

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**SENT TO D.C.**

3-28-06

### National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

#### 1. Name of Property

historic name Ariston Café  
other names/site number N/A

#### 2. Location

street & number 413 Old Route 66  not for publication  
city or town Litchfield  vicinity  
state Illinois code IL county Montgomery code 135 zip code 62056

#### 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 for 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.)

Wm. L. Wheel ISHPP 3-28-06  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

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 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 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: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Ariston Café  
Name of Property

Montgomery County, Illinois  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

Historic and Architectural Resources of  
Route 66 Through Illinois

**Number of Contributing resources previously listed  
in the National Register**

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE: restaurant

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE: restaurant

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

No Style

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE

walls BRICK

roof ASPHALT

other

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Ariston Café  
Name of Property

Montgomery County, Illinois  
County and State

### 8. Statement of Significance

#### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- 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 N/A

(Mark "x" in all boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** moved from its original location.
- 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.

#### Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE

TRANSPORTATION

#### Period of Significance

1935-1956

#### Significant Dates

1935

#### Significant Person

(complete if Criterion B is marked)

N/A

#### Cultural Affiliation

N/A

#### Architect/Builder

Vasel, Henry A., Builder

#### Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

### 9. Major Bibliographical References

#### Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

#### 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
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency – National Park Service
- Local Government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

Ariston Café  
Name of Property

Montgomery County, Illinois  
County and State

### 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than 1 acre

UTM References Litchfield USGS Quadrangle  
(place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>16</u>	<u>269525</u>	<u>4339635</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing
2	<u>        </u>	<u>        </u>	<u>        </u>

3	<u>        </u>	<u>        </u>	<u>        </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing
4	<u>        </u>	<u>        </u>	<u>        </u>

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 Philip Thomason/Teresa Douglass  
organization Thomason and Associates date November 8, 2005  
street & number 1907 21<sup>st</sup> Ave. S. telephone 615-385-4960  
city or town Nashville state TN zip code 37212

### 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 FPO for any additional items

### Property Owner

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

name Ariston Café Inc.  
street & number P.O. Box 453 telephone 217-324-2023  
city or town Litchfield state IL zip code 62056

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listing. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P. O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20303.

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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

Ariston Café  
Litchfield, Montgomery County, Illinois

## DESCRIPTION

The Ariston Café is located in along the original Route 66 in the town of Litchfield, Montgomery County, Illinois. Litchfield is in south-central Illinois, approximately forty miles south of Springfield, Illinois, and forty miles northeast of St. Louis, Missouri. The restaurant is situated on the western edge of the town and occupies a rectangular lot. The building faces Old Route 66 and is surrounded by a paved parking area. No other buildings or structures are on the property.

The Ariston Café was constructed in 1935 in a utilitarian commercial form of the period. It lacks allusions to a particular architectural style although the interior booths reflect the influence of the Art Deco style of the 1930s. Its most distinguishing exterior features are its curved parapet wall on the main façade and its finely crafted varied brickwork. The interior is remarkably unaltered and provides an unusually strong sense of time and place from its period of construction.

The original design and plan of the Ariston Café was modified in 1974 with the addition of a banquet room on the north façade. This addition was designed to complement the original building through its brick coloring and the continuation of the parapet wall on the main façade. This addition does not significantly detract from the building's original design. The overall exterior appearance of the Ariston Café continues to reflect its period of construction from 1935, and its interior is especially evocative of this era.

The building has a poured concrete foundation, a gable roof of asphalt shingles, and an exterior of tan, red, and beige textured stretcher bond brick. On the main (east) façade is the storefront (Photo 1). This storefront originally had two entrances with multi-light glass and wood doors. Over the doors were frame elliptical canopies. These entrances were remodeled in 1977 with aluminum and glass doors. This remodeling also resulted in the addition of frame and glass vestibules at each entrance with a connecting wood shingled mansard roof. The vestibules have single-light aluminum and glass doors and single-light aluminum and glass display windows. The exterior walls of the vestibules have vertical board siding. Leading to the vestibule entrances is a concrete handicapped access ramp and a wrought iron railing.

The entrances into the building retain their original glazed tile surrounds and blind brick arch. Between the two entrances is an original window opening with an original tan colored glazed tile surround. The original windows were replaced in 1978 with three fixed baked enamel aluminum windows. On either side of the vestibules on the main façade are original window openings with tan colored glazed tile surrounds. Above the storefront is a large rectangular sign panel. This panel is outlined in glazed tile and the panel is of stucco. Attached to the sign panel is the painted sign, which reads "ARISTON" and is also outlined in neon. On either side of the sign panel are inset glazed tile panels that have a central square design set within a diamond design. The main façade has a curved parapet wall with glazed terra cotta coping. At the corners of the roofline are short piers with glazed terra cotta coping and original light fixtures with acorn globes. Projecting from the upper façade are two original metal and neon projecting signs that advertise "Ariston Café" and "Budweiser." On the main façade is a belt course above the foundation of glazed tile.

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Litchfield, Montgomery County, Illinois

The south elevation has an exterior of stretcher bond brick and approximately one foot above grade is a soldier course belt course. The east bay window has a surround of soldier course brick and a brick sill. This window opening has a single-light baked enamel aluminum window. This elevation also displays four original window openings just below the roofline. These window openings have original soldier course brick surrounds and brick sills. Three of the openings have single-light aluminum windows added in 1978 and one opening has a metal panel. The west bay of this elevation has a window opening with an original glazed tile sill and lintel. The original window was replaced by stuccoed wood panels in 1978.

The rear or west elevation was designed with three windows. The south bay window opening has original glazed tile sills and header course. This window opening has stuccoed wood panels added in 1978. The central window on this elevation has an original surround of glazed tile. This opening has been enclosed with wood panels and a one-over-one aluminum sash windows. The three brick bays on this elevation are divided by original glazed tile pilasters that rest on poured concrete piers. In the gable field of the west elevation is vinyl siding. This gable field has a metal sign inscribed "ARISTON" and the letters are outlined in neon.

At the roofline of the original brick section is glazed tile coping and short projecting piers. The corner piers have original light fixtures with acorn globes. Below the roofline on this elevation are metal letters outlined in neon that read "Better Place to Eat." Attached at the rear are two metal non-contributing coolers added in 1978. These coolers rest on concrete block and poured concrete foundations.

On the north elevation at the northwest corner of the building is an original entrance with a solid metal door added ca. 1980. This entrance has a transom enclosed with a wood panel. On the north elevation is a non-contributing one-story, brick wing added in 1974 with tan and cream colored stretcher bond brick. This wing has a shed roof of rolled asphalt roofing. The wing lacks fenestration except for a central entrance on the north elevation with a metal door. Across the width of this elevation and the east elevation is a planting bed with gravel, shrubs, and other landscaping. At the roofline of this wing is concrete coping.

The interior of the original section has an original acoustical tile ceiling, plaster walls with added wallpaper, and a carpeted floor (Photo 5). Along the north wall is an original Art Deco influenced wall cabinet and built-in shelves of wood construction. This cabinet has original light fixtures, zig zag molding, and central and corner cases. The central case has "The Ariston Café" inscribed in wood. In front of this cabinet is an original counter with replacement formica. In front of this counter are seven original upholstered chrome stools. Along the south wall are six original wood booths with original chrome hat racks. The exterior walls of the booths have vertical fluting. The booths have tables with formica tops added in the 1960s. The booths have original metal light fixtures made by the Fitzpatrick Fixture Company of Springfield, Illinois. The tables and chairs in the dining area are original. Two of the light fixtures hanging from the ceiling are original and four are added ceiling fans with white globes. The kitchen area has a concrete floor and brick walls and a paneled wood ceiling. A wood staircase leads from the kitchen to an upper floor storage area.

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Ariston Café  
Litchfield, Montgomery County, Illinois

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE - SUMMARY

The Ariston Café in Litchfield, Illinois, is locally eligible for the National Register under Criterion A as a locally significant property within the context of Commerce and Transportation. The property is significant for its role in the commercial history of U.S. Route 66, which extended from Chicago, Illinois, to Los Angeles, California, and was the primary transportation corridor between these two destinations in the early and mid-twentieth century. The Ariston Café is a representative example of the types of commercial businesses that once flourished along the once well-traveled route. Although the restaurant has undergone some alterations, it continues to retain a sufficient degree of original design and materials to reflect its period of significance from its construction date of 1935 to the fifty year milestone of 1956. The property meets the registration requirements for restaurants set forth in the Multiple Property Documentation Form, "Historic and Architectural Resources of Route 66 Through Illinois."

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Restaurants, along with gas stations and motels, were among the most common types of businesses found along Route 66 throughout the country. Restaurants and roadways were natural companions as America experienced a boom in both restaurant development and automobile use in the early twentieth century. Due to changing social patterns and developments in technology, dining out became a more available and frequent activity and an "eating-out boom" occurred. Between 1910 and 1927 the number of restaurants in the country rose forty percent. During this same period, automobile production and use soared as well. In his study of roadside architecture, historian Chester Liebs points out that "a symbiosis developed between two emerging forces—the urge to ride in the car and the urge to eat out."<sup>1</sup> These two complementary developments posed a welcome opportunity to many potential businessmen and women, especially along a busy road. Liebs states that "to the hopeful wayside entrepreneur, it offered the freedom of situating a restaurant along the margins of any well-traveled road where land could be acquired inexpensively."<sup>2</sup>

As the main corridor between Chicago and California, Route 66 was one such well-traveled road and a wide range of eating establishments could be found along its path. All along the route individual "mom and pop" enterprises emerged to feed hungry travelers ranging from short-order diners to roadside hamburger stands to more full-service family restaurants and cafés. These were typically individually owned and operated businesses, especially in the early years of the roadway, and more often than not a restaurant would be associated with either a gas station or motel. The independent eateries along Route 66 were particularly common in small towns; and, although they shared a basic commonality, each had a unique appearance and style due to the individual ownership. Their common characteristics, however, were that they were generally

<sup>1</sup> Chester H. Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile, American Roadside Architecture* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1985), 196.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

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Ariston Café  
Litchfield, Montgomery County, Illinois

built with little capital, and offered homemade local foods often cooked and served by the owners themselves.<sup>3</sup>

The Ariston Café reflects this history of restaurant development along Route 66. Even during the midst of the Great Depression, restaurants remained a likely choice of budding entrepreneurs and individuals who were trying to better their financial situation. Relatively inexpensive to build and requiring little labor beyond immediate family members, restaurants offered the chance of a possible decent living, especially if they were located along a well-traveled road such as Route 66.

The Ariston Café, however, was no minor novice operation, but was the work of seasoned restaurateurs. The original owners of the Ariston Café, Pete Adam and Tom Cokinos, were well experienced in the restaurant business and thus had an added advantage. Adam had been in the restaurant business for fifteen years and was well versed in the intricacies of the trade. Prior to the designation of Route 66 in this area, Adam owned a restaurant in nearby Carlinville. Keenly aware of the importance of location, he saw an opportunity when Route 66 was established. He selected a spot near the intersection of two major thoroughfares—Route 66, which extended in a north-south direction on the city's western border, and Route 16, which was the city's primary east-west corridor—to build his new café in Litchfield.

Adam and his partner hired contractor Henry A. Vasel to construct the building along Route 66. Work began on the structure on April 4, 1935, and was completed on July 5th of the same year (Figure 1). An original ledger maintained by the Adam family reveals that construction costs for the building came to \$3,625.36. The opening of the café served as a sign of local economic recovery, as an article in the *Litchfield News-Herald* reported: "Hailed by many as another reason why Litchfield's prosperity is ahead of recovery programs in other cities is the recent opening of the new Ariston on Route 16 west of the city." The article goes on to state that the Ariston Café was "in a strategic position to attract a great deal of automobile traffic between St. Louis and Chicago or the east."<sup>4</sup> The restaurant's location along the main thoroughfares of Routes 66 and 16 surely contributed to its success.

The original building of the Ariston Café measured 40' by 60' and contained fifteen tables and six booths, which accommodated up to 100 persons. Owner Pete Adam boasted that the kitchen was equipped with "modern refrigeration," and the chief cook, James Paulos, was "the best cook I have had in fifteen years of restaurant experience."<sup>5</sup> In addition to Paulos, the Ariston Café employed nine other individuals. And like many businesses along Route 66, the Arison Café originally had two gas pumps in front of the building. The combination food and gas stop helped to draw more customers and added to the business's profit.

<sup>3</sup> Michael Cassity, "Route 66 Corridor National Historic Context Study," (Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program, National Trails Systems Office – Intermountain Region, Santa Fe, New Mexico, December 15, 2004), 176.

<sup>4</sup> *News-Herald* (Litchfield, Illinois), 1935.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*



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Ariston Café  
Litchfield, Montgomery County, Illinois

The building was designed with its primary entrance facing Sherman Street, which served as the original roadbed of Route 66 through Litchfield until 1940. By 1940, the traffic on Route 66 had become so congested that a four lane bypass was constructed one block to the west. When this happened, owner Pete Adam added additional signage at the rear of his building to advertise the café and it continued to be the most popular restaurant along this section of the highway. After Pete Adam died, his son, Nick, assumed the ownership and operation of the restaurant. As business trends changed over the years, the gas pumps were removed and Nick Adam expanded the restaurant in 1974 with an added wing and attached two large metal coolers at the rear of the building.

The Ariston Café meets the registration requirements for the property type of Restaurants/Diners as outlined in the Multiple Property Documentation Form, "The Historic and Historic Archaeological Resources of Route 66." The building faces Old Route 66 (Sherman Street) on the east, while its rear façade faces the New Route 66 which was completed in 1940. In addition to its physical proximity to Route 66, the building also retains its character defining aspects of a restaurant including its original booths, counter, dining area, and kitchen. The Ariston Café is one of only a few restaurants associated with Route 66 in Illinois that remains in operation along the original roadbed. During the 1960s and 1970s, the construction of Interstate 55 replaced Route 66 as the main thoroughfare for automobile traffic from Chicago to St. Louis. Most restaurants and other businesses that depended on travelers for their business either closed, relocated or found other means to remain in business. The Ariston Café has remained in operation since 1935, due to its quality of food and service, its location near the junction of several busy roads and the interstate, and a dedicated local and regional clientele.

The Ariston Café remains as a rare survivor of the type of family-owned restaurants that flourished along Route 66 in Illinois during the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. It is a well-known landmark and direct link to the history of Route 66. For additional information, see the Multiple Property Documentation Form, "Historic and Architectural Resources of Route 66 Through Illinois" and the "Route 66 Corridor, National Historic Context Study."

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Ariston Café  
Litchfield, Montgomery County, Illinois

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## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adam, Nick. Personal Interview, 19 April 2005.

Cassity, Michael. "Route 66 Corridor National Historic Context Study." Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program, National Trails System Office – Intermountain Region, National Park Service, Santa Fe, New Mexico, December 15, 2004.

Liebs, Chester H. *Main Street To Miracle Mile, American Roadside Architecture*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1985.

*News-Herald* (Litchfield, Illinois), 1935.

Seratt, Dorothy and Terri Ryburn-Lamont, Route 66 Association of Illinois. Multiple Property Documentation Form, "Historic and Architectural Resources of Route 66 Through Illinois." 1997.

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Ariston Café  
Litchfield, Montgomery County, Illinois

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## VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundary for the Ariston Café includes all of parcel 001 in block 453 on Montgomery County Tax Map 1032 (Map 2). This parcel includes less than one acre and encompasses the entire lot on which the Ariston Café is sited. The lot is bounded on the east by Old Route 66 (Sherman Street), on the north by the right-of-way of State Route 16, on the south by a paved driveway, and on the west by the right-of-way of New Route 66.

## VERBAL BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary for the Ariston Café includes all property historically associated with the building. The building and its paved parking area encompasses the entire lot on which it is sited and there are no ancillary buildings or structures.

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Ariston Café  
Litchfield, Montgomery County, Illinois

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## PHOTOGRAPHS

Ariston Café, 413 Old Route 66, Litchfield, Illinois

Photos by: Thomason and Associates

Date: April 19, 2005

Location of Negatives: National Park Service, Santa Fe, New Mexico

Photo 1: East façade and storefront, view to west.

Photo 2: South façade, view to northwest.

Photo 3: West façade, view to northeast.

Photo 4: North façade, view to southwest.

Photo 5: Interior view of original cabinets and counter.

Photo 6: Interior view of original booths.

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Ariston Café  
Litchfield, Montgomery County, Illinois

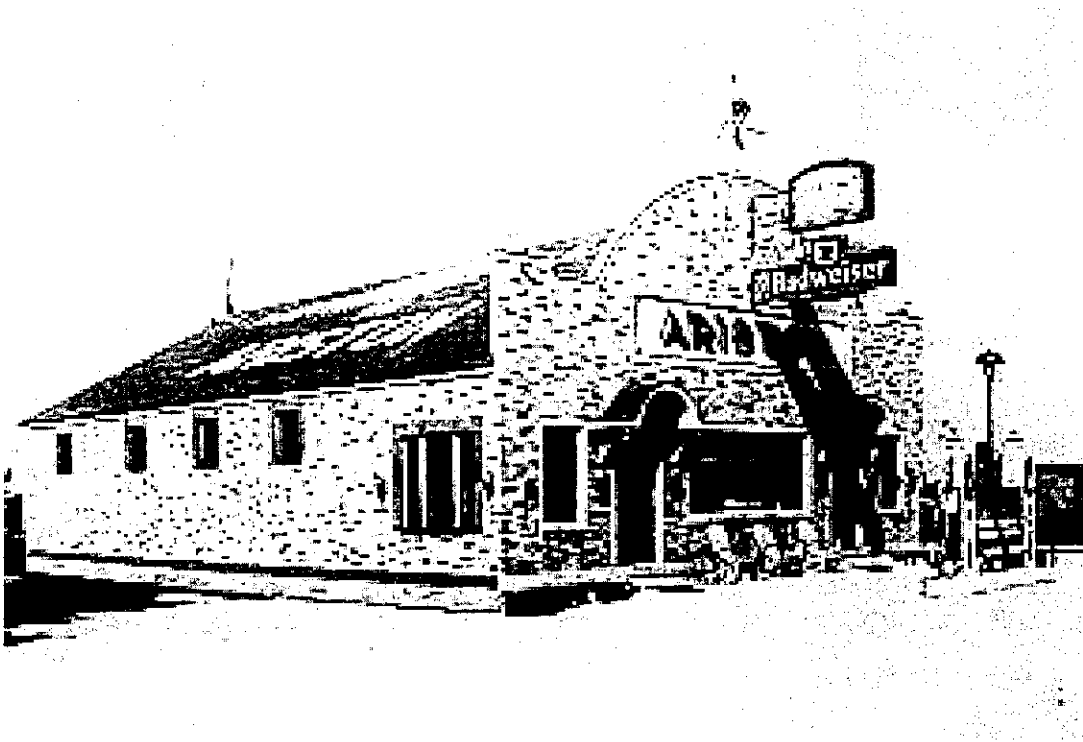


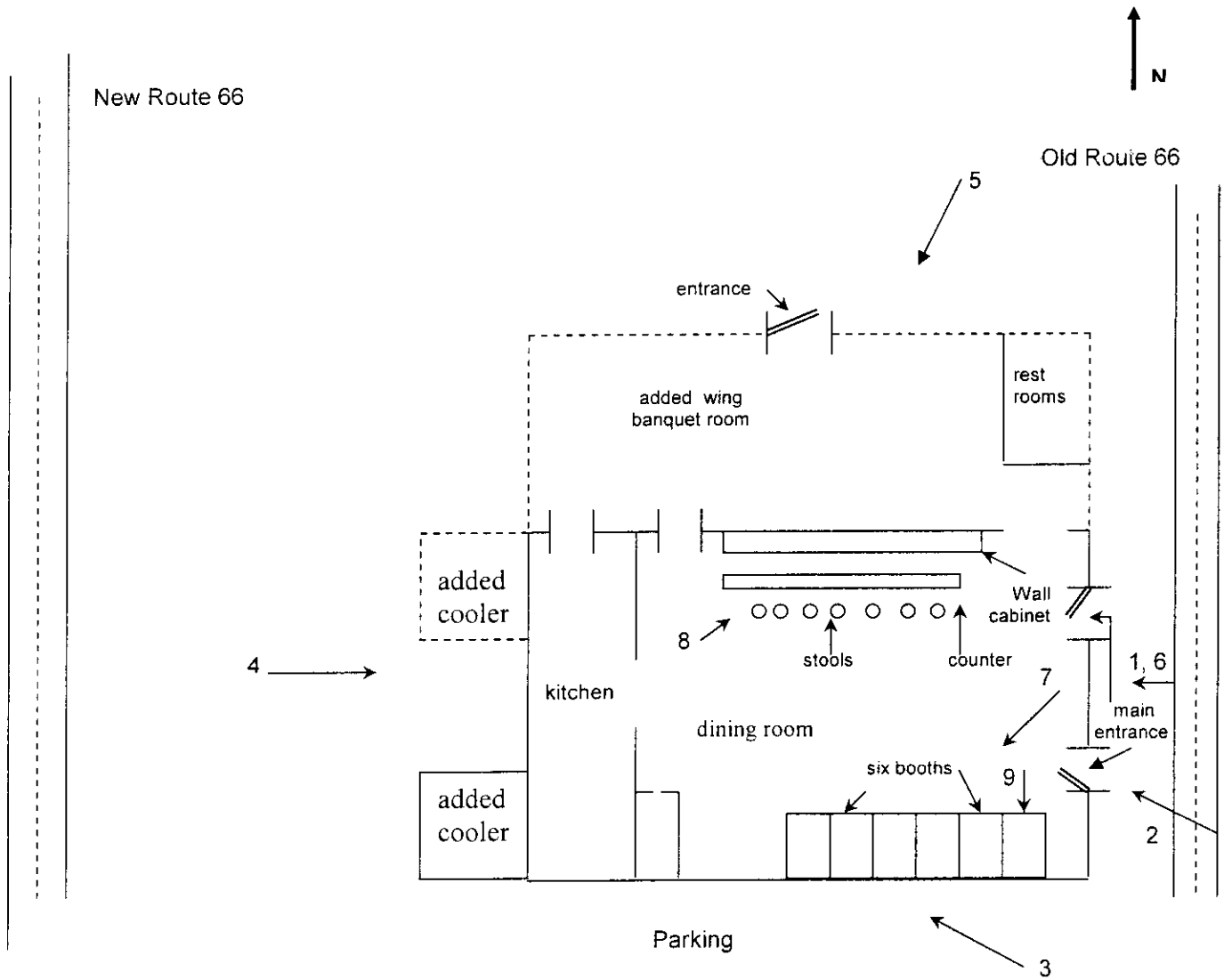
Figure 1: Ariston Café soon after its construction in 1935 (Photo courtesy of Nick Adam).

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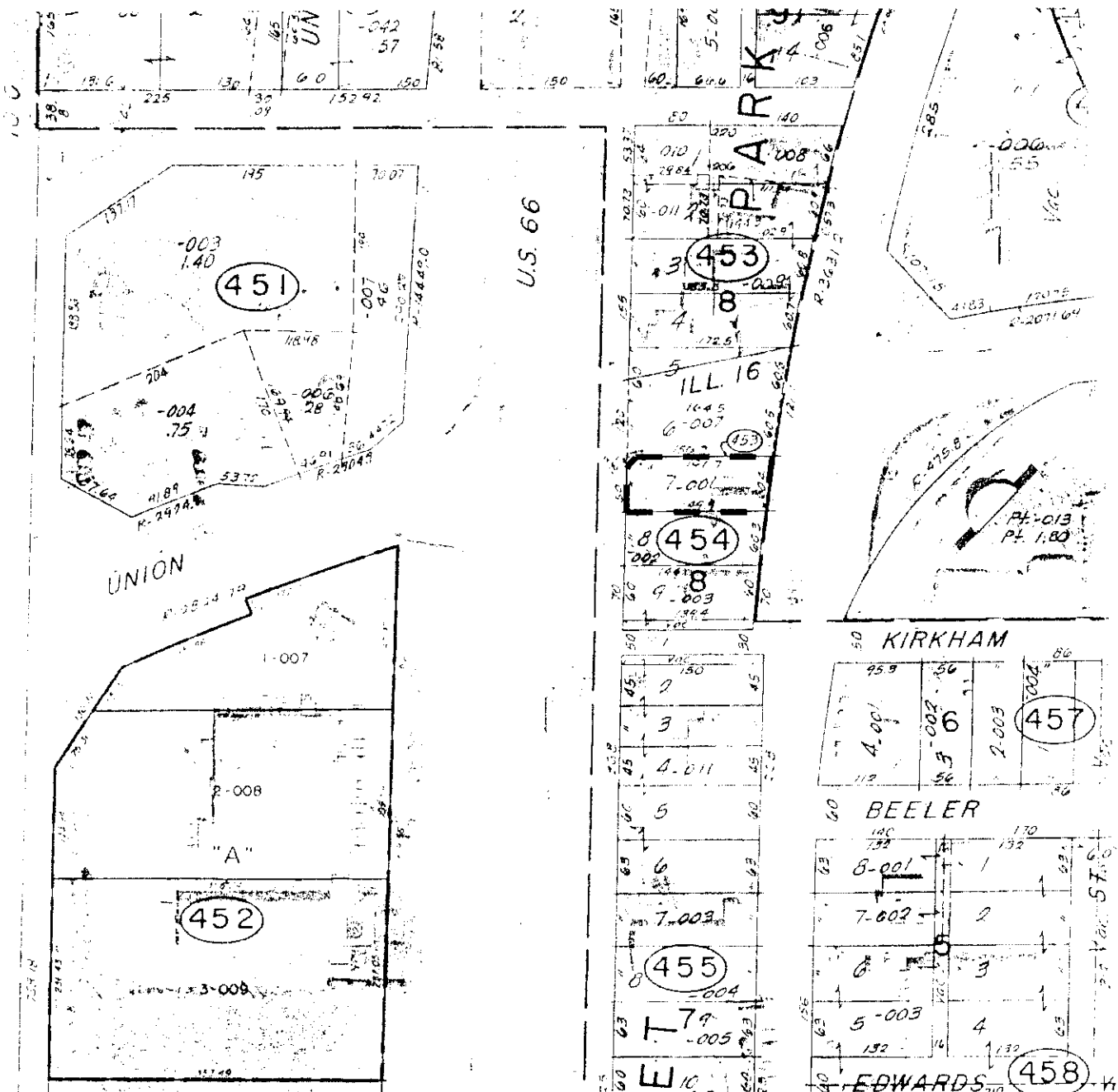
Map 1: Site plan and photo key of the Ariston Café (not to scale).

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Ariston Café  
Litchfield, Montgomery County, Illinois



Map 2: Parcel Tax Map. The dashed line denotes the National Register Boundary.

ARIZONA, MARICOPA COUNTY,  
West End Hotel,  
701 W. Washington,  
Phoenix, 85002897,  
REMOVED, 5/02/06  
(Phoenix Commercial MRA)

ARIZONA, PIMA COUNTY,  
Winterhaven Historic District,  
Bounded by Prince, Country Club, Ft. Lowell, and Tucson Blvd.,  
Tucson, 05001466,  
ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION APPROVED, 5/02/06

ARIZONA, YAVAPAI COUNTY,  
West Prescott Historic District,  
Roughly bounded by Gurley Dr., Park Ave., Country Club Dr., Vista Dr., and  
Coronado Ave.,  
Prescott, 89001075,  
ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION APPROVED, 5/02/06

COLORADO, ALAMOSA COUNTY,  
Mt. Pleasant School,  
Jct. of Cty Rd. 3 S and Rd. 103 S,  
Alamosa vicinity, 06000327,  
LISTED, 5/03/06  
(Rural School Buildings in Colorado MPS)

COLORADO, DENVER COUNTY,  
Clayton, George W., Trust and College,  
3801 Martin Luther King Blvd.,  
Denver, 06000329,  
LISTED, 5/02/06

ILLINOIS, COOK COUNTY,  
Lou Mitchell's Restaurant,  
565 W. Jackson Blvd.,  
Chicago, 06000376,  
LISTED, 5/05/06  
(Route 66 through Illinois MPS)

ILLINOIS, DU PAGE COUNTY,  
Dell Rhea's Chicken Basket,  
645 Joilet Rd.,  
Hinsdale vicinity, 06000375,  
LISTED, 5/05/06  
(Route 66 through Illinois MPS)

X ILLINOIS, MONTGOMERY COUNTY,  
Ariston Cafe,  
413 Old Route 66,  
Litchfield, 06000380,  
LISTED, 5/05/06  
(Route 66 through Illinois MPS)