

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

SENT TO D.C.

1-9-07

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 Belevidere Café, Motel and Gas Station

other names/site number Cerolla's Cafe

2. Location

street & number 817 Old Route 66 not for publication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.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

Illinois Historic Preservation Agency

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:)

Belvidere Motel and Café
Name of Property

Montgomery, Illinois
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

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

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal
- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
6	1	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	1	objects
6	2	Total

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

Historic and Historic Archaeological
Resources of Route 66

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

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling

DOMESTIC: motel

COMMERCE: restaurant

TRANSPORTATION: gas station

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling

VACANT/NOT IN USE

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: Minimal Traditional

Tudor Revival

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE

walls ASBESTOS; METAL: aluminum; BRICK

roof ASPHALT

other

Narrative Description

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

Belvidere Motel and Café
Name of Property

Montgomery, 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.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

TRANSPORTATION
COMMERCE

Period of Significance

1936-1956

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.

Significant Dates

1936/ca. 1950

Significant Person

(complete if Criterion B is marked)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

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: _____

Belvidere Motel and Café
Name of Property

Montgomery, Illinois
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one acre

UTM References

(place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 16 269556 4338940
Zone Easting Northing

2 _____

3 _____
Zone Easting Northing

4 _____

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 March 20, 2006
street & number 1907 21st 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 Yo Cho Hamric
street & number 825 Old Route 66 telephone 217-324-4411
city or town Litchfield state Illinois 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.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**Section number 7 Page 1Belvidere Motel and Café
Litchfield, Montgomery County, Illinois**DESCRIPTION**

The Belvidere Café and Motel is located along the original Route 66 in the town of Litchfield, Illinois (2000 population 6,815). Litchfield is in south central Illinois, approximately forty miles southwest of Springfield and forty miles northeast of St. Louis, Missouri. The property is located within a residential and commercial area in the southern section of Litchfield and faces east towards Old Route 66 (also known as Sherman Street). The property consists of a gas station, motel and café built in 1936, and two additional motel wings, a dwelling, and garage built ca. 1950. The buildings are arranged in a "U" pattern with a central gravel parking area. The café and gas station sit at the southern portion of the property and face east towards Old Route 66. The motel wing of 1936 was built parallel to the highway and faces a courtyard and gravel parking area. The garage and residence are located on the north property line and face south toward the courtyard and parking area. The two, ca. 1950 motel wings lie parallel to one another in an east-west position directly behind the gas station.

The gas station and café were both built in 1936 and with similar materials (Figure 1). The gas station was built with a high-pitched gable roof and with an exterior of tan and yellow textured and colored brick. The café was built with identical brickwork and featured a stepped parapet roofline and Craftsman style windows. To the rear of the café a one-story motel was built in 1936. This motel was originally designed with a stepped parapet roofline and with inset parking garages between the motel units (Figure 4). This motel was remodeled ca. 1950 into its present form and the garage units replaced with additional rooms (Figure 5). Also around 1950 a dwelling was built on the premises and two new motel units were added to the rear of the gas station. Since the 1950s, this complex has not been significantly altered and retains much of its original form, plan, and design.

INDIVIDUAL BUILDING & STRUCTURES

Key:

C = Contributing

NC = Non-contributing

ca. = Circa

Gas Station, 1936 (C)

This is a small one-story building built in 1936 (Photo 2 and 3). It has a gable roof of asphalt shingles, a poured concrete foundation, and an exterior of yellow brick. On the main (east) elevation is a central entrance with an original single-light glass and wood door and original six-light glass and wood storm door. On either side of the entrance are original four-over-one vertical sash windows, and each is covered with plywood panels. Above the entrance there is a gable peak at the roofline. The north and south elevations each have a single four-over-one vertical sash window that is covered with plywood panels. There is no fenestration on the rear elevation, which has a brick exterior chimney flue. The interior of the gas station consists of one-room with a small bathroom. The interior has plaster walls and ceiling, and a concrete floor covered with linoleum. In front of the gas station are the remnants of a concrete gas pump foundation.

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Belvidere Motel and Café
Litchfield, Montgomery County, Illinois

Motel Unit, West Wing, 1936, (C)

The west wing of the motel is linear and has eight units with an attached laundry/utility building on the north elevation (Photos 1, 9 and 10). The building has a concrete block foundation, a gable roof of asphalt shingles, and an exterior of asbestos shingles. Across the width of the main (east) façade is a ca. 1950 metal awning. The south bay unit, Unit 1, has been altered ca. 1980 with the addition of a single-light steel and glass door and single-light windows. The remaining seven units have original one-over-one rectangular wood sash windows and three-panel and three-vertical light glass and wood doors (Photo 11). These entrances also have original six-light and two-panel storm doors. The utility wing has original one-over-one rectangular sash windows and a ca. 1970 solid wood door. The north façade of this wing has two original one-over-one wood sash windows. The rear (west) elevation has original one-over-one wood sash windows with wood slat shutters and ca. 1950 metal awnings. At the roofline is a plain soffit panel and gutter. The south elevation has paired original one-over-one wood sash windows.

The interiors of the motel units have original plaster walls and ceilings, and original wood floors with added linoleum (Photo 12). Fixtures date to the 1960s. Unit 7 has an original interior two-panel wood door leading to the bathroom. Bathrooms retain original shower stalls, wall sinks and toilets. The laundry facility also retains original plaster walls and ceiling, and a wood floor with added linoleum.

Café, 1936 (C)

The Belvidere Café is a one-story, rectangular plan, commercial building constructed in 1936 (Photos 2 and 4). The building has a poured concrete foundation, a barrel vault roof of rolled asphalt, and an exterior of tan, textured stretcher bond brick. The main (east) façade has two entrances: the south entrance has an original multi-light glass and wood door, while the north entrance has a ca. 1970 single-light aluminum and glass door. Over both entrances are soldier course lintels. The central bay between the two entrances has an original fixed multi-light window flanked by original one-over-one wood sash windows. The upper sash units are Craftsman or multi-light design. Flanking the entrances on the corner bays are similar windows. Above the foundation encircling the building is a soldier course belt course. Over the entrances and windows on the main façade are ca. 1950 metal awnings. At the roofline of the main façade is a curved and stepped parapet. Painted in the upper façade are the words "Route 66 Café," and the images of a cup of coffee and a piece of pie. In front of the café is a ca. 1970 concrete handicapped access ramp with a wrought iron railing. Also in front of the café is a concrete foundation and pipe for a gas tank.

The north elevation has four window bays with original windows. One window bay has been covered with wood panels. An entrance on this elevation has a ca. 1970 solid metal door. On the west elevation is an exterior of red stretcher bond brick. This elevation has three window bays with original one-over-one wood sash windows and ca. 1950 metal awnings. This elevation also has a ca. 1990 solid metal door. On the south elevation are six window bays. The east and west bays have paired one-over-one wood sash windows with brick sills and soldier course lintels. The other windows are original single-light and one-over-one wood sash design with soldier course lintels and sills. The windows and doors on the other elevations also have soldier course lintels.

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Belvidere Motel and Café
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The interior of the café retains its original paneled wood ceiling, original wood floor, and both original plaster walls and added vertical paneling. The interior retains what appears to be an original counter with padded metal chrome chairs (Photo 5). Original Art Deco cabinets are along two walls (Photo 6). Bathrooms have original five-panel wood doors, and an arched opening leads from the dining room to the kitchen.

Motel Unit, South Wings, ca. 1950 (C)

Directly west of the gas station are two identical motel wings built ca. 1950 (Photos 7 and 8). The buildings lie in an east-west position with their rear elevations only a few feet apart. Each building contains four individual units. The buildings have gable asphalt shingle roofs, poured concrete foundations, and exteriors of aluminum siding. Shed roof porches extend along the main facades and have concrete floors and round wood posts. Entrances to the units have six-panel metal doors. Windows are tri-part design with a central fixed window flanked by jalousie windows. Rear elevations have one small jalousie window per unit. The wings contain both one- and two-bedroom units. The interiors retain original wood paneling, original carpet, and original laminated panel ceilings.

Residence, ca. 1950 (C)

The residence is a one-story, frame, Minimal Traditional style dwelling built ca. 1950 (Photos 9 and 13). The house has a gable roof of asphalt shingles, an interior brick chimney, a concrete block foundation, and exterior of ca. 1970 aluminum siding. On the main (south) façade is an incised corner entry porch with a square Doric motif column. The entrance has an original three-light glass and wood door. The main façade has a projecting bay with a picture window. The window has a central fixed light flanked by two-over-two horizontal sash wood windows. The other windows in the dwelling are original two-over-two horizontal wood sash design. On the rear (north) elevation is an entrance with an original four-light and three-panel glass and wood door. Over this entrance and windows are original metal awnings.

Garage, ca. 1950 (NC)

To the west of the residence is a ca. 1950 frame garage (Photo 9). This garage has a gable roof of asphalt shingles, an exterior of aluminum siding, and a concrete block foundation. On the east façade is a pedestrian entrance with an original three-horizontal light and three-panel door. On the west elevation is a ca. 1970 sliding track metal window. The garage door has a ca. 1970 overhead track metal door.

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Belvidere Motel and Café
Litchfield, Montgomery County, Illinois

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE - SUMMARY

The Belvidere Motel and Café in Litchfield, Illinois is eligible for the National Register under Criterion A for its role in the 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. As U.S. Route 66 emerged as one of the major east-west highways across the country, it became lined with a variety of privately owned businesses such as motels, restaurants, and gas stations that accommodated travelers along the route. The Belvidere Motel and Café is a notable example of the types of commercial businesses that once flourished along U.S. Route 66 throughout its history. The complex contains a gas station, motel, and café built in 1936, and two additional motel units along with a residence and garage built ca. 1950. The buildings of the complex have not been extensively altered and retain much of their historic design, materials, and setting. The property is nominated for its local significance and its period of significance extends from 1936 to 1956 reflecting the National Register's fifty-year criteria. The complex meets the registration requirements for the property types of "Gasoline/Service Stations," "Restaurants/Diners," and "Motels/Tourist Courts" as set forth in the Multiple Property Documentation Form, "The Historic and Historic Archaeological Resources of Route 66."

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE - DISCUSSION

U.S. Route 66 emerged as one of the nation's major east-west highways in the early twentieth century. As automobile ownership and traffic increased, numerous businesses catering to travelers were built along the highway. Among the most common of these businesses were gas stations, motels, and restaurants. These businesses were typically privately owned and operated and were often grouped together in a single complex. The Belvidere Motel and Café reflects the development of such "mom-and-pop" enterprises that came to be associated with highway travel in the early- to mid-twentieth century.

Gas stations were an essential service that developed concurrently with the rise in automobile use. Initially, gas stations were often an additional service offered at a grocery, hardware, or other store and consisted simply of one or two gasoline pumps situated along the curb. Safety concerns led to the development of off-street, drive-in gasoline stations. The first of these were simple utilitarian sheds of metal or clapboard set off the road and accessed via a dirt or gravel driveway.

As automobile production and use soared in the early twentieth century, the restaurant and motel industries also boomed. The number of restaurants in the United States rose forty percent between 1910 and 1927 as Americans traveled more frequently, and restaurants were especially prevalent along busy roads.¹ The restaurants that emerged along Route 66 were many and ranged from short-order diners and roadside hamburger stands to more full-service family restaurants and cafés. Likewise, the motel industry also boomed

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

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in the United States during the early to mid-twentieth century. The development of lodging facilities on U.S. Route 66 followed a progression from free municipal campsites to pay camps and private campgrounds, to privately owned motels and tourists courts.² These businesses tended to be small operations rather than large developments, and were owned and operated by local individuals who often lived on the premises.

As the main corridor between Chicago and California, U.S. Route 66 was a well-traveled road and the ever-increasing amount of traffic on the route presented a welcome opportunity to many potential businessmen and women. Land along the road was often inexpensive, and many began businesses on property they already owned. After the route was designated a national highway in 1926, a large variety of gas stations, motels, and restaurants emerged along its length. These were typically individually owned and operated businesses, especially in the early years of the highway. Each had a unique appearance and style due to their individual ownership; however their common characteristics were that they were generally built with little capital and were small in size and scale.

Restaurants and motels were especially good enterprises for small, first-time business owners. They were relatively inexpensive to build and required little labor beyond immediate family members. Restaurants offered homemade local foods often cooked and served by the owners themselves.³ Motels along U.S. Route 66 were generally simple in design and often constructed by the owners. They “tended to be more functional than stylish and the construction reflected their low capitalization and utilitarian design.”⁴ This was largely due to the fact that they typically were the business venture of a married couple that had more sweat equity than capital to invest. Furnishings were minimal and in many cases secondhand items were used. Men generally tended to the general operation, construction and repairs, while women cleaned, cooked, and assisted in associated stores and gas stations.⁵ Both motels and restaurants were easy family businesses for many to start, and ones that offered great potential to those who were willing to work hard at it.

These types of small, “mom-and-pop” enterprises were sprinkled up and down U.S. Route 66 in the 1930s. Their plan and form varied with each individual owner’s tastes, interests, and available capital. More often than not, restaurants and motels were associated with one another as owners sought to take full advantage of the tourist dollar. Typically, owners started out with a gas station or restaurants and then expanded their trade into the motel business arena. Most of those who started these businesses “were not upwardly mobile or newly wealthy; they were property owners who were converting or diversifying their investments in response to temporary market constraints.”⁶

² Michael Cassity, “Route 66 Corridor National Historic Context Study,” (Route 66 Preservation Program, National Trails System Office – Intermountain Region, National Park Service, Santa Fe, New Mexico, 2004), 97-100.

³ *Ibid.*, 176.

⁴ John A. Jakle, Keith A. Sculle, and Jefferson Rogers, *The Motel In America* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1996), 167.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 63-69.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 64.

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The Belvidere Motel and Café exemplifies this commercial development along U.S. Route 66. Vincenzo "James" Cerolla (1876-1945) and Albina Cerolla (1881-1949), the husband and wife owners of the property, typified the U.S. Route 66 business owner. European immigrants, the Cerollas acquired the lots in Litchfield, Illinois in the late 1920s shortly after U.S. Route 66 was designated a national highway. Like many individuals, they saw the potential for opportunity along the highway having previously operated a boarding house and were familiar with running their own business. At this point in their lives, the husband and wife team were fifty-three and forty-eight years of age, and sought a line of work that would see them through retirement. The Cerollas started with a small gas station and gradually added a café and motel in the 1930s, expanding their business as finances allowed.⁷

The Cerollas erected a one-room, frame gas station at the edge of their property along U.S. Route 66 in 1929. The business was typical of early filling stations of this era in its size and placement. Located near the edge of the road, the station allowed motorists easy access to its single pump. The station sold oil, greases, and other items in addition to gasoline. The Cerollas initially operated the station as part of the Johnson Oil Refining Company of Chicago. The two-year lease initiated February 28, 1930, was contracted for \$720 per year. This company later became the Horton Oil Company.⁸

The Cerollas followed a common trend as the number of gasoline stations built in the United States soared in the 1920s reaching 143,000 by the end of the decade. This number continued to escalate in the following decades as well, reaching 231,000 by 1940.⁹ During the 1930s, the trend moved from independent ownership to ownership by the petroleum companies themselves. As this trend continued, gas stations became larger and offered more services. Individual owners found it hard to compete and many sought to expand their enterprise by also adding a restaurant and/or a motel to attract customers. In his recent study of Route 66, Michael Cassity reveals that independent gas stations often faded

unless it was possible to add a motel or a restaurant to the existing facilities, Where there was a gas station, and where there was a motel, there was increasingly likely to be a restaurant nearby, and in fact often it was a restaurant associated with the other two businesses.¹⁰

The Cerollas followed this typical pattern and constructed a new gas station and café in 1936. The gas station was of brick construction and designed in the "House" typology, common among gas station designs of the period (Figure 1).¹¹ The building reflected the influences of the Colonial Revival style in its symmetrical

⁷ "Cemeteries at Mt. Olive, Illinois, Macoupin County," (Staunton, IL: Macoupin County Genealogical Society, 1993); Nora A. March to Albena Sirola, August 30, 1929, Montgomery County Deed Book 160, Page 635 (Montgomery County Courthouse, Litchfield, Illinois).

⁸ Montgomery County Miscellaneous Records, Book 21, Page 451, February 28, 1930, and Book 22, Page 110, March 23, 1931 (Montgomery County Courthouse, Litchfield, Illinois).

⁹ John Margolies, *Pump and Circumstance: Glory Days of the Gas Station* (Boston: Bullfinch Press, 1993), 58.

¹⁰ 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), 175-176.

¹¹ John Jakle & Keith Sculle. *The Gas Station in America*, (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1994), 134.

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design and brick lintels and sills. The restaurant, initially known as Cerolla's Café, first appears in the Litchfield city directory in the autumn of 1936. It continued under this name until 1942, when the Cerollas changed the name to the Belvidere Café.¹² The building was constructed of brick and its overall design reflected utilitarian commercial forms of the period with arched canopies over the entrances, Craftsman style windows, and tile pent roofs over the windows on the main façade (Figure 1). The restaurant contained a large, well-lit dining room that contained a number of booths and tables as well as counter space. The Cerollas chose a modern Art Deco decorative theme for the interior in the café's counters, shelves, and booths.

The couple also built the associated Belvidere Motel around this same time. The motel was not listed in local directories, but its design and materials suggest a construction date of ca. 1936. Descendants of the Cerollas recall that the café and gas station were the focus of the family-run business and the motel was secondary to these operations.¹³ This was common of many such family businesses where a small motel was added to other operations in an effort to attract customers by offering an additional service. If tired and hungry travelers could get everything they needed in one stop – gas, food, and lodging – then they were more likely to choose these facilities. Motels in these instances were typically small structures located near the other businesses, but back off the road a bit for quiet and privacy. The original section of the Belvidere Motel fits this model. The building originally contained four units separated by automobile garages (Figure 4). This motel was remodeled into its present form into seven units by enclosing the garage bays. These units consisted of one room with an adjacent small bathroom. At the north end of the building was a laundry and storage room. In addition to the motel, the Cerollas also built a small dwelling on the property that was replaced ca. 1950 by the present dwelling.

As was also common, the family business was passed down to the next generation. Vincenzo "James" Cerolla passed away in 1945, and his wife, Albina, died in 1949. In her will, Albina Cerolla left the family business and property to their daughter Edith (1908-1984). Edith and her husband, Lester ("Curly") Kranich (1908-1999) continued to operate the gas station, café, and motel under the Belvidere name along U.S. Route 66 in Litchfield. Edith and Lester were married in 1929 and helped to operate the business with her parents. The couple lived on the premises and they were the primary managers and operators of the business. Their two children recall that Edith and Lester "did everything." Lester primarily ran the gas station while Edith managed operations of the café, which at one time had a revolving sign in front promoting "Chicken in a Basket." Again the motel was secondary to these other businesses, with most of their energies focused on the restaurant and filling station.¹⁴

The Belvidere Café was especially well-known during the 1940s and 1950s and was a popular stop along the highway. As one resident recalled,

¹² Telephone Directory, Litchfield, Illinois (Illinois Consolidated Telephone Company), 1936, 1937, 1940, 1941, 1942, 1944.

¹³ Interview with Jean Kranich Heyen, Springfield, Illinois, 14 December 2005.

¹⁴ Ibid.

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Litchfield, Montgomery County, Illinois

In a way I guess the Belvidere was the “Cheers” of its time. You know, “where everybody knows your name, and they’re always glad you came.” There was music, there was a small but adequate dance floor. Music may have been the juke box or a small combo brought in occasionally. And there was “Mary,” the gal who played the piano and sang little ditties. Mary was felt to be a sort of treasure at the Belvidere. No newcomer was long a stranger. It was just a fun place.¹⁵

Following his retirement Lester Kranich recalled that “Oh, it was busy in those days...when 66 still went by, you met people – you talked to them. This was the best place in town to eat and I’m not braggin.”¹⁶ Kranich employed local singer Mary Levy to entertain customers while his wife Edith became known for her roast beef, roast pork and fried chicken.

The hard work of the Kraniches proved successful enough to construct a new home on the property and expand the motel operation. During the early 1950s, the Kraniches razed the original Cerolla house that stood on the property and built a more modern dwelling and a garage. Around this same time, the couple decided to expand their lodging business and built two additional motel wings to the rear of the gas station. Identical in plan, these wings contained both one- and two-bedroom units and interiors with wood paneling and carpeted floors. The dwelling was designed in the Minimal Traditional style with a gable roof, interior brick chimney and incised corner entry porch. The two motel wings were built in utilitarian forms with gable roofs and large shed roof porches.

The addition of new motel units coincided with the large increase in traffic along U.S. Route 66 which occurred following World War II. The heavy traffic through Litchfield in the 1930s led to the construction of a new, four-lane bypass one block to the west of the original two-lane street through the community. Completed in 1940, this highway was at the rear of the Kranich’s property and they reoriented the entrance off this route with new signs.

Like the majority of businesses associated with Route 66, the livelihood of the enterprise was dependent upon the road and its traffic. And, as did numerous other businesses along the historic route, the Kranich’s operations suffered as use of the road faded in the late twentieth century. Interstate 55 west of Litchfield was completed in the 1970s and many of the businesses along U.S. Route 66 in the community closed their doors. The gas station was the first to close in the early 1970s. Edith and Lester continued to operate the Belvidere Café and Motel until they retired in 1975.¹⁷ The property changed hands several times during the 1980s with the current owner, Yo Cho Hamric purchasing it in 1989. Ms. Hamric uses the dwelling on the premises as a

¹⁵ Helen Magas, “Route 66 here sparkled with activity of all kinds,” News-Herald, Litchfield, Illinois, 17 September, 1991.

¹⁶ “Road food flourished when the highway was the destination,” *Heartland Magazine*, 5 February 1993.

¹⁷ Obituaries, *Montgomery County News*, October 1984, October 1999, (on file at the Montgomery County Library, Litchfield, IL.

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Belvidere Motel and Café
Litchfield, Montgomery County, Illinois

rental property and occasionally rents a room in the ca. 1950 wing of the motel. The remaining motel wing, café, and gas station are currently used for storage.

All of the buildings of the Belvidere Motel and Café retain their original configuration, design, and materials with little or no alterations. Together the property strongly reflects the private commercial development that occurred on U.S. Route 66 throughout its history and the evolution of the family-owned businesses along the highway. While many motels, cafés, and gas stations have been documented along U.S. Route 66 in Illinois, the Belvidere Motel and Café is one of the best preserved complexes which includes all three of these property types. The combination of motels, restaurants, and gas stations were once common along U.S. Route 66, but these complexes soon disappeared the U.S. Route 66-era of mom-and-pop enterprises gave way to the interstate and corporate commercial chains. Located along the historic roadbed of U.S. Route 66, the Belvidere Motel and Café stands as a testament to the history of the early- to mid-twentieth century roadbed and the commercial development that it inspired.

For additional information, see the Multiple Property Documentation Form, "The Historic and Historic Archaeological Resources of Route 66."

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Belvidere Motel and Café
Litchfield, Montgomery County, Illinois

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Litchfield, Montgomery County, Illinois

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundary for the Belevidere Café, Motel and Gas Station Complex includes lots 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 in Block 13 on the accompanying Montgomery County, Illinois tax map 15-5C. This map is drawn at a scale of 1" = 100'. The property is bounded on the north by an adjacent property line, on the west by the ca. 1955 right-of-way of U.S. Route 66, on the south by Clyde Avenue, and on the east by the right-of-way of Sherman Street (Old Route 66).

VERBAL BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary includes all lots historically associated with the nominated property. Lots 3 through 7 in Block 13 in Litchfield were purchased by the Cerollas in 1929, who then developed the Belevidere Café, Motel and Gas Station Complex on these lots. The lots have not been divided and remain under single ownership.

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Belevidere Motel and Café
Litchfield, Montgomery County, Illinois

PHOTOGRAPHS

Photos by: Thomason and Associates

Date: December 14, 2005

Location of Negatives: National Park Service, Santa Fe, NM

- | | |
|-----------------|--|
| Photo 1 of 13: | Belevidere Motel sign and Motel, west wing, view to the northeast. |
| Photo 2 of 13: | Gas station, café and residence, view to the northwest. |
| Photo 3 of 13: | Gas station, view to the southwest. |
| Photo 4 of 13: | Café, view to the northwest. |
| Photo 5 of 13: | Café interior, view of the original booths on the south wall. |
| Photo 6 of 13: | Cafe interior, view of the original counter on the west wall. |
| Photo 7 of 13: | Motel unit, south wing, view to the northwest. |
| Photo 8 of 13: | Motel unit, south wing, view to the northeast. |
| Photo 9 of 13: | Motel unit, west wing, garage and residence, view to the north. |
| Photo 10 of 13: | Motel unit, west wing, view to the northwest. |
| Photo 11 of 13: | Original door, motel, west wing. |
| Photo 12 of 13: | Interior view of room in the west wing of the motel. |
| Photo 13 of 13: | Residence, view to the northeast. |

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Belevidere Motel and Café
Litchfield, Montgomery County, Illinois

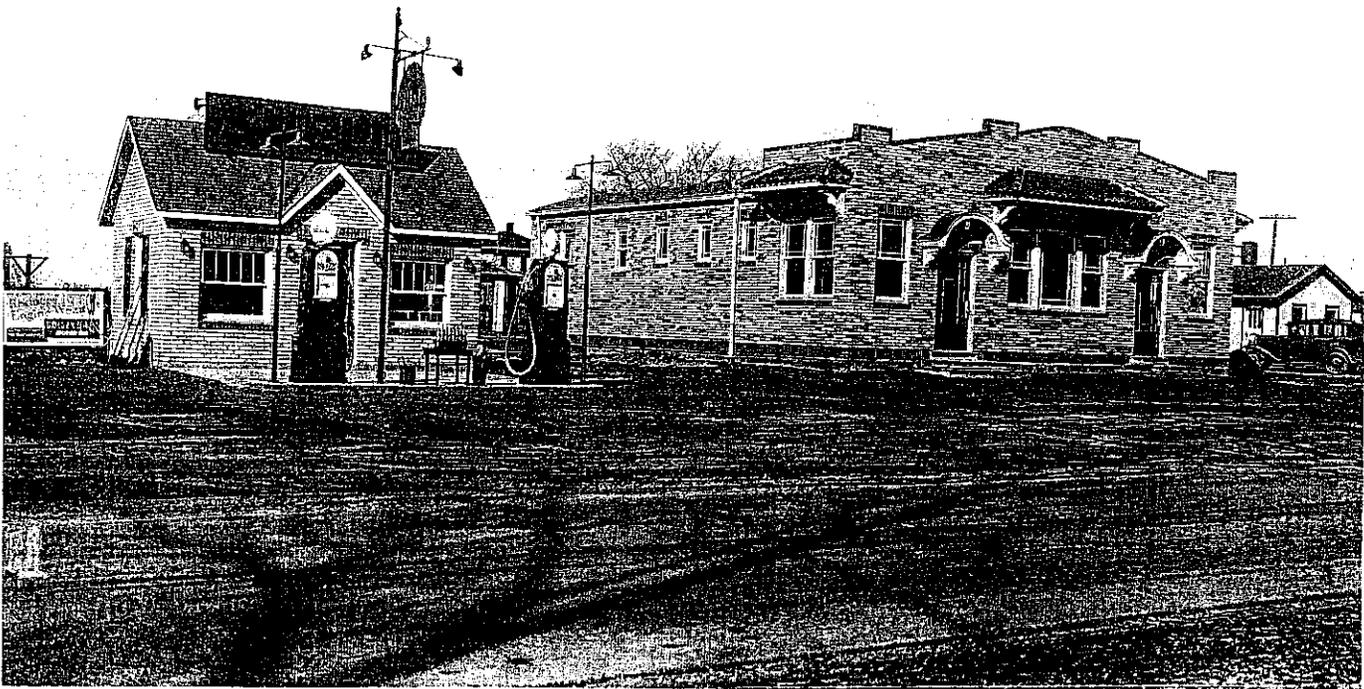


Figure 1: Belevidere Café and Shell Gas Station, August of 1938 (Photo courtesy of Jean Kranich Heyen).

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Figure 2: Vincenzo and Albina Cerolla, and James and Jean Kranich, ca. 1943 (Photo courtesy of Jean Kranich Heyen).

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Belevidere Motel and Café
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Figure 3: Lester "Curly" and Edith Kranich in the Belevidere Café, ca. 1950 (Photo courtesy of Jean Kranich Heyen).

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Belevidere Motel and Café
Litchfield, Montgomery County, Illinois

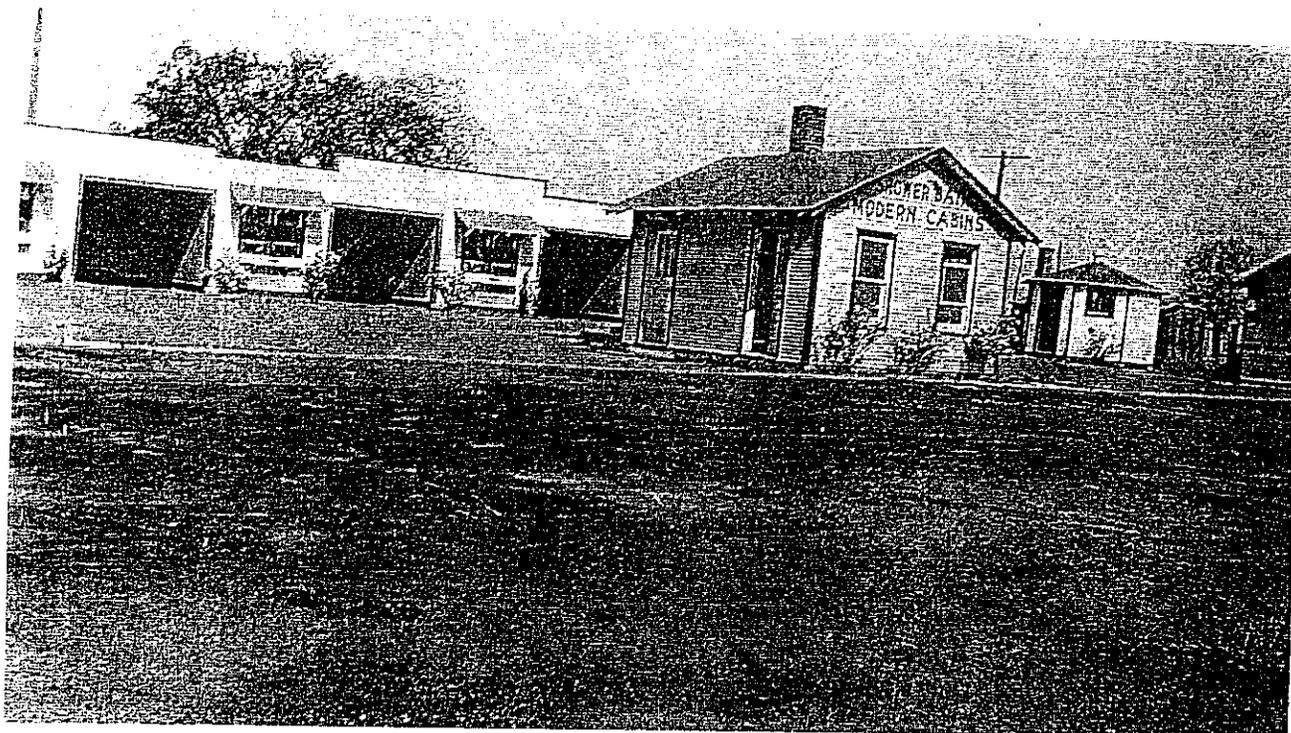


Figure 4: Belevidere Motel prior to remodeling, ca. 1940 (Photo courtesy of Jean Kranich Heyen).

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Litchfield, Montgomery County, Illinois

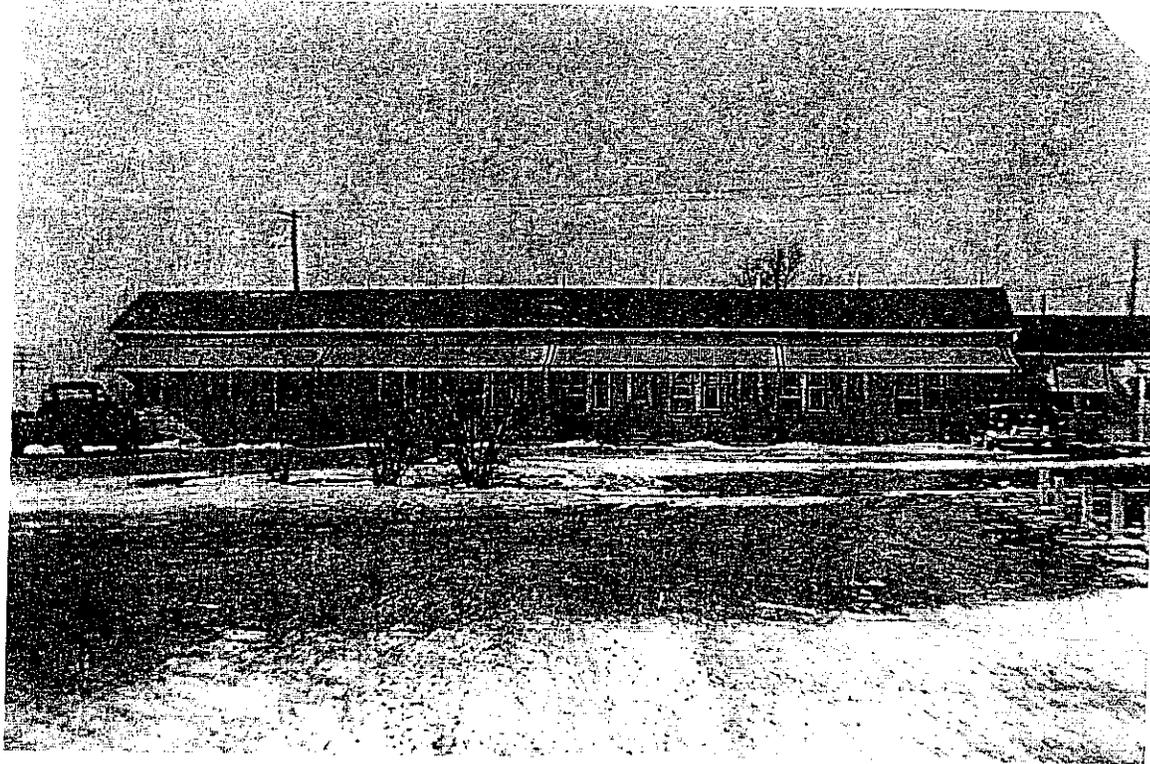


Figure 5: Belevidere Motel after remodeling, ca. 1955 (Photo courtesy of Jean Kranich Heyen).

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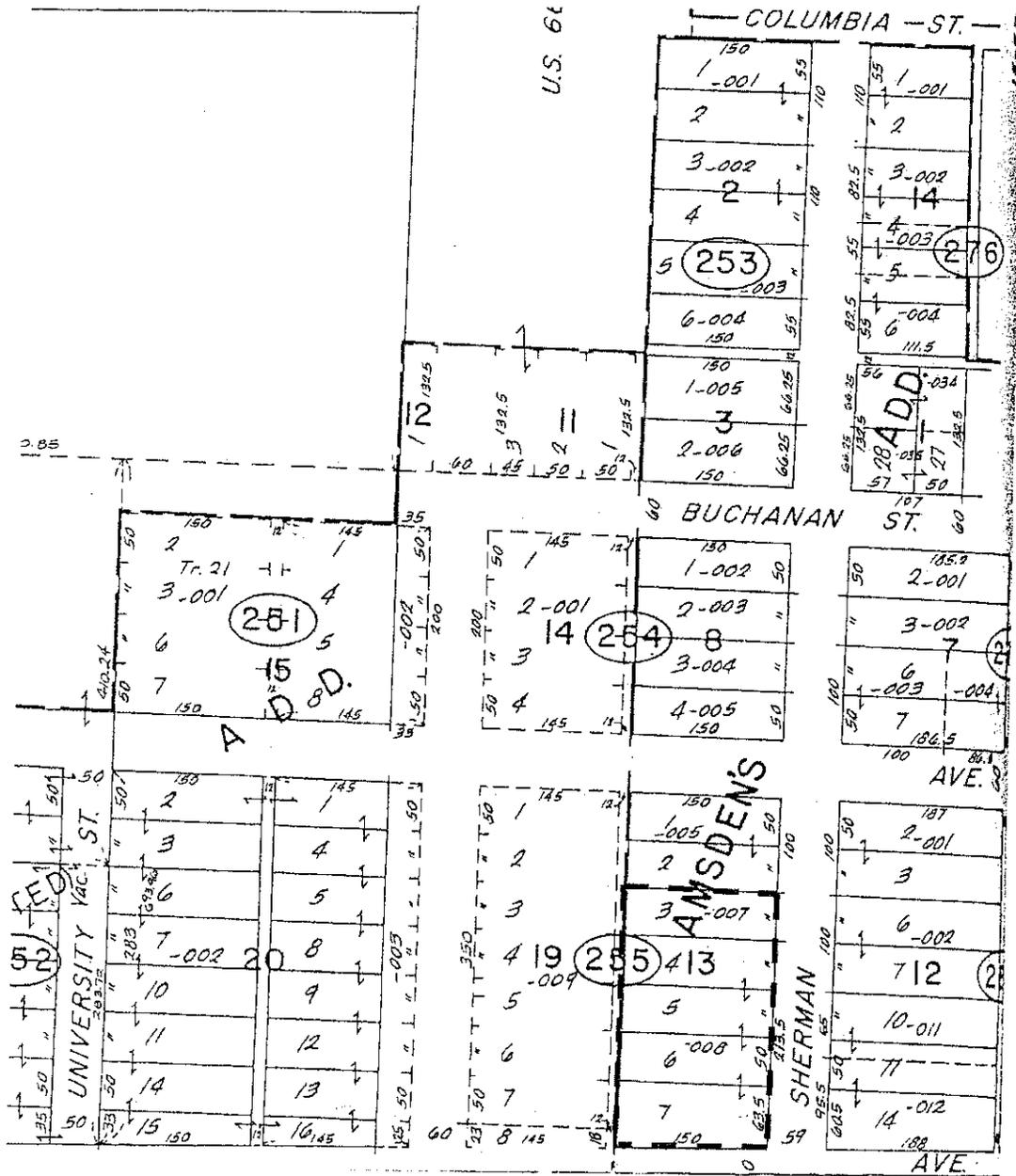


Figure 6: Parcel Map with Historic District Boundary.

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Litchfield, Montgomery County, Illinois

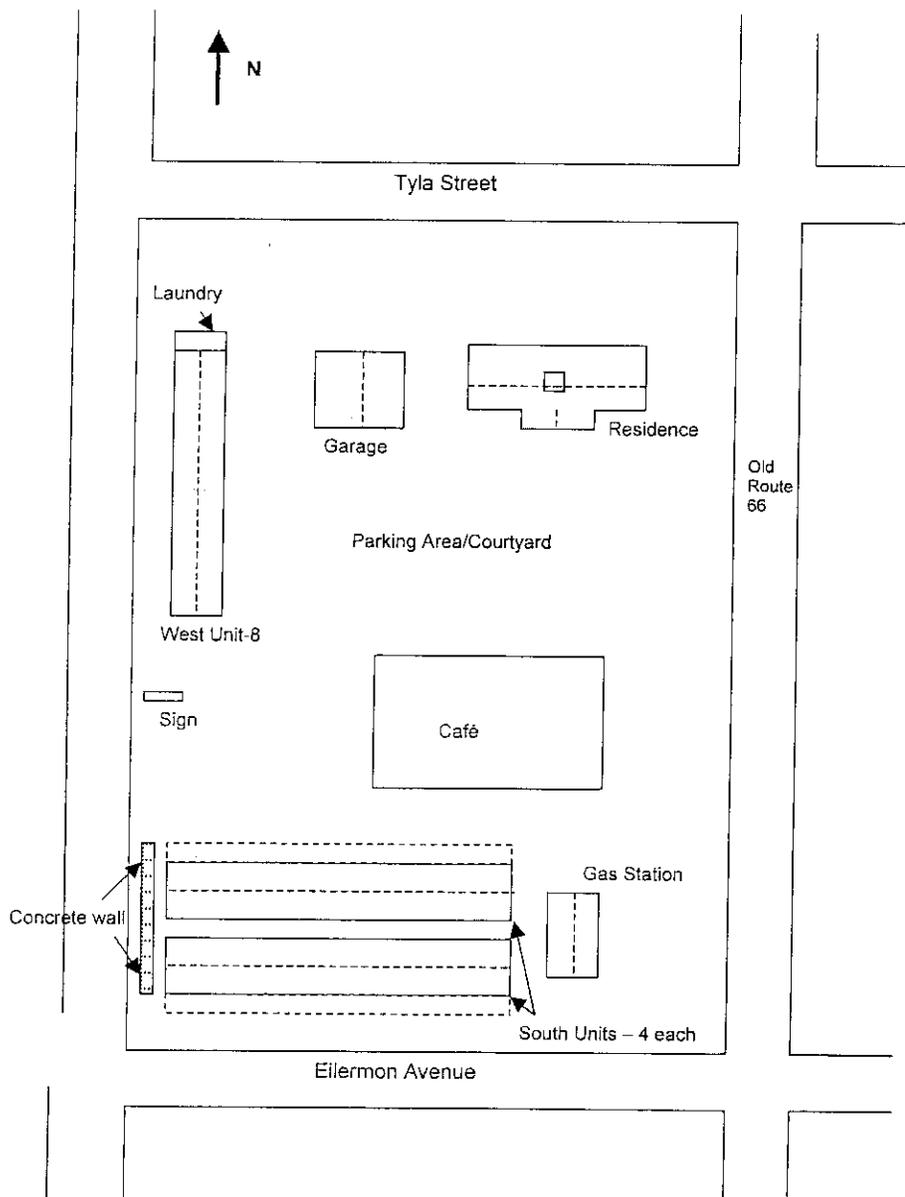


Figure 7: Belevidere Café, Motel and Gas Station site plan.

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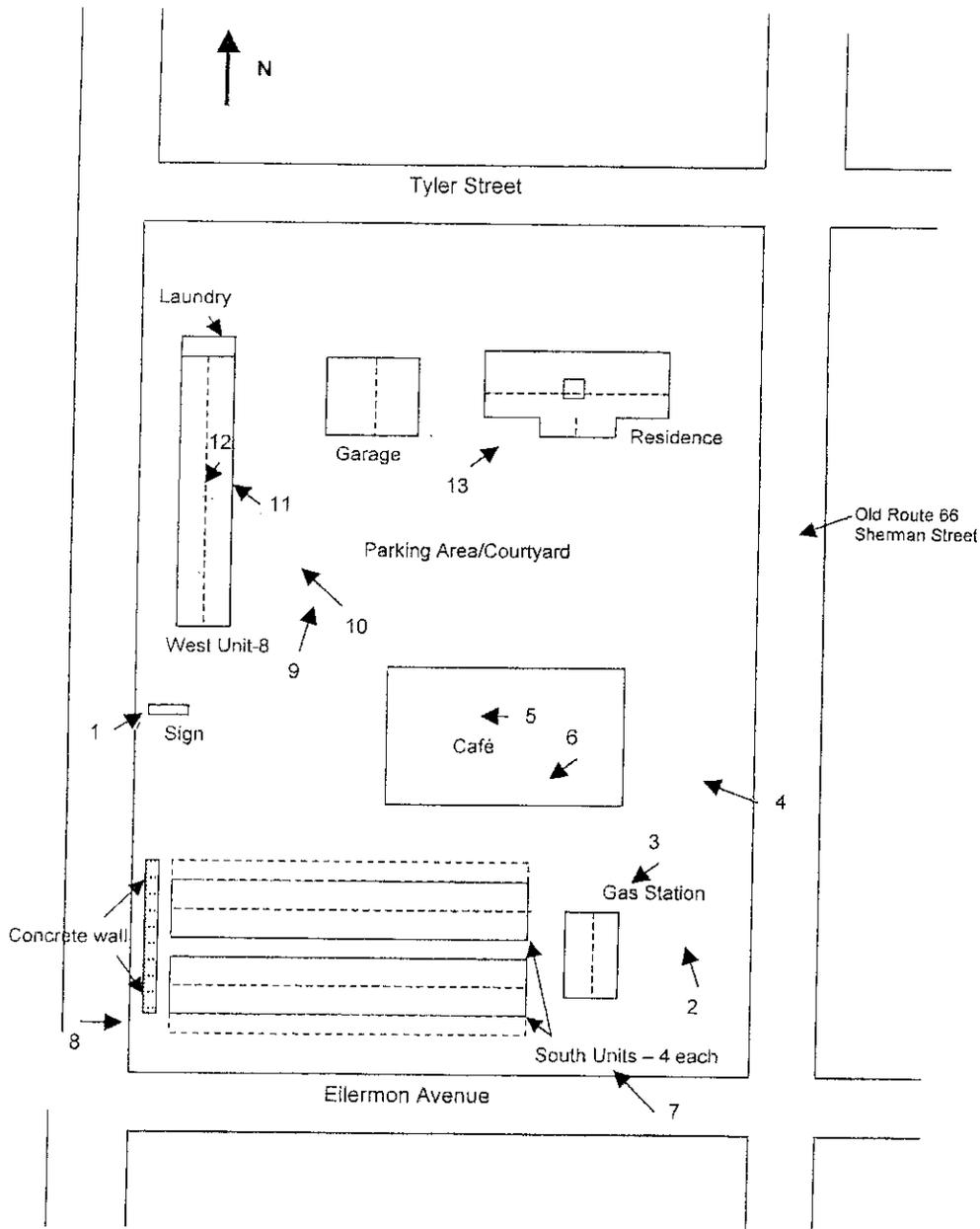


Figure 8: Belevidere Café, Motel and Gas Station Site Plan with Photo Key.

LISTED, 2/21/07
(Florida's New Deal Resources MPS)

FLORIDA, PALM BEACH COUNTY,
Northboro Park Historic District,
Bounded by 40th N, Flagler Dr., 36th St. and Broadway, West Palm Beach, 07000059, LISTED,
2/20/07

FLORIDA, ST. JOHNS COUNTY,
Hastings Community Center,
401 N. Main St.,
Hastings, 07000057,
LISTED, 2/21/07

IDAHO, BLAINE COUNTY,
Ketchum Ranger District Administrative Site,
131/171 River St.,
Ketchum, 07000005,
LISTED, 2/09/07

IDAHO, NEZ PERCE COUNTY,
Children's Home Finding and Aid Society of North Idaho,
1805 19th Ave.,
Lewiston, 07000090,
LISTED, 2/23/07

ILLINOIS, COOK COUNTY,
Home Bank and Trust Company,
1200 N. Ashland Ave.,
Chicago, 07000061,
LISTED, 2/21/07

ILLINOIS, COOK COUNTY,
Silhan, Mr. Robert, House,
3728 S. Cuyler Ave.,
Berwyn, 07000062,
LISTED, 2/20/07

ILLINOIS, MONTGOMERY COUNTY,
Belevidere Cafe, Motel and Gas Station,
817 Old Rte 66,
Litchfield, 07000060,
LISTED, 2/21/07
(Route 66 through Illinois MPS)

LOUISIANA, BEAUREGARD PARISH,
Hudson River Lumber Company General Manager's House,
411 S. Washington Ave.,
DeRidder, 07000068,
LISTED, 2/21/07

LOUISIANA, BEAUREGARD PARISH,
Sills House,
211 W. Fourth St.,
DeRidder, 07000067,
LISTED, 2/21/07