

The Evangeline Hotel (1928) is a large six story tan brick building with an original one story restaurant wing. Located on a corner in downtown Lafayette, the hotel's decorative motifs are mainly derived from Italian sources. Despite various alterations and additions, the building remains a landmark in the Lafayette CBD.

The Evangeline Hotel's styling is confined to the top floor, as was sometimes the case in tall buildings of the period. Specific Italian influenced features include low pitched gables, double arch windows with a rounder above, blind arcading and a central front window with an overall Mannerist character. These elements will be described in more detail below. In addition to its styling, the top floor (front and two sides) is set apart by its white stucco finish with brick accents.

The front of the top story features a low pitched central gable defined by pronounced blind arcading and quoins. (The quoins begin at the second story.) At the center is a prominent terra cotta window surround reminiscent of the Mannerist style. Its pediment is broken by an oversized rather florid cartouche with attached swags to each side. The sides are accented with quoin-like elements. Beneath the window is a false balcony with an arcade resting on consoles. A square head window set within a brick round arch surround is located to each side of the central composition. A rich, textured effect was created by laying the bricks within the round arches with their corners pointing outwards.

At each end of the side elevations is a two bay low pitched gabled section defined by quoins in the same manner as the front. Each culminates in a gable featuring pronounced blind arcading and a double arch window composition with a rounder above. The windows are the same as those on the front -- i.e., a square head window set within a brick round arch surround. The roundels feature the same brick treatment as the round arches, as previously described. The bays between the gabled sections feature blind arcading and square head windows with brick surrounds.

Alterations since construction:

(1) The hotel was enlarged by about a third. The date for this expansion is unknown; the 1940s is an educated guess. The addition is the same height as the original and is of similar brick. Although sensitively done, it clearly reads as an addition, largely because the top story is unadorned.

(2) The exterior of the first story was completely redone in the late 1960s, when the hotel was remodeled for use as a state office building. The work on the ground story included covering almost all of the openings, plastering over the entire surface, adding a mansard roof to the restaurant wing, and attaching a mansard roof covered area to part of the main side elevation. However, historic photographs and a drawing survive to show the original appearance, which was basically fairly low key. The front featured a central round arch double door entrance with a single door to each side. Above each single door was a terra cotta decorative panel. To each side of this composition was a large plate glass window with a multi-paned transom. The restaurant wing is shown with two large plate glass windows at the center with a round arch entrance to each side. None of the foregoing is visible except for one round arch opening on the wing and the round arch opening on the hotel and the two decorative plaques. On the side elevation were a series of simple square head openings. It should be noted that the ground story will be restored to its original appearance as part of a slated tax certification project.

(3) The interior was also remodeled when the building was taken over by the state, including some floor plan changes and dropped celotex ceilings in most spaces. Surviving features on the ground level include a paneled wainscot in the lobby (now subdivided) and an entrance hallway which features a plain vaulted ceiling, an arched opening to the lobby and a paneled wainscot. Also, some guest rooms retain their original louvered doors.

(4) A one story plastered rear addition was added as part of the state's remodeling project.

Assessment of Integrity:

Although numerous, the above alterations have not impacted the hotel's Italian architectural character, which was confined to the top story. While the reworked ground story is visually jarring and out of character, it should be noted that the original design was not a stylistic statement. In short, while the modifications are most regrettable, at least no major stylistic features were lost. Because the hotel's articulated top story survives intact, the building is a landmark in the much depleted and altered Lafayette CBD.

Significant dates	1928
Architect/Builder	unknown
Criterion C	

The Evangeline Hotel is locally significant in the area of architecture as one of very few landmarks remaining in downtown Lafayette.

The Lafayette central business district contains about 50 or so 50+ year old buildings, all of which fall within the c.1900 to c.1935 period. Virtually all of these are either unstyled buildings or severely altered older buildings. In addition, due largely to booming oil-generated prosperity in the modern era, there are a large number of modern buildings where historic buildings once stood. This prosperity, of course, also contributed to the modernization of historic buildings. Because downtown Lafayette's historic building stock has been so greatly depleted and altered, a major styled building such as the Evangeline Hotel is a landmark even to the casual observer. In fact, it is one of only about three or four buildings in the downtown which can claim to represent a specific style of architecture. Although confined to the top story, its Italian styling is nonetheless quite pronounced, including low pitched gables, double arch windows with a rounder above, blind arcading and a terra cotta window surround in the Mannerist style accented with an arcaded "balcony" resting on consoles. The hotel's landmark status is enhanced by the fact that it is one of only two historic buildings in the CBD over two stories high. As one approaches the downtown, the building is quite prominent because of its six story height and distinctive top story. All in all, it makes quite a statement within the context of downtown Lafayette.

Bibliography

Historic postcard, photographs, and front elevation drawing of Evangeline Hotel, copies in Register file, Division of Historic Preservation.

Historical Sites Inventory, Lafayette Parish, Section II. Because this volume covers only buildings constructed before 1920, it was augmented with a windshield survey conducted by Division of Historic Preservation staff.