

(Oct. 1990)

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

HISTORIC NAME: Vega Motel

OTHER NAME/SITE NUMBER: Vega Court

2. LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER: 1005 Vega Blvd.

CITY OR TOWN: Vega

VICINITY: NA

NOT FOR PUBLICATION: N/A

STATE: Texas

CODE: TX

COUNTY: Oldham

CODE: 359

ZIP CODE: 79092

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 (nationally) (statewide) (locally). (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official

Date

State Historic Preservation Officer, Texas Historical Commission

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is:

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

____ entered in the National Register

____ See continuation sheet.

____ determined eligible for the National Register

____ See continuation sheet

____ determined not eligible for the National Register

____ removed from the National Register

____ other (explain): _____

5. CLASSIFICATION

OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY: Private

CATEGORY OF PROPERTY: Building

NUMBER OF RESOURCES WITHIN PROPERTY:	CONTRIBUTING	NONCONTRIBUTING
	3	1 BUILDINGS
	0	0 SITES
	1	0 STRUCTURES
	<u>0</u>	<u>0 OBJECTS</u>
	4	1 TOTAL

NUMBER OF CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES PREVIOUSLY LISTED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER: 0

NAME OF RELATED MULTIPLE PROPERTY LISTING: Route 66 in Texas MPS

6. FUNCTION OR USE

HISTORIC FUNCTIONS: DOMESTIC: motel

CURRENT FUNCTIONS: DOMESTIC: motel

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: NO STYLE

MATERIALS: FOUNDATION CONCRETE
WALLS OTHER: Perma-Stone
ROOF ASPHALT
OTHER

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION (see continuation sheet 5)

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

APPLICABLE NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA

- 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.

CRITERIA CONSIDERATIONS: N/A

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: Commerce, Architecture

PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE: 1947-1956

SIGNIFICANT DATES: 1947

SIGNIFICANT PERSON: N/A

CULTURAL AFFILIATION: N/A

ARCHITECT/BUILDER: unknown

NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (see continuation sheets 6 through 10).

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

BIBLIOGRAPHY (see continuation sheet 11).

PREVIOUS DOCUMENTATION ON FILE (NPS): N/A

- 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 (*Texas Historical Commission*)
- Other state agency (*TXDOT*)
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository:

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF PROPERTY: less than one acre

UTM REFERENCES	<u>Zone</u>	<u>Easting</u>	<u>Northing</u>
1.	14	399364	3898736

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION: The boundary for the Vega Motel is shown on the accompanying map and includes lots 6-10 on block 52 of the town of Vega. This map is drawn at a scale of 1" = 300'. The property includes one acre and is bounded on the north by Vega Boulevard, on the west by Eleventh Street, on the south by Ross Street, and on the east by an alley.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION: The boundary for the Vega Motel includes all property historically associated with the motel since its construction in 1947. No other buildings or structures are associated with this business.

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME/TITLE: Philip Thomason and Teresa Douglas

ORGANIZATION: Thomason and Associates

DATE: February 2006

STREET & NUMBER: 1907 21st Avenue S.

TELEPHONE: (615) 385-4960

CITY OR TOWN: Nashville

STATE: Tennessee

ZIP CODE: 37212

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

CONTINUATION SHEETS

MAPS (see continuation sheets 14 and 15)

PHOTOGRAPHS (see continuation sheet 16)

ADDITIONAL ITEMS (see continuation sheets 12 and 13)

PROPERTY OWNER

NAME: Harold and Tresa Whaley

STREET & NUMBER: 1005 Vega Blvd

TELEPHONE: (806) 267-2205

CITY OR TOWN: Vega

STATE: Texas

ZIP CODE: 79092

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Vega Motel
Vega, Oldham County, Texas

The Vega Motel is located at 1005 Vega Boulevard in the Oldham County seat of Vega, Texas (2000 pop. 936). The property consists of three separate wings built in a U-plan around a central courtyard. The west and south wings were built with hipped roofs in 1947 and contained six units each. In 1953, a gable roof wing was added to the east with eight units. All three motel wings were originally built with an exterior of stucco and with a central office/manager's residence. In 1964, the office/manager's residence was razed and a new office/manager's residence was added to the north façade of the west wing. Also in 1964 the original stucco exterior was covered with a new surface of Perma-Stone. The property retains a good degree of integrity and continues to serve as overnight lodging for travelers on Route 66.

Vega Boulevard is the main east-west highway through the community and Route 66 followed this alignment during the 20th century. The motel was built in 1947 as the Vega Court facing Route 66 and it has been in continuous operation at this location since its construction. To the east and north of the motel are commercial properties while dwellings are located to the west and south.

The motel wings were built of frame and stucco construction. The motel was built with single or paired units divided by recessed garage bays (Photo 2). The east and west wings have gable roofs while the south wing has a hipped roof. Each building has roofs of asphalt shingles, concrete foundations and the primary facades have stone and brick veneer exteriors. The rear facades are of frame with stucco surfaces. The interior walls of the garage bays are also of frame and stucco. The roofline on each wing extends across the fronts of the units and has an original wood ceiling. The units have original one-over-one rectangular wood sash windows and solid wood doors. The garage bays hold two cars and have a central steel support post. In front of each door is a concrete step.

The west wing contains the office/manager's residence and six motel units (Photos 3-4). The office has two-over-two horizontal wood sash windows and solid wood doors. On the north façade is a large picture window and paired two-over-two horizontal sash windows. On the east side of the office wing is a canopy with a drive-thru bay. This bay has a concrete floor and is supported by wood posts. The west wing motel units have original one-over-one wood sash windows except for units 1 and 6, which have original six-over-six wood sash windows. Doors are original three-vertical light and three-panel design. At the eaves are exposed rafters.

The east wing has a single unit at both the north and south ends and three sets of paired units in between (Photos 5-6). The south wing has two single end units and two paired units in between (Photos 7-8). The south building units 11, 10 and 7 have original paneled wood doors while the other units have ca. 1980 replacement wood doors. The projecting roofline on the south and west wings have steel support posts.

The interior of each unit consists of original wood floors with added carpet, drywall walls and ceilings and solid wood closet and bath doors (Photo 9). The baths have linoleum floors, and original wall sinks and showers (Photo 10).

The three motel units are arranged around a central courtyard. This courtyard has a landscaped yard, a concrete deck with chairs, a clothesline, and several elm trees (Photo 11). At the street in front of the building is an original metal sign supported by a steel post. This sign originally had neon letters which spelled "Vega Court." The sign's neon has been removed and the name "Vega Motel" is now painted directly on the sign (Photo 12). Also on the property is a ca. 1980 frame storage building which is included as a non-contributing building (Photo 13).

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Vega Motel
Vega, Oldham County, Texas

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Vega Motel is nominated to the National Register under Criteria A and C in the areas of Commerce and Architecture for its association with local business spurred by the town's location on Route 66, and as a representative example of a mid-twentieth century motel complex. The Vega Motel reflects commercial development along Route 66, the primary transportation corridor between Chicago and southern California during the early to mid-twentieth century. The designation of the road and the increasing flow of traffic that occurred along the route encouraged the development of numerous businesses along its path, the majority of which were small, privately owned enterprises such as the Vega Motel. Under Criterion C, the Vega Motel is significant as a representative example of the type of motels constructed along Route 66 in the mid-twentieth century. The motel consists of three buildings arranged in a U-shaped pattern with a central courtyard. This configuration was a common design of small, privately owned motels of the era. Like many motels of the mid-20th century, the Vega Motel was "modernized" in 1964 with a new exterior of Perma-Stone. Since 1964, the motel has not been altered and retains a high degree of its design, materials, and workmanship from its period of significance. The Vega Motel meets the registration requirements for the property type of "Motels/Tourist Courts" in the Multiple Property Documentation Form, "Route 66 in Texas MPS."

Route 66 extended through the Texas panhandle in a general east-west direction. From the east it entered the state along the Texas-Oklahoma border just south of the North Fork of the Red River. It continued westward through a series of small towns and farming communities, including McLean, Alanreed, Groom, and Conway, before entering Amarillo, the only sizeable city through which the road passed in the state. Leaving Amarillo and continuing westward with only a slight curve to the north, Route 66 again traversed through small towns such as Wildorado, Vega, and Adrian before exiting the state near Glenrio, Texas.

The Texas panhandle was one of the last areas of Texas to be settled, and the arid landscape remained sparsely populated at the time Route 66 was designated in 1926. The Native Americans and buffalo herds that once dominated the region were displaced by the end of the 19th century with extensive sheep and cattle ranches. During the 1920s, agricultural production in the panhandle boomed and the oil industry emerged as a leading economic source. The oil industry generated substantial growth in Amarillo, which became a commercial and corporate center of the region, and led to significant highway development through the panhandle.¹ In 1940, the Works Projects Administration conducted an overview of the Texas panhandle and described it as follows:

US 66 slices through the center of the Texas Panhandle, east to west, crossing the High Plains through a region once occupied by great herds of buffalo and bands of Kowas and Comanches... Today this level expanse is rich, producing oil, gas, wheat, small grain crops, and fine Herfords. At intervals the countryside is covered with a pall of smoke from factories and refineries... The population of the region is predominantly native-born white. Since settlement is comparatively new, any 25-year resident is considered an old-timer.²

¹ Michael Cassity, "Route 66 Corridor National Historic Context Study." (Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program, National Trails System Office – Intermountain Region, National Park Service, Santa Fe, New Mexico, December 15, 2004), 76-78.

² "Route 66: Across 1930s Texas," from *Texas: A Guide to the Lone Star State*, compiled and written by the Federal Writers' Project of the Works Projects Administration for the State of Texas, 1940. Available online at http://members.aol.com/hsuertieg/rt66/wpa_tx.htm.

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Vega Motel
Vega, Oldham County, Texas

The town of Vega in Oldham County is located in the western portion of the panhandle, midway between Amarillo and the Texas-New Mexico border. The town was established in 1903 in anticipation of the coming Choctaw, Oklahoma and Texas Railroad, which arrived in 1909. The railroad brought many homesteaders to the area and the town flourished as settlement remained heavy through ca. 1915, at which time Vega became the Oldham County seat. It remained a small, but relatively prosperous town with agriculture as its economic base. Telephone service was available in 1909, a piped water system was installed for town residents in 1919, and electrical service was established 1929. The town of Vega incorporated in 1927.³

In 1912, county leaders began an effort to promote an east to west and a north to south highway across the county. The east to west route was addressed first and prominent citizens from towns throughout Oldham County joined forces with representatives from neighboring counties to promote the proposed highway, which largely followed the Santa Fe Trail. By 1914, the group had secured the name of the Texas-New Mexico Highway, and the associated counties began plans to grade the road, as “a graded road was all anyone could hope for in those days.”⁴ It was not long before W.H. “Coin” Harvey, promoter of the Ozark Trail Association, became involved, and by 1916 the portion of the route through Vega, which extended from Amarillo, Texas to Tucumcari, New Mexico, was named part of the Ozark Trail. Extension of the road both to the east and west was called for, and as Route 66 was designated in 1926, it became part of this national highway.

Route 66 inspired commercial development in Vega as it did in numerous towns across the country. The highway extended directly through the town and before long new businesses emerged along its path. Gas stations and tourist courts were among the first to appear. One local entrepreneur built three gas stations along the route and the town’s first tourist court. Known as Camp Joy, this early lodging facility consisted of a long shed-like building that contained six individual cabins. The rooms were primitive by today’s standards with little more than a bed, a folding table hinged to the wall, and a small stove for both cooking and heating. Travelers gathered water in a bucket from a hydrant in the yard, and a privy was located on one side of the cabins. The fee for this facility was one dollar per night.⁵

Various improvements were made to Route 66 in the Vega area over the years, including paving and widening, which enhanced travel and thus commercial development. In 1931, area citizens voted on a bond to pave Route 66 through the region, but this effort was defeated. It was not until 1936 that the road was paved from the Potter County line to west of Vega. In 1947, Highway 51, the primary north-south corridor in the area, was rerouted to extend through the town where it intersected Route 66. This led to further transportation improvements, mainly the paving of streets in the surrounding forty blocks. In 1958 a caution light was installed at the intersection of Route 66 and Highway 51. Despite all this development, Vega remained a small town, and in 1953 had a population of 620.⁶

The Vega Motel (originally the Vega Court), was constructed on Route 66 in Vega in 1947. Ervin “E.M.” Pancoast built and started the motel. An oil field worker who had traveled through Oklahoma and Texas, Pancoast decided to settle in Vega during the late 1930s. He took up farming for awhile, but saw a unique opportunity to operate his own business on Route 66. He purchased four lots from the Vega Town Company on October 3, 1944, and acquired an additional adjoining lot from Nellie May Lloyd on May 22, 1945.⁷ Pancoast began his business in 1947 with the

³ Oldham County Historical Commission, *Oldham County, 1881-1981*, (Lubbock, TX: Taylor Publishing, 19??), 76-81.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid., 83.

⁶ Ibid., 85-86.

⁷ Vega Town Company to E.M. Pancoast, Oldham County Deed Book 35, Page 343, October 3, 1944; Nellie May Lloyd to E.M. Pancoast, Oldham County Deed Book 36, Page 131, May 22, 1945.

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Vega Motel
Vega, Oldham County, Texas

construction of the west and south wings of the motel, which contained twelve units. Aware of the importance of automobiles to travelers, Pancoast incorporated garages into his motel design, and pairs of garages alternated with pairs of motel units in each wing. At the same time, he also constructed a small house in the center courtyard that served as an office and living quarters. Pancoast married his wife Josephine the following year, and the couple lived on the property which became their life's work. Josephine helped E.M. run the motel business by managing the front desk, cleaning the rooms, and taking on any number of tasks to make the business run smoothly. In later years, Josephine humorously recalled that "It didn't seem like hard work then, but now my back hurts when I go by [the motel]."⁸

Business was good for the young couple as traffic along Route 66 through Vega remained busy over the following decades. In 1953, the Pancoasts added an east wing containing eight units to their motel resulting in the motel's U-shaped configuration. Like the first two wings, the east wing also had built-in garages. All of the units had bathrooms and some units had kitchenettes. Gas heaters were used to heat the rooms in the wintertime. In 1964, the Pancoasts decided to update the facility with a new brick and stone veneer exterior over the original stucco. The couple continuously had to make repairs to the corners of the buildings because drivers were always misjudging the distance and running into them with their cars. As business increased, two maids were hired to assist Josephine, and a laundry service from Amarillo came twice a week.

Tourist courts such as this came into vogue in the late 1920s as the latest development in tourist accommodations. This development was a natural progression from free roadside camps, to motor camps with basic accommodations, such as the early Vega enterprise Camp Joy, to more permanent and private accommodations. In 1933, the American Automobile Association estimated that thirty thousand "tourist cottage and camp establishments" lined the nation's highways, and by the mid-1930s, the transition from tent sites to cabins had been made.⁹

Traffic along Route 66 increased during the 1940s and 1950s as the economy improved, and more and more people could afford automobiles and leisure travel. The Vega Motel opened in 1947 at the dawn of a new era of unparalleled prosperity in the United States. Leisure and travel became a booming industry as by the mid-1950s, the average American income was fifty percent higher than it had been in 1929, and individuals and families had more money to spend on these activities. Motel construction doubled between 1946 and 1953, and by 1964 motels were being built at six times the rate of 1945.

The Vega Motel is a representative example of the types of motels that dominated Route 66 in the mid-twentieth century. The motel was built in 1947 and enlarged into its present "U" shape with a central courtyard in 1953. Like some other motels along Route 66, the Vega Motel was designed with attached garages interspersed with the individual lodging units. This design catered to overnight guests who wanted to park directly next to their room. The courtyard provided a playground area for children and a place for adults to socialize. The present appearance of the Vega Motel also reflects the desire of the Pancoasts to "modernize" the complex through the addition of Perma-Stone in 1964. Perma-Stone was a concrete and stone material formed into an appearance of individual stone blocks. In the case of the Vega Motel it was added directly over the original stucco surface. Perma-Stone was a popular imitation stone and concrete exterior siding material of the 1950s and 1960s and was considered to provide buildings with an

⁸ Oldham County Chamber of Commerce, comp. *Oldham County Remembers, A Special Collection of Stories, Memories, and Recipes from Route 66 in Oldham County, Texas* (Oldham County Chamber of Commerce, 1997), n.p.

⁹ Chester H. Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile, American Roadside Architecture* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1985), 170-177.

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Vega Motel
Vega, Oldham County, Texas

updated look. This exterior siding material was also promoted as being “maintenance free, fireproof and energy efficient.”¹⁰ Throughout the length of Route 66, numerous motels and other businesses were remodeled with Perma-Stone and similar materials in an effort to present a fresh and modern appearance.

Traffic remained heavy on Route 66 through Vega throughout the 1950s and 1960s. However, during this same period the forces which brought the national road into being—mainly the desire for better and faster transportation coupled with advances in technology—were bringing about changes that would ultimately make the road obsolete. In the early 1960s, Route 66 was widened to four lanes through Vega and curbs and gutters were added to the road. These improvements, however, did not ensure the road’s longevity as plans for an interstate through the Texas panhandle were forming. The State Highway Commission began to purchase right-of-ways in the early 1960s even as improvements were being made to Route 66, and construction was scheduled to begin in 1966. A local group organized to postpone the development of Interstate 40 through the area and was successful for a time, but the coming of the modern highway was inevitable, and the new road was completed in the early 1970s.¹¹

After the new highway opened, traffic began to bypass downtown Vega. Businesses along Route 66 began to fail as new businesses emerged along the access roads to the interstate. The Vega Motel also suffered from lack of business, and the Pancoasts “found themselves burdened with a piece of property nobody wanted.”¹² They finally found a buyer in 1976, and after operating the motel for over thirty years, sold the property and business to E.C. Betts, a native of Oldham County. Betts passed away shortly after acquiring the property, and his family continued to operate the motel until 1988 when the Vega Motel was purchased by Harold and Tresa Whaley, who remain the current owners.¹³ Both Harold and Tresa Whaley have a long history with Route 66. Harold Whaley grew up along the highway and took his first job pumping gas at one of the many stations along its path. Tresa worked in a restaurant along the highway in her youth. As a couple they operated a gas station one block east of the Vega Motel on Route 66 in the 1970’s and experienced the loss of business following the opening of the interstate. When the Whaleys purchased the Vega Motel in 1988, it had been neglected for a number of years and since that time they have slowly restored the property. Currently eight of the units are available for rental and they hope to have the remaining units in operation in coming years.

The Vega Motel is representative of the types of motels associated with Route 66 that have survived the development of interstate highways. The motel represents the commercial development along Route 66 in its heyday, and also reflects the evolution of the motel industry in the United States during the mid-twentieth century. As traffic along Route 66 increased, the motel was expanded through an additional wing and office and the overall appearance was updated in 1964 in keeping with trends of the time. The Vega Motel has not been extensively altered since 1964 and retains its overall integrity.

The Vega Motel is also a rare survivor of an intact motel complex in the small towns of the Texas Panhandle on Route 66. While Amarillo boasts several motels from Route 66’s period of significance, only three motels are known to survive intact along Route 66 outside of Amarillo. These include the Vega Motel, the Village Motel in Shamrock (now apartments), and the abandoned Texas Longhorn Motel in Glenrio. A few rooms remain from a fourth motel, the 66

¹⁰ Thomas C. Jester, ed. *Twentieth Century Building Materials, History and Conservation*, (Washington D.C., McGraw-Hill, 1995), 177.

¹¹ Oldham County Historical Commission, *Oldham County, 1881-1981*, 86.

¹² Oldham County Chamber of Commerce, *Oldham County Remembers*, n.p.

¹³ E.M. and Josephine Pancoast to E.C. Betts, Oldham County Deed Book 81, Page 604, October 1, 1976; Boobby Joe Betts, administrator of E.C. Betts estate, to Harold and Tresa Whaley, Oldham County Deed Book 95, Page 367.

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Vega Motel
Vega, Oldham County, Texas

Court in Groom, but this complex has been largely demolished in recent years. The Vega Motel is the only one of these still in operation and representative of the types of motels which once flourished along Route 66.

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Vega, Oldham County, Texas

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Vega Motel
Vega, Oldham County, Texas

Figure 1: Vega Court, ca. 1955, (Courtesy Joe Sonderman Collection).



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Vega Motel
Vega, Oldham County, Texas

Figure 2: Vega Motel, ca. 1970, (Courtesy Joe Sonderman Collection).



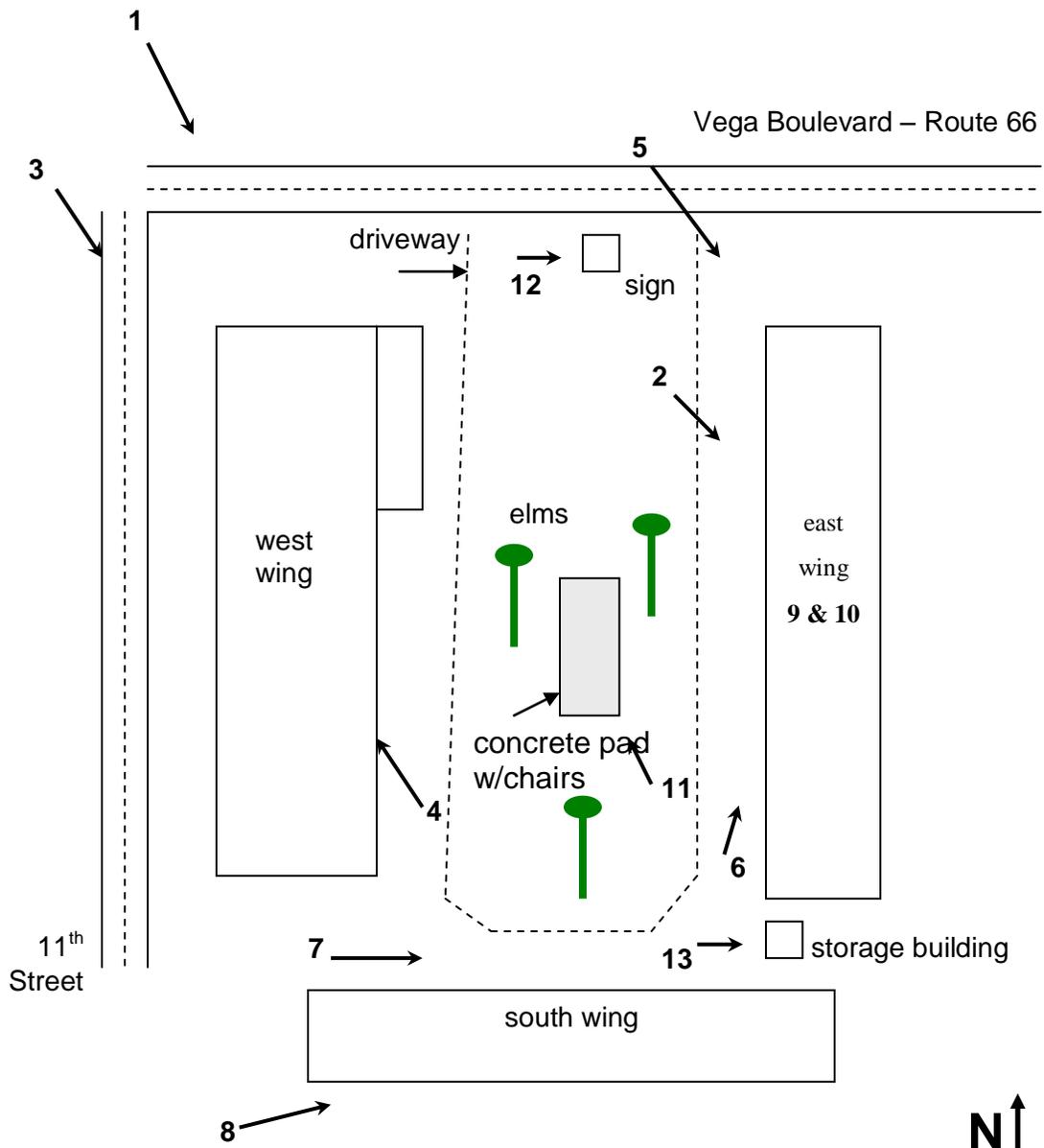
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Vega Motel
Vega, Oldham County, Texas

Map 2: Site plan and Photo Key for the Vega Motel.



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Vega Motel
Vega, Oldham County, Texas

PHOTOGRAPHS

Vega Motel
1005 Vega Boulevard
Vega, Oldham County, Texas
Photos by Thomason and Associates
February 22, 2005
Location of Negatives: National Park Service, Santa Fe, NM

- Photo No. 1: Vega Motel, east wing and office, view to the southeast.
- Photo No. 2: East wing showing units and garage bay arrangement, view to the east.
- Photo No. 3: Office and west wing, view to the southeast.
- Photo No. 4: West wing, view to the northwest.
- Photo No. 5: East wing, view to the southeast.
- Photo No.6: East wing, view to the northeast.
- Photo No. 7: South wing, view to the east.
- Photo No. 8: South wing, view to the northeast.
- Photo No. 9: Interior view of representative unit.
- Photo No. 10: Interior view of representative bathroom.
- Photo No. 11: View of courtyard, view to northwest.
- Photo No. 12: Sign, view to the east,
- Photo No. 13: Storage building, view to the east.