

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**
FOR FEDERAL PROPERTIES

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	J. N. JR
DATE ENTERED	2/15/77

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

1 NAME

HISTORIC The Ahwahnee Hotel
AND/OR COMMON The Ahwahnee Hotel

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
Yosemite Valley
CITY, TOWN
Yosemite National Park
STATE
California
VICINITY OF
CODE
06
COUNTY
Mariposa
CODE
043
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
15th
NOT FOR PUBLICATION

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER

4 AGENCY

National Park Service

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS (if applicable)
Western Regional Office

STREET & NUMBER
450 Golden Gate Ave., Box 36063

CITY, TOWN
San Francisco
VICINITY OF
STATE
CA

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC
Mariposa County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN
Mariposa
STATE
CA

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

EXCELLENT
 GOOD
 FAIR

DETERIORATED
 RUINS
 UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

UNALTERED
 ALTERED

CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE
 MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Ahwahnee Hotel, the largest building in Yosemite National Park, was built in 1925, and designed by the architect Gilbert Stanley Underwood. Ahwahnee, an Indian word meaning "deep, grassy meadow", describes the setting in which the hotel is placed, at the base of the north valley wall and Royal Arches.

The hotel is composed of three wings forming a Y shape. The total square footage of the building is c. 150,000. It has 95 guest rooms, and three large public rooms on the ground floor. The wings, around the perimeter, are two or three stories in height and the center core of the building, where the wings intersect, rises to six stories. The exterior massing is irregular and asymmetrical, and broken up with balconies and terraces at different levels.

The primary material used in the construction of the hotel was reinforced concrete, but the visual appearance suggests timber and granite. The vertical structural members are granite masonry, and the horizontals appear as timber siding. The massive structural piers rising from the ground through the first and second floors, and the chimney stacks and corner supports rising to various heights, are all faced with granite boulders in an uncoursed rubble pattern. The ground floor consists almost entirely of glass and granite. Above the second floor, reinforced concrete was formed to take the appearance of horizontal timber siding, and it is stained a light brown color. The overhanging green/grey slate roofs are both gabled and hipped. A large porte cochere and breezeway are located on the north side of the hotel, and are constructed of peeled logs. The breezeway is decorated with painted Indian patterns in muted earth colors.

The Lobby is in the north wing of the hotel and has brightly painted rough plastered walls and piers, with mosaic floors of acid etched cement with inlays of rubber tile in detailed Indian designs. The room is stenciled around the ~~corners~~^{cornices} with Indian motifs.

Over the fireplace in the Elevator Lobby is painted an abstract mural of Indian basket patterns. The elevator doors are covered with intricately cut wood in low relief with Indian motifs depicted in black and red.

In the south wing is the Main Lounge, which has a cruciform plan, with the Lounge 51' x 77' and 24' height, two small reading rooms on the "trancepts" and an apse shaped sunroom. The Lounge has 10 floor-to-ceiling windows with 5' x 6' panels of stained glass at the top in brilliant colors, each a different Indian pattern. The flat ceiling appears coffered with the exposed girders and beams, all of which are decorated with bands of Indian motifs. The room has large fireplaces of cut sandstone at each end. The room is furnished with wooden chests and tables designed for the room, decorated with painted designs. The Persian rugs hanging on the walls of the room are part of the original furnishings plan. Large, hand-wrought iron chandeliers hang in the center of the room. A large painted tapestry depicting the local flora and fauna covers one wall of the west Writing Room, off the Lounge.

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CONTINUATION SHEET The Ahwahnee Hotel ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 2

The Dining Room, 130' x 51' x 34' high, features 11 large floor-to-ceiling windows, massive granite piers and log scissor trusses supporting the gable roof. The sugar pine trusses are supported by large concrete "logs", painted, grained and textured to appear as timber. The room is decorated with two rows of hand-crafted iron chandeliers, and sconces along the walls. Painted Indian motifs are found above the windows and on the plaster walls of the room. The original simple wooden tables and chairs continue to be used in the Dining Room.

The upstairs halls, doors, and each guest room are stenciled with colorful, geometric Indian designs, and all are different.

The Ahwahnee is located on a 35-acre site which includes a number of small structures and landscape features, eight guest cottages (1928), an employee dormitory, a nine-hole golf course, two tennis courts, a bullfrog pond, a native flower garden, and two parking lots.

Underwood was the Architect for the San Francisco Mint (built in 1937), the United States Courthouse in Seattle, and the Federal Building in Los Angeles.

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 type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)		
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION				

SPECIFIC DATES 1925-27

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Gilbert Stanley Underwood/Arch

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Recommended level of significance: National.

The Ahwahnee, because of its architectural design and its pristine, unaltered condition, is among the most significant park hotels in the country. A number of large resort hotels were built in the national parks and scenic areas of the western United States and Canada, in the years between 1900 and 1935. These include the Old Faithful Inn in Yellowstone National Park, the El Tovar in Grand Canyon National Park, and the hotels associated with the Canadian National Railroad in the Canadian Rockies. The style of these hotels is Rustic; each hotel reflects its particular environment, in elements of the design and in the materials used in its construction. The style is characterized by the use of native materials in their natural state: boulders, river rock, and fieldstone in masonry and unpeeled logs as structural members.

The Ahwahnee was designed in a style which the architect termed "environmental". A successful effort was made to make the hotel blend into its surroundings, by the use of native materials, granite and timber, and by scaling the building low around its perimeter and massing it higher toward the center, minimizing the visual impact. The massive vertical granite buttresses, piers, and chimneys reflect the granite cliffs towering around the hotel.

The hotel combines with the Rustic style, elements of the Art Deco style, particularly in the interior. It was a period when a great deal of interest and talent was directed to the field of decorative arts. The Art Deco style was inspired by geometric patterns, and an important source for these patterns was the arts of the American Indians. This expression of Art Deco can be seen on buildings throughout the country, but nowhere is this form of decoration better developed than at the Ahwahnee. Art Historians were hired to research the decorations for the interior, and all elements of the hotel and its furnishings were designed as a whole. The grammar of ornament was based on the designs created by the California tribes of the Pomo, Hupa, and Yurok from baskets, beadwork, and pottery. Every detail, from the table service and the drinking fountain to the ping pong tables, was designed around the rustic, Indian theme. Hand craftsmanship was of prime importance in the design and construction of the hotel.

The significance of the hotel lies in the preservation of the exterior of the building and its setting, and in the preservation of the interior, with its original decorative features and furnishings. The hotel is the primary resource on the site; the ancillary buildings and structures are not significant individually, but contribute to the site as a whole.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Ahwahnee Hotel file, Yosemite Research Library
The Ahwahnee, informational booklet (1971) Yosemite Park & Curry Co.
Five California Architects, Ester McCoy, Prager Publishers, New York.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 35

UTM REFERENCES

A	1 1	2 7 3 5 2 0	4 1 8 0 7 2 0	B	1 1	2 7 3 4 9 5	4 1 8 0 3 2 0
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C	1 1	2 7 3 0 8 0	4 1 8 0 3 5 5	D	1 1	2 7 3 1 4 0	4 1 8 0 7 7 0
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Beginning at the concrete and granite tower of the hotel entrance gate, on the north side of the road, follow the fence (which remains equidistant bet. the foot trail and the no. edge of the road) in an easterly direction for 435 yds. Turn south, follow the northeast edge of the fire road for 60 yds., then turn east (146°) for 116 yds. Go east (96°) 140 yds., E/S/E (126°) 90 yds., S/SE (176°) 110 yds., W 200 yds., SW (256°) 65 yds., S (236°) 50 yds., (226°) 85 yds., (266°) 150 yds.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE Merrill Ann Wilson/Historical Architect
 Leslie Starr Hart/Cultural Resources Specialist

ORGANIZATION	DATE
National Park Service, Denver Service Center	2/23/76
STREET & NUMBER	TELEPHONE
P.O. Box 25287	(303) 234-5545
CITY OR TOWN	STATE
Denver	CO

12 CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

YES ___ NO ___ NONE ___

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

In compliance with Executive Order 11593, I hereby nominate this property to the National Register, certifying that the State Historic Preservation Officer has been allowed 90 days in which to present the nomination to the State Review Board and to evaluate its significance. The evaluated level of significance is ___ National ___ State ___ Local.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
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AND/OR COMMON

The Ahwahnee Hotel

2 LOCATION

CITY, TOWN

Yosemite Valley

— VICINITY OF

COUNTY

Mariposa

STATE

CA

3 MAP REFERENCE

SOURCE U.S.G.S.

SCALE 1:24000

DATE 1958(Limited revision 1970)

4 REQUIREMENTS

TO BE INCLUDED ON ALL MAPS

1. PROPERTY BOUNDARIES
2. NORTH ARROW
3. UTM REFERENCES

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3 PHOTO REFERENCE

PHOTO CREDIT National Park Service

DATE OF PHOTO unknown

NEGATIVE FILED AT

Yosemite Museum Collections, Yosemite National Park, CA 95389

4 IDENTIFICATION

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC. IF DISTRICT, GIVE BUILDING NAME & STREET

Ahwahnee Hotel West side, looking East. Dining Room is the wing to the left.

PHOTO NO 1



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3 PHOTO REFERENCE

PHOTO CREDIT National Park Service

DATE OF PHOTO 9/75

NEGATIVE FILED AT Western Regional Office, NPS, 450 Golden Gate Ave., Box 36063
San Francisco, CA 94120

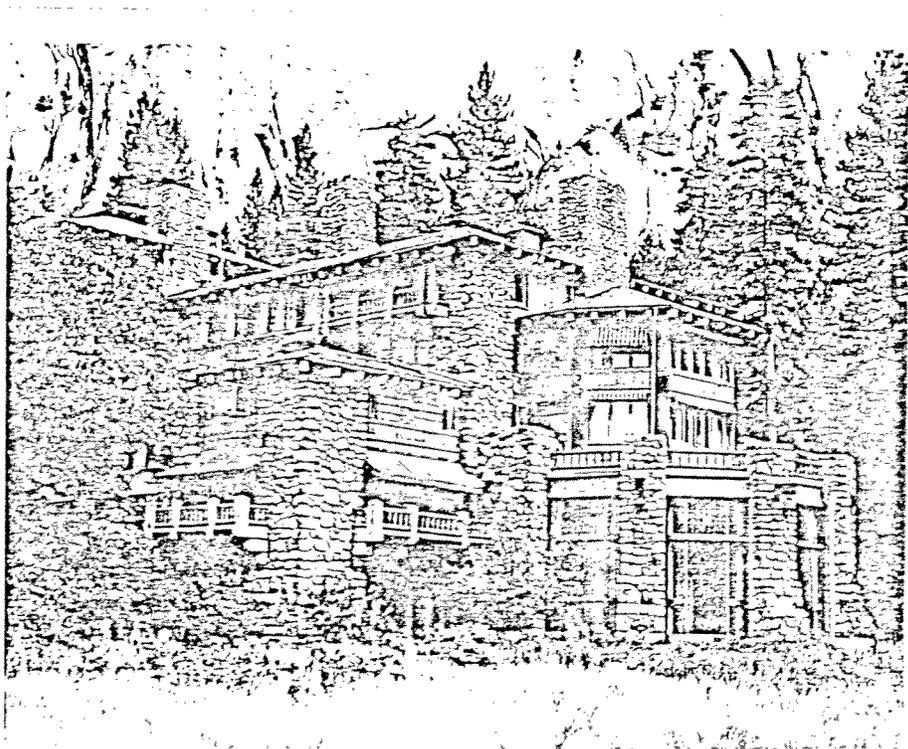
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SW corner of South wing looking NE. Shows projecting sunroom

PHOTO NO 2

12



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PHOTO CREDIT Merrill Ann Wilson

DATE OF PHOTO 8/75

Historical Architect, Denver Service Center

NEGATIVE FILED AT

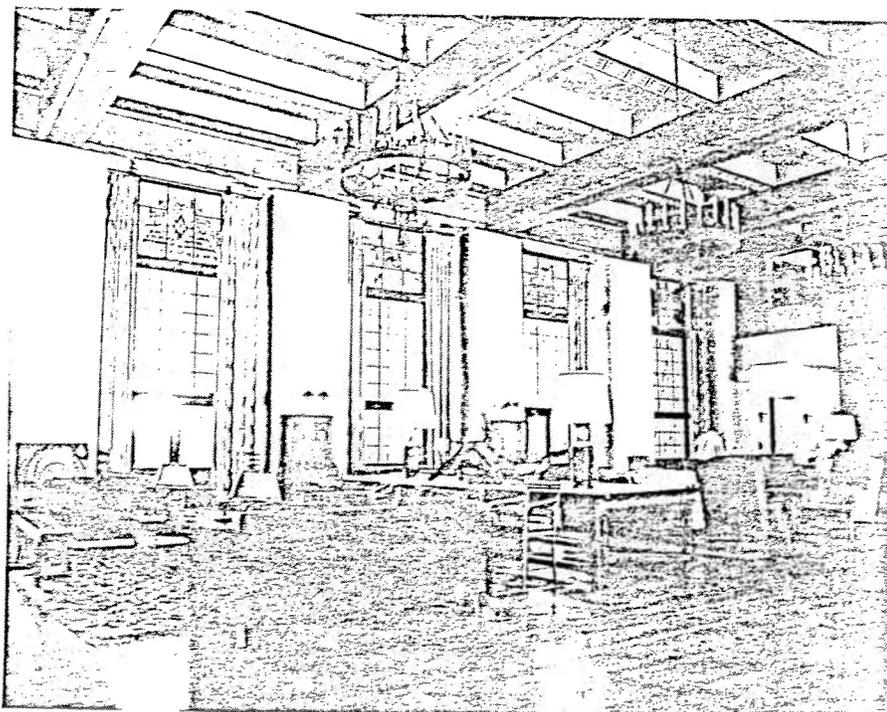
Western Regional Office, NPS, 450 Golden Gate Ave, Box 36063, San Francisco, CA

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PHOTO NO 3

Interior of the Great Lounge, South wing. Shows stained glass windows and furnishings designed for Hotel in 1927.



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PHOTO NO

Interior of the dining room, looking West, West wing Ahwahnee

4



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PHOTO REFERENCE

PHOTO CREDIT

National Park Service

DATE OF PHOTO

Unknown

NEGATIVE FILED AT

Yosemite Research Library, Yosemite Nat'l Park, CA 95389

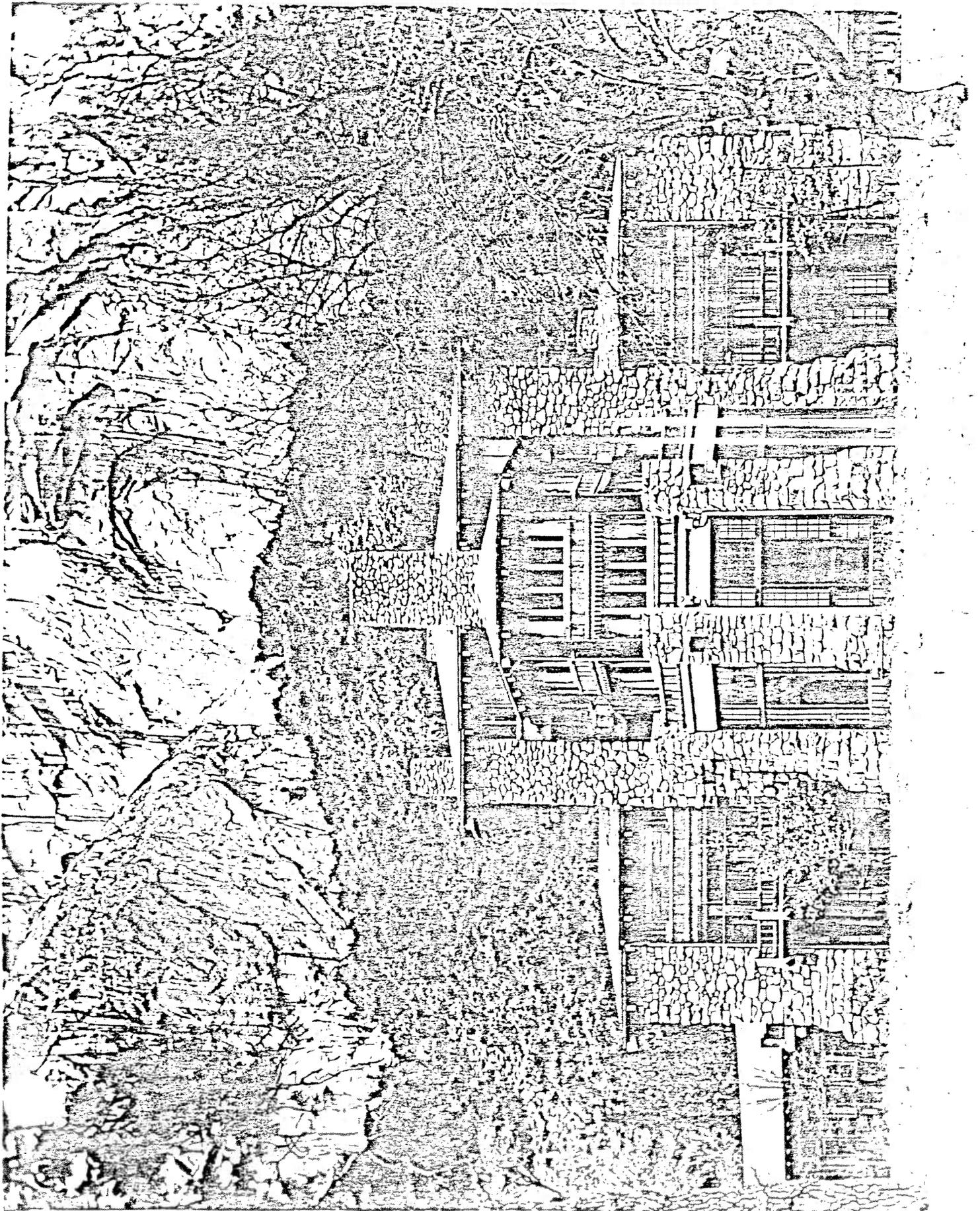
IDENTIFICATION

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC IF DISTRICT. GIVE BUILDING NAME & STREET

South wing Ahwahnee Hotel, view is to North Wall of Yosemite Valley

PHOTO NO.

5



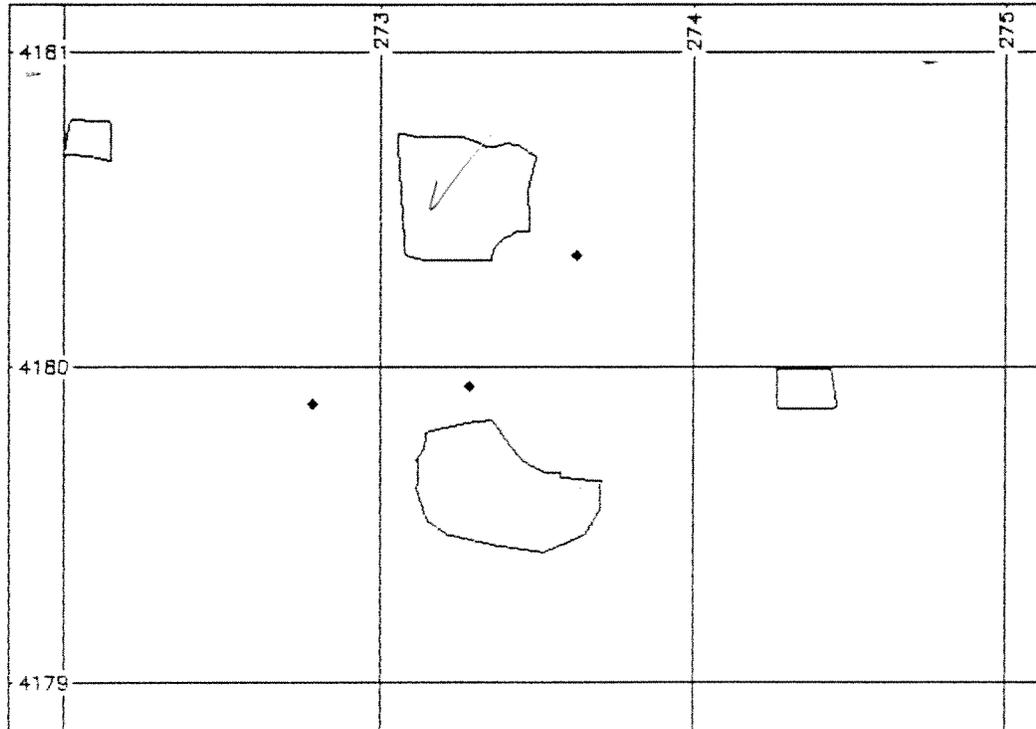
LOCATION: yosemite
MAPSET: rob

DATE: Thu Jan 13 16:19:47 1994
USER: rob

RASTER MAP: none
MASK: none

Produced by: Yosemite National Park
Software: GRASS

LOCATION: Yosemite National Park, California



SCALE: 1 : 24000

REGION: 271831.23478409 4181149.86644673 275131.42326172 4178839.48557284 (grid: 1000 me
Arch.hist.sites.bldgs (rob)