

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 Dell Rhea's Chicken Basket

other names/site number N/A

**2. Location**

street & number 645 Joliet Road

not for publication

city or town Hinsdale

vicinity

state Illinois

code IL

county DuPage

code 043

zip code 60521

**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]  
Signature of certifying official/Title

3-28-06  
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:

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:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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

Dell Rhea's Chicken Basket  
Name of Property

DuPage County, 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)

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> public-local       | <input type="checkbox"/> district               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> public-State       | <input type="checkbox"/> site                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal     | <input type="checkbox"/> structure              |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> object                 |

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

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

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

Historic and Architectural Resources of  
Route 66 Through Illinois

0

**6. Function or Use**

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

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

COMMERCE/TRADE: restaurant

COMMERCE/TRADE: restaurant

**7. Description**

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

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

No Style

foundation CONCRETE

walls BRICK

roof STEEL

other WOOD

**Narrative Description**

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

Dell Rhea's Chicken Basket  
Name of Property

DuPage 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.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

TRANSPORTATION  
COMMERCE

**Period of Significance**

1946-1956

**Significant Dates**

1946, 1956

**Significant Person**

(complete if Criterion B is marked)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Stoyke, Eugene F., Architect

**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.

**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, Santa Fe, NM
- Local Government
- University
- Other

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

Dell Rhea's Chicken Basket  
Name of Property

DuPage County, 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 421885 4621948  
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 August 3, 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 Patrick Rhea  
street & number 645 Joliet Road telephone 630-325-0780  
city or town Hinsdale state IL zip code 60521

**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

Dell Rhea's Chicken Basket  
DuPage County, Illinois

## DESCRIPTION

Del Rhea's Chicken Basket is located at 645 Joliet Road in Hinsdale, Illinois. Hinsdale is a densely populated community located fifteen miles southwest of downtown Chicago. The building was constructed in 1946, and was built on the south side of US Highway 66. In the 1960s, Interstate 55 was constructed directly south of the building and now forms its southern boundary. To the west, north and east of the building are commercial properties including offices, warehouses and other restaurants. Dell Rhea's Chicken Basket occupies an irregular shaped lot and faces Joliet Road, which was the original alignment of Route 66 during much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. On the lot is the restaurant, sign, and paved parking area. There are no other associated buildings or structures.

Del Rhea's Chicken Basket is a one-story brick building designed in a utilitarian commercial form in 1946. The building is composed of a large dining room, a lounge wing, and kitchen. In the basement are offices and food preparation and storage areas. The building has a concrete foundation, a flat steel roof, and an exterior of six-course common bond brick. On the main (north) façade is the primary entrance, which is located within an original vestibule that has aluminum and glass windows added circa 1970 (Photo 1). Doors leading from the vestibule into the dining room and lounge are original single-light glass and wood design. To the east of the entrance on this façade are nine original, single-light, glass and wood canted windows. These windows rest on a continuous concrete sill. Across the width of this continuous window bay is a canvas awning. Above the windows is an original stuccoed frame cornice. At the roofline is a parapet wall of original steel panels. The lounge wing of the building was built in 1956 and on the main façade are three original single-light, glass and wood canted windows. These windows rest on a wood sill. Above the windows is a wood cornice with recessed lighting. At the roofline of the lounge wing is concrete coping.

The east façade of the building has an original stepped brick chimney with concrete shoulders (Photo 4). On the south façade of the dining room are six original single-light wood and glass canted windows which rest on a continuous concrete sill. This façade has a projecting shed roof kitchen wing. The kitchen wing has two original windows on the east and south façades with structural glass blocks and brick sills. At the northeast corner of the kitchen is a brick flue. On the south façade of the kitchen wing is an entrance with a circa 1960 steel door. This façade also has a staircase leading to the basement storage level beneath the kitchen wing. The lounge wing has an original two-light aluminum and glass-canted window. This window rests on a wood sill. The west façade of the building has a curved wall and lacks fenestration.

In front of the building is a landscaped flowerbed beneath the window bays. Also in front of the building is an original metal sign, which rests on a steel post. This sign is inscribed with neon and says "Dell Rhea CHICKEN BASKET COCKTAIL LOUNGE."

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Dell Rhea's Chicken Basket  
DuPage County, Illinois

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The dining room has painted brick walls, carpeted floors and an original drywall ceiling. On the perimeter of the ceiling is a recessed ceiling which contains the HVAC ductwork and light fixtures. At the main ceiling are fans. On the east wall of the main dining room is random course, rock face stone. Inset into this wall is a concrete and brick fireplace with a smooth concrete surround and stone hearth. The interior of the lounge section has original diagonal and vertical wood paneling on the walls, an added acoustical tile ceiling and carpeted floor. The bar is original and has an oak parquet floor. Just off the lounge are restrooms which were upgraded and remodeled in 2003. The kitchen has its original brick walls and some original equipment such as its exhaust hoods and walk-in cooler.

Surrounding the building on all four sides is a paved parking lot. No other buildings or structures are associated with the property.

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Dell Rhea's Chicken Basket  
DuPage County, Illinois

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE - SUMMARY

Dell Rhea's Chicken Basket is eligible for the National Register under Criterion A in the areas of transportation and commerce for its historical association with Route 66. As the premier highway between Chicago and southern California, Route 66 was one of the most well-traveled highways in America during the early to mid-twentieth century. The traffic along the highway encouraged the development of businesses along its path such as restaurants and cafes. Dell Rhea's Chicken Basket reflects the type of private commercial development that occurred along Route 66 and it is one of only a handful of pre-1970 restaurants that have remained in continuous operation along the highway in Illinois. The restaurant has not been substantially altered since the lounge wing was built in 1956, and it retains integrity from its period of significance. The property is of local significance and its period of significance extends from its construction date of 1946, to its expansion and 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

Dell Rhea's Chicken Basket traces its history to a small lunch counter established inside a gas station in the late 1930s. Originally Illinois Route 4, the highway connecting Chicago with Joliet was designated as Route 66 in 1926, and this gas station was built in the midst of farmland on the south side of the road. Owner Erwin (Irv) Kolarik's business included not only gas and automobile service but he also established a lunch counter in the station. In order to improve his lunch counter business, Kolarik considered expanding his menu by adding new food items. According to oral tradition, two local farm women overheard Kolarik discussing his potential plan and approached him with an offer. The women had an excellent recipe for fried chicken that they thought would be a big seller. They offered to share the recipe with Kolarik and teach him how to cook the chicken, if he would purchase his birds from their farms. Kolarik agreed and the Chicken Basket was born.<sup>1</sup>

Traffic on Route 66 increased steadily in the late 1930s and early 1940s, and business at Kolarik's lunch counter also increased. Its location, just outside of the Chicago area and across the street from the Hinsdale airport, contributed to the flow of traffic and his success. As Kolarik's restaurant business prospered, he opted to do away with the automobile repair side of his operation and transformed the two garage areas into dining room facilities. The Chicken Basket continued to grow in popularity, and in the mid-1940s, Kolarik purchased adjacent land to build a brand new restaurant. This building, which remains the current restaurant today, was completed in the summer of 1946.<sup>2</sup> The original gas station, located on the lot to the east, is no longer extant.

<sup>1</sup> "History of the Chicken Basket," Dell Rhea's Chicken Basket Website, <http://www.chickenbasket.com>.

<sup>2</sup> Patrick Rhea, Personal Interview, Hinsdale, Illinois, 14 July 2005.

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DuPage County, Illinois

Kolarik hired Chicago architect Eugene F. Stoyke to design his new restaurant. Stoyke had an office on Michigan Avenue and designed numerous residences and commercial buildings in the city, from 1936 until his death in 1993.<sup>3</sup> He designed the restaurant in a rectangular plan with large canted windows and a flat steel roof. In front of the building Kolarik erected a large metal sign on a steel pole. The Chicken Basket became a well-known and favored stop along Route 66. Only about fifteen miles outside of downtown Chicago, the restaurant was a popular spot for travelers on their way in or out of the city. Another development that helped to boost the Chicken Basket's business and identity was its designation as a Blue Bird bus stop, a regional bus service. With its reputation for good food, specializing in fried chicken, the restaurant's business continued to grow. It began to offer live entertainment on weekends, and customers enjoyed watching small private airplanes land and take off at the Hinsdale airport across the street through the restaurant's large windows. The volume of business at the Chicken Basket soon required more chickens than the original two women could provide, and another local farmer became the supplier. This farmer was Stanley Helma, who had recently moved to the area. Helma's family became a familiar part of the Chicken Basket day-to-day operations, and it is Helma's grandson, Patrick Rhea, who owns the restaurant business today.<sup>4</sup>

Restaurants such as the Chicken Basket 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>5</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>6</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

<sup>3</sup> Christine Stoyke Linnell, Telephone Interview, Forest Park, Illinois, 20 July 2005. Ms. Linnell is the daughter of Eugene F. Stoyke.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Chester H. Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile, American Roadside Architecture* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1985), 196.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

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Dell Rhea's Chicken Basket  
DuPage County, Illinois

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 built with little capital and offered homemade local foods often cooked and served by the owners themselves.<sup>7</sup>

The Chicken Basket reflects this history of restaurant development along Route 66. A privately owned enterprise that initially developed as part of a gas station, the Chicken Basket grew from a simple lunch counter to a full-service restaurant. Its unique personality and character came from its individual ownership, and its distinctive menu and location. Owner Irv Kolarik boosted his business not only through his food, but also through various forms of advertising. Like many businesses of the period, he advertised through postcards and match covers (Figures 1-2). To attract customers in the winter, Kolarik flooded his roof with water and hired youths to ice skate on top of the building.<sup>8</sup> As the Chicken Basket's business increased a lounge wing was added in 1956.

In 1959, Kolarik heard of the proposed construction of Interstate 55 through the area. Fearing that it would hurt his business, Kolarik sold the restaurant to the Bei family but after a period of time ended up buying the restaurant back. Following the completion of the interstate through the area in 1962, business substantially decreased and a local bank foreclosed on the property. In 1963, the bank sold the restaurant to Delbert (Dell) Rhea of Chicago. Rhea was a well known businessman who managed the Stevens Hotel on Michigan Avenue and also served as the Executive Director of the Chicago Convention and Tourism Bureau.<sup>9</sup> Rhea felt that he could make the restaurant a success through continuing the basic food service, but also through additional advertising and using his business connections. Rhea, wife Grace, and son Patrick were able to attract new customers as the suburban population of Chicago increased in addition to attracting travelers to stop off the interstate. Over the next several decades Dell Rhea's Chicken Basket became a well known and successful family-owned restaurant.

<sup>7</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>8</sup> Rhea, Interview, 14 July 2005.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

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Dell Rhea's Chicken Basket  
DuPage County, Illinois

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Today, the restaurant continues to be operated by Patrick Rhea who took over the business following his father's death in 1992. The building has not been substantially altered since the 1950s and it retains much of its original design on both the interior and exterior. The business also boasts its original sign on the front of the building. Dell Rhea's Chicken Basket is a notable survivor of the businesses which opened along Route 66 in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century and it has become a landmark in Illinois for tourists on 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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Dell Rhea's Chicken Basket  
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## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- 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.
- "History of the Chicken Basket." Dell Rhea's Chicken Basket Website, <http://www.chickenbasket.com>.
- Liebs, Chester H. *Main Street To Miracle Mile, American Roadside Architecture*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1985.
- Linnell, Christine Stoyke. Telephone Interview, Forest Park, Illinois, 20 July 2005.
- Rhea, Patrick. Personal Interview, Hinsdale, Illinois. 14 July 2005.
- 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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Dell Rhea's Chicken Basket  
DuPage County, Illinois

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## VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundary for Dell Rhea's Chicken Basket includes all of Parcel 001 on Block 401, on DuPage County tax map 9-26D-E which is drawn at a scale of 1" = 200.' The property is bounded on the northwest by the right-of-way of Joliet Road, on the east by a property line, on the south by a vacated right-of-way of 79<sup>th</sup> Street.

## VERBAL BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary contains all property historically associated with Dell Rhea's Chicken Basket during its period of significance. No other buildings or structures are associated with this property.

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Dell Rhea's Chicken Basket  
Willowbrook, DuPage County, Illinois

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## PHOTOGRAPHS

Dell Rhea's Chicken Basket  
645 Joliet Road, Hinsdale, Illinois  
Photos by: Thomason and Associates  
Date: July 14, 2005  
Location of Negatives: National Park Service, Santa Fe, NM

- Photo No. 1: Main (north) façade and sign, view to the southeast.
- Photo No. 2: Main entrance, view to the east.
- Photo No. 3: East and south facades, view to the northwest.
- Photo No. 4: West and south facades, view to the north.
- Photo No. 5: Interior view of the dining room.
- Photo No. 6: East wall and fireplace opening.
- Photo No. 7: View of the lounge.

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Willowbrook, DuPage County, Illinois



Figure 1: Matchbook cover for Dell Rhea's Chicken Basket, ca. 1950, (Courtesy of Patrick Rhea).

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Willowbrook, DuPage County, Illinois

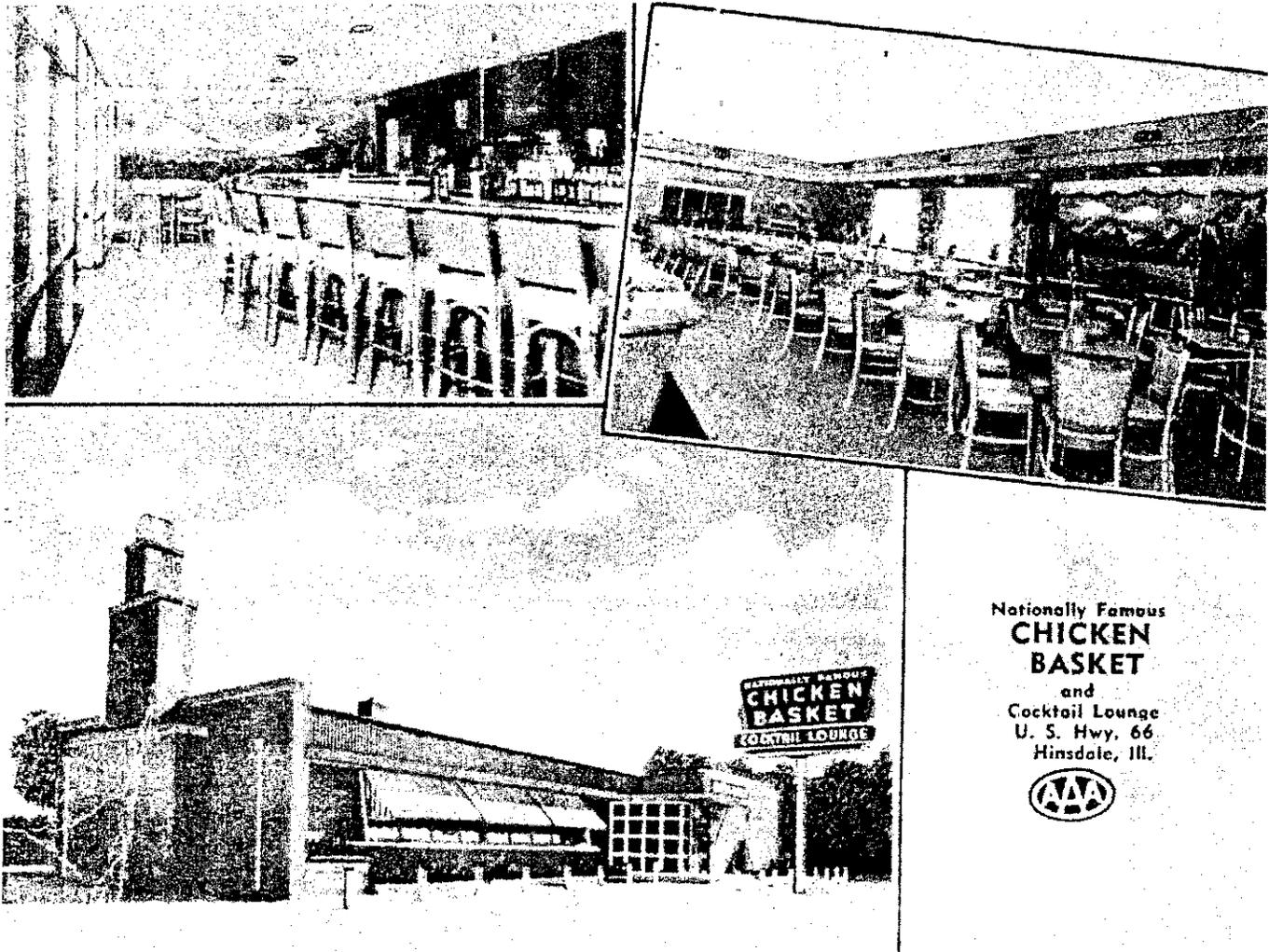


Figure 2: Dell Rhea's Chicken Basket postcard, ca. 1950, (Courtesy of Patrick Rhea).

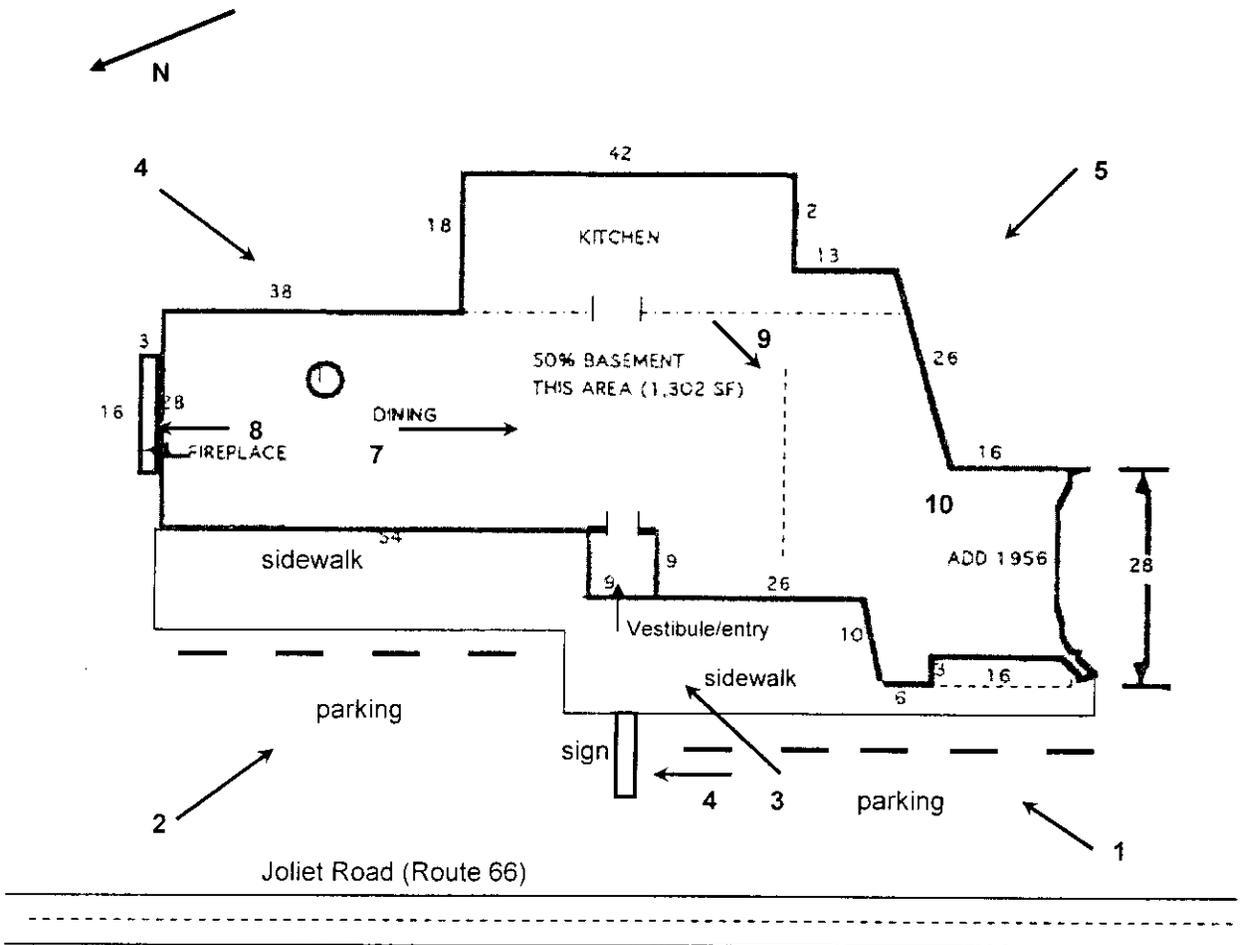


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Dell Rhea's Chicken Basket  
Willowbrook, DuPage County, Illinois



Map 2: Site Plan and Photo Key for Dell Rhea's Chicken Basket.

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)

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