

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 Sanford Hotel (D009: 124-38)

and/or common Conant Hotel

2. Location

street & number 1913 Farnam Street N/A not for publication

city, town Omaha N/Avicinity of

state Nebraska code 031 county Douglas code 055

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> NA in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: Hotel

4. Owner of Property

name Sideris - Panos Realty Company

street & number 1913 Farnam Street

city, town Omaha N/Avicinity of state Nebraska

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Omaha/Douglas Civic Center - Register of Deeds

street & number 1819 Farnam Street

city, town Omaha state Nebraska

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

1984 Omaha/Douglas Co.  
title Historic Building Survey has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1984 - on going  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Omaha City Planning Dept. & Nebraska State Historical Society

city, town Omaha/Lincoln state Nebraska

---

## 7. Description

---

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved    date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

---

**Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance**

Functionally, the Sanford Hotel is a large hotel building built in 1916-17 for Dr. Harold Gifford; technically, it is constructed of a brick-clad, concrete encapsulated steel frame with a concrete pan joist floor system; formally, the seven story building is rectangular in plan (basement and first floor) changing to an "H" plan at the second through seventh floors; stylistically, the architect John Latenser employed Louis Sullivan's method of giving unity to multi-story elevations by dividing the facade into the tripartite scheme of base, shaft, and capital analogous to a classical column.

The Sanford Hotel, built in 1916-17, is a large seven-story over full basement building measuring approximately 86'-9" X 90'-0" (ground floor). Technically the Sanford is constructed of a steel skeleton frame encapsulated in concrete for "fire-proof" construction. The floors are a concrete pan joist system spanning between composite beams, while a brick veneer clads the concrete and steel structure.

The building is divided into three functional zones arranged vertically; the basement contains support and mechanical functions, the first floor contains the hotel lobby and adjacent commercial areas, while the second through the seventh floors contain hotel rooms. The major entrance, centrally located at the northern Farnam Street facade, opens directly into the hotel lobby. Vertical circulation is provided by two centrally located elevators, with secondary vertical circulation provided by an interior stair at the north eastern corner of the building and fire stairs at the east and west ends of the southern facade.

Formally, the rectangular plan at the basement and first floor changes to an "H" shaped plan at the second through seventh floors. This change in plan corresponds to a change in function, thus allowing light and air to interior hotel rooms. A flat roof tops the building, with the elevator penthouse projecting above the roof line at the building's center.

The Sanford basically has only one major facade. All articulation and ornamentation are applied to the buff brick northern Farnam Street elevation; the other elevations are constructed of utility brick, obviously anticipating other adjacent buildings.

Stylistically, architect John Latenser employed Louis Sullivan's method of giving unity to multi-story elevations; the tripartite scheme of dividing an elevation into base, shaft and capital - analogous to a classical column.

The "base", in this case, is the first story commercial storefront severely remodelled in recent remodellings. This level contains a central entrance covered by a large suspended canopy. A continuous horizontal band of carved limestone divides the "base" from the "shaft". The second through sixth floors are articulated by pairs of double-hung windows arranged vertically in seven equally spaced rows. Limestone trim surrounds each row of windows emphasizing the vertical, while recessed spandrels contain inset rectangular blocks of limestone and decorative rowlock brick coursing. Another band of limestone trim at the seventh floor creates the division of "shaft" to "capital". Pairs of double-hung windows, aligned with those below, are separated from each other by inset, rectangular limestone panels carved with circular and floral

Continued

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

**CONTINUATION SHEET**      Description      ITEM NUMBER      7      PAGE      2

---

designs. An elaborate, projecting sheet metal cornice crowns the building, wrapping only the north, east and west sides of the northern wing.

The integrity of the Sanford is very good. The ornately detailed plastered beam ceiling of the first floor lobby is now covered with a suspended ceiling, but is still intact. The hotel rooms and support areas, while constructed of relatively plain plastered walls and ceilings, have undergone some remodelling over the building's history. Much of the exterior is relatively unchanged, though with the street level commercial facade having undergone the most severe alterations, it is doubtful that much of the original store front fabric remains.

# 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/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates** 1916-17 **Builder/Architect** John Latenser - Architect; Selden-Breck Construction Company - Bldr.

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

The Sanford (Conant) Hotel is significant to Omaha and Nebraska in the area of social/humanitarianism by its direct association with its developer and owner, internationally known ophthalmologist and, locally prominent philanthropist, Dr. Harold Gifford. The building is architecturally significant as one of the few remaining well preserved examples of high rise hotel architecture of early 20th century Omaha. Designed by locally prominent architect John Latenser Sr., it exhibits characteristics of the Commercial Style (Whiffen) and is a local adaption of Louis Sullivan's method of giving unity to a multi-story building.

The seven story Sanford Hotel, located at 1913 Farnam Street in Omaha, was built in 1916-17 at a cost of \$140,000 for its owner and financier Dr. Harold Gifford. Dr. Gifford (Oct. 18, 1858 - Nov. 28, 1929) was known internationally as a pioneer in ophthalmology and locally as a kind, generous man of medicine and lover of nature.

Born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Dr. Gifford attended universities at Cornell, Ann Arbor, Germany and Austria before arriving in Omaha in 1886 and establishing his practice at 20th and Harney. In Omaha, Dr. Gifford achieved international recognition for his efforts in diagnostic evaluation, clinical research and eye surgery. His treatment was "the finest to be obtained in this field" (Omaha World Herald, 11/29/29). Equally significant, Dr. Gifford helped found one of Omaha's largest medical centers, Methodist Hospital, and organized the Omaha Medical College - today known as the University of Nebraska College of Medicine - and acted as its dean.

Dr. Gifford's humanitarian efforts equalled his medical accomplishments. An avid naturalist, Dr. Gifford also helped to establish many City parks and donated much of the land to create the Fontenelle Forest wilderness preserve along the Missouri River. Although an avowed socialist and agnostic, Dr. Gifford invested continuously in Omaha real estate and hotels. In 1915 he built the Castle Hotel (623 So. 16th Street, razed 1974) and also developed the Sanford Hotel in 1916. (Building Permit)

The Sanford Hotel was built during a great construction era in downtown Omaha. This construction boom gave Omaha a look that characterized it for much of the 20th century. Among the buildings constructed from 1910 to the depression were such high-rises as the WOW Building, Fontenelle Hotel, 1st National Bank, Medical Arts Building and the Paxton Hotel. The Sanford was not only part of this downtown expansion, but was a part of a great period of hotel building as well. In all, Omaha has 117 hotels, in or near the downtown in 1917. (City Directory) Since then, the automobile has decentralized the commercial districts; people choose to stay in low-rise motels lining the highways. Today, the Sanford (Conant) and the Hill are the only high-rise hotels still functioning as hotels in Omaha.

Continued

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

**CONTINUATION SHEET**    Significance    **ITEM NUMBER** 8    **PAGE** 2

---

After its construction, the Sanford was leased to Harley Conant, who managed and operated it until 1950. Conant already owned and operated his own high-rise hotel "The Conant" at 16th and Harney (now the Regis Condominiums). Late in 1929 a four story addition was planned for the Sanford but never completed. Apparently, Dr. Gifford's death, in November, and the Great Depression brought the plans to a stand still. Conant sold his hotel at 16th and Harney in 1939 and devoted all his efforts to the Sanford (soon thereafter renamed The Conant Hotel).

The design for the Sanford was provided by John Latenser Sr. (1858-1930). Latenser, a native of Liechtenstein, arrived in Omaha in 1885. He soon achieved notariety by being appointed Superintendent of Public Buildings by President Cleveland after he successfully devised a system to stabilize the foundation of the Chicago Post Office. Latenser's practice in Omaha was prolific, with commissions including the Douglas County Court House (NRHP, 1979) and Omaha Central High School (NRHP, 1979).

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

**CONTINUATION SHEET**    Bibliography    **ITEM NUMBER**    9    **PAGE**    1

---

Building Permit Records. Omaha City Planning Department, Omaha, Nebraska.

Deeds and Mortgage Records, Douglas County, Nebraska.

Omaha Chamber of Commerce Journal, 8 Nov., 1924; 6 Oct., 1928; 2 Nov., 1929; May 1939.

Omaha City Directories. Omaha, 1917-1984.

Omaha's Own Magazine, July 1926, pg. 11-13.

Omaha Public Library Clipping File Collection, listed under Dr. Harold Gifford and Hotels, Motels.

Sheldon, Addison E. Nebraska, The Land and the People. V. 2 Chicago and New York; Lewis Publishing Co., 1931.

Whiffen, Marcus American Architecture Since 1780, A Guide to the Styles. Cambridge; The M.I.T. Press, 1969.

