

5-7-73

NR

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Arkansas	
COUNTY: Sebastian	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

NR LISTED:  
5/7/73

**1. NAME**

COMMON: River Front Hotel

AND/OR HISTORIC: Commercial Hotel

**2. LOCATION**

STREET AND NUMBER: 123 North First Street

CITY OR TOWN: Fort Smith

STATE: Arkansas CODE: 05 COUNTY: Sebastian CODE: 131

**3. CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Both	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)		<input type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ _____ _____

**4. OWNER OF PROPERTY**

OWNER'S NAME: Donald W. Reynolds Enterprise

STREET AND NUMBER: 920 Rogers Avenue

CITY OR TOWN: Fort Smith STATE: Arkansas CODE: 05

**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.: Sebastian County Courthouse

STREET AND NUMBER: 6th Street - Rogers Avenue

CITY OR TOWN: Fort Smith STATE: Arkansas CODE: 05

**6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE OF SURVEY: Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

DATE OF SURVEY: August 1971  Federal  State  County  Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: Arkansas History Commission

STREET AND NUMBER: 300 West Markham

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

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE: COUNTY:

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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 type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (If known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The historic Commercial Hotel is a two-storey frame structure measuring 43 feet by 68½ feet. The clapboard structure is a simple yet excellent example of Victorian baroque style architecture. The main or east entrance of the building is capped with pedimented architrave, complete with pilasters terminating in simple Corinthian style capitals above which are scrolled brackets supporting a dentilated cornice. One window on either side of the main entrance also has a simple dentilated pedimented lintel. The rest of the windows in the building are simple rectangular, single-light, double-hung sash.

The building is crowned with a dentilated and bracketed cornice supporting a mansard roof. The east front boasts three dormers; the center one directly above the main entrance has three windows, one rectangular and two oval. This three-section dormer boasts semicircular lintels, swags and other decorative carved detail. The dormer windows, one on either side of the center one, are oeil-de-boeuf or "eye of the ox" type windows, being circular in shape but ornamented with scrolls and other carved decorations. Other dormers are simpler, yet have simple pediments and good molding treatment.

There are seven rooms downstairs plus a kitchen, pantry and one bathroom with nine rooms upstairs. The imposing stairway has walnut newel posts and balustrade. The woodwork along the corridors is handcarved. Carpets, well-worn through the years however, are still on the floors of the rooms and the corridors. Several of the rooms still have rather gaudily colored wallpaper including pink roses.

The historic Commercial Hotel was built between 1898 and 1899 and is the tangible link between modern Fort Smith and the old "hell on the border" days of the Indian Territory frontier.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

SIGNIFICANCE			
PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian	<input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century
<input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 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 type="checkbox"/> Political	<input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning
<input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> Engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Phi- losophy	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Historic	<input type="checkbox"/> Industry	<input type="checkbox"/> Science	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> Invention	<input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture	_____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> Social/Human- itarian	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Art	<input type="checkbox"/> Literature	<input type="checkbox"/> Theater	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Communications	<input type="checkbox"/> Music		_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Conservation			_____
STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE			
<p>In 1838, the Congress of the United States established a permanent military post on land bought from Captain John Rogers, near the site of the older military post at Belle Point. In the autumn of the previous year, Captain Rogers had advertised in Arkansas newspapers and in the newspapers of New Orleans, New York, Philadelphia, and other cities that he would establish a town at Fort Smith.</p> <p>The land on which the Commercial Hotel was built was part of a tract of land given in a government patent dated November 15, 1830, to Hugh Tygart. Two years later, Tygart sold 235 acres, including the hotel property, to Captain Rogers.</p> <p>At the time (1898-1899) that the Commercial Hotel was built at 123 Front Street, the Cherokee Strip had been open only nine years; and Oklahoma was still the Indian Territory. Front Street was the main street of that brawling and rollicking frontier. Fort Smith was the metropolis of the area; and to the city and to Front Street came the railroad men, the displaced Indians, the criminals, the dirt farmers, the cowboys, and the women of unsavory reputation. They were not to leave until well into the 20th century.</p> <p>The old hotel was for years one of the most important and thriving business houses in the river section of the town. Pearl Starr, daughter of the notorious Belle, moved to 215 Front, just across the street.</p> <p>That the hotel was an opulent and prosperous venture is attested to by the fact that in</p>			

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(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	
Arkansas	
COUNTY	
Sebastian	
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(Number all entries)

8. Significance

1911 the building, its furniture and fixtures, sold for \$47,000.

It was not long, however, before civilization finally tamed both the Indian Territory and Front Street. The Indian Territory became the State of Oklahoma in 1907; and eventually the name of Front Street, with all its associations, became the more civilized "First Street." The hotel ceased operations, its patrons gone, and has remained vacant until the present time.

The importance of the Commercial Hotel lies in the fact that it is perhaps unique in Arkansas. Fort Smith was a border city and a gateway to the west. It was the "fun city" of the Indian Territory and the Commercial Hotel one of the fun spots of the town. Its clientele were not the rich nor the socially prominent, but those outcasts and individualists whose forebears had crossed the Alleghenies two centuries before.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

American Guide Series. Arkansas, A Guide to the State. New York: Hastings House, 1941.

Hicks, Edwin P. Belle Starr and Her Pearl. Little Rock: C. A. Harper, 1963.

Mapes, Ruth B. Old Fort Smith. Little Rock: Pioneer Press, 1965.

(continued)

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	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	° ' "	° ' "		35° 23' 32"	94° 25' 37"	
NE	° ' "	° ' "				
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY:

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
None			
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:

Fadjo Cravens, Jr. and Staff

ORGANIZATION

Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

DATE

December 1971

STREET AND NUMBER:

1023 West Third Street

CITY OR TOWN:

Little Rock

STATE

Arkansas

CODE

05

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

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 \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

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

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

Date \_\_\_\_\_

ATTEST:

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

Date \_\_\_\_\_

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
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(Continuation Sheet)

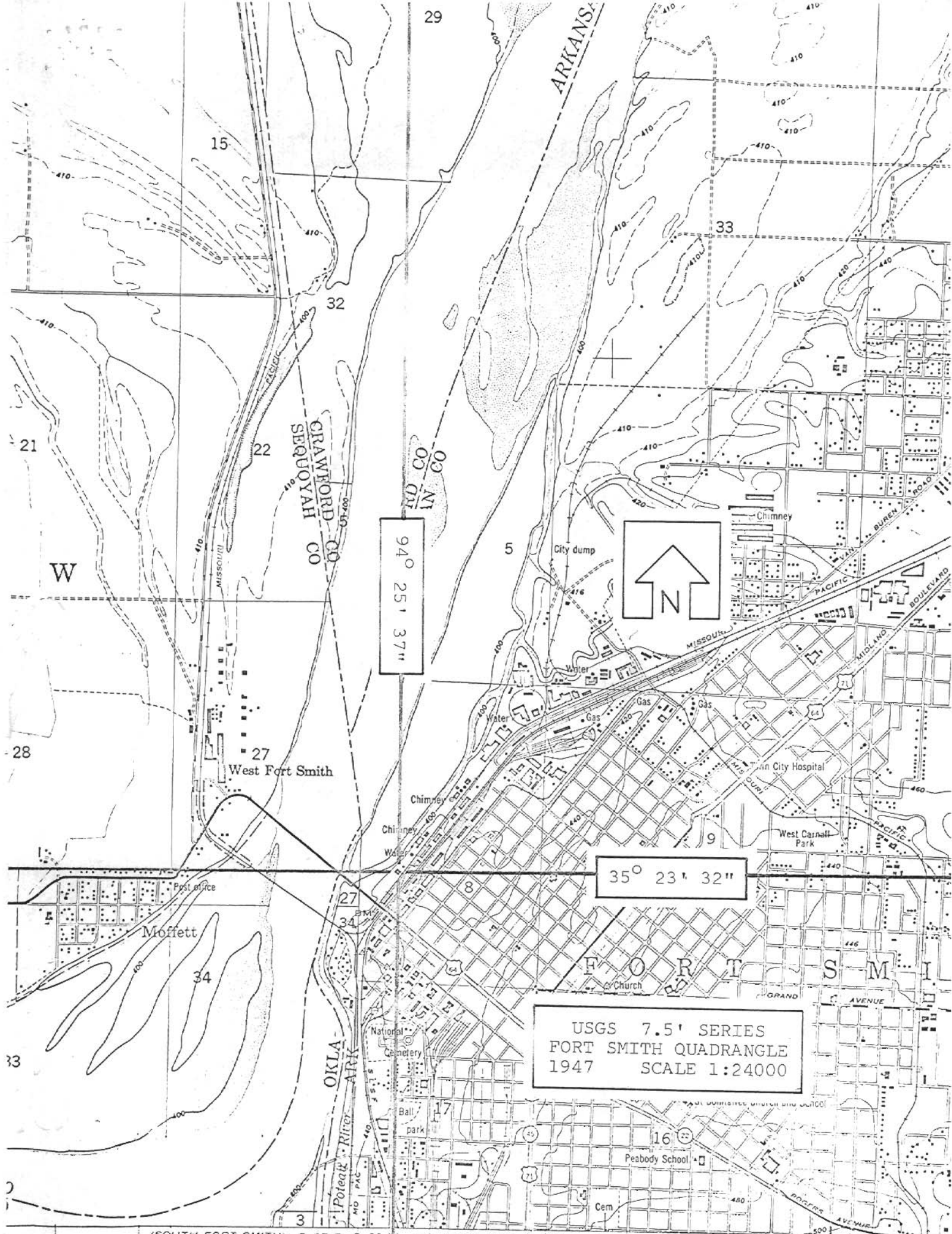
STATE Arkansas	
COUNTY Sebastian	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

(Number all entries)

9. Major Bibliographical References

News Record (Fort Smith). February 2, 1897.

Southwest-Times Record (Fort Smith). February 13,  
1927; July 19, 1936.



29

15

33

32

21

22

W

GRAVWORLD CO  
SEQUOYAH CO

94° 25' 37"

5



28

West Fort Smith

35° 23' 32"

33

Moffett

34

OKLA  
ARK

USGS 7.5' SERIES  
FORT SMITH QUADRANGLE  
1947 SCALE 1:24000

3

National  
Cemetery

Ball  
park

16

Peabody School

Cem