1970. Please refer to the Bibliography for complete citations.

<sup>36</sup> "Blackstone," *Kansas City (MO) Star*, 2 August 1942 (Kansas City: Kansas City, Missouri Public Library, Missouri Valley Room), Microfilm.



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The changing character of the Blackstone Hotel and of the surrounding neighborhood can be inferred from the make-up of the hotel's commercial tenants. Although the Blackstone Deli had occupied a storefront in the hotel since it opened, and the corner location as early as 1935, between 1945 and 1950, Harry Siegelbaum moved the deli down the street to 622 East 9<sup>th</sup> Street. While the corner storefront was vacant

in 1950, Ben Casey Drugs, which occupied 602 East 9<sup>th</sup> Street, expanded into the corner storefront by mid-decade. At this time, the hotel still housed a barbershop and a café, but the beauty parlor was gone and, by 1955, the easternmost storefront housed a small television repair shop. As early as 1950 the garage ceased to serve a public function, and was leased to toy manufacturer, Ro Ko, Inc., owned by Sherman Rosenberg.



Figure 11: Blackstone Hotel, 1958

A 1958 economic and engineering analysis of the property shows that a grocery occupied the corner storefront and a restaurant was next door on 9<sup>th</sup> Street.<sup>37</sup> The two Cherry Street storefronts were leased to the tenant of the garage (Ro Ko, Inc.) — one was used as an office and the other was sub-leased to a photographer. Two years later, Mrs. Virginia L. Hooper, a widow, was the resident manager of the hotel. Friendship Greetings, Inc., a wholesale distributor of greeting cards, occupied 815 Cherry Street. Benjamin Casey had moved Ben Casey Drugs to 701 East 31<sup>st</sup> Street, but Robert Rabinowitz continued to operate Ben Casey Sundries at the corner of 9<sup>th</sup> and Cherry streets. In the photo that accompanies the report (Figure 11), the canvas awnings look somewhat less fresh and the dominant storefront signage on the

building advertises beer and liquor.

By 1970, the majority of the buildings in the “close-in” East Side neighborhood had been demolished for surface parking. Only a handful of hotels remained, and none retained the élan of the 1920s era in which they were built. Patrick K. Hadley was listed as the resident hotel manager at the Blackstone that year. Ben Casey Sundries and Ben Casey Liquors occupied the western storefronts on 9<sup>th</sup> Street, while a Mexican restaurant, El Takito, had taken over the café space. The Scandia Furniture Frame Company occupied the Cherry Street storefront.

<sup>37</sup> Real Estate Research Corporation, “Engineering and Economic Analysis of the Blackstone Hotel, 817 Cherry, Parcel 6190,” (12 March 1958): 6, (Kansas City: City of Kansas City, Missouri Landmarks Commission), photocopy.

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Developer: Jewell Realty Company

In 1925, the Jewell Realty Company, controlled by William R. Jewell and William R. Jewell, Jr., commissioned architect Phillip Drotts to design two similar hotel buildings, the Blackstone Hotel and the Emerson Apartment Hotel, located at the intersection of Linwood Boulevard and Garfield Avenue.<sup>38</sup> During that year, Jewell Realty also built the 200-room Robert E. Lee Hotel at the northwest corner of 13<sup>th</sup> and Wyandotte streets, in the heart of the convention district.<sup>39</sup> From downtown offices in the Chambers Building, Jewell Realty Company actively developed medium to large commercial buildings, apartment buildings, and hotels throughout the 1920s. During the previous decade, an earlier manifestation of the company, the Jewell-Huth Construction Company, was involved in single-family residential construction in Kansas City.

Architect: Phillip T. Drotts

An active architect in Kansas City throughout the first half of the twentieth century, Phillip Theodore Drotts primarily designed apartment buildings and hotels. Early in his forty-five-year career, Drotts worked with two prominent Kansas City architects. He was a draftsman in John McKecknie's office from 1907 to 1918. McKecknie's passion for reinforced concrete exposed Drotts to the abilities of this material during its early experimental years. In the early 1920s, Drotts worked in partnership with Ernest Brostrom, whose forte was designing churches and apartment buildings. Drotts' partnership with Brostrom resulted in such Kansas City landmarks as the George Rushton Baking Company building

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<sup>38</sup> *Western Contractor*, 2 September 1925, 34.

<sup>39</sup> *Kansas City (MO) Star*, 9 April 1925 and "A New Hotel Opens Today," *Kansas City (MO) Times*, 9 November 1925 (Kansas City: Kansas City, Missouri Public Library, Missouri Valley Room), Microfilm.

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(1920; 814 Southwest Boulevard); the Newbern Apartments building (1921; 525 East Armour Boulevard); and the Broadway Baptist Church (1922; 3931 Washington).<sup>40</sup>

In 1924, Drotts established his own practice with a downtown office in the Reliance Building. His business quickly flourished. In 1925 alone, he designed the Blackstone Hotel, the Bainbridge Apartments building, and the Aladdin Hotel, which received third place in a contest sponsored by the Business District League for new downtown structures.<sup>41</sup> Drotts went on to design dozens of distinctive buildings throughout Kansas City, Missouri through the late 1940s. His portfolio includes the Clyde Manor Apartments building (1930; 330 East Armour Boulevard) and the Wrenmoor Apartments building (1927; 919 East Armour Boulevard).<sup>42</sup> Phillip Drotts died on May 16, 1960.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> The George Rushton Baking Company Building is listed in the Register of Historic Kansas Places. The Newbern Apartments is individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

<sup>41</sup> Sherry Piland, "A Kansas City Architect: Phillip Drotts," *Historic Kansas City Foundation Gazette*, July/August 1983. The Bainbridge Apartments building (1925; 900 East Armour Boulevard.) is listed in the National Register of Historic Places as a contributing resource to the "Armour Boulevard Multiple Resource Area." The Aladdin Hotel is listed in the National Register of Historic Places as a contributing resource to the "Hotels in the Downtown Area of Kansas City Historic District" thematic nomination.

<sup>42</sup> Both the Clyde Manor Apartments building and the Wrenmoor Apartments building are listed in the National Register of Historic Places as contributing resources in the Armour Boulevard Multiple Resource Area.

<sup>43</sup> "Phillip T. Drotts," *Kansas City (MO) Times*, 17 May 1960 (Kansas City: Kansas City, Missouri Public Library, Missouri Valley Room), Microfilm.

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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section 10 Page 28

Blackstone Hotel  
Jackson County, Missouri

**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

Lot 2, Himmelstein-Rabicoff Park, Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri.

**BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION**

This nomination includes the parcel of land historically associated with the resource.

**PHOTO LOG**

**Photographer:** Brad Finch, F-Stop Photography, Kansas City, Missouri  
**Date of Photographs:** April 2003  
**Location of Negatives:** Department of Housing and Community Development  
11<sup>th</sup> floor, City Hall  
414 East 12<sup>th</sup> Street  
Kansas City, Missouri 64106

<u>Photograph No.</u>	<u>Description and Camera View</u>
1)	West and south elevations, view looking northeast.
2)	South and east elevations, view looking northwest.
3)	South elevation, view looking north.
4)	West elevation, view looking east.
5)	Detail of storefronts and main hotel entry (at left), west elevation, view looking east.
6)	North and west elevations, view looking southeast.
7)	West and north elevations showing wall sign and terracotta detail, view looking southeast.
8)	Detail of terracotta banding above storefront transoms, view looking east.
9)	Detail of terracotta treatment at cornice and upper-story windows, view looking north.
10)	Interior view of hotel entry, view looking west.
11)	Main staircase in hotel lobby, view looking southwest.
12)	Interior of corner commercial space, view looking south.
13)	Typical upper floor corridor, view looking east.
14)	Typical room entrance, view looking south.
15)	Typical bathroom, view looking northwest.
16)	Parking garage, view looking east.
17)	Parking garage, view looking south.



ACKSTONE HOTEL  
NSAS CITY  
CKSON COUNTY  
SSOURI  
mi. 15/363755/  
4329460







Staffing  
Network

**NOW  
HIRING**











FREE PARKING BLACKSTONE HOTEL

150  
UP























