

VLR-12/11/90 NATIP-2/6/91

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 of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

### 1. Name of Property

historic name The Colonial Hotel  
other names/site number The Inn at Wise Courthouse DHR File No. 329-02

### 2. Location

street & number Main and Spring Streets N/A  not for publication  
city, town Wise N/A  vicinity  
state Virginia code VA county Wise code 195 zip code 24293

### 3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
		Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> structures
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> objects
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:  
N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

### 4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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.  See continuation sheet.

[Signature] 19 Dec 1990  
Signature of certifying official Date  
Director, VA Dept. of Historic Resources  
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

### 5. National Park Service Certification

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 the Keeper

Date of Action

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic: Hotel

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Work in Progress

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification  
(enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS:  
Colonial Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone: sandstone

walls Brick

roof Asphalt

other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

**SUMMARY DESCRIPTION**

The main building of the Colonial Hotel, built in 1910, is situated on the northwest corner of the intersection of Main and Spring streets. The hotel complex occupies almost the entire south side of Main Street between Spring Street and Birchfield Road. The hotel is a 2 1/2-story, white-painted brick, roughly U-shaped building with a hipped roof. A mid-twentieth-century hyphen connects the hotel to a two-story, brick commercial building built in the second quarter of the twentieth century. The principal entry is located in an angled pavilion facing the intersection of Spring and Main streets. Two detached mid-twentieth-century motel buildings, located to the rear of the hotel, are not included in the boundaries.

**ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION**

The Colonial Hotel is located at the intersection of Spring and Main streets adjacent to the Wise County Courthouse in the town of Wise. The brick building was originally U-shaped, with wings to the south. The wing along the west side of Spring Street is longer than the opposite wing. The building's angled entrance is located at the intersection of Spring and Main streets and is sheltered by a pedimented colossal Ionic portico with paired round columns flanked by paneled square columns. There is an ornamental railing around a porch on the second floor. The portico is located diagonally to the rest of the building and is flanked by one-story Ionic-columned porches which continue along the Main and Spring street fronts. The longer Main Street porch was enclosed in recent decades to provide space for a coffeeshop. An enclosed one-story porch is located at the rear of the west wing.

The brick walls are laid in running bond. The original red brick building was painted white, probably in the 1950s. The walls are topped by a modillion cornice. The six-bay Main and Spring street fronts contain one-over-one sash windows with transoms above the first-floor windows and rock-faced stone lintels above all windows. The asphalt shingle hipped roof is pierced by two hip-roofed dormers on the north and west fronts, both containing paired one-over-one sashes. There is a single dormer on the rear of each wing, and a large chimney on the rear of the west wing, while two smaller flues rise on the rear slopes of the main structure. A shed-roofed dormer was added to the portico roof in the 1950s. At the same time a chimney was inserted nearby and the former semicircular window in the pediment was replaced by a larger window.

The entrance contains large oak double doors flanked by wide sidelights and surmounted by a transom. The windows in the first two bays on the Spring Street front provide light to the lobby inside, and are filled with fixed sheets of plate glass with transoms above. This appears to be an original feature. There are doors onto the enclosed porch on the Main Street front in the first and fifth bays from the main entry. There is an added fire escape in the space between the two rear wings.

**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally     statewide     locally

Applicable National Register Criteria     A     B     C     D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)     A     B     C     D     E     F     G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)  
ARCHITECTURE  
COMMERCE  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Period of Significance  
1910-1940  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Dates  
1910  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Cultural Affiliation  
N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Person  
N/A

Architect/Builder  
Phipps, D. J.  
\_\_\_\_\_

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

**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

The Colonial Hotel is significant under Criteria A and C as an architecturally sophisticated hostelry which, together with the Wise County Courthouse, is the community's principal landmark. The building is significant in the category of commerce under Criterion A, as an example not only of the aspirations for local economic growth held by a group of allied businessmen, but of the national spirit of civic promotion and competition typical of early twentieth-century small towns. The building is located on a site used for hotel purposes since the post-Civil War era, functioning in response to the periodic demand for housing in connection with the meetings of the Wise County Court. The hotel is significant under Criterion C as the most significant architectural expression of Wise's commercial goals and community standards for commercial architecture, and as the county's best example of the Colonial Revival Style.

**HISTORIC CONTEXT**

Wise County was formed in 1856 from portions of Russell, Scott, and Lee counties and named for Virginia governor Henry A. Wise. One of the principal settlements in the new county was at Big Glades. The lands of Daniel Ramey at Big Glades were selected as the site of the new county seat. Ramey had purchased the land in 1853, when an earlier land grant in the region was sold by the state in a commissioners sale. The settlement was renamed Gladeville, and a site for the courthouse was chosen near Ramey's house. While most of the county was rough and sparsely cultivated, the Gladeville area was relatively densely settled. However, Gladeville was situated on a plateau at the top of Guest's Mountain at an elevation of 2,500 feet, making it difficult to reach from neighboring regions.

The first hotel that opened at the county seat was located on the west end of the present courthouse square, directly opposite the later Colonial Hotel site on the same side of Main Street. Known as the Virginia Hotel, this building was later demolished as the courthouse was expanded. As early as 1870, the Dotson Hotel was opened in the former A. J. Dotson House, which had been built before 1856.<sup>1</sup>

In the early 1890s, Gladeville's inaccessibility and lack of modern hotel facilities were used as arguments for the relocation of the county seat to other newly-formed towns. Wise County had undergone a vast change in 1890 when railroads were completed into the county and coal and timber resources began to be exploited. New towns were laid out and developed along the railroad lines. In 1893 the town's name was changed to Wise. Gladeville did not

- Johnson, Charles A. Wise County, Virginia (Reprint of 1939 Edition). Johnson City, Tennessee: The Overmountain Press, 1988.
- Kwanis Club of Wise, Inc. A Pictorial Journey into Our Past, no date, no publ.
- Williams, Sandra. Research and typescript of history of the Colonial Hotel, 1989, Wise, Virginia.
- Wise County Charter Book 4, p. 255, Wise County Courthouse, Wise, Virginia.

- 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 # \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet

- Primary location of additional data:
- State historic preservation office
  - Other State agency
  - Federal agency
  - Local government
  - University
  - Other

Specify repository:  
Virginia Department of Historic Res  
221 governor St., Richmond, VA 23219

**10. Geographical Data**

Acres of property less than one acre

UTM References

A 

1	7
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3	5	9	3	0	0
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4	0	9	3	3	4	0
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 Zone Easting Northing

C 

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B 

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 Zone Easting Northing

D 

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Beginning at the southwest corner of the intersection of Main and Spring Streets at point A, proceeding with the west side of Spring Street south 103 feet to point B on the west side of Spring Street, thence west with the south wall of the hotel building 131 feet to point C, thence north 103 feet with the west wall of the hotel building to point D on the south side of Main Street, thence east 131 feet with the south side of Main Street to the point of origin.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundaries were chosen to encompass the historic part of the hotel complex, including only the significant building and its attached sections and historic landscaped areas, and not including the mid-twentieth-century hotel structure and parking lots to the south.

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Gibson Worsham, Architect  
 organization Gibson Worsham, Architect date May 20, 1990  
 street & number Yellow Sulphur Springs, Rt. 2 telephone (703) 552-4730  
 city or town Christiansburg, state Virginia zip code 24073

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

The Colonial Hotel  
Wise, Virginia

Section number 7 Page 1

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The formerly detached, two-story, brick, commercial building on the southwest corner of Birchfield Road and Main Street is connected to the hotel by a narrow, frame, two-story hyphen occupying the space formerly filled by an alley. The building, which houses a modern kitchen on the first floor and fire-damaged apartments on the second floor, has a sloping shed roof, a replaced first-floor storefront, and twelve-over-twelve sash windows on the second floor. Five small high-placed casements are located along the west facade.

The main entrance to the hotel in the southeast corner gives access to a large lobby (about 30' x 34') which occupies the angle of the Spring and Main street fronts. The room is plastered throughout except along the south wall, which was added in the 1950s and is covered with painted knotty pine boards. The room is distinguished by unpainted oak trim, including baseboards, chair railing, and plain door and window trim. There are two eccentrically-placed, oak-sheathed, octagonal columns in the lobby and a closed-stringer oak stair with paneled stringer and square newel in the southwest corner. An early paneled oak hotel desk stands nearby, probably relocated from elsewhere in the room in the 1950s. Acoustical tiles were glued to the ceiling in the 1950s.

The Main Dining Room is located behind the remaining four bays of the Main Street facade. The rectangular room is plastered throughout and has an added acoustical tile ceiling. The white-painted woodwork is similar to that in the lobby, and the two rooms are connected by glass panel oak doors. The first floor of the west wing is occupied by a dining room known as the Gray Room and by a narrow passage and staircase next to the court between the two wings. Another passage runs under the main stair in the lobby and behind the added wall on the south side of the lobby. A small toilet room is located off each of the passages. The first passage and the Gray Room both are connected by doors to the enclosed porch, now known as the T.V. Room. The large chimney in the Gray Room is equipped with a Federal-style mantel relocated from another building. The Gray Room appears to have been the location of the original kitchen. The present kitchen, in the brick annex, is connected to both the Main Dining Room and the Gray Room by a service pantry in the added hyphen, which also contains an added dining room known as the Pine Room. The Pine Room, entirely paneled with knotty pine, is accessible from the Main Dining Room and projects out in line with the porch on the Main Street front.

The east wing contains six guest rooms on each floor arranged along a double-loaded corridor. The rooms are arranged with baths between each one. Each bathroom is lit by smaller windows than those in the bedrooms. The passage in the east wing on the first floor originally opened directly into the lobby, but is blocked by the knotty pine wall previously mentioned. Similar rooms are located above the Main Dining Room and the Gray Room. The second floor is reached by the main staircase in the lobby and by the flight of steps in the passage beside the Gray Room. At the top of the main stair there is an upper lobby and a small parlor over the main entry. A single straight flight of stairs leads to the attic story, which contains guest rooms largely rebuilt in the 1950s, including the room over the portico. A fire, occurring approximately ten years ago, damaged the attic along the Spring Street front and the area has been partly rebuilt in recent years as a modern apartment.

Since the 1950s a portion of the basement below the Main Dining Room has been used as a rathskeller-style restaurant. The basement formerly housed storage and utility areas. This has been expanded in recent years into a larger facility with an entrance on grade at the rear of the hyphen between the former commercial building and the original hotel. An additional entrance has been added at the bottom of the exterior stairs in the front of the hyphen. The basement of the commercial building has been recently adapted into a bar.

The grounds are limited to the grass areas along Spring and Main streets. These are set off from the sidewalks and streets by a low stone wall. There is an ornamental iron fence along the Main Street wall.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetThe Colonial Hotel  
Wise, VirginiaSection number 8 Page 1

receive direct access to the rail system until 1899 when a branch line was built connecting the town to Ramsey on the Norfolk and Western Railway. The efforts to relocate the courthouse proved ineffectual, however, and court business grew dramatically, although the town's population remained small. According to one account, forty or fifty lawyers attended court sessions each month during this period. A new Italianate courthouse was built in 1896-1897.

The Dotson Hotel burned in 1909, and it became apparent to local citizens that a new hotel needed to be built immediately if Wise was to function as the county seat and grow as a regional commercial center. A group of businessmen founded the Wise Hotel Corporation and purchased lots on the south side of Main Street for a new hotel. The corporation was initially headed by future Virginia governor George C. Peery. In December 1909, the corporation contracted with builder D. J. Phipps to build the 22-room hotel for a cost of \$17,000. The building was furnished in July 1910. The corporation liquidated its holdings a year later, however, in order to satisfy a builder's lien for the unpaid portion of the construction cost. Oscar M. Vicars, cofounder of the Glamorgan Coal Company and son-in-law of the former proprietor of the Dotson Hotel (Henderson Dotson) purchased the new hotel at auction for \$8,200.<sup>2</sup>

The hotel changed hands several times during the next decade and a half. In 1925 G. C. Wharton purchased it for \$20,000. His widow sold the hotel to Herbert Thompson, president of the Red Ash Pocahontas Coal Company. Thompson thoroughly redecorated and modernized the hotel, changing its name to The Inn at Wise Courthouse. Among other alterations, Thompson incorporated the adjacent commercial building into the hotel and apparently converted the original kitchen into the present Gray Room. He added a guest room in the pediment of the portico, added a partition on the south side of the lobby, and created the Pine Room and the basement restaurant. He decorated the hotel with an eclectic collection of art and antiques, much of which remains in the hotel today. Duncan Hines, hotel and restaurant critic, praised the remodeled hotel, and it became known for its food and service.

During all the years of its existence the hotel retained its importance as a center for the community. One Wise resident recalls the movies shown in the dining room in the 1910s, the dances with jazz bands in the 1920s, and the visits of national and international reporters to cover the sensational Edith Maxwell murder trial. In 1954, the idea of Clinch Valley College was conceived at the hotel when a local resident, in a chance meeting with a University of Virginia official, pressed for the University to open a division in Wise. The hotel has served as the site of many of the county's wedding receptions, bridge parties, civic meetings, political gatherings and Sunday dinners over the past eighty years, reinforcing its position as one of Wise County's most significant buildings.<sup>3</sup> The structure functioned as an unofficial annex to the courthouse, used by lawyers and politicians as well as salesmen and other travellers.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Johnson, p. 12-15.<sup>2</sup>Williams.<sup>3</sup>Williams.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number PHOTO Page 1

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PHOTOGRAPH LISTING

The following information is the same for all the photographs:

Name of property: COLONIAL HOTEL  
Location: TOWN OF WISE, VIRGINIA  
Credit: GIBSON WORSHAM  
Date: MARCH 1990  
Negative filed: Virginia State Library, Richmond, VA  
File number: Department of Historic Resources 329-02

Photograph 1  
View of Hotel from the east  
Negative number:  
Photo 1 of 7

Photograph 2  
View of Portico and Entrance from the east  
Negative number:  
Photo 2 of 7

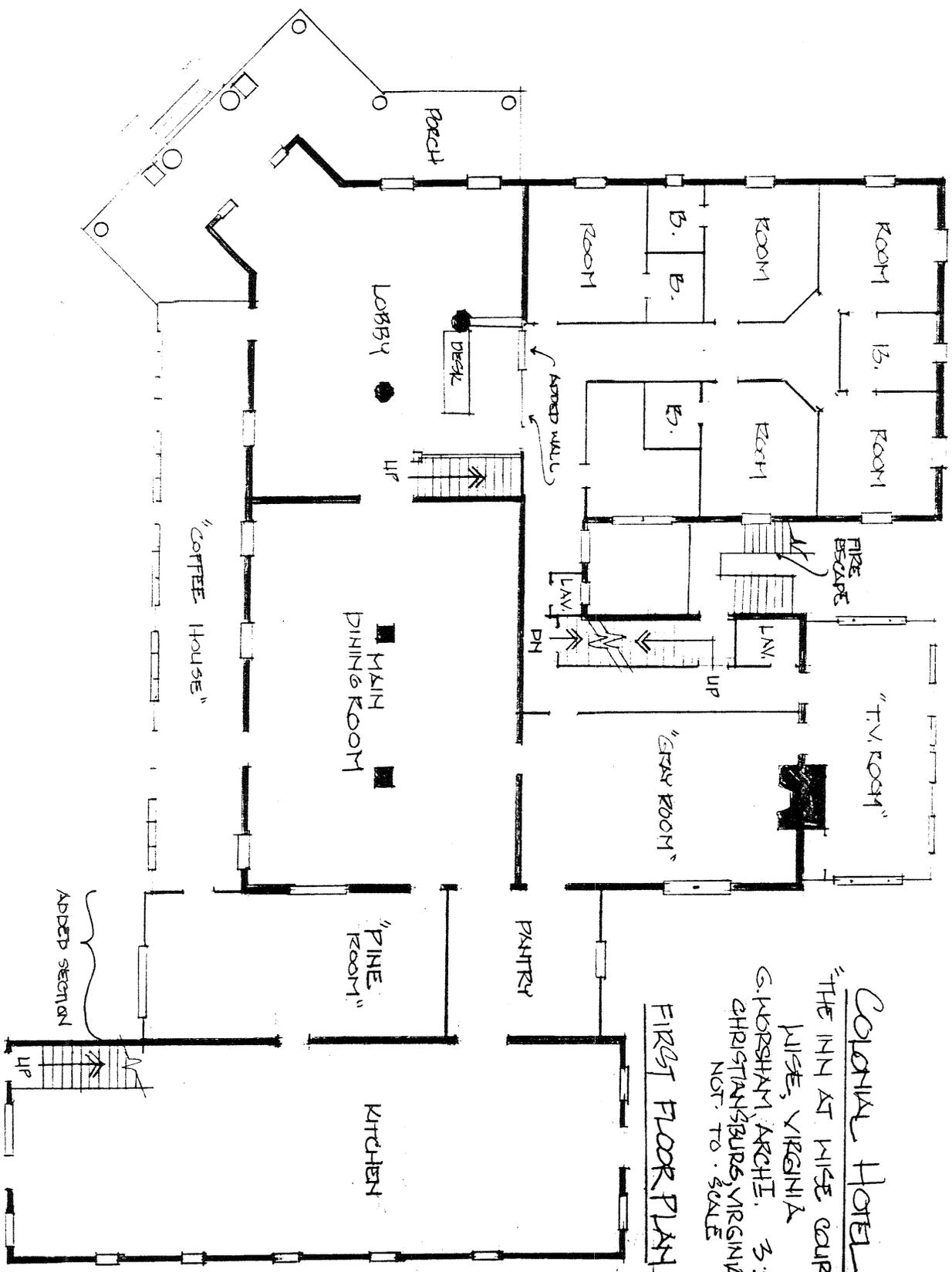
Photograph 3  
View of Portico from the north  
Negative number:  
Photo 3 of 7

Photograph 4  
View of Hotel from the northeast  
Negative number:  
Photo 4 of 7

Photograph 5  
View from north showing commercial  
Negative number:  
Photo 5 of 7

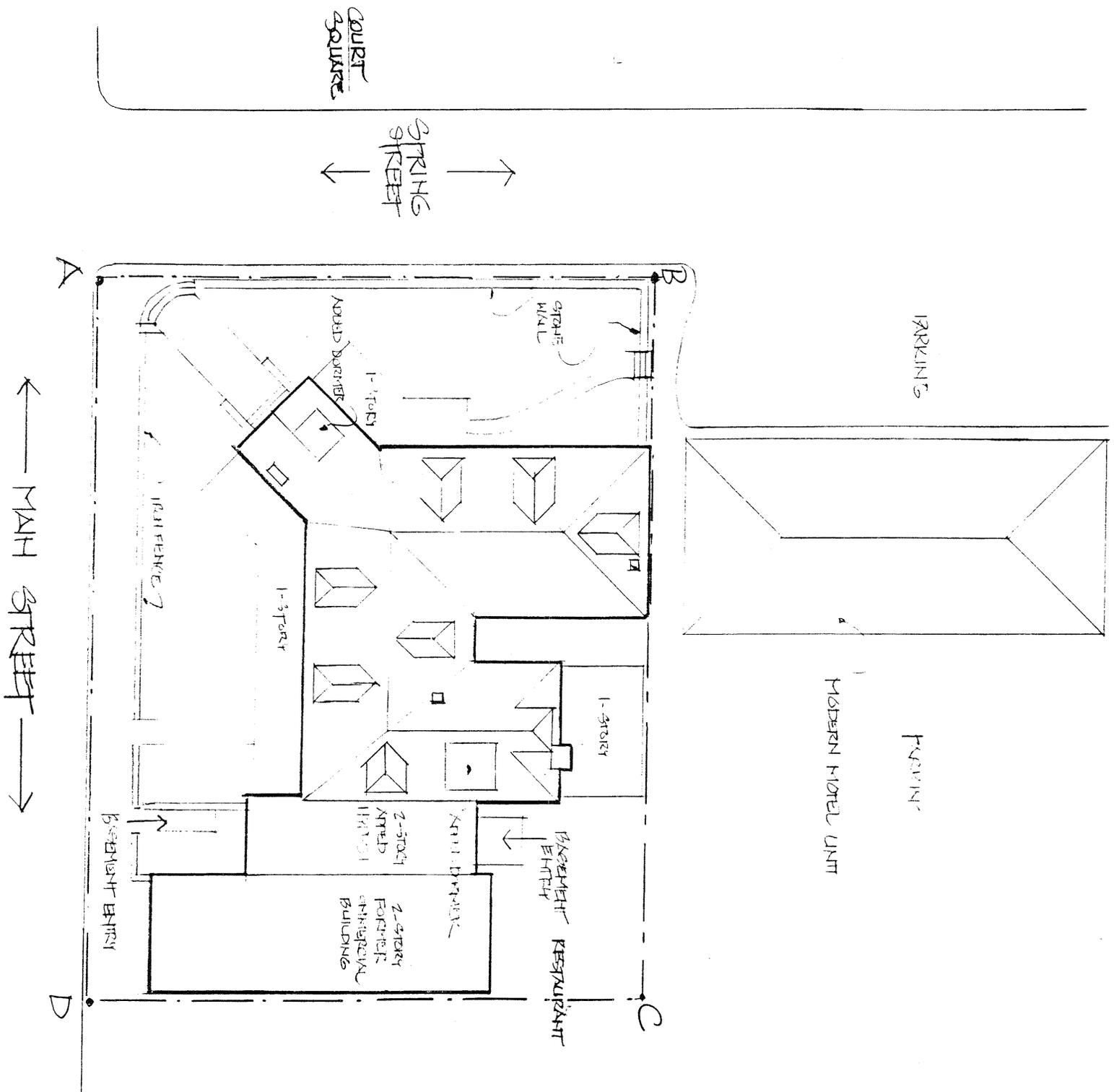
Photograph 6  
View of rear of Hotel from the southwest  
Negative number:  
Photo 6 of 7

Photograph 7  
Interior view of Lobby from east  
Negative number:  
Photo 7 of 7



COLONIAL HOTEL  
 "THE INN AT WISE COURTHOUSE"  
 WISE, VIRGINIA  
 G. MORSHAM ARCHT. 3.9.0  
 CHRISTIANSBURG, VIRGINIA  
 NOT. TO SCALE

FIRST FLOOR PLAN



Colonial Hotel  
 WISE, VIRGINIA  
 S. WORSHAM, ARCHITECT  
 3.90  
 NOT-TO-SCALE

SITE PLAN

NATIONAL REGISTER  
BOUNDARY

