

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Lafayette Elementary School (1926) is a two story, brick and concrete, mainly neo-Gothic institutional building located in a residential area near downtown Lafayette. Despite some alterations and an enlargements the school retains its National Register eligibility.

The building has an "E" shaped plan with a long frontal main block and three rear wings. The middle wing contains an auditorium and was originally longer than the other two. The plan features a central corridor in each part of the building, except, of course, for the auditorium.

Most of the building's architectural pretension is on the facade. There is a central entrance pavilion and two end pavilions which are connected by hyphen wings. Each of the pavilions is articulated with sets of Gothic pylons which have inscribed tracery patterns. At the bottom of each pylon is a large, molded quatrefoil. The pavilions also feature windows surmounted by decorative Tudor arch panels, quatrefoil panels, shaped parapets, and cartouches. Most of the building is surmounted by a modillion cornice. The parapets which surmount the hyphen wings are treated with rectangular cuts which resemble crenellations. Windows are of the multipane sash type and are set in groups.

In 1982 the interior of the school was almost completely modernized. The only remaining historic interior is the auditorium with its pilasters, panels, and pointed arch proscenium.

In addition to the above, there have been two noteworthy exterior changes in the school since construction. The rear wing on the north side has been extended in a manner designed to duplicate the style of the original building. In addition, the front entrance has received a fixed awning.

Assessment of Integrity

The above changes have not compromised the school's architectural integrity. The building still retains the features which contribute to its architectural significance (see Item 8). Moreover, neither of the above exterior additions has had a significant visual impact upon the building.

Specific dates _ 1926
Builder/Architect Architect William T. Nolan (New Orleans)

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)
Criterion C

The Lafayette Elementary School is locally significant in the area of architecture because of its artistic value and landmark status within the City of Lafayette.

Of the two or three hundred 50+ year old buildings in Lafayette, the Lafayette Elementary School is clearly one of the most impressive. It is one of only two buildings which feature palatial articulation consisting of a central pavilion, end pavilions, and hyphen wings. It also features a striking interplay of pylons, parapets, and Gothic details which produces a rich and visually energetic facade. In addition, the school undoubtedly has the longest facade of any 50+ year old building in the city.

Much of the school's visual interest comes from the staccato placement of the pylons across the facade pavilions. These are not strictly speaking Gothic features, but their use with Gothic decoration was a bold and original stroke. The pylons distinguish the Lafayette Elementary School from the city's other older school buildings which feature a more orthodox, low key stylistic treatment.

The school is also locally important because it is a rare example of the Gothic style in Lafayette. Gothic styling can be seen not only in its exterior detailing, but in its auditorium detailing as well.

Major Bibliographical References

Historical sketch prepared by Lafayette Parish School Board, Copy in Register file, LA State
Historic Preservation Office.