

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Gordon Hotel is a four-story monumental brick and stucco commercial building which was once the hub of the Lafayette central business district, which is now largely devoid of historic structures. It was built in 1904 and remodeled in 1928. Although the building has suffered numerous alterations over the years, it still retains enough of its original features to convey its historical associations and to stand as a worthy piece of architecture.

As originally built in 1904, it was a three-story brick and stucco building with rather conservative Renaissance Revival styling which featured minimal ornamentation. It did, however, feature an impressive facade articulation with a broad hyphen and a pair of protruding end pavilions. The ground story has lost its original fenestration. The second and third story facades are of brick and stucco with brick quoining on the corners, featuring articulated jack arches over the windows and a modillion cornice. The rear of the building is plainer than the other facades and is divided in half by a light well.

A fourth story, which enhanced the building, was added in an extensive remodeling which occurred in 1928. The new story is articulated in an elaborate Baroque style with an undulating roof, corner obelisks, and a crowning central scroll pediment. This remodeling also included a three-story addition to the east side and a refurbishing of the hotel rooms.

In recent years the hotel was turned into an apartment house. Many of the original hotel bathrooms were converted to kitchens, dropped ceilings were hung, and partitions were rearranged. In addition, public rooms have been subdivided and otherwise altered. (For example, ceilings have been lowered, new wall surfaces have been applied, etc.)

Integrity

Given the alterations mentioned above, it must be admitted that the ground level exterior (loss of original fenestration) and the interiors no longer contribute to the building's historic value. Consequently, its significance must rest solely upon the three upper stories of the exterior,

In the opinion of the State Historic Preservation Office, this portion of the exterior is sufficient to qualify the Gordon Hotel for listing in two areas, architecture and commerce, for the following reasons:

- (1) The building still retains its height and majestic facade, which is what makes it the architectural landmark of the much depleted Lafayette central business district.
- (2) Despite the alterations, the Gordon Hotel still looks like an early twentieth century hotel, and hence it can still be said to convey its historical associations.

Specific dates	1904
Builder/Architect	Architects 1904: Favrot and Livaudais, New Orleans, George Knapp--contractor 1928: Architect: William T. Nolan, New Orleans

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)
Criteria A and C

The Gordon Hotel is locally significant (within the context of Lafayette) in the areas of architecture and commerce. It is architecturally significant on the local level because it is the architectural landmark of the Lafayette central business district. It is locally significant in the area of commerce because it represented the commercial aspirations of the city of Lafayette in the early twentieth century. As a 1905 source noted: "The handsome new brick hotel in Lafayette - The Gordon - . . . is a really great and meritorious improvement to the town. . . . So large and well appointed a hotelry will play a conspicuous part in the great career and progress upon which Lafayette is entering."

Architecture

Firstly, the Gordon Hotel represented something of an architectural coming of age for the downtown area of Lafayette. It was built in a deliberate attempt to create a landmark in the town. Favrot and Livaudais, New Orleans' most prestigious architectural firm at the time, was commissioned to design the hotel. Moreover, the company which built the Gordon was specifically chartered to construct a modern hotel with the view that it would significantly improve the town's appearance (as well as its business climate).

Secondly, the Gordon Hotel has an imposing presence in the Lafayette central business district. This is partially due to its grand hyphen and end pavilion articulation and partly due to its Renaissance and Baroque styling. More importantly, however, its landmark status is due to its size and height. From its construction until about 1955 it stood as the tallest and largest commercial building in Lafayette. The 1928 additions enhanced this standing rather than detracted from it. It should be noted that Lafayette has experienced an oil boom in recent years which has caused much redevelopment in the central business district. As a result, the Gordon Hotel stands today as downtown Lafayette's most impressive early twentieth century structure.

Commerce

In September, 1890, several Lafayette business leaders met to organize a Board of Trade for the purpose of developing new businesses in the community. The Board of Trade found little support in the community at this time for such a group. However, the idea of an association to promote the commercial interest of Lafayette lingered on. In November, 1890, a committee of merchants met and established a Blue Law Association to strictly enforce the Sunday Law which forbade business operations on Sunday. Over the next few years, this Blue Law Association became much more than its name implied. In essence, it became the town's first Chamber of Commerce. The civic spirit and cooperation exhibited in organizations such as the Board of Trade and the Blue Law Association again flowered in the Lafayette Improvement Association, which formed in 1899. The assembling of these men may be said to mark the beginning of the modern Chamber of Commerce. Their purpose was the improvement of the town. These were the men who decided that Lafayette should have a modern hotel. Accordingly, they organized the stock company which in 1904 built the Gordon Hotel in downtown Lafayette. The spirit exhibited by them was further manifested in 1915 when the Chamber of Commerce was organized.

In 1908 the Progress Edition of the Lafayette Gazette reflected upon the early progress of Lafayette by billing the Gordon Hotel as a "commodious brick structure," and telling the world that it was the only steam-heated hotel in Lafayette and offered "hot and cold baths."

The Gordon Hotel's commercial significance was further demonstrated on several occasions in 1913. On one occasion, a number of prominent businessmen met in the parlor of the Gordon Hotel for the purpose of taking preliminary steps toward forming a businessmen's league. Later that year, the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce met at their office room in the Gordon Hotel to adopt a resolution to request officials of Southern Pacific Railroad and Brotherhood to arbitrate their differences without interrupting service to Southwest Louisiana by an impending strike.

In summary, the hotel was founded as the cutting edge of an overall effort to bolster the downtown and improve its attractiveness as a commercial focal point.

In essence, the Gordon Hotel represented Lafayette's emergence into the twentieth century, and for the first twenty years of its existence, the hotel served as the hub of commercial activity for Acadiana and more particularly for Lafayette. There is ample documentation of this in the microfilm archives of The Daily Advertiser (the Lafayette newspaper) dating from 1904-1925. The hotel still conveys this association with Lafayette's early twentieth century commercial history.

Relationship of Integrity to Significance: See Item 7

Bibliography

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