

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Gordon Hotel
HABS LA - 179

Location:

100-110 East Vermilion Street
Lafayette, LA 70502
Lafayette Parish
United States of America

The Gordon Hotel property is located on the corner of Jefferson and Vermilion Streets in the downtown area of Lafayette, Louisiana. From Interstate 10, exit at LA-90 south/ Morgan City exit to the Evangeline Thruway. Heading south on the Evangeline Thruway, turn right on Jefferson Street (about the fifth traffic signal). The Gordon Hotel is on the left at the Jefferson Street and Vermilion Street intersection. The current property owners are Dr. Edward J. Hannie and Judge Edmund M. Reggie.

History and Significance:

In 1821, Vermillionville was a village located along the Vermillion River and west of the Atchafalaya River basin swamp. Vermillion parish was created in 1823 and settled primarily by French Canadian refugees from Nova Scotia (Acadians). City and parish were both renamed Lafayette in 1884 and Lafayette was incorporated as a city in 1914. The city is currently known as the "Heart of Cajun Country" and borders the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area. The Gordon Hotel is locally significant in the areas of commerce and architecture. Near the end of the nineteenth century, Lafayette experienced exponential growth with the building of the railroad. In September 1890, several Lafayette business leaders met to organize a Board of Trade tasked with development of new businesses in the community. In November 1890, a committee of merchants met and established a Blue Law Association. These civic organizations became the Lafayette Improvement Association in 1899 (the beginning of the modern Chamber of Commerce). The members of these groups decided that Lafayette should have a modern hotel, organized the stock company, and built the Gordon Hotel. They tasked the architects and contractor with the creation of a modern hotel in the hopes that it would significantly improve both the appearance of the city and improve the downtown business climate. They intended to create a landmark for Lafayette. As the result of these aspirations, the Gordon Hotel remained significant to the history of Lafayette commerce in the early twentieth century.

Named for a local Confederate "hero," the Gordon Hotel was designed by prominent New Orleans architects, Favrot and Livaudais. The construction by contractor George Knapp was rushed to completion in order to accommodate the December 1904 Convention of the State Teachers Association held in Lafayette. The hotel's first guest signed the register on December 30, 1904 under the supervision of Hotel Manager L.F. Salles. The January 1905 edition of the Louisiana School Review noted, "The handsome new brick hotel ... is a really great and meritorious improvement to the town and ... will play a conspicuous part in the great career and progress" of Lafayette.

As originally built, the architecture of the three-story building reflected Renaissance Revival style with brick and plaster ornamentation over brick bearing walls. The front faced Vermilion Street and featured a broad inset entry with an arched arcade over the sidewalk at street level. The building formed a U-shape on the rear where guestroom windows faced an open courtyard. With steam heating installed, the hotel was Lafayette's first modern hotel offering guests the choice of cold or hot baths.

Once open for business, the Gordon Hotel became the meeting place for prominent citizens groups. In 1913, the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce met in the hotel to adopt a resolution to request officials of Southern Pacific Railroad and Brotherhood to arbitrate their differences without interrupting service to Southwest Louisiana due to the impending strike. The Lafayette's women's suffrage group gathered in the lobby and in 1915, the first Chamber of Commerce was organized in the hotel. Throughout the first two decades of its existence, the Gordon Hotel represented Lafayette's emergence into the twentieth century as the hub of commercial activity for the Acadiana area.

By 1928, the hotel required remodeling and additions to accommodate the expanding business. Architect William T. Nolan from New Orleans designed the remodel and added a fourth floor to the existing structure.

Additional structural columns were added on each floor to support the new fourth floor. Around the same time, the Jefferson Street arcade was removed and an existing three-story building to the east was annexed and incorporated into the existing hotel layout. With a scrollwork parapet roof, corner obelisks, and crowning central scroll pediment, the addition of the fourth floor ensured that the hotel remained the tallest, largest, and most significant commercial building in the city of Lafayette until the 1950s.

At some time between 1928 and the 1940s, the exterior brick walls were painted leaving the natural brick details only at corner quoins and window headers.

By the 1960's, the hotel once again went through a remodel, this time into rental apartments. Many of the hotel bathrooms were converted to kitchens, ceilings were lowered, and partition walls were relocated. Public areas were subdivided, ceilings lowered, and new wall finishes installed. One enduring story about the hotel resulted from an event that occurred on March 26, 1966. According to the *Daily Advertiser*, there was a stabbing death at the hotel. A local barmaid, Gloria Adams Toone, was found mutilated in a guestroom. After being rushed to the hospital, she was pronounced dead by Lafayette Parish Coroner Dr. Henry C. Voorhies. It is rumored by current tenants of the Gordon that her spirit still "roams" the hotel at night.

In the 1980s, the hotel was converted to commercial office space, the courtyard was enclosed, and a fourth-floor ballroom suite was added to the east wing. Balconies were added at the centers of both Jefferson and Vermillion street facades. The Gordon Hotel was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1982.

The Gordon Hotel retains its façade as the architectural landmark of the early Lafayette central business district and continues to serve as a significant historic component for Lafayette. As it exists today, the Gordon Hotel consists of a three-story brick bearing wall structure with a stucco façade on the two street elevations. The ground story features stucco, stone, and glass elevations on the two street elevations. The second and third story facades are of brick and stucco with brick quoins at the corners and flat brick details at window headers. The original ornate cornice remains between the original three-story structure and the fourth floor addition. The fourth floor features brick arches over the windows and a decorative somewhat Spanish Revival parapet. Columns added to the first, second, and third floors carry the additional structural loads of the fourth floor. The courtyard is covered with glass skylights and has a large fountain on the south wall. Balconies on the second, third, and fourth floors overlook the courtyard. The building occupancy consists of mercantile and restaurants on the first floor with professional offices on the second, third, and fourth floors.

During the mid-twentieth century, Lafayette experienced an oil boom, which resulted in the demolition of most of the early twentieth century historic downtown commercial structures. The Gordon Hotel remains as one of the most prominent and last remnants of Lafayette's first economic boom.

Sources:

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Historians: Adam Cannon and Darrell Landry, students. Karen JS McKinney, Architect, AIA / Adjunct Instructor; Corey Saft, Architect, AIA, LEED / Professor. Report Completed 5/14/2019.

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Gordon Hotel with street level arcade (before 1928 addition). Library of Congress. <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/>



State Library of Louisiana (<http://www.state.lib.la.us>)

Louisiana Digital Library. Gordon Hotel in Lafayette Louisiana in the 1940s. <http://louisianadigitallibrary.org>.

