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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Arkansas

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

COUNTY:

Pulaski

FOR NPS USE ONLY

ENTRY DATE

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

1. NAME

COMMON:

Capital Hotel

AND/OR HISTORIC:

Denckla Building

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:

117 West Markham

CITY OR TOWN:

Little Rock

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:

Two

STATE

CODE  
05

COUNTY:

Pulaski

CODE  
119

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No

PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |                                     |  |   |                                   |
|--|-------------------------------------|--|---|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural          | <input type="checkbox"/> Government | <input type="checkbox"/> Park              | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation             | <input type="checkbox"/> Comments |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commercial | <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial | <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) | _____                             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Educational           | <input type="checkbox"/> Military   | <input type="checkbox"/> Religious         | _____   | _____                             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment         | <input type="checkbox"/> Museum     | <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific        | _____   | _____                             |

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:

Miss Amelia Cassinelli

STREET AND NUMBER:

301 West 18th

CITY OR TOWN:

North Little Rock

STATE:

Arkansas

CODE  
05

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:

Pulaski County Courthouse

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:

Little Rock

STATE

Arkansas

CODE  
05

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:

Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

DATE OF SURVEY: 1973

- Federal   
  State   
  County   
  Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

STREET AND NUMBER:

Suite 1030, Plaza West, McKinley and Lee

CITY OR TOWN:

Little Rock

STATE:

Arkansas

CODE  
05

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## 7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Capital Hotel opened January 22, 1877, as Little Rock's finest hotel. Today after almost 100 years of continual use the Capital remains the most significant structure of its kind in the State of Arkansas. Located at Markham and Louisiana Streets in downtown Little Rock, the Capital is constructed of brick with a facade of cast iron. The basic dimensions of this four-story, white painted structure measure one hundred thirty-two (132') feet by one hundred thirty (130') feet.

This excellent example of Victorian grandeur boasts seventeen bays across its facade. Projecting from the center of the front elevation is a one-story portico five bays in length and supported by six columns with Corinthian capitals. The second story porch deck is enclosed by a simple wrought iron railing, and surmounted by a canopy edged with decorative iron scroll work.

Across the entire length of the first story the front elevation has engaged Corinthian columns between each bay. With the exception of the deck projection on the second floor, the second and third story facades are identical with two sash, semi-elliptical headed windows separated by squared columns. The fourth story, added about 1889, has a mullion window with transom between each of the Corinthian capitated pilasters.

Each corner of the flat roof ends in a two bay wide gable with moulded cornice. Alternately spaced brackets and panels embellish the frieze, along with five circular, decorative air vents, one under each gable and the others centered above the three center bays.

The symmetry of the second and third stories of the north facade is repeated on the west elevation. The first ten windows each have an Italianate arch, while the last five are segmentally arched with keystones. The fourth story has segmental pediments over the first ten windows, and segmental arches with keystones are over the last five bays. All the windows have decorated lugsills. Both ends and the center of the roof have gables identical to those on the facade. Three decorative air vents and paired brackets embellish the plain frieze.

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7. Description (Continued - Page 2)

The south and east elevations of the Capital have faced alleyways throughout the building's history. Because these elevations were never intended for public view, they are very plain with brick veneer and simple window construction.

On entering the main lobby of the Capital Hotel, one first notices the inlaid tile flooring, the two parallel rows of columns with uniquely decorated capitals, and the gray marble staircase located opposite the entrance. Both squared marble and round painted columns support the exposed beams which terminate in a recessed ceiling. Thick panels of highly polished gray marble line the interior walls of the lobby. On the west side is the hotel desk with the original wrought iron grill work and etched glass panels.

Divided flights of the stairway lead to a second floor balcony which surrounds the light well over the rear part of the lobby. The square skylight at the top of the light well contains stained glass panes leaded together in a wooden frame.

Surrounding the second floor light well are round arches supported by columns with Ionic capitals. A wrought iron with polished brass railing lies between each of the columns. Parallel rows of arcading lead to a parlor which opens onto the veranda.

Most of the remaining area of the Capital is taken up by hotel rooms. Wide and spacious hallways are lined by doorways with symmetrically moulded trim and corner blocks. Each room has a fifteen foot or higher ceiling. The baseboards and window and door trim are made of polished wood.

Though several alterations have been made in the interior and on parts of the exterior, the important changes were made within a few years of the original construction and are in keeping with the original style. Beneath the peeling paint the Capital Hotel retains the grandiose Victorian elegance of an earlier era.

8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Pre-Columbian |  16th Century |  18th Century |  20th Century  
 15th Century |  17th Century |  19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |                                      |   |   |
|--|--------------------------------------|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal              | <input type="checkbox"/> Education   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Political | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric             | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Phi-        | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic                | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry    | osophy  | _____   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture             | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention   | <input type="checkbox"/> Science              | _____   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape   | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture            | _____   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art                     | Architecture                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Human-        | _____   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce                | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature  | itarian                                       | _____   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications          | <input type="checkbox"/> Military    | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater              | _____   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation            | <input type="checkbox"/> Music       | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation       | _____   |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

For one hundred years the Capital Hotel building has stood in downtown Little Rock as a relic of the Gilded Age of American history. From its opening in 1877 until just after the turn of the century, the Capital was the leading hotel in Little Rock and the center of public life in the state.

The land on which the Capital now stands belonged for many years to Judge George C. Watkins, a prominent Little Rock attorney and Chief Justice of the Arkansas Supreme Court. In June, 1872, the land was sold to Mr. William P. Denckla. Mr. Denckla, one of the builders of the Little Rock and Fort Smith Railroad owned several buildings on the "Denckla block," and the building he erected on the northwest corner became the most important.

Using a cast iron front purchased in New York and shipped in pieces on a water route to Little Rock, Mr. Denckla built a three-story brick structure. When a fourth story was later added to the building, a cast iron facade was included to harmonize with the cast iron front on the lower floors. The Denckla building was originally intended for stores and offices, and it filled this capacity for the next four years.

During the 1870's Little Rock was growing and expanding rapidly as the city recovered from the Civil War. In 1876 the Weekly Arkansas Gazette described the need for a public guest residence as an ". . . urgent necessity that our city, just now struggling into life and stability, should have a public house for the accommodation of the traveling community. The fitness of the building and site . . . demand the change" of the Denckla building into a hotel.

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8. Significance (Continued - Page 2)

On December 21, 1876, Colonel A. G. DeShon and Major John D. Adams leased the Denckla building, and within a month they converted the office building into a hotel. The Denckla building was described as one of the finest edifices in the South and a fair rival to model structures in Northern cities. Colonel DeShon altered the interior to match the grand facade.

In deciding on a name for the planned hotel, Major Adams asked a Little Rock lady to suggest a fitting title. Mrs. Morehead Wright complied with the request, and her reply was as follows:

Major John D. Adams: Appreciating the compliment of being asked to name your hotel, I can think of no name more appropriate than "The Capital Hotel", as it is a capital enterprise located in a capital building, which will do honor to the capital of the state, and I trust prove a capital success to yourself and Maj. DeShon.

When the Capital Hotel opened on January 22, 1877, it was beautifully furnished and had daintily figured carpets in every room. Gas provided the lighting system throughout. A magnetized annunciator enabled each guest to request individual room service by merely pushing a button. In keeping with the current fashion among first-class hotels, the Capital provided its guests with a restaurant, bar, barber shop and billiard hall.

For the next thirty years the Capital was the leading hotel in Little Rock. It became the unofficial political headquarters of the entire state, and within its walls the success or failure of many an office-seeker was determined. One of the most famous political battles waged within the walls of the Capital was that between J. D. Walker of Fayetteville and R. W. Johnson of Little Rock, both candidates for the United States Senate in 1879. Walker had headquarters in one end of the hotel and Johnson in the other. From their respective rooms one of the most memorable political campaigns in the history of the State was directed.

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8. Significance (Continued - Page 3)

Before being converted into a hotel the Denckla building was involved in another and bigger political battle. In 1874 the Brooks-Baxter War was being waged, and President Ulysses S. Grant sent Federal troops to intervene. The Denckla building served as headquarters for Federal officers. It also served as the dividing line between the Brooks and Baxter forces, with the middle ground in front of the present hotel being occupied by Federal troops attempting to prevent a clash.

In its heyday the Capital Hotel served as the temporary home for Little Rock's most distinguished visitors. During his 1880 visit to the city, President Grant stayed at the Capital, and the facade received a new coat of paint in honor of this special guest.

Business was so prosperous for the Capital that a fourth story was added to the original three story structure. In an advertisement published in 1890, it was announced that the hotel had been "enlarged, improved, refitted and refurnished." A few years later another addition was made to the rear of the building. In the early twentieth century the lobby was elegantly redecorated; however, by this time the popularity of the Capital was beginning to wane. A rival hotel was opened across the street, and was destined to replace the Capital as the political and social center of Arkansas.

The Capital Hotel has never closed its doors for any great length of time, but has continually served the public since 1877. Other establishments have dominated the Little Rock hotel business in the twentieth century, but the Capital, unlike many, has never been forced to close. Ironically, the neighboring hotel which took and retained for sixty years the Capital's prominent position, will soon be demolished. Yet the historic Capital Hotel will continue to stand as the visible reminder of a great era. Because of its stately architecture, its cast iron front and its historic role as the State's most important hotel, the Capital Hotel is one of the most significant buildings in Arkansas

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Arkansas Gazette, December 25, 1876; January 1, 21, 1877;  
 July 25, August 15, 1908.  
 Arkansas Press City Directory for 1890. Little Rock: Press  
 Printing Company, Publishers, 1890.  
 The City of Little Rock, Guide to the City of Roses for Visitors  
 and Citizens. Little Rock: Guide Publishing Company,  
 1890.  
 Little Rock and Argenta Arkansas; Descriptive Review. Memphis,  
 Pittsburgh, and London: Historical and Descriptive  
 Publishing Company, 1888.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES	
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds
NW	° ' "	° ' "	92 ° 16 ' 15.9"	34 ° 44 ' 52.7"
NE	° ' "	° ' "		
SE	° ' "	° ' "		
SW	° ' "	° ' "		

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: Less than one acre

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:  
Dianna Kirk, Research Historian

ORGANIZATION: Arkansas Historic Preservation Program DATE: December, 1973

STREET AND NUMBER:  
Suite 1030, Plaza West

CITY OR TOWN: Little Rock STATE: Arkansas CODE: 05

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National  State  Local

Name William E. Henderson  
 (William E. Henderson,  
 Title State Historic Preservation Officer  
 Date March 8, 1974

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date \_\_\_\_\_

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Keeper of The National Register

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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9. Major Bibliographical References (Continued - Page 1)

Pulaski County Deed Book, Deed Grantor Index W, 1800-1906,  
P. 1027.



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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**  
**PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM**  
(Type all entries - attach to or enclose with photograph)

<b>1. NAME</b>		
<small>COMMON</small>	<small>AND/OR HISTORIC</small>	<small>NUMERIC CODE (Assigned by NPS)</small>
Capital Hotel	Denckla Building	
<b>2. LOCATION</b>		
<small>STATE</small>	<small>COUNTY</small>	<small>TOWN</small>
Arkansas	Pulaski	Little Rock
<small>STREET AND NUMBER</small>		
117 West Markham Street		
<b>3. PHOTO REFERENCE</b>		
<small>PHOTO CREDIT</small>	<small>DATE</small>	<small>NEGATIVE FILED AT</small>
Robert Dunn	November, 1973	Arkansas Historic Preservation Program
<b>4. IDENTIFICATION</b>		
<small>DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.</small>		

North elevation, viewed from the north.

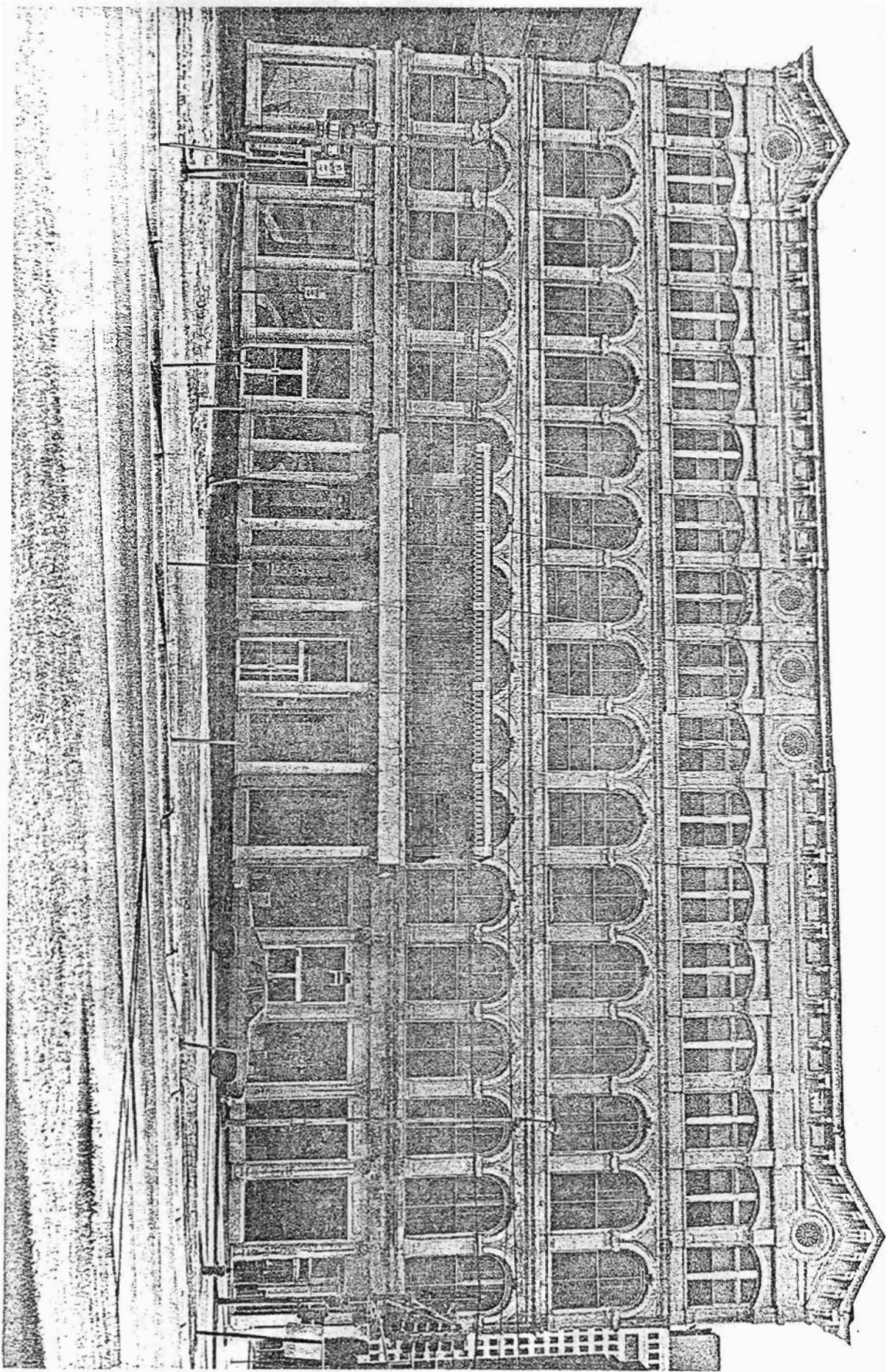
GPO 932-009

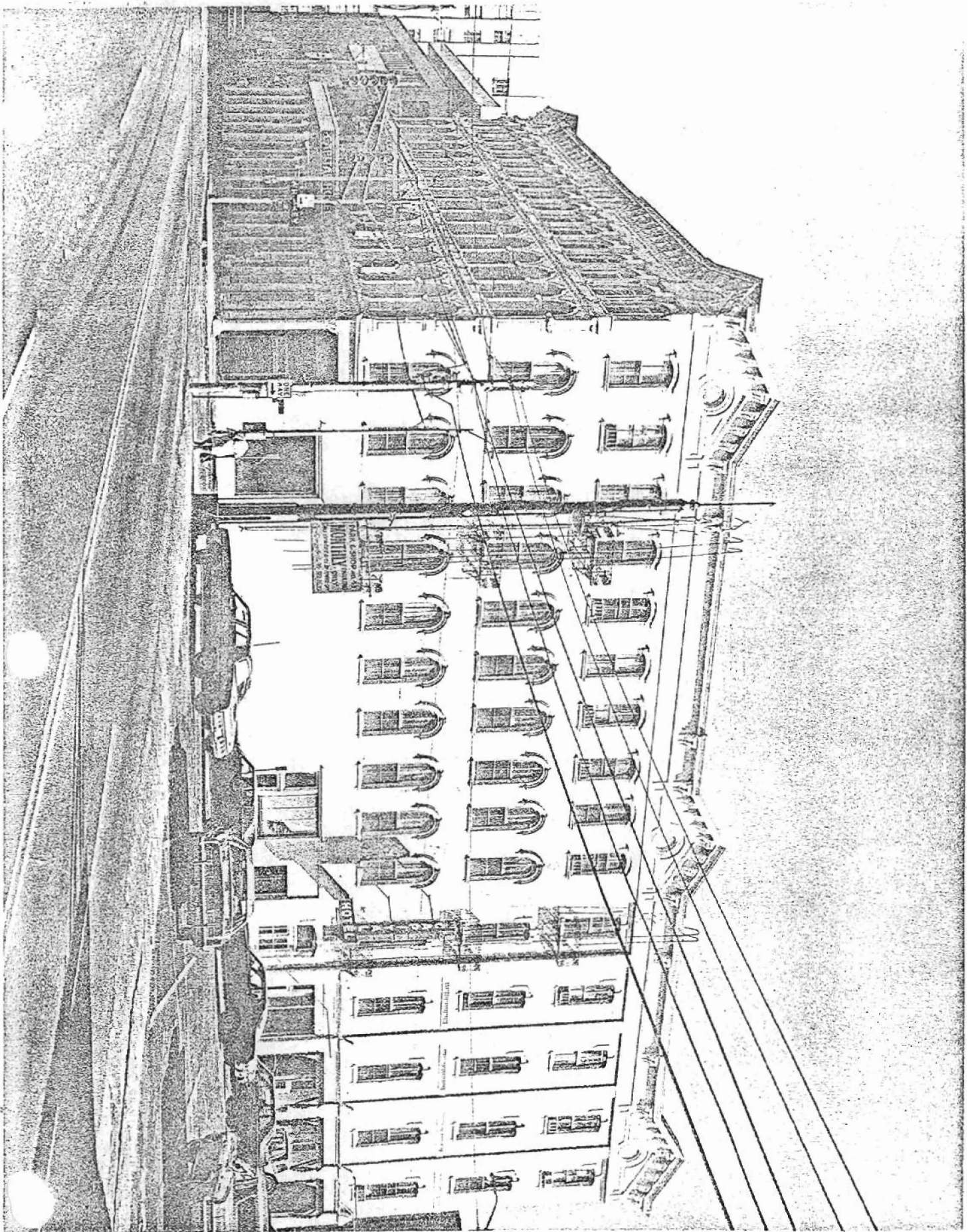
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(Type all entries - attach to or enclose with photograph)

<b>1. NAME</b>		
<small>COMMON</small>	<small>AND/OR HISTORIC</small>	<small>NUMERIC CODE (Assigned by NPS)</small>
Capital Hotel	Denckla Building	
<b>2. LOCATION</b>		
<small>STATE</small>	<small>COUNTY</small>	<small>TOWN</small>
Arkansas	Pulaski	Little Rock
<small>STREET AND NUMBER</small>		
117 West Markham Street		
<b>3. PHOTO REFERENCE</b>		
<small>PHOTO CREDIT</small>	<small>DATE</small>	<small>NEGATIVE FILED AT</small>
Robert Dunn	November, 1973	Arkansas Historic Preservation Program
<b>4. IDENTIFICATION</b>		
<small>DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.</small>		

West elevation, viewed from the west.

GPO 932-009





NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
PROPERTY MAP FORM

(Type all entries - attach to or enclose with map)

STATE	Arkansas
COUNTY	Pulaski
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SEE INSTRUCTIONS

1. NAME

COMMON: Capital Hotel

AND/OR HISTORIC: Denckla Building

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:

117 West Markham Street

CITY OR TOWN:

Little Rock

STATE:

Arkansas

CODE

05

COUNTY:

Pulaski

CODE

119

3. MAP REFERENCE

SOURCE:

U.S.G.S. 7.5 Minute Series, Little Rock Quadrangle

SCALE: 1:24000

DATE: 1970

4. REQUIREMENTS

TO BE INCLUDED ON ALL MAPS

1. Property boundaries where required.
2. North arrow.
3. Latitude and longitude reference.

