

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

HISTORIC NAME: Ranchotel

OTHER NAME/SITE NUMBER: Morning Star Hostel; Mark Schupp Center

2. LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER: 2501 West Sixth

CITY OR TOWN: Amarillo VICINITY: N/A

STATE: Texas

CODE: TX

NOT FOR PUBLICATION: N/A

COUNTY: Potter CODE: 375 ZIP CODE: 79106

3. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

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

*Courtis J. Powell*

3-7-95

Signature of certifying official

Date

State Historic Preservation Officer, Texas Historical Commission

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is:

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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):

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5. CLASSIFICATION

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OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY: private

CATEGORY OF PROPERTY: building

NUMBER OF RESOURCES WITHIN PROPERTY:	CONTRIBUTING	NONCONTRIBUTING
	2	0 BUILDINGS
	0	0 SITES
	0	0 STRUCTURES
	0	0 OBJECTS
	2	0 TOTAL

NUMBER OF CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES PREVIOUSLY LISTED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER: 0

NAME OF RELATED MULTIPLE PROPERTY LISTING: N/A

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6. FUNCTION OR USE

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HISTORIC FUNCTIONS: DOMESTIC/hotel

CURRENT FUNCTIONS: HEALTH CARE/sanitarium

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7. DESCRIPTION

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ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: Other: U-plan tourist court

MATERIALS: FOUNDATION CONCRETE  
WALLS STUCCO; WOOD  
ROOF ASPHALT  
OTHER CONCRETE

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION (see continuation sheets 7-5 through 7-6).

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**8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

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**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 VALUE, 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: N/A

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: Transportation

PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE: 1940-45

SIGNIFICANT DATES: 1940

SIGNIFICANT PERSON: N/A

CULTURAL AFFILIATION: N/A

ARCHITECT/BUILDER: Randall Construction Company (builder)

NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (see continuation sheets 8-7 through 8-10).

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**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES**

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**BIBLIOGRAPHY** (see continuation sheets 9-11 through 9-12).

**PREVIOUS DOCUMENTATION ON FILE (NPS):** N/A

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

**PRIMARY LOCATION OF ADDITIONAL DATA:**

- State historic preservation office (*Texas Historical Commission*)
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository: Preservation Amarillo

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**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

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ACREAGE OF PROPERTY: less than one acre

UTM REFERENCES	Zone	Easting	Northing
	14	239220	3900020

**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

Lot 1, Block 105, Original Town Amarillo, Potter County

**BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION**

Boundaries encompass all property historically associated with nominated buildings.

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**11. FORM PREPARED BY (with assistance from Bruce Jensen, THC Architectural Historian)**

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NAME/TITLE: Lucise Tyson

ORGANIZATION: Preservation Amarillo

DATE: January 1995

STREET & NUMBER: 2220 South Tyler

TELEPHONE: (806)371-0728

CITY OR TOWN: Amarillo

STATE: TX ZIP CODE: 79109

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**ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION**

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**CONTINUATION SHEETS**

MAPS (see continuation sheets Map-13 through Map-16)

PHOTOGRAPHS (see continuation sheet Photo-17)

ADDITIONAL ITEMS N/A

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**PROPERTY OWNER**

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NAME: Kingdom of God Community

STREET & NUMBER: 2501 West Sixth

TELEPHONE: (806)371-0373

CITY OR TOWN: Amarillo

STATE: TX ZIP CODE: 79106

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Occupying a quarter block along the historic alignment of U.S. Route 66 in Amarillo, the Ranchotel typifies the tourist courts that evolved in the first half of the 20th century. In 1940 the Randall Construction Company built this 16-unit tourist court in a U-shaped configuration around a central office/residence. The 1-story buildings feature detailing such as stuccoed wall surfaces and squat chimneys that reinforce the imagery of the region's vernacular adobe traditions. Despite alterations to historic spatial configurations, the buildings retain a high level of integrity of location, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association.

The Ranchotel occupies a level tract west of Amarillo's central business district and immediately east of the commercial strip that evolved along the historic alignment of U.S. Route 66 in the San Jacinto neighborhood (see U.S. Route 66-Sixth Street Historic District; NR 1994). The tourist court originally consisted of a U-shaped building housing 16 units linked by alternating garage spaces (see Map 13). This building stretches 150 feet along the east, south and west perimeters of the property. A separate building housed an office and residential quarters centered along the street (north) frontage of the property. Its position at the entrance of the property afforded the operator a commanding view of arriving and departing guests.

The primary building featured 12 bedroom/bathroom units separated by open garage spaces, with 2-bedroom suites anchoring each corner. Detailing drawn from the rustic adobe traditions of the American southwest emphasizes the imagery of the region's ranching heritage. Fenestration includes 4/4 and 6/6 wood sash flanked by rustic wood shutters, with 2/2 sash for the bathrooms. Triple lights grace the upper halves of panelled doors. Squat chimney shafts simulate the massive adobe examples of regional models. The simple side gabled roof features gable ends clad in vertical wood siding. Shifts in roof level distinguish each segment of this axially arranged composition, with a shed roof supported by knee brackets to protect each entry (see Photos 4 and 5). Exposed rafter ends in the overhanging eaves suggest the vigas traditional in the region. Shed roof porches with rustic square posts and wagon wheel balustrades at the streetside suites complete the composition (see Photo 3).

Showcasing similar detailing, the office building is surmounted by a side gabled roof pierced by an adobe chimney (see Photos 1 and 2). An entry porch on the primary (north) elevation originally featured the shed roof, rustic posts and wagon wheel balustrade of the main building. During the tourist court's heyday, a neon sign at the northeast corner of the property attracted the attention of Route 66 travelers with the image of a cowboy astride his rearing horse.

The Ranchotel's interiors featured furnishings that continued the ranching theme. The Texas Spoke Log Furniture Studio of San Antonio provided hand made bedsteads, tables and chairs. Other rustic furnishings included cowhide lamp shades, horseshoe-shaped mirrors and curtain rods approximating the branding irons used by each room's namesake ranch.

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At present the complex serves as a hostel for the homeless and provides hospice services to HIV/AIDS patients. The complex contains a laundry, library, meeting room, infirmary, quiet room, a women's dormitory, and nine other residential units. The hospice created additional space by enclosing the garages and the office's north entry porch. This remodelling effort preserved character defining roof profiles and stucco wall surfaces. New french doors provide access to these spaces. Despite these changes, however, the property remains recognizable to its period of significance. It still conveys its historic function as a tourist court providing shelter to travellers along Route 66. The property therefore retains its integrity of location, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association.

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Among the earliest transcontinental highways, U.S. Route 66 stretched over 2,200 miles from Chicago to Los Angeles. The emergence of a national highway network and concomitant growth in automobile traffic fostered the development of roadside businesses aimed at tourists. The long distances between communities in the southwest encouraged the creation of new services and architectural forms. As the only major urban community traversed by Texas' 177-mile section of Route 66 through seven Panhandle counties, Amarillo soon evolved into an oasis along the highway. Entrepreneurs opened gas stations, cafes and tourist courts along the route through the community. Burgeoning tourist traffic during the late 1930s prompted construction of the Ranchotel in early 1940. Drawing on forms and architectural imagery standard to the region, this tourist court represented the final development phase before the transformation of the motel industry following World War II. Evaluated within the context of *Transportation in Texas, 1875-1960*, the Ranchotel is eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion A at the local level of significance.

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The origins of the American motel industry are rooted in the growth of automobile travel as the development of all weather roads and mass marketing of automobiles encouraged widespread auto-related travel in the early 20th century. Long distances between towns in Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona sent motorists searching for overnight accommodations on the road (Jakle:37). The first documented tourist cabin camp opened in 1913 in Douglas, Arizona (*The Hotel Monthly*: July 1936, 24).

When Americans first began long distance automotive travel, they typically stayed in hotels or camped beside the road. Partly out of civic pride and partly from a sense of self-protection, towns along migratory routes began furnishing free campgrounds with water, cooking, and bathing facilities (Jakle:35). As the only large urban area on the Texas segment of Route 66, Amarillo attracted travelers looking for overnight accommodations. In response the city constructed the Amarillo City Tourist Camp in June 1924, providing four cook houses, a community house, a manager's house, and restrooms within a fenced facility. On Fifth Avenue between Travis and Bowie streets, the publicly supported camp was about nine blocks from the subsequent location of the Ranchotel.

During the mid 1920s, privately owned auto camps began replacing publicly supported outdoor camps as an alternative to hotels (Jakle:35). In 1926 entrepreneurs opened Amarillo's first privately owned tourist camp, the Amarillo Cottage Camp at 1600 West Sixth Avenue. The Cottage Camp began with 13 small cabins, subsequently adding three rows of continuous units and a residence office. The facility eventually filled a full city block (300' x 300' tract) with 49 units and a wash house at the rear of the property. This progression typified development along the highway as increasing tourist traffic generated income to pay off loans. Partly as a result of this facility's success, the municipal tourist camp closed in 1927.

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The popularity of this new undertaking demonstrated the impact of automobile travel on America's built environment. Automobile travelers created a demand for overnight lodging that was less expensive and more convenient than downtown hotels. They sought ample parking and privacy that allowed informal dress and access without public scrutiny. In response services such as gas pumps and cafes began appearing at the front of tourist court complexes such as the Pueblo Court and Service Station (1935, now demolished) at 3101 Northeast Eighth.

From its designation in 1926 onward, Route 66 proved a significant force in Amarillo's economy. The volume of traffic along the highway increased steadily throughout the period, peaking at an average of 970 vehicles daily in 1941 at the nearby Texas-New Mexico border. As the largest city on Route 66 between Oklahoma City and Albuquerque, a distance of about 700 miles, Amarillo became host to a profusion of tourist courts (see Map 15). Compact arrangements such as the row-on-row or narrow U form prevailed in urban communities, perhaps as a result of frontage property costs (Kammer:F85). As a result, investors built early examples at the city's edge where land was cheaper and building and operating costs lower. This enabled proprietors to keep room rates low and intercept travelers before they reached the downtown hotels. Indeed, some early examples were built beyond the city limits, precluding access to city services such as water and sewage facilities. More attractive were areas such as Sixth Avenue between the congested downtown business district and the burgeoning San Jacinto neighborhood. This area offered abundant, cheap land for automobile related facilities such as tourist courts, highway cafes, service stations. The availability of large parcels of land encouraged development of less compact units with wide courtyards and areas for trailer parks. As many as six tourist camps in L-shaped, U-shaped, continuous row, and individual cabin configurations soon occupied ten blocks along Sixth Avenue from Georgia Street on the west to Bowie Street. The total number along Route 66 in the city grew from 25 in 1928 to 37 in 1945, eventually reaching 68 "motels and auto courts" in 1953 (*Amarillo City Directory*, various dates). Other significant concentrations occurred in the relatively undeveloped stretches of Fillmore Street north of the downtown area and along Northeast Eighth.

This phase of tourist court development resulted in the incorporation of garage spaces into cottage forms. Local examples included the Old English Court (c.1939, now vacant) at 600 Forest and the Green Gables Court (c.1939, now demolished) at 2813 Northeast Eighth. Proprietors also linked cabins with alternating garages to create a continuous facade such as at the Forest Hills Courts (1937, now vacant) at 3401 Northeast Eighth and the Best Tourist Court (1940, now demolished) at 600 Northeast Eighth, in addition to the Ranchotel. As the demand for housing outstripped the cost of providing garages, many operators created additional lodging space by enclosing garages. Individual porches were typically replaced at this stage by continuous covered passages. New units built in this form include the Hillcrest Courts (1945, now altered) at 3017 Northeast Eighth. In Amarillo few examples of this last form were built until the tourist boom at the end of World War II.

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Proprietors often relied on architectural whimsy to attract the eye of passing motorists during this period. Decorative elements such as windmills, Tudor half timbering and Spanish tiles often played a role in establishing a tourist court's identity. Vernacular expression of regional architecture were especially popular in the American southwest as promoters sought to capitalize on the romance of the region's heritage. In Amarillo the most popular imagery included western, rustic, and simulated adobe motifs. Contemporaneous local examples of this southwestern flavor included the Alamo Tourist Camp, Pueblo Courts, Longhorn Log Lodges, Casa Mia Courts, Ranch 66, and Coronado Courts, all since demolished.

These trends led to construction of the Ranchotel in 1940. Tourist courts often attracted investments by small business people, as low building and operating costs made the operations economically accessible. As courts with less than a dozen cabins could easily be operated by a husband and wife team, the average size of an urban tourist court was less than twenty and rarely more than thirty units (Kammer:F85). These factors attracted Chester and Betty Bordwell into the accommodations industry. On 4 April 1940 they commissioned the Randall Construction Company to build their frame and stucco tourist court at a cost of \$20,000. Bounded on the west by the densely developed commercial strip in the San Jacinto Heights neighborhood, the Ranchotel was one of the first tourist courts the traveller reached upon approaching Amarillo from the west. The Bordwells charged travellers \$4 for a single room and \$8 to \$10 for the suites.

As a major transportation route for defense materials in the years immediately following the Ranchotel's construction, Route 66 traffic kept the Bordwell's busy until they sold the property in 1952. With the end of the war, traffic increased 60% over wartime levels, with an almost 250% increase reached by 1955 (Kammer:E67). Following their sale of the property in 1952, Route 66 was shifted off of Sixth Avenue. All of the nine tourist courts along Fillmore Street and 12 of the 20 on Northeast Eighth built by 1945 have disappeared. Most of the survivors have been insensitively altered or modernized. The Green Gables cottages burned in the 1980s and the Old English Cottages and the Forest Hills Courts are currently derelict, sure to fall victim to demolition soon. Construction of I-40 in 1968 and the closure of the Amarillo Air Force Base accelerated the demise of tourist courts throughout the community, including the larger 2-story motor inns built in the 1950s and 1960s.

The Ranchotel is one of the few extant pre-war examples of the tourist courts that historically lined Route 66 in Amarillo. It remains in good repair, continuing to provide lodging as a hospice facility managed by the Kingdom of God community, a nondenominational religious group. Following the relocation of Route 66, its close proximity to the Northwest Texas Hospital kept the Ranchotel viable until construction of a new medical center west of town in 1982. The loss of Route 66 combined with the loss of the Hospital doomed the Sixth Avenue motels. West Sixth Avenue developed into an area of automobile sales agencies and used car lots requiring large parcels of land. Many motels were lost to these redevelopment pressures. The scant survivors include a few cabins of the Amarillo Cottage Courts and the postwar Elks Courts Motel at 1401 West Sixth,

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both surviving in greatly deteriorated condition. As a rare surviving representative of a travel experience along Route 66 that has virtually disappeared, the Ranchotel demonstrates a significant association with the automobile culture of the early 20th century. These circumstances justify nomination of the property as locally significant under Criterion A in the area of Transportation.

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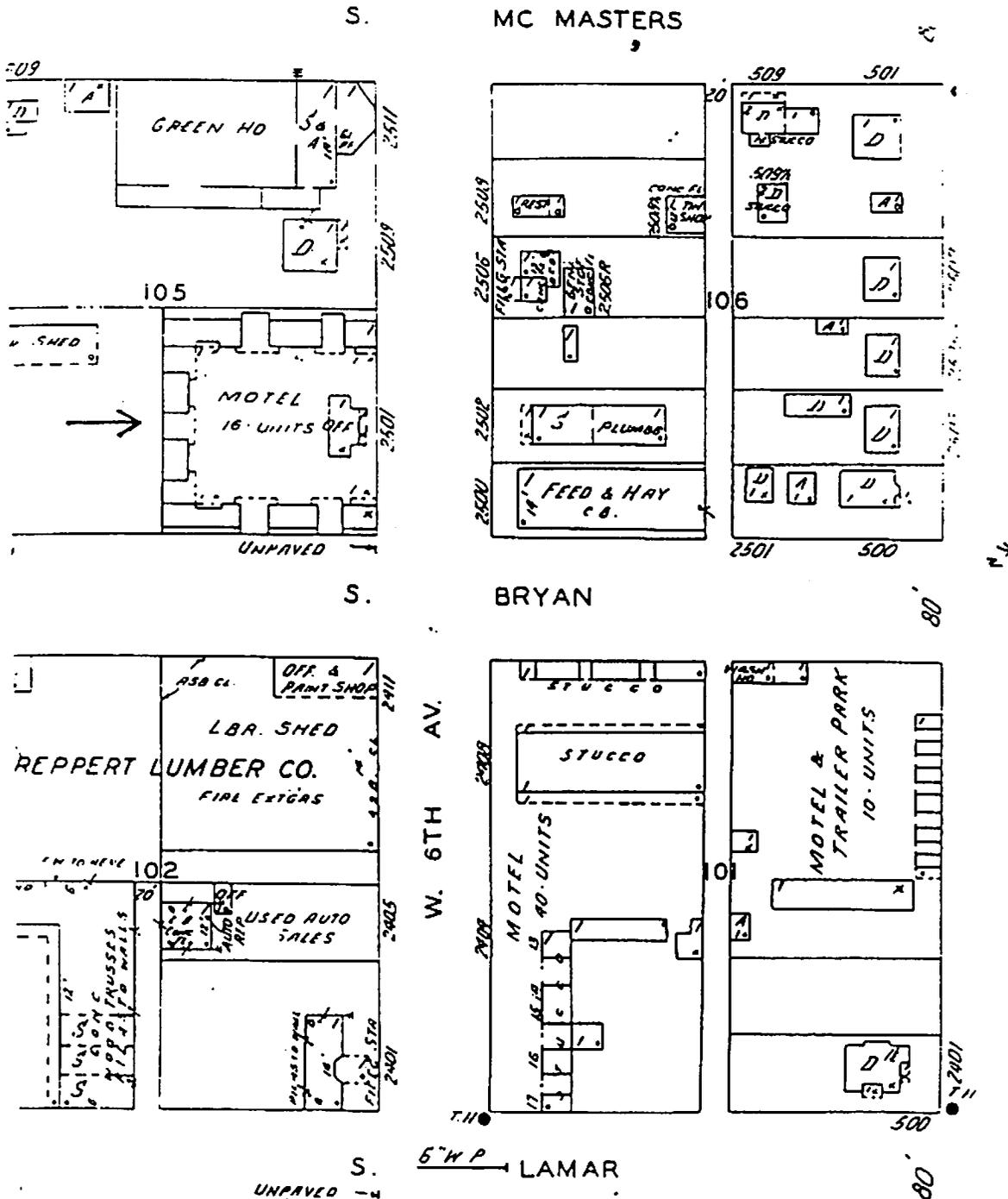
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Ranchotel, Amarillo, Potter County, Texas

SITE PLAN OF RANCHOTEL - dotted lines correlate with historic garage spaces  
(source: Sanborn Map Company, 1945)



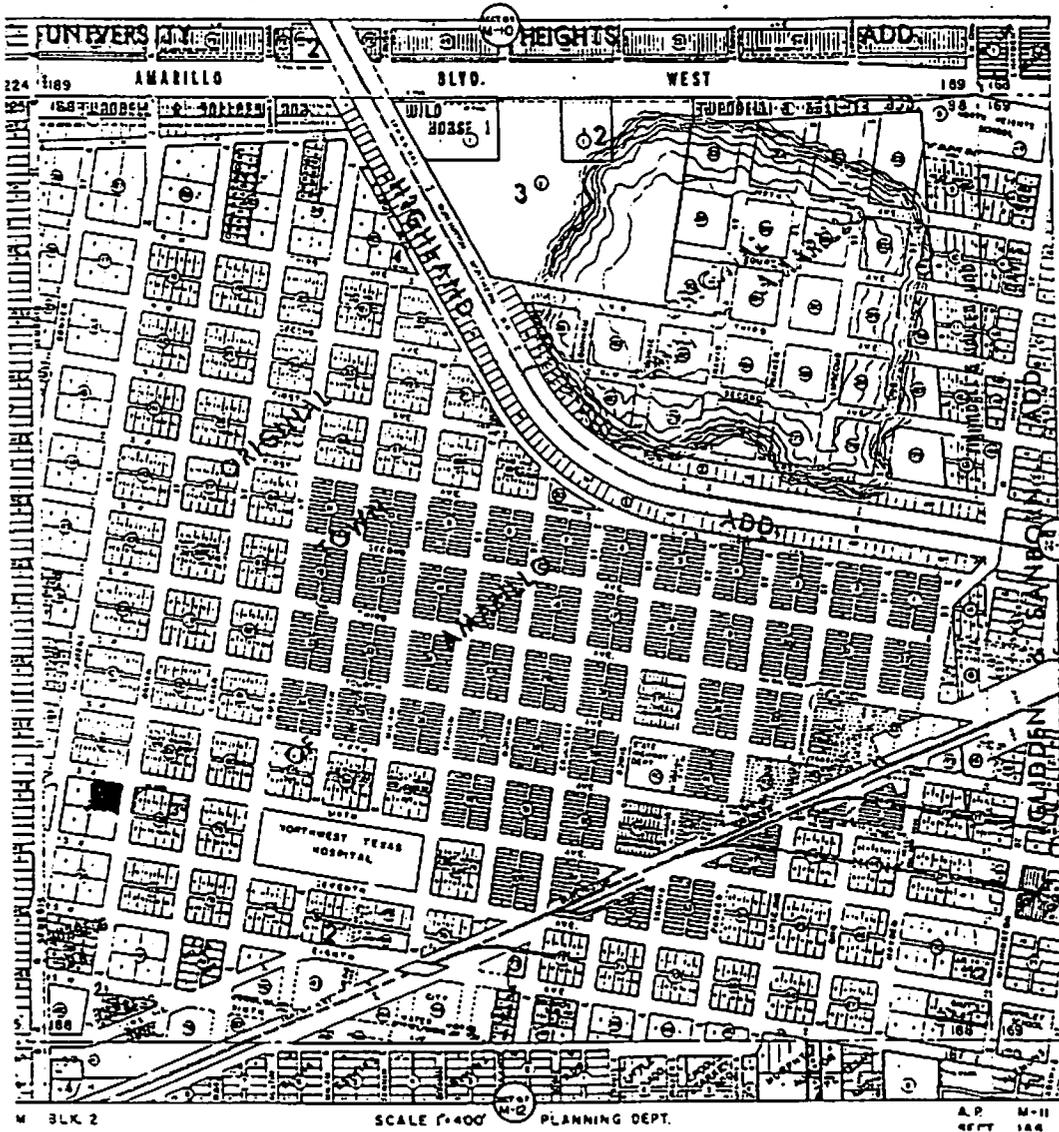
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Ranchotel, Amarillo, Potter County, Texas

## ORIGINAL TOWN AMARILLO PLAT MAP INDICATING NOMINATED PROPERTY



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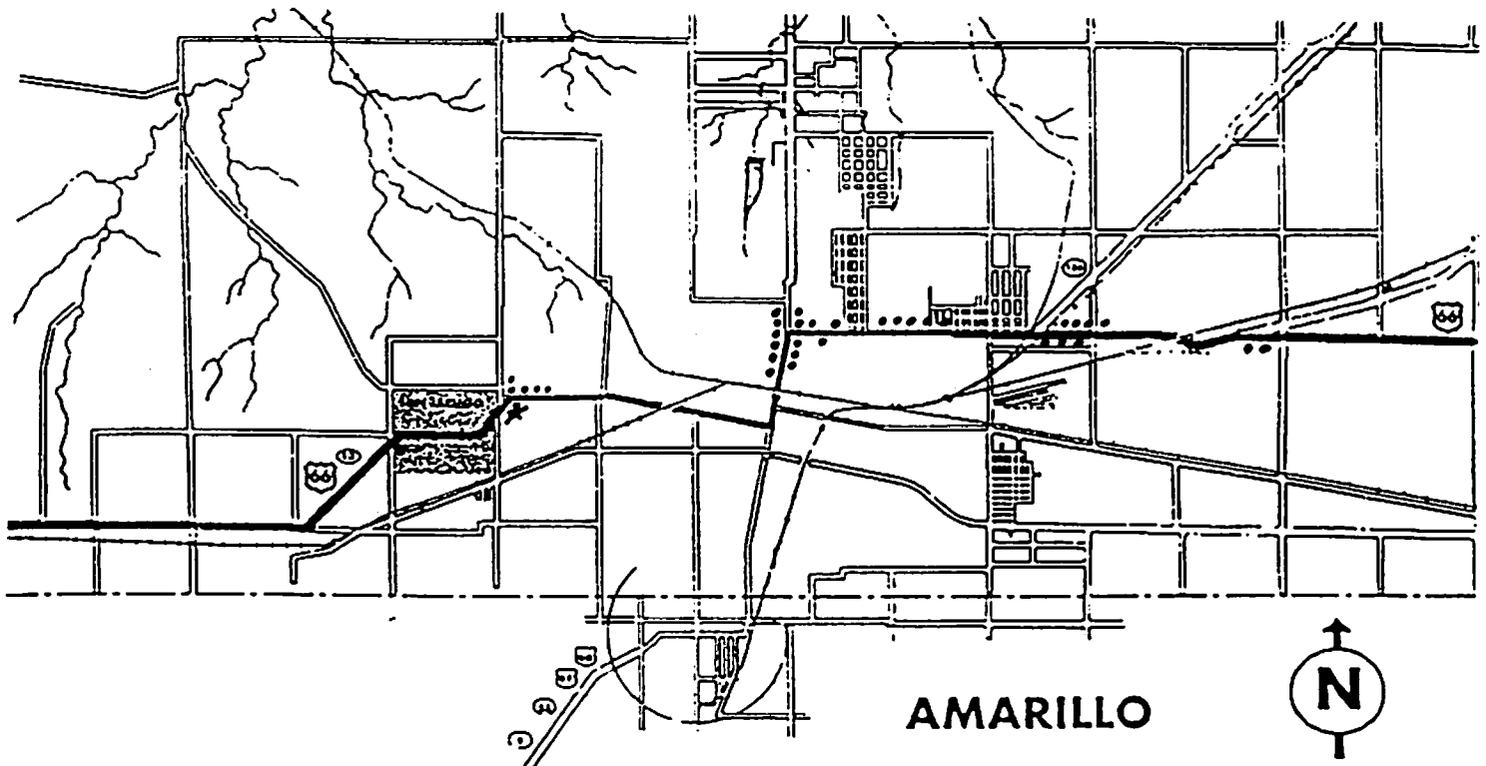
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## TOURIST COURTS ALONG ROUTE 66 IN AMARILLO, 1945 (source: Texas State Highway Department, annotation added)

- - Tourist Court Locations
- ★ - Ranchotel Location



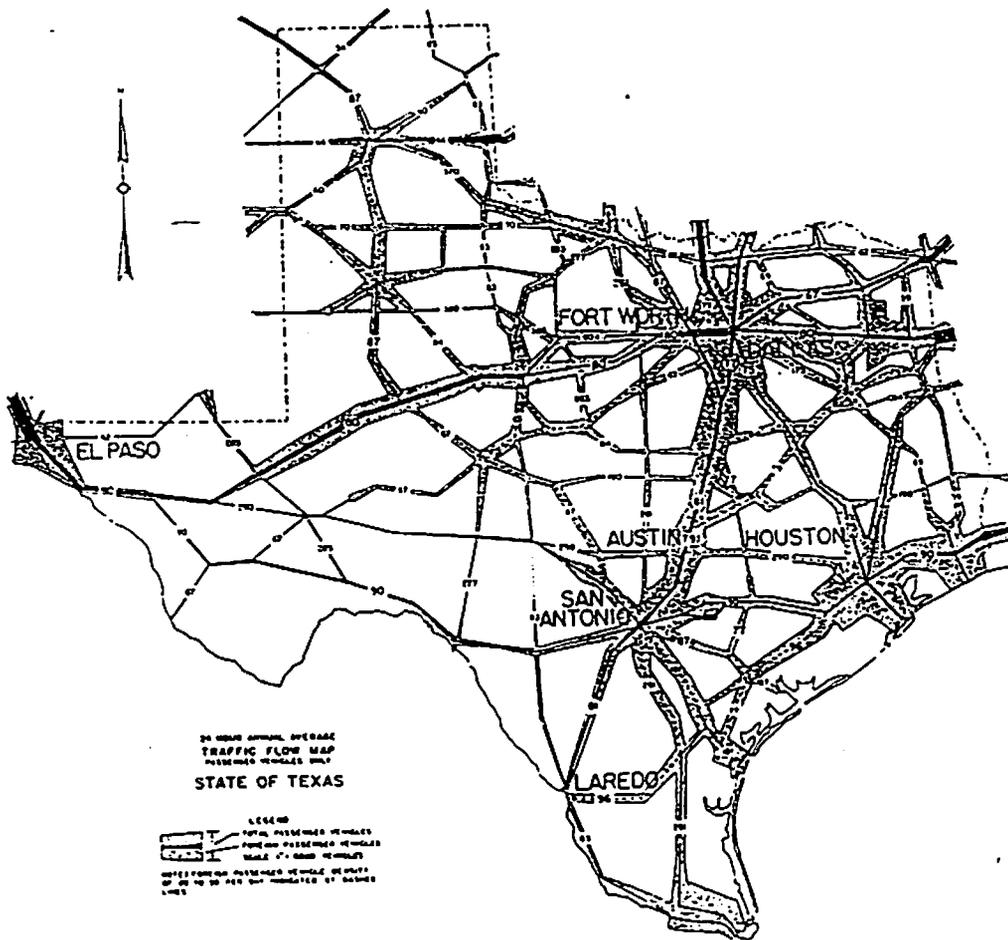
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## AVERAGE DAILY TRAFFIC FLOW ALONG ROUTE 66 IN 1940 (source: Texas Highway Department)



STATE-WIDE HIGHWAY PLANNING SURVEY  
 BASED ON TRAFFIC SURVEY CONDUCTED FROM JANUARY 1937 TO  
 APRIL 1938 BY STATE ENGINEERS UNDER SUPERVISION OF STATE ENGINEER

FIGURE 12

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### PHOTO INVENTORY

RANCHOTEL  
2501 WEST SIXTH AVENUE  
AMARILLO, POTTER COUNTY, TEXAS  
LUEISE TYSON - PHOTOGRAPHER, EXCEPT AS NOTED  
DECEMBER 1994, EXCEPT AS NOTED  
ORIGINAL NEGATIVES ON FILE WITH PRESERVATION AMARILLO

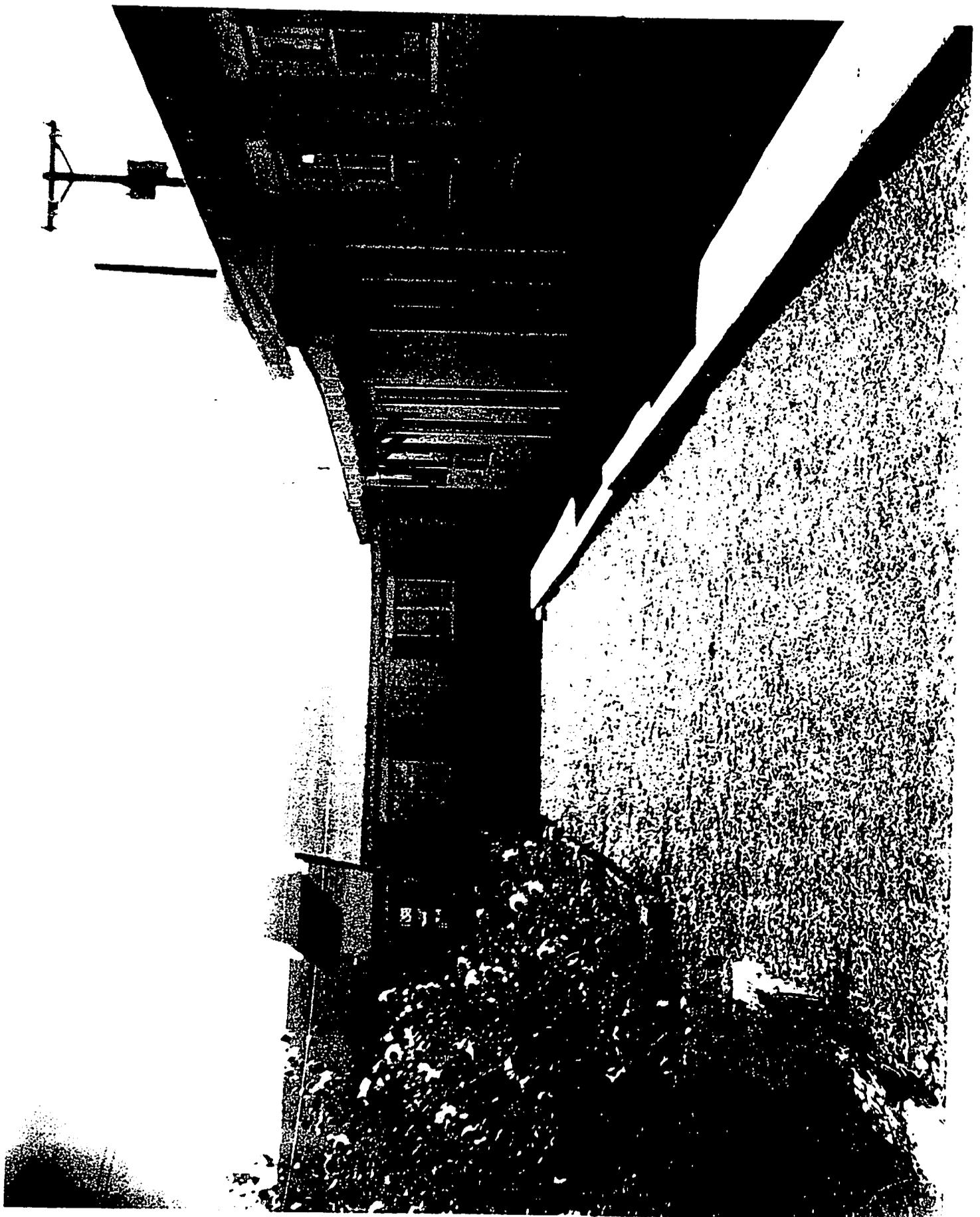
- PHOTO 1 - Historic view of office building (c.1940), camera facing southeast
- PHOTO 2 - Oblique view of south and west elevations of office building, camera facing northeast
- PHOTO 3 - Oblique view of property, camera facing southwest
- PHOTO 4 - Oblique view of north and west elevations within court, camera facing southeast
- PHOTO 5 - Oblique view of north and east elevations within court, camera facing southwest
- PHOTO 6 - Oblique view of exterior east elevation, camera facing northwest













RANCHOTEL  
2501 WEST SIXTH AVE.  
AMARILLO, POTTER CO., TEXAS  
UTM REFERENCE: 14/239220/3900020

