

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Lafayette Hardware Store (c. 1890) is a two story, false front, frame Italianate commercial building located in downtown Lafayette. Having been little altered since construction, the building retains its National Register eligibility.

Originally the ground story consisted of two separate stores, each with a row of Eastlake columns down the middle. Sometime in the early twentieth century the dividing wall was removed and a row of bracketed posts was installed in its place. This created a large single space with three parallel rows of columns. Other than this, the beaded board interior is largely unaltered. Even most of the shelving is original. The sides feature small two-pane windows downstairs and six over six windows upstairs. The front features plate glass windows upstairs with a totally original shopfront below. The shopfront features large plate glass windows, transoms, Italianate cast-iron columns, multiple molded skirting boards, sets of double glass doors, and a hanging fixed awning. The false front itself is sheathed with pressed metal in various patterns including rockfaced stone and brincaade. There is also an engaged column on a base set between the double windows on each side of the upper facade. The false front terminates in a full entablature, a modillion cornice, a paneled parapet, two raised paneled tablets, and a crowning pediment.

In addition to the early twentieth century change already mentioned, there is a covered lean-to in the rear which appears to be about fifty years old. These alterations have not impaired the store's National Register eligibility because both are minor. In any case, the store still retains the features which contribute to its significance. (See Item 8)

Specific dates c. 1890
Builder/Architect Probable builders: Mr. & Mrs. George Hopkins

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)
Criterion C

The Lafayette Hardware Store is locally significant in the area of architecture because it is a commercial landmark within the context of the city of Lafayette.

This can be seen in the following respects:

1. It is a full blown, two story frame Italianate commercial building. As such it is the city's only remaining example of a type which was once the standard large commercial building in small and-large towns across the state.
2. It is one of the city's oldest commercial buildings. It dates from c. 1890, while almost all of Lafayette's fifty or so other older commercial buildings date from the post-1900 period.
3. It is an almost perfect surviving example of a late nineteenth century commercial building. It stands as a museum piece, retaining all of its pressed metal ornamentation and a totally original shopfront. Moreover, except for the c. 1915 removal of the cent wall, its historic interior commercial space remains completely intact. The hardware store is believed to be Lafayette's best preserved older commercial building. Although it would be considered an extreme rarity in any South Louisiana town, the store is particularly important for Lafayette. In the past thirty or so years the city has experienced an oil boom with rapid redevelopment and the resultant loss of much of its downtown

patrimony. The fifty or so older commercial buildings that do survive are, for the most part, nondescript and much altered.

Historical Note:

Tax records of 1890 indicate that Mrs. George Hopkins was assessed \$400 for the lot and improvements thereon. On February 3, 1891, an act of exchange put Theodule Hebert, Jr. in possession of the property. (Mr. and Mrs. George Hopkins exchanged their lot with improvements to Mr. Hebert for another lot.) The Lafayette Hardware Store has been in operation in the building since 1915.

Major Bibliographical References

Historical sketch of property prepared by City of Lafayette, copy in Register file, LA State Historic Preservation Office.