

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED
DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Hotel Baker

AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

100 West Main Street

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

St. Charles

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

13th

STATE

Illinois

VICINITY OF

CODE

12

COUNTY

Kane

CODE

089

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY

DISTRICT

BUILDING(S)

STRUCTURE

SITE

OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

PUBLIC

PRIVATE

BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

IN PROCESS

BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

OCCUPIED

UNOCCUPIED

WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE

YES: RESTRICTED

YES: UNRESTRICTED

NO

PRESENT USE

AGRICULTURE

COMMERCIAL

EDUCATIONAL

ENTERTAINMENT

GOVERNMENT

INDUSTRIAL

MILITARY

MUSEUM

PARK

PRIVATE RESIDENCE

RELIGIOUS

SCIENTIFIC

TRANSPORTATION

OTHER: Retirement Hotel

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Lutheran Welfare Services of Illinois

STREET & NUMBER

4840 W. Byron

CITY, TOWN

Chicago

VICINITY OF

STATE

Illinois

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Kane County Recorders Office

STREET & NUMBER

719 Batavia Avenue, Building 'B'

CITY, TOWN

Geneva, Illinois

STATE

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

Illinois Historic Structures Survey

DATE

1973

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Department of Conservation--Division of Historic Sites

CITY, TOWN

Springfield

Illinois

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

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## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Hotel Baker is a steel-framed five story structure that, in 1928, combined advanced building technology with a free interpretation of traditional Spanish architecture. The exterior, unchanged from the original, is brown brick trimmed with beige terra cotta. The roof projects well beyond the facade, and the flat eaves both elegantly terminate the building and emphasize the horizontal lines of the structure. The entrance is marked by a tower which breaks the horizontal plane, projecting about two feet out from the facade and about fifteen feet above the roof line. Notable details on the exterior are the paired engaged columns flanking the main door. Spiral in shape, these columns are reminiscent of the architecture of Barcelona, and indicate that the Hotel's principle designers (Wolf and Sexton) were well versed in the Spanish vernacular. Beneath this traditional facade, the architects used the most modern steel framing techniques available. Rolled plate columns and girders carry the weight of the building to massive steel footings buried in the soil. The owner of the Hotel, Colonel Baker, was especially proud of the modern aluminum windows which contained window, sill, and weatherstripping in one unit.

The interior is lavishly colored. Dark brown wood molding and rafters are accented with beige, pale and dark green, gold, blue and mauve stencils. The patterns are Spanish and Moorish, and often borrow from heraldic designs. Plaster details in the same colors decorate the joints of the structural members. The elevator doors are wood carved in a medallion design, stained dark brown and decorated in greens and golds. The lounge is a notable room, designed to resemble an open plaza. The walls of roughened plaster (simulating adobe) and the projecting balconies and windows contribute to this outdoor effect. The glass dance floor in the main dining room is a second unusual feature of the Hotel. In contrast to the traditional Spanish theme, this is a very modern assemblage of glass blocks and over one thousand synchronized colored light bulbs. In 1927 the Hotel staff proudly claimed that only two other lighted dance floors this sophisticated and beautiful existed.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD		AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY: Technology		
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION				

SPECIFIC DATES construction: 1926-8 BUILDER/ARCHITECT Wolf, Sexton, Harper & Trueax, arch.

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

### HISTORY:

Colonel Edward Baker, a St. Charles, Illinois millionaire who made his original fortune in barbed wire manufacturing and sales, built the Hotel Baker in 1926-28. Baker was well-traveled, and it seems the architecture of Spain made such a great impression on him that he decided he would build a Spanish hotel in the heart of St. Charles. Many other notable St. Charles properties have a strong connection to the Colonel; the St. Charles Municipal Hall and the Baker Community House were built with his generosity.

The Hotel was an exclusive resort catering to Chicago's elite vacationers. It was particularly popular among newlyweds. However, the Hotel was never particularly successful and the Depression of 1929-1939 and more important--changes in the public's taste in travel accommodations resulted in a further decline in profits. Colonel Baker's death in 1959 accelerated this decline, and in 1969 Dellora Norris, the Colonel's niece who inherited the Hotel, donated it to the Lutheran Welfare Services of Illinois. The Hotel is currently used as a retirement hotel and as a community center for the elderly. Besides housing, uses of the public areas include banquets, wedding receptions (especially popular in the room with the dance floor) and a senior citizen hot meal program.

### ARCHITECTURE:

The Hotel Baker is an excellent example of the use of traditional foreign styles in a modern commercial building. It also is a fine representative of a type of hotel architecture that is no longer built in America. The impact of the automobile and the new leisure activities associated with it is measured in the disappearance of the small, high quality hotel. One feature of the Baker that is unique in modern hotel design is that every room in the original hotel was different. Not only were no two rooms furnished alike, but the floor plans differed! These unusual qualities absent in the modern motel, and the fine integration of Spanish detail and steel technology make the Hotel Baker a significant building; that the detail has been so well preserved makes the structure worthy of nomination to the National Register.

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SIGNIFICANCE: Hotel Baker

TECHNOLOGY:

The Hotel Baker contains an important technological feature as well. In the basement of the Hotel are the original magneto generators installed in 1927. Powered by the flow of water diverted from the Fox River through the generators, the Hotel was one of the area's first self-sustaining hydroelectric sites. The gates and raceways controlling the stream to the power plant have been renovated, and currently a feasibility study on the generators' usefulness is being undertaken.



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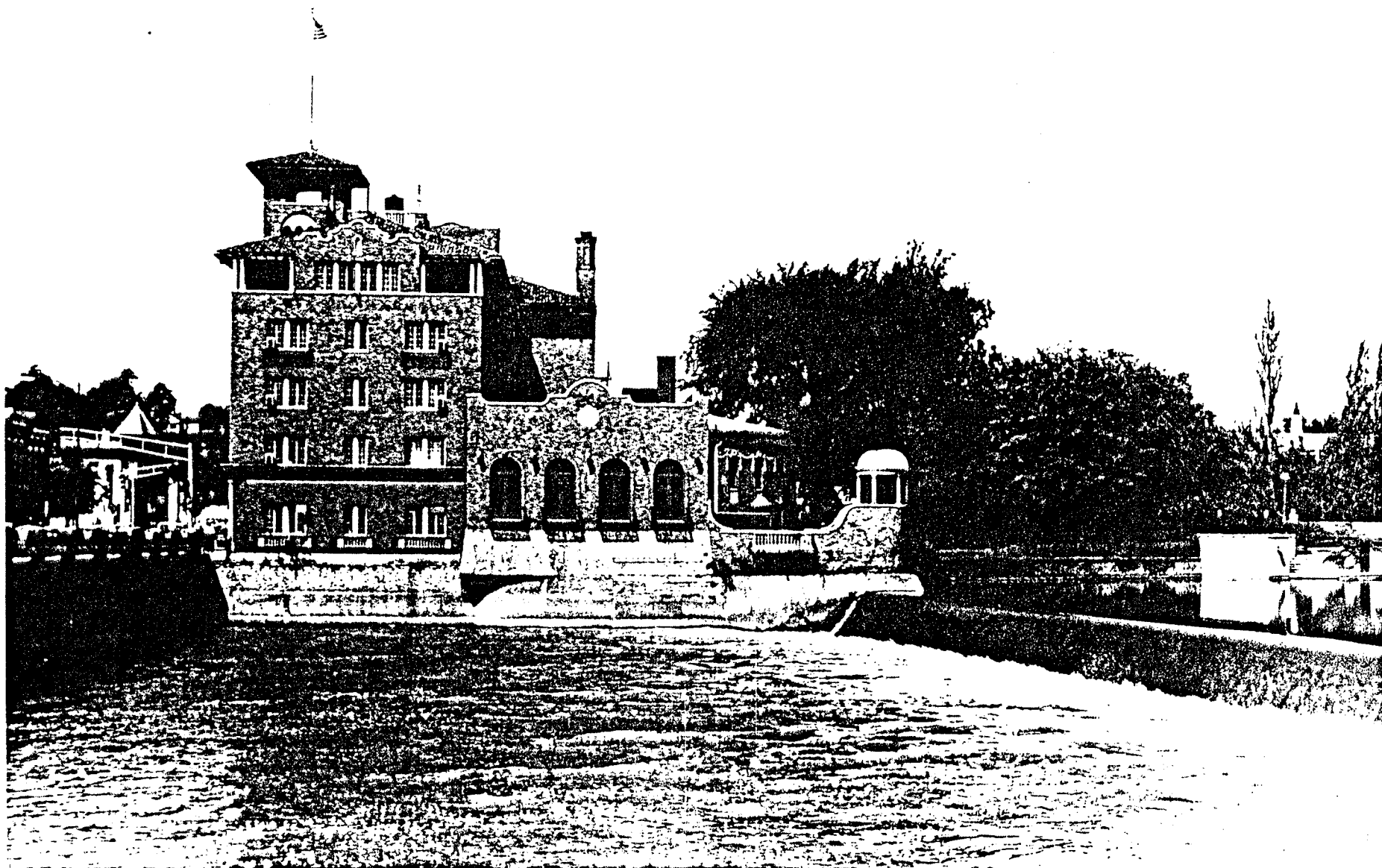
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Legal Description: The Hotel Baker

Lot Six in Block One of Millington's Second Addition to St. Charles and that part of the southwest quarter (SW $\frac{1}{4}$ ), section twenty-seven, Township 40N, Range 8E:

Beginning at a point on the North line of West Main Street twenty-four feet Easterly of the Southeasterly corner of Block One of Millington's Second Addition to St. Charles; thence Northerly parallel with the Easterly line of said Block 1, 112 feet; thence Westerly parallel with the Northerly line of West Main Street twenty-four feet to the Easterly line of said Block One; thence Northerly along the Easterly line of said Block, forty feet to the Northeasterly corner of said Block; thence Westerly along the North line of said Block, fifty-five feet; thence Northerly parallel with the Easterly line of Second Street North and fifty-five feet normally distant therefrom 245 feet; thence Easterly parallel with the Northerly line of West Main Street fifty-two feet more or less to the Westerly bank of the Fox River; thence Southerly and Southeasterly along said Westerly bank to a point on the Northerly line of West Main Street 145 feet Easterly from the point of beginning. Thence Westerly along said Northerly line 145 feet to the point of beginning in the City of St. Charles, County of Kane, in the State of Illinois.

HOTEL BAKER, ST. CHARLES, ILLINOIS



HOTEL BAKER, ST. CHARLES, ILLINOIS

