

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Jefferson Hotel is a four story brick railroad hotel built in 1922 on the edge of downtown Shreveport across the street from the city's Union Depot. Alterations have been minimal.

The one hundred and six room hotel was built to accommodate the steady stream of travelers arriving at Union Depot and needing overnight lodging because of schedule differences, changing from one railroad line to another, etc. Demolished in 1972, the magnificent Union Depot served as the passenger terminal for the numerous railroad lines that converged upon Shreveport. When a passenger walked out the door, the Jefferson was immediately across the street. All that remains today of the Union Depot are the steps going down from the site to street level. Railroad tracks run down Lake Street a few feet away from the Jefferson's principal side elevation.

The hotel is sparingly detailed, as perhaps befits its functional nature. One immediately notices that the facade and principal side elevation are taken up largely with square head hotel room windows featuring brick jack arches and cast concrete keystones. The original fixed awning has an arched canopy over the entrance and a pressed tin ceiling. The handsome aedicule style doorway is distinguished by a denticular cornice, egg and dart molding, and patera blocks in the pilasters. Cast concrete bands are used above the first floor to define the shopfront level. Shopfront spaces are located on either side of the doorway and at the rear of the principal side elevation. These shops had a variety of uses, including a cafe, drugstore, bar, hotel dining room, ice cream parlor, and barber shop. The top of the Jefferson is ornamented with a plain cast concrete cornice and decorative cast concrete panels in the parapet featuring urns and shields. Exterior alterations are confined to the painting over of the transoms and some of the shopfront windows as well as some fairly minor shopfront modifications.

The hotel lobby originally turned the corner at the rear, giving it an overall L shape. However, a wall has been inserted in the rear corner. The lobby is fairly plain, featuring square columns and pilasters with a Jefferson crest at the top, a high wainscot, an openwork ceiling, and a tile floor. The present registration counter is modern. Other interior changes include dropped ceilings in the hotel dining room and some of the shop spaces. In at least two instances the dropped ceilings are deteriorated and the original pressed tin ceilings are visible in places.

Assessment of Integrity:

Because changes have been so minimal, particularly on the exterior, there is no integrity problem.

Significant dates	1922-1939
Architect/Builder	Architect: H.E. Schwartz Contractor: B & T Construction Co.

Criterion A

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Jefferson Hotel is locally significant in the area of transportation because it is one of very few buildings left to represent Shreveport's very important railroad history.

From its founding in 1835 Shreveport became a natural crossroads of commerce due to its location on the Red River, a major trade artery. However, by the turn of the century the Iron Horse had supplanted the steamboat, and Shreveport soon emerged as a major regional railroad hub. In short, it had moved from a river town to a railroad town.

There were no less than six railroad lines converging upon Shreveport, radiating from the city like the spokes of a wagon wheel. These transportation facilities enabled the city to become a regional shipping center as well as a major passenger hub. Perhaps Shreveport's railroad history is most graphically illustrated in Sanborn Insurance Company maps for the 1890s-1935 period. Even the casual observer would notice that Shreveport was first and foremost a railroad landscape. The huge Union Depot served as the central passenger terminal, but each line, and branch thereof, had

its own freight depots, round houses and occasionally office buildings. For example, the 1935 map shows Union Depot, eight freight depots, numerous round houses, and two railroad office buildings. In addition, by about 1940, Texas and Pacific had built its own passenger depot.

Other important components of any railroad town landscape are railroad hotels and warehouses located near the tracks. While not as directly associated with railroading as depots and round houses, these buildings are inextricably related. After all, the railroad was their *raison d'être*. Located adjacent to the passenger depot, railroad hotels were the airport hotels of their day. Because of the need to switch lines and scheduling differences, passengers often had to stay overnight. Thus the importance of a convenient hostelry of ample size was no small concern in a railroad town like Shreveport. This need in Shreveport was filled by the Jefferson, which apparently was regarded as the railroad hotel because of its size, quality, and prime location directly across the street from the Union Depot. As passengers streamed out the front doors, the Jefferson was just down the steps and across the street. At the time the hotel was built, Shreveport was one of the fastest growing cities in the United States and Union Depot was one of the busiest in the South. A November 1922 article in a local publication heralded the construction of the Jefferson as follows: "Shreveport's transient population, especially 'shall rise up and call her blessed,' for in the building here of another mammoth up to date hotel, the traveling public will indeed be adequately cared for."

Sanborn maps show that hotels were concentrated in the downtown proper, two to four blocks north of Union Depot. There were never more than two or three close enough to Union Depot to be called railroad hotels. In 1903, there was a two story Ferris Hotel on the Jefferson site and the Hunter Hotel immediately to the left across the street. The 1935 map shows the Jefferson and a smaller Avis Hotel immediately to the right. None of these remain except for the Jefferson. The only other possibility is the Arlington, located a block to the north. While it may technically be a railroad hotel, it does not have a visual relationship with the Union Depot site. In short, one can tell that the Jefferson is a railroad hotel by its siting, whereas it is not evident with the Arlington.

While the Shreveport landscape was once replete with a plethora of rail-related buildings, as previously described, relatively little remains today. Only the 1920s Central Station and a c.1940 Texas & Pacific Depot remain to represent resources directly connected with railroading. While there were once about two dozen railroad warehouses, only about a half dozen are left. Finally, the Jefferson survives to illustrate the phenomenon of the railroad hotel. Because there is so little left from the once abundant resources directly associated with railroading, and because railroading was such a pivotal force in Shreveport's history, secondary buildings such as railroad hotels and warehouses are of considerable significance.

Note: The fifty year cutoff is being used as the end of the period of significance. The Union Depot continued to be a major passenger terminal into the 1940s and '50s and the Jefferson continued in its role as a railroad hotel.

Major Bibliographical References

Sanborn Insurance Company Maps, Shreveport, 1885, 1890, 1896, 1899, 1903, 1904, 1909, 1935.

Historic photos of the Jefferson Hotel and Union Depot. Copies in Register file.

Historical sketch of Shreveport railroads and the role of the Jefferson provided by Paul C. Harwell, Red River Valley Railroad Historical Society, Inc.

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