

# 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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any 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 certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

## 1. Name of Property

Historic name Hotel Roberts

Other names/site number Hotel Parrish; KHRI # 151-145

Name of related Multiple Property Listing n/a

## 2. Location

Street & number 120 West Fourth Street

|     |
|-----|
| n/a |
|-----|

 not for publication

City or town Pratt

|     |
|-----|
| n/a |
|-----|

 vicinity

State Kansas Code KS County Pratt Code 151 Zip code 67124-2604

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,  
I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.  
In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:  
 national  statewide  local      Applicable National Register Criteria:  A  B  C  D

### SEE FILE

Signature of certifying official/Title Patrick Zollner, Deputy SHPO Date \_\_\_\_\_

Kansas State Historical Society  
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

## 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:  
 entered in the National Register  determined eligible for the National Register  
 determined not eligible for the National Register  removed from the National Register  
 other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Action \_\_\_\_\_

Hotel Roberts  
Name of Property

Pratt County, Kansas  
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 the count.)

|                                     |                  |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | private          |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | public - Local   |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | public - State   |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | public - Federal |

|                                     |             |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | building(s) |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | district    |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | site        |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | structure   |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | object      |

| Contributing | Noncontributing |              |
|--------------|-----------------|--------------|
| 1            | 1               | buildings    |
| 0            | 0               | sites        |
| 0            | 0               | structures   |
| 0            | 0               | objects      |
| 1            | 1               | <b>Total</b> |

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**  
**0**

**6. Function or Use**

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

Domestic: hotel  
Commerce/Trade: Specialty Store  
Health Care: Hospital  
   
   
   
 

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

Vacant/Not in use  
   
   
   
   
 

**7. Description**

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

Modern Movement: Art Deco  
   
   
   
   
 

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: concrete  
walls: brick  
concrete  
roof: not visible  
other: wood  
metal

Hotel Roberts  
Name of Property

Pratt County, Kansas  
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**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

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

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

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

Property is:

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance**

Community Planning and Development

Architecture

**Period of Significance**

1930-1959

**Significant Dates**

1930

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

n/a

**Cultural Affiliation**

n/a

**Architect/Builder**

Voigt, S. S./ Architect

Elson, Webb L./Builder

**Period of Significance (justification)**

The period of significance begins when the hotel was placed in service, 1930, and concludes ca. 1959, when the building and the affiliated hotel management company were sold, and the name changed to the Hotel Parrish. The building continued to function as a hotel into the 1970s.

**Criteria Considerations (justification)**

n/a

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.) **See continuation sheets**

Hotel Roberts  
Name of Property

Pratt County, Kansas  
County and State

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**  
 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 # \_\_\_\_\_  
 recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**  
 State Historic Preservation Office  
 Other State agency  
 Federal agency  
 Local government  
 University  
 Other  
Name of repository: Pratt County Historical Society, Pratt, KS

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** Less than one acre

**Provide latitude/longitude coordinates OR UTM coordinates.**  
(Place additional coordinates on a continuation page.)

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_  
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1 Latitude:37.643050° Longitude: -98.740694° 3 \_\_\_\_\_  
Latitude: \_\_\_\_\_ Longitude: \_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_  
Latitude: \_\_\_\_\_ Longitude: \_\_\_\_\_ Latitude: \_\_\_\_\_ Longitude: \_\_\_\_\_

**Verbal Boundary Description** (describe the boundaries of the property)  
The west 77 feet of Lots 13 and 14, Block 21, Original Town of Pratt, Kansas.

**Boundary Justification** (explain why the boundaries were selected)  
The boundaries include all land currently and historically associated with the hotel.

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Deb Sheals with Andrea Herries  
organization Historic Preservation Consulting date November, 2014  
street & number 29 South Ninth Street Ste. 208 telephone 573-874-3779  
city or town Columbia state MO zip code 65201  
e-mail debsheals@gmail.com

**Property Owner:** (complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO)

name \_\_\_\_\_  
street & number \_\_\_\_\_ telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
city or town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ zip code \_\_\_\_\_

**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 listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Hotel Roberts**

**Pratt County, Kansas**

Name of Property

County and State

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Photographs**

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each digital image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to a sketch map or aerial map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

**Photograph Log**

Name of Property: **Hotel Roberts**

City or Vicinity: **Pratt**

County: **Pratt County** State: **Kansas**

Photographer: **Deb Sheals**

Date

Photographed: **June and July, 2014**

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 18: Southwest corner
- 2 of 18: West wall
- 3 of 18: North wall
- 4 of 18: East wall
- 5 of 18: Southeast corner
- 6 of 18: Upper facade (south wall)
- 7 of 18: Lower facade (south wall)
- 8 of 18: Upper facade (south wall)
- 9 of 18: Detail, east bay of facade
- 10 of 18: Lower facade, looking west
- 11 of 18: Lobby, looking south
- 12 of 18: Lobby, looking north
- 13 of 18: Plaster detail, north wall of lobby
- 14 of 18: West retail space, first floor, looking south
- 15 of 18: Second floor, looking east
- 16 of 18: Third floor, looking north to elevators
- 17 of 18: Fifth floor, northeast corner
- 18 of 18: Seventh floor, looking west

**Figures**

**Figure Log:**

- 1. Aerial photo map from Google Earth, with Coordinates. Accessed August 2014
- 2. Aerial photo map of the area, from Google Earth. Accessed August 2014
- 3. Architect's Rendering of the building, 1929.
- 4. Photo of the Hotel, ca. 1940s.
- 5. Current photos, window and doors, interior views
- 6. First Floor Plan
- 7. Second Floor Plan.

**Hotel Roberts**

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Name of Property

8. Typical Upper Floor Plan.
9. Map of Downtown Pratt, 1911.
10. Other Early Hotels in Pratt.

**Pratt County, Kansas**

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County and State

National Register of Historic Places  
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|--|
| Hotel Roberts                            |
| Name of Property                         |
| Pratt County, Kansas                     |
| County and State                         |
| n/a                                      |
| Name of multiple listing (if applicable) |

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**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources, if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

**Summary**

The Hotel Roberts, at 120 West 4th Street in the town of Pratt, Pratt County, Kansas, is an eight-story hotel with gold brick walls, a concrete structural system and a flat roof. It occupies a level corner lot at the intersection of West Fourth and Jackson Streets. The Art Deco style building was constructed in 1930 and served as a hotel into the 1970s. It has a rectangular footprint and is placed in the southwest corner of its lot. The south-facing facade and the shorter west sidewall are close to the streets, leaving the east and north edges of the lot open. The symmetrical facade is divided into narrow vertical bays which are accented with Art Deco style stone panels.<sup>1</sup> The bays are defined by changes in the plane of the front wall, with a multi-faceted center section, and side bays that step back slightly. The center bays are topped with a stepped parapet and large ornamental stone panels. All four walls of the building are lined with even rows of windows; the window sashes have all been removed, but the openings themselves are intact and in good condition. The lower south and west walls have large open storefronts that are outlined with flat stone trim. The storefronts are boarded over, but all retain some original components, including the main entrance to the hotel lobby, which is highly intact. That entranceway has early or original double doors, an arched fanlight, and wide sidelights, all of which are early or original. The lobby is also highly intact, albeit in poor condition. Original elements in that room include Art Deco style plasterwork, terrazzo flooring and a formal staircase to the upper floors. The flanking ground floor spaces feature early plaster walls, wood trimmed storefronts and terrazzo flooring. Upper floor finishes are in poor condition after years of water infiltration, but the original central staircase and most early elevator lobbies have survived. The only other resource on the lot is a modern shed located north of the hotel in the back part of the property. The shed is a non-contributing building; the hotel is a contributing building. Although the hotel building has been largely vacant since the 1980s and is in poor physical condition, it is intact and structurally sound, and it clearly conveys a sense of its time and place.

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**Elaboration**

The Hotel Roberts is located in the southern part of downtown Pratt. It is one block from Main Street, the primary north-south commercial artery of the area, and two blocks west of the Pratt County Courthouse. (See Figure 2.) The property is located midway between the paths of two early railways. Nine blocks south is the former path of the Santa Fe Railroad, and nine blocks to the north is the still-active right of way for the Union Pacific Railroad (formerly "Rock Island" Railroad). The Hotel Roberts is one of the

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<sup>1</sup> The term "stone" is used here as a generic term for the stone or stone-like architectural trim used on the building. Some of the components appear to be cast stone, while others could be of concrete or limestone.

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| Hotel Roberts                            |
| Name of Property<br>Pratt County, Kansas |
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tallest buildings in Pratt, and it is visible for many blocks in each direction. The nearby blocks of Main Street, by contrast, are lined with two- and three-story commercial buildings, and most properties close to the hotel contain one- or two-story buildings. (Photos 1-3.)

The hotel lot occupies the southwest corner of the block. It is bounded by W. Fourth Street on the south, Jackson Street on the west, and small alleys on the north and east. There is an open lot directly to the east, and to the north is the Pratt Municipal Building, a large two-story multi-function building which opened just a few months before the Hotel Roberts. The lot directly across the street to the west contains an open paved parking lot.

The facade of the hotel faces south to West Fourth Street, and the west side wall overlooks Jackson Street. The building sits directly at the edge of the sidewalk at each of those streets. The east side of the property contains a gravel parking lot, and an open area at the back is surrounded by a wooden privacy fence. (Photos 2-5.) Within the fenced area is a small modern shed which has a gable roof, and metal-clad walls. (The roof of the shed is visible in photo 2.) The shed, which measures approximately 8 feet by 12 feet, contains equipment for cellular antennae that are mounted on the roof of the building. It is a non-contributing building.

The hotel building has a rectangular footprint, with gold brick walls, stone accents, and a flat roof. The same type of rough multi-toned gold bricks were used for all four exterior walls, and each wall is topped with smooth stone coping. The bases of the south and west walls are faced with smooth stone panels, and similar stone is used for architectural accents throughout. The roof contains a small elevator penthouse, and two large rooftop signs. The signs are located close the east and west edges of the roof and angled so they can be seen from the north and south as well. (See Figure 1.) They are not original, but appear to have been installed before 1940.<sup>2</sup> The signs have large open metal supports, onto which are mounted neon channel letters. The west sign reads HOTEL, and the one on the east reads HOTEL PARRI. (The hotel was renamed the Hotel Parrish in 1959; both signs originally read HOTEL ROBERTS.) The signs are intact, but in poor condition. Several modern cellular antennae are mounted to the sign supports. (Photos 2 and 4.)

### Facade

The symmetrical facade of the hotel features a vertical composition which emphasizes its locally distinctive height. Variations in the plane of the wall create strong vertical lines which continue above the roofline into a stepped central parapet. (Photo 5.) The front wall is divided into seven narrow bays. The bays are defined by doors and storefronts on the first floor, and columns of windows and changes in wall surfaces on the upper floors. Although all of the windows of the building are missing sashes and have

<sup>2</sup> Historic photos show that they were not there when the building was new, but had been added by 1940. "Pratt City and County History Vertical File 5," and Tim Stucky, Pratt, Kansas: A Centennial View, 1884-1984, (Pretty Prairie, KS: Prairie Publications, 1984) 64.

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| Hotel Roberts                            |
| Name of Property<br>Pratt County, Kansas |
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| Name of multiple listing (if applicable) |

been covered with plywood for many years, most of the original frames remain, and the masonry openings are all intact. Most window openings feature original soldier-course brick headers and smooth stone sills.

The three bays in the center of the facade are the most highly ornamented. The wide flat center bay is flanked by slim projecting bays that are each just wide enough for a single column of windows. The center bay contains three single windows per upper floor, and a wide storefront entrance on the first floor. Large stone panels incised with stylized floral motifs typical of the Art Deco style are centered beneath each row of windows on the upper floors. A larger stone panel adorns the top edge of the central bay, which extends above the main roofline. (Photo 8.)

The ground floor doorway of the center bay is topped by a stylized stone cornice and surrounded by flat stone trim. The cornice includes a projecting band of trim faced with stylized scrolls, above flat panels that are incised with abstract geometric patterns. (Photo 7.) The doorway below the cornice, which has angled upper corners, contains a pair of wood and glass doors, large sidelights, an arched fanlight and a polygonal transom. (Photos 10, 11.) The doors and all associated framing are early and possibly original, and most of the openings in that doorway retain early glass as well. As is the case for all of the ground floor openings, the fanlight and transom is covered with modern metal panels and the lower openings are covered with plywood.

The flanking central bays, which are approximately 4 feet shorter than the center bay, are topped with similar stone panels. (Photos 6 and 8.) They each have a single recessed column of window openings, separated by carved stone spandrel panels. They also have elaborate single doorways at the first floor. (Photos 7, 9, 10.) Those doorways are topped by ornamental square stone panels and surrounded by stepped stone moldings. (Photo 9.) The stonework around the doorways is original and in good condition and there are some early framing members in the doorways, but the doors are modern and the transoms have been covered with thin sheets of metal.

The two end bays on each side of the facade have similar compositions, but simpler patterns of ornamentation. The plane of the front wall steps back a few inches at each side bay to create strong vertical lines between the different sections of the facade. The end bays all have even rows of windows on the upper floors, and storefronts on the first floor. The only applied ornament on the upper floors in those areas consists of narrow bands of pale stone above the eighth floor, and a simple round stone medallion centered in each bay. (Photo 6.) Each bay also has a band of stone trim at the second floor sill line which matches that used above the main entranceway.

The storefront openings at the ground level of each end bay have angled top corners and wide stone trim which matches that of the center doorway. High bulkheads below the boarded-over display windows are

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| Hotel Roberts                            |
| Name of Property<br>Pratt County, Kansas |
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faced with the same type of stone used on the surrounding walls. (Photo 7.) The display windows all retain some early framing, but little to no original glass has survived. (Photo 14.)

Each of the display windows is topped with a large transom area which is now covered with modern metal sheathing. It is not clear if those transoms were originally filled with glass. They all retain at least some of their original frames, but they show little evidence of having been built with stops or other molding which would accommodate panes of glass. The original architect's drawing of the building seems to show solid panels in those areas, and early photos show that most of the transoms were covered with signs, all of which invites speculation that they were never meant to serve as windows. (See Figures 3 and 4.)

Secondary Elevations

The side and back walls of the hotel are less ornate than the front wall. The west side wall, which faces Jackson Street, has a higher level of detail than the back and east walls. It is nearly flat, with four bays of windows on the upper floors and two large storefronts on the ground floor. (Photo 2.) The top edge of the wall is detailed to match the facade, with stone coping, a stone string course, and round stone medallions over each column of windows. The narrow outer window bays project slightly from the plane of the wall, but are otherwise unadorned. The lower west wall is also detailed to match the facade. There is a matching band of scrolled stone molding at the first floor sill line, and the two storefronts have the same type of stone trim used on the front storefront openings.

The east side wall is comparable to the west wall, except that it has no projecting bays, and there are no storefronts or architectural embellishments on the ground floor. (Photo 4.) It does have the same type of stone bands and medallions at the roofline. A small one-story rear ell on that side of the building has a flat brick wall and stone coping. There is also a single window opening on the first floor, which contains the only original window sashes left in the building. That window is boarded over on the outside, but the 6-over-1 window is visible from inside the building. (Figure 5.)

The wide back wall is flat, and like the east wall, adorned only at the roofline. (Photos 3 and 4.) The upper floors are filled with even columns of windows, and the lower floor has two larger window openings and a single boarded-over door. The wood door is uncovered inside the building; it has a six-light window above three horizontal panels. (Figure 5.) Part of the lower wall has been painted white, and marks on the wall at the level of the second floor indicate there was a roof of some sort attached to the wall at one point. A below-grade staircase near the windows leads down to a basement door. An original large square external chimney of matching brick is located just west of the stairs. (Figure 6.) The small rear ell has two slightly larger doorways, which are also boarded over. One is on the back wall of the ell, and the other is on its west side wall. The ell has no windows, and no applied ornamentation.

An open metal fire escape near the center of the back wall runs from the second floor to the eighth. There is a single exterior doorway on each floor to access the fire escape. Most of the doorways contain

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| Hotel Roberts                            |
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early or original metal fire doors. Each door has a four-light window in the top half, and a single raised panel in the bottom half. The fire escape is constructed of metal, with open treads and riser and slim pipe handrails.

The only addition that has been made to the outside of the building in the past 50 years is the installation of cellular antennas on the roof. Those antennas are served by two large bundles of wires mounted to the back wall--one is at the east edge of the wall and the other is next to the fire escape. (Photos 3 and 4.) The wires run from the roof down the wall and out to the modern equipment shed in the back lot.

Interior-First Floor and Basement

The interior of the first floor is in poor condition, but largely intact. There are three large rooms--the central lobby and two open side rooms. (Figure 6.) The wide central doorway of the facade opens to the lobby, which includes a formal staircase, elevators, and a reception counter. (Photos 11 and 12.) The front doors and almost all of the original dark varnished millwork of the entranceway are intact. (Photo 11.) The doors are partially boarded over and in poor condition, the other millwork in the opening is in fair condition and several of the openings retain early glazing. There are two elevators, located in the rear east corner of the lobby. One elevator door opens into the lobby and the second opens into a small hallway next to the front desk. The single panel elevator doors and cabs are in ruins, but the doorways and frames are intact.

The walls and beamed ceilings of the lobby are plastered. Elaborate Art Deco style trim runs along the edges of the beams and the ceiling, and there are matching plaster medallions and other ornaments over the front desk and on the side walls. The plaster is in just fair to poor condition; several areas have been damaged by years of roof leaks, and some of the applied ornamentation has popped off of the walls. (Photos 11 and 13.) The plaster ornament was all originally painted dull gold and muted jewel tones, but some of the finishes have been eroded by water infiltration. Most of the plaster ornament features stylized flowers and leaves, and a large panel above the front desk includes depictions of fruit. (Photo13.)

The floor of the lobby and the treads and risers of the L-shaped staircase are all of terrazzo, which is intact and in fair to good condition. The terrazzo has black, white and gold flecks, in a gray base. There is also an early or original Art Deco style ceiling fixture; like the rest of the finishes, it is intact but in poor condition. The staircase has a delicate curved metal handrail that has a dull gold finish which matches that of the ceiling fixture. (Photo 12.)

The side rooms of the ground floor are simple open rooms, with beamed ceilings and large rectangular support posts. The west room has a few minor partitions near the back wall; all appear to be modern. (Figure 6.) The storefronts in both rooms have the same type of wood trim used for the front entranceway, and most also have the same type of dark varnished finish. (Photo14.) One storefront, at the north side of the west wall, has painted woodwork. All of the storefronts are boarded from the

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exterior; the openings are all intact but none appear to have retained their original display windows. Most have no glass at all, and a few have newer glass and framing. The front display windows on the east side are filled with large wood casement sashes which may be early but are probably not original. As noted above, the transoms do not have glass and it is not clear if they ever did. Other finishes in those rooms include unadorned plastered walls and ceilings, and terrazzo floors.

The basement is reached via a set of stairs which aligns with the stairway between the lobby and the second floor. It is divided into several large rooms, which originally housed support space such as laundry and housekeeping areas. There is a boiler room in the northwest corner. All of the rooms are generally unfinished, with concrete floors and painted concrete walls and ceilings.

Interior-Second Floor

The second floor of the hotel has a small lobby which provides access to the elevators, the stairs to the first floor, and a second set of stairs which links floors two through eight. (Figure 7. and Photo 15.) The stairs to the upper floors are constructed of poured concrete, and have open metal handrails that are similar to those on the lobby stairs, although of a simpler design. (Photo 18, typical upper floor staircase.) The elevator doors on this floor and all others are of painted metal, and each has a single recessed panel. (Photo16.)

Historic descriptions indicate that the second floor originally contained a banquet room and the manager's apartment, and may have had guest rooms as well. Although the floor plan appears to have been changed over the years, the likely location of the banquet room is indicated by the use of terrazzo flooring. The southeast section of the second floor has the same type of terrazzo flooring used in the first and second floor lobbies, indicating its original use as a banquet room (or rooms). Almost all other flooring in the upper floors of the building is unfinished concrete, which appears to have been originally covered by carpet. A few former bathrooms retain some floor tiles.

Although only a few interior doors have survived on the second floor or the floors above, almost all of the exterior window trim remains in place and in fair condition, and many rooms retain at least some original baseboards. (Photos 15 and 17.) Most existing historic wood doors have single recessed panels which match those used for the elevators. (Photo 16.) The surviving door and window trim throughout the building is similar to that used around the storefronts, in configuration as well as color and finish. Most are finished with a clear dark varnish; a few rooms have painted woodwork.

Interior-Floors Three Through Eight

The upper floors of the hotel have sustained significant water damage over the years, and many of the plaster walls there have literally dissolved into piles of dust after prolonged exposure to water. (Photo 18.) As would be expected, water damage is more extensive on the higher floors, and the eighth floor has almost no partitions or interior finishes. Additional damage was done when walls were removed during

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failed attempts to redevelop the property. The concrete structure of the building is solid however, and the central staircase and elevator core are intact, as are most of the walls around the doors to the back fire escape. (The elevator penthouse may have limited water infiltration in that part of the building.) As a result, the primary circulation areas of the upper floors are, if not fully intact, at least evident.

Each floor was built with a T-shaped corridor. A wide hallway running north and south serves as an elevator lobby and provides access to the fire escape via a small vestibule with an arched doorway. Those vestibule are intact on almost every floor, and the north south hallways survive on approximately half of the floors. A longer east-west hall contains the staircase. The south side of the staircase was originally open to the hallway on floors three through eight, but some were later enclosed with modern stud walls. The stairs are all still in place, as are most of the original railings and some of the flanking walls.

Although most of the walls for the hotel rooms and baths have been removed during remodeling projects, or have fallen apart due to water damage, marks on the floors and ceilings indicate the original wall locations in many areas. Guest rooms were arranged around the exterior walls of the hotel, to provide natural light and ventilation to each room. All or most appear to have had small private bathrooms. The eighth floor of the building, which contained a hospital for much of the 1930s, may not have been built with individual rooms; there are no walls in that area now.

Condition and Integrity

The long-vacant building can best be described as battered but reasonably intact. It has seen remarkably few exterior alterations, and the most important interior spaces in the building have also survived. There have been no additions or changes to the footprint or the rooflines, and all exterior finishes are intact and in good condition. The character-defining Art Deco stonework of the facade, and all original patterns of fenestration are clearly in evidence. Although almost all of the window sashes are missing, the original frames and masonry openings are intact, as are the distinctive storefronts and doorways on the lower street elevations. The most prominent entranceway, the door into the lobby, is highly intact.

That doorway leads to what is arguably the most important interior space--the hotel lobby. The lobby is in poor condition, but does not appear to have ever been remodeled, and all surviving finishes are early or original. The interior spaces of the upper floors have admittedly not fared as well, but the historic circulation spaces are at least partially intact, and the building clearly reflects its long tenure as a hotel.

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### Narrative Statement of Significance

(Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

#### Summary

The Roberts Hotel, built in 1930 at 120 West Fourth Street in Pratt, Kansas, is the largest and most highly styled historic hotel in Pratt. It is locally significant under National Register Criteria A and C, in the areas of Architecture and Community Planning and Development. Construction of the hotel was initiated by the Pratt Chamber of Commerce, which formed a committee in the late 1920s specifically to facilitate the construction of a large new hotel. Seen as a potentially valuable asset for the community, the hotel was financed in part through a public subscription campaign, and constructed on land provided by the Chamber of Commerce. The hotel was owned and operated by the Pratt Hotel Company, which hired Wichita architect S. S. Voigt, and Kansas City contractor Webster L. Elson to design and build the hotel building. Contractor Webb Elson not only supervised the rapid construction of the "fire-proof" building, he was a founding member of the Pratt Hotel Company, and he retained an ownership interest in the property throughout the period of significance. Architecturally, the building is significant as an early and sophisticated example of the Art Deco style in central Kansas. The hotel opened as the Hotel Roberts in 1930, and continued under that name until 1959, when it was purchased by Monte Parrish and renamed the Hotel Parrish. The period of significance begins with construction, in 1930, and ends in 1959, when the property changed hands.

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#### Elaboration

Pratt, Kansas, population 6,835, is the seat of Pratt County, which is located in south central Kansas. Pratt was founded in 1884 by businessmen from the nearby town of Iuka, which had been designated the Pratt County seat in 1880. Although civic leaders of Iuka expected their town to develop into a regional trade center once it became the county seat, they were disappointed to learn in 1884 that the first railroad to be built in the area planned to bypass their town. The Kingman, Pratt, and Western Railroad had announced that tracks would instead follow of a route near the Ninnescah River and through the rival town of Saratoga.<sup>3</sup>

Knowing that rail service was vital to the progress of the community, civic leaders were forced to make drastic changes. Businessmen from Iuka bought land and laid out "Pratt Center" just north of the planned path of the new railroad. Many Iuka businesses soon packed up and moved six miles south to the new town site. One historical account stated that

Hotels, livery stables, general stores, drug stores, lumber companies, and legal and medical professionals which had hung their shingles in Iuka opened their doors in Pratt Center. Many

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moved their buildings from luka, some put up new, larger structures. Calling itself an 'extraordinary infant,' Pratt Center immediately became an important commercial center...<sup>4</sup>

In November of 1886 Pratt welcomed the first train of the Kingman, Pratt, and Western Railroad, which later became the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad.<sup>5</sup> In August 1887, a second railroad company--the Rock Island Railroad, built tracks on the north edge of the community. (Figure 9.) Pratt soon became a division point for the Rock Island Railroad, which meant the establishment of new facilities for division officers, dispatchers, and other staff, as well as a terminal for freight and passenger crews, and a new roundhouse. In 1913 a third railroad, the Anthony Northern, established a terminal at Pratt.<sup>6</sup> As foreseen by luka businessmen in the 1880s, the railroads come to play a vital role in area commerce, and they were for many years the largest employers in Pratt. By the late 1920s, for example, the Rock Island Railroad alone had 900 local employees, in a town of just over 6,300 people.<sup>7</sup>

Railroad service provided the expected economic boon for Pratt, but the town leaders did not rely solely on the railroad for economic security and growth. About one year after the move, on August 13, 1885, residents of Pratt Center submitted to the Pratt County board of commissioners a proposal to move the county seat from luka to Pratt. A dramatic battle with rivaling town Saratoga ensued, but in 1888 Pratt was officially voted in as the county seat.<sup>8</sup> The county seat saw steady growth, and by 1900, Pratt had a population of just over 1,200.<sup>9</sup>

The new century brought continued prosperity and a remarkable period of expansion. By 1910, Pratt was home to more than 3,300 people and showed few signs of slowing down. Business from the railroads was supplemented by state fish hatchery which was established in 1903, a light and ice company, and a large grain mill and elevator. Increased tourism from events such as the county fair and horse races, and a strong retail trade also contributed to economic growth.<sup>10</sup> In the late 1910s, the Pratt County Oil and Gas Development Company began selling leases, launching a healthy local oil and gas industry.<sup>11</sup>

Downtown Pratt grew with the local economy. Main Street became a busy commercial center, and the business district spread to adjacent streets. A large new brick county courthouse was erected one block

<sup>3</sup> Stucky, 2-3.

<sup>4</sup> Stucky, 13.

<sup>5</sup> Stucky, 6.

<sup>6</sup> Stucky, 6-7.

<sup>7</sup> Stucky, 7, and "Pratt, Kansas," [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pratt,\\_Kansas](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pratt,_Kansas), accessed July 2014.

<sup>8</sup> Stucky, 13-15.

<sup>9</sup> All population figures here and below are census figures cited in "Pratt, Kansas," [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pratt,\\_Kansas](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pratt,_Kansas), accessed July 2014.

<sup>10</sup> A. C. Tracy, comp. *Chronicles of Pratt and Pratt County, Kansas*, (Pratt, KS: Pratt Commercial Club, 1911; Reprint Pratt County Historical Society, 1993) 5, and Stucky, 25-30.

<sup>11</sup> Stucky, 63.

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east of Main Street in 1910.<sup>12</sup> A map of the town published by the Sanborn company in 1911 shows a densely developed commercial center, with one- two- and three-story buildings along Main Street. Businesses in operation by 1912 included a steam laundry, an opera house, 2 newspapers and three banks.<sup>13</sup>

The 1920s brought continued prosperity, and by 1930, Pratt had almost as many residents as it does today, with a population of 6,322. Public services had grown along with the local economy. The city began paving streets with brick around 1911, and by 1920 there were 20 miles of brick streets in Pratt. City residents also had access to a well-established telephone company, free mail delivery, a public water system and an airport.<sup>14</sup>

The local economy was so strong in the late 1920s that area residents paid little heed to the stock market crash of 1929. As one local history noted, "Pratt barely blinked....there wasn't time to sit down and ponder the ramification of Wall street dreams gone sour--the dreams were still very sweet in Pratt."<sup>15</sup> Public and private investment continued unabated throughout 1930. The Peoples Bank undertook a major expansion project, a large new movie theater, the Barron, opened on Main Street, and the Ne-Hi Bottling Company began work on a new bottling facility.<sup>16</sup>

The City of Pratt also completed a large new Municipal Building located just north of the lot now occupied by the Hotel Roberts. The Municipal Building, which opened in March 1930, included room for city offices and a large auditorium. The auditorium was designed to be used by the general public and to accommodate what one local history described as "the many conventions which were asking to come to Pratt."<sup>17</sup> One city official was quoted as saying that Pratt had been passed up as a site for the Southwest Poultry Association's annual convention for lack of accommodations, and assured voters that the public expenditure would be worth it to "move our town forward to keep step and a little in advance of our neighbors."<sup>18</sup>

"Pratt's New Two Hundred and Fifty Thousand Dollar Hotel "

The Municipal Building project was no doubt related to a very public effort by the Pratt Chamber of Commerce to see a major new hotel built in downtown Pratt. The Chamber of Commerce formed a special hotel committee and began laying the groundwork for a hotel project in the late 1920s, and by 1929

<sup>12</sup> Tracy, 2.

<sup>13</sup> Frank W. Blackmar, ed. Kansas: A Cyclopedia of State History, Embracing Events, Institutions, Industries, Counties, Cities, Towns, Prominent Person, Etc. Vol. 2. (Chicago: Standard Publishing Co., 1912) 495.

<sup>14</sup> Blackmar, 495, and Stucky, 40.

<sup>15</sup> Stucky, 64.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Gertrude Gillam and J. R. Gray, Comp, A History of Pratt: Kansas Centennial Edition, (Pratt, Kansas: Pratt County Centennial Commission, 1961) 9.

<sup>18</sup> Stucky, 64.

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they had secured a lot and engaged an architect. The *Pratt Union* reported on October 16, 1929 that the "contracts have been signed, the land purchased, the stock salesmen are in the field, and the plans and specifications almost complete for Pratt's fine new two hundred fifty thousand dollar hotel."<sup>19</sup> The newspaper noted that the hotel site was located just south of the "fine new community building," and that the building was expected to include everything "that goes to make a modern hotel complete."<sup>20</sup>

The hotel project was big news in town, and the *Pratt Union* ran almost weekly updates from the time the project was announced in October 1929 until the grand opening celebration in September 1930. That level of coverage was probably at least partly due to the influence of the *Union's* editor, S. P. Gebhart, who became president of Pratt Hotel Co. in late December, 1929.<sup>21</sup> Gebhart was a leading area businessman who moved to Pratt from Iuka in 1888 and played a prominent role in the civic affairs of Pratt until his death in 1935. A former teacher, he was involved in education, supported and organized the first Pratt County fairs, served as president of the Pratt Mortgage and Investment Company, and became editor of the *Pratt Union* in 1896.<sup>22</sup> He was well-known for his public spirit; one historical account said that there "was not a thing of public nature which this community has which was not built or at least 'pushed' by 'Geb' as his friends called him."<sup>23</sup>

That public spirit no doubt guided Gebhart's participation in the hotel project, which he and the rest of the committee clearly expected to be a benefit for the whole community. Articles printed in the *Union* even before he became president of the hotel committee went to special pains to point out that the new hotel was not expected to take business away from the town's existing hotels: "We wish to remind you that...judging from the results of other cities...this new hotel will in no way injure the trade of the hotels now running at this place."<sup>24</sup> It was also frequently mentioned that the hotel committee members were involved in the project more for public benefit than personal gain, and readers were encouraged to support the project: "If you are for your home town, help push for success. If you want to drag behind other cities of the country, knock as hard as you can."<sup>25</sup>

Gebhart and the other members of the committee promoted the hotel and kept the public informed throughout the construction project. Every change in design or proposed amenities was described in the *Union*, and a front page article published November 6, 1929 included a large rendering of the final design, titled "Pratt's Big New Modern Hotel." (Figure 3.) That article noted that the committee hoped to see the hotel ready for occupancy in the spring. Another published in February 1930 mentioned that the

<sup>19</sup> "Pratt's New Two Hundred Fifty Thousand Dollar Hotel," *Pratt Union* 16 Oct. 1929.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> "Gebhart Heads Hotel Company," *Pratt Union* 25 Dec. 1929.

<sup>22</sup> Tracy, 35, and Stucky 20-21.

<sup>23</sup> Stucky, 20-21.

<sup>24</sup> "The New Hotel," *Pratt Union* 23 Oct. 1929.

<sup>25</sup> "Pratt's New Two Hundred Fifty Thousand Dollar Hotel."

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construction of the Municipal Building and the hotel together were expected to lure conventions and bring "many people to our fine little city."<sup>26</sup>

The hotel committee also asked citizens of Pratt to help finance the project, through a subscription drive.<sup>27</sup> The committee set a goal to raise \$50,000 through subscriptions, which was expected to cover one fifth of the construction cost. The group was no doubt inspired to start the drive by the experiences of other small towns in the state. Several other Kansas towns had recently been able to raise funds for hotel development through similar drives, including Coffeyville and Chanute. Coffeyville promoters raised more than \$75,000 in 1924 to construct the Hotel Besse, and citizens of Chanute supplied \$35,000 to help with the construction of the Tioga Inn.<sup>28</sup> Pratt promoters found equal success, and in March, 1930 they announced the names of fifty new stockholders in the Pratt Hotel Company, each of which had invested \$1,000.<sup>29</sup>

Although the Chamber's hotel committee was active in the promotion of the project, all real estate transactions were done by the Pratt Hotel Company, which had been chartered on October 19, 1929. The Hotel Company owned the property and operated the hotel throughout the period of significance. Unlike the Chamber hotel committee, which was composed of Pratt residents, officers of the Pratt Hotel Company were all from other towns in Kansas. The original charter was signed by 5 directors: Frank H. Wight, Kansas City; W. L. Elson, Kansas City; C. H. Brooks, Wichita; Howard T. Fleeson, Wichita; and H. T. Horrell, Wichita.<sup>30</sup>

The Hotel Company was likely formed specifically to develop the hotel, and the members of the company may not have expected to be involved with the project much past the opening day. That was almost surely the case for director Webster Laurence Elson, a commercial builder from Kansas City who also served as the general contractor for the construction project. Elson's company built the eight story hotel building in just six months time. They were able to begin pouring concrete in the coldest part of the year (January) by erecting canvas walls around the job site and heating the space within. The workers also heated all of the materials that went into the concrete which formed the structure of the building, and covered all new concrete with eight inches of hay after it was poured to give it time to cure properly.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>26</sup> "Pratt's Big Hotel Climbing Higher and Higher," Pratt Union 12 Feb. 1930.

<sup>27</sup> "New Hotel," Pratt Union, undated clipping of an advertisement sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce. The ad included names of the committee members: Dr. P. K. Gatson, A. S. Farmer, Walter Pedigo, Dr. A. H. Atkins, S. P. Gebhart and Mitchell Baston.

<sup>28</sup> National Register nominations--Besse Hotel, Coffeyville and Tioga Inn, Chanute.

<sup>29</sup> "Boosters---for the New Hotel," Pratt Union 12 Mar. 1930.

<sup>30</sup> "Charter: Pratt Hotel Company," Greene County Deed Records, Misc. Book 85, 61-63.

<sup>31</sup> "Hotel Parrish Construction Launched Thirty Years Ago," clipping on file with the Pratt County Historical Society, ca. Jan. 1960. W. L. Elson was interviewed for that article.

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The weekly updates in the *Pratt Union* show that the building went up at an impressive rate. By April, the concrete structure for all eight floors had been poured, and the building was almost completely enclosed. The same article noted interior spaces were finished from the ground floor up, and that plasterers were working on the first floor at the time while carpenters had made it up to the 6th floor.<sup>32</sup>

As the new hotel began to take shape, the Pratt Hotel Company decided to engage the general public in the selection of a name. In February 1930, the hotel company launched a naming contest, complete with cash prizes. The project was met with much enthusiasm--the committee had hoped to receive around 2,000 votes, and received some 3,000 suggestions. The name Gebhart received the most votes, but S. P. Gebhart withdrew his name from consideration, so the company settled on Hotel Roberts. The new hotel was named for Forrest Roberts, who had recently entered into an agreement to manage the hotel for a period of 15 years. Roberts and his father-in-law E. T. Poland had signed a 15 year lease on the hotel in late 1929.<sup>33</sup>

The hotel first accepted guests in early June, just six months after Elson's crew began excavating the site.<sup>34</sup> The newspaper reported that although they were receiving guests, the building was not quite finished, with just five floors ready for occupancy, but the rest were due to be complete soon. When the rooms were finished, workers turned their attention to the support spaces, which included a restaurant, a drug store and a barber shop.<sup>35</sup> Once they were able to put the finishing touches on the commercial spaces, the Hotel Company celebrated with a grand opening which included an open house and a banquet.<sup>36</sup> By the time the open house was arranged, the hotel had been in service for several weeks and was enjoying a brisk business. The newspaper reported in August that the hotel had lost income in June but had begun to turn a profit in July and had enjoyed high occupancy rates ever since, including one night when 126 guests occupied the establishment's 104 beds.<sup>37</sup>

### Architecture of the Hotel Roberts

For a building constructed in a small rural town just a few years after the Art Deco style came in to its own, the Roberts Hotel building presents a notably unified expression of Art Deco ideals. It was designed by Sigfried Samuel Voigt, a German immigrant who moved to Wichita with his family as a teenager. He lived in Wichita for most of his life and had been working as an architect there for at least a decade when he designed the Hotel Roberts.<sup>38</sup> It was Voigt who supplied the drawing of the hotel that was featured in the

<sup>32</sup> "Hotel Roberts Still Going Higher," 2 Apr. 1930.

<sup>33</sup> "Our New Hotel Going With a Rush," *Pratt Union* 18 Dec. 1929.

<sup>34</sup> "New Roberts Hotel," *Pratt Union* 11 June 1930.

<sup>35</sup> "Hotel Roberts Still Going Higher," 2 Apr. 1930.

<sup>36</sup> "Our Formal Opening, Friday Evening, Sept. 5. " *Pratt Tribune* 4 Sept. 1930.

<sup>37</sup> "Roberts Hotel," *Pratt Union* 22 Aug. 1930.

<sup>38</sup> U. S. Census records and Wichita City Directories, accessed on Ancestry.com, July-August 2014.

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*Pratt Union* in late 1929. (Figure 3.) The building appears to have been built very much as it was drawn, with the exception of minor alterations to ground floor storefronts, which were divided into smaller units.

The Art Deco style was widely used for commercial and civic architecture in America in the 1920s and 30s, with isolated examples continuing into the 1940s. Although designs in the style began appearing many years earlier, the origins of the title "Art Deco" go back to a 1925 exhibition in Paris, the *Exposition Internationale des Art Decoratifs et Industriels Modernes*, which celebrated modern design in a wide range of subjects.<sup>39</sup> The term Art Deco itself was generally not used until later in the century and it came into common use in 1968, with the publication of Bevis Hillier's book of the same name.<sup>40</sup>

Art Deco is one of two early "modern" movements which were in vogue in the early decades of the twentieth century. Art Deco scholar David Gebhard refers to the two schools of thought at the time as high style "modernist" or International Style, and popular "Moderne," which he divides onto the closely related Art Deco and Streamline Moderne sub-styles. Architects and designers from both schools of thought shared a desire to emphasize the future rather than the past, including a disdain for exact copies of elements taken from historic architecture. The literature for the 1925 Paris exposition, for example, stated that "reproductions, imitations and counterfeits of ancient styles will be strictly prohibited."<sup>41</sup>

Art Deco has also been referred to as Jazz Moderne, or Zigzag Moderne, titles often used when the style was in vogue in the 1920s. The Art Deco movement was very widespread, and applied to all facets of design, including the decorative arts, industrial design and architectural interiors. In architecture, the style was utilized for everything from giant skyscrapers to modest apartment buildings, although it did not gain widespread favor for buildings until the late 1920s. It is worth noting that one of the earliest iconic Art Deco style buildings in the county, the Chrysler Building in New York, was built the same year as the Hotel Roberts.<sup>42</sup>

Defining characteristics of the Art Deco style vary somewhat according to the author discussing it, but there are some common principals. There is an overall vertical emphasis, and futuristic as the buildings appear to be, most use classical patterns of composition. And, as the name implies, ornament or decoration is always present, and most often of a stylized or geometric nature.

Voigt's design for the Hotel Roberts incorporates all of those characteristics. The distinctive vertical massing of the hotel's facade is very typical of Art Deco buildings of the time, and the hotel resembles a scaled down version of a metropolitan Art Deco skyscraper of the period. Classical elements of the composition include strict symmetry as well as a classical three-part division of the exterior into base, shaft

<sup>39</sup> John C. Poppeliers, et. al. *What Style Is It?* (Washington, D.C.: Preservation Press, 1984) 88.

<sup>40</sup> Barbara Capitman, et. al., *Rediscovering Art Deco, U. S. A.*, (New York: Viking Books, 1994) 1-2.

<sup>41</sup> Poppeliers, 88.

<sup>42</sup> David Handlin, *American Architecture*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1985) 187-188.

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and embellished upper walls. And, not surprisingly, it is the use of ornament that best defines this as an Art Deco building. The patterns of the ornamental panels found on the interior and exterior of the building exemplify Art Deco ideals, with geometric and highly stylized botanic figures.

While it is likely that many if not all of the ornamental panels were pre-fabricated, Voigt deserves credit for the way they are incorporated into the design of the building, especially on the exterior walls. The use of recessed stone reliefs for spandrel panels in the center bays of the facade strongly reinforce the vertical composition of that area, and the oversized panels at the center of the upper facade enhance the overall composition of the facade as well as the surface of the walls.

Local and National Hotel Development

The Hotel Roberts was the largest hotel ever built in Pratt, and one of the last hotels of any size to be constructed there. Hotels played an early and important role in Pratt's economy. Train passengers created a strong demand for lodging as soon as the town was founded, and the community's position as a regional trade center brought overnight visitors from the surrounding countryside as well. One of the largest early hotels in Pratt was the Briggs Hotel, which opened ca. 1900 and occupied the upper floors of a large commercial building at Main and Fourth Streets for more than 70 years.<sup>43</sup> (See Figure 10.) The Briggs Hotel occupied the lot directly east of the Hotel Roberts until 1971, when it was demolished. Another notable early lodging business, the Grier Hotel, opened next to the Rock Island Railroad depot in 1908. The Grier Hotel was one of the first lodging businesses in town which included a public dining room, known locally as the "Grier Eating House."<sup>44</sup> By 1916, overnight visitors had a choice of at least six different hotels in downtown Pratt.<sup>45</sup>

Hotel development in Pratt followed statewide and national trends. Although hotels were a common part of the American landscape at the dawn of the 20th century, the American hotel industry had only been in existence for a few decades when Pratt was founded. It was not until around 1800 that the concept of combining overnight lodging with full housekeeping and dining services began to develop, and 1829 before the first modern hotel opened for business. Prior to that time, commercial lodging in America and Europe consisted mostly of inns which offered rooms and sometimes communal meals, all of which were of varying quality, and few of which came with any additional services. The Tremont Hotel, which opened in Boston in 1829 is often described as the first true hotel. According to one history of the hotel industry:

The first hotel that was ever invented, the *Tremont*, opened in Boston, Massachusetts, on 16<sup>th</sup> October, 1829.... It was an American claim that there is as big a difference between the old inn

<sup>43</sup> Sanborn maps and Figure 10.

<sup>44</sup> Tracy, 11.

<sup>45</sup> City Directory of Pratt, Kansas 1915-1916, (Pratt, KS: Tribune Publishing Co. Inc., 1916.)

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and the modern hotel as between a broom and a vacuum cleaner; that the modern luxury hotel is as much an invention as the sewing machine and that it was an American invention.<sup>46</sup>

The Tremont was an instant success, and soon imitated throughout America and Europe. Hotels became a standard feature in communities across the country almost overnight. The spread of railroad service had a profound effect upon the growth of the hotel business in America, especially in frontier situations. Railroad companies recognized the advantage of offering cross-country travelers good quality food and lodging, and often operated their own hotels and restaurants, or made deals with local businesses who were interested in running hotels and restaurants nearby. The Grier Hotel in Pratt was typical of that trend; it was located less than fifty feet from the passenger depot of the Rock Island Railroad.

Hotels came to be seen as a symbol of prosperity and a direct reflection of the economic well-being of the host community. As one history put it, as "the railroads spread westward across the continent, new cities grew at junction points. With new cities came new chambers of commerce that realized the need for a grand hotel to demonstrate enterprise and faith in the future."<sup>47</sup> That trend continued into the 1920s, as the national economy boomed and the growing popularity of the automobile provided a new source of travelers. One description of that period noted that Chambers of Commerce and other groups encouraged hotel development in their towns "not only out of self-interest but also to bolster civic pride, for no town or city could prosper without a modern hotel..."<sup>48</sup>

Many Kansas communities agreed with that statement; civic groups successfully launched hotel building programs in a number of nearby towns in the 1920s, and several of those have since been listed in the National Register of Historic Places. They include the Besse Hotel in Pittsburg, built 1926, listed 4/16/2008; Broadview Hotel in Wichita, built 1922, listed 6/19/2009; Broadview Hotel, Emporia, built 1923, listed 11/22/2008; Hotel Dale, Coffeyville, built 1924, listed 1/31/2008; Tioga Inn, Chanute, built 1929, listed 2/23/1990.<sup>49</sup>

#### Hotel Operation 1930-1959

The early success of the Hotel Roberts may have been short-lived. As it turned out, the Pratt Hotel Company may have been better served to choose another name suggested during the early naming contest--"The Elson," after contractor and Hotel Company officer W. L. Elson. Although Mr. Roberts helped get the hotel furnished and opened, and managed it for a time after the grand opening, his tenure proved to be much shorter than expected. Elson had to take over management of the business just three

<sup>46</sup> Arthur White, Palaces of the People: A Social History of Commercial Hospitality, (New York: Taplinger Publishing Company, 1968) p. 129.

<sup>47</sup> Henry End, Interiors Book of Hotels & Motor Hotels, (New York: Whitney Library of Design, 1963) 5.

<sup>48</sup> John A., Jakle, Keith Sculle and Jefferson S. Rogers, The Motel in America, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996) 25.

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| n/a                                      |
| Name of multiple listing (if applicable) |

years later, and he continued in that job until the late 1950s.<sup>50</sup> Elson was probably not involved in the day-to-day management of the hotel, since he continued to live and work as a contractor in Kansas City, but he retained his post as an officer of the Hotel Company until 1959.<sup>51</sup> He also appears to have been active in the Pratt Chamber of Commerce over the years, as he is included in a photo of Chamber members that was taken in 1951.<sup>52</sup>

It is likely that the hotel business fell flat as the effects of the Great Depression began to be felt in the mid-west, leaving the Pratt Hotel Company unable to find buyers for the large new hotel. They were not alone in that predicament. A nationwide boom in hotel construction during the 1920s had created a glut in the hotel market that would have been difficult to address even without the economic struggles of the 1930s. The Hotel Roberts survived the Depression, however, and with help from Elson and numerous mortgages on the property, it served as a landmark hotel well into the twentieth century.<sup>53</sup>

The property also benefitted from non-hotel income, which may have helped them weather the lean years of the Depression. The building almost always housed at least one restaurant which catered to the general public as well as hotel guests. The Hotel Roberts Coffee Shop occupied a space there in the 1930s and other articles mentioned a Roberts Grill. City directories and other historic sources also show that the top floor of the building had an unusual tenant for much of the 1930s. The Community Hospital was established on the eighth floor of the building in 1932, complete with an operating room and an x-ray machine.<sup>54</sup> The hospital may have operated there until 1950, when the new Pratt County Hospital opened; the 8th floor is still labeled as a hospital on the 1950 Sanborn map of the building.<sup>55</sup>

Elson and the other directors of the Hotel Company finally sold the property in 1959, nearly 30 years after the grand opening celebration. The hotel was a civic icon throughout the time it was operated by the Pratt Hotel Company and it became a popular gathering place over the years. It was included in a list of "landmarks" in a local history of Pratt which was published in 1961, with the notation that the Hotel Roberts had long been "a source of pride and satisfaction to the people of Pratt."<sup>56</sup>

1959 to Present

<sup>49</sup> Kansas State Historic Preservation Office, "National and State Registers of Historic Places," [http://www.kshs.org/natreg/natreg\\_listings/search](http://www.kshs.org/natreg/natreg_listings/search), accessed July 2014.

<sup>50</sup> "Hotel Parrish Construction Launched Thirty Years Ago." It is not clear why Roberts left the area, but U. S. Census and military records show that he was living in Kansas City by 1940, and had moved to Arlington Virginia by 1942. (ancestry.com, accessed July-August 2014.)

<sup>51</sup> U. S. Population Census records and Kansas City Directories, accessed on Ancestry.com, July 2014.

<sup>52</sup> Stucky, 120.

<sup>53</sup> Green County Deed records show that the building was heavily mortgaged throughout the period of significance.

<sup>54</sup> Stucky, 107.

<sup>55</sup> Gray, 9, and the 1950 Sanborn map of Pratt, 3.

<sup>56</sup> Gilliam, 9.

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| Hotel Roberts                            |
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| Name of Property                         |
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| County and State                         |
| n/a                                      |
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| Name of multiple listing (if applicable) |

In 1959, Monte Parrish bought the Pratt Hotel Company and the hotel and changed the name of the company and the building. Parrish also owned and operated another Pratt lodging facility, the Casa Loma Motel. The Hotel Roberts was re-christened the Hotel Parrish, and Parrish operated it and the Casa Loma together for many years. He closed the Hotel Parrish around 1974, but he and his wife Ellen continued to use the building as their personal residence until they sold the property in 1982.<sup>57</sup> The new owner announced plans to redevelop the building for residential use and auctioned off the contents of the hotel a few weeks later, but was unable to follow through with the rehab plans.<sup>58</sup> The property changed hands again in 1987, but redevelopment plans again fell through. The building sat empty for years, with windows falling out of the frames and a badly leaking roof. Finally, around 2007, the People's Bank of Pratt took ownership of the property and began a search for a new use. In late 2014 plans are underway to rehabilitate the building and create new multifamily housing in downtown Pratt.

The Hotel Roberts has aptly been described as "one of the city's primary landmarks."<sup>59</sup> Although often praised for its status as one of the tallest structures in the community, it is also significant as a refined early example of the Art Deco style, and tangible evidence of years of civic pride.

<sup>57</sup> Marsha Ioerger, "Developer Buys City Landmark," Pratt Tribune ca. July 1982. (undated clipping)

<sup>58</sup> "Nostalgia Draws Large Crowd," Pratt Tribune July 19, 1982.

<sup>59</sup> Stucky, 21.

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| Hotel Roberts                            |
| Name of Property                         |
| Pratt County, Kansas                     |
| County and State                         |
| n/a                                      |
| Name of multiple listing (if applicable) |

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| Hotel Roberts                            |
| Name of Property                         |
| Pratt County, Kansas                     |
| County and State                         |
| n/a                                      |
| Name of multiple listing (if applicable) |

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Kansas State Historic Preservation Office, "National and State Registers of Historic Places."

[http://www.kshs.org/natreg/natreg\\_listings/search](http://www.kshs.org/natreg/natreg_listings/search), accessed July 2014.

Pratt County Assessor's Office. Pratt County Deed Records. Pratt, Kansas.

### Collections of the Pratt County Historical Society.

"Pratt City and County History Vertical File 5." This file includes numerous clippings from the Pratt Union and the Pratt Daily Tribune, 1929-1987. Most clippings are dated, but many are missing page numbers and/or newspaper names. That information has been included below when available.

Ball, Buzz. "Health Hazard Problem Involves Parrish Hotel." "Big Hotel Up to Eighth Floor." Pratt Union 5 Mar. 1930.

"Boosters---for the New Hotel." Pratt Union 12 Mar. 1930.

"Building Pratt History: Hotel Roberts." Pratt Tribune 13 Nov. 2009.

"Do Modern Hotels Pay?" Pratt Union 1 Jan. 1930.

"Eyes and Minds All Over the State are Now Turned on Pratt..." Pratt Union 5 Jan. 1930.

"Gebhart Heads Hotel Company." Pratt Union 25 Dec. 1929.

Holdren, Dick. "Hotel Man, Engineer Top Army Officer." Pratt Tribune 30 Dec. 1959.

"Hotel Parrish Construction Launched Thirty Years Ago." ca. 1960.

"Hotel Roberts." Pratt Union 19 Mar. 1930.

"Hotel Roberts." Pratt Union 28 May 1930.

"Hotel Roberts Open House." Pratt Union 27 Aug. 1930.

"Hotel Roberts Rapidly Advancing Toward Completion." Pratt Union 26 Mar. 1930.

"Hotel Roberts Still Going Higher." 2 Apr. 1930.

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"New Hotel Roberts: More Than 3,000 Vote." Pratt Tribune 19 Mar. 1930.

"New Hotel Roberts Soon Ready for Guests." 14 May 1930.

"New Roberts Hotel." Pratt Union 11 June 1930.

"Our Formal Opening, Friday Evening, Sept. 5." Pratt Tribune 4 Sept. 1930.

"Our New Hotel Going With a Rush." Pratt Union 18 Dec. 1929.

"Our New Hotel is Still Taking Form." Pratt Union 15 Jan. 1930.

"Our New Hotel Starting." Pratt Union 4 Dec. 1929.

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| Hotel Roberts                            |
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| Name of multiple listing (if applicable) |

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"Pratt's Big Hotel Climbing Higher and Higher." Pratt Union 12 Feb. 1930.

"Pratt's Big New Modern Hotel." Pratt Union 6 Nov. 1929.

"Pratt's Fine New Modern Hotel." Pratt Union 30 Oct. 1929.

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"Pratt's New Two Hundred Fifty Thousand Dollar Hotel." Pratt Union 16 Oct. 1929.

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"Roberts Hotel." Pratt Union 22 Aug. 1930.

"Ruling in Parrish Hearing Wednesday." 25 May 1968.

"The New Hotel." Pratt Union 23 Oct. 1929.

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| Hotel Roberts                            |
| Name of Property                         |
| Pratt County, Kansas                     |
| County and State                         |
| n/a                                      |
| Name of multiple listing (if applicable) |

Figure 1. Aerial photo map from Google Earth, with coordinates. Accessed August 10, 2014.



Hotel Roberts  
Pratt, Pratt County, Kansas  
Latitude: 37.643050° Longitude: -98.740594°  
Datum WGS84

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| Hotel Roberts                            |
| Name of Property                         |
| Pratt County, Kansas                     |
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| n/a                                      |
| Name of multiple listing (if applicable) |

Figure 2. Aerial photo map of the area, from Google Earth. Accessed August 10, 2014.



Google earth

feet 1000  
meters 500



Hotel Roberts  
Pratt, Pratt County, Kansas  
Latitude: 37.643050° Longitude: -98.740594°  
Datum WGS84

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| Hotel Roberts                            |
| Name of Property                         |
| Pratt County, Kansas                     |
| County and State                         |
| n/a                                      |
| Name of multiple listing (if applicable) |

Figure 3. Architect's Rendering of the Proposed Hotel, 1929.  
Published in "Pratt's Fine New Modern Hotel," Pratt Union 30 Oct. 1929.



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| Hotel Roberts                            |
| Name of Property                         |
| Pratt County, Kansas                     |
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| Name of multiple listing (if applicable) |

Figure 4. Photo of the Hotel Roberts, 1940.  
"Pratt City and County History Vertical File 5," Collections of the Pratt County Historical Society.



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| Hotel Roberts                            |
| Name of Property                         |
| Pratt County, Kansas                     |
| County and State                         |
| n/a                                      |
| Name of multiple listing (if applicable) |

Figure 5. Current photos, window and doors, interior views

Photos by Deb Sheals 2014.

Left: Window, First floor, east wall.

Right top: Back door, second floor.

Right bottom: Back door, first floor.

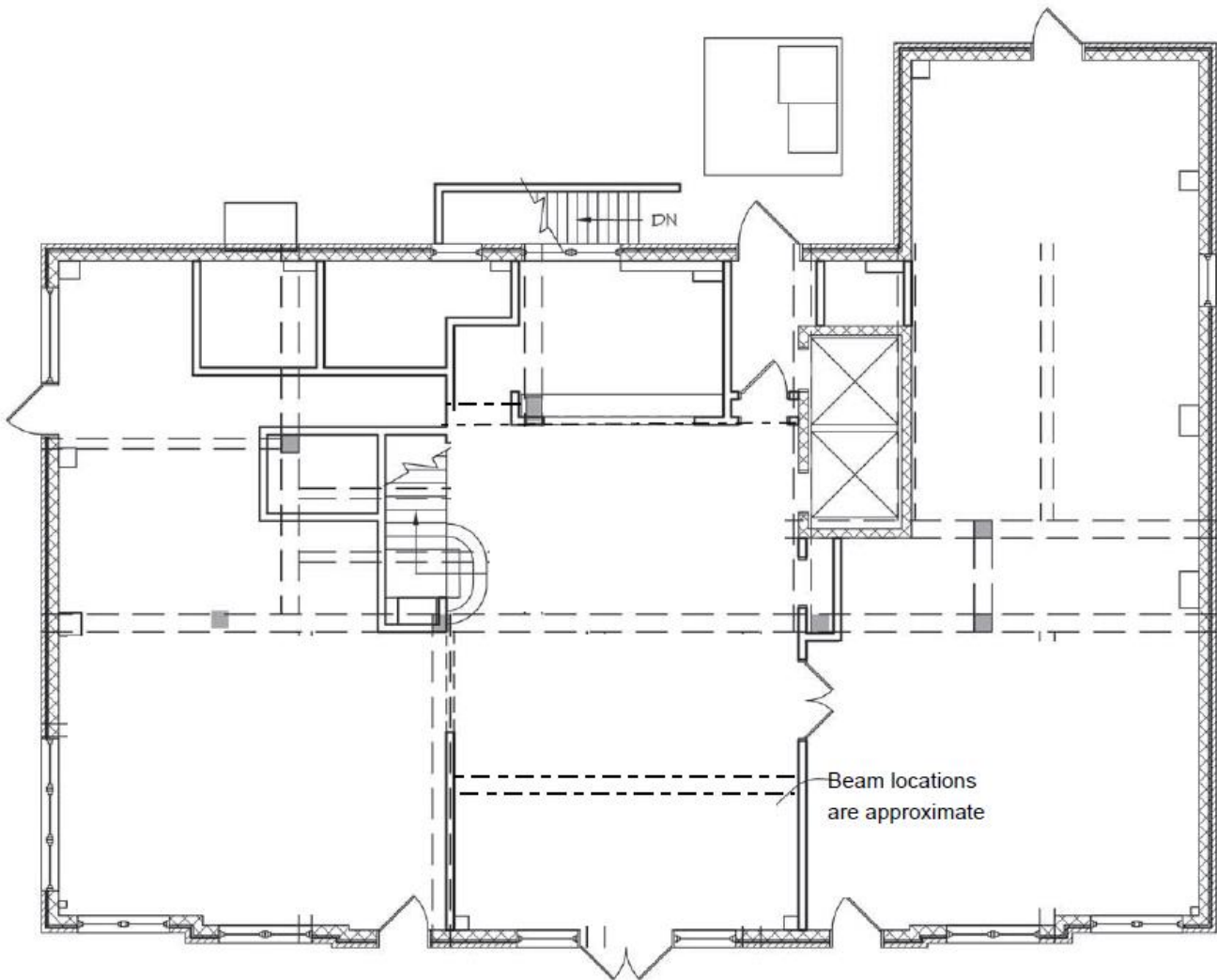
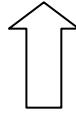


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| Hotel Roberts                            |
| Name of Property                         |
| Pratt County, Kansas                     |
| County and State                         |
| n/a                                      |
| Name of multiple listing (if applicable) |

Figure 6. First Floor Plan.  
Drawing by Wallace Architects, Sedalia, MO

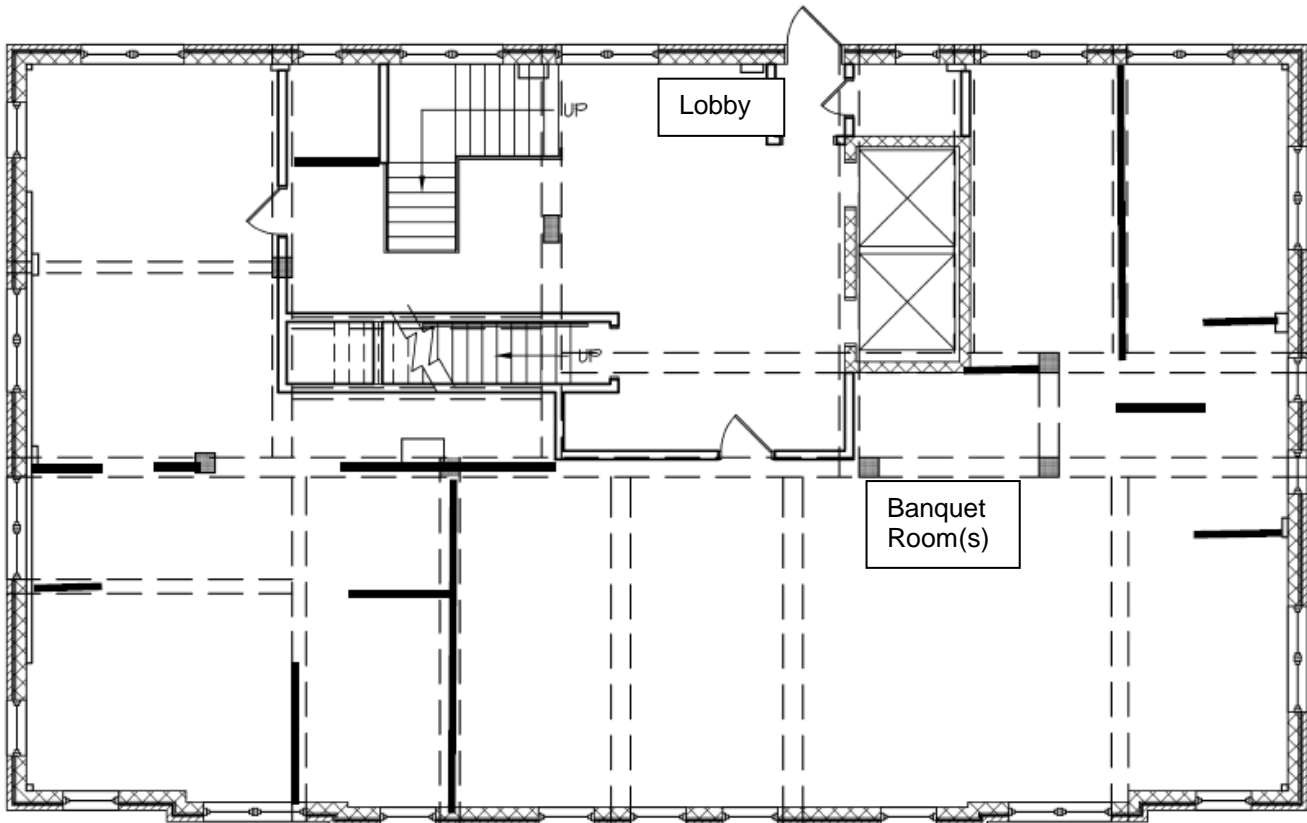
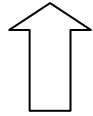


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| Hotel Roberts                            |
| Name of Property                         |
| Pratt County, Kansas                     |
| County and State                         |
| n/a                                      |
| Name of multiple listing (if applicable) |

Figure 7. Second Floor Plan.  
Drawing by Wallace Architects, Sedalia, MO  
Solid dark lines indicate approximate size and location of interior partitions.

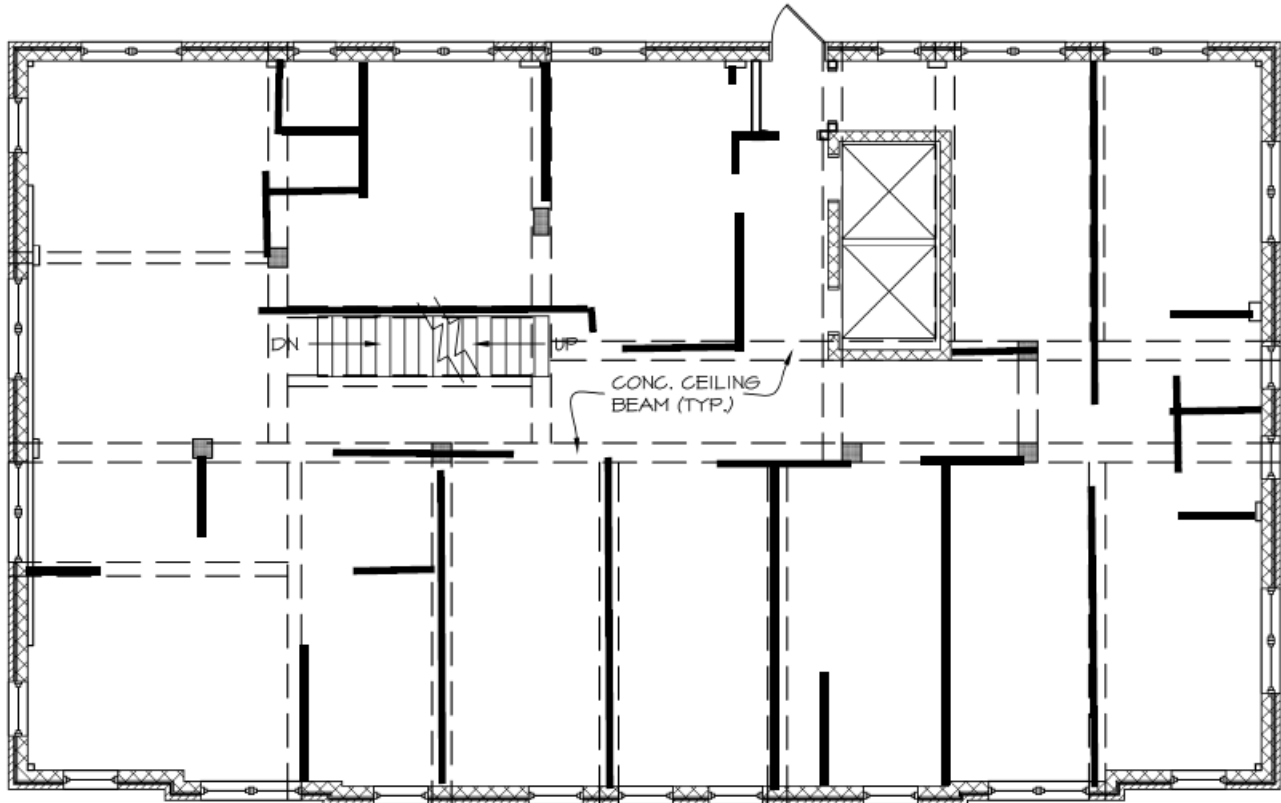
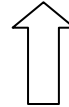


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| Hotel Roberts                            |
| Name of Property                         |
| Pratt County, Kansas                     |
| County and State                         |
| n/a                                      |
| Name of multiple listing (if applicable) |

Figure 8. Typical Upper Floor Plan.  
Drawing by Wallace Architects, Sedalia, MO  
Solid dark lines indicate approximate size and location of interior partitions. Partition configurations vary widely, and the 8th floor has no surviving interior partitions.

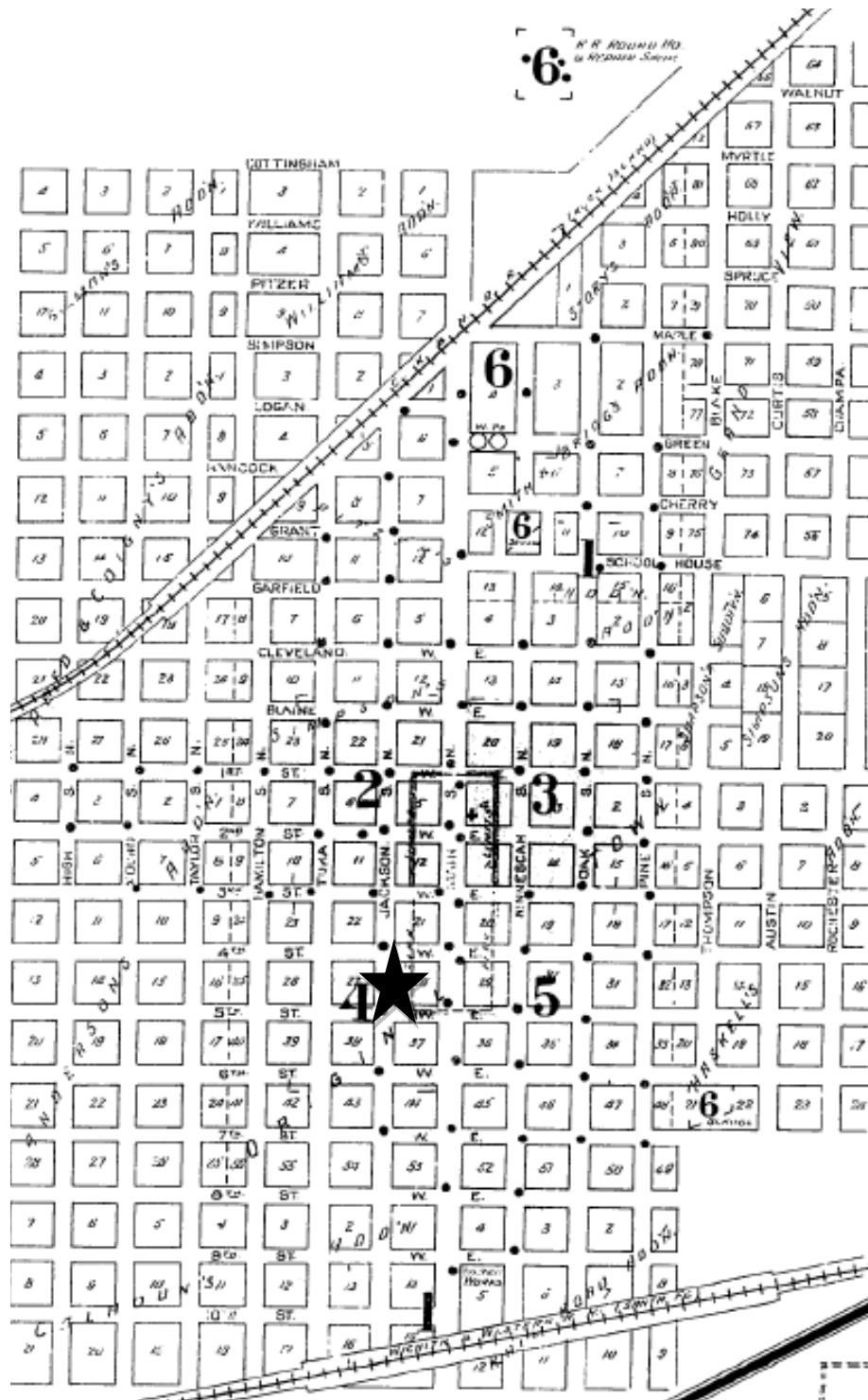
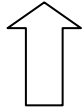


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| Hotel Roberts                            |
| Name of Property                         |
| Pratt County, Kansas                     |
| County and State                         |
| n/a                                      |
| Name of multiple listing (if applicable) |

Figure 9. 1911 Sanborn Map of Pratt, Showing Railroad Locations. The Hotel Roberts property is starred.

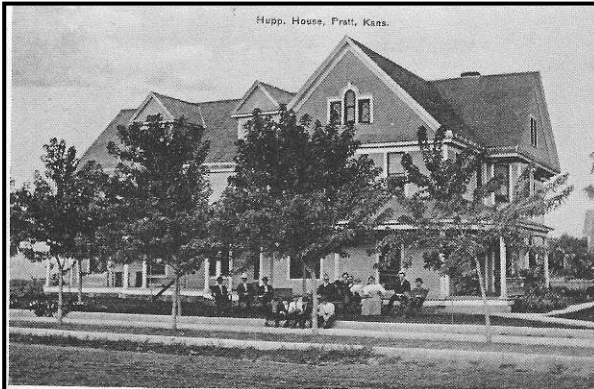


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| Hotel Roberts                            |
| Name of Property                         |
| Pratt County, Kansas                     |
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| Name of multiple listing (if applicable) |

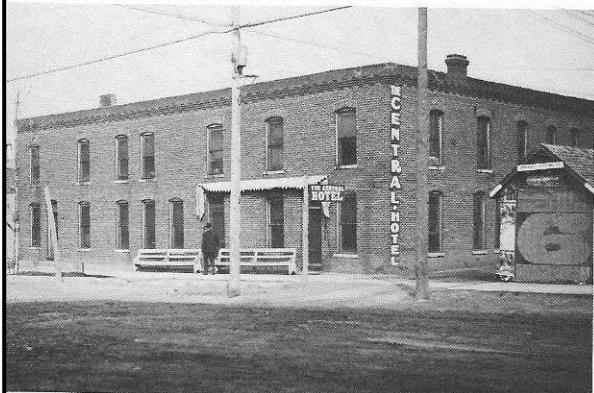
Figure 10. Other Early Hotels of Pratt. This page shows all except two of the hotel that were in operation when the Hotel Roberts was built. From Tim Stucky, Pratt, Kansas: A Centennial View, 1884-1984, (Pretty Prairie, KS: Prairie Publications, 1984) 65.



The Hupp House, located at the northeast corner of First and Main, was first a boarding house and then a hotel. In later years it was the Maxfield Hotel.



Originally known as the Grier House, the Ninnescah next to the Rock Island depot was a favorite boarding and rooming establishment during the teens and twenties.



The Central Hotel, built in the 1920s was located north of the Municipal Building. It was closed in August 1941 and demolished in the early 1970s to make way for First National Bank parking.



For more than 70 years the Briggs Hotel occupied the second and third floors of the Briggs-Smith-Peak building on the northwest corner of Main and Fourth Streets.



The Cottage Hotel was located on South Jackson, east of the present library building.



The Calbeck Hotel was located across from the Calbeck Furniture Company at 401 S. Main.