

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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 Stove Pipe Wells Hotel

other names/site number Stovepipe Wells Hotel, Stovepipe Wells Village Hotel

2. Location

street & number Highway 190 not for publication

city or town Death Valley National Park vicinity

state California code CA county Inyo code _____ zip code _____

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

Signature of certifying official

Date

Title

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

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

Category of Property
(Check only **one** box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
0	16	buildings
		district
	1	site
	2	structure
		object
	19	Total

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Recreation/outdoor recreation

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Recreation/outdoor recreation

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Other

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation: Concrete slab

walls: wood

roof: Metal

other: _____

Narrative Description

Summary Paragraph

Stovepipe Wells Hotel is set in the center of Death Valley National Park, nine miles west of the junction of California Highway 190 and Scotty's Castle Road. It lies about twenty-two miles northwest of park headquarters at Furnace Creek. The hotel complex is set along and south of Highway 190, which runs from the southwest to the northeast through the development. The property contains eighty acres. The hotel complex includes eighty-three guest rooms in eight one-story buildings, a pool, a restaurant, a lobby and gift shop building, as well as offices, employee dorms, trailer sites and assorted support buildings and sheds. The buildings were constructed between 1930 and 1987, but they exhibit a similar appearance due to the tan board and batten siding, blue trim and metal roofs that appear on most of the buildings. The parcel gently slopes to the north at the bottom of an alluvial fan on Tucki Mountain. Palm, deciduous tamarisk and evergreen tamarisk trees dot the area around the hotel, while creosote shrubs and mesquite trees occupy the area surrounding the hotel.

Narrative Description

See continuation sheet

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Entertainment/Recreation

Period of Significance

1926-1936

Significant Dates

1926, 1930

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Herbert (Bob) Eichbaum

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.

Period of Significance (justification)

The period corresponds with the construction of a toll road into Death Valley, and the construction of the first Stove Pipe Wells Hotel buildings, by Bob Eichbaum in 1926. The period ends with the sale of the property by Bob Eichbaum's widow in 1936.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph

Stovepipe Wells Hotel became the first tourist accommodations in Death Valley in 1926, and the associated road (now California Highway 190) became the first automobile route for tourists into the valley that same year. By the 1920s, the automobile had transformed the way that Americans vacationed. Cars had become the preferred means of transportation for middle and upper class vacationers, and tourists began to travel further afield in their cars in their quest for recreational activities or places of scenic interest. Americans of this era also demonstrated a willingness to journey to new places in their quest to experience new sights and activities, and this enthusiasm made Death Valley a prime target for recreational development. Bob Eichbaum, who had developed tourist facilities elsewhere in southern California, realized the tourism potential of Death Valley, and he became the first entrepreneur to build a road and tourist accommodations in the valley.

By making Death Valley accessible to auto travelers and by providing comfortable accommodations once there, Eichbaum helped to transform the public's understanding of the valley. Eichbaum hired a publicity agent, advertised in Los Angeles newspapers, and lured travel journalists to his hotel. The publicity helped to convince vacationers that Death Valley was no longer an unforgiving, inhospitable place, but instead, an area of great natural beauty and historic interest. Eichbaum's venture proved successful, and he expanded the facility until his death in 1932. The success of Stovepipe Wells Hotel also paved the way for subsequent development of other hotels and recreational facilities in the valley. The period of significance spans from 1926, when Eichbaum established his resort, until 1936, when Eichbaum's widow sold the property.

Stovepipe Wells Hotel is significant under Criterion A at the local level for its association with the development of tourism in Death Valley. However, the only remaining building from the period of significance and the portion of road that follows Eichbaum's original route both lack integrity to the historic period. The original hotel building, built in 1930, has been extensively altered through additions and remodeling. The original toll road has been rerouted, realigned, paved and widened. The building and the road are therefore not eligible to the National Register of Historic Places.

There are a number of hotel buildings and structures in the complex that were constructed during the 1950s and 1960s. These have been evaluated for significance, but they are not associated with the Mission 66 program and they do not have other historical associations. They have also all been remodeled extensively since construction, and so lack physical integrity to their dates of construction. Thus they have been found ineligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

Narrative Statement of Significance

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form)

Books

- Death Valley Forty-Niners. *Stove Pipe Wells Village*. Bishop, Ca: Chalfant Press, 1992.
- DeDecker, Mary. *Bob Eichbaum's Resort and his Toll Road to Death Valley*. Morongo Valley, Ca: Sagebrush Press, 1996.
- Greene, Linda W. *A History of Mining in Death Valley National Monument*. Denver: National Park Service, 1981.
- Lingenfelter, Richard E. *Death Valley and the Amargosa: Land of Illusion*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988.
- Pyle, Ernie. *Home Country*. New York: William Sloane Associates, 1935.
- Rothman, Hal. *Devil's Bargains: Tourism in the Twentieth Century American West*. Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2000.
- Starr, Kevin. *Material Dreams: Southern California through the 1920s*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991.
- Sutton, Paul. *Driven Wild: How the Fight Against Automobiles Launched the Modern Wilderness Movement*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002.
- Wrobel, David, Ed. *Seeing and Being Seen: Tourism in the American West*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2001.

Articles

- Death Valley Journal, "Herbert William Eichbaum," February 24, 2009, online resource, accessed in January 2012 at <http://oldtrailmaster.wordpress.com/2009/02/>.
- Minogeroodee, Fitzhugh. "Road Joins Extremes." *New York Times*, October 24, 1937.
- Overholt, Alma. "Strange Sights Intrigue Visitor who Penetrates Death Valley District." *Los Angeles Times*, March 15, 1931.
- Story, Isabelle. "Oases for Tourists," *New York Times*, October 17, 1937.

Government Documents

- California Department of Transportation, State Route 190 Transportation Concept Report, May 2003, accessed online at <http://www.dot.ca.gov/dist6/planning/tcrs/>.
- Massie, Mark. *Appraisal of Tract 15-105, Stove Pipe Wells Village*, May 1, 1978, Death Valley National Park Archives.
- National Park Service. *Death Valley National Monument*. National Park Service, 1941, Death Valley National Park archives.
- National Park Service. *Real Property Improvements Assigned, Stovepipe Wells Resort*. 2011. Concession Files, Death Valley National Park.
- National Park Service, *Mission 66 for Death Valley National Monument*, March 1965. Denver Service Center, Technical Information Files.
- National Park Service. *Death Valley National Monument, Master Plan Development Outline*, May 1962. Denver Service Center, Technical Information Files.
- National Park Service. *Death Valley in California, Master Plan Development Outline*, October 1962. Denver Service Center, Technical Information Files.
- National Park Service, *Stovepipe Wells Developed Area Plan*. Denver: National Park Service, 1980.
- Rothman, Hal. *To Ride Alone Forever in an Unprocessed Country: An Administrative History of Death Valley National Park* (draft). 2005. Death Valley National Park Archives.

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 # _____

Primary location of additional data:

State Historic Preservation Office
 Other State agency
 Federal agency
 Local government
 University
 Other
Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 80
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage)

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1 _____
Zone Easting Northing

3 _____
Zone Easting Northing

2 _____
Zone Easting Northing

4 _____
Zone Easting Northing

Verbal Boundary Description (describe the boundaries of the property)

See boundary map.

Boundary Justification (explain why the boundaries were selected)

Highway 190 serves as the northern boundary, since that marks the northern edge of the hotel complex. The boundary includes all buildings and structures in the hotel complex. The boundary excludes the modern service station and grocery, which are located across the highway from the hotel complex and were built long after the period of significance ended.

11. Form Prepared By

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organization National Park Service date April 10, 2012
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Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Photographs:

Name of Property: Stove Pipe Wells Hotel

City or Vicinity: Death Valley National Park

County: Inyo **State:** CA

Photographer: Christy Avery

Date Photographed: December 6, 2011

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

Photo #1

Courtyard and front entrance to the hotel lobby and registration building. Camera facing south-southeast.

Photo #2

Courtyard and front entrance to the hotel lobby and registration building. Camera facing southeast.

Photo #3

Southeast side of hotel lobby and registration building on right, with registration entrance visible; restaurant on left; parking area in foreground. Camera facing south.

Photo #4

Southeast side of hotel lobby and registration building on right, with registration entrance visible; rear of building on left. Camera facing northwest.

Photo #5

The hotel lobby and registration building courtyard, from the building's entrance. Camera facing northwest.

Photo #6

Rear of hotel lobby and registration building, and rear patio. Camera facing southwest.

Photo #7

Rear of hotel lobby and registration building, from the ramp leading to the restaurant. Camera facing northwest.

Photo #8

Panamints motel building, front elevation. Entrance pillars of hotel lobby and registration building at far left. Camera facing northeast.

Photo #9

Stairs and landscaping at the rear of the hotel lobby and registration building, leading to the restaurant.

Photo #10

The 49er motel building, typical of the motel buildings at the site. Camera facing southeast.

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.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 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. fo the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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Stovepipe Wells Village Hotel (originally called Stove Pipe Wells Hotel) is set in Death Valley National Park, in the Mohave Desert of California. Death Valley National Park contains over three million acres and has an exceptionally diverse array of natural features, including badlands, sand dunes, salt flats, canyons, wetlands and snow-capped mountains. The 156-mile long valley itself, set between the Amargosa Mountains to the east and the Panamint Mountains to the west, is one of the hottest and driest places in North America. It contains the lowest elevation on the continent, 282 feet below sea level, as well as mountains that soar to over 11,000 feet. Temperatures can exceed 120 degrees Fahrenheit in summer, and the average rainfall in the valley is less than two inches per year. The park contains the largest wilderness area in the contiguous United States, and it is part of the Mojave and Colorado Biosphere Reserve.

Stovepipe Wells Village Hotel is in the center of the national park, nine miles west of the junction of Highway 190 and Scotty’s Castle Road. It lies about twenty-two miles northwest of Death Valley National Park headquarters at Furnace Creek. The hotel complex is set along and south of California Highway 190, which runs from the southwest to the northeast through the development. The parcel gently slopes to the north on the bottom of an alluvial fan on Tucki Mountain. Palm and deciduous and evergreen tamarisk trees dot the area around the hotel, while creosote and mesquite trees occupy the area surrounding the hotel. The Grapevine, Tucki and Cottonwood Mountains and the Mesquite Flat sand dunes are visible from the hotel site.

The entire Stovepipe Wells Village property contains eighty acres. The hotel includes eighty-three guest rooms in eight buildings, a pool, a restaurant, a lobby and gift shop, as well as offices, employee dorms, trailer sites and assorted support buildings and sheds. These buildings and structures are scattered around the site, since the hotel complex was built over the course of nine decades without a master plan. The lobby building, the Panamint Lodge building and the pool and pool buildings are set closest to the highway. The other guest lodging buildings (except for the Roadrunner Unit), the restaurant and bar, the powerhouse and the manager’s office are in the center of the complex. The manager’s house, the employee dorms, and the Roadrunner guest rooms are set further southeast. To the south of these, employee recreational vehicle sites are set in a row from southwest to northeast. Beyond these, and furthest from the highway, lie four units of employee housing, a maintenance building, a propane station, and assorted sheds. Split rail fences, stone walls, concrete and gravel paths, and historic mining artifacts such as wagon wheels and mining carts are used throughout the public parts of the hotel complex as landscape features.

A general store with fuel pumps (built in 1985), a recreational vehicle campground, and a National Park Service campground are set across (north of) the Highway 190 from the hotel. Since the building

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and the campgrounds lie across the highway from the hotel and were not part of the historic hotel complex, they are not evaluated in this nomination.

The Stovepipe Wells Village Hotel is not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places due to a lack of integrity. Only one building remains from the historic period (the lobby and gift shop building), and that building has been substantially altered. The only other structure that dates to the historic period is Bob Eichbaum’s toll road, but the original toll road has been rerouted, realigned, paved and widened.

There are a number of hotel buildings and structures in the complex that were constructed during the 1950s and 1960s. These have been evaluated for significance, but they are not associated with the National Park Service’s Mission 66 program and they do not have other historical associations. They have also all been remodeled extensively since construction, and so lack physical integrity to their dates of construction. Thus they have been found ineligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

Stovepipe Wells Village Hotel Buildings and Structures

Lobby and Gift Shop Building (1930): The single-story, U-shaped building represents the only extant building from the historic period, 1926-1936. The wood-framed building was built in 1930 and contains 9,150 square feet. Besides a lobby and gift shop, the building contains the registration desk, store rooms, restrooms and eight guest rooms. The gabled, contemporary metal roof has wide eaves that shelter a veranda on the front (northwest) and northeast sides of the building, as well as around the courtyard. The building’s original exterior finish was white stucco, but this has been covered with board and batten siding, painted tan with blue trim. The building has a concrete slab-on-grade foundation.

The building contains a concrete courtyard on its northwest side, close to the highway. Two trapezoidal stone pillars, each topped with an electric lamp, delineate the entrance to the courtyard and to the lobby building. Each pillar contains a rectangular plaque; the easternmost pillar’s plaque reads “Stovepipe Wells Village,” while the other reads “Welcome to our Village.” A concrete, wheelchair accessible ramp slopes from the courtyard to the parking area in between the pillars. A wood rail fence, supported by smaller trapezoidal stone pillars (built after 1967 to match the older, larger pillars), is set along the front of the hotel. A flagstone walkway lines the length of the building’s front. Paved parking spaces are set perpendicular to the building and to the highway.

Contemporary aluminum double doors lead from the courtyard into the lobby, which contains space

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for guests to relax, as well as a television and a computer for public use. A doorway on the east side of the room leads into the gift shop, while a doorway on the west side of the room leads into an auditorium that was formerly used for NPS evening programs but now serves as storage. Contemporary aluminum double doors also lead from the lobby to the rear of the building.

The northeast side of the building contains an exterior contemporary aluminum door that leads to the registration desk area, as well as a contemporary aluminum door that opens into the gift shop. There is a stone wall along the northeastern side of the building. Paved parking spaces are set perpendicular to this side of the building.

A concrete walkway runs the length of the rear of the building. Stone retaining walls are set behind the building, and these create planting beds for tamarisk in between the lobby building and the restaurant to the rear. A wheelchair accessible concrete ramp leads from the rear of the lobby building to the restaurant, which is situated behind and above the lobby building.

Integrity:

The building no longer retains integrity to the historic period, 1926-1936. It was enlarged twice in the 1970s. One addition is set on the southeast side, and the other along the southwest side. Guests originally entered the building through the front (north) doors off of the courtyard, but they now enter through a door on the northeastern side of the building. The original lobby area was partitioned into an auditorium space, for NPS evening presentations, and a lounge space for guests in the 1980s; the registration area was moved to the northeastern corner of the building.

Other alterations have drastically changed the exterior appearance of the building. A fireplace originally occupied the space where the lobby’s front doors are now; it was replaced by a window in 1936, and by double doors at an unknown date. The fountain, the original centerpiece of the courtyard, was removed in the 1960s. The stone post and wood rail fence were added after 1967. The original white stucco exterior finish was covered with board and batten siding, painted tan with blue trim, after 1967. The stone retaining walls and pathways that surround the building were built in 1968. Large plaques have been added to the historic trapezoidal pillars that mark the courtyard entrance.

The fenestration pattern and the roof have been drastically altered since the historic period. The northeast side of the building originally contained five small windows between the registration office and the highway; these have been removed. The guest room windows on the building’s front (northwest) side have be replaced with much larger windows. The building now features a contemporary metal roof and contemporary aluminum doors.

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Due to these exterior and interior changes, the building no longer resembles the building constructed in 1930. The lobby and gift shop building does not retain integrity of design, materials, association or workmanship due to the number of changes to the building’s interior and exterior. It also does not retain integrity of setting and feeling. When it was constructed in 1930, the building was surrounded by tent cabins, an unpaved road and desert. In 2012, a modern motel complex, with over twenty wood-framed buildings, a pool and paved parking lots, occupies the site, and a paved highway runs directly in front of the hotel. It does retain integrity of location, since it remains in the same location.

Restaurant and Bar (1968): This 11,230 building lies in the center of the complex, directly behind and above the lobby building. It was built in 1968. The building is single-story and wood-framed. It includes a public dining room with a large stone fireplace, a bar, a kitchen, and storage rooms. It also contains a 720 square foot basement, used for storage. The exterior is covered in rough sawn plywood siding with battens applied, and a gabled metal roof. Flagstone steps, bounded with a wood post-and-rail fence, lead from the southeast corner of the lobby building to the double wooden front doors of the restaurant. The rock walls, staircases and planting beds between the lobby building and the restaurant were all constructed at the same time as the restaurant, in 1968.

The building was constructed outside of the period of significance and thus is ineligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

Panamint Lodge (1961): This L-shaped, 3,235 square foot building contains ten guest rooms and lies just south of the highway and immediately southwest of the lobby building. It was built in 1961. The building is single-story and wood-framed, with a gabled metal roof. It has a concrete slab-on-grade foundation. The building contains the same tan board and batten siding, with blue trim, as the other hotel guest room buildings. The roof has wide eaves supported by wooden posts, and verandas occupy the northwest and southwest sides. A wood rail fence, supported by stone posts, is set along the front (northwest) side of the building; a stone wall lines the southwest side of the building. Paved parking spaces are set perpendicular to the building.

The building was constructed outside of the period of significance and thus is ineligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

Cottonwood Lodge (1963-4): This set of two buildings is set just south of the Panamint Lodge. The smaller building contains six guest rooms and a storage room in 1,575 square feet; it was constructed in 1964. A veranda bounded by a stone wall is set in the front. The larger unit, set to the southwest,

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contains ten units and 2,490 square feet, and was constructed in 1963. It is also single-story and wood- framed. Both buildings have gabled metal roofs. Both buildings were originally covered with white stucco, but are now covered with board and batten siding, painted tan with blue trim. Both buildings have a concrete slab-on-grade foundation.

The Cottonwood Lodge was constructed outside of the period of significance and thus is ineligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

49ers Motel (1968): This single-story, wood framed structure contains sixteen guest rooms in 7,500 square feet. It was built in 1968 and is set southeast of the pool. The building is covered with blue board and batten siding with tan trim, and topped with a gabled metal roof. The roof contains wide eaves, supported by wooden posts that shelter verandas on three sides of the building. The posts are set into stone walls occupy three of the building sides. It rests upon a concrete slab-on-grade foundation. Parking spaces are set perpendicular to the building along the northern side.

The building was constructed outside of the period of significance and thus is ineligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

Road Runner Motel (1969): This single-story, 8,960 square foot building was completed in 1969. It is the easternmost building in the complex, and lies just southeast of the 49er motel unit. It contains twenty-three guest rooms. The building contains tan board and batten siding with blue trim, and a gabled metal roof. The roof contains wide eaves, supported by wooden posts that shelter verandas on three sides of the building; the posts are set into stone walls. The building contains a concrete slab-on-grade foundation. Parking spaces are set perpendicular to the building along the northern side.

The building was constructed outside of the period of significance and thus is ineligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

Tucki Motel (1987): This single-story, wood-framed building lies at the western boundary of the complex, perpendicular to the Cottonwood Lodge. It contains a concrete slab-on-grade foundation, a gabled metal roof and 725 square feet. It was built in 1987. Parking is set perpendicular to the western side of the building.

The building was constructed outside of the period of significance and thus is ineligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

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Lodge Rooms 49 & 50: This small, single story, wood-framed building, contains two guest rooms in 630 square feet. It was built in 1940 and extensively remodeled in 1962. The building has a concrete slab-on-grade foundation. The original exterior walls were covered with white stucco, but board and batten siding, painted tan with blue trim, was added in after 1968. The metal gabled roof contains wide eaves that shelter an overhang, supported with wooden posts.

The building was constructed outside of the period of significance and thus is ineligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

Pool House (1959): Built in 1959, the pool house is a single-story, wood-framed, flat-roofed structure with a concrete slab-on-grade foundation. The original white stucco finish has been covered by tan board and batten siding, with blue trim. The building contains men’s and women’s changing areas and is located on the south side of the pool.

The building was constructed outside of the period of significance and thus is ineligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

Pool Cabana (1968): This is an open-fronted, wood-framed shelter adjacent to the pool. It was built in 1968 and is located on the north side of the pool. It contains a concrete slab-on-grade foundation with blue board and batten siding and tan trim, and a metal hip roof.

The building was constructed outside of the period of significance and thus is ineligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

Swimming Pool (2004): The rectangular swimming pool was built in 2004. A white metal fence stretches between the cabana building and the pool house, and encloses the pool area.

The pool was constructed outside of the period of significance and thus is ineligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

General Manager’s House (1960): This single-story, wood framed 1,100 square foot building was completed in 1960. It originally contained a combination living room and bedroom and one bathroom in 505 square feet. In 1970, a large bedroom and bathroom were added. The building originally had white stucco exterior walls, but is now covered with tan board and batten siding and blue trim. It has a concrete slab-on-grade foundation and gabled metal roof.

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The building was constructed outside of the period of significance and thus is ineligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

General Manager’s Office (1975): This building is wood-framed, with a concrete slab-on-grade foundation, and 750 square feet. It was built in 1975. It is set due south of the pool, in the center of the complex.

The building was constructed outside of the period of significance and thus is ineligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

Employee Dorm (1975): This 5,110 square foot building was constructed in 1975. It is set in the southern part of the hotel complex, adjacent to the employee dorm constructed in 1985. Interior and exterior walls are both constructed from concrete block. It rests upon a concrete slab-on-grade foundation. It contains dormitory twenty units. The building contains a gabled roof with a built-up covering.

The building was constructed outside of the period of significance and thus is ineligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

Employee Dorm (1985): This 6,650 square foot building was built in 1985. It is set in the southern part of the complex, adjacent to the older employee dorm.

The building was constructed outside of the period of significance and thus is ineligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

Maintenance Shop (1970): Built in 1970, this 2,250 square foot structure is set just south of the employee trailer sites, at the south end of the complex. It is single story and built of concrete blocks, with a concrete slab-on-grade foundation. Concrete partitions divide the building into three shop areas.

The building was constructed outside of the period of significance and thus is ineligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

Powerhouse (1968): In the center of the complex, behind the restaurant, lies the 256 square foot powerhouse. It was built in 1968. It is a single story, one-room structure, constructed with concrete block and gabled composition roof.

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The building was constructed outside of the period of significance and thus is ineligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

Employee Trailer Area (1973): This lies in between the maintenance shop and the employee dorms. Fourteen sites with electric hookups make up the site. It was established in 1973.

The site was constructed outside of the period of significance and thus is ineligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

Sheds and Other Small-Scale Features

There are also a number of modern sheds and outbuildings at the hotel complex. All were constructed outside of the period of significance. This includes a storage shed for the 49er motel, two sheds behind the maintenance shop, a fueling station near the maintenance building, and a set of propane tanks, also near the maintenance shed.

Highway 190: Highway 190, a paved California state highway, creates the northern boundary of the hotel complex. Inside Death Valley National Park, the highway runs from the eastern boundary, ten miles southeast of the Furnace Creek Visitor Center, to the western boundary, west of Panamint Springs. The highway continues in both directions outside the park. The section of Highway 190 that runs between Stovepipe Wells and the park’s western boundary replaced Eichbaum’s toll road in 1937. The state rerouted the western portion of Eichbaum’s toll road at this time. The new route was two-and-one-half miles shorter than Eichbaum’s road, and it contained only seventy-two curves, rather than the 245 of Eichbaum’s road. The new road grade averaged 6.7 percent (compared to up to 22 percent for the old road).¹ The original surface was dirt, but the road was later paved and widened, probably in the 1950s.

The route changes, along with alterations such as paving and widening and the replacement of an eleven-mile stretch that washed out in 1942, have left the route without integrity to the historic period.²

¹ Fitzhugh Minogeroodee, “Road Joins Extremes,” *New York Times*, October 24, 1937; Isabelle Story, “Oases for Tourists,” *New York Times*, October 17, 1937; Greene, 911.

² California Department of Transportation, State Route 190 Transportation Concept Report, May 2003, accessed online at <http://www.dot.ca.gov/dist6/planning/tcrs/>.

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Native peoples have lived in and around Death Valley for 10,000 years, but in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, few tourists would have thought of venturing to the area. Death Valley was known as a vast, foreboding place, the hottest and driest in North America. Writers described the valley as “a pit of horrors” or a “hell on earth.” Place names reflected this viewpoint; the area contained the Funeral Mountains, Coffin Peak, Deadman Pass and Hell’s Gate. These attitudes reflected not only specific ideas about Death Valley, but also contemporary thinking about desert landscapes in general. Most Americans prior to the 1920s regarded deserts as wastelands, useless at best, and dangerous and fearsome at worst.

Miners and mining companies were the first groups of Americans to occupy Death Valley. The first miners, who arrived in the 1880s, were hampered by the dry climate and lack of transportation options. As mining technologies improved in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, corporations established large-scale operations in order to extract the gold, silver, zinc, borax and other minerals found in Death Valley.¹ Boom towns sprung up in the area; Rhyolite (just west of the current national park boundary in Nevada) boasted 10,000 inhabitants at its peak. In addition to miners, Death Valley attracted a number of people seen as eccentric—those willing to trade the comforts of society for a solitary existence of the desert. Some local entrepreneurs considered plans to bring tourists into the valley in the first decade of the twentieth century, but they ultimately decided that Death Valley was too remote and foreboding to attract visitors. Furthermore, most Americans accessed vacation destinations by railroad, and there was no passenger rail transportation to the area. The isolated desert valley remained the domain of miners and eccentrics.²

Herbert (Bob) Eichbaum, an engineer who built the first electric plant in the mining boom town of Rhyolite in 1906, believed that Death Valley had the potential to attract tourists. Eichbaum had a college degree in engineering, but he began prospecting around Death Valley while living in Rhyolite, and he developed a love for the scenery and natural environment of the area. After the Rhyolite mine closed in 1911, he moved to southern California; there he developed profitable tourist attractions on Catalina Island and Venice Beach in the late 1910s and early 1920s. This experience in the tourism industry spurred his interest in developing similar facilities in Death Valley; in particular, he believed that a resort on the buttes overlooking Stovepipe Wells could become a popular and profitable spot. The original Stovepipe Wells site centered around shallow wells of brackish water, where entrepreneurs had built a roadhouse with accommodations and dining for miners traveling across the valley.³ However, before 1926, existing roads to Death Valley were too poor for tourist travel, and Eichbaum’s plan hinged on capitalizing on the newest vacation trend—auto travel.

¹ Richard E. Lingenfelter, *Death Valley and the Amargosa: Land of Illusion*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 5-7.

² Hal Rothman, *To Ride Alone Forever in an Unprocessed Country: An Administrative History of Death Valley National Park* (draft), 25-26.

³ Lingenfelter, 7-9. The exact date that Eichbaum established his California businesses is unknown.

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By the 1920s, the automobile had transformed the way that Americans vacationed. Americans of previous decades had relied on trains to access leisure-time destinations, but by the 1920s, automobile use had skyrocketed in the United States. By 1922, there were more than 10 million automobiles on the road. Cars had become the preferred means of transportation for middle and upper class vacationers, since cars gave them the freedom to explore at will. Americans increasingly spent their leisure time in nature, engaging in activities such as auto camping and scenic driving (the *New York Times* estimated that half of the nation's 10 million cars were used for car camping by the mid-1920s), and improved highways and tourist facilities that catered to auto travelers made these endeavors possible. People began to travel further afield in their cars in their quest for recreational activities or places of scenic interest, and once remote areas, like Death Valley, now seemed within reach of the auto tourist. Americans of this era also demonstrated a willingness to journey to new places in their quest to experience new sights and activities, and this enthusiasm made Death Valley a prime target for recreational development.⁴

These travel trends were nowhere stronger than in Southern California. Noted journalist Bruce Bliven observed in the 1920s that Los Angeles had become "a completely motorized civilization. Nowhere else in the world have human beings so thoroughly adapted themselves to the automobile."⁵ Tourism emerged as a major industry in Southern California in the 1920s, and it was the automobile that made mass tourism possible. Improved highways and roads, auto camps, motels, gas stations, and roadside restaurants allowed tourists to travel safely and with relative ease and comfort to new vacation destinations around the state. The Auto Club of California began publishing maps and newsletters to guide local tourists to the state's natural wonders; they even posted signs on the state's roadways directing drivers to scenic natural features and other sights.⁶

Bob Eichbaum had learned, through his Southern California ventures, the necessity of good roads when developing tourist facilities, and he knew that building such a road into Death Valley was the first step toward turning the area into a vacation destination. He began to formulate plans to build not only a resort at Stovepipe Wells, but also a road that would allow auto tourists to access Death Valley from the population centers of Southern California. Eichbaum sold his Catalina Island business to William Wrigley, of Wrigley chewing gum fame, and returned to Death Valley in 1925, where he became the first person to successfully implement plans to bring tourists into Death Valley.⁷ He developed plans to build a toll road to the valley from the west that would allow southern California tourists to access the area. Toll roads had become common in the deserts of the American West, since municipalities were

⁴ Paul Sutton, *Driven Wild: How the Fight Against Automobiles Launched the Modern Wilderness Movement*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002), 28-30; Patricia Nelson Limerick, "Seeing and Being Seen: Tourism in the American West," in *Seeing and Being Seen: Tourism in the American West*, David Wrobel, ed., (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2001), 47.

⁵ Kevin Starr, *Material Dreams: Southern California through the 1920s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 80 and 95-96.

⁶ Hal Rothman, *Devil's Bargains: Tourism in the Twentieth Century American West*, (Lawrence: University of Kansas press, 2000), 147.

⁷ Death Valley Journal, "Herbert William Eichbaum," February 24, 2009, online resource at <http://oldtrailmaster.wordpress.com/2009/02/>.

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reluctant to fund road construction to sparsely visited areas. Eichbaum petitioned Inyo County for the right to build his road, but at the urging of the Pacific Coast Borax Company, which utilized the route Eichbaum planned to build upon, they rejected his proposal. In late 1925, after delivering a petition signed by hundreds of local residents and businesspeople, and with the support of the Automobile Club of Southern California, Eichbaum received permission to build a toll road from Darwin Wash (where a road from the Owens Valley, west of Death Valley, terminated) to Stovepipe Wells.⁸

The road proved challenging to build due to the geography and unstable terrain along the route, and these factors determined the eventual location of Eichbaum's new hotel. Eichbaum and his engineer first worked with the Inyo County Board of Supervisors to choose Towne Pass as the route over the Panamint Mountains. To save money, Eichbaum rejected the use of dynamite, and so road width was limited by the rock outcroppings that lined the route. Construction was delayed by rain, landslides, and the difficulty of obtaining supplies and retaining workers. Shifting sands from the Mesquite Sand Dunes stymied construction on the valley floor four and one-half miles short of Stovepipe Wells, so in early 1926, Eichbaum decided to establish his hotel at the end of the completed section of road (he named the hotel after the distant spring anyway). County supervisors allowed Eichbaum to charge two dollars for each car, fifty cents for each person, and one dollar for each head of livestock that traveled between Darwin Wash and the terminus. The road was rough, with grades as steep as 22 percent. Driver faced 245 curves, many of them hairpin turns. Cars could not negotiate some corners without backing up. Despite these difficulties, auto tourists could now visit the once-inaccessible site via Eichbaum's toll road.⁹

Next, Eichbaum turned his attention to developing the first tourist accommodations in Death Valley. Because of the expense of constructing the road, Eichbaum scaled back his resort plans, and in 1926, he built twenty rental cottages containing fifty rooms, as well as a restaurant, general store and gas station.¹⁰ Eichbaum nicknamed his cluster of cottages "Bungalette City" or "Bungalow City," though Stove Pipe Wells Hotel was the official name of the facility. The hotel owner did not believe that such a warm climate required frame buildings, so the cottages were similar to tent cabins, with beaverboard (a wood fiberboard typically only used for interiors), screens, and green and white-striped roll-up canvas awnings. Army tents served as the larger buildings. Eichbaum modeled the tents after those that served as tourist accommodations at Avalon on Catalina Island; that development, too, was called "Bungalow City." Despite the rustic nature of the cabins, the resort had electricity and bathrooms with hot water, and Eichbaum lured a chef from Catalina Island to run the tented restaurant. Workers landscaped the site with Joshua trees, flower beds and a single fir. A searchlight on the restaurant illuminated the sky above the hotel.¹¹ Stove Pipe Wells Hotel opened in November of 1926.¹²

⁸ Linda W. Greene, *A History of Mining in Death Valley National Monument*, (Denver: National Park Service, 1981), 898-899.

⁹ Greene, 900.

¹⁰ Fitzhugh Minogeroode, "Road Joins Extremes," *New York Times*, October 24, 1937.

¹¹ Rothman, 26-27.

¹² Mary DeDecker, *Bob Eichbaum's Resort and his Toll Road to Death Valley*, Death Valley National Park archives.

¹² Greene, 901-902; L. Burr Belden, *Death Valley Historical Report*, 1959, XI-3, ETIC Files.

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Eichbaum capitalized on the traveling public's appetite for new destinations and experiences by building the road and hotel, and thus providing access to the isolated, mysterious valley. Death Valley was now only a seven to eight hour drive from Los Angeles, and the entrepreneur positioned the entire journey as a worthwhile trip. Eichbaum promoted the scenic wonders and points of historical interest along the entire journey from Los Angeles; he spotlighted unusual geologic features, silver mines, the Los Angeles Aqueduct and Owens Lake. He lured tourists with promises of spectacular landscapes and an oasis at the end of the road. "After a 38 mile drive across the Panamint Range," Eichbaum wrote, "with color blazoned mountains and the sky appearing in brighter aspect around every turn in the road, the visitor arrives at Stove Pipe Wells Hotel." Regional newspapers soon lauded the new toll road as a picturesque journey that allowed southern California residents to take in the scenic wonders of the area.¹³

By making Death Valley accessible to auto travelers and by providing comfortable accommodations once there, Eichbaum helped to transform the public's understanding of the valley. Eichbaum hired a publicity agent, advertised in Los Angeles newspapers, and lured travel journalists to his hotel. The publicity helped to convince vacationers that Death Valley was no longer an unforgiving, dangerous place, but instead, an area of great natural beauty and historic interest. Eichbaum softened the harsh image of Death Valley by portraying it as a wintertime haven from the fierce winter storms of coastal California. The automobile editor of the *Los Angeles Examiner* visited the hotel the same month that it opened, and he assured his readers that the once-inaccessible valley could now be reached "in absolute safety, comfort and convenience."¹⁴ National travel guides and magazines such as *Overland Monthly* heaped praise upon the spot as well; renowned journalist Ernie Pyle described Stovepipe Wells as a "lavish spot for comfort."¹⁵

Eichbaum understood that auto tourists craved new adventures, and he invented activities that catered to their desires in order to boost tourism to Death Valley. He was renowned for the creative ways he had lured tourists to his Catalina Island and Venice Beach attractions, and he utilized the same skills to bring visitors to Death Valley. He created dramatic spectacles for guests during holidays. The annual Easter celebration, which featured a Sunrise mass on the top of a large sand dune, was proclaimed "the most unique and significant Easter service America has ever known" by one visitor. Thanksgiving at Stovepipe Wells, attended by the famed former prospectors of the area, proved similarly impressive. Eichbaum staged other publicity stunts, such as rolling and skiing contests on the nearby sand dunes. Guests could also take guided horseback rides with former prospectors ("Thrills of long ago without the dangers and discomforts," Eichbaum promised), or take in the sights from the comfort of a Studebaker on an organized sightseeing tour. Eichbaum invented exaggerated stories about local people and places (for example, he guided them to the remains of what he identified as ancient temples and lost cities), in

¹³ Lingenfelter, 455; Alma Overholt, "Strange Sights Intrigue Visitor who Penetrates Death Valley District," *Los Angeles Times*, March 15, 1931.

¹⁴ Greene, 899-900.

¹⁵ Standard Oil Company of California, *Standard Oil Bulletin*, 1933, 21-22; *Nature Magazine*, 1928, 268; Ernie Pyle, *Home Country*, 272 (William Sloane Associates, 1935).

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order to make his visitors feel that they were somewhere truly unique and important. Tourists were fascinated by the geologic features, the valley's below-sea level location, the ruins of mining operations, and the lore surrounding colorful residents such as Walter Scott, known as "Death Valley Scotty."¹⁶

The entrepreneur provided additional means for vacationers to access Death Valley when he inaugurated stage and air service for visitors. Eichbaum began stage service from Los Angeles in 1927 for tourists who did not want to drive their own cars to Death Valley. He billed the entire four-day trip as a package sightseeing vacation. The stage stopped in Lone Pine, west of the valley, where passengers could see sunset and sunrise reflected upon Mt. Whitney, the highest point in the United States at the time, before traveling to the continent's lowest point.¹⁷ He also provided stage service from the nearest train station, in Lone Pine. In 1929, Eichbaum launched scenic flight service to Death Valley. The flight originated in Los Angeles and first veered north to Yosemite National Park, so that tourists could enjoy views of the national park on their way to the remote desert valley. Eichbaum sent cars to meet each incoming flight and bring guests to his hotel.¹⁸ Private car, however, remained the most popular mode of travel.

Eichbaum's success spurred other hotel development in Death Valley, but Eichbaum's first competitor miscalculated the public's willingness to leave their cars behind and return to train travel. By the mid-1920s, the mining industry in Death Valley had declined, and the Pacific Coast Borax Company began to look to tourism as a way to profit from their railroad.¹⁹ In 1927, the year after Stove Pipe Wells Hotel opened, the borax company completed the Furnace Creek Inn. The elegant, Spanish-style Inn contrasted sharply with Eichbaum's complex of tent cabins.²⁰ However, train travel was no longer a popular mode of transportation for most vacationers, who instead preferred to arrive by car. The railroad line shut down only three years later, though the Inn proved a success due to the auto travelers that made their way to the hotel, often partially via Eichbaum's toll road.²¹

The opening of a luxury hotel near Furnace Creek helped to solidify Death Valley's appealing new image. Auto clubs and Southern California tourist organizations began promoting the valley as a "health-giving winter resort" or "winter resort deluxe." Newspapers described the area as a playground, and a "hellhole turned paradise." In the winter of 1928 and 1929, over 10,000 tourists visited the valley; virtually none had come before Eichbaum built Stove Pipe Wells Hotel and the toll road. The establishment first of Eichbaum's road and hotel, and then Furnace Creek Inn, was the catalyst for the rise in visitor numbers and for the rapid shift in public opinion regarding Death Valley.²² Visitors no longer feared the arid valley, since they could travel from southern California on a maintained road, and lodge in relative comfort in either hotel.

¹⁶ Lingenfelter, 458.

¹⁷ Richard Lingenfelter, *Death Valley and the Amargosa: A Land of Illusion*, University of California Press, 1986, 451-452. Mt. Whitney lost its position as the highest mountain in the United States when Alaska joined the Union in 1959.

¹⁸ Lingenfelter, 458.

¹⁹ Greene, 885.

²⁰ Rothman, 27.

²¹ Greene, 35.

²² Lingenfelter, 455.

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Encouraged by the success of his hotel and road and the rise in tourism to the valley, Eichbaum expanded his resort. He built a lobby building in 1930 (this building is extant in 2012, and it represents the only building remaining from Eichbaum's tenure at Stovepipe Wells). The U-shaped building featured white stucco walls and a courtyard with a circular stone fountain. It contained a lounge area with a large stone fireplace and a registration desk. Eichbaum set the lobby building along the road, while the bungalows and dining room were located behind the new structure. Knowing that new roads were the key to luring more tourists and keeping them in the valley longer, Eichbaum helped construct a road between his establishment and Scotty's Castle in 1930, a project that shaved fifty miles off of the drive between the two points; he also built roads to scenic locations such as Aguerberry Point. To the south, a new road led to the Furnace Creek area, and Pacific Coast Borax Company Employees began to build roads to scenic spots near the Inn.²³

Eichbaum had proved that tourism could be a profitable business in Death Valley, and numerous other operations opened in the late 1920s and early 1930s. By this time, Furnace Creek Inn had added a golf course, swimming pool, tennis courts and additional rooms to become the premier resort in the valley. In 1933, the company converted a former supply point for Harmony Borax works in to the Furnace Creek Ranch, which offered less costly accommodations than the inn. Entrepreneurs opened affordable hotels in Death Valley Junction and Beatty (on the east side of the valley in Nevada, and accessible by good road) that provided direct competition for Stove Pipe Wells Hotel. Small hotels and cabin complexes, often established by former miners, opened at points around the valley.²⁴ Eichbaum died unexpectedly in 1932, and his wife Helene assumed control of the operation.

A year later, at the urging of NPS director Horace Albright, President Herbert Hoover designated Death Valley a national monument. Albright had expanded the size and geographic range of the park system since his appointment as chief in 1928, and he also sought to diversify the type of landscapes that the NPS protected. The sparsely vegetated desert park did not resemble other American national parks or monuments, but Albright, who had an affinity for desert landscapes, convinced the outgoing president to designate the valley as a national monument before his tenure ended.²⁵

The new designation attracted increased numbers of tourists, and the National Park Service employed Civilian Conservation Corps crews in the 1930s to build infrastructure in the new monument. Crews constructed or improved roads, trails and ranger stations in order to keep up with the rise in visitation. Eichbaum's toll road became the subject of increasing complaints, since the public did not expect to pay a toll when they entered a national monument. The California Division of Highways purchased the road in 1933, and then turned over the portion within the new monument to the National Park Service in 1934. In 1937, the state paved the toll road outside of the monument's western boundary; at the same time, the NPS hard-surfaced the portion of the road inside the monument, as well as a newer addition to

²³ Greene, 884, 908-909; Lingenfelter, 458.

²⁴ Lingenfelter, 455.

²⁵ Rothman, 34-36.

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the road that led east and bisected the park. Now drivers could travel between Lone Pine, outside the monument to the west, and Baker, to the east, on paved or well-maintained roads.²⁶

The agencies rerouted the western portion of Eichbaum's toll road at this time; the new route, known as the Darwin Cut-Off, avoided the former site of Darwin in favor of a route to the north. The new cut-off made the road two-and-one-half miles shorter than the original route, and it featured only seventy-two curves, rather than the original 245. It contained more gradual elevation changes; the road grade averaged 6.7 percent (compared to up to 22 percent for the old road). It also proved less prone to landslides and washouts than the original toll route. The Darwin Cut-Off ended just west of Panamint Springs, and the new road followed the path of Eichbaum's toll road the rest of the way to Stove Pipe Wells Hotel.²⁷ An eleven-mile portion of the road washed out in 1942, and without the funds to rebuilt it, the NPS turned the road back over to the state. The road through the park, including the section that had previously been Eichbaum's toll road, became California State Highway 190.²⁸

Eichbaum's widow sold the operation in 1936 to the General Hotel Company. It changed hands again in 1947, when it was acquired by George and Peg Putnam. George Putnam, an author and explorer, had been Amelia Earhart's agent and publicist before becoming her husband in 1931; he moved to the Lone Pine area in 1940, three years after Earhart's disappearance over the Pacific. Putnam remarried in 1945, and he purchased Stovepipe Wells Hotel as a gift for his new wife, Peg (the couple had enjoyed winter stays at the hotel). Peg managed the hotel while George concentrated on writing books about the Death Valley area; he died in 1950, but Peg continued her ownership of the facility. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, Peg significantly expanded the hotel by building the Panamint Lodge building, the Cottonwood Lodge building, the pool house and cabana, a wedge-shaped swimming pool, and the general manager's house (the pool is no longer extant, but the other buildings remain).

While the Mission 66 program spurred new growth and development at Death Valley National Monument between 1955 and 1966, Stovepipe Wells remained relatively unaffected by the development program, and no hotel buildings or structures were constructed as part of the program. Many other national parks looked to concession operations to provide visitor services and amenities during this time, and concession operations were a substantial part of some other parks' Mission 66 plans. Death Valley administrators, however, focused instead on the development of infrastructure, park support services, and visitor services such as visitor centers and ranger stations. NPS administrators expressed an interest in buying the Stovepipe Wells property at this time, but Mission 66 program provided inadequate funds for the purchase.²⁹

²⁶ Greene, 911; Isabelle Story, "Oases for Tourists," *New York Times*, October 17, 1937.

²⁷ Fitzhugh Minogeroodee, "Road Joins Extremes," *New York Times*, October 24, 1937; Isabelle Story, "Oases for Tourists," *New York Times*, October 17, 1937; Greene, 911.

²⁸ California Department of Transportation, State Route 190 Transportation Concept Report, May 2003, accessed online at <http://www.dot.ca.gov/dist6/planning/tcrs/>.

²⁹ National Park Service, *Mission 66 for Death Valley National Monument*, March 1965; National Park Service, *Death Valley National Monument, Master Plan Development Outline*, May 1962, DSC Etic; National Park Service, *Death Valley in California, Master Plan Development Outline*, October 1962, DSC Etic.

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The Trevell Corporation, which owned retail operations in Yellowstone National Park, purchased Stovepipe Wells from Peg Putnam in 1966. The purchase enabled the company to provide winter employment to their seasonal Yellowstone employees. The purchase included the original lobby building, a restaurant (which subsequently burned down), Panamint Lodge, Cottonwood Lodge, twenty-seven guest cottages, and a number of employee housing buildings. The purchase also included a general store and gas station, which had been built across the highway from the hotel complex. Over the next decade, Trevell enacted extensive changes. The company built a dining room and bar to replace the burned structure, as well as the rock walls, paths and planting beds that lie between the lobby building and the restaurant (these buildings and structures are extant in 2012). Trevell also built the Roadrunner motel units, the 49'er motel units, shop buildings, one employee dormitory, and stables. They removed the guest cottages at this time.³⁰ Despite the new buildings, the resort fell into a state of disrepair in the 1970s.

When Edwin Rothfuss became monument superintendent in 1979, he found decaying facilities throughout the monument, but particularly at Stovepipe Wells. Stovepipe Wells, Rothfuss remembered, “looked like it needed to be condemned. ... It was a disaster.”³¹ Some considered it the most dilapidated accommodations in the entire national park system. In an effort to bring agency attention to the state of facilities at Death Valley, Rothfuss suggested demolishing Stovepipe Wells and planting the area with vegetation. He supported his idea with a report from a NPS safety engineer that characterized the hotel facility as “dilapidated.” Utility and fire prevention systems did not meet codes. Parking lots and access roads were not paved. NPS planners agreed that the property needed extensive rehabilitation to address safety concerns, to improve circulation, and to bring the property up to NPS standards.³²

The report spurred the NPS to purchase the 80-acre property and spend \$5 million on its improvement in 1979. The purchase included seventy-nine guest rooms, fourteen trailer sites, a restaurant, bar, gift shop, general store, gas station, employee housing (including a number of small, substandard cottages that lacked indoor plumbing), and maintenance buildings. The NPS hoped to extensively redevelop the site into different zones, including a public use area with an NPS contact station, an employee housing area with a recreation center, and a fenced utility area. However, the actual changes were much more modest.³³ Most of the buildings were renovated to meet fire and safety codes, and most were clad in new board-and-batten siding. The only building that remained from Eichbaum’s tenure—the lobby building—was transformed by two additions, new siding and interior changes. In 2012, the property no longer resembles the Stove Pipe Wells Hotel built by Bob Eichbaum.

³⁰Mark Massie, *Appraisal of Tract 15-105, Stove Pipe Wells Village*, May 1, 1978, Death Valley National Park Archives, 55.

³¹Rothman, 80.

³²Rothman, 73.

³³National Park Service, *Stovepipe Wells Developed Area Plan*, 1980, Death Valley National Park Archives, 1.

**OFFICE OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION
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January 28, 2013

In reply refer to: NPS120904A

Wayne Badder, Acting Superintendent
National Park Service
Death Valley National Park
P.O. Box 579
Death Valley, CA 92328

Re: Determination of Eligibility, Stovepipe Wells Hotel Historic District, Death Valley National Park

Dear Mr. Badder:

Thank you for your letter dated August 30, 2012, requesting review and comment regarding the Determination of Eligibility (DOE) by the National Park Service (NPS) for the Stovepipe Wells Hotel Historic District. Although your letter does not specify, it is assumed that NPS is consulting the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) to fulfill its responsibilities under Section 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act to survey and evaluate properties for National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) eligibility.

NPS has applied the criteria of eligibility and assessed the integrity of Stovepipe Wells Hotel Historic District and finds that it is significant under Criterion A at a local level, but lacks historic integrity as a result of several additions and modifications after the period of significance (1926-1936). Therefore, NPS proposes that the district is not eligible for listing in the NRHP.

The SHPO concurs that the Stovepipe Wells Hotel complex possesses significance but lacks historic integrity and is not eligible for listing in the NRHP. However, the SHPO cannot concur that Highway 190 is not eligible for listing in the NRHP. Much of Highway 190 follows the former Eichbaum Toll Road, which has been designated as a California State Historical Landmark. While the SHPO acknowledges that the road has been modified since 1936, the extent of these changes is not clearly defined in the DOE information provided, and further research would be necessary to determine and record its potential significance and historic integrity for the purposes of NRHP eligibility.

Thank you for seeking my comments and considering historic properties as part of your project planning. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Mark Beason, Project Review Unit Historian, at (916) 445-4047 or mark.beason@parks.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Susan K. Stratton for".

Carol Roland-Nawi, Ph.D.
State Historic Preservation Officer



United States Department of the Interior



NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Death Valley National Park
P.O. Box 579
Death Valley, California 92328

IN REPLY REFER TO:
H32

August 30, 2012

MAILED USPS CERTIFIED MAIL - RETURN RECEIPT

Milford Wayne Donaldson
State Historic Preservation Officer
Department of Parks and Recreation
Post Office Box 942896
Sacramento, CA 94296-0001

Attn: Mark Beason, State Historian II

Subject: Transmittal of National Register of Historic Places Registration Form for Stovepipe Wells Hotel
Historic District, Death Valley National Park, Inyo County, California

Dear Mr. Donaldson,

Death Valley National Park (Park) is requesting California State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) review of information supporting the National Park Service (NPS) finding that the Stovepipe Wells Hotel Historic District (Hotel) is ineligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Park is seeking SHPO consensus with the NPS's finding that the Hotel is ineligible for listing due to a loss of integrity. Information gathered through fieldwork and archival research suggests that the Hotel has been significantly altered since the 1950s and no longer retains historic integrity.

Stovepipe Wells Hotel became the first tourist accommodations in Death Valley in 1926, and the associated road (now California Highway 190) became the first automobile route for tourists into the valley that same year. By the 1920s, the automobile had transformed the way Americans vacationed: tourists began to travel further afield in their cars in their quest for recreational activities or places of scenic interest, including remote Death Valley. Bob Eichbaum, who had developed tourist facilities elsewhere in southern California, realized the tourism potential of Death Valley, and he became the first entrepreneur to build a road and tourist accommodations in the valley.

To promote his property, Eichbaum hired a publicity agent, advertised in Los Angeles newspapers, and lured travel journalists to his Death Valley hotel. The publicity helped to convince vacationers that Death Valley was no longer an unforgiving, inhospitable place, but instead, an area of great natural beauty and historic interest. Eichbaum's venture proved successful, and he expanded the facility until his death in 1932. The success of Stovepipe Wells Hotel also paved the way for subsequent development of other hotels and recreational facilities in the valley. The period of significance spans from 1926, when Eichbaum established his resort, until 1936, when Eichbaum's widow sold the property.

Stovepipe Wells Hotel is significant under Criterion A at the local level for its association with the development of tourism in Death Valley. However, the cumulative effect of the alterations and additions to

the Hotel has led to the loss of historic integrity. The setting, feeling, and overall design of the Hotel have changed dramatically so that it is no longer discernible as Eichbaum's original resort property. The only remaining building from the period of significance and the portion of road that follows Eichbaum's original route both lack integrity to the historic period. The original hotel building, built in 1930, has been extensively altered through additions and remodeling. The original toll road has been rerouted, realigned, paved and widened. The building and the road are therefore not eligible to the National Register of Historic Places.

There are a number of hotel buildings and structures in the Hotel complex that were constructed during the 1950s and 1960s. These have been evaluated for significance, but they are not associated with the Mission 66 program and they do not have other historical associations. They have also all been remodeled extensively since construction, and so lack physical integrity to their dates of construction. Thus they have been found ineligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

We greatly appreciate your office's assistance and want to thank you for the review of this finding. If you concur with the finding of ineligibility for Stovepipe Wells Hotel, please send us a letter stating your concurrence. If you need any additional information, or have questions or concerns, please contact Blair Davenport, Cultural Resource Specialist, at Death Valley National Park (760/786-3287, blair_davenport@nps.gov).

Sincerely,



Sarah Craighead
Superintendent

Enclosures:

1. National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, 2 copies
2. USGS topographical map with marked with property
3. Archival processed and labeled photographs, 2 sets of 10 images
4. CD containing photographs (10 .tiff files) and NR Form (4 MS Word files)

bcc (w/out enclosures):

B Davenport, CR Manager, DEVA (signed copy via email)
W Raschkow, Archeologist, DEVA (signed copy via email)
L Newman, Concession Specialist, DEVA (signed copy via email)
Christine Avery, Project Historian, PWRO-Seattle (signed copy via email)
Elaine Jackson-Retondo, History Program Manager, PWRO-San Francisco (signed copy via email)
Central Files, DEVA

RM:BDavenport:mbd:08/29/2012:760-786-3287;Sent via US Certified Mail, August 30, 2012