Old Faithful Inn Yellowstone National Park Teton County Wyoming HABS No. WY-87

HABS WYO 20-YELNAP

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### *PHOTOGRAPHS*

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

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Historic American Buildings Survey National Park Service Department of the Interior Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

#### HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

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W. S. Keller, Photographer March, 1981

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United States Department of the Interior NATIONAL ARCHITECTURAL AND ENGINEERING RECORD HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY NATIONAL PARK SERVICE HABS WYO, WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240 ARCHITECTURAL DATA FORM 20-YELNAP STATE COUNTY TOWN OR VICINITY WYOMING TETON YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK HISTORIC NAME OF STRUCTURE (INCLUDE SOURCE FOR NAME) HABS NO. WY-87 Old Faithful Inn (Source: National Register Nomination) SECONDARY OR COMMON NAMES OF STRUCTURE Old Faithful Lodge, Old Faithful Tavern COMPLETE ADDRESS (DESCRIBE LOCATION FOR RURAL SITES) Yellowstone National Park DATE OF CONSTRUCTION (INCLUDE SOURCE) ARCHITECT (S) (INCLUDE SOURCE) Fall, Winter, and Spring of 1903-1904 Mr. Robert C. Reamer (Source: National Register Nomination) (Source: National Register Nomination) SIGNIFICANCE (ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORICAL, INCLUDE ORIGINAL USE OF STRUCTURE) Statement of Significance in National Register Nomination STYLE (IF APPROPRIATE) Tyrolean influence MATERIAL OF CONSTRUCTION (INCLUDE STRUCTURAL SYSTEMS) Lodge-pole Pine SHAPE AND DIMENSIONS OF STRUCTURE (SKETCHED FLOOR PLANS ON SEPARATE PAGES ARE ACCEPTABLE) Shape and dimensions in National Register Nomination EXTERIOR FEATURES OF NOTE See National Register Nomination, Item #7. INTERIOR FEATURES OF NOTE (DESCRIBE FLOOR PLANS, IF NOT SKETCHED) Interior features described in National Register Nomination. MAJOR ALTERATIONS AND ADDITIONS WITH DATES Major alterations and additions described in National Register Nomination. PRESENT CONDITION AND USE See National Register Nomination. OTHER INFORMATION AS APPROPRIATE See National Register Nomination. SOURCES OF INFORMATION (INCLUDE LISTING ON NATIONAL REGISTER, STATE REGISTERS, ETC.) See National Register Nomination.

DATE

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FOR HPS USE ONLY

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

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DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (II known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The present and original physical appearance of Old Faithful Inn is that of a great (sometimes advertised as the world's largest) log hostelry, its configuration individualistic but nevertheless easily traceable to Tyrolean influence.

The building faces to the north. Viewed from that direction it presents a tall and massive middle\_block dominating wings that extend to the east and the west and which, though themselves a full three stories high, appear dwarfed in comparison with their central core. Actually this core contains no more than three working stories itself, but its roof is so steeply pitched as to peak 80 feet above ground level---about a third again as high as that of either wing. Set along this topmost third are several little dormer windows, so staggered as to suggest the presence of two more factually nonexistent floors.

A sort of ship's-deck platform, about six feet wide and slightly shorter than the 100 feet long roof-tree, crowns this middle block's central gable. Thereon are set eight flagstaffs all reaching another twenty to thirty feet into the sky. From the tops of these masts fly, besides the Stars and Stripes and the Wyoming Bison Bull in its field of blue, various pennants symbolic of such entities as the Nacional Park Service and the Yellowstone Park Company. Also mounted on this platform is the instrument whereby civilization achieves one of its most unnecessary and obtrusive wilderness intrusions. This is a powerful searchlight used to illuminate---in garish shafts of light---the night time plays of Old Faithful Geyser.

A porte-cochere extends the full length of the middle block and protrudes more than 40 feet to cover the ingress-egress roadway. The roof of this porte-cochere is made into a wide, rail surrounded porch onto which entrance is gained through wide doors set in the second story wall. The building's own roof commences its steep rise even before the ceiling level of the third floor is reached, so that its broad eaves extend over about half the width of the porch---allowing occupants their choice of shade or direct sunlight.

Because of shadows cast by the eaves and by this broad and long porte-cochere, it is easiest for the north placed viewer to gain his comprehension of general building design and construction techniques through shifting his gaze to the wings. These were formerly of equal length, extending, upon completion of the first construction phase, 130 feet from both the east and the west ends of the 100 foot long central section. Thus, the overall length of the building was originally 360 feet. As previously stated, the wings were built to a height accommodating three stories but the pitch of their roofs is much gentler than that of the center so that the gable peaks are no more than 60 feet above ground elevation. The width of each is 36 feet which provides, on each floor level, for two rows of guest rooms opening off from a central hallway. Originally the total building, including second and third floor levels of the central section, housed 120 guest rooms. Ś

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## UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR MATIONAL PARK SERVICE NATIONAL EGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

#### (Continuation Sheet)

(Number all entries)

Physical Appearance - 4

The lodge-pole pine is, of course, at least within the region of the Rocky Mountains, the most superb material that can be found for the construction of log buildings. A thirty foot log cut from this tree will, often enough, not vary more than an inch in diameter from one end to the other. Now, lodge-pole logs certainly figure in the construction of the Inn's outside walls and the work that has been done in these walls, with this material, is beautiful. But it is within the lobby and along the balcony rails and supports, as seen from the lobby floor or examined at closer range by walking the balconies themselves, that one will gather the best impression of what can be done with lodge-pole materials and will form the deepest respect for a now vanished class of craftsmen who---with adz and ax, hammer and saw<sup>1-2</sup> were able to create such fascinating yet sturdy designs.

There is still one more observation to be made regarding this material and the craftsmen who used it. The lodge-pole, just as other forms of life, is subject to accidents and diseases which result in deformities---knobs, knurls, strange turns and twists. Individual examples can be found in any forest, but sometimes an infestation will result in a forest district where such oddities are common. Evidently the craftsmen-builders at Old Faithful Inn found some such source of supply, for there are many curious pieces fitted into the lobby's woodwork.

The final out-of-the-ordinary feature in Old Faithful's lobby is its great stone fireplace. Really this is four fireplaces, a fact requiring some explanation. The chimney, 10 feet square at its base, is located well out from all walls but still within the lobby's southeast quarter where it rests on a flagstone section of flooring. There is room on all sides to enjoy a fire and, since this spacious and lofty room does accentuate the coolness of its mountain surroundings, a fire can be enjoyed even in August. The architect, aware of this circumstance, provided for a fireplace in each of the chimney's four faces. These fireplaces are fitted with individual flues leading to the common central duct whereby their smokes rise more than 80 feet to the chimney's lofty, roof-topping terminus.



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The name is known. Millions of this world's inhabitants, some living as far removed as halfway around it, could instantly affirm: "Yes, Old Faithful Inn takes its name from Old Faithful Geyser alongside which it is built." So, the Inn is <u>named</u> for one of the world's best known natural wonders and for that reason has become well known itself. However, its claim to fame is not entirely based on its namesake, it is a structure possessing a considerable reputation of its own. Thus, in the course of a conversation one participant may mention an indoors event and say, "Yes, that happened at Old Faithful." Such a remark will elicit no question, the others present recognizing that it is the building which is referred to and being able, either from personal visitation or from their store of common knowledge, to conjure a vision of the place.

Old Faithful Inn appears not to have been the originally chosen name for this intentionally rustic but also intentionally cosmopolitan hostelry. However, in view of that name's subsequent and continuing acceptance, it seems to have been a happy substitution. At any rate, when, on May 28, 1903, Mr. Robert C. Reamer, Seattle Architect, signed the several sheets of plans basic to the building's construction the title appearing thereon was "Old Faithful Tavern." But "Tavern" it has never been, at least not within memory of any known living person.

It is not known whether it was the architect or his patron who made the choice of the name "Tavern". Whichever one, he was only one-third a poor name chooser---for the other two words of the name are clearly apt and have endured. If the architect, then this choice of name was about his only act with which it is possible to find fault. And he was evidently concerned with the affair for a long time, and as active in super-vising actual construction as he had been in producing designs and plans.

Certainly Mr. Reamer proved to be the embodiment of faithfulness so far as the building of Old Faithful Inn is concerned. After signing the plans on that May 28, 1903 date, he was there on the building site during the fall, winter and spring of 1903-1904 while, under his direction, the

OLD FAITHFUL INN HABS No. WY-87 (page 6)

y Participant

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INVENTORY - HOMINATION FORM

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

(Continuation Sheet)

Statement of Significance - 2

structure took form. And then, ten years later, in 1913, he was there again to supervise construction of his plans for the addition to the east wing; finally, when in 1928 another addition was necessary, this time to the west wing, it was again Mr. Reamer who provided the plans. Thus, over a quarter of a century's time, he was the master-builder of Old Faithful Inn.

Old Faithful Inn is an acknowledged individualistic creation. It is not only a large structure, it is one that was built swiftly and, for the most part, under extremely difficult climatic conditions. That is it was built during the winter time and in a high mountain, deep snow country where below zero temperatures were too common an event to be allowed as an excuse for slowing, let alone halting work. It is pertinent, therefore, to consider the journey-man builders who along with the master builder must be credited with achieving, under very difficult circumstances, a most remarkable result.

In truth, it seems doubtful if the building of Old Faithful Inn could be duplicated today---at least in the same amount of time and under the same adversities inherent to a winter construction period. The type of men who built it, the journey-man forest-craftsman---proud in their skills, hardened to and disdainful of weather extremes---were a product of frontier conditions. Men of their stamp, possessing mastery of the ax, adz and drawknife, independent and accustomed by their lifestyle to free use of their own initiative, can still be found today---but almost certainly not in sufficient numbers to so quickly build a structure of such dimensions and complexity in despite of snow and cold.

Especially within the Inn's lobby it is possible to discover on every hand examples of the teamwork which necessarily existed between the architect and these craftsmen who assisted him. Here are thousands of separate joints fitting wood pieces of unusual sizes and shapes --- shapes that no master builder could have foreseen in his plans and drawings --- into rails, supports and trusses which hold stairways, carry balconies and brace the wide expanse of ceiling against the weight of winter snows. One is struck with the thought of how easily all of this effort might have gotten out of hand--have created an outlandish, a nightmarish effect. And yet, it didn't! The effect is interesting and pleasing, and so is often described by later-day architects who study the work. Also, this handicraft was not limited to woodwork, it included other materials. An example hangs from the broad north face of the chimney --- a giant metal clock activated by weights, chains and pulleys. It is explained that this clock -- and, indeed, all other special hardware for the building --- "were hammered out on the grounds from designs by Mr. Reamer."

A final point of significance, as regards any hostelry, is the people it has sheltered during its lifetime. In the case of Old Faithful Inn it is

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# UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARX SERVICE NATIONAL GISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

### (Continuation Sheet)

Statement of Significance - 3

(Number all antries)

appropriate to consider two classes of these people: the workers, that is the hotel staff; and the guests, who have been attracted by exceptional and most curious natural environs.

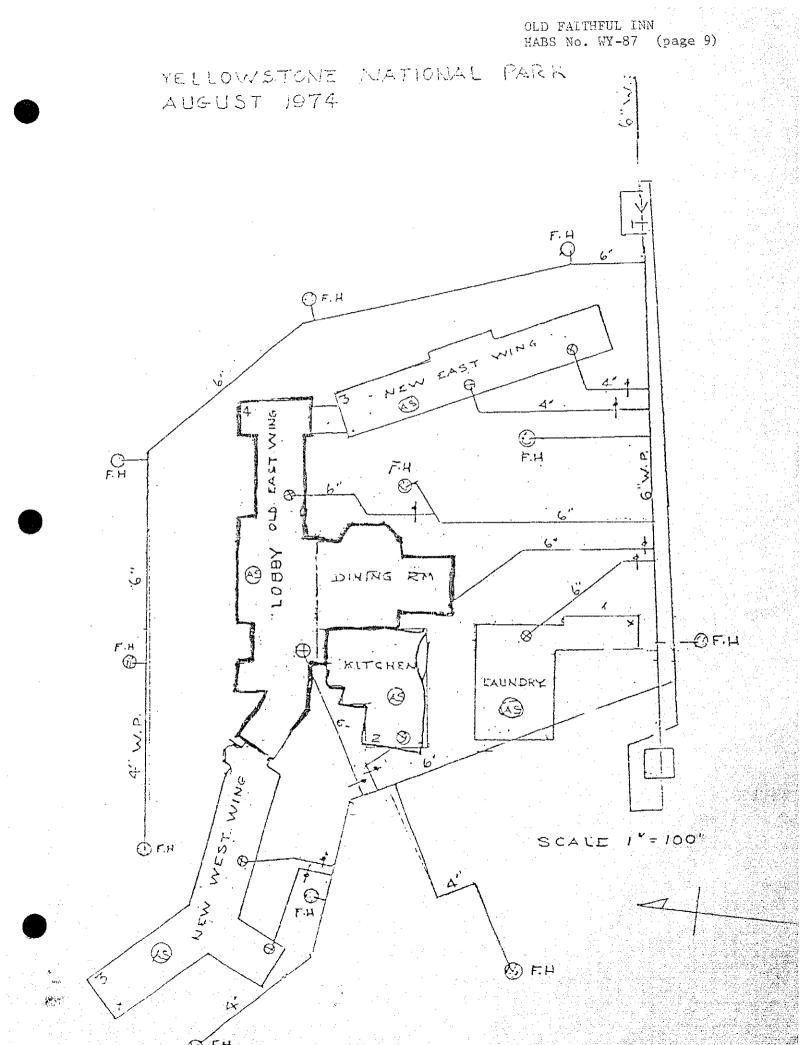
As is true of most seasonal resorts, the staff at Old Faithful Inn, except for a few key personnel, has never been a professional one. To a large extent the employees are made up of college students, themselves on their summer vacations, who grasp this opportunity to earn money while at the same time enjoying the broadening aspects of travel and the study of new surroundings. It can be safely said that, during the course of several generations of such young people working at Old Faithful Inn, there have been any number who have found their life-time careers while so engaged. Some have gone on in the affairs of the resort vacation industry; some in the affairs of the National Park Service or other natural resource agencies of Federal and State Governments; some have become scientists --- zoologists, botanists, geologists and otherwise. It may not be open to proof, but it is ripe to speculate how much influence a single such place as Old Faithful Inn, now having been in continuous operation throughout almost all of the first three quarters of the 20th century, may have had on mankind's presently increasing awareness of, and concern for, his natural environs.

Included in this vein of thought should be the guests who have stayed at Old Faithful Inn at some time during its existence up to the present. Have not those guests necessarily made some significant impact upon the present generation's conception of its environmental responsibilities? They have included many of the important persons of recent history---heads of governments, statesmen, financiers, industrialists, scientists, teachers, priests and philosophers. What impressions have such leaders carried away from Old Faithful Inn and how have those impressions influenced the course of subsequent events?

One example was the financier and philanthropist John D. Rockefeller, Jr. While himself a boy, he visited during a summer at Old Faithful and elsewhere in Yellowstone; and, during the 1920's, brought his own children there several times to see and study the wonders of that great national park. His own fascination with what he observed and learned has resulted in several great benefits to the nation---including, south of Old Faithful and Yellowstone's southern boundary, the great, new Grand Teton National Park.



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Addendum to Old Faithful Inn (Old Faithful Lodge, Old Faithful Tavern) Yellowstone National Park Teton County Wyoming

HABS No. WY-87

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#### PHOTOGRAPHS

Historic American Buildings Survey National Park SERvice

U.S. Department of the Interior Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

#### HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

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Addendum to: Old Faithful Inn (Old Faithful Lodge, Old Faithful Tavern) Yellowstone National Park Teton County Wyoming

NOTE: Photographs WY-87-1 through WY-87-14 were taken in 1981 and transmitted to the Library of Congress in 1983. The Index to Photographs for WY-87-1 through WY-87-14 is page 1.

Photographer: Jet T. Lowe, Summer 1989.

- WY-87-15 LOOKING WEST TOWARD OLD FAITHFUL INN. THE INN'S NAMESAKE, OLD FAITHFUL GEYSER IS AT LEFT.
- WY-87-16 LOOKING WEST AT OLD FAITHFUL INN, MOST OF THE EAST WING IS VISIBLE TO THE LEFT. THE EAST WING ADDITION WAS BUILT BY THE INN'S ORIGINAL ARCHITECT, ROBERT C. REAMER IN 1913-14.
- WY-87-17 LOOKING EAST, OLD FAITHFUL INN, ENTRANCE DRIVE. (TAKEN FROM CHERRY-PICKER)
- WY-87-18 LOOKING SOUTH AT STEEPLY PITCHED, GABLED ROOF. THE UPPER DORMERS PROVIDE LIGHT IN THE LOBBY AND THE LOWER DORMERS OPEN INTO SOME OF THE ORIGINAL GUEST ROOMS IN THE INN. (TAKEN FROM CHERRY-PICKER)
- WY-87-19 REAR OF OLD FAITHFUL INN, LOOKING NORTH. (TAKEN FROM CHERRY-PICKER)
- WY-87-20 REAR OF OLD FAITHFUL INN, LOOKING NORTH-NORTHWEST.
- WY-87-21 REAR OF OLD FAITHFUL INN, LOOKING NORTH. SEMI-CIRCULAR SIDE DINING ROOM, NOW CALLED THE BEAR PIT WAS ADDED IN 1927. (TAKEN FROM CHERRY-PICKER)
- WY-87-22 REAR OF OLD FAITHFUL INN, LOOKING NORTHWEST AT THE BEAR PIT.
- WY-87-23 REAR OF OLD FAITHFUL INN, LOOKING WEST AT THE BEAR PIT.
- WY-87-24 REAR ENTRANCE TO LOBBY.
- WY-87-25 LOBBY FIREPLACE. NOTE THE GEYSER DECORATING THE FIREPLACE SCREEN AND THE WEIGHTS AND PENDULUM HANGING FROM THE CLOCK DESIGNED BY ARCHITECT ROBERT C. REAMER.

HABS No. WY-87

20-YELNAP

#### OLD FAITHFUL INN HABS No. WY-87 (Index to Photographs Page 3)

- WY-87-26 LOBBY, LOOKING NORTH TOWARD MAIN ENTRANCE FROM SECOND FLOOR. LOCAL LODGEPOLE PINE WHICH WAS VALUED FOR ITS INVARIABLE DIAMETER WAS USED TO CONSTRUCT THE COLUMNS AND BEAMS OF THE INN WHILE GNARLED OR DISEASED LOGS WERE SELECTED FOR THE BRACES AND BALUSTERS.
- WY-87-27 LOBBY, LOOKING NORTHEAST FROM SECOND FLOOR. THE STRUCTURE IN UPPER LEFT HAND SIDE OF PHOTOGRAPH, A MUSICIANS' PLATFORM CALLED "THE CROW'S NEST" WAS BUILT IN THE GABLE.
- WY-87-28 LOBBY, LOOKING EAST FROM THE THIRD FLOOR. THE OBELISK SHAPED FIREPLACE IS FULLY VISIBLE AT THE RIGHT.
- WY-87-29 LOOKING AT EAST WALL OF OLD FAITHFUL INN FROM THIRD FLOOR.
- WY-87-30 GUEST ROOM ENTRANCES ON THIRD FLOOR.
- WY-87-31 LOOKING DOWN (SOUTHEAST) AT LOBBY FROM WIDOW'S WALK TO THE CROW'S NEST.
- WY-87-32 LOOKING DOWN (SOUTHWEST) AT THIRD FLOOR AND LOBBY FROM WIDOW'S WALK TO THE CROW'S NEST.
- WY-87-33 LOOKING UP AT THE CROW'S NEST FROM WIDOW'S WALK.
- WY-87-34 THE CROW'S NEST. IN THE EARLY YEARS OF THE INN MUSICIANS SAT AND PLAYED FOR THE GUESTS IN THE LOBBY BELOW. THE EARTHQUAKE IN 1959 CAUSED SOME STRUCTURAL DAMAGE AND NOW THE CROW'S NEST IS NOT ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC.
- WY-87-35 LOOKING OUT FROM THE CROW'S NEST AT WEST WALL AND LOBBY BELOW.
- WY-87-36 STAIRWAY ON GROUND FLOOR, OLD WEST WING.
- WY-87-37 DINING ROOM FROM BALCONY. THE DINING ROOM ROOF IS SUPPORTED BY A SCISSOR TRUSS SYSTEM REINFORCED WITH TURNBUCKLE IRON RODS AND GUSSET PLATES (NOTE: THIS SYSTEM DIFFERS FROM THE LOBBY).
- WY-87-38 DINING ROOM, THE CHIMNEY WAS SEVERELY DAMAGED BY AN EARTHQUAKE IN 1959 AND HAD TO BE RECONSTRUCTED.

### OLD FAITHFUL INN HABS No. WY-87 (Index to Photographs Page 4)

- WY-87-39 DINING ROOM, LOOKING (NORTH) BACK TOWARD ENTRANCE. BEFORE 1907, GUESTS AT THE INN ATE FAMILY-STYLE AT LONG RECTANGULAR TABLES.
- WY-87-40 SOUTH DINING ROOM, COMPLETED IN 1922.
- WY-87-41 THE BEAR PIT (OLD SIDE DINING ROOM). THE ETCHINGS ON THE CEILING BEAMS AND COLUMNS OF PARK WILDLIFE ARE ORIGINAL TO THE OLD SIDE DINING ROOM. THE SIDE DINING ROOM WAS DESIGNED AND BUILT BY ROBERT REAMER IN 1927. IN 1962 WHEN IT WAS CONVERTED INTO THE BEAR PIT A WALL WAS ADDED BETWEEN THE THREE COLUMNS THAT SEPARATE THIS ROOM FROM THE MAIN DINING ROOM. THE ORIGINAL BEAR PIT ETCHINGS DEPICTING BEARS TENDING BAR AND PLAYING THE PIANO WERE MOUNTED ON THE WALL BETWEEN THE COLUMNS.

ADDENDUM TO OLD FAITHFUL INN (Old Faithful Lodge) (Old Faithful Tavern) Yellowstone National Park Teton County Wyoming

HABS NO. WY-87 HABS WYO 20-YELNAP, 1-

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#### HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

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HABS WYD 20-YELNAP

WY-87-1 through WY-87-41 were previously transmitted to the Library of Congress.

### INDEX TO COLOR TRANSPARENCIES

All color xeroxes were made from a duplicate color transparency

Photographer: Jet T. Lowe, Summer 1989.

WY-87-42 (CT)

REAR VIEW OF OLD FAITHFUL INN, LOOKING NORTHWEST AT THE BEAR PIT.



