

The City Hotel is a two story frame galleried building located in the heart of the small community of Marthaville. Because its styling is minimal and very low-key, the "no styles" category is being used. The hotel has received relatively few alterations since it was built c.1881 in response to the coming of the Texas and Pacific Railroad.

The tripped roof hotel has a full gallery on both stories. The plain square posts have simple molded capitals. The Italianate balustrade is original on the second story and replicated on the first due to severe deterioration. The hotel is sheathed in clapboards on all elevations except the front, which features drop siding. The entrance and a doorway opening onto the second story gallery reflect central halls. Both have side lights and transoms. The wider first floor entrance was made narrower within the last twenty or thirty years by moving the side lights closer together and filling in the spaces on the side. Other exterior alterations, all fairly minor, include concrete front steps, removal of the chimney tops, the enclosure of a portion of the gallery on the rear ell wing for a bathroom, and a small addition to the rear of the ell wing.

The floor plan (both floors) consists of two capacious rooms on each side of a central hall. At the ground level a long dining room extends beyond the core to form, along with the kitchen, an ell wing. Except for the central halls, the interior spaces are covered in fairly narrow gauge flush boards. The central halls feature the same drop siding as on the facade. All of the original mantels survive downstairs. The simple design consists of a pair of molded panels surmounted by an entablature-like molded panel and a molded shelf. There are no mantels in the two upstairs west rooms; those in the east rooms are salvaged.

#### Assessment of Integrity

Although there have been a few alterations, the City Hotel looks very much as it did when it was built. There is no question that it would be recognizable to its patrons from the historic period.

Significant dates	n/a
Architect/Builder	unknown
Criterion A	

The City Hotel is locally significant in the area of transportation because it is the only resource left to represent the town's very important railroad history. The period of significance spans from c.1881, the date of construction, to 1943, the fifty year cutoff for significance. The railroad remained an important force up to and past the fifty year cutoff, and the hotel continued to service it.

The small community of Marthaville was settled in the 1850s. John Jackson Rains, an early settler, is considered the founder. A post office with the name Marthaville was established there in 1855. The name honors Rains' wife. The most important event in the town's history was the arrival of the Texas and Pacific Railroad in 1881. This transportation artery made possible a bustling economy based on sawmills and cotton gins. Historic photographs show frame gable fronted business houses lining the railroad corridor. The town was incorporated in 1884.

Realizing the need for a hostelry to service the railroad, Rains built the hotel under consideration across the street from the depot. Its principal patrons were salesmen ("drummers") and other individuals who had traveled to Marthaville by rail to conduct business. Railroad hotels such as the one in Marthaville were a common phenomenon. They were, in effect, the airport hotels of their day.

Today, the City Hotel is the only resource left to represent the town's railroad history. The depot has been demolished, and even the tracks have been removed. Businesses and industries which thrived because of the railroad in an indirect way represented it, but they too do not survive. Essentially there is no historic downtown Marthaville. Were it not for the hotel, one could not tell from the built environment that Marthaville had been a railroad town.

The hotel was owned by the Rains family until Mrs. Rains' death in 1898. It then went through a succession of owners before being purchased in the 1920s by the Darden family, who operated it for many years as Hotel Darden. Exactly when it ceased being a hotel is not known, although it is certain from various recollections that it was in the post-World War II years.

The Eason family has owned the building since the 1960s. The present owner, Tommy Eason, lives there on a part-time basis. A sign in the front yard reminds passersby of the building's history as a railroad hotel.

#### Major Bibliographical References

Jennings, Thomas F. "The Town of Marthaville and Surrounding Community." Marthaville, 1969.  
This typescript history includes historic photographs.

Historic photos of City Hotel and Marthaville in possession of hotel owner.