

(Oct. 1990)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
**National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form**

1. Name of Property

historic name Wagon Wheel Motel, Cafe and Station
other names/site number Wagon Wheel Motel Historic District {preferred}

2. Location

street & number 901-905 East Washington Street. [N/A] not for publication
city or town Cuba [N/A] vicinity
state Missouri code MO county Crawford code 055 zip code 65453

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant [] nationally [X] statewide [] locally.
(See continuation sheet for additional comments [].)

LaVerne Brondel

2/19/95

Signature of certifying official/Title LaVerne Brondel/Deputy SHPO

Date

Missouri Department of Natural Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property [X] 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

- [] 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):
See continuation sheet [].

**Wagon Wheel Motel Historic District
Crawford County, Missouri**

5. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property		
		Contributing	Noncontributing	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	6	1	buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	0	0	sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	1	0	structures
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	2	0	objects
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	9	1	Total

Name of related multiple property listing.

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register.

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

DOMESTIC: hotel
COMMERCE/TRADE: restaurant
COMMERCE/TRADE: specialty store

Current Functions

DOMESTIC: hotel
COMMERCE/TRADE: specialty store
DOMESTIC: multiple dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification

LATE 19th and 20th CENTURY REVIVALS:
Tudor Revival
OTHER: Ozark Rock Masonry

See continuation sheet [].

Materials

foundation concrete
 walls stone
 roof asphalt
 other steel

See continuation sheet [x].

Narrative Description

See continuation sheet [x].

**Wagon Wheel Motel Historic District
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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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

See continuation sheet [x].

9. Major Bibliographic References

Bibliography

See continuation sheet [x].

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 #

Areas of Significance

COMMERCE

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1936-1969

Significant Dates

1936

Significant Person(s)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Freisenhan, Leo

Primary location of additional data:

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State Agency

Federal Agency

Local Government

University

Other:

Name of repository:

State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia, MO

**Wagon Wheel Motel Historic District
Crawford County, Missouri**

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 5.34 acres

UTM References

A. Zone 15	Easting 640786	Northing 4214160	B. Zone 15	Easting 640786	Northing 4213951
C. Zone 15	Easting 640674	Northing 4213951	D. Zone 15	Easting 640674	Northing 4214073

[x] See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Becky L. Snider, Ph.D.
 organization Becky L. Snider Consulting LLC date October 2002
 street & number 507 South Garth Avenue telephone 573 256-1105
 city or town Columbia state Missouri zip code 65203

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

- A 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 FOP for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FOP.)

name Harold and Pauline Armstrong
 street & number 901 East Washington Street telephone (573) 885-3411
 city or town Cuba state MO zip code 65453

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Wagon Wheel Motel Historic District
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7. Description continued:

Materials continued:

walls brick
vinyl
concrete block
roof terra cotta

Summary:

The Wagon Wheel Motel Historic District is located at 901-905 East Washington Street in Cuba, Crawford County, Missouri. The 5.34 acre motel property faces south toward East Washington Street, which functioned as U. S. Highway 66 from 1926 until 1969 when the Interstate 44 bypass at Cuba was completed. The district contains a large collection of highly intact historic resources, most of which date to the 1930s and 1940s. District boundaries include all of the buildings and structures that have been associated with the Wagon Wheel Motel since the first building in the complex was constructed in 1936. Contributing resources in the district include the original stone cafe and gas station building, three stone motel buildings, one concrete block motel building, a frame mixed-use building, two historic signs and a concrete gas pump island. A mobile home on the property is the only non-contributing resources in the district. All of the resources in the district are in excellent condition. The Wagon Wheel Cafe and Gas Station is currently used as a gift shop, and the Wagon Wheel Motel continues to provide nightly accommodations.

Elaboration:

The Wagon Wheel Motel, 901-905 Washington Street, is located on the eastern edge of Cuba, Missouri approximately two miles from the town center. The 5.34 acre property is roughly L-shaped and has approximately 380 feet of frontage on Washington Street, a thoroughfare that served as U.S. Highway 66 from 1926 until the late 1960s.

All seven of buildings on the property face Washington Street, and all are located on the front 3.5 acre portion of the lot; the rear portion of the property is undeveloped land. (Figure One) The resources on the motel property are arranged in three tiers of development. Near the street are two neon signs, a gas station/cafe building and a gas pump island. Approximately 200 feet back from the street, three stone motel buildings are arranged in a line parallel to Washington Street. Further to the north and away from the street is another line of buildings. This group of buildings, which is separated from the stone motel buildings by a wide gravel driveway and

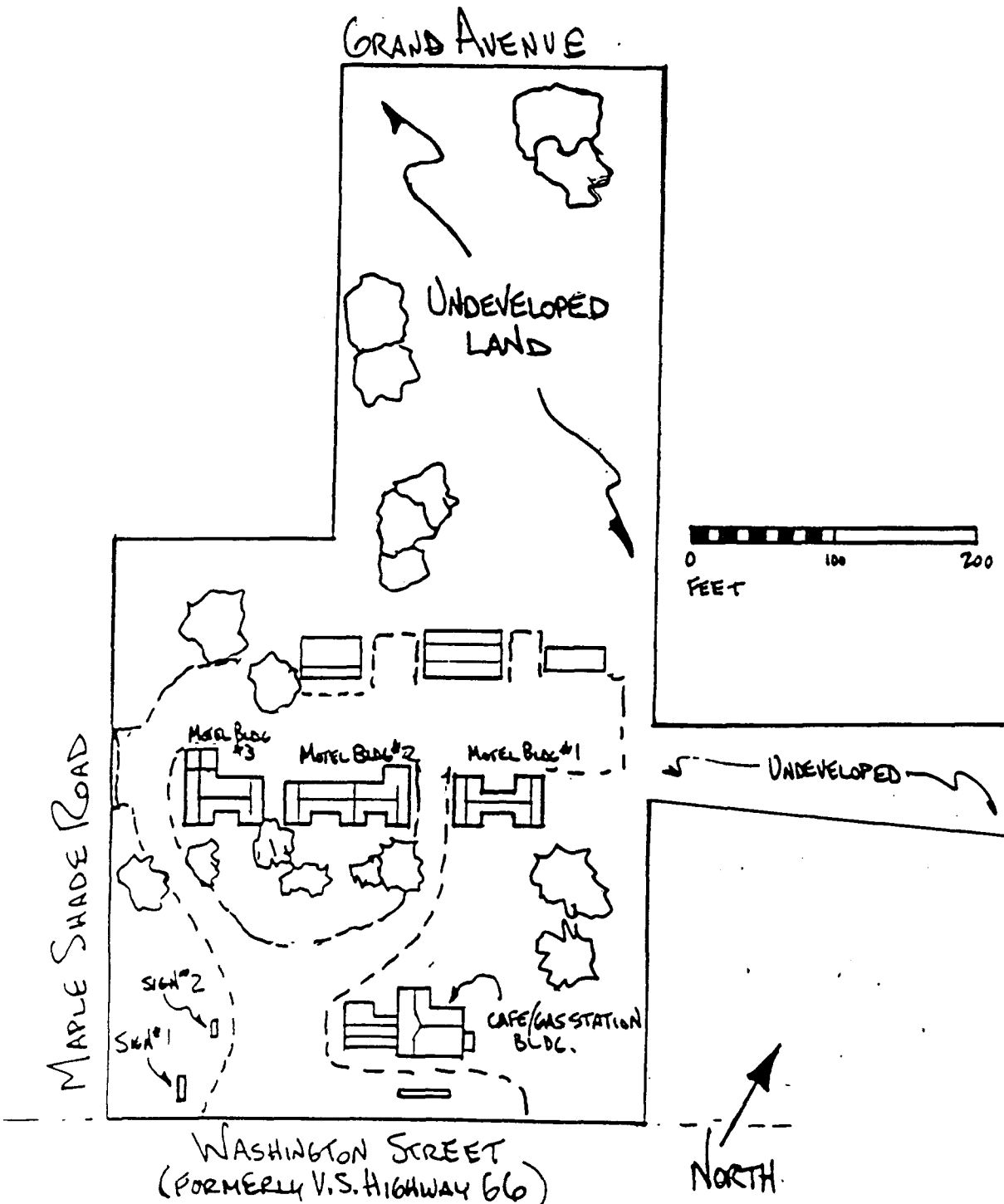
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Wagon Wheel Motel Historic District
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Figure One: Site Plan. Drawn by Becky Snider, October, 2002



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parking lot, consists of a concrete block motel building, a frame laundry and storage building, and a modern mobile home.

Gas Station/Cafe Building and Gas Station Pump Island, 1936, contributing building and contributing structure. The gas station/cafe building sits very near the road. It originally was built as two separate stone buildings – a cafe and a small gas station, but the two buildings are now connected. A three-foot gap, which originally separated the two buildings has been filled with a frame addition. The gas station portion of the building is also enclosed on the front and side by a frame addition. These alterations were made within the period of significance.¹

The one-story cafe building, which makes up the largest portion of the gas station/cafe building, has a concrete foundation, random-coursed Ozark sandstone walls, a rectangular plan and a hip roof. (Photo Nos. 3, 4) On the west side of the facade, a gabled ell projects out in front of the rest of the facade; on the east side of the facade, there are two windows and an infilled window opening. One of the windows has early or original 6/6 wood sash and is intact, the other has a single fixed pane of glass. Historic photos of the building show that the west side of the facade originally had two windows flanking a central door. (Figure Two) However, one window has been infilled, and the central doorway has been replaced by a modern window. Both the window opening and the bottom of the door opening have been infilled with stone matching the rest of the building. The stone sill and projecting stone windowbox supports are still in place. The interior of the cafe retains many of its original features, including knotty pine paneling and the original stone fireplace and mantel (See Figure 3 and Photo No. 5.)

The entrance to the cafe section of the building is now located on the east elevation, and it is sheltered by a windbreak consisting of a frame wall and a shed roof. Next to this windbreak is a stone chimney and an original 6/6 window. The rear elevation of the cafe section of the building has a garage door in the basement level on the west end, a second stone chimney, and a frame addition. The frame addition has a concrete foundation, a hip roof and vinyl siding.

The western portion of the gas station/cafe building contains the original stone gas station, and it has a frame garage addition that wraps around the front and side of the stone building. On the facade of this portion of the building, there is a pedestrian door flanked by two small windows on the east side and a roll-up garage door on the west side. A band of single light, fixed-pane windows stretches across the west elevation of the building. An oblong concrete gas pump island, which is roughly twelve feet long, is located directly in front of the gas station/cafe building. Modern alterations have not been extensive and the building still looks much as it did during the period of significance. It is, therefore, considered a contributing building; the gas pump island is a contributing structure.

¹ A personal interview with current owner, Pauline Armstrong on August 1, 2002 revealed that the changes to the café/gas station building were done prior to their purchase of the property in 1963.

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Figure Two. Postcard of the Wagon Wheel Motel, ca. 1940.
Source: Becky Snider

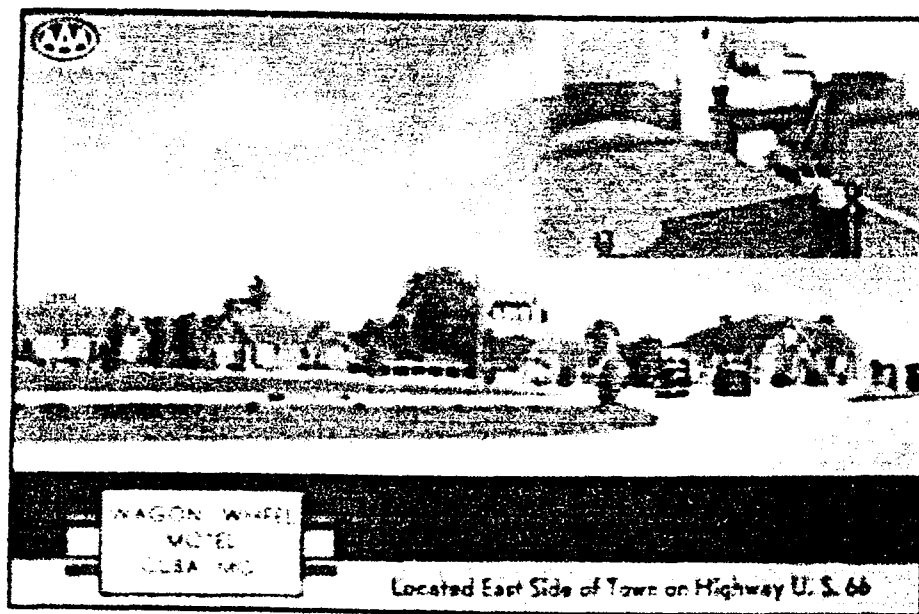


Figure Three. Postcard of the Interior of the Wagon Wheel Cafe, ca. 1940.
Source: The Skip Curtis Route 66 Postcard Collection.



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Historic Sign #1, ca. 1947, contributing object. This sign is located at the driveway entrance to the motel, in the southeast corner of the lot approximately 9 feet off the roadway. The structure of this sign is made up of a brick, rectangular base and two steel posts. Suspended from this structure are the words "WAGON WHEEL MOTEL" spelled out in neon. Those letters are surrounded by a neon arrow that points towards the motel. The sign also has a wagon wheel outlined with neon. The wheel is suspended from a metal pole, which is connected at a right angle to the support post nearest the road. (Photo No. 1.)

Historic Sign #2, ca. 1947, contributing object. This sign, which is much smaller than the main motel sign, is located approximately 50 feet north of the road in a grassy area next to the driveway. It is composed of a rectangular light box with the word "OFFICE" spelled out on it which is mounted on the top of an 8 foot tall steel post. Above the light box, there is a neon arrow pointing to the north. (Photo No. 2.)

The three stone motel buildings are located approximately 200 feet north of the road. All three buildings are constructed of random-coursed sandstone, and have Tudor Revival detailing. In addition, they retain early or original windows and doors, many of which are surrounded by brick quoining. Windows throughout are 8/1 or 6/1 double-hung. The motel room interiors are also highly intact. Most have changed little since the period of significance. Early or original two-panel doors and wood floors (under carpeting) are still in place in many units and some units still have walls covered with knotty pine paneling.

Motel Building #1, ca. 1937, contributing building. This one-story building has a rigidly symmetrical facade. (Photo No. 6.) The facade is divided into three sections with projecting front facing gables in the end bays. Each of these bays has a door with a gabled stoop cover, a single 6/1 window and an archway leading to a recessed entrance. These front facing gables have asymmetrical sweeping rooflines characteristic of Tudor Revival cottages. The tops of the arches are outlined with brick, and each has a stone keystone. Both the brick around the arches and the brick quoining around the windows are painted white, providing a sharp contrast to the earth tones of the stone walls. In the upper part of each gable end, there is a small rectangular vent. The center bay of the facade contains two equally-spaced pairs of 6/1 double hung windows. The rear elevation of Motel Building #1, like the front, is divided into three bays. The outer bays each contain a door with a gabled stoop cover and a 6/1 window. However, unlike the front elevation, the gable ends of these outer bays are filled with stucco rather than stone. There are four equally spaced 6/1 windows in the center bay of the rear elevation.

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Motel Building #2, ca. 1937, 1945, contributing building. Motel Building #2 is the largest of the three original motel units; it contains 8 units. (Photo No. 7.) Historic photos of this building show that it was built in two sections; the later section replaced a row of garages that ran between Building #1 and Building #2. (Figure Four) The facade of this building is divided into five sections. The west 3/5 of the facade was constructed first. This section has three bays. A center bay with two sets of paired double hung windows is flanked by projecting front facing gables. Each of the gabled sections, which formed the outer bays of the original building, contains a window and a recessed door. However, unlike the recessed doorways of Motel Building #1, the porch leading to the recessed door has a square opening rather than an archway. Although the materials used to construct the eastern section of Motel Building #2 are identical to the rest of the building and its design is very similar, the fenestration patterns in the eastern 2/5 of the building don't follow those on the rest of the building. The bay connecting the newer section to the older part of the building contains a door and two windows. The door has a gabled stoop cover; the windows have 6/1 double hung sash and the window opening is outlined with brick quoining. The end bay of Motel Building #2 is composed of a projecting front facing gable.

On the rear elevation, two 1-car garages have been converted into motel units. A door and two 1/1 windows have been installed in each garage door opening and the rest of the opening has been infilled with concrete. The stone lintels in these former openings are still in place. According to the current owner, these alterations were made prior to 1963 when they purchased the property.

Motel Building #3, ca. 1937, contributing building. Motel Building #3 is very similar in design to Motel Building #1. It is the easternmost of the three stone motel buildings. It has projecting front facing gables with asymmetrical sweeping rooflines in the end bays, recessed doorways with arched porch openings, and brick quoining around the window and door openings. (Photo No. 9.) The building's three bay facade has two pairs of double-hung windows in the center bay and projecting front gables in the end bays. The western end bay has a recessed entrance and a second door that is centered on the facade and is sheltered by a freestanding arched canopy. It is likely that this door is original and always functioned as the entrance to the motel office. Although the motel office is still entered through this door, the room it opens onto also functions as the owner's living room. The eastern end bay of Motel Building #3 has a window and a recessed entrance. There is a stone addition which is early, but probably not original, on the west side of the rear elevation. A garage door opening in the eastern end of the rear elevation has been infilled with a door and two windows. The stone lintel is, however, still in place. Motel Building #3 appears to have originally contained two motel units and the motel office; it now serves as the motel office and owners' residence.

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Motel Building #4, ca. 1950, contributing building. This one story concrete block building is located approximately 60 feet north of Motel Building #2 across a wide driveway and parking area. It has a rectangular plan and a small concrete block rear addition on the back. (Photo No. 10.) Motel Building #4 has a flat roof with a false mansard roof covered with terra cotta tiles on the front elevation. The three bay facade has a door and an 8/1 double-hung window in each outer bay and a small 1/1 window in the center bay. The rear addition has a shed roof, a small concrete chimney and two 6-light awning windows. There are four motel units in this building.

Laundry/Storage Building, ca. 1950, 1963, contributing building. This one-story frame building is located approximately 60 feet due north of Motel Building # 1. It has a side gable roof and weatherboard siding. (Photo No. 11.) The building's facade is divided into three sections. The east section has a large three-light picture window and a door. The center section contains two garage doors. The west section has a single door. A narrow shed roofed addition runs the length of the rear elevation. This building once functioned as a small coffee shop, but is now used for storage and as the motel laundry facility.

Mobile Home, ca. 1970, non-contributing building. A modern single-wide mobile home is located approximately 30 feet east of the Laundry/Storage building.

Overall, the Wagon Wheel Motel Historic District looks and functions today much as it did during the period of significance. All of the resources in the district are in excellent condition and all but the gas station/café building are functioning in their original capacity. With the exception of the gas station/café which has seen some alterations, the contributing resources retain their original location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association.

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8. Significance:

Summary:

The Wagon Wheel Motel Historic District in Cuba, Missouri is significant under Criteria A and C. In the area of COMMERCE, the district is significant as a highly intact tourist court on Route 66. The Wagon Wheel Cafe and Gas Station opened in 1936, and the Wagon Wheel Motel, known originally as the Wagon Wheel Cabins, was accommodating nightly travelers by 1938. The Wagon Wheel Motel has been in operation ever since. The motel complex was one of the many tourist courts constructed in response to the surge in automobile travel and tourism during the first half of the twentieth century. Most, like the Wagon Wheel were built by local craftsmen and were locally owned and operated. However, few are still in operation today. Not only does the Wagon Wheel Motel still accommodate nightly travelers, but also it is still locally owned and operated. It is also the earliest tourist court on Route 66 in Missouri still in operation as a lodging facility.

The Wagon Wheel Motel Historic District is also significant under Criterion C in the area of ARCHITECTURE. It is a rare early example of the transition in roadside lodging from individual tourist cottages to buildings with multiple units. In addition, the high degree of formal styling in the design of the motel buildings in the Wagon Wheel Historic District is rare along Route 66 in Missouri. While the use of stone as a building material for tourist courts on Route 66 was fairly common, most are unstyled vernacular buildings. In contrast, the Wagon Wheel Motel buildings have distinctive Tudor Revival features. Furthermore, the buildings in the Wagon Wheel Motel Historic District have additional local significance because they were designed and constructed by Leo Friesenhan, a mason who is well known locally as well as in the St. Louis area.²

The period of significance for the Wagon Wheel Motel Historic District runs from 1936, the year the Wagon Wheel Cafe and Gas Station opened for business to 1969, the year the Interstate 44 bypass at Cuba was completed.³ The extension of the period of significance past the arbitrary fifty-year cut-off acknowledges the continuing importance of Route 66 in Missouri and in Cuba until the highway was decommissioned in the Cuba area in the late 1960s.

Of the nine resources within the district boundaries, six are contributing buildings, two are contributing objects, one is a contributing structure and one is a non-contributing building. The Wagon Wheel Motel is one of the best known sites on Route 66 in Missouri. It has been featured in Route 66 guidebooks worldwide and is a common stop for American and international Route 66 fans.

² Letter to Pauline Armstrong from Marie Friesenhan Davis, May 27, 1995.

³ Missouri Department of Transportation Composite Map showing the highway projects in Crawford County between 1923-1996.

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Elaboration

Cuba is located in north central Crawford County, Missouri, which was organized in 1828 and named for Georgia Senator W. H. Crawford.⁴ The town was platted in 1857 by M.W. Trask and W.H. Ferguson in anticipation of the construction of the St. Louis-San Francisco Railroad. The railroad reached Cuba a year later, and the town's early history as a railroad shipping point began.⁵ Although much of the town was severely damaged by guerilla raids and troop movement during the Civil War, Cuba had recovered by the early twentieth century, and was a bustling railroad town. Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps for 1924, the earliest year they were published for Cuba, show the street fronting the railroad tracks lined with commercial buildings.⁶ However, by that date, a commercial corridor was also beginning to develop one block north of the tracks along Highway 14, known in town as Washington Street. Two years later, when Highway 14 became Route 66, many of the town's businesses abandoned the commercial area along the railroad tracks and relocated to lots with highway frontage.⁷ New businesses were also attracted to Cuba as a result of the construction of Route 66 through town. Across the country, the proliferation of automobiles and the construction of highways, including Route 66, in the early decades of the twentieth century caused many towns, like Cuba, to shift their focus away from the railroad towards the new source of commerce – the highway. In A Guide Book to Highway 66, which was published in 1946, Jack D. Rittenhouse wrote "Although still important as an agricultural center, Cuba is now an important highway town."⁸

The first automobiles began to appear in cities across the United States in the early 1890s, and within twenty years, there were more than one million automobiles on the nation's roads.⁹ This exponential growth, combined with poor road conditions, fueled a nationwide movement to improve the country's road system. In response to this demand, two key pieces of legislation passed by Congress, the Federal Road Act of 1916 and the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1921, created the infrastructure and funding for the development of the Federal Highway System. On November 26, 1926, U. S. Highway 66 was officially commissioned by the United States Secretary of Agriculture as part of the Federal-Aid Highway System.

Route 66, as it is more commonly known, was the only interstate highway to cut diagonally across the country connecting two of the country's most important cities, Chicago

⁴ James W. Goodrich and Lynn Wolf Gentzler, ed., Marking Missouri History (Columbia, Missouri: The State Historical Society of Missouri, 1998) p. 232.

⁵ Workers of the Writers' Program of the Work Projects Administration, Missouri: The WPA Guide to the "Show Me" State (St. Louis: Missouri Historical Society Press, 1986) p. 409.

⁶ Sanborn Map Company. Map of Cuba, Missouri, 1924.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Jack D. Rittenhouse, A Guide Book to Highway 66 (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1946) p. 24.

⁹ General context on Route 66 and associated property types has been excerpted from the Route 66 in Missouri Survey Report, written by Becky Snider and Debbie Sheals. This nomination was written in conjunction with that survey project.

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and Los Angeles. The path Route 66 followed across the state of Missouri was established several centuries earlier by Native American tribes as a hunting and trading route and was known as the Osage Trail. As Missouri was settled in the early nineteenth century and roads were constructed, this route became known as the St. Louis to Springfield Road. Later, during the Civil War when telegraph poles were installed along the road, it took on the moniker, the Old Wire Road. In 1921, the Centennial Road Law, which was passed by the Missouri Legislature, created a system of state highways and the route from St. Louis to Joplin was designated State Highway 14. Four years later, Highway 14 became part of the Federal Highway System and was renamed U.S. Highway 66. When Route 66 was commissioned in 1926, much of the roadway in Missouri was still unimproved. Although construction began on the highway the same year it was commissioned, it was not completely paved with concrete in Missouri until 1931, and the paving of the entire route from Chicago to Los Angeles was not completed until 1938.

As the shortest route from the Midwest to California, Route 66 soon became one of the country's most traveled highways. During its 29-year existence, Route 66 developed into an American icon. Nicknamed the "Main Street of America" by the U.S. Highway 66 Association, Route 66 helped many realize the American dream of owning their own business. Roadside businesses, owned predominately by "mom and pop," sprung up all along the highway to serve the thousands of travelers that ventured out on the country's highways "in search of America."

Proximity to the popular new highway provided local businesses with a ready-made clientele, and in many towns, the highway became one of the biggest sources of commerce. This was especially important during the Great Depression, a time which saw an overall increase in volume for some roadside businesses. Between 1926 and 1939, the number of tourist courts in the United States jumped from approximately 2000 to 13,521.¹⁰ In addition to tourists, Route 66 was used by thousands of farmers devastated by the dust bowl and depression as they migrated westward in search of jobs during the late 1920s and early 1930s. In his book, the Grapes of Wrath, John Steinbeck immortalized the plight of these migrants and gave Route 66 another name – The Mother Road – as a place of shelter, comfort and hope.

Roadside lodging accommodations along Route 66 in Missouri serve as tangible links to the early days of cross-country travel along Route 66. Unlike the other types of resources related to Route 66 in Missouri, these businesses were created exclusively for the use of travelers, and had few local customers. They were, however, almost all locally owned and operated. Roadside lodging in the first half of the twentieth century was predominantly a "mom-and-pop" industry. More than 98% of all motels in the country were independent operations in 1948. That percentage dropped significantly in the 1960s and 1970s, as national and regional franchise operations began to dominate the lodging industry.¹¹

¹⁰ John Margolies, Home Away From Home: Motels in America, (Boston: Bulfinch Press, 1995) p. 32-35.

¹¹ John A Jakle, et al., The Motel in America, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996) pp. 79 and 150

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As with other property types associated with Route 66, early twentieth century developments in the lodging industry were closely linked to the rise in popularity of the automobile. Although the modern hotel had been around for almost a century by the time the automobile was developed, it was not until the 1920s and 1930s that full service roadside lodging facilities became common.

Prior to the early 1800s, commercial lodging in America and Europe consisted mostly of inns which offered rooms and sometimes communal meals, all of which were of varying quality. The level of housekeeping services also varied, and in many cases, travelers were required to supply their own servants. It was not until around 1800 that the concept of combining overnight lodging with full housekeeping and dining services began to develop. The idea caught on quickly. One history of the industry noted that "it took 12,000 years for innkeepers to progress to the point of having 30 rooms under one roof. And in the next 100 years this jumped to 3,000 rooms."¹²

It has been noted in several historical accounts that the modern hotel industry is an American invention. The full service Tremont Hotel, which opened in Boston in 1839, has been widely recognized to be the first hotel ever opened.¹³ The Tremont pioneered a number of features associated with modern hotels. It was, for example, the first to offer washing facilities, including what was at that time a rare commodity, soap, in every room. The Tremont was instantly a hit, and soon imitated throughout America and Europe. Hotels became a standard feature in communities across the country, and were often regarded as objects of civic pride, with communities competing to have the biggest and best hotel of the day.

The locations of commercial lodging facilities have always been tied to transportation routes. The first known inns or taverns operated along trade routes thousands of years ago, and later, were located near stage lines in both America and Europe. One description of the English inn system claimed that "the stagecoach and the inn developed together for the 200 years before the railroad appeared."¹⁴ The spread of railroad service had a profound effect upon the growth of the hotel business in America, especially in frontier situations. As one history put it, as "the railroads spread westward across the continent, new cities grew at junction points. With new cities came new chambers of commerce that realized the need for a grand hotel to demonstrate enterprise and faith in the future."¹⁵

Those downtown hotels, which varied from upscale establishments to basic accommodations for traveling salesmen, did not quite meet the needs of the new breed of automobile traveler, however. Early automobile tourists, especially in the days of open cars and

¹² Henry End, Interiors Book of Hotels & Motor Hotels, (New York: Whitney Library of Design, 1963) p. 3.

¹³ Arthur White, Palaces of the People: A Social History of Commercial Hospitality, (New York: Taplinger Publishing Company, 1968) p. 129.

¹⁴ End. p. 2.

¹⁵ End. p. 5.

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dirt roads, were not comfortable with the thought of traipsing through a downtown hotel lobby to secure lodging after a day on the road. Location was also an issue; the commercial center of town was usually inconvenient to the highway traveler, as it often required a trip through traffic and unfamiliar neighborhoods. Furthermore, the distance between communities large enough to have a downtown hotel often meant that there was often nowhere to stay when they did stop. As a result, many early travelers simply camped. As one history of the motel put it "They brought camping gear, found an attractive spot along the roadside at day's end, pitched a tent, lit a fire, and then slept in their own makeshift camp."¹⁶

By the time work began on Route 66, campgrounds for motorists, often called tourist camps, had become common features along many of the nation's roadways. Those camps were at first publicly owned and operated, and in most cases free, but as the need to charge for the services became apparent, the private sector took over the business. Tourist camp operators saw an opportunity in the making, and quickly expanded their offerings to include cabins as well as campsites.¹⁷

The concept of individual dwelling units that came complete with tiny kitchens and many of the comforts of home was enthusiastically greeted by the traveling public. By the mid-1920s, the cottage court was the lodging of choice for the automobile traveler in America. It has been estimated that the number of cottage courts in the nation doubled between 1920 and 1926, and by 1935, there were 9,848 tourist courts in the country. Growth in the industry continued throughout the Depression; the national total had risen another 39% by 1939, to 13,521.¹⁸

Route 66 in Missouri was no exception, almost all of the 1920s and 30s era lodging facilities found on the old route today are cottage courts, and lodging directories from the 1930s include numerous listings for "cottages." The Missouri listings in a directory put out in 1935, for example, show that except in major cities, cottages greatly outnumbered hotels, especially in towns served by Route 66.¹⁹ Hotels were completely absent from the listings for most of the smaller communities, many of which had two or three cottage courts. Early directories also show that the cost of cottage rental was usually about the same or slightly less than that of a hotel room, about \$1.50 per night. Although the Wagon Wheel Motel was considered to be a tourist court when it was constructed and was originally called the Wagon Wheel Cabins, it is better described as an early motel since it has multiple units within each building.

Construction on the Wagon Wheel Cafe, Gas Station and Motel (Cabins) began in the mid-1930s. In 1934, Robert and Margaret Martin purchased approximately 11 acres of land on Route 66 just outside the city limits of Cuba, Missouri. Over the following two years, they

¹⁶ Liebs, p. 170.

¹⁷ Jakle, et al., pp. 33-36.

¹⁸ Margolies, pp. 32-36.

¹⁹ Conoco Travel Bureau, Conoco Travel Bureau Hotel and Cottage Camp Directory. (Conoco: USA, 1935) pp. 42-49.

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borrowed a total of \$7,000 from the previous owners of the property and from the People's Bank of Cuba, ostensibly for the construction of the Wagon Wheel Cafe, Gas Station and Motel.²⁰ The Martins hired local mason, Leo Friesenhan, to design and construct the motel complex buildings.²¹

Although stone was commonly used as a building material for roadside businesses along Route 66 in Missouri, the formal styling of the Wagon Wheel Motel buildings is unusual. As Quinta Scott, the author of Along Route 66 notes,

Cuba advertised itself as the Gateway to the Ozarks, and the Wagon Wheel represented the first use of "colorful Ozark stone." However, the Wagon Wheel looked to east to St. Louis rather than west to Rolla for its design.

It is likely that the choice of Tudor Revival styling for the Wagon Wheel Motel buildings resulted from Friesenhan's work in St. Louis, but it is unknown whether the Martins selected him because they were familiar with his work and liked the Tudor styling or whether Friesenhan suggested the design after he was selected as the architect/builder.

Tudor Revival was one of the period revival styles that were popular in the United States from 1890 to 1940. These buildings were designed to emulate specific periods or movements in history. They were designed not so much to be exact copies of earlier buildings as new forms in which a single past style was emulated. In most cases, this was done by copying general massing and using carefully duplicated ornamentation. Although the general massing and ornamentation of earlier forms was carefully duplicated, most Period Revival houses featured much more open plans than their predecessors.

In the last decades of the nineteenth century, architectural designs began to move away from exuberant ornamentation and Victorian picturesqueness towards more "pure" forms and styles. Two factions developed over the definition of "pure." The members of the Modernist movement believed that purity could be achieved by eliminating all applied ornament which was based on past styles and by allowing the structure of the building itself to become the decoration. On the other hand, architects who felt that purity was best achieved by correctly reproducing earlier forms such as those promoted at the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Period Revival styles are based on the philosophies of the latter.

Although the Period Revival movement was begun by academically trained architects, the Revival styles, like other twentieth century architectural styles and types, were frequently introduced into the mainstream building market by the widespread publication of pattern books and mail-order catalogues. Those publications offered Americans a myriad of variations and

²⁰ Property Abstract for the Wagon Wheel Motel, in the possession of the property owners, Harold and Pauline Armstrong.

²¹ Quinta Scott, Along Route 66. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2000) p. 75

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combinations to choose from. One history of the movement noted that in those books "Modern Tudor Revivals merged with Colonial Revivals" to form "Composite Tudors" like those sold by the Aladdin Company as the "Shelburne" and "Colonial Bungalows" like those sold by the Sears Company as the "Ardara."²² As a result of the variations that developed, many streets throughout the country are lined with these uniquely American houses.

Predominate characteristics of the Tudor Revival style include asymmetrical plans, steeply pitched roofs, often with eaves of varying height, and at least one front-facing cross gable. Tudor buildings also often have a mixture of wall materials, round or slightly pointed arched doorways, and decorative quoining around window and door openings.²³

Figure Four. Example of the distinctive mortar profile found on many buildings constructed by Leo Friesenhan.

Source: Bourbon, Missouri, Celebrating 150 Years: 1853-2003, p. 78.



²² Robert Schweitzer and Michael W. R. Davis, America's Favorite Homes, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1990) p. 24.

²³ Virginia McAlester and Lee McAlester, A Field Guide to American Houses (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984) pp. 354-371.

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Leo Friesenhan, the builder Robert and Margaret Martin chose to design and construct the Wagon Wheel buildings, immigrated to the United States from Hungary just after the turn of the twentieth century. He settled in St. Louis and found work as a brick and stonemason, a trade he had learned from his brother.²⁴ According to his daughter, Marie Friesenhan Davis, Leo Friesenhan built many Tudor bungalows along Gravois Road in south St. Louis. One street in particular, Hummelshein Street, is lined with houses built by Friesenhan. In 1914, Friesenhan moved his family to Bourbon, Missouri, west of Cuba. Although he continued to build houses in St. Louis, he also built a number of buildings in Crawford County, including the Von Hoffman Press Building in Bourbon, the Rock Fair Filling Station and Cafe in Cuba and the Wagon Wheel Cafe, Gas Station and Motel. Friesenhan's specialty was native stone fireplaces, like the one in the Wagon Wheel Café building, and his work can be easily recognized by the curved mortar ridge between the stones.²⁵ (Figures Three and Four)

A number of different sources cite the construction date of the Wagon Wheel Cafe, Gas Station and Motel (Cabins) as 1934, the same year the property was purchased by the Martins.²⁶ However, a March 12, 1936 article in the Steelville Ledger noted that "The new restaurant and filling station called 'The Wagon Wheel' and operated by Mr. and Mrs. Joe Slowensky opened Saturday for business."²⁷ According to the abstract for the Wagon Wheel Motel property, Robert and Margaret Martin granted a five-year lease to Marathon Oil Company on January 1, 1936. Terms of the lease included a monthly payment of \$50 plus 1 cent per gallon on all gas sold over 5,000 gallons per month.²⁸ It is likely that Marathon Oil hired the Slowenskys to operate the gas station and cafe, but it is unclear whether the construction of the Wagon Wheel Cabins preceded or followed the construction of the gas station and cafe buildings.

No articles could be found in local paper between 1934-1937 announcing the opening of the tourist court, but the Wagon Wheel Cabins lodging establishment was definitely open for business by 1938. The tourist court is listed in the 1938 Shell Tourist Accommodation Directory - North Central States.²⁹ That directory noted that the Wagon Wheel Cabins had 10 cottages, all of which have private baths with hot and cold running water. A year later, the following listing for the Wagon Wheel Cabins appeared in the Directory of Motor Courts and Cottages published by the American Automobile Association.

²⁴ Telephone Conversation with Marie Friesenhan Davis, October 28, 2002.

²⁵ Bourbon History Book Committee, Bourbon, Missouri, Celebrating 150 Years: 1853-2003, (Rich Hill, MO: Bell Books, 2002) p. 77-78, 158.

²⁶ Scott, p. 75 and Keith Purtell, "Wagon Wheel Motel Most Famous Landmark." Cuba Free Press, October 15 1992, 4.

²⁷ Steelville Ledger, March 12, 1936.

²⁸ Property Abstract for the Wagon Wheel Motel.

²⁹ Shell Petroleum Corporation, Shell Tourist Accommodation Directory - North Central States (Chicago: The H. M. Gousha Company, 1938) p. 35.

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Wagon Wheel Cabins on U.S. 66, the east side of town. 9 newly constructed stone cottages, each with private tub or shower bath. Very well furnished; gas heat; fans in summer; enclosed garages. Rates, \$2.50 to \$3 per day for two persons. This is a home away from home. Splendid surroundings. Cafe; laundry facilities; rest rooms; super-service station. One of the finest courts in the state. Very good.³⁰

Although advertisements refer to the stone cottages at the Wagon Wheel Cabins, the Wagon Wheel was unusual in that the "cabins" were constructed as multiple unit buildings rather than individual free-standing single-unit cabins. As such, it is an early example of the transition to the multiple-unit motel format which became popular in the 1940s and 1950s. Many tourist courts started out as individual cottages, and later the units were joined together under a single roofline either with garages or additional motel units. As the lodging industry matured, operators began combining units into larger buildings for the sake of efficiency. This was done either as part of a remodeling project, or, in the case of later buildings, as an original design element. The terms "motor court" and "motel" came into widespread use, and by mid-century, the "motel" had become firmly established as the modern form for roadside lodging. However, the term "motel" had actually been around for two decades by then; the first establishment to operate with that name was the Milestone Mo-tel in San Louis Obispo California, designed by architect Arthur S. Heineman in 1925.³¹

By 1940, the Wagon Wheel Cafe and Gas Station and the Wagon Wheel Cabins were well-established businesses. Both are listed in the local newspaper as supporters of a variety of events in Cuba. One such advertisement which appeared in the March 25, 1940 Cuba Review newspaper listed the Wagon Wheel Station and "Wagon Wheel Cabins, Compliments of R.W. Martin" as sponsors of the local high school theatrical production of "Bubbling Oven."³² The Wagon Wheel Cafe continued in operation until the mid-1940s when it was converted into an office for local physician, Dr. Kaplan. During that same period, the Wagon Wheel Gas Station was taken over by the City of Cuba and used as a filling station and maintenance facility for city vehicles.³³

Route 66 was used extensively during World War II as a military conduit across the country for men, munitions and equipment. The construction of Fort Leonard Wood east of Cuba near Waynesville in the early 1940s significantly increased the traffic flow on Route 66 through Missouri. The extensive military use of the country's highways revealed the need for

³⁰ American Automobile Association, Directory of Motor Courts and Cottages, (Washington, DC: American Automobile Association, 1939) p 88.

³¹ Margolies, p. 68.

³² Cuba Review, March 25 1940.

³³ Personal interviews with current owner, Pauline Armstrong, August 1, 2002. October 23, 2002.

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better defense roads and, ironically, sealed the fate of Route 66. The passage of the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1944 created the National Interstate Highway System, but funding limitations as a result of the war prevented the interstate system from being constructed. Route 66 was given a reprieve for a few years, and the highway was used by tourists more than ever in the post-war years. Those operators who had managed to hold on through the slow war years were rewarded with the largest client base yet. One source estimates that by 1956, there were approximately 60,000 motels and tourist courts in the country.³⁴ By the mid-1940s, the Wagon Wheel Motel had grown from 10 to 14 units with the construction of the addition on Motel Building #2.³⁵

In 1946, the motel passed to its second set of owners. Robert and Margaret Martin sold the Wagon Wheel Motel apparently to move on to a larger establishment. The Martins purchased the Pennant Tavern in Rolla and transformed it into the Pennant Cafe and Hotel Martin.³⁶ Two couples, Clifton and Beulah Speer and Edmund and Violet Koebelin, jointly purchased the Wagon Wheel Motel from the Martins, but this partnership lasted less than one year. In 1947, John and Winifred Mathis purchased the Wagon Wheel Motel.³⁷ According to current owner, Pauline Armstrong, it was Mr. Mathis who designed and had constructed the motel's unique neon sign. Mr. Mathis was also responsible for the change in the business' name from the Wagon Wheel Cabins to the Wagon Wheel Motel, and for the addition of two more buildings to the motel complex - the concrete block motel building, which has four motel units in it, and the laundry/storage building.

During the Mathis' ownership, the Wagon Wheel Motel became one of the first Missouri lodging establishments to be accepted into the Best Western referral network. According to the authors of The Motel in America, Best Western was founded in 1946. By 1951, "a map of the cooperating motels virtually outlined the nation's western highway system: U.S. 101 and U.S. 99 in parallel along the Pacific Coasts, U.S. 50 and U.S. 30 following the route of the old Lincoln Highway, U.S. 66 from Los Angeles to Chicago, and U.S. 70 and U.S. 80 in the Southwest."³⁸ That map, which is reproduced below, (Figure Five) shows only three Best Western member motels in Missouri, one of which appears to be in Cuba, Missouri. It is likely that the motel indicated on that map in east central Missouri was the Wagon Wheel Motel; a postcard of the Wagon Wheel Motel from the same period included the Best Western logo. (Figure Six)

³⁴ Liebs, p. 183.

³⁵ American Automobile Association, Directory of Accommodations - North American Continent (Washington, D.C.: American Automobile Association, 1946) p. 89.

³⁶ C.H. (Skip) Curtis, The Missouri U.S. 66 Tour Book (Lake St. Louis: Curtis Enterprises, 1994) p. 97-98.

³⁷ Wagon Wheel Property Abstract.

³⁸ Jakle et al., p. 142.

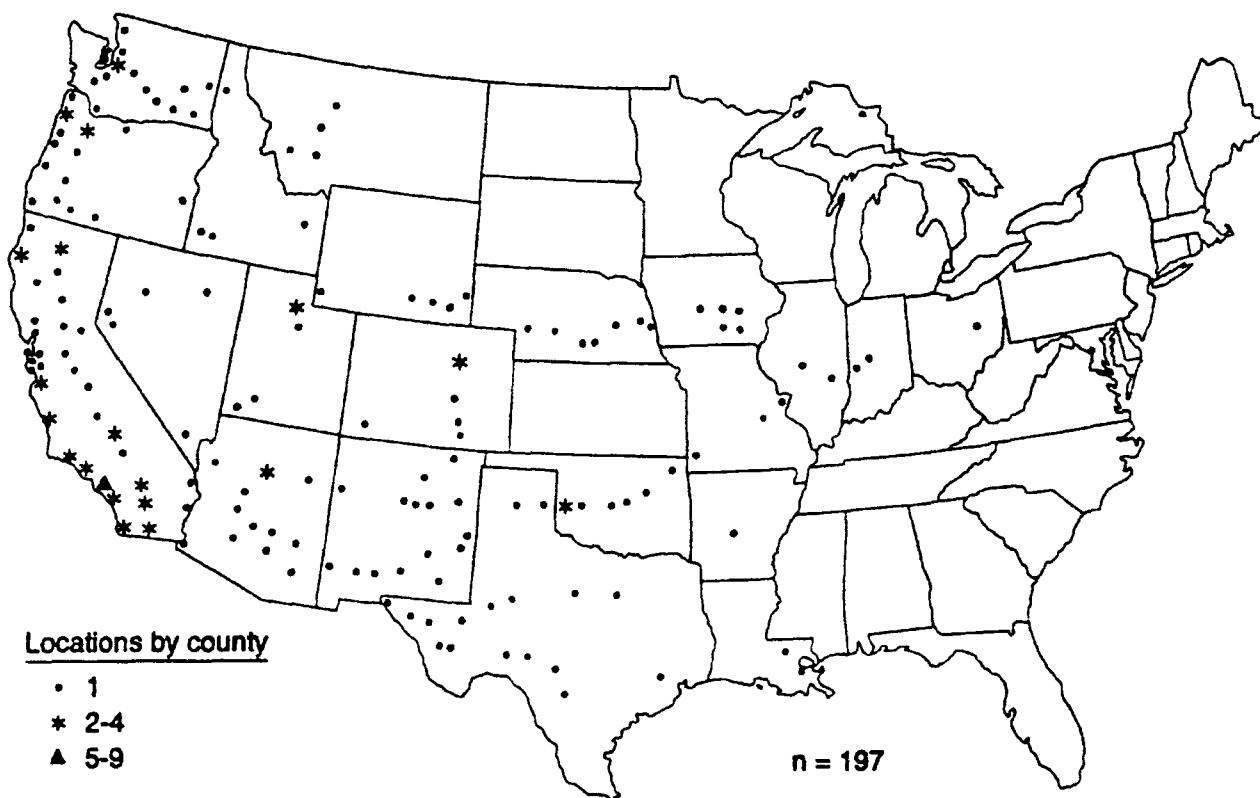
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Wagon Wheel Motel Historic District
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Figure Five: Best Western participating motels, 1951
Source: The Motel in America. p. 144.



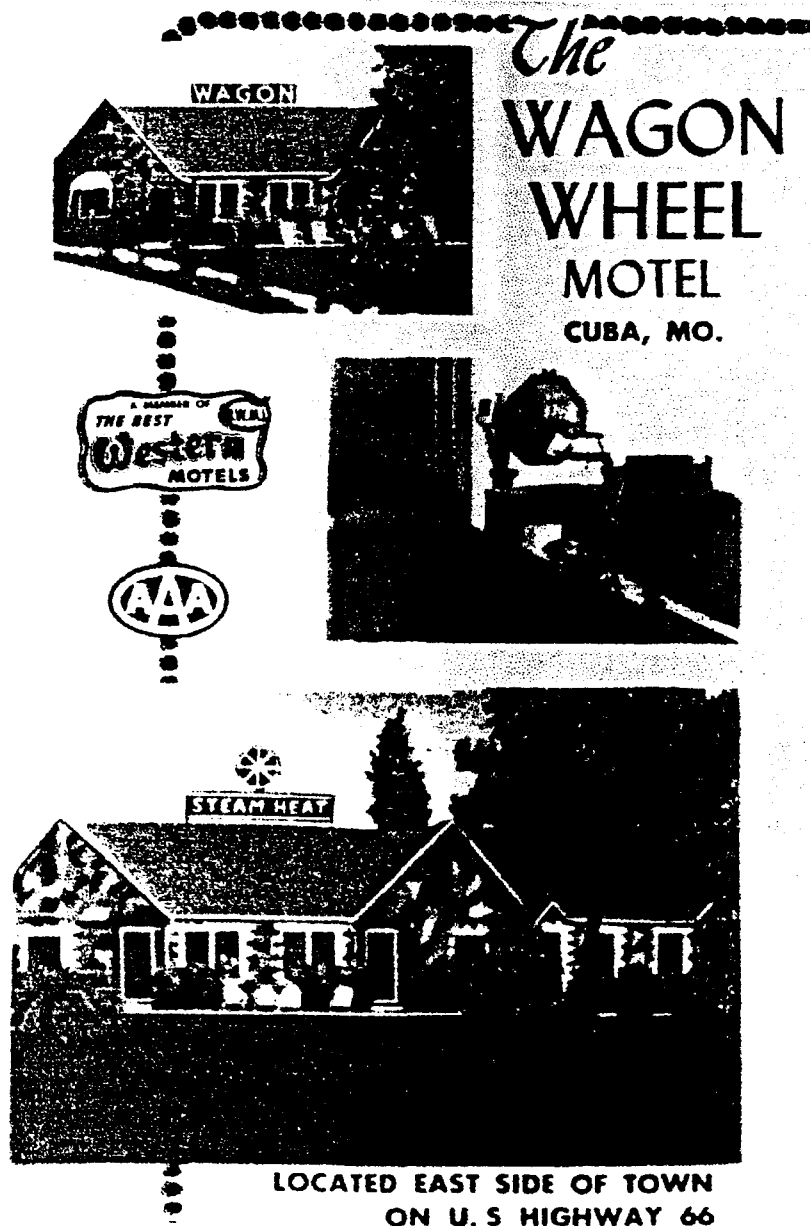
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Figure Six: Postcard of the Wagon Wheel Motel, ca. 1950.
Source: The Skip Curtis Postcard Collection



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In 1963, Aurora, Illinois residents, Pauline and Hallie Roberts, purchased the Wagon Wheel Motel from John and Winifred Mathis. The Roberts had met the Mathis' through mutual friends in the area. One of the only changes the Roberts made to the motel was the renovation of the laundry and storage building so that it could be used as a small coffee shop in addition to serving as the laundry facility. According to current owner, Pauline Roberts Armstrong, they had a concrete floor installed and finished out the interior of the building, which had been mostly used for storage. In addition to operating the motel, Pauline also managed the coffee shop, which was named Ye Olde Coffee Shoppe. When Mr. Roberts passed away in 1980, Pauline closed the coffee shop but continued to run the motel by herself. She later married her second husband, Harold Armstrong. Although they have a few employees who help clean the rooms, Pauline or Harold Armstrong still own and operate the Wagon Wheel Motel. 2004 will mark Pauline Roberts Armstrong's 40th year as owner/operator of this Route 66 landmark.

Although the late 1940s and early 1950s were some of the best years for roadside businesses along Route 66, the highway's reprieve ended when funding for the National Interstate Highway System was appropriated by Congress with the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956. Construction on the new interstate began almost immediately in Missouri and, section by section, Route 66 was replaced and towns were bypassed. The last section of Route 66 in Missouri was bypassed in 1980. As the new interstate was constructed, many of the roadside businesses along Route 66 closed, and some towns simply ceased to exist after Route 66 was decommissioned.

Decommissioning of the old route, combined with the construction of Interstate 44, meant that almost overnight, traffic out front dropped to a trickle and countless roadside businesses across the country were forced to closed. As Chester Liebs put it:

Probably the greatest threat to the industry....was the specter of being bypassed. Motel owners about to be commercially marooned by road realignments, or even worse, new limited access superhighways, had relatively few options....For some, especially in isolated areas, the only choice was abandonment. As a result, to this day ghost motor courts, with their eerie gatherings of tumbledown cabins, are still a relatively common vision through the windshield.³⁹

The Interstate 44 bypass at Cuba was completed in 1969. The period of significance for the Wagon Wheel Motel Historic District ends that same year because Route 66 was decommissioning through Cuba at that time. However, the Wagon Wheel Motel had earned such a good reputation for clean, affordable lodging that business continued to thrive, and the motel is still in operation today.

³⁹ Liebs, p. 184.

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According to a recent survey of Route 66 in Missouri, the Wagon Wheel Motel is one of the most intact tourist courts left on the route today; it has been in continuous use as a lodging facility since it was constructed, and it is the earliest such business still in operation today. Although literally dozens of tourist courts were constructed along Route 66 when it was in use as an interstate highway, most of these complexes of cabins, cottages and motel units are now either in ruins or they have been converted to long-term rentals. Of the 124 hotels, motels and tourist courts identified in the survey, only 23 are still in use today as nightly lodging establishments. The Wagon Wheel Motel is the oldest and one of the most intact of these lodging establishments. The surviving lodging establishments on Route 66 in Missouri reflect national trends in the development of roadside lodging, and strongly evoke the days when such establishments were locally owned and operated. They stand as strong reminders of the days when Route 66 was still considered "The Mainstreet of America."

The Wagon Wheel Motel Historic District is significant as a rare "high style" tourist court in Missouri, as an early example of the transition in roadside lodging from individual cottage units to multiple units in a single building, and as the work of noted local mason, Leo Friesenhan. Furthermore, the Wagon Wheel Motel Historic District is one of the most intact tourist courts on the old route in Missouri. It is one of the few tourist courts still operating in its original function, and it is one of the best known roadside businesses on historic Route 66 in Missouri.

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10. Geographic Data continued:

E. Zone	Easting	Northing
15	640071	4214073
F. Zone	Easting	Northing
15	640071	4214160

Verbal Boundary Description:

The property is parcel number 6-9-30-04-13-9 as shown on the Crawford County Tax Map 6-9-30-04. The map was prepared by Harlan Bartholomew with aerial photos taken in 1982. The scale of the map is 1"= 100'. Copies of the map are available at the Crawford County Assessor's Office in Steelville, MO. The boundaries of the property are shown in heavy lines on the copy of the relevant portion of the map which is reproduced on the next page.

Boundary Justification: The boundaries represent all of the land historically associated with the property that retains integrity.

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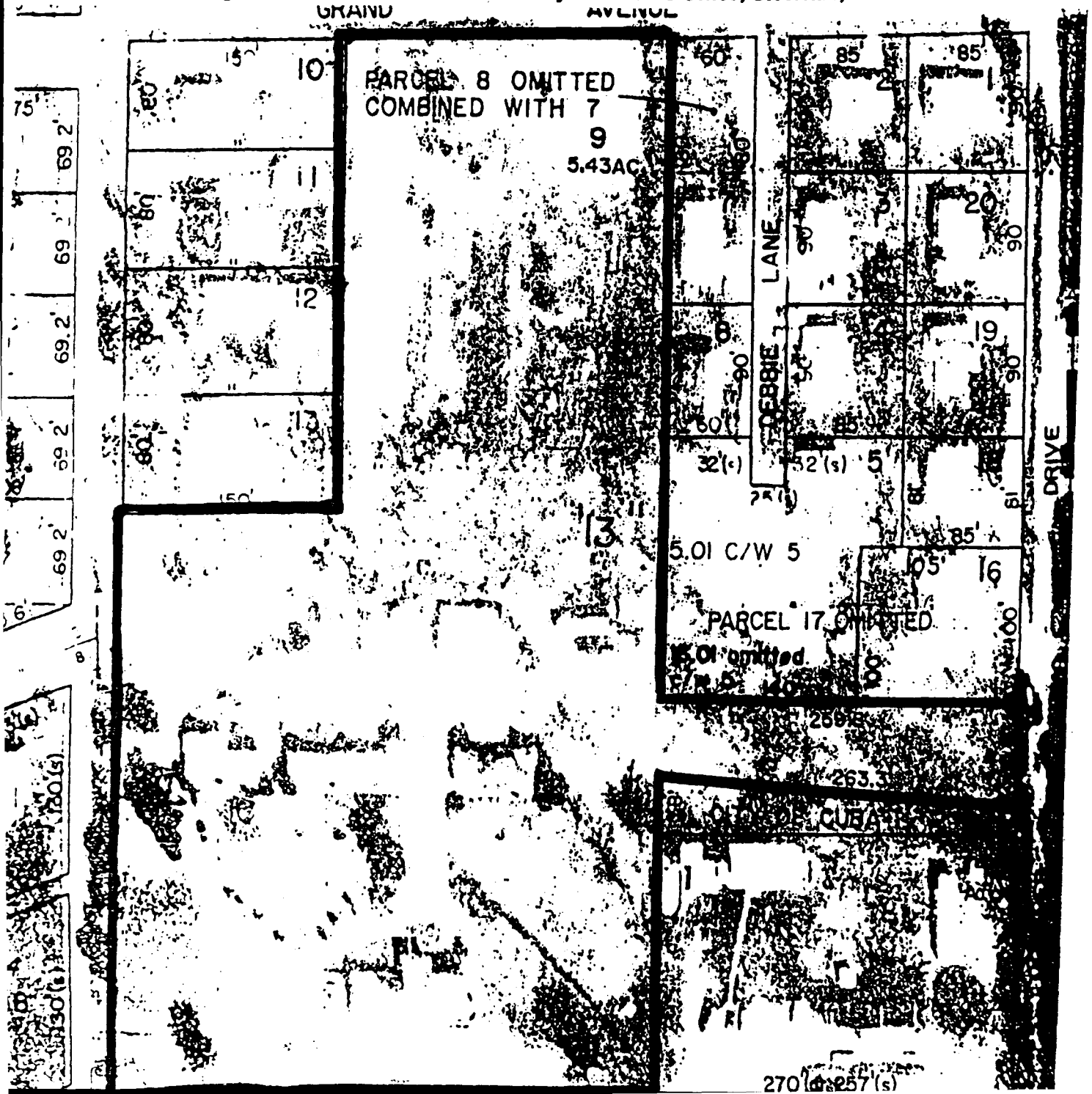
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Figure Seven: Crawford County Tax Map 6-9-30-04

Source: Original on file at the Crawford County Assessors Office, Steelville, Missouri.



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Photographs.

The following is the same for all photographs:

Wagon Wheel Motel Historic District
901-905 East Washington Street
Cuba, Crawford County, Missouri
Becky L. Snider
August, 2002

Negatives on file with Becky L. Snider Consulting LLC
507 South Garth Avenue
Columbia, MO 65203

List of Photographs

Camera Angles are indicated on the Photo Key Map

1. Historic Sign #1
2. Historic Sign #2
3. Gas Station Cafe Building
4. Gas Station Cafe Building
5. Fireplace, Interior of Cafe
6. Motel Building #1
7. Motel Building #2
8. Interior, Unit #2
9. Motel Building #3
10. Motel Building #4
11. Laundry/Storage Building

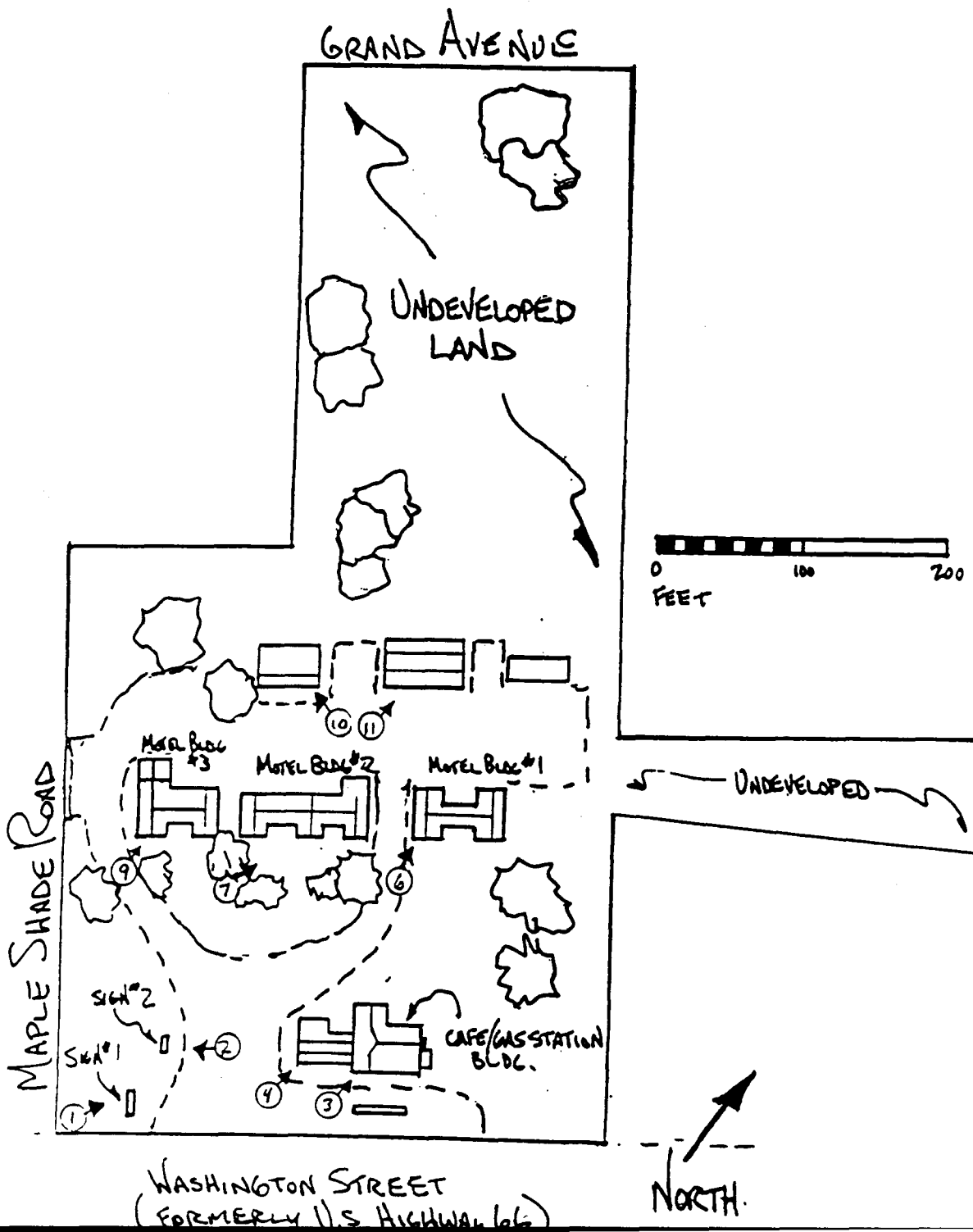
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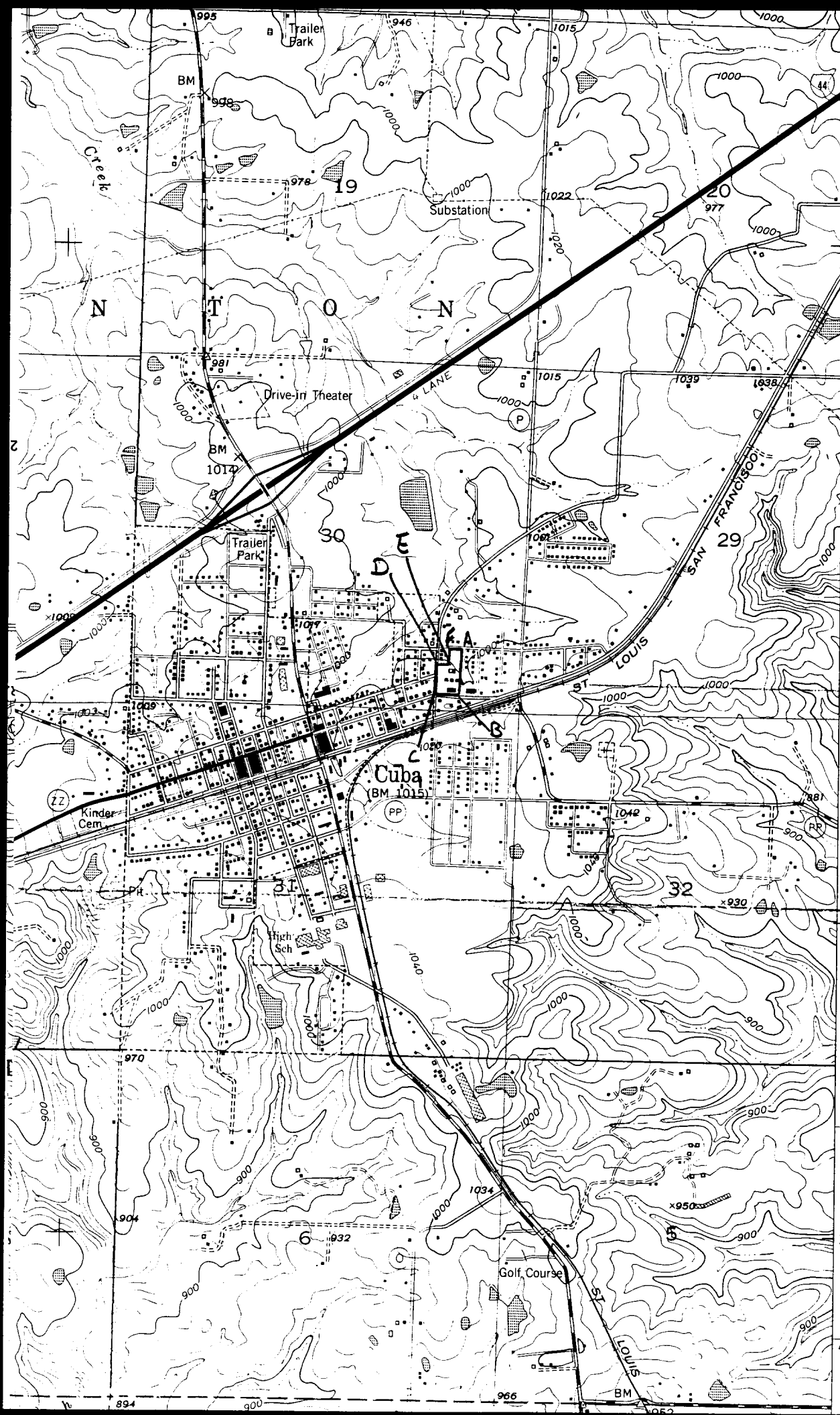
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Figure Eight: Photo Key Map. Drawn by Becky L. Snider.





WAGON WHEEL MOTEL
 HISTORIC DISTRICT
 CRAWFORD COUNTY, MISSOURI
 CUBA 7.5 MINUTE SERIES TOPO

- A: 15/640786/4214160
- B: 15/640786/4213951
- C: 15/640674/4213951
- D: 15/640674/4214073
- E: 15/640071/4214073
- F: 15/640071/4214160

T. 39 N.
T. 38 N.

2'30"

4211

ST. LOUIS 86 MI.

4215

4214

4213

4212

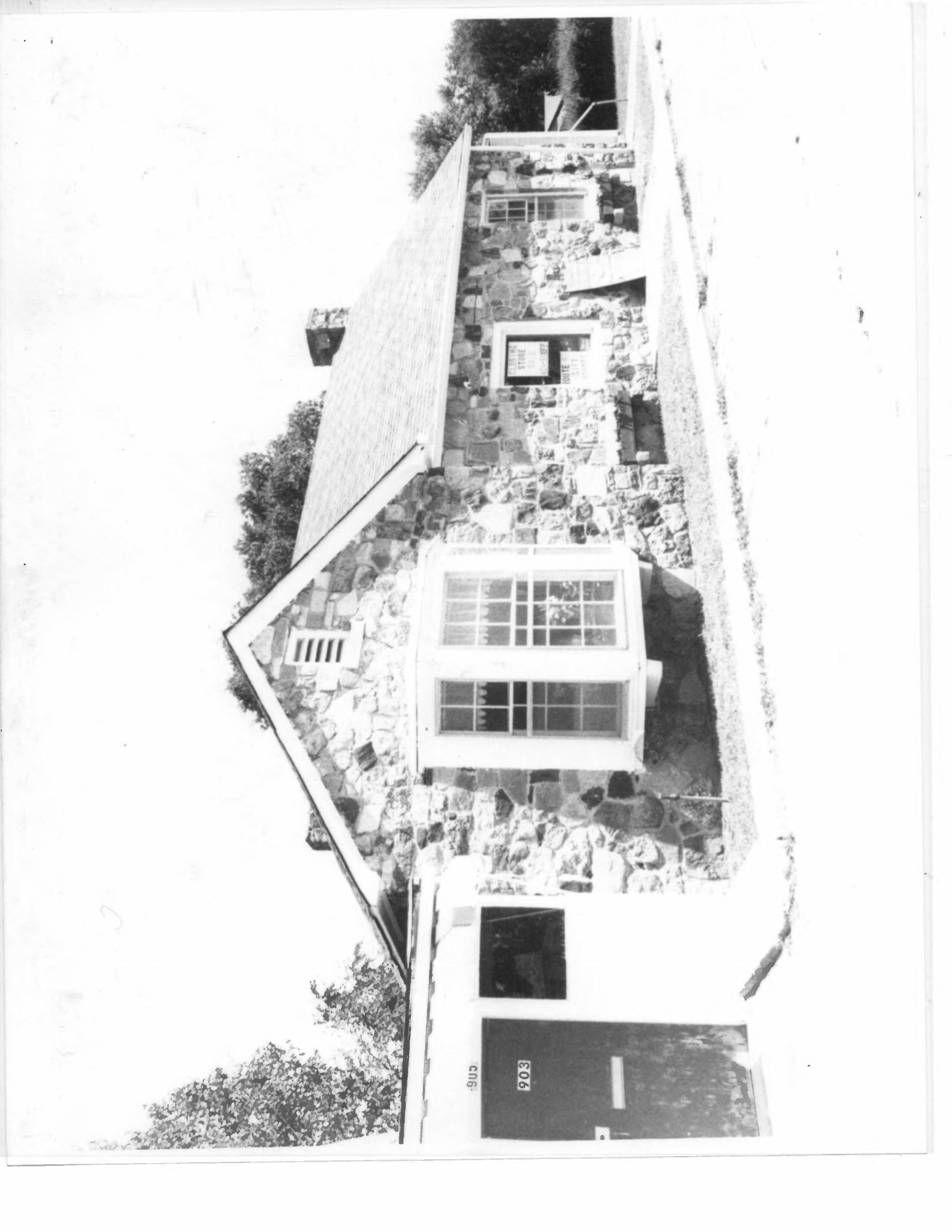
4211

(LEASBURG)
7760 III SE



OFFICE





903

903

FOR SALE
ROUTE 211

ROUTE 211

