

back cover

NR LISTED

JUN 27 1997

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

AHPP

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

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1. Name of Property

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Historic Name: Woodman of Union Building

Other Name/Site Number: National Baptist Hotel / GA 0469

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2. Location

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Street & Number: 501 Malvern Avenue

Not for Publication: N/A

City/Town: Hot Springs

Vicinity: N/A

State: AR

County: Garland

Code: AR 051

Zip Code: 71901

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3. Classification

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Ownership of Property: Private

Category of Property: Building

Number of Resources within Property:

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

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

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

Woodman of Union Building
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4. State/Federal Agency Certification
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As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets _____ does not meet the National Register Criteria. _____ See continuation sheet.

Catherine A. Slater _____ 5-16-97
Signature of certifying official Date

Arkansas Historic Preservation Program
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

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5. National Park Service Certification
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I, hereby certify that this property is:

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

Signature of Keeper Date
of Action

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6. Function or Use
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Historic: Domestic Sub: Hotel
Recreation and Culture Auditorium
Social Meeting Hall
Commerce Financial Institution

Current : Vacant/Not In Use Sub: _____

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7. Description
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Architectural Classification:

Classical Revival

Materials: foundation Terra Cotta, Brick roof Asphalt
walls Brick other Terra Cotta, Wood

Describe present and historic physical appearance:

Summary

Located at 501 Malvern Avenue in downtown Hot Springs, the Woodman of Union Building is a four-story, irregular-plan, commercial building constructed in 1923. The majority of the building is of masonry construction; however, the southeastern portion of the building has a wood-frame superstructure. The red brick walls are trimmed with cream-colored, Classical Revival-style, terra cotta decorations including porch columns, brackets, belt courses and cornices. Significant interior features include an original bank vault, marble wainscoting and trim, bathhouse stalls and fixtures, and a large 2,500 seat auditorium on the fourth floor. Although the Woodman of Union Building is in an advanced state of deterioration and has been condemned by the city, it retains the necessary historic integrity required for listing.

Elaboration

Constructed in 1923, the Woodman of Union Building is a four-story, irregular-plan, commercial building. The structure is largely of masonry construction - brick, structural ceramic block, and concrete - along with some steel reinforcement. The southeastern section, however, contains a

wood-frame superstructure. The foundation is faced with cream-colored terra cotta wainscoting on most of the three principal facades. The exterior walls are faced with red tapestry brick on the northwest, southwest, and southeast elevations and common brick on the rear elevation. The roof is flat and largely behind a parapet although the fly tower for the auditorium substantially projects above the roofline. There is one exterior brick chimney along the rear elevation.

The front, or southwestern, elevation fronts Malvern Avenue and both the Gulpha and Garden Street corners are beveled. In between, this elevation is divided into roughly nine vertical window divisions in addition to the principal feature of the facade, the wide entrance and porch bay that is positioned four window bays south of the Gulpha Street corner. The first story entrance contains double-leaf, three-quarter glazed, wood doors that are flanked by large single-pane sidelights and capped by a simple wood pediment set within a rectangular wood panel and three transom lights. This assemblage is surrounded by a large elliptical arch with a decorative keystone and flanking fluted pilasters. A pair of large scroll brackets, one above each pilaster, supports a projecting entablature that forms the base of the overhanging porch above. The frieze above the cornice proclaims "BATH HOUSE & SANITARIUM" in raised letters. Excepting the wood framework around the doors/sidelights/transoms, all of the exterior decorative work on the first-story entrance and the porches above are made of cream-colored terra cotta.

The first story section to the north of the entrance bay is arranged into three commercial-type, storefront windows with large, bisected plate-glass and three-pane transoms, most of which are boarded over. To the south of the entrance bay, there are five pairs of one-over-one, double-hung, wood windows and two single windows (spaced closely together and counted above as a single bay) near the Garden Street corner.

The second story of this elevation is delineated by a terra cotta belt course. Window arrangements for the second and third stories are identical except that three pairs of windows are utilized above the storefront windows. The second and third story porches above the entrance bay project slightly from the surrounding wall and are also recessed. These porches are supported by three square terra cotta columns with ornate Corinthian capitals clustered at each corner. Both porches are accessed through double-leaf doors with large sidelights and transoms. The fourth floor of the front elevation is delineated by a relatively plain terra cotta belt course above the third-story windows and a more elaborate projecting entablature with dentils and modillions along the sill level of the fourth-story windows.

Fenestration on this story is similar to the second and third stories but with a pair of windows as opposed to two single windows near the Garden Street corner. Window treatment, however, is much more elaborate with large terra cotta hood molds that connect with the adjacent window, the continuous nature of which provides a castellated effect. Similar terra cotta panels link the bottom halves of the windows, and two square panels are placed between the right angle turns of the connecting courses. As expected, the

fourth-story porch is also more decorative than those on the second and third stories and features two elliptical arches with an additional two columns in the center. A simple terra cotta course separates the top of this story from the brick parapet, and a slight terra cotta pediment caps the porch bay division.

The beveled corners at the Gulpha and Garden Street corners are similarly arranged with terra cotta-clad porches on the first three stories. The first story porches are supported by two round columns with Corinthian capitals and are accessed by double-leaf doors with transoms flanked by one-over-one, double-hung, wood windows. **The second and third story porches are supported by two square columns.** The fourth story of the beveled corners have a pair of windows that are adorned in the fashion of their previously mentioned front elevation counterparts.

The Gulpha Street, or northwestern, elevation contains several storefront windows and single-leaf entrances with transoms. These windows and doors are currently boarded over and only the multiple-pane transoms are visible. Fenestration, belt courses, and cornice treatment for the upper stories follows the same pattern established on the front elevation. The second and third stories are each fenestrated by four paired and two single one-over-one windows (the second story seems to have been altered by the addition of two small casement windows between pairs). With a slight variation in placement, the fourth story contains the same number of windows and continues the front elevation decorative treatment.

The rear, or northeastern, elevation is finished in common brick and contains a number of windows. The most distinguishing features, however, are the large brick chimney and the two access drives. One is a recessed three-story hall adjacent to the chimney and the other is a full-height access between the center section containing the fly tower and the Garden Street wing.

The Garden Street, or southeastern, elevation does not contain any storefronts, but rather reflects the interior bathhouse usage. Terra cotta wainscoting is utilized on the first story, and fenestration is accomplished by two single one-over-one windows on the Malvern Avenue end and eight small windows that appear to have originally been of one-over-one configuration but are now largely boarded. There are also five small metal vents, and one of the windows has been partially filled with brick and a larger louvered vent installed. The second story is identical with the exception of some variation in vent placement. The third story is fenestrated by ten conventional-sized one-over-one windows, and the fourth story has the decorated paired and single one-over-one windows as seen in the front elevation. A smaller casement window appears to have replaced the original window near the rear corner.

The interior still reflects the mixed usage of the building and most of the original details are intact, though deteriorated. Significant interior features include an original bank vault, marble wainscoting and trim, bathhouse stalls and fixtures, and a large 2,500 seat auditorium on the fourth floor.

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The Woodman of Union Building is located at 501 Malvern Avenue in downtown Hot Springs in the proximity of the Park Hilton Hotel and the Hot Springs Convention Auditorium. Although the building is in an advanced state of deterioration and has been condemned by the city, it retains the necessary historic integrity required for listing.

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8. Statement of Significance
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Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: Statewide.

Applicable National Register Criteria: A,C

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): N/A

Areas of Significance: Ethnic Heritage - Black
Architecture

Period(s) of Significance: 1923 - 1947

Significant Dates: 1923

Significant Person(s): N/A

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: Webb, J. L.

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

Summary

The Woodman of Union Building is being nominated under Criterion A with statewide significance for its association with the Supreme Lodge of the Woodman of Union and its various activities during the period from 1923 to 1947. Under Criterion C, the building is equally significant as a hotel/bathhouse/commercial building constructed by a locally prominent builder in an unusual Classical Revival-style inspired design.

Historical Background

The reputation of Hot Springs as a resort town was well established even before the Civil War due to the widespread belief that the hot springs contained medicinal qualities. The first crude bathhouses were constructed in 1830 and proved so popular that two years later the United States set aside four sections of land around the springs as a reservation to prevent commercial exploitation. Because of the natural resource, Hot Springs experienced relatively steady growth, and during the nineteenth century slowly transformed from a small, primitive village into a modern pleasure resort. This growth was greatly facilitated in 1875 with the completion of a narrow-gauge railroad from Malvern known as the "Diamond Jo" after its financier, Joseph "Diamond Jo" Reynolds, a prominent Chicago businessman of that era.

Little is known about the earliest African-American settlement in the area, though it is certain that there was at least a small community of some size in 1868, as it was in that year that the Rev. Henderson Patillo and Rev. B. W. Whitlow came to Hot Springs from Malvern via the old highway in a wagon to preach to a small group of worshippers that met outdoors.

In 1919, the Supreme Lodge of the Woodman of Union, a black social club/union/fraternity, purchased the site of the nominated property. In 1923, the current structure was erected along the length of Malvern Avenue, between Gulpha and Garden Streets. On January 17, 1924, prominent African-American men from every region of Arkansas participated in the dedication of the new Woodman of Union Building. Created by the genius of J.L. Webb, Supreme Custodian of the Woodman of Union, the unique building housed the various activities of the fraternity. A 100-bed hospital and nurse training school, a 75-room bath hotel, the Woodman of Union Bank, a 2,500 seat auditorium, which featured such attractions as Count Basie and Duke Ellington, an electrically operated printing plant, and executive offices were all located within the building.

Although not located on Bathhouse Row (NR 11/13/74, NHL 5/28/87) under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service, the Woodman of Union bathhouse was also subject to federal regulations regarding bathhouse standards.

In 1950, the building was purchased by the National Baptist Association, U.S.A and became known as the National Baptist Hotel and Bath House. The National Baptist Association expanded the bath house and upgraded the bath facilities according to regulations of the United States Department of Interior. The bath house was finished with an abundance of nickel-plated brass and marble. In 1971, the National Baptist Association purchased the land directly behind the hotel for use as a parking lot.

As segregation ended and integration of public facilities became prevalent, usage of the National Baptist Hotel waned, and in the late 1970s, it became a struggle to remain open. Finally, in 1981, the hotel closed and has remained closed to this date.

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In 1984, when the city began its redevelopment project which included the Hot Springs Convention Center and Park Hilton slightly more than a block away, the property was sold to four partners from Dallas. A year later, as plans were being completed to convert the 155-room hotel to 80 suites, the Texas real estate market crumbled and two of the partners went into bankruptcy. In August 1991, the property was purchased by Hawk Management Group, Inc., a corporation based in Northern Nevada. The building is currently vacant and in deteriorated condition.

Historical and Architectural Significance

The Woodman of Union Building is being nominated under Criterion A with statewide significance for its association with the Supreme Lodge of the Woodman of Union and its various activities during the period from 1923 to 1947. Under Criterion C, the building is equally significant as a hotel/bathhouse/commercial building constructed by a locally prominent builder in an unusual Classical Revival-style inspired design.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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Brown, Dee. *The American Spa, Hot Springs, Arkansas*. Little Rock: Rose Publishing Co., 1982.

Information submitted for NR determination of eligibility by Ken Santor, President Hawk Management, May, 1996.

Page, John C. and Laura Soulliere Harrison. *Out of the Vapors: A Social and Architectural History of Bathhouse Row*. U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1987.

Workers of the Writer's Program. *The WPA Guide to 1930's Arkansas*, with new introduction by Elliot West. Lawrence, Kansas: The University Press, 1987 (original copyright, 1941).

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository: _____

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10. Geographical Data
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Acreage of Property: Approximately one

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing

A	<u>15</u>	<u>495470</u>	<u>3818180</u>	B	_____	_____
C	_____	_____	_____	D	_____	_____

Verbal Boundary Description:

Lots 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6, Block 65 of the Hot Springs Reservation, as surveyed, mapped and platted by the United States Hot Springs Commissioners.

Boundary Justification:

This boundary includes the historic hotel and all of the property historically associated with this resource.

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11. Form Prepared By

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Name/Title: Patrick Zollner, National Register/Survey Coordinator

Organization: Arkansas Historic Preservation Program Date: May 16, 1997

Street & Number: 1500 Tower Bldg., 323 Center St. Telephone: (501) 324-9880

City or Town: Little Rock State: AR ZIP: 72201