

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form**

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

**1. Name of Property**

historic name Colonial Hotel

other name/site number Colonial Apartments

**2. Location**

street & town 328 East Broadway N/A not for publication

city or town Excelsior Springs, N/A vicinity

state Missouri code MO county Clay code 047 zip code 64024

**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.)

Mark A Miles  
Signature of certifying official/Title Mark A. Miles/Deputy SHPO

MAY 10, 2010  
Date

Missouri Department of Natural Resources  
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 certifying official/Title Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that the property is:

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

☐ 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:) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Colonial Hotel  
Name of Property

Clay County, MO  
County and State

**Ownership of Property**  
(check as many boxes as apply)

**Category of Property**  
(check only one box)

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

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

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures <input type="checkbox"/>
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**

**Number of contributing resources previously listed**

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

**in the National Register**

N/A

N/A

**Historic Function**

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC; Hotel  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Function**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Vacant  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Revivals  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation limestone  
walls brick  
roof asphalt  
other \_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description**

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

☒ See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 7

Colonial Hotel  
Name of Property

Clay County, MO  
County and State

## Applicable National Register Criteria

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

☒ **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

☐ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

☒ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

☐ **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

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.

### Narrative Statement of Significance

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

## Areas of Significance

(enter categories from instructions)

Commerce

Architecture

### Period of Significance

1924-1960

### Significant Dates

1924

### Significant Persons

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

### Cultural Affiliation

N/A

### Architect/Builder

unknown

☒ See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 8

## Major Bibliographical 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

repository:

- ☐ 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  
Register ☐ University  
☐ designated a National Historic Landmark ☐ Other Name of

☒ See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 9

Colonial Hotel  
Name of Property

Clay County, MO  
County and State

Acreage of Property less than one acre

#### UTM References

(Place additional boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

1 15 394860 4355500  
Zone Easting Northing

2 / / / / / / / / / / / / / / / /  
Zone Easting Northing

3 / / / / / / / / / / / / / / / /  
Zone Easting Northing

4 / / / / / / / / / / / / / / / /  
Zone Easting Northing

#### Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Kugler's Addition, Lot 31, Block 8, Excelsior Springs, Clay County, Missouri

Property Tax No. 12312001602200

#### Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary encompasses all of the property historically associated with the Colonial Hotel.

☐ See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 10

name/title Rhonda Chalfant, Ph.D.

organization Chalfant Consulting

date November 2, 2009

street & number 619 West 32<sup>nd</sup> Street

telephone 660-826-5592

city or town Sedalia

state MO zip code 65301

#### Verbal Description

Submit the following items with the completed form:

#### Continuation Sheets

##### Maps

**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

name/title Downtown Excelsior Partnership, Inc.

street & number % Ginger Nelson, 115 East Broadway

telephone 660-630-5060

city or town Excelsior Springs

state MO zip code 64024

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

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

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National Park Service

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Section 7 Page 1

Colonial Hotel  
Clay County, Missouri

**Summary:** The Colonial Hotel, located at 328 East Broadway, Excelsior Springs, Clay County, Missouri, is a symmetrical, three-story, red brick building. Constructed ca. 1924, the building is an example of the colonnaded apartment; a property type commonly built in small cities and urban areas in Missouri in the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The type is characterized by multi-story porches supported by brick or wood columns. The Colonial Hotel has a three-tiered porch supported by four nearly full-height square brick columns. The porch roof is a shed-roof that begins at the base of a plain parapet and extends across the width of the building. The primary entrance is centered in the three-bay façade. The exterior of the building retains integrity and looks today very much as it does in a ca. 1950 postcard (figure 1).

**Elaboration:** The Colonial Hotel faces south on East Broadway Avenue, the main business street in Excelsior Springs. The location is within two blocks of the major downtown intersection of Broadway Avenue and Main Street. The front of the building reaches the sidewalk. The building is very close to nondescript one-story buildings on either side. These flanking buildings are slated for demolition.

The three-story Colonial Hotel is a red brick building with a central entry and four tall, square brick columns that support a full width porch. A sloping porch roof spans the façade. The load bearing walls are laid in a pattern of running bond with every seventh row being in Flemish bond. The windows are wood, with wood sills and lintels painted white. The roof is flat with a parapet that conceals gutters.

In the south (front) façade of the building, square brick columns mark each corner and the central entry. The columns extend to the third story where they support a roof over the third story gallery. Each story has a central door opening onto the porch/gallery. The doors are flanked by groupings of windows. Windows are four-over-one, with the four lights at the top divided vertically. On the first story, the windows are in two groups of three. On the second and third stories, the windows are paired. On the second and third stories, wooden railings surround the galleries while on the first story, a low brick divider capped with concrete surrounds the porch. The porch steps are flanked by low brick posts capped with stone slabs. Planter urns formerly adorned the posts (photo 1).

The east elevation has six bays. This elevation does not display the symmetry of the south and north elevations, as the windows are in different configurations on each story. On the first floor, the windows in two of the bays are small, flanking an interior fireplace. Some first story windows are paired and others are single units. Two entrances access the building from a small open porch (photo 3).

The west elevation is somewhat more symmetrical than the east, with the second and third stories having an identical fenestration pattern involving five bays, with three pairs of windows, a small single window, and a pair of windows. The first story also has five bays consisting of three window pairs and two side entrances although there is no longer a porch (photo 2).

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Colonial Hotel  
Clay County, Missouri

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The north (rear) elevation has a central entrance on each story (infilled with wood). A metal fire escape is intact in the rear. Each doorway is flanked by a window pair (4/1s). At the northwest corner, a stairway leads to the building's basement (photo 5).

The pattern of windows and doorways suggests that the building originally had four rooms with adequate closets on each side of a central hallway and a bath shared by the four rooms on that side of the hallway, or two four-room apartments with adequate closets on each floor. The building was subdivided into smaller apartments in ca. 1970, and as a result the bathroom and toilet fixtures are in unusual places. In one unit, the toilet is in a closet off the same room as the kitchen. In another unit the bathroom sink is between a closet housing the kitchen sink and a closet that once held the toilet. In yet another unit, the shower is in a closet next to a separate closet housing the toilet (photos 7, 8). The kitchens in each unit are very small, with a metal wall cabinet in one version and a 1970s vintage sink cabinet in another version. The lintels of the doors are angled. The hardwood floors have been covered with flat pile carpeting, but seem to be intact.

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Colonial Hotel  
Clay County, Missouri

**Summary:** Built in ca. 1924, the Colonial Hotel at 328 East Broadway, Excelsior Springs, Clay County, Missouri, is locally significant under Criteria A and C in the areas of Health/Medicine and Architecture. The Colonial provided residential space for those visiting Excelsior Springs for an extended period of time in order to "take the waters" as well as individuals working in the medical and tourism industries that developed in connection with the city's growth as a health spa. Billing itself as "America's Haven of Health," Excelsior Springs was the site of twenty mineral springs and also developed numerous sanitariums, bathhouses, and spas where people could attempt to cure their various ailments. During the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the city advertised itself and its mineral springs widely and became a center for vacations and professional conventions with a number of recreational facilities to provide activities for the visitors.<sup>1</sup> Located in close proximity to numerous springs and spas, the Colonial Hotel is a good local example of a property constructed to serve these visitors as well as long-term residents. Under Criterion C, the Colonial exemplifies the "square brick column colonnade type apartment building" which has been identified as a type popular in small cities and urban areas in Missouri in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>2</sup> It is the only intact, unaltered three-story, flat roofed, square column colonnaded apartment building in Excelsior Springs. The period of significance runs from the building's construction in ca. 1924 through ca. 1960, after which the medical benefits of hydrotherapy were effectively debunked, ending Excelsior Springs' period of prosperity as a health resort.

**Elaboration (Part I):** The Colonial Hotel is located on East Broadway, the main street in Excelsior Springs' business district. Two blocks east of Main Street, the Colonial is near the business district on Broadway Avenue, the Siloam Spring and Gardens, and the Hall of Waters (NR listed 6/9/83). The 1926 Sanborn insurance map shows the Colonial Hotel across from the Maples, one of the city's larger hotels, and in the block east of the Lyndhurst Hotel and the Lyndhurst Annex (figure 2). Directly across the street from the Colonial, at 329 East Broadway, was Dr. S. D. Henry's offices and bathhouse. The Colonial lies east of the Excelsior Springs Hall of Waters Commercial Historic District (NR listed 5/27/99) and west of the proposed Boarding House Historic District (proposed by Wolfenbarger in 1994). In addition, it was included in Wolfenbarger's 1991 survey of historic resources as being eligible for individual listing in the National Register.<sup>3</sup> Like most of the hotels and apartments in Excelsior Springs, the Colonial covers most of the lot on which it sits. It is flanked by two small, one-story buildings slated for demolition.

Excelsior Springs is a small town (population approximately 11,000) located about 30 miles northeast of Kansas City. The terrain is hilly and timbered, making the site pleasant for tourists and lending itself to a number of parks and attractive vistas, an aspect of the city

<sup>1</sup> *Excelsior Springs: America's Haven of Health*, (Excelsior Springs, MO: Chamber of Commerce, 1930), passim.

<sup>2</sup> Sally E. Schwenk, *Historic Colonnade Apartment Buildings of Kansas City, Missouri*, National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Submission, December 2003, 11.

<sup>3</sup> Deon Wolfenbarger, *Excelsior Springs Historic Resources Survey Plan*, June 1994; Deon Wolfenbarger, *Excelsior Springs Historic District Survey Plan*, July 1991.

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Colonial Hotel  
Clay County, Missouri

advertised as part of its allure for tourists and those seeking a healthy climate. Excelsior Springs is near the Watkins Mill State Historic Site near Lawson, Missouri, and the Jesse James Home in Kearney, Missouri. Both of these sites were advertised in early tourism brochures.

Excelsior Springs originally developed as a health spa and resort town around the area's 20 mineral springs. Local residents had noted the presence of the mineral springs as early as the 1840s, according to the *History of Clay County*.<sup>4</sup> Several stories offer explanations of the springs' healing powers. Some stories apparently were repeated until eventually making their way into local histories.<sup>5</sup> Other accounts refer to Native Americans, especially Chief Wapoo, and appear to have been created by city boosters to add "authenticity" by attributing mystical qualities to Indians.<sup>6</sup>

Whatever the story of the discovery of the springs' medicinal powers, they were first exploited by the Rev. Dr. J. V. B. Flack. Flack had samples of the water analyzed by chemists Wright and Merrill in St. Louis, who found the water contained iron manganese, soda bicarbonate, sulphur, saline, and lithia.<sup>7</sup> The *History of Clay County* identifies four separate springs known in 1885—the Excelsior, the Saratoga, the Relief, and the Empire—each with water containing a different combination of minerals that could treat and cure a variety of diseases.<sup>8</sup> Meanwhile, during the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, hydrotherapy or the "water cure" was becoming a popular treatment option.<sup>9</sup> According to Loring Bullard, between 1870 and 1880, nearly 80 of Missouri's many springs were operated as health resorts.<sup>10</sup> Excelsior Springs, catering to the visitors who came to take the waters, became one of the most popular. Growth was rapid, and by 1883, its population was 1,375.<sup>11</sup>

Before the railroad arrived, the area was relatively isolated, a situation that made its rapid growth unusual.<sup>12</sup> The Chicago, Milwaukee, & St. Paul Railroad line between Chicago and Kansas City passed through Excelsior Springs in 1887, increasing the number of tourists and the number of permanent residents whose businesses served the tourist trade as well as local

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<sup>4</sup> *History of Clay County* (Indianapolis: National Historical Company, 1885), 384. Hereafter cited as HCC.

<sup>5</sup> HCC, 384; *Excelsior Springs: America's Haven of Health*, 5; James Watson, ed., *Reflections of Excelsior Springs* (Marceline, MO: Heritage House, 1992).

<sup>6</sup> Philip DeLoria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale, 1988), 103; *Excelsior Springs: America's Haven of Health*, 5; *Wapoo: Keeper of the Springs* (Excelsior Springs, MO: McClardy Sanitarium and Clinic, 1939), passim, pamphlet on file at the State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia, Missouri; *Excelsior Springs in the Valley of Vitality* (Excelsior Springs, MO: Valley of Vitality Club, n.d.), pamphlet on file at the State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia, Missouri. This document can be dated as post-1939 because it includes descriptions and photographs of the Hall of Waters, built in 1939.

<sup>7</sup> HCC, 384.

<sup>8</sup> HCC, 387.

<sup>9</sup> Katherine Sklar, "All Hail to Pure Cold Water," *American Heritage*, 26 (December 74), 64, 66.

<sup>10</sup> Loring Bullard, *Healing Waters* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2004), 22-23.

<sup>11</sup> HCC, 384-86.

<sup>12</sup> *America's Haven of Health*, 7.



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Colonial Hotel  
Clay County, Missouri

residents. The Wabash Railroad also extended its line into Excelsior Springs, further stimulating the town's growth.<sup>13</sup>

In 1889, the *Kansas City Star* reported that Excelsior Springs had 3,500 residents.<sup>14</sup> In addition, the city had a large transient population. "Thousands visit here," said the *Star*, taking advantage of the "large number of cottage hotels" as well as eight larger hotels. Statistics cited by the *Star* showed that of a thousand patients treated by one physician, most stayed less than two months but others stayed as long as six months.<sup>15</sup>

Excelsior Springs' growth continued because it was able to adapt to the changing desires of its clientele. The popularity of health resorts, hydrotherapy, and bottled mineral water waned somewhat in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, according to Bullard, in part because magazines such as *Everybody's Magazine* and *Good Housekeeping* criticized health spas as quackery. Many of the state's resorts were rather primitive and closed as visitors demanded more and better amenities, but Excelsior Springs thrived.<sup>16</sup> Excelsior Springs rebuffed criticism of the water cure by the presence of its sanitariums managed by doctors, including the Ball Clinic, the McCleary Clinic, the Thornton Minor Hospital, and the Excelsior Clinic.

The city dealt with concerns about its accessibility by advertising the ease with which it could be reached. In addition to the trains already serving the city, transportation was further enhanced when Excelsior Springs became a stop on the Kansas City, Clay County, & St. Joseph Interurban Railroad. Transportation into Excelsior Springs was also improved as a result of the Governor's Good Roads Plan that eventually resulted in Highway 69 being paved and county roads being surfaced with gravel.

To further improve the city and its position as a health resort and tourist center, Excelsior Springs embarked on a plan of improvement characteristic of the Progressive Era and the City Beautiful movement. Goals included better public utilities, electric street lamps, sewers and sanitary facilities, paved and resurfaced streets, granitoid sidewalks, city parks and drives, and a new pavilion at the Siloam Spring.

City utilities were largely developed by Dr. W. A. Bell, owner of the Bell Clinic.<sup>17</sup> The city installed electric street lamps in 1915, creating a "brilliant white way" along Broadway Avenue which was repaved with new sidewalks installed.<sup>18</sup> The city also embarked on a "Sanitation Movement" creating a sewer system, encouraging homeowners to add indoor plumbing, and enacting ordinances mandating such things as the re-building of privies and the use of window

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<sup>13</sup> "In the City of Health," *Kansas City Star*, 20 April 1899.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Bullard, 96-97; 107.

<sup>17</sup> *America's Haven of Health*, 11.

<sup>18</sup> *Kansas City Times*, 22 October 1915.

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Colonial Hotel  
Clay County, Missouri

screens. Excelsior Springs was soon named one of the most sanitary cities in the nation.<sup>19</sup> The emphasis on sanitation was important to Excelsior Springs as a further confirmation of the health benefits of its resorts. The city had long advertised itself as being so healthy that it had no mosquitoes and no malaria.<sup>20</sup>

A part of the civic improvement plan for the creation and improvement of city parks was begun in 1915. At this time landscape architect George E. Kessler and the Kansas City firm of Hare and Hare were hired to create a system of scenic drives and walks, and to lay out parks. In addition, in 1922, the city passed a bond issue to pay for rebuilding a shabby pavilion at the Siloam Spring and landscaping of the Siloam Gardens. By 1923, the parks and drives system occupied 100 of the city's 907 acres.<sup>21</sup>

World War I provided an unexpected benefit to Excelsior Springs. Many of the health resorts in Europe were inaccessible, and well-to-do Americans accustomed to traveling to Germany, Belgium, and Switzerland instead came to Excelsior Springs, which had two of the world's six iron-manganese springs.<sup>22</sup> In addition, the emphasis on enjoyment following the war's devastation and accompanying the Roaring Twenties prompted more people to travel to vacation spots.

Civic organizations vigorously advertised the town's beauty and healthfulness. The women's Civic Improvement Association and the businessmen's Commercial Club gave Excelsior Springs "the widest publicity possible." A paid secretary directed the effort of "attracting visitors and making them comfortable when they arrive."<sup>23</sup> In 1920, their efforts were lauded: "They have made the town; they guarantee its future." The 1920 *History of Clay County* praised the quality and number of hotels, apartments and boarding houses by noting that Excelsior Springs made "more substantial provision" for visitors than other towns that relied on only seasonal visitors. Excelsior Springs had become a "real town, a real health and pleasure resort."<sup>24</sup>

By 1923, according to the *Excelsior Springs Daily Standard*, all the springs had been placed under city control. In addition to standard civic amenities such as streetlights, paved streets, water mains, fire hydrants, schools and stores, the newspaper identified health and medical services including 20 bathhouses, 19 mineral water dispensaries, three sanitariums, two hospitals, seven masseurs, six nurses, four optometrists, six osteopaths, 26 physicians, five chiropractors, and five dentists. The three theaters, one hundred acres of parks, 36-hole golf course, bridle paths, walking trails, bowling alleys, billiard halls, roller skating rink, target

<sup>19</sup> *Excelsior Springs Weekly Standard*, June, July, August 1916, passim.

<sup>20</sup> "In the City of Health" *Kansas City Star*, 20 April 1899.

<sup>21</sup> Deon Wolfenbarger, *Excelsior Springs Park and Driveway System Survey*, 15 February 1994, 11-14; *America's Haven of Health*, 21-26.

<sup>22</sup> Woodson, 177.

<sup>23</sup> *Clay County, Missouri, Centennial Souvenir*, 70-72.

<sup>24</sup> W.H. Woodson, *History of Clay County* (Topeka: Historical Publishing Co., 1920), 175.

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Colonial Hotel  
Clay County, Missouri

shooting range, swimming pools, fishing and boating lake, and penny arcade provided ample of recreation for those visiting the city.<sup>25</sup> Excelsior Springs clearly had all the amenities of a health and pleasure resort.

The increased number of visitors coming to Excelsior Springs prompted a need for more lodging. During the 1920s, an average of 250,000 people per year visited Excelsior Springs and needed places to stay within walking distance of the springs and bathhouses, as walking was considered a part of the cure.<sup>26</sup> Excelsior Springs particularly needed long-term temporary quarters such as boarding houses and hotels. The expectation that people could recover from serious diseases in from ten days to three weeks was considered unrealistic by many physicians, and visitors to the springs were encouraged to stay for four to six months.<sup>27</sup> Increasing numbers of visitors also meant that more workers would be employed in the health and tourism industries in order to serve them. These workers also needed housing, preferably within walking distance of the workplace since the town had no public transportation.

In 1923, the *Excelsior Springs Daily Standard* identified four first class hotels and 16 second class hotels, 87 houses renting furnished rooms, and 28 apartments.<sup>28</sup> The hotels catered especially to the more well-to-do, short-term visitor, providing furnished rooms and other amenities including restaurants. The 87 boarding houses were generally 19<sup>th</sup> century, single-family dwellings that had been altered to provide rooms with second-story porches where the guests could enjoy the fresh air. Most of the boarding houses constructed between 1900 and 1905 were built for that purpose. The boarding houses generally provided communal meals for their residents, as comments about the owners' culinary skills suggest.<sup>29</sup> The apartments often provided kitchenette facilities so that their residents had the option of eating in restaurants or preparing simple meals at home. As the demand for up-to-date housing increased, the number of multi-family dwellings increased. Most of the boarding houses and apartments were located east of the downtown area, according to Wolfenbarger's survey of the proposed Boarding House District. In addition, other boarding houses and apartments were scattered through other areas of the city.

Distinctions between the three types of multiple family housing (hotels, boarding houses and apartments) have been defined by architectural historian Ward Bucher. Bucher defines a hotel as "a building with suites or rooms for rent by the day [that] typically include public facilities for dining and entertainment." A boarding house, according to Bucher, is "a building where rooms are rented and meals provided to residents for a fixed term." An apartment house is "a building with multiple dwellings, each of which has kitchen facilities [although] originally the term was reserved for buildings occupied by the wealthy and/or those without

<sup>25</sup> "Items of Interest About the Springs," *Excelsior Springs Daily Standard*, 11 October 1923.

<sup>26</sup> Bonnie Burnett Keller, 1961. Clipping in Clay County file in the Vertical File at the State Historical Society, Columbia, MO

<sup>27</sup> "In the City of Health" *Kansas City Star*, 20 April 1899.

<sup>28</sup> "Items of Interest About the Springs," *Excelsior Springs Daily Standard*, 11 October 1923.

<sup>29</sup> Woodson, 182.

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Colonial Hotel  
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kitchens."<sup>30</sup>

In Excelsior Springs, these distinctions were often blurred. In 1920, the *History of Clay County* grouped hotels and boarding houses together and noted that they "have heretofore met the needs of visitors." Although this history identifies a resident population of 5,000, it does not clarify whether permanent residents primarily owned their own homes, rented single-family houses, or stayed in apartments or boarding houses. In 1922, a souvenir pamphlet printed in honor of the Clay County Centennial further blurred the definitions among the types of rental housing. It mentions "magnificent hotels with every modern convenience [and] hundreds of apartments and rooming houses."<sup>31</sup> For example, on the 1930s "Official Map of Excelsior Springs," the Colonial is identified as the Colonial Apartments, and in the 1940 Excelsior Springs Telephone Directory it is identified as the Colonial Hotel, as it is in a circa 1950 photograph (figure 1).

However the types of multiple family dwellings are categorized, Excelsior Springs experienced a need for more multi-family dwellings between 1913 and 1926. Wolfenbarger notes 15 new buildings constructed in her proposed district. In addition to those, the Ligon (Udell) Apartments was built at 211 East Excelsior Street, just west of the proposed Boarding House District, in 1917.

While many of the apartments served the transient population, others provided long-term housing for working class and middle class people employed in the various health and tourism industries in Excelsior Springs. During the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, American attitudes toward apartment living changed. In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, apartments were linked in many people's minds with the crowded tenements occupied by the poor. As an increasing number of working-class and middle-class single men, women, and childless couples moved into larger towns to take jobs in the service sector, the demand for housing increased. In areas without public transportation, housing was particularly needed near the job centers. The four-to-twelve unit apartment became increasingly popular as housing for the rapidly growing middle-class.<sup>32</sup>

While hotels, by definition, usually provided short-term lodging for visitors, the "apartment hotel" became an acceptable alternative to living in a single family dwelling for the professional man or well-to-do single woman.<sup>33</sup> The "apartment hotel" name had a certain cachet, reminiscent of the grander apartment hotels in large East Coast cities, and the status conferred by living in such a dwelling may have added to its appeal.

The Colonial Hotel had long-term residents, including five couples who had lived in the Colonial since 1924. R. B. Christian, who lived there with his wife until at least 1939, listed his

<sup>30</sup> Ward Bucher, *Directory of Building Preservation* (New York: John Wiley, 1996), 240, 55-56, 16.

<sup>31</sup> *Clay County Missouri Centennial Souvenir*, 66-7.

<sup>32</sup> Schwenk, E 3.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

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address as the Colonial Hotel in advertisements he placed in trade publications. Christian was associated with Excelsior Springs' entertainment industry, being the owner/operator of the Casino and the Beyer Theaters.<sup>34</sup> The 1930 census identifies other residents of the Colonial as \_\_\_\_\_ Plowman and wife Ethel, managers of the apartment house; Earnest Milstion and wife Berniece (he worked at a store and she was a housewife); Charles Whitsell and wife Della (he was an osteopath); Floran Toddan and wife Lola (he was also an osteopath); John W. Addair, wife and step-daughter (he was apparently a farmer); and Sam Flimming and wife Sarah (no occupation stated). The length of stay, as of 1930, was six years for everyone named above except the Flimmings for whom no length of stay was stated, perhaps suggesting that they were short term residents in town for the health resort.

**Elaboration (Part II):**

In July 1917, the *Liberty Advance*, a newspaper in the nearby county seat, noted that the Colonial Hotel Corporation planned to build a 5-story hotel on East Broadway on the land where the Maples Hotel already stood. The new hotel was to cost \$200,000 and have all the "modern hotel conveniences."<sup>35</sup> This particular Colonial Hotel was never built, but in 1924 a three-story building also known as the Colonial Hotel—the nominated property—was constructed across the street from the Maples at 328 East Broadway.

The Colonial Hotel is an example of the square brick column colonnade type apartment with Neoclassical details, a style that developed in nearby Kansas City at the same time that the City Beautiful Movement was in the process of creating boulevards and parks. The Beaux Arts and Neoclassical styles became popular during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and were linked to the Progressive Movement: "The use of the classical idiom, with its references to the birthplace of democratic ideals, provides a noble style, evoking reform and progress toward perfection."<sup>36</sup> The City Beautiful Movement postulated that social ills might be alleviated because people living in beautiful surroundings would be inspired to moral behavior. Beautiful natural surroundings were also thought to contribute to improved health, a factor that Excelsior Springs had exploited in tourism brochures since the establishment of its health resorts.

The elements of Neoclassical architecture seen in the square brick column colonnade apartment include symmetry, central elevated entrances, and stylistic details from other eras. Schwenk describes the colonnade apartment as featuring multi-tiered colonnaded porches and brick walls with contrasting stone details. The Colonial Hotel is a simple, vernacular version of a colonnaded apartment building, using the same façade arrangement as more highly articulated stylized versions but lacking contrast between its square brick columns and walls. In the Colonial and similar examples, references to academic styles are more vague but

<sup>34</sup> "R.B. Christian, Colonial Hotel, Excelsior Springs, MO,"

<sup>35</sup> *Liberty Advance*, 27 July 1917.

<sup>36</sup> Schwenk, 23.

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the form is unmistakable. The Colonial used a flat roof and parapet, a central entry, and columned porches on either side of the entry to create symmetry.

The colonnaded apartment building type was not used extensively in Excelsior Springs. Five examples remain, but the Colonial Hotel is the only three-story, square brick colonnaded building in Excelsior Springs that retains its original exterior appearance. The Buckley Hotel at 101 South Street is a well-preserved, two-story example included in the Excelsior Springs Hall of Waters Commercial District (NR 5/27/99). The Ligon Apartments at 514-516 Elms Boulevard is an example of a two-story colonnaded apartment, but its porches have been enclosed, altering the exterior appearance. The Ligon (aka Udell)<sup>37</sup> Apartments at 211 East Excelsior have a gable roof and detailing that makes it significantly different in appearance from the other colonnaded apartments in the city. The Shelton Apartments at 408 East Broadway is a three-story colonnaded apartment, now altered almost beyond recognition by removal of the round stone columns that supported the second story porch, removal of the second story porch, the addition of asbestos shingles on the third story, and the addition of a preserved wood railing around the first story porch.

The Colonial was an inexpensive hotel/apartment, compared to others in Excelsior Springs. The "Official Map of Excelsior Springs" lists the Colonial Hotel, incorrectly identifying its address as 328 "West" Broadway, as having 18 rooms that rented for between \$3 to \$8 per week (\$46.50 to \$124 per week in today's dollars).<sup>38</sup> When compared to luxury hotels such as the Elms, the Colonial was relatively inexpensive. However, at a time when the average wage was \$1,368 annually, the Colonial's rates seem somewhat high.

Excelsior Springs survived the Great Depression and notoriety stemming from the occasional presence of violent gangsters, and there was a renewed interest in hydrotherapy following research by the Simon Baruch Research Institute at Saratoga Springs, New York.<sup>39</sup> In 1930, the federal government added to Excelsior Springs' position as a health resort and to the city's economy and further need for housing by expanding the Veteran's Hospital to a 300-bed capacity costing \$1,200,000. Family members of hospitalized veterans used the city's numerous apartments and boarding houses while in Excelsior Springs. Though the number of vacationers declined, the city's position as a "haven of health" meant that visitors still came to take the waters. In 1933, Governor Guy Park authorized the use of a Reconstruction Finance Corporation loan to expand and refine the mineral water system. In 1938, the Hall of Waters, within sight of the Colonial Hotel, was completed at a cost of nearly half a million dollars. This construction assured the continuation of Excelsior Springs' position as a health resort for additional decades.

Excelsior Springs also survived World War II, despite seeing a decline in the number of

<sup>37</sup> "Official Map of Excelsior Springs."

<sup>38</sup> <http://measuringworth.com> ; <http://kclibrary.lonestar.edu/decade30.html>

<sup>39</sup> Bullard, 108.

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tourists because of the rationing of gasoline and tires. The Hall of Waters and the VA hospital continued to provide an economic boost during the late 1940s and 1950s. In 1960, the McCleary Clinic consolidated with the Thornton Minor Clinic and a two-story addition was constructed. Despite floods and fires in the downtown area during the 1950s, Excelsior Springs remained viable but wisely began efforts to secure businesses other than health spas and tourism. Two industries, AVSCO and Nelson Plastics, opened in 1951 and 1957, respectively.

During the 1960s, however, Excelsior Springs' position as Missouri's "haven of health" began to decline because of changes in attitudes and laws. The publicity that enhanced Excelsior Springs' growth during its early years now contributed to its decline. Physicians' groups had been questioning the value of the various water treatments for many years, especially the claims that hydrotherapy could cure the wide variety of diseases cited by early proponents. In 1959, the American Arthritis Foundation issued a statement on "The Misrepresentation of Arthritis Drugs and Devices in the U.S."<sup>40</sup> Following this, federal legislation forbade mineral water spas and clinics from advertising that their waters would cure arthritis and rheumatism.<sup>41</sup> Soon medical insurance companies stopped paying for hydrotherapy.

In September 1963, Excelsior Springs' health industry received another blow when the *Saturday Evening Post* printed an article titled "The Hucksters of Pain" in which health spas, including the clinics at Excelsior Springs, were denounced. And when investigative journalist Ralph Lee Smith visited the McClardy Clinic in Excelsior Springs with trumped-up symptoms of back pain which he claimed not to have been cured, Excelsior Springs' popularity as a medical destination declined even further.<sup>42</sup> Excelsior Springs' mineral water bottling industry began losing an average of \$25,000 per year.<sup>43</sup> In 1967 the Hall of Waters closed and the luxurious Elms Hotel, after enduring a series of bankruptcies, finally closed in 1971. The mineral water bottling industry, already reeling, was closed temporarily by a state order prohibiting bottling and capping of beverages by hand.

Many of the boarding houses and hotels, including the Colonial, became low-rent apartments, poorly maintained and poorly kept. A ca. 1995 photograph of the Colonial Hotel (in Wolfenbarger's Boarding House District Survey) shows the building called the Colonial "Apartments."<sup>44</sup> The Colonial had been subdivided and kitchen and bathroom fixtures added to rooms that did not originally have such fixtures. As a result, bath and kitchen fixtures are in odd places and rooms are very small, mostly less than ten by twelve feet. In one apartment, the toilet is in a closet off the room serving as the kitchen. In another apartment, the bathroom sink is mounted on the wall between two closets, one housing the toilet and the other housing

<sup>40</sup> "The Misrepresentation of Arthritis Drugs and Devices in the U.S."; <http://www.texasnonprofits.org/Article/%3FArticleID%3D1603>

<sup>41</sup> *America's Haven of Health*, 47.

<sup>42</sup> "The Clinics."; <http://theidlhour.com/health.html>

<sup>43</sup> Bullard, 136.

<sup>44</sup> Wolfenbarger, *Boarding House District*, 1994, n.p.

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a kitchen sink and cabinet unit. In yet another apartment, the shower is in what was once a closet. The Colonial's interior continued to deteriorate until 2007 when the apartments were closed.

While numerous small hotels and apartment buildings still exist in Excelsior Springs, the Colonial Hotel is the only flat-roofed, three story square brick colonnaded apartment that substantially reflects its exterior appearance from the period of significance. Although the Colonial's interior has been converted into small apartments, much historic material nonetheless remains. Unlike many of Excelsior Springs' older hotels, apartments and boarding houses whose exteriors have deteriorated over the years, the exterior of the Colonial is also relatively well-preserved. The prospective owner plans on remodeling the building into upscale apartments.



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The following information is the same for all photos:

Colonial Hotel  
Excelsior Springs  
Clay County, Missouri  
Photographer: Rhonda Chalfant  
Date: October 12, 2009  
Images are digital

**Photographs:**

1. South (primary) elevation facing north
2. Detail of east elevation
3. South and east elevations, facing NW
4. South and west elevations, facing NE
5. North elevation, facing south
6. Interior, stairway detail
7. Interior, bathroom detail
8. Interior, kitchen detail

**Figures:**

- Figure 1. Ca. 1950 postcard of Colonial Hotel  
Figure 2. 1926 Sanborn map showing Colonial and other hotels and apartments  
Figure 3. First floor plan of Colonial Hotel

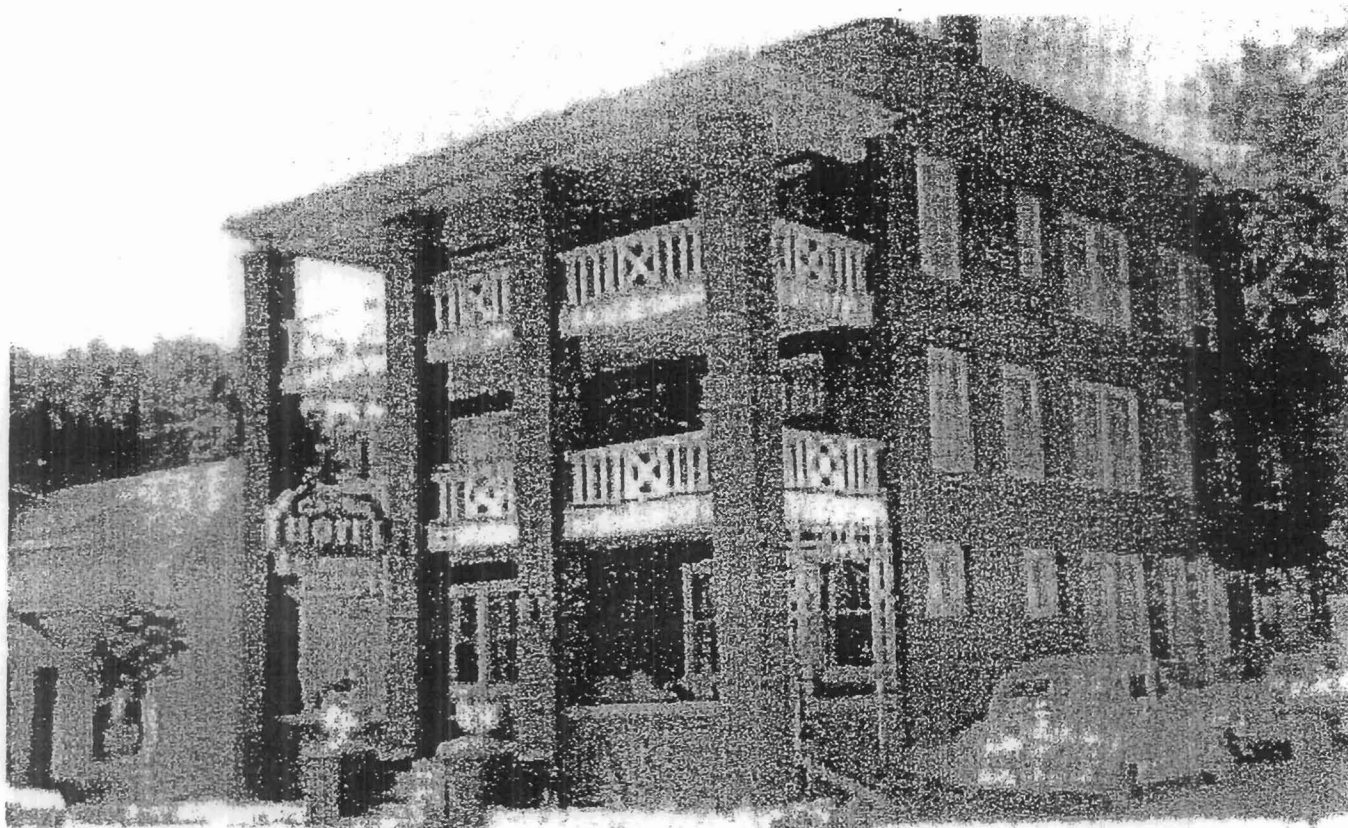
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Colonial Hotel  
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Figure 1: Ca. 1950 postcard of Colonial Hotel



COLONIAL HOTEL - Excelsior Springs, Mo.

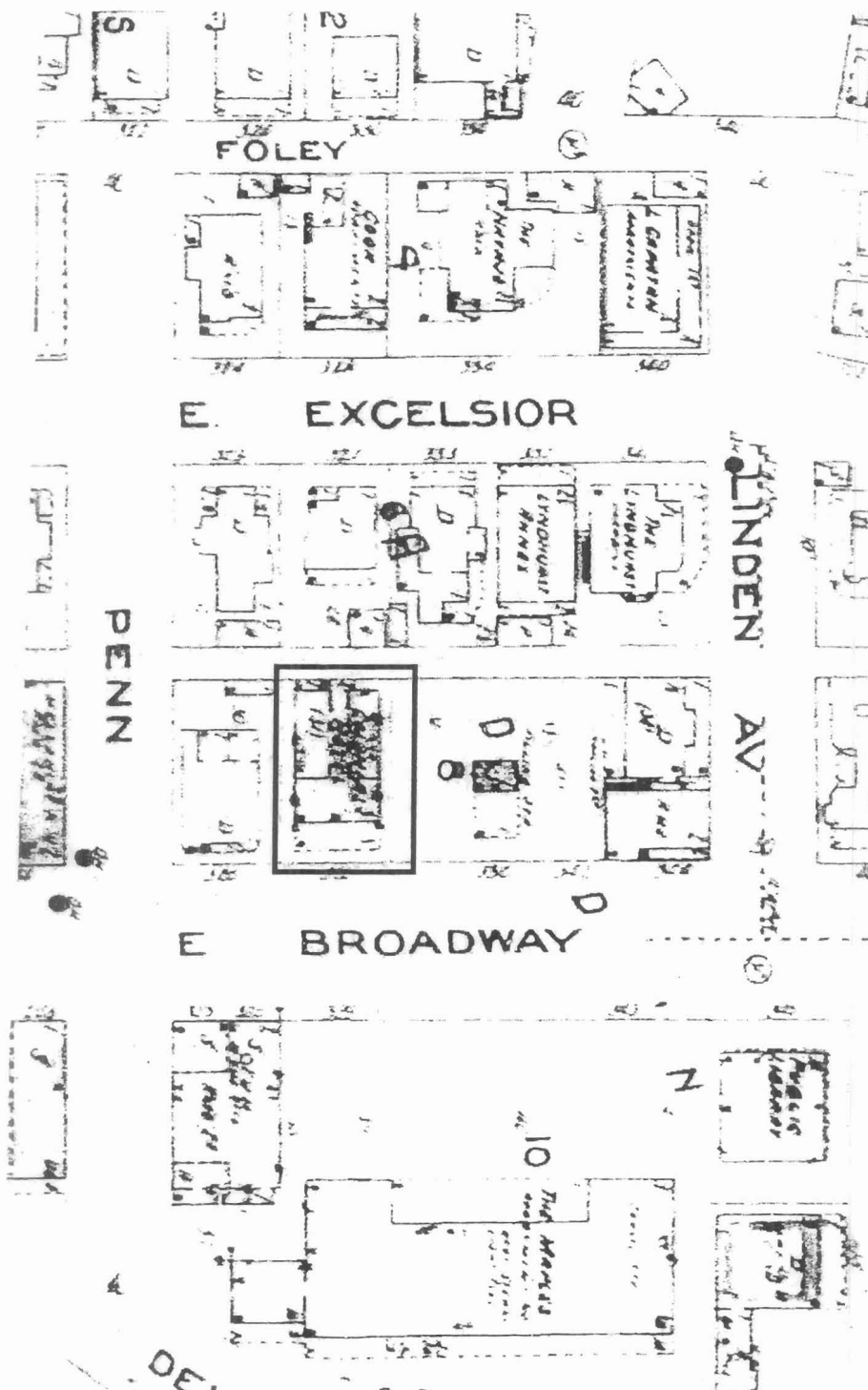
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Figure 2. 1926 Sanborn map showing Colonial and other hotels and apartments



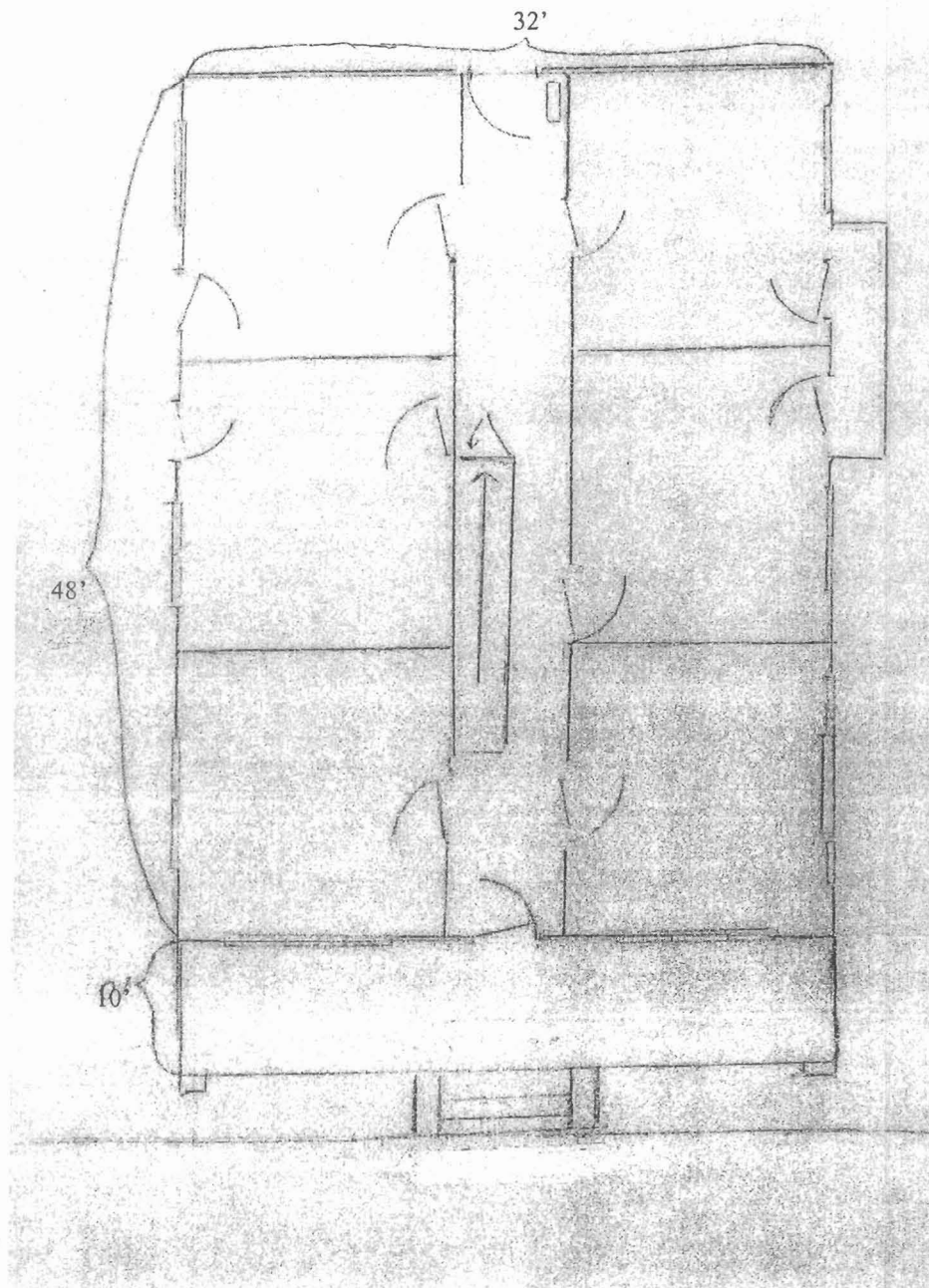
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Figure 3. First floor plan of Colonial Hotel



Not to scale.



COLONIAL HOTEL  
EXCELSIOR SPRINGS,  
CLAY CO., MISSOURI

UTM REFS:  
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4355500 N

