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.

1. Name of Property
Historic Name: Dew Drop Inn
Other Names/Site Number: N/A
Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

2. Location
Street & Number: 2836 LaSalle Street
City or town: New Orleans   St ate: LA   County: Orleans
Not for Publication:   Vicinity:  

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  ☐ state  ☒ local

Applicable National Register Criteria: ☒ A  ☐ B  ☐ C  ☐ D

Signature of certifying official/Title: Kristin Sanders, State Historic Preservation Officer

Date

Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism
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 Certification

I hereby certify that the 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.)

X Private

Public – Local
Public – State
Public – Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box.)

X Building(s)
District
Site
Structure
object

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

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Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions.): RECREATION AND CULTURE/music facility; DOMESTIC/hotel

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions.): VACANT/NOT IN USE
Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions.): NO STYLE

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)
  foundation: brick, concrete
  walls: stucco, wood, aluminum, plywood, synthetic
  roof: asphalt
  other: glass block, glass, aluminum

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a summary paragraph that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The Dew Drop Inn, 2836 LaSalle Street, New Orleans, Louisiana, comprises two early twentieth-century wood-frame structures that were connected and renovated in 1945 by African-American businessman Frank Painia to serve as a live entertainment venue, hotel, restaurant, and barber shop. The property is located in the Central City neighborhood of New Orleans, a historically working-class section that developed west of downtown in the mid-nineteenth century. Across LaSalle Street from the Dew Drop is Harmony Oaks, a mixed-income housing development that replaced federal housing built for African-Americans in 1941. “Building A,” on the 6th Street/west side of the block, was a one-story residence constructed c.1900 and enlarged c.1930 with a one-story stucco-clad storefront. “Building B,” on the Washington Avenue/east side of the block, was a two-story residence constructed c.1910. In addition to connecting the two buildings, Painia elevated Building A to create a new ground-floor venue and erected a one-story detached brick structure at the rear of the property to house a second venue nicknamed the “Groove Room.” The front club and hotel sections were expanded in the 1950s, and the hotel expanded again in the early 1960s. In 1968, the façade was remodeled with a Permastone-like product, wood paneling, and aluminum cladding over the historic facade, which was re-exposed in March 2021. Exterior cladding materials on secondary elevations include wood clapboard siding, vinyl siding, and T1-11 plywood paneling. The balcony and overhang on Building B were removed in the 1968 remodel and the second-floor openings in both buildings were resized. The Groove Room was demolished in the late 1990s, and the interior of the front club was gutted in 2005 following Hurricane Katrina. A portion of the second floor above this space has collapsed. Due to the evolution of the site over time, the building today presents a variety of features and finishes from different eras (c. 1900-1960s). The historic hotel layout, including guestrooms and corridors, remains intact throughout. Other intact interior features include the single-run stair near the hotel entrance; floor finishes including wood and various types of tile; plaster walls with some picture molding; historic interior wood doors and frames; plaster and tongue-and-groove wood ceilings; and striated-plywood paneling in the hotel lobby. Both music venues were closed by 1970, and the hotel and barbershop closed in the 2000s. The building has been vacant since 2005. Despite the loss of some historic exterior and interior components, the Dew Drop Inn still possesses sufficient integrity to convey its historic significance and is therefore eligible for individual listing.

Narrative Description

Site and Setting
The Dew Drop Inn, a former nightclub, hotel, restaurant, and barbershop, at 2836 LaSalle Street, New Orleans, Orleans Parish, occupies a 0.24-acre urban parcel fronting on LaSalle Street in the Central City neighborhood of New Orleans. This historically low-income neighborhood developed west of downtown in the mid-nineteenth century with low-rise, wood-frame rental housing, small clusters of commercial buildings, and neighborhood-focused churches and schools. By the early twentieth century the area was densely populated by predominantly poor and working-class African Americans. LaSalle Street (renamed from Howard Street in 1924) is a historically mixed-use thoroughfare comprised of early twentieth-century wood-frame shotgun houses, mid-twentieth century low-rise apartment complexes, and a variety of historic and contemporary commercial and institutional buildings. It is a wide, four-lane street with a central grassy median strip that serves as a primary east-west thoroughfare connecting downtown and uptown New Orleans. Across LaSalle from the Dew Drop was the Magnolia Street Housing Project, the first federal housing complex constructed for African Americans in the United States. Completed in 1941, just a few years before the Dew Drop opened, it was razed in the 2000s for the mixed-income Harmony Oaks residential community.

The block in which the Dew Drop is situated is bounded by LaSalle Street to the north, Washington Avenue to the east, S. Liberty Street to the south, and 6th Street to the west. The block retains its historically dense low-rise character, although there are two large vacant parcels at the west and southwest corners. Directly east of the Dew Drop are two c. 1960s low-rise apartment complexes, and to the west is a vacant parcel where a double shotgun house and a corner store and restaurant once stood. To the south and southwest of this block are St. Joseph Cemetery No. 1 (founded 1854), St. Joseph Cemetery No. 2 (founded 1873) and Lafayette Cemetery No. 2 (founded 1850).

The Dew Drop sits at the front property line in engagement with the public right-of-way. The east and west elevations have minimal setbacks. To the rear is a roughly 62x40-foot rectangular yard marking the location of the former Groove Room (demolished in the 1990s). The yard is bordered by a tall wood and chain-link fence. There are no notable landscape features. The paved section between the rear additions of the building consists of a concrete slab topped with red and orange broken-tile mosaic.

Property Overview

The Dew Drop Inn comprises two formerly separate early twentieth-century residential buildings (Building A and Building B) that were combined into one complex by African-American businessman Frank Painia in 1945. The buildings were modified and expanded between the 1940s and the 1960s as Painia’s enterprise grew and evolved. As a result, the property exhibits a range of building forms, materials, and finishes dating from c. 1900 to the 1960s. Below is a timeline of the property’s evolution, which is also depicted in Diagram 1:

- C. 1900: Building A, on the west/6th Street side of the block, is constructed at 2840-42 LaSalle Street as a one-story wood-frame double-shotgun house with a front setback and a front porch. The building has a front-gable roof. The rear shed-roof addition was likely added within a decade of original construction. (Map 1)

- C. 1910: Building B is constructed by a separate owner from Building A as a two-story wood-frame residence at 2836 LaSalle Street. The building’s gable-on-hip roof is supported by decorative brackets and protects a second-floor balcony. The balcony has square pickets with turned balusters and ball finials. A central door, flanked by two standard-length six-over-six wood windows, provides balcony access. The original appearance of the first floor is unknown. (Figure 1)

- C. 1930: Building A is expanded northward with a one-story stucco-clad wood-frame storefront, and the double residence behind it is converted to single-family. The first floor of Building B is converted to

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commercial use, housing a shop in the front, apartments in the rear and above, and an auto repair business in a detached rear garage. *(Map 2)*

- April 1939: Frank Painia rents the first floor of Building B, formerly a restaurant, to open Frank’s Barber Shop and a bar called the Dew Drop Inn.³

- November 1943: Painia purchases Building B for $8,000.

- 1945: Painia purchases Building A for $7,500 and connects it to Building B to create a single complex. Building A is elevated a full story and the new ground floor (constructed of brick columns and exterior walls with steel beams) becomes a nightclub and restaurant/bar (the “Dew Drop Café”). A brick and concrete exterior exit stair and passage is added along the west side of the building. The Building B storefront is renovated to match Building A. At the rear of the two lots he builds a one-story brick structure to house a second venue (the “Groove Room”). Frank’s Barber Shop remains in operation in Building B. The upper floors of the two buildings are converted into small hotel guest rooms with private or shared baths. *(Map 3)*

- 1950s: Painia expands Building B to the rear with a large two-story wood-frame shallow gable-roof addition. The exterior exit stair is extended along the west side of this addition. The ground floor is an extension of the club/restaurant and the upper floor is built out with six additional hotel guest rooms. *(Map 4)*

- In 1964, Painia expands Building B to the rear with a narrow two-story wing addition with balcony that adds approximately six more guest rooms. He also builds a one-story addition on the east side of Building A’s 1950s addition to provide three new bathrooms for the front venue. Both additions are CMU and wood-frame construction with a stuccoed exterior and low-slope roofs. The Groove Room gains a full second floor and both levels of the venue are converted into two floors of hotel rooms. Live entertainment continues in the front venue.⁴ *(Map 4)*

- 1968: Painia remodels the primary façade by encapsulating the exterior with a Permastone-like product, wood paneling, and aluminum siding (removed in March 2021). Second-floor openings are resized on the exterior and the balcony and overhang of Building B are removed. The horizontal projecting wall sign is replaced with the current vertical sign.


- 1972: Painia dies after several years of declining health. His widow, Feddie, continues to operate the hotel and the bar is leased to another operator. Painia’s descendants maintain the barber shop.

- Late 1990s: The rear venue is demolished due to structural failure.

- C. 2002: The barbershop is converted into a sno-ball stand. The bar closes.

- 2005: The hotel closes following the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and the building is fully vacated.

*Exterior (Photos 1-6)*

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³ New Orleans city directories, 1938-1940; and “Arrest 146 in Disease Drive,” *New Orleans States*, March 25, 1944.

⁴ This portion of the timeline is derived from the 1964 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, physical evidence, and a building permit dated 6/11/1964. The 1964 Sanborn does not show the two-story rear wing addition to Building B, presumably because construction began in the latter half of the year while the Sanborn was produced, most likely, in 1963 and early 1964.
The primary north façade comprises two distinct two-story buildings that are stitched together by a wood-frame wall clad in stucco. Both buildings were constructed with minimal setbacks from their shared property line, and this relationship remains visible on the interior, where the former exterior walls are clad in wood clapboards.

The appearance of Building A’s stucco-clad façade dates primarily to 1945, when Painia elevated the building a full story and constructed a new storefront, which consists of two pairs of recessed entrance doors flanking two large square window openings filled with glass blocks. Both entrances provided access to the front entertainment venue and restaurant, the Dew Drop Café. Set in the center of the glass blocks are wood-frame plate-glass display windows that were expanded from small openings in the 1968 renovation. Both pairs of entrance doors are historic one-light metal-clad wood swing doors with tiled vestibules and are secured by contemporary metal security gates. Protecting the two entrances were half-round metal-clad canopies that are non-extant. Between the former canopy locations is a stuccoed sign band with remnants of hand-painted lettering. The stucco-clad second floor terminates at a curved, Spanish-style parapet. There are two c. 1968 aluminum-frame windows set within the historic openings; one of these openings is intact on the interior, and the other was rebuilt. A large projecting wall sign trimmed in neon was anchored at the center of the upper façade. It read “Dew Drop Café Bar Cocktail Lounge” with a separate sign hanging from below that read “Hotel/Floor Shows Fri, Sat & Sun.” This sign was replaced in 1969 with the current vertical sign mounted where the two upper facades meet.5

The stucco-clad ground floor of the façade of Building B dates to 1945. On the left/east side is the hotel entrance consisting of a recessed door and tiled vestibule set into an arched opening with two lunette windows on either side. To the right/west of the hotel entrance is a wood-frame door and display window that form the small storefront of the barbershop. This display window has been fitted with a non-historic sliding window dating to its use as a sno-ball stand, and the door is a historic wood door partially covered with painted plywood. Both transoms are extant. A third opening, between the hotel and barbershop entrances, was infilled with stucco at an unknown date. On the upper floor are three regularly spaced openings containing aluminum sash windows; these windows were fitted into the original openings in 1968 that consisted of a central glazed wood door with transom and two six-over-six double-hung wood sash windows on either side. The dimensions of these historic rough openings remain visible on the exterior and the frames and transom are intact on the interior.

The west elevation of Building A, facing Sixth Street, is divided into three distinct sections: the west side of the stucco-clad storefront (one bay wide); the west side of the former double shotgun, which is clad in wood siding that is partially covered in vinyl siding, and the brick and concrete exit stair below (approximately seven bays wide); and the west side of the 1950s two-story stucco-clad addition and the extension of the exit stair (approximately eight bays wide). The storefront has no openings on its west elevation. The second-floor openings of the former shotgun include six double-hung six-over-six wood sash windows and a non-historic wood exit door. On the second floor of the 1950s addition are three aluminum sash or awning windows and one small aluminum-frame bathroom window. The exit stair is bordered by a metal pipe railing.

On the interior of the site, the west elevation of the rear two-story 1964 addition to Building B is clad in T1-11 plywood siding. The upper balcony has a simple railing comprised of horizontal painted 2”x 4” rails and posts. The balcony floor and ceiling are painted plywood. Openings at both levels consist of two hollow-core wood slab doors at guest room entrances. On the ground floor, an open passage with T1-11-covered walls provides egress to the east alley.

The west elevation of Building B, on the Washington Avenue side, is minimally visible from the street due to its proximity to the adjacent apartment building. The second floor overhangs the first floor by approximately one foot and the underside is clad in painted plywood. The ground floor is clad in wood clapboards beneath vinyl siding. Window openings on this floor are limited to the rear and consist of two one-over-one aluminum sash windows corresponding to Rooms 101 and 102, and two wood-frame guest bathroom windows. The second

5 City of New Orleans, building permit, May 21, 1969.
floor is clad in wood clapboards beneath vinyl siding and has a semi-regular fenestration pattern corresponding to guestroom and bathroom locations. The four guestroom windows are six-over-six double-hung wood sashes consistent with the building’s c. 1910 construction date; the four bathroom windows are two-over-two horizontal-light wood sashes, which are consistent stylistically with the building’s 1945 conversion into a hotel. The east elevation of the rear two-story 1964 addition is a bare CMU wall with a limited number of small aluminum-frame windows.

On the interior of the site, the east elevation of the rear 1950s addition to Building A (second floor) is clad in plywood siding extending uninterrupted into the addition’s rear gable. The rear gable of Building A, which is partially visible above the roofline of the 1950s addition, is clad in plywood sheet siding with no visible wall penetrations. The rear elevation of the one-story 1960s bathroom addition is solid stucco over CMU, and the rear of Building B consists of plywood sheet siding with wood battens and a louvered gable vent. The shed-roof rear addition to Building B, which was likely added c. 1910s, is clad in T1-11 plywood siding; rear openings include one six-over-six double hung wood sash window and an exit door accessed by an exterior metal stair. The rear elevation of the 1964 addition to Building B is a windowless expanse of T1-11 plywood siding.

The roofing on Building A, the c. 1930 storefront addition to Building A, and Building B is brown-colored architectural asphalt shingle. On the shed-roof additions to Building A and Building B, the roofing is black-colored architectural asphalt shingle. On the low-slope roofs of the 1950s and 1960s additions, the roofing is rolled asphalt. The roofing over the interstitial space between Building A and B is asphalt shingle at the front and asphalt roll roofing towards the rear; historically, this area was open at the 2nd floor.

Interior (Photos 7-15)

Like the exterior, the interior of the Dew Drop Inn exhibits a wide variety of historic features and finishes due to its phases of remodeling and expansion between c. 1900 and the 1960s. Today, it contains the former Dew Drop Café, the barbershop, the hotel lobby, and 35 hotel guestrooms.

The first floor of Building A, which housed the Dew Drop Café, was largely gutted following Hurricane Katrina in 2005. However, this gutting consisted primarily of the removal of wall and ceiling finishes and a few interior partitions at bathrooms and the restaurant kitchen, as the space was otherwise historically open in plan. According to Painia’s grandson Kenneth Jackson, both venues underwent several eras of remodeling during the period of significance. Today, the concrete floor slab shows at least three generations of floor tiles, and the walls have remnants of a plaster finish (on metal lath) with a coved cornice. Some partitions were framed out c. 2006 to provide structural support and as part of a canceled renovation project. Throughout the space, brick structural columns are exposed as are the wood ceiling joists and steel I-beams. Where the shed-roof addition of Building A meets the 1950s addition there is an increase in floor height of approximately six inches, followed by another concrete floor slab. Where the two sections meet is the former rear wall of the shotgun’s shed-roof addition, the second floor of which has collapsed; the space is now open to the ceiling, which is clad in tongue-and-groove wood boards. The wood wall and ceiling framing of the 1950s addition is exposed as are the structural metal pipe columns that divide the space longitudinally; these columns are decoratively painted.

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6 Kenneth Jackson, in a phone interview with the author, March 12, 2021.
and were likely intended to be exposed as part of the finished space. The 1960s bathroom addition on the east side of this rear space contains three bathrooms with multi-colored ceramic tile wainscoting and floors.

The second floor of Building A was originally constructed as a double shotgun house c. 1900, then converted into a single dwelling c. 1930, and finally, in 1945, subdivided into twelve small hotel guest rooms arranged along a central corridor. At roughly the building’s midway point, a crosswise corridor runs from the interior stair in Building B through Building A to the western exterior stair. This historic layout remains intact today. The corridors are narrow spaces with textured-finish wallboard walls and ceilings (in some areas, ceilings have been replaced with unpainted gypsum board), linoleum or vinyl floor tile, and simple painted-wood wall trim. Guestroom doors are painted hollow-core wood slab doors or painted solid-core wood panel doors. Several of the doors retain their original metal room numbers mounted on the door-frame headers. The front two guestrooms (Rooms 206 and 207) are located in the former c. 1930 storefront and are finished with vinyl tile over plywood subfloors and plain gypsum-board walls and ceilings. The guestrooms in the c. 1900 converted shotgun (Rooms 202-206 and 209-213) vary in finishes. Some retain early twentieth-century finishes such as picture molding, tall wood baseboards, and tall ceiling heights, with wallboard covering the original beadboard ceilings (e.g., Rooms 202, 204, 210, 213). Others were refinished in the 1940s or 1950s with wood-veneer wall paneling and gypsum-board ceilings (e.g., Rooms 209, 211). All of the guestroom floors are vinyl or linoleum tile over wood or plywood. Rooms along the east elevation retain their original six-over-six double-hung sash windows overlooking the interstitial space between the buildings. None of the rooms in this section has a private bathroom.

The six guestrooms on the second floor of the 1950s addition to Building A (Rooms 240-245) consist of two suites with a shared central bathroom and two single rooms with no private bathroom. The central corridor continues from the front of the building into the addition. Corridor finishes include wood-veneer wall paneling or gypsum board and vinyl-tile flooring; the wallboard finish has been removed from the ceiling and the wood framing is exposed. Guestroom doors, connecting suite doors, and bathroom doors are hollow-core wood slab doors with simple painted-wood frames. Walls are finished in wood-veneer paneling or gypsum board and ceiling framing is exposed throughout. Floors are vinyl tile. Bathrooms are finished with ceramic tile floors and wainscoting with gypsum-board upper walls and exposed-frame ceilings.

On the ground floor, the interstitial space between Building A and B was incorporated into the venue interior; on the second floor, the former exterior walls of both buildings remain visible. The walls are clad in wood clapboards and windows are six-over-six double-hung wood sashes. These windows correspond to second-floor guestrooms in both buildings.

The first floor of Building B contains the hotel lobby and stair in the front part of the building, with the small barbershop carved out to the west of the stair. Moving towards the rear are hotel administrative areas (office and storage) followed by three guestrooms (Rooms 101, 102, and 105) opening onto a central corridor that leads to the rear patio, yard, and the 1964 addition, which houses two additional ground-floor guestrooms with exterior entrances (Rooms 103 and 104). The hotel lobby contains an enclosed reception desk in the southeast corner, a wood stair to the west that was enclosed in 1982 to meet life safety requirements, and a small storage closet in the northeast corner. Walls are finished with striated-plywood wainscoting dating to c. 1950s with smooth-finish wallboard above. The ceilings have been replaced with unpainted gypsum board. The concrete floor slab is covered with at least two generations of composition tile. (Photos 65-68)

The reception desk is enclosed with wall-board partitions with wood-countertop and glazed-panel openings in the northwest corner and on the north side. Inside the enclosed space, the painted-wood luan ceiling was installed c. 1950s approximately two feet below the original wood-clad ceiling and floors are layered composition tile.

The barbershop interior dates primarily to c. 1950s and is finished with wood-veneer wall paneling, vinyl-tile floors, and a dropped acoustical-tile ceiling installed in 1968. Along the western wall are wash basins and shelving. The barber chairs are extant in storage.
Dew Drop Inn
Orleans Parish, LA
Name of Property
County and State

The guestroom corridor on this floor dates to c. 1950s and is finished with wallboard walls, vinyl-tile floors, and a beadboard ceiling that was previously concealed with wallboard to match the walls. Guestroom doors are painted hollow-core wood slab doors or painted solid-core wood panel doors set in simple painted-wood frames. Inside, the guestroom finishes date to c. 1950s with ceramic or vinyl tile floors, wood-veneer wall paneling over plaster, and ceilings are plywood or non-historic acoustical tile. The private bathrooms for Rooms 101 and 102 are finished with ceramic-tile walls and flooring. At the rear of the first floor, a one-light over two-panel wood door provides access to the rear patio and 1964 guestrooms. Adjacent to this door is a hollow-core wood slab door providing access to the venue in Building A.

The first floor of the 1964 addition to Building B contains two guestrooms (Room 103 and 104), each of which has a private bathroom. These units have been largely gutted but retain some gypsum-board wall and ceiling material and vinyl-tile floors.

The interior single-run stair to the second floor, which was enclosed in 1982, is accessed from the hotel lobby via a 1980s painted metal fire door with a vision panel. The walls and ceiling in the stairwell are predominantly plaster on wood lath, and the wood treads and risers are covered in rubber. (Photos 79-80) At the top of the stairs is another fire door matching the one below.

The second floor of Building B contains nine guestrooms in the c. 1910s portion of the building (Rooms 215-223), which was converted from an apartment in 1945. The guestrooms are arranged along a central north-south corridor that extends from the door opening onto the former front balcony to the building's rear, where an exit door accesses the balcony of the rear 1964 addition. At roughly the building's midway point, a crosswise corridor runs from the interior stair through Building A to the western exterior exit stair; this serves as the only interior connection point on the second floor between the two buildings. The narrow north-south corridor is finished with textured-plaster walls and ceilings on wood lath with picture molding and linoleum tile over wood flooring. The cross-wide corridor is finished in textured-wall board with a vinyl-tile floor, and trim is limited to simple painted-wood door frames. Guestroom doors are painted hollow-core wood slab doors or painted solid-core wood panel doors, and most of those along the north-south corridor have decorative painted-wood frames typical of the early twentieth century. The rooms along the western wall shared a bath located in the rear lean-to addition and those on the eastern wall contain private baths. Room finishes in this section include wood floors, covered in some areas with tile; plaster walls and ceilings; picture molding; and simple 2" x 6" wood baseboards. Bathroom finishes include ceramic tile floors and wainscoting with textured-wallboard upper walls and ceilings. In the rear lean-to addition, the walls are finished with wood-veneer panels, a gypsum-board ceiling, and a plywood floor. The door to the shared bathroom is a horizontal six-panel painted wood door.

The three guestrooms on the second floor of Building B (Rooms 246-248) consist of a suite with shared bath and a single room with no private bath. Floors are plywood subfloor or vinyl tile; walls are covered in plywood panels or wood veneer, some of which has been replaced with unpainted gypsum board; and ceilings are missing or covered in either plywood or unpainted gypsum board.

**Assessment of Integrity:**

**Location and Setting:** The property possesses integrity of location and setting. The buildings remain in their original locations. The setting retains its historically low-rise mixed-use character comprised of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century wood-frame rental housing, mid-twentieth century multi-family housing, and clusters of commercial and institutional buildings, particularly along LaSalle Street. The demolition of the 1941 Magnolia Housing Project across LaSalle Street from the subject property is mitigated by the fact that it was replaced with a similar property type and use (multi-family housing) in 2008.

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7 City of New Orleans, building permit, 2836 LaSalle Street, May 21, 1982.
Design, Materials, and Workmanship: The property possesses good integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. On the exterior, it still possesses the majority of its design features and materials from the period of significance (1945-1965). The only notable exterior losses are the removal of the balcony and overhang at Building B. The resizing of second-floor windows is mitigated by the fact that the original openings are intact on the interior and rough openings are intact on the exterior. Extant exterior features include the property's distinctive piecemeal character of two combined buildings expanded to the rear over time; stucco and wood clapboard siding on the façade; arched opening and lunette windows at the hotel entrance; separate barbershop storefront; four-part fenestration pattern at the venue entrance, including recessed doors and glass-block windows; six-over-six wood double-hung sash windows and various types of aluminum windows; and curved Spanish-style façade parapet. Interior extant features include the overall spatial arrangement and circulation pattern, including the open-plan venue, separate barbershop unit, hotel lobby and stair, double-loaded corridors, and hotel guestroom layout; and several finishes illustrating the interior's evolution over time, including plaster, wallboard, and paneling, various styles of wood trim, various types of doors, striated-plywood paneling, and various types of floor tile. The loss of the interior finishes in the front venue (the Dew Drop Café) is mitigated by the fact that they were changed out often during the period of significance. The demolition of the Groove Room is unfortunate; however, it was converted into additional hotel rooms during the period of significance and therefore had lost its character as a venue, while the Dew Drop Café continued the tradition of live music until 1970.

Feeling and Association: The property possesses integrity of feeling and association. Its integrity of location, setting, design, workmanship, and materials convey the building's history as a modest post-war multi-purpose establishment that was pieced together over time in a predominantly working-class African-American neighborhood in New Orleans. Despite the removal of some historic materials, there is no question that a former patron of the Dew Drop Inn would recognize the building today.

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.)

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<td>C</td>
<td>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.</td>
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Criteria Considerations:

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<td>A commemorative property</td>
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<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions.): Ethnic Heritage: Black; Entertainment/Recreation; Commerce

Period of Significance: 1945-1965

Significant Dates: N/A

Significant Person (Complete only if Criterion B is marked above):

Cultural Affiliation (only if criterion D is marked above):

Architect/Builder (last name, first name): Unknown; Painia, Frank (renovations)

Period of Significance (justification): The period of significance begins in 1945, when the Dew Drop Inn first opened in its current two-building configuration, and ends in 1965, when the Dew Drop entered into decline due to desegregation and Painia’s failing health.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary): n/a

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Dew Drop Inn, 2836 LaSalle Street, in New Orleans, Louisiana, is locally significant under Criterion A in the areas of Ethnic Heritage: Black, Recreation/Culture, and Commerce as the leading entertainment venue for African-American musicians, both local and national talents, in segregated New Orleans in the 1940s through the 1960s. Today, it is world-famous among music aficionados as the “cultural mecca” of Black New Orleans. Founded by African-American businessman Frank Painia, the family-operated Dew Drop also included a hotel, restaurant, and barber shop that became a safe haven, meeting place, and training ground for Black musicians from around the country. It is one of the few segregation-era hotels remaining in New Orleans and the only multi-purpose business of its kind to survive into the present day, making it a particularly significant remnant from this period in local African-American history. The property was designated a local landmark in 2010. The period of significance begins in 1945, when the Dew Drop Inn first opened in its current two-building configuration, and ends in 1965, when the Dew Drop entered into decline due to desegregation and Painia’s failing health.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least one paragraph for each area of significance.)

African-American Nightlife in New Orleans During Segregation, 1890-1965

Following the institution of racial segregation under Jim Crow laws in Louisiana in the 1890s, African Americans in New Orleans were severely limited in their access to commercial facilities of all kinds, including places of entertainment. As with other types of businesses, African Americans were forced to establish their own venues, either purpose built or incorporated into other property types such as masonic temples, benevolent society halls, and school auditoriums.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, entertainment for African Americans primarily occurred at multi-purpose facilities with an entertainment component. Examples from this period include Perseverance Society Hall in Treme (1880s; extant), which played an important role in the early development of jazz; the San Jacinto Social and Pleasure Club in Treme (1903; demolished); and the Pythian Temple, the city’s premier African-American fraternal organization and leading upscale venue located on the outskirts of the Central
Business District (1909; extant). Early purpose-built entertainment venues include South Rampart Street’s Eagle Saloon (1908; NRHP 2002) and Iroquois Theater (c. 1911; NRHP 2003), both known for their roles in jazz history and, in particular, the musical careers of jazz greats Buddy Bolden and Louis Armstrong.8

The creation of Storyville, New Orleans’ famed red-light district, in the 1890s provided African American musicians with additional venue options in the form of dance halls and brothels, some of which also catered to Black patrons.9 When Storyville was shuttered by the federal government in 1917, the action gradually shifted downriver to Bourbon Street, which by the 1940s cemented its role as the city’s entertainment mecca. Black musicians were welcomed as main attractions at the strip’s many clubs but, unlike Storyville, Black patrons were uniformly unwelcome.

In response to these limited options, a growing number of Black-owned nightclubs opened in New Orleans in the 1930s and 1940s. Some, including the Dew Drop Inn, were on the “Chitlin’ Circuit,” which developed during this period as a known group of entertainment venues throughout the country, and particularly in the South, that were open to traveling Black performers and patrons.

As hotel and restaurant accommodations were similarly limited for African Americans, some of these clubs incorporated lodgings and a restaurant or café that ensured performers could not only play but also eat and sleep without discrimination or reprisal. Such a combination of offerings also translated into savings for the promoters. As music journalist Preston Lauterbach explains in his book *The Chitlin’ Circuit and the Road to Rock ‘n’ Roll*, rather than pay for outside lodgings and meals, “[p]laces like…the Dew Drop Inn could feed, lodge, and showcase a traveling single act at no additional cash outlay for the promoter, which translated into lower ticket prices for the consumer and steady exposure and flow for the artists.”10 This type of streamlined multi-purpose establishment became a popular business model throughout the South in the 1940s and the 1950s. According to New Orleans musician Charles Neville,

> each city he visited [in the 1950s and 1960s] usually had one particular mecca for black musicians, a place where they could gather for friendship, to find work and to play music. Because of segregation laws, these clubs frequently were attached to a restaurant and hotel, providing the touring musicians with an assured place to eat and sleep. Before he went on the road, Neville—a member of the prominent musical family—already knew that New Orleans had such an establishment, the fabled Dew Drop Inn, located on LaSalle Street.11

In the 1930s and 1940s, New Orleans gained several such establishments, of which the Dew Drop was the most famous. In the late 1940s, the Robin Hood Hotel (with a nightclub of the same name) opened in Central City at the corner of Jackson and Simon Bolivar Avenues (demolished). The Golden Leaf Hotel, with Club Tiajuana, opened in the late 1940s in Central City (demolished). One of the oldest hotels for African Americans in New Orleans, the Astoria on South Rampart Street, gained the Tick Tock Tavern in the 1930s (demolished). The Hotel Foster, located on LaSalle Street one block upriver from the Dew Drop, was established in the 1940s and included both a venue, the Rainbow Room, and an eatery known as Foster’s Chicken Dean (demolished). All of these venues were listed in the *Negro Motorist Green Book*, an annual national travel guide published from 1936 to 1967 to help African Americans travel safely, and were included under “Hotels,” “Taverns,” or “Restaurants” depending on the establishment’s desired emphasis.12

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12 *Negro Motorist Green Book*, 1940-1964 editions
In addition to multi-purpose establishments, mid-century New Orleans also gained some standalone “Black clubs,” as they were then known, including the Caldonia Inn and the Gypsy Tea Room in Treme (both demolished) and Club Desire in the Desire neighborhood (demolished). To see major touring acts, African Americans had access to the Municipal Auditorium in Treme (1930; extant), albeit in segregated seating, and the auditorium of Booker T. Washington High School (1942; extant). Due to his experience as a booking agent at these large venues, Dew Drop Inn proprietor Frank Painia was able to attract touring acts to his own smaller venue when it opened in 1945, and from that time onward the Dew Drop was another quality option for Black patrons to enjoy national performers.

Following the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the desegregation of Bourbon Street and other formerly whites-only venues across the city, the segregation-era venues gradually declined. Black musicians had more options for accommodations while on tour, and patrons could access the venues of their choice. Multi-purpose establishments, such as the Dew Drop Inn, pivoted their business models to stay afloat. By the end of the twentieth century, however, most had closed, as had many of the standalone clubs, and today all but the Dew Drop have been demolished.

Hotels in New Orleans During Segregation, 1890-1965

Like other types of businesses, safe and decent travel accommodations for African Americans in New Orleans were limited by racial segregation laws between the 1890s and the 1960s. In response, the African American community developed its own lodging options throughout the city for various types and classes of travelers. Among the earliest documented hotels operated for and catering to African Americans were the Astoria Hotel and the Patterson Hotel, both of which were located in converted low-rise commercial buildings on South Rampart Street. The Astoria, described as “one of the largest negro hotels in the South,” opened c. 1908 at 235-37 South Rampart Street (demolished). In addition to guest rooms, the Astoria offered a restaurant and billiards room, and in the 1930s it expanded with an entertainment venue named the Tick Tock Tavern. The Patterson Hotel opened in the 1930s at 761 South Rampart Street, then moved one block away to 801 ½ South Rampart in the 1940s (both locations demolished). In 1937 the Patterson advertised as “New Orleans’ finest colored hotel,” and in 1949 as “A National and International Hotel for Colored.”

Beginning in 1940, the Negro Motorist Green Book also listed a handful of “tourist homes,” which were rooms in private residences run by female proprietors. Examples listed in the guide include the Central City homes of Mrs. F. Livaudais at 1954 Jackson Avenue (demolished) and Mrs. King at 2826 Louisiana Avenue (extant).

Following World War II, as the nation prospered and automobile travel increased, New Orleans gained several new hotels for African American guests; between 1945 and 1965, there were approximately 22 hotels according to available records, including the Dew Drop Inn. Some were similar in business model to the Dew Drop, with a restaurant/bar/club component, while others were strictly hotels. None were large in comparison to whites-only hotels, ranging in size from a few guestrooms to no more than a few dozen. Some were purpose-built, such as the Gladstone Hotel at 3435 Dryades Street (c. 1946; extant), while others, like the Creole Ritz at 1314 Carondelet Street (c. 1850s/c. 1946; extant), were located in existing buildings converted for hotel use. The number of private tourist homes also increased in the post-war period.

As the city’s numerous hotels for white patrons began to integrate in the mid-1960s, the segregation-era hotels gradually closed until only a handful, including the Dew Drop Inn, remained in operation as inexpensive lodging options outside of the downtown core, typically with an extended-stay business model. Today only a few examples survive from this period, as discussed in more detail below.

13 "Astoria Hotel is Sold. South Rampart Street Property Brings $30,000," Times-Picayune, July 29, 1919.
14 "Patterson Hotel," New Orleans Item, June 1, 1937; and New Orleans city directory, 1949. In 1951 the Patterson relocated to Mid-City (demolished).
15 Negro Motorist Green Book, 1940-1964 editions
16 Negro Motorist Green Book, 1940-1941 editions
17 Negro Motorist Green Book, 1947-1964 editions
In 1934, twenty-six-year-old Frank Painia Jr. (1908-1972) left his rural hometown of Plaquemine, Louisiana, with his wife, Feddie, and their young children to search for work in New Orleans. A barber by trade, Painia was soon employed in a barber shop at 2857 LaSalle Street in the predominantly working-class African-American neighborhood of Central City. In the late 1930s, when the shop was slated for demolition for the federally funded Magnolia Street Housing Project (1939-41; NRHP, 1999; demolished), Painia leased the first floor of a two-story wood-frame building across the street at 2836 LaSalle, where he opened Frank's Barber Shop and a bar, the Dew Drop Inn, in April 1939. Frank’s brother Clarence moved from Plaquemine to help run the business, and for a time he rented the apartment upstairs. Frank also entered the entertainment business around this time, booking touring Black musicians at local segregated venues such as the auditorium at Booker T. Washington High School (demolished) and the Coliseum Arena (demolished).

Painia’s varied business ventures were profitable and, in November 1943, he was able to purchase 2836 LaSalle Street for $8,000. Soon thereafter, in March 1945, he purchased the two-story frame building next door at 2840 LaSalle Street, connected the two structures, and expanded the business into a hotel, restaurant, and 24-hour nightclub. Together with the barber shop and bar, the Dew Drop Inn became a one-stop shop for Black musicians at a time when options—for accommodations and venues alike—were limited by segregation laws. The hotel provided small, simply furnished rooms, most with shared bathrooms, and the casual restaurant served local homestyle cooking. It was a family business, with several Painias working the various sections of the establishment. According to city directories, Frank’s brother Clarence was the bartender, and another relative, Alma, was a waitress; his sister Bessie was assistant manager of the café and bar, and Easton, another brother, was one of the barbers. Feddie, Frank’s wife, was the general supervisor of the café and bar, and his brother Paul was the cook.

Painia’s skills as a booking agent and his growing list of contacts helped make the club a virtual overnight success. In October of 1945, *Louisiana Weekly*, the city’s African-American owned newspaper, had already dubbed it “New Orleans’ swankiest nightspot” for its vibrant mix of local and touring acts, both in the front bar and café (“the Dew Drop Café,” also known as the Lounge – *Figures 4-5*) and in the “Groove Room,” a one-story brick structure with mezzanine-level seating that Painia constructed at the rear of the property (demolished). (*Figures 2, 6*) The house band was led by Dave Bartholomew or Edgar Blanchard, both New Orleans musicians who became prominent figures in American R&B. Touring performers in the 1940s included Cecil Gant, Big Joe Turner, the Ravens, and Velma “Chubby” Newsom, and major local performers included Smiley Lewis, Tommy Ridgley, and Guitar Slim. (*Figure 7*) In addition to music, the Dew Drop hosted floor shows with a grab bag of entertainers including comedians, dancers, female impersonators, and strongmen. In 1949, when Louis Armstrong was King of Zulu, New Orleans’ leading African-American Carnival krewe, his float reportedly stopped in front of the Dew Drop and Armstrong raised a toast. This acknowledgment, which was akin to the then-whites-only King of Rex’s traditional toast to City Hall, signaled the Dew Drop’s stature both in the local Black community and in the music industry more broadly.
The Dew Drop flourished in the 1950s, hosting internationally known and local blues, jazz, and R&B artists on a near-weekly basis. Indeed, it was not uncommon for musicians to check in at the hotel and stay for weeks at a time. In the 1950s, the “Drop,” as it was popularly known, hosted Etta James, Ray Charles, Dinah Washington, James Brown, Roy Milton, Willie Mae Thornton, and Champion Jack Dupree. According to New Orleans blues singer Joseph August, known as “Mr. Google Eyes,” the Dew Drop was a status symbol: “The Dew Drop was just it. It was the foundation for musicians in New Orleans. Whether you were from out of town or from the city, your goal was the Dew Drop. If you couldn’t get a gig at the Dew Drop, you weren’t about nothing.”

Little Richard, who first performed at the Dew Drop in 1955 and played there several times thereafter, co-wrote a song with Esquerita about the Dew Drop, “The Dew Drop Inn,” in 1970:

Meet those fine gals
your buddies and your pals
down in New Orleans on a street they call LaSalle.
Down at the Dew Drop Inn
You meet all your fine friends.
Baby do drop in, I’ll meet you at the Dew Drop Inn.

Thus, as these lyrics illustrate, Painia had created much more than a successful nightclub. The Dew Drop was a safe haven and a meeting place where Black musicians from around the country knew they were welcome by Painia and their peers. They performed, honed their skills, learned from each other, and simply hung out at
all hours of the day and night. In New Orleans, widely recognized as a center of American music culture, the Dew Drop was at the center of its music scene during a period of incredible innovation and creativity.

Painia’s health began to suffer in 1965. His illness, in addition to the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which ruled segregation unconstitutional, triggered the gradual decline of the Dew Drop as a live music venue. Black patrons were no longer shut out of previously whites-only clubs, including those on Bourbon Street, and thus had more entertainment options. Nevertheless, live music continued in the Dew Drop Café until 1970, and Painia updated the façade with a modern slipcover in 1968.

Upon his death in July 1972, Painia was eulogized on the front page of Louisiana Weekly as “the first major black night club owner in the city to feature night club acts of many of the now famous black stars….His club during the forties and early fifties was the show place for many of the nation’s top names in show business.”

In 1978, in honor of the Dew Drop’s famed all-night performances, the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival created a Dew Drop Inn tribute program as part of its annual festivities, with musicians from around the country joining midnight “jam sessions” at the Contemporary Arts Center.

Following Painia’s death, his widow, Feddie, continued to operate the hotel portion of the business and leased the bar to new operators. Painia’s descendants ran Frank’s Barber Shop until 2002. The hotel closed following the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in 2005, which flooded the building with several feet of water and caused significant exterior damage. The building remains vacant today.

**Criterion A: Ethnic Heritage - Black, Recreation/Culture, and Commerce**

Given the multi-purpose nature of its business model, the Dew Drop Inn is locally significant under Criterion A in three areas, all of which are tied to its association with racial segregation under Jim Crow laws:

- **Ethnic Heritage – Black**, for its role as an African-American-owned business that catered to Black musicians and clientele
- **Recreation/Culture**, as the leading live entertainment venue for African Americans during segregation
- **Commerce**, as a segregation-era hotel.

The property’s significance in these three areas is amplified by its status as a rare surviving example of both a Black-owned entertainment venue and a hotel, as discussed in more detail below.

The historic significance of the Dew Drop as a mid-twentieth century entertainment venue is well documented. The following quotes from a variety of sources capture its status within the city’s African-American community and its significance to the history of American music more broadly.

In 1973, not long after the Dew Drop closed as a music venue, the Times-Picayune called it “New Orleans’ leading hostelry and ‘jam corner’ for the nation’s outstanding black musicians and entertainers.”

In a 1986 article for Blues Unlimited, a British music magazine, New Orleans journalist Jeff Hannusch wrote that “from 1945 to 1970, the Dew Drop was synonymous with top flight Black entertainment, drawing singers, musicians, dancers and comedians like a magnet….The club would embrace the lives and careers of thousands of people.” The magazine’s editors added their own introductory note to the article: “Undoubtedly the club which rekindles the fondest musical memories and stories [of New Orleans’s history of music and

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37 Hannusch, 10.
entertainment] is the famous Dew Drop Inn, located at 2836 LaSalle Street...For 25 years, the Dew Drop constantly lived up to its boast of being 'the south’s swankiest night spot.’”

In a 2016 documentary about the Dew Drop, New Orleans R&B musician and singer Deacon John, who got his start at the club, described it as

our cultural mecca. It was the catalyst for the indigenous culture of New Orleans. It was the showplace of the South. The Dew Drop was a great hangout for a lot of characters, musicians, dancers, and female impersonators. It was a family business. The Dew Drop was a hotel, it was a restaurant, it was a barbershop. Everything you wanted was in, like, a one-stop place....When [performers] came to New Orleans, the first place they wanted to go was the Dew Drop.

In celebration of the city’s tricentennial in 2018, the *Times-Picayune* published a series highlighting three hundred moments, people, and places that defined New Orleans’s unique history. In “The rise and fall of New Orleans’ legendary Dew Drop Inn,” journalist Allie Mariano wrote:

In its prime, the Dew Drop Inn served a part of the population that wasn’t afforded access to all that the city had to offer. Black musicians could perform on Bourbon Street, but they couldn't have a drink after the show. The Dew Drop Inn carved out its place amid this injustice and made a space where anyone -- from amateurs to touring legends -- could perform, have a drink, and lay their head. In the process, it cultivated some of the most iconic music that New Orleans has to offer.

The 2010 landmark designation report by the New Orleans Historic District Landmarks Commission defined the Dew Drop’s significance within the greater legacy of New Orleans as a center of American music:

New Orleans is an important music and entertainment center due to the number of live music venues that attracted nationally known artists and fostered the city’s many musical styles. There were hundreds of music clubs in the city that carried the musical heritage of the city, however most are just a memory and the famous Dew Drop Inn still stands to represent the musical culture of New Orleans.

While most of the city’s “hundreds” of music clubs were for white audiences only, there were also several that catered to Black audiences, and most of them were also Black-owned. After the Dew Drop, the best known of the “Black” clubs, as they were commonly called, were:

- Caldonia Inn, 942 N. Rampart Street (demolished)
- Club Desire, 2604 Desire Street (demolished)
- San Jacinto Club, 1422 Dumaine Street (demolished)
- Club Tiajuana at the Golden Leaf Hotel, 1209 S. Saratoga Street (demolished)
- Rainbow Room at Hotel Foster, 2926 LaSalle Street (demolished)
- Tick Tock Tavern at the Astoria Hotel, 235 S. Rampart Street (demolished)
- Robin Hood Hotel, 2132 Simon Bolivar Avenue (demolished)

All of these clubs and the lesser-known ones, too, have been lost. Only the Dew Drop has been documented as extant. Club Desire, constructed in 1948 as a “swank” club in the downriver St. Claude neighborhood, was

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36 Ibid.  
the most recent loss following its demolition c. 2017. Other multi-purpose establishments, i.e., those that also included a hotel, including the Robin Hood Hotel, the Astoria Hotel, Hotel Foster, and the Golden Leaf Hotel, are no longer extant, making the Dew Drop the only remaining example of this type.

The Dew Drop is also historically significant in the area of Commerce as a segregation-era hotel that embodies, in a local context, the challenges that Black travelers faced under Jim Crow laws to find safe and decent accommodations. Today, three hotels from this period survive, including the subject property:

- **Creole Ritz Hotel, 1314 Carondelet Street.** This 2.5-story Greek Revival-style townhouse was constructed c. 1850s as a double residence. Around 1946, one side was converted into a small hotel for African Americans with approximately 8-10 rooms (extrapolated from the size of the building). Hotel owner Otto Duncan, a well-to-do African-American physician, operated the hotel until c. 1960, according to available records. The Creole Ritz was listed in the *Green Book* from 1950 until 1958. This property differs from the Dew Drop in several ways, including the size of the hotel, the lack of a nightclub component and other amenities, such as a restaurant, and the clientele. Based on the name and the economic status of its owner, the Creole Ritz was likely intended to attract more well-heeled travelers than the Dew Drop, which was a simply furnished hotel catering to traveling musicians.

- **Gladstone Hotel, 3435 Dryades Street.** The Gladstone Hotel, which is still in operation, was originally constructed c. 1946 as a two-story brick masonry hotel with a one-story lounge at the front (with no documented history of live entertainment). Its claim to fame is that Louis Armstrong stayed there in the 1950s. The Gladstone was listed in the *Green Book* from 1947 until the publication’s final 1966-67 edition. Today, the hotel portion is three stories in height and its footprint has changed significantly in comparison to what is shown on the 1937-51 Sanborn Map. In addition, the mansard roof added to the front lounge appears to date to the 1970s or later. Thus, it appears that the Gladstone does not possess historic integrity.

- **Dew Drop Inn, the subject property.** With 35 guestrooms (plus more before the converted Groove Room was demolished), the Dew Drop was among the largest of the segregated hotels. It was listed in the *Green Book* from 1949 until 1955, but under “Nightclubs” rather than “Hotels.” This is due, perhaps, to its fame as an entertainment venue and the emphasis on its hotel component as a place for traveling musicians.

**Conclusion**

The Dew Drop Inn embodies African-American enterprise in segregated New Orleans during a period of incredible limitation and adversity. As a world-famous, African-American owned and operated entertainment venue and hotel in the 1940s through the 1960s, it is historically significant both for its contribution to the history of American music in the twentieth century, specifically to the genres of blues, R & B, and rock ‘n’ roll, and for its distinctive functionality as a multi-purpose establishment designed to accommodate African American performers and patrons in the face of pervasive and legalized racial injustice. This extraordinary history, and the property’s status as a rare local survivor of a venue and a hotel from this period, qualify the Dew Drop Inn for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

**Developmental History/Additional historic context information**

See above

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44 New Orleans city directories, 1945-1955

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

“Arrest 146 in Disease Drive.” *New Orleans States*, March 25, 1944.

“Astoria Hotel is Sold. South Rampart Street Property Brings $30,000.” *Times-Picayune*, July 29, 1919.


City of New Orleans, building permits, 1969-1982


Jackson, Kenneth. Phone interview with the author, March 12, 2021.

“Jazz Great Deacon John to hit Dew Drop on Friday.” *Times-Picayune*, October 7, 2015.


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service / National Register of Historic Places Registration Form
NPS Form 10-900

Dew Drop Inn
Name of Property

 Orleans Parish, LA
County and State


Negro Motorist Green Book, 1936-1967 editions

New Orleans city directories, 1935-1970


Orleans Parish Property Tax Rolls. Municipal District 4, Assessment District 12, 1943-44.

“Patterson Hotel.” New Orleans Item, June 1, 1937.


Previous documentation on file (NPS):

X 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 # __________

recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # __________

Primary location of additional data:

X State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University
Dew Drop Inn
Name of Property

Orleans Parish, LA
County and State

____ Other
Name of repository: _____________________________________

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____________

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: less than 1 acre

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates
Datum if other than WGS84:__________
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)
1. Latitude: 29.936901°  Longitude: -90.091687°
2. Latitude: Longitude:
3. Latitude: Longitude:
4. Latitude: Longitude:

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.) Square 333, Lot 2 facing LaSalle Street measuring 35' x 150' and Lot 3 facing LaSalle Street measuring 30' x 150'. This includes 2836 thru 2842 LaSalle.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.) The National Register boundaries correspond to the current legal boundaries of the parcel, which are unchanged since the period of significance.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Gabrielle Begue, Senior Associate
organization: MacRostie Historic Advisors
street & number: 614 Gravier Street
city or town: New Orleans state: LA zip code: 70130
e-mail: gbegue@mac-ha.com
telephone: (504) 655-9707
date: June 29, 2021

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

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

• Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.

• Additional items: (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)
Photographs
Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 3000x2000 at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn’t need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Dew Drop Inn  
City or Vicinity: New Orleans  
County: Orleans  
State: LA  
Name of Photographer: Gabrielle Begue  
Date of Photographs: March 2021

1 of 15
Exterior view, façade, camera facing southwest

2 of 15
Exterior view, façade, camera facing southeast

3 of 15
Hotel entrance in Building B storefront, camera facing south

4 of 15
Glass-block windows in Building A storefront, camera facing southeast

5 of 15
Curved parapet of Building A façade, camera facing south

6 of 15
Rear elevation of Buildings A and B, camera facing northeast

7 of 15
Venue interior, Building A, camera facing west

8 of 15
Venue interior, Building A, camera facing southwest

9 of 15
Interstitial space between Building A (right) and Building B (left), camera facing south

10 of 15
Hotel lobby, Building A, camera facing south

11 of 15
2nd-floor corridor, Building B, camera facing north
Dew Drop Inn
Name of Property

Orleans Parish, LA
County and State

12 of 15
Room 216, Building B, camera facing northeast

13 of 15
2nd-floor corridor, (Building A, camera facing north

14 of 15
Room 206, Building A, camera facing west

15 of 15
Room 243, Building A (1950s addition), camera facing east

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 100 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. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.
MAP 1. Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1908-09 series (Vol. 4, Sheet 398). Building A (2840-42 Howard Street) is depicted as a one-story double shotgun house. Building B (2836 Howard Street) has not been built.
MAP 2. Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1908-09 series, corrected 1933 (Vol. 4, Sheet 398). Building A has been converted into a single residence and a one-story shop has been added to the front. Building B is shown as a two-story building with a shop in front and dwelling in the rear.
DEW DROP INN
2836 LaSalle Street, New Orleans, LA
National Register Nomination
June 2021

MAP 3. Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1937-51 series (Vol. 4, Sheet 398). This map depicts the Dew Drop Inn after Painia connected and renovated the buildings in 1945. The “Groove Room” is visible at the rear of the site.
MAP 4. Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1937-51 series corrected 1964 (Vol. 4, Sheet 398). This map depicts the Dew Drop Inn when the Groove Room was increased to two stories and converted into hotel guestrooms. The 1960s rear additions were constructed later in the year and thus are not depicted on the map.
FIGURE 2. Advertisement for the Dew Drop Inn, the “South’s Swankiest Nite Club.” These photos were likely taken inside the Groove Room. Source: *The Negro South* (March 1946)/Louisiana Research Collection/Tulane University Special Collections.
FIGURE 3. Exterior of the Dew Drop Inn, c1950s. Source: Jeff Hannusch/Blues Unlimited (August 1986)/Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University Special Collections.
FIGURE 4. Interior view of the Dew Drop Cafe, 1952. The audience is watching a performance by comedian Lollypop Jones. The opening in the background leads into the 1950s addition, which provided more seating. Bathrooms are to the right. The stage is to the left just beyond the frame. Source: Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University Special Collections.
FIGURE 5. Interior view of the Dew Drop Cafe, 1952. Behind the police officers is the front entrance to the venue (facing LaSalle Street) and to the right is the stage. Source: Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University Special Collections.
DEW DROP INN
2836 LaSalle Street, New Orleans, LA
National Register Nomination
June 2021

FIGURE 9. An ad for the Dew Drop published in *Crescent City Sepia Host Buyer’s and Tourist “Guide to New Orleans”* (1956). In an online exhibit that includes this image, the New Orleans Public Library Louisiana Collection writes that the Dew Drop was “one of the most important showplaces for New Orleans rhythm and blues artists during the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s.”
DIAGRAM 1. Evolution diagram of the Dew Drop Inn color coded by date of construction. Source: MacRostie Historic Advisors.
### DEW DROP INN, 2836 LaSalle Street, New Orleans, LA

National Register Boundary Map - June 2021

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parcel</th>
<th>2836- LASALLEST</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Location Address</td>
<td>2836 LA SALLE ST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner Address</td>
<td>DEW DROP INN REVIVAL LLC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address</td>
<td>1718 ST ANN ST SUITE 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address</td>
<td>NEW ORLEANS LA 70116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land Use Code</td>
<td>C 413</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land Area (sq ft)</td>
<td>10,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Area (sq ft)</td>
<td>16,590</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Land Value | $84,000 |
| Building Value | $71,300 |
| Total Value | $155,300 |
| Date         | 11/9/2020 |
| Price        | 0 |
| Grantor      | JACKSON LAURA P |
| Grantee      | JACKSON KENNETH C |

Date created: 6/22/2021
Last Data Uploaded: 6/22/2021 7:53:34 AM

Legend:
- Parcels
- Roads
- National Register boundary

Overview

Orleans Parish, LA