FHR-8-300 (11-78)

United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

For HCRS use only
received AUG 15 1979
date entered SEP 21 1979

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Columbia Gorge Hotel

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 9000 Westcliff ~~Drive~~ W. of Hood River at 9000 Westcliffe Dr. ___ not for publication

city, town Hood River n/c ___ vicinity of congressional district 2nd

state Oregon code 41 county Hood River code 027

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
___ district	___ public	___ occupied	___ agriculture	___ museum
X building(s)	X private	___ unoccupied	X commercial	___ park
___ structure	___ both	X work in progress	___ educational	___ private residence
___ site	**Public Acquisition**	**Accessible**	___ entertainment	___ religious
___ object	___ in process	___ yes: restricted	___ government	___ scientific
	___ being considered	___ yes: unrestricted	___ industrial	___ transportation
		___ no	___ military	X other: hotel

4. Owner of Property

name Stonebridge Inn, Inc.

street & number c/o Paul A. Federici
4000 Westcliff Drive

city, town Hood River ___ vicinity of state Oregon 97031

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Hoodriver County Court House

street & number

city, town Hood River state 97031

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Statewide Inventory of Hist. Properties has this property been determined elegible? ___ yes X no

date 1976 ___ federal X state ___ county ___ local

depository for survey records State Historic Preservation Office

city, town Salem state Oregon 97310

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
___ excellent	___ deteriorated	___ unaltered	_X_ original site
_X_ good	___ ruins	_X_ altered	___ moved date _____
___ fair	___ unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Columbia Gorge Hotel, designed by Portland architect Morris H. Whitehouse, and completed in May of 1921, was built one mile west of Hood River to accommodate travelers on the newly completed Columbia River Highway. Responsible for the construction of the hotel and highway was Simon Benson, an influential figure in Oregon's growth and development in the early 20th century. The hotel underwent numerous changes in ownership and management, but remained a hotel until 1952, at which time it was converted into a home for the aged. In 1978 plans were made to reopen the structure as a resort hotel. The hotel has been well maintained, and few changes other than modernizing of plumbing and electrical equipment have been necessary.

The hotel is situated between a high bluff overlooking the Columbia River on the north, and the Columbia River Highway on the south. Flowing through the middle of the site is Phelps Creek, which forms Wah-Gwin-Gwin Falls as it drops into the Columbia River below.

The landscaping is highlighted by four bridges crossing Phelps Creek. The main bridge, which serves as the principal approach to the hotel, is constructed of ashlar masonry walls with splayed and spiralled terminals framing masonry lamp posts. The same ashlar masonry technique is carried through in a terrace and wall along the edge of the bluff directly behind the hotel. The terrace affords a spectacluar view of Wah-Gwin-Gwin Falls and the Columbia River. The side yards and front yard have been landscaped with expanses of lawn and natural grasses, and a rock garden featuring a pond and fountain. E. E. Newell, a Hood River City Engineer, supervised the landscape plan.

The building plan is basically that of an elongated "H" shape running 185' longitudinally east and west and 83' north and south at its widest point. The building is three stories in height on the south side, and four stories high on the north side. The basic structure consists of exterior wood frame covered with stucco with interior steel beams and columns and wood floor joists and rafters. Footings and foundation walls are concrete,as is the basement floor. The foundation wall extends slightly above the main floor level. The interior partitions are wood frame approximately 4" thick. Floor to floor dimensions are as follows: Basement to 1st, 11'-0"; 1st to 2nd, 13'-0"; 2nd to 3rd, 9'-6"; 3rd to ceiling, 8'-6".

The Mission Style appears at first to be the essential style of the hotel, as suggested by the unornamented stucco walls, the strong horizontal lines created by the low-pitched hipped tile-clad roofs, and arched openings free of molding or surrounds. However, the building displays certain of the characteristics of the Italian Villa Style, including a square observation tower at one corner, well-defined rectilinear massing, hipped roofs of slight pitch with eaves of considerable projection supported by brackets, and a number of arched windows in sets of two and three.

The principal street facade (south) has a yellow stucco finish with wood sash windows and louvered shutters. The south elevation is made up of a number of masses projecting from the main body of the building running longitudinally east and west. Ells, three stories in height, are located at each end,with a veranda one story in height between them. This veranda was originally a loggia, but was enclosed at a later date with French windows. In time, the French windows were replaced by single panes of glass.

The west ell is marked by a porte-cochere at the main entrance. Pilasters at the southeast and southwest corners extend past the roofline of the porte-cochere and become part of a balustrade at the second story level. Small eaves supported by eave plates and brackets at each end are projected out on the south, east, and west walls.

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The most prominent feature of the south elevation is the square observation tower rising at the corner of the west ell and main body of the building. It rises to a height of 100 feet, at which point it is capped by a cornice and balustrade. On the south and east walls of the tower are a series of three arched openings, or arcades. Sitting on top of the tower is an octagonal mirador with arched windows on the north, east and west walls, and a door on the south wall. The door leads to an observation deck around the mirador and to a larger deck above the elevator shaft which is at the northwest corner of the tower.

The east and west elevations have no salient features and display the same characteristics of the Italian Villa and Mission Styles.

The north elevation is four stories in height with the lower level opening onto a terrace. A cocktail veranda extends from the main body of the building between two ells at the main floor level. The veranda is divided into six bays by classical pilasters and filled with four panels of French windows. Directly below the veranda at the lower level are five arched openings forming a porch. This porch opens onto a terrace overlooking Wah-Gwin-Gwin Falls and the Columbia River. This porch will be glazed in at a future date to extend a lounge in the lower level.

The main entry is at the west ell under a porte-cochere and through a vestibule into the main lobby. The doors of the entry and vestibule are double French doors flanked by one panel of French windows and a transom on each side. The flooring of the vestibule was originally hardwood, but will be covered with tile. With the exception of a 48-inch tile wainscot, the wall and ceiling treatment are typical for most public spaces on the first floor. This treatment consists of light blue or salmon-painted plaster walls and off-white plaster ceilings and crown molding.

The lobby is a space created by the intersection of two axial leads. The lounge to the north and the entrance to the south create one axis, and public restrooms and a banquet room to the west and the main dining hall to the east created the other axis. Each opening to these areas is framed by classical pilasters, and from these pilasters span deep beams forming bays with plaster ceiling and crown molding. The north elevation is divided into three bays; the center being the larger with a double French door, two side lights and transom. The flanking openings consist of two panels of French windows. The south wall, which is the entrance from the vestibule, is similar and symmetrically aligned with the center bay of the north wall.

Between the opening to the main dining hall and the desk is an elevator which serves all floors.

Flanking the lobby to the east is a gift shop, originally a women's sitting room, and to the west is the registration desk and office. The desk is framed by two classical pilasters and is made of fir, painted off-white. The walls in the desk area and office area are of wood paneling.

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The banquet room, which is in the northwest corner of the building, is highlighted by a fireplace centered on the north wall. The hearth and facing are of a ceramic tile with wood trim and mantel painted off-white. Wood sash windows on each side of the fireplace symmetrically balance the wall. The walls were originally painted plaster, but will now be finished in oak paneling.

North of the lobby is a lounge room featuring a large fireplace on the north wall. The fireplace is framed by classical pilasters on each side. The hearth and facing are an ivory colored ceramic tile surrounded by wood trim painted off-white. The mantel, also painted off-white, is supported at each end by fluted, curved brackets. The east wall has a double French door with transom leading to the cocktail veranda. The ceiling has been divided into three bays dictated by the pilasterson the north and south walls. Accoustical tile has been put over the original plaster ceiling.

A small hallway leads from the lobby to the main dining room. Flanking the hallway to the north was a cloakroom which now has been divided into a cloakroom and small bar serving the cocktail veranda. To the south of the hallway, through two double French doors, is the stair hall.

The open stairway, a stright run with intermediate landings and returns between floors, extends from the lower level to the mirador. The balustrade features newel posts with dark painted caps and formed handrail. The plaster walls are papered.

The largest space in the hotel is the main dining hall (36 x 60') which has the capacity to seat 200 guests. Flooring is hardwood covered with carpeting. Both the north and south walls are divided into five bays, each bay being framed by classical pilasters having a double French door, side lights and transom. These divisions are articulated by beams running transversely in the ceiling. Each beamed bay is further divided into five joist bays creating a coffered effect. Accoustical tile now covers the plaster ceiling but the plaster crown mold has remained exposed. The north and south walls open respectively to the cocktail veranda and the breakfast veranda.

To the east of the main dining hall is the kitchen and food preparation area. This is being remodeled, modernized with new equipment.

The basement, or lower level,originally featured a ballroom occupying the central portion directly under the dining hall. A bowling alley ran along the river side. Directly adjacent to this, and under the cocktail veranda, is a porch formed by five archways opening onto the rim of the cliff.

The basement also contained a complete laundry, men's lavatory, the hotel's water pressure tank, a barber shop, ladies' beauty parlor, and a billiard parlor.

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Future use of the basement will remain basically the same, with a bar and lounge immediately opening to the terrace to the north. Plans are to glaze the archways of the porch and thus expand the lounge area. Also, a women's lounge will be added, as will a wine cellar. The beauty parlor, barber shop, and billiard room will no longer function.

The second and third floor contain the guest rooms and are similar in plan. Each floor is laid out with a double loaded corridor running longitudinally east and west.

There have been no significant changes in the layout of the floors, but a suspended accoustical tile ceiling has been added in the corridor. The guest rooms have receive new gypsum board walls,and the plumbing fixtures have had to be replaced. The origina louvered doors have remained, but solid doors have had to be added to meet code requirements. Most of the lighting fixtures have had to be replaced over the years, but attempts have been made to simulate the spirit of the original.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
___ prehistoric	___ archeology-prehistoric	___ community planning	_x_ landscape architecture	___ religion
___ 1400–1499	___ archeology-historic	___ conservation	___ law	___ science
___ 1500–1599	___ agriculture	___ economics	___ literature	___ sculpture
___ 1600–1699	_x_ architecture	___ education	___ military	___ social/ humanitarian
___ 1700–1799	___ art	___ engineering	___ music	___ theater
___ 1800–1899	_x_ commerce	___ exploration/settlement	___ philosophy	_x_ transportation
_x_ 1900–	___ communications	___ industry	___ politics/government	___ other (specify)
		___ invention		

Specific dates 1920 - 1921 **Builder/Architect** Morris Homans Whitehouse, Architect
Dinwiddie Construction Co., Builder

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Columbia Gorge Hotel is significant to Oregon as one of the state's outstanding resort hotels developed at the outset of the automobile age. The inspiration of Good Roads advocate Simon Bensonand master chef Henry Thiele, it was conceived as a complement to the Columbia River Highway, the bold road-building enterprise which Benson promoted with his personal fortune. Designed in the Mission Style with certain Italianate features, and completed in 1921, the spectacularly sited hotel is one of the noted works by Morris H. Whitehouse, who was among Oregon's leading architects of the early 20th century.

The man responsible for the construction of the Columbia Gorge Hotel was Simon Benson. Born in Gulbarns-dalen, Norway, October 7, 1852, he came to the United States with his family in 1868. In 1875, Benson married Esther Searle and the pair started a store in Lynxville, Mississippi. After the store burned in 1879, he and his wife moved to Oregon.

Benson logged near St. Helens for a while before moving to Washington due to illness of his wife, who died in 1890. Benson returned to Oregon to re-enter in the logging business, and he began to make his fortune. Many loggers had invested in Donkey engines but could not profitably use them. Buying them up at low prices, he quickly turned over good profits and invested them in timberlands. Benson developed a method of towing logs at sea in cigar-shaped rafts which enabled him to expand his markets as far south as San Diego. His exposure to southern California was to have an influence on him later when he built the Columbia Gorge Hotel.

In 1910, his health failing, Benson sold his entire holdings for $5,000,000. Benson's active mind and relentless energy would not permit him to remain idle. Having toured the state numerous times, he concluded that the most important form of development for the progress and prosperity of Oregon was the improvement of the roads. Benson embarked on a campaign of education as to the necessity of the construction and improvement of roads. This led to the forming of the first citizen State Highway Commission, which he served as chairman.

One of his greatest undertakings was the construction of a road through the Columbia River Gorge. Problems of engineering and expense seemed to be insurmountable, but with Benson helping to defray the cost, the highway was built from Astoria to Hood River, a distance of 180 miles.

Under the supervision and engineering expertise of Samuel C. Lancaster, precedents were established in methods of alignment and construction that would be emulated for decades. The engineering aspects however, were no more impressive than the sensitivity to the landscape. Special efforts were made to make the most of the scenic grandeur of the Columbia Gorge. Using Italian masons to set the dry wall construction and face the bridges with indigenous stone, the road was blended into the natural terrain with consummate skill. In addition to the road itself, Benson acquired land at Multnomah Falls, Wahkeena Falls and numerous other locations which he donated to the public for use as roadside parks.[1]

9. Major Bibliographical References

"Spas, Coastal Resorts, and Mountain Retreats," Space, Style and Structure: Building in Northwest America (Portland: Oregon Historical Society, 1974), Vol 2, 518-520.

The Columbia Gorge Hotel on the Scenic Columbia River Highway, Oregon (Portland, 1921). Promotional leaflet.

(Continued)

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property ca. 8.2 acres

Quadrangle name _____ **Quadrangle scale** 1:62500

UMT References Hood River, Oregon.- Washington

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
A	10	612620	5062825	B			
C				D			
E				F			
G				H			

Verbal boundary description and justification

All that portion of the west half of the SE¼ Sec. 27, T.3N., R10E., of the Willamette Meridian lying south of the south line of the right of way of the Oregon-Washington Railroad and Navigation Company, EXCEPT that portion conveyed by deed to Laddie G. Henderson and (con't)

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Rudiger Krohn

organization Mackenzie Engineering Incorporated **date** April 30, 1979

street & number 2850 N.W. 31st Ave. **telephone** 503/224-9560

city or town Portland **state** Oregon 97210

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

___ national X state ___ local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature James A. Scalet

title State Historic Preservation Officer **date** July 31, 1979

For HCRS use only

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

for William H. Brockman **date** 9/21/79

Keeper of the National Register

Attest: W. Ray Luce **date** 9/21/79

Chief of Registration

GPO 938 835

Simon Benson had envisioned the highway to be a means of access for the world to see the natural beauties of Oregon, but he did not stop after the highway was complete. Benson stated: "We have built good roads, and have invited the world to come and view our beauty spots, but until now we have done nothing toward taking care of them after they arrived. With our new hotel we will, in a measure, take care of this." [2]

Following the completion of the highway in 1920, Mr. Benson and Henry Thiele chose the site for a new hotel. Henry Thiele had established himself as one of the finest chefs in the Northwest in Simon Benson's fashionable hotel in downtown Portland, the Benson Hotel. Henry Thiele had first thought of the hotel and its location, but it was with Simon Benson's support that it was built. Thiele was to become the hotel's first manager.

The spirit in which the hotel was conceived adds significantly to the building's history. Benson was quoted as saying, "My principal purpose in the erection of the hotel was not to initiate a money-making adventure, but to express my ideas of what a tourist hotel should be and provide entertainment for tourists over the Columbia River Highway. It is not only essential to make our valleys and mountains accessible by good highways, but it is further necessary to capitalize them by pleasant and comfortable hotels. I don't expect to make money out of the hotel and will do well if it pays expenses. I am in the hopes that it will serve as a model and stimulate the building of other resorts in the wake of our improved highways." [3]

The site selected was on a rocky bluff overlooking the Columbia River and the mountains beyond. The hotel site was to serve as a base for the motor parties sight-seeing along the Columbia Gorge and Hood River Valley.

The hotel site was acquired in 1920 from Bobby Rand who, for the past 17 years, had run the Wah-Gwin-Gwin Hotel. The latter was named for Wah-Gwin-Gwin Falls, falls which are located on the site and drop 150 feet to the Columbia River below. The demolition of the old hotel and construction of a new concrete and stucco hotel began immediately by Dinwiddie Construction and Company of Hood River.

During this time, Simon Benson was remarried to Mrs. Harriet King of Hood River. The Del Monte Lodge in Monterey, where the Bensons spent their honeymoon, was to have an influence on the new hotel.

Construction for the new hotel was completed in May of 1921 and a grand opening was held in June. The hotel became the hub for social life in Hood River. Weddings, parties, banquets and formal dances were often held there.

The hotel did not succeed as had been envisioned. Ironically, it was Simon Benson's good roads that led to the demise of the hotel. Motorists drove from Portland, enjoyed the fine cuisine of master chef Henry Thiele, returned to Portland the same

day, leaving the guestrooms empty.

Simon's son, Amos Benson, took over the hotel in 1922, but he too could not turn it into a successful venture. Finally in 1925, the hotel was up for foreclosure. The hotel underwent numerous years of shifting ownership and management, all unsuccessful.

In 1952, the hotel was purchased by the Neighbors of Woodcraft and turned into a home for the aged. It remained in this ownership until 1978, when plans again were made to reopen the structure as a resort hotel.

Morris Homans Whitehouse, born March 11, 1867, was the son of Benjamin G. Whitehouse, a long time official of the Portland Gas and Water Companies. Whitehouse attended Bishop Scott Academy in Portland, and in 1894 he enrolled at the MIT school of architecture. After one year at "Boston Tech," he returned to Portland and apprenticed in the office of Rolph H. Miller for five years, and with Joseph Jacobberger's firm for three years. He returned to MIT in 1903 and was graduated in 1906. He became the first recipient of the Guy Lowell travelling fellowship for outstanding design work. Whitehouse spent the following year at the American Academy in Rome then returned to Portland and established an office with Bruce Honeyman, an MIT classmate in architectural engineering. In 1909, he joined architect Edgar M. Lazarus (Lazarus, Whitehouse & Fouilhoux). A year later, Whitehouse and Fouilhoux established their own office, a partnership that lasted until 1920 when Fouilhoux, upon his return from World War I duty in France, went to New York and joined Raymond Hood's office. (Fouilhoux, born in Paris in 1897, was educated at the Sorbonne and studied architecture at the Ecole Centrale des Arts et Manufacturers. He came to the U.S. in 1904 and worked as a draftsman for five years in Portland. Fouilhoux was associated with many important buildingswhile in New York. The firm of Hood & Fouilhoux won the international competition for the Chicago Tribune Building. In the 1930's he formed a partnership with Wallace K. Harrison, which was expanded in 1941 with the addition of Max Abramovitz. Fouilhoux was involved in the design of Rockefeller Center, and the Trylon & Perisphere at the 1938 New York World's Fair. The firm of Harrison, Fouilhoux and Abramovitz continued until Fouilhoux's death in 1945).

Whitehouse carried on the Portland office under his own name until 1928 when the firm became Morris H. Whitehouse & Associates, the associated being Glenn Stanton and Walter Church who became partners in 1931. Whitehouse, Stanton & Church continued until 1935 when Stanton opened his own office. Whitehouse and Church headed the firm until 1942 when Earl Newberry and Frank Roehr were made partners. The firm became Church, Newberry & Roehr upon the death of Whitehouse in 1944. After Church's retirement and other partnership changes, the firm has continued to the present as Schuette and Wheeler, the oldest continous architectural firm in the State. The office is also the repository for the Whitehouse drawings and

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documents.

During the Whitehouse years, the firm designed many importnat Portland and Oregon buildings. In addition to the Columbia Gorge Hotel, their work included: Jefferson and Lincoln High Schools; the Gearhart Hotel; Multnomah Athletic Club; the Multnomah Oswego, and Waverly County Clubs; 6th Church of Christ Scientist; the Federal Courthouse; and University Club; and Multnomah Stadium. In 1936, the firm was associated with New York architects Trowbridge and Livingston, and Francis Keally in the plans for the Oregon State Capitol. [4]

1. Space, Style & Structure:Building in Northwest America, Vol. II, pg. 158.
2. Columbia Gorge Hotel on the Scenic Columbia River Highway, (Portland, 1921).
3. ibid.
4. National Register of Historical Places Inventory -- Nomination Form University Club - item no. 8, page 2.

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Withey, Henry F. and Withey, Elsie Rathburn, Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased), Los Angeles, 1956 (re: Whitehouse, Fouilhoux & Fritsch).

Yates, Keith, History of the Woodcraft Home, (Portland, 1975).

Hood River News July 30, 1920

Hood River News August 13, 1920

Hood River News December 10, 1920

Hood River News May 27, 1921

Hood River News June 18, 1921

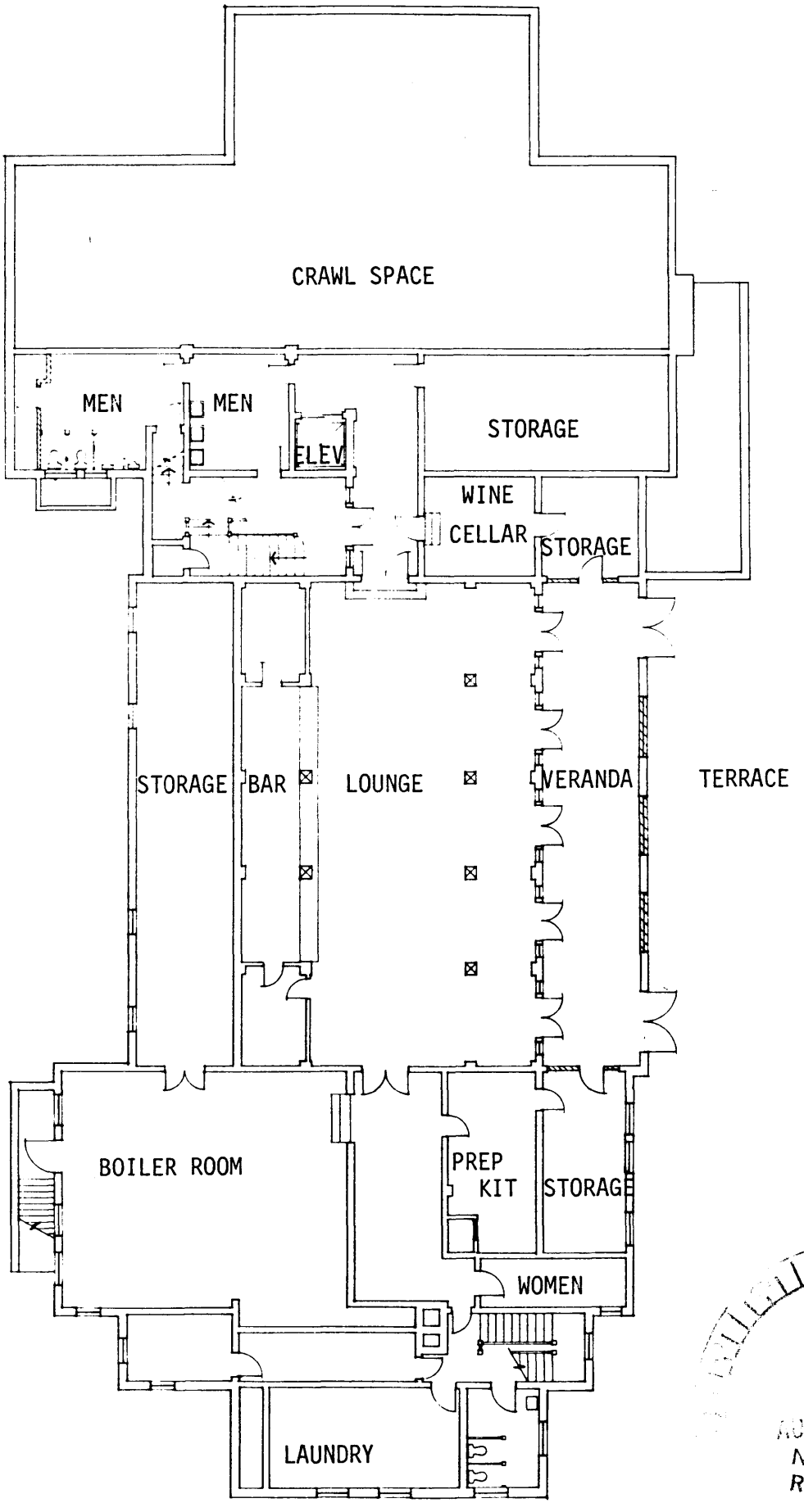
Stimmel, Tom, "Historic Columbia Gorge Hotel to Open Doors Again," Portland Oregon Journal (June 15, 1979), Sec. 2, 17.

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and Jeannette S. Henderson, husband and wife, dated August 30. 1973, and recorded September 6, 1973, Fee No. 731847, Hood River County Deed Records, AND EXCEPT from said parcel all lands lying in public highways, containing in all 8.2 acres, more or less.

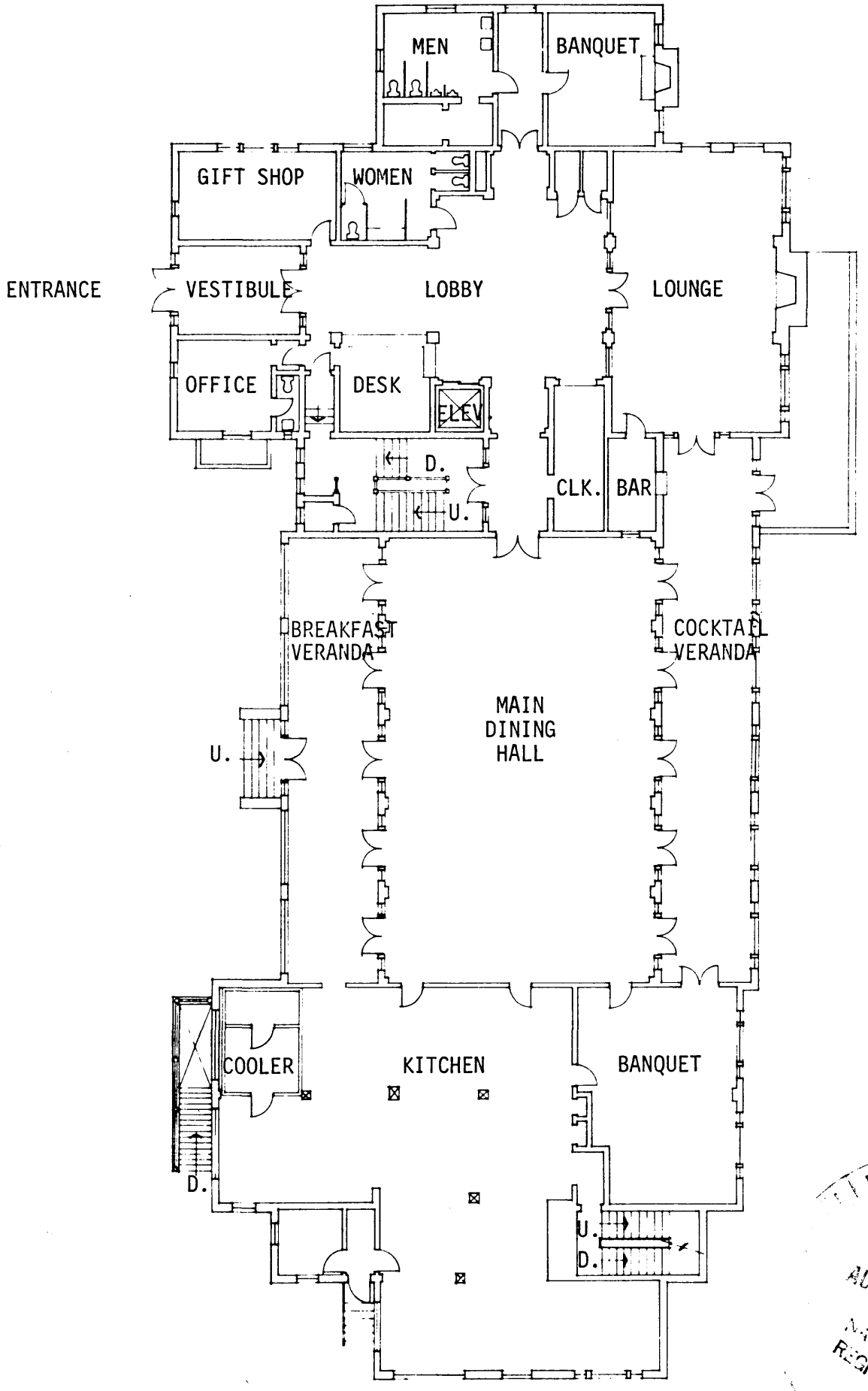


LOWER FLOOR PLAN

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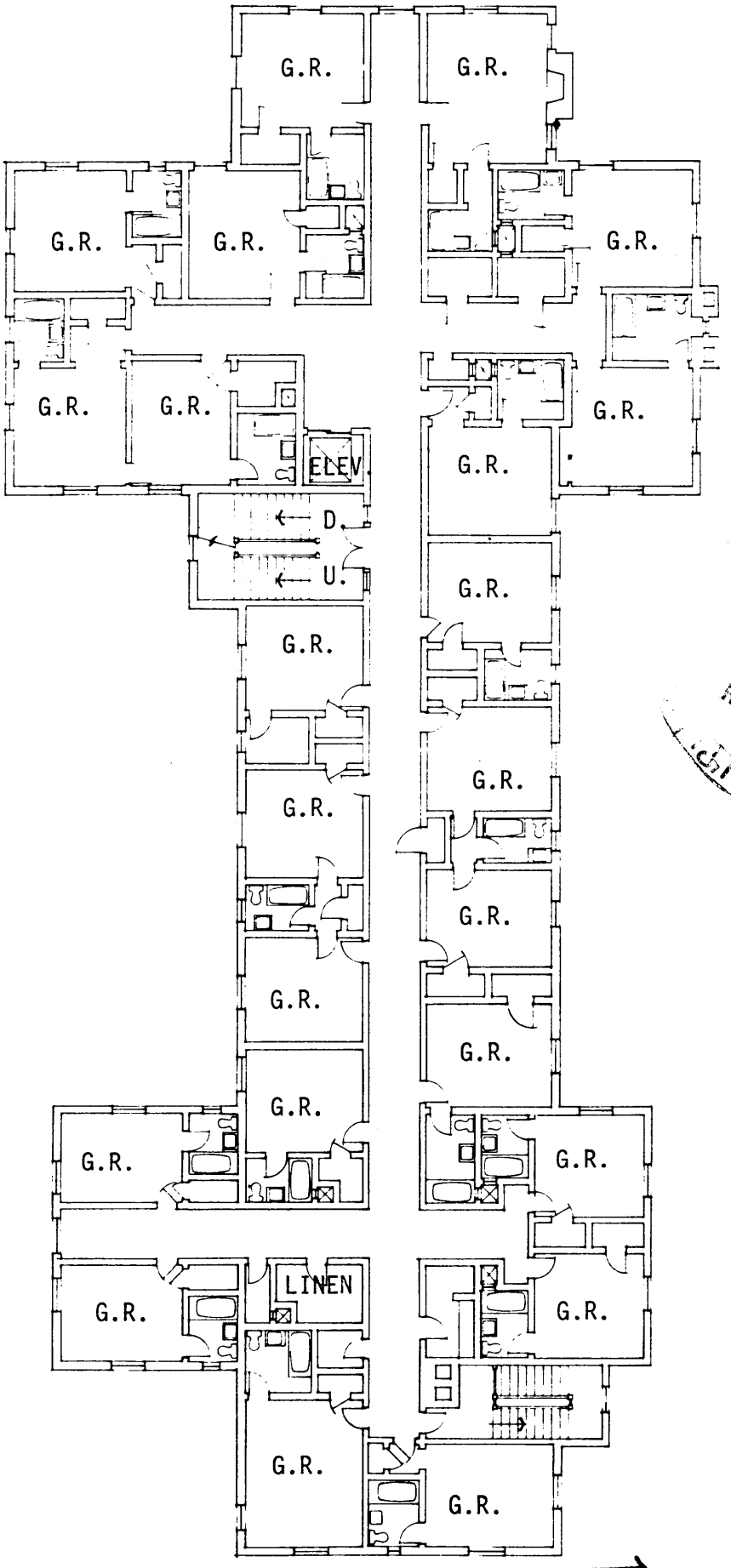
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Hood River County, Oregon



MAIN FLOOR PLAN

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Hood River County, Oregon

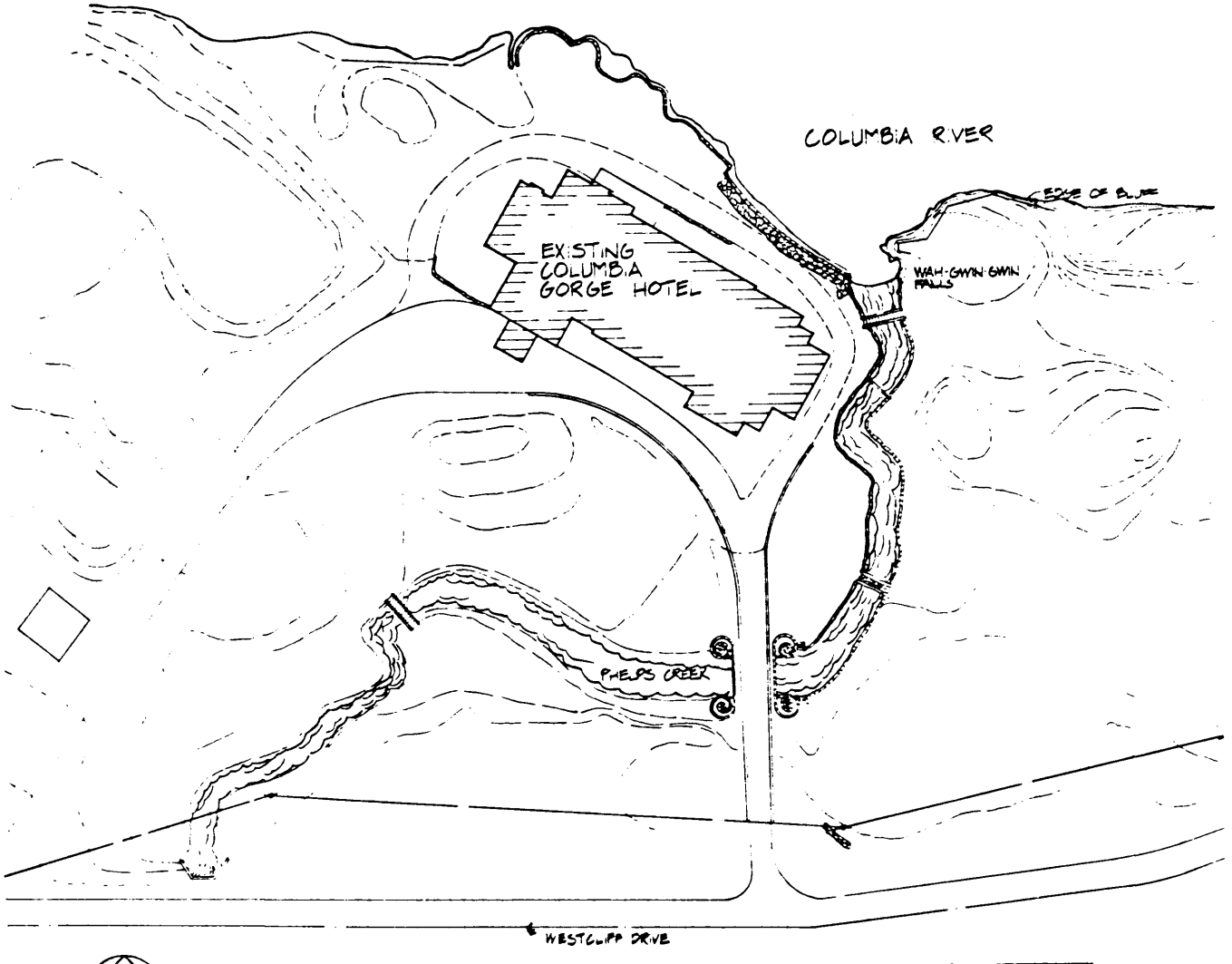


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2nd & 3rd FLOOR PLAN

NORTH

Columbia Gorge Hotel
Hood River
Hood River County, Oregon



SITE PLAN

AUG 15 1979

Columbia Gorge Hotel
Hood River
Hood River County
Oregon



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#1

Columbia Gorge Hotel
Hood River
Hood River County, Oregon

AUG 15 1979

Southwest and Southeast Elevations
From South Bank of Phelps Creek

Lawrence Hudetz Photo, 1979
2651 N.W. Cornell Road
Portland, OR 97210

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