

Date of Action  
5/26/00

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**5. CLASSIFICATION**

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**OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY:** Private

**CATEGORY OF PROPERTY:** Building

**NUMBER OF RESOURCES WITHIN PROPERTY: CONTRIBUTING**

**NONCONTRIBUTING**

1

0 BUILDINGS

0

0 SITES

0

0 STRUCTURES

0

0 OBJECTS

1

0 TOTAL

**NUMBER OF CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES PREVIOUSLY LISTED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER:**

**NAME OF RELATED MULTIPLE PROPERTY LISTING:** *Historic Resources of Bryan, Texas* (1987)

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**6. FUNCTION OR USE**

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**HISTORIC FUNCTIONS:** DOMESTIC/Hotel

**CURRENT FUNCTIONS:** WORK IN PROGRESS

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**7. DESCRIPTION**

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**ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION:** OTHER: 2-part vertical block

**MATERIALS:** FOUNDATION CONCRETE

WALLS CONCRETE, BRICK, OTHER/cast stone, STONE/limestone

ROOF OTHER/gravel

OTHER N/A

**NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION** (see continuation sheets 7-5 through 7-14)

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La Salle Hotel  
Bryan, Brazos County, Texas

The 1928 La Salle Hotel is a 7-story (with basement) 2-part vertical block at the northwest corner of South Main and 27<sup>th</sup> Streets in Bryan, the agricultural and mercantile center of Brazos County, Texas. Designed by Austin architect George Louis Walling, the building features a distinct vertical emphasis and classical detailing, both elements typical of early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Texas hotels. The ground floor of the rectangular, reinforced concrete frame and masonry building has honed limestone cladding. Cast stone and limestone windowsills detail the masonry upper floors and a recessed cast stone half baluster motif alternates with brick panels at the parapet above a cast stone entablature. Located in the southern part of Bryan's central business district, the hotel and the surrounding buildings speak to the growth of this commercial area in the early 20<sup>th</sup>-century. The building, vacant since 1980, is presently undergoing rehabilitation utilizing the investment tax credits to restore the building to its historic function of mixed commercial and hotel uses.

### Setting & Location

The La Salle Hotel, located in the southern end of Bryan's central business district, faces south onto 27<sup>th</sup> Street and occupies the entirety of Lot 1 bounded by South Main Street to the east and South Bryan Avenue to the west. Main Street serves as Bryan's principal thoroughfare and the blocks facing Main are only half a block deep. Main Street storefronts in this area back directly onto adjacent parallel streets – the main line of the H&TC on the east and Bryan Avenue on the west (Map 1).<sup>1</sup> The La Salle Hotel, set on the west side of South Main Street, occupies one of these half-blocks and features a secondary pedestrian entrance on South Main Street and a service entrance along South Bryan Avenue. The hotel's location was strategic – directly across South Main Street from the original site of the Houston & Texas Central Railroad (H&TC) passenger station (demolished). The hotel is across South Main Street from (and is approximately one-half block south of) the 1903 Bryan Carnegie Library (NR 1976), the center of the town's cultural and intellectual life in the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>2</sup> The La Salle is located within the boundaries of the Multiple Property Area (Historic Resources of Bryan, Texas, NR 1987), a combination of predominantly commercial multi-storied and residential buildings dating from the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries in and around the central business district. A residential district east of the urban core, the East Side Historic District, is also included in the MRA.

A modest 2-story, early 20<sup>th</sup>-century two-part commercial building abuts the hotel to the north. This building shares a continuous 2½-story party wall along the hotel's north façade. Down the block at 110 South Main, the floating crown above the Queen Theater's pylon remains a downtown landmark, although the theater is closed.<sup>3</sup> Across 27<sup>th</sup> Street is the 1906 Howell Building, a 3-story Italianate Style commercial building built for Robert Wistar Howell's wholesale grocery business. Mr. R. W. Howell also built the La Salle. The 3-story Hotel Charles at 201 South Main Street was built for J. Allen Myers in 1912. His son, Charles, hired architects Atkinson & Sanders to design a streamlined slip-cover in 1939. Further down the block, the 3-story 1911 Hotel Bryan at 211 South Main Street features

1 Fox, Stephen, Bryan, College Station, A&M: An Architectural Tour. Supplement to *Cite 41: The Architecture and Design Review of Houston*. Rice Design Alliance, Spring 1998., p. 1

2 Hardy, Heck & Moore. The Historic Resources of Bryan, Texas (Partial Inventory of Architectural and Historic Properties). 1986., p. 3

3 Fox, Stephen, p. 4.

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a porcelain enamel slipcover which stops short of the bracketed eaves on its primary façade. The red brick facing, original 9/1 wooden sash windows, hipped roof and eave brackets remain visible on the secondary facades.<sup>4</sup>

**Exterior**

The 7-story La Salle Hotel is rectangular in plan, and measures 50' x 100' on the basement level and through the first and second floors. The plan then steps back from the common property line by five feet (45' x 100') for the remaining five floors. The reinforced concrete frame features clay tile back-up with an exterior buff colored brick veneer. The built-up tar and gravel roof is flat. The La Salle was built on the property line and is surrounded by wide sidewalks without landscaping. The original metal sidewalk grills, two on the south facade and one each on the east and west facades, were replaced with glass block and allow for natural light to enter the basement. The La Salle Hotel displays a noble simplicity and calm grandeur: the building is solid, yet not severe, with very restrained classical ornament.

The south façade fronts onto 27<sup>th</sup> Street and is the primary façade of the hotel despite the address listing as 120 South Main Street. This symmetrical nine-bay façade clearly exemplifies the commercial 2-part building type. The ground floor is clad in homed Lueders limestone, a Texas stone, cut into 12" x 18" rectangular panels, which are laid up horizontally. The rhythm of the ground floor corresponds with the 9-bay pattern of this façade, with a greater distance between each of the three central, single entry doors with single-light transoms than the three flanking commercial wooden framed fixed windows with two-light transoms to each side. A central canopy is currently being replicated and will cover the three entry doors as originally built. Historically, the central canopy was only partial width and covered the entry doors. In the 1950s the canopy was extended to cover the full width of the south façade and a second canopy was installed on the east façade. A beltcourse separates the commercial ground floor from the upper floors and marks the transition from limestone to the buff colored brick cladding of the remainder of the building. Nine 8/8 wooden sash windows with cast stone or limestone sills define the bays of floors two through seven on the south facade. There is a full cast stone entablature and parapet at the terminus of the building. The parapet alternates brick panels and recessed cast stone half balustrade detailing that corresponds to the fenestration pattern of this façade. All of the detailing and decorative elements of this façade are repeated on the east and west facades.

The symmetrical east (South Main) façade, is three bays wide with the exception of a five foot section which juts out to the north on the lower two-and-one-half stories only. The pattern of this façade repeats the exterior cladding and decorative elements of the south facade. The ground floor has a central, single entry door with double-light transom flanked by large, wide, wooden framed commercial windows with two- and three-light transoms to the south and north respectively. The upper floors demonstrate the A-B-A pattern with a central, single 8/8 wooden sash window flanked by paired windows of the same type. The entablature and parapet repeat the fenestration pattern of the facade. The neon sign, the second for the hotel, is currently being restored and will be reinstalled on the southeast corner at the third floor level.

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<sup>4</sup> Fox, Stephen, p. 4.

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Bryan, Brazos County, Texas

The west façade is the mirror image of the east façade with the omission of the single, central entry door on the ground level. The southern most opening on the ground floor is a commercial window with double-light transom; the wider ground floor opening is a garage door with a rolling metal door.

The 9-bay north facade shares a 2½-story party wall with an adjacent building. The building then steps back five feet to the south and rises the remaining five floors. The building brick and decorative elements of the east and west facades wrap around a few feet onto this unadorned stuccoed rear facade. This asymmetrical facade has 2/2 metal sash windows with wire glass. A brick boiler flue stack runs vertically along this facade, between the seventh and eighth bays. From this facade, the elevator penthouse and steel cistern on the roof are visible.

### Interior

The La Salle Hotel features a rectangular footprint with interior reinforced concrete columns that form regular east-west rows. The pattern of the east and west exterior facades and the nine-bay pattern of the south facade are the direct result of this interior structural system. The 2½-story annex along the north party wall forms a narrower east to west row along the northern interior of the building for the first 2½ floors only.

The basement is divided into rooms that follow no regular pattern. Originally, the basement housed the boiler room, kitchen storeroom, two locker rooms, laundry storeroom, trunk room, elevator shaft, stair corridor, men's wash room, and three sample rooms.<sup>5</sup> Presently, the basement contains restrooms for hotel personnel, an employee lounge, a room for maintenance and storage, fire stairs, the elevator lobby, and separate rooms for the electrical and communications systems. The southernmost east-west bay of the basement is unfinished with the original hotel boiler extant in this area. The ground floor originally housed the hotel lobby and entry foyer, hotel offices, the kitchen and coffee shop, a valet's room, an auditor and checkroom, two shops and the kitchen staircase. There were two rental spaces that faced South Main Street. The single entry door accessed a corridor between the two businesses (a tailor shop and barbershop) and also provided access to the café.<sup>6</sup>

Room configurations on the ground floor adjusted as the building changed uses. The original wooden wainscoting and green marble baseboards of the lobby remained in the hotel despite the changes in ownership. These materials were salvaged, removed and reinstalled during the recent rehabilitation. The terrazzo floors are original to the building and vary in pattern from a black and white checkerboard, to white with black borders surrounding the room perimeter and the area around the column bases. Two new interior staircases were installed in the third bay of the grid, one on each of the east and west sides of the building. The new elevator is located directly north of the check-in desk and is located in the original elevator shaft.

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<sup>5</sup> Builder's Specifications, Division N: Painting, sheet 2, work 272, paragraph 8a.

<sup>6</sup> Bryan Daily Eagle, August 31, 1927, "La Salle Hotel will be seven stories with a hundred rooms."

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La Salle Hotel  
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In addition to the wainscoting, baseboards and terrazzo flooring, another character-defining feature of the lobby are the 11 arches which span the width of the structural columns around the primary hotel entry and check-in area. The original arches were unable to be salvaged during the rehabilitation due to water damage and corrosion of the metal lathe. The present arches are all new and built using the curvature and height measurements of the original lobby arches. The arches are Arts and Crafts inspired in style and have very little curvature and no decorative moldings. Originally there were only five arches (four small and one large). Three of the original arches were located directly inside the westernmost entry door and defined the check-in desk. Another small arch was on the east side of the check-in desk and the large arch was between the central interior structural bay. Due to the change in location of the check-in desk and general traffic flow patterns of the ground floor, the arches were rebuilt in their original locations and six (five small and one large) additional arches were added to expand upon this character defining feature for the lobby. Historically, the second floor housed the dining room, a ballroom, beauty shop, utility closet, service pantry, ladies room, main stair, foyer and gallery.<sup>7</sup> This floor is currently a combination of hotel rooms and suites.

Originally floors three through seven housed the hotel's 100 guestrooms. Each room was carpeted and equipped with a combination fan and ceiling light (50 watt), telephone, tub or shower bath, Simmons beds, a dresser, writing table, two chairs, and closet. 'Ventilated' doors with top panels that could be opened and closed, similar to those found in the contemporary hotels in New York were also standard.<sup>8</sup> The interior paneled pine doors with birch veneer were stained and coated with one coat of shellac and two coats of varnish. The last varnish coat was rubbed with a pumice stone and oil. All of the doors in the basement and other trim work throughout the building originally were painted.<sup>9</sup>

The original interior circulation pattern on floors three through seven was a central, double-loaded corridor in the central interior east-west bay between the structural column rows. A single exterior window at each end lighted the corridor. Currently, the interior circulation corridor runs only part of the east-west length of the building in the central bay; there is no access to exterior windows in the corridor – access to the new interior staircases. There are ten rooms on the second floor and nine rooms on floors three through seven for a total of 55 rooms. The new rooms are considerably larger than the original and each has its own bathroom.

**Current Rehabilitation**

The rehabilitation of the building began in the fall of 1998 by owner Morgan Hill and the Galveston architectural firm Michael Gaertner and Associates. The rehabilitation project utilizes the 20% investment tax credits and follows the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. At this time, the Texas Historical Commission and the National Park Service have approved both the Parts I and II of the application, and the rehabilitation is in progress. The exterior work on the building envelope is complete and the interior systems and framing is in place. The canopy on the south façade and the neon sign has not been installed at this time, however hardware is in place for both of these items.

<sup>7</sup> Builder's Specifications, page paragraph 8, sections 1. – e., division N, sheet 1, work 272.

<sup>8</sup> Bryan Daily Eagle, August 31, 1927, La Salle Hotel will be seven stories with a hundred rooms.

<sup>9</sup> Builder's Specifications.

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The rehabilitation includes the installation of new 8/8 wooden sash windows on the east, south and west facades and the restoration of the original 2/2 metal sash windows with wire glass on the north façade. When the current owner bought the building in 1997, the majority of the original wooden sash windows had been removed from the building. A few original windows were extant and thus provided a template for the new windows. Exterior finishes, the limestone, brick and cast stone, was cleaned, repointed and/or patched where needed. The ground floor wooden commercial windows and door openings are new and follow the design, size and materials of the originals. The café will be reintroduced in its original location and access to the café and lobby will again be possible from the South Main Street entrance.

The building's interior deteriorated due to persistent water leaks during the 18 years the building stood vacant. The square structural columns are in their original locations and some have changed slightly in size to accommodate new plumbing chases. The architects attempted to save the interior plaster where possible, only to have the plaster and rusted metal lathe fall in great sheets when the workmen attempted to remove the lead based paint. Therefore, all of the interior wall surfaces are newly installed gypsum board. In the ground floor lobby, historic finishes were removed and placed in storage during the rehabilitation and then reinstalled. These elements, the wooden wainscoting and the green marble baseboards specifically, are original to the building. A series of arches around the entrance foyer and the front desk are a mix of replica and newly introduced arches. All of the arches, replicas and new, follow the spring height and curvature of the original arches.

Terrazzo was used extensively on the ground and second floors. Patterns of the terrazzo ranges from black and white checkerboard to solid white and white with a black border. The border pattern was used around the room perimeter and around the bases of the structural columns. All of the terrazzo flooring on the second floor was removed during the rehabilitation. In addition to the work mentioned, the rehabilitation includes new plumbing, electric, heating and cooling and sprinkler systems. Additionally, two interior enclosed fire stairs and an elevator are upgrades for the building. The original 100 guestrooms became 55 rooms and suites each with a private bath. All of the interior walls are new. Structurally, the columns and the building envelope retain their historic and architectural integrity to a substantial degree.

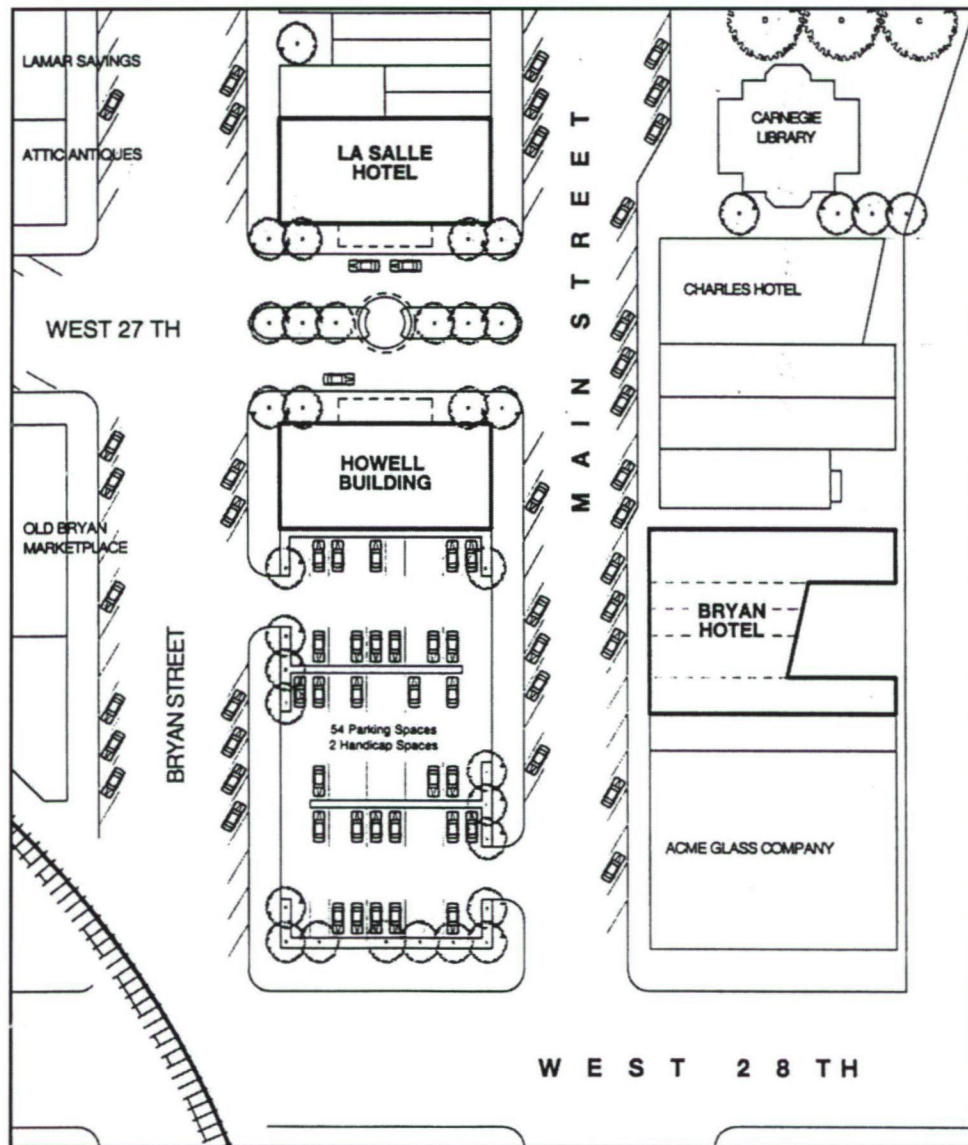
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La Salle Hotel  
Bryan, Brazos County, Texas

Site Plan



not to scale

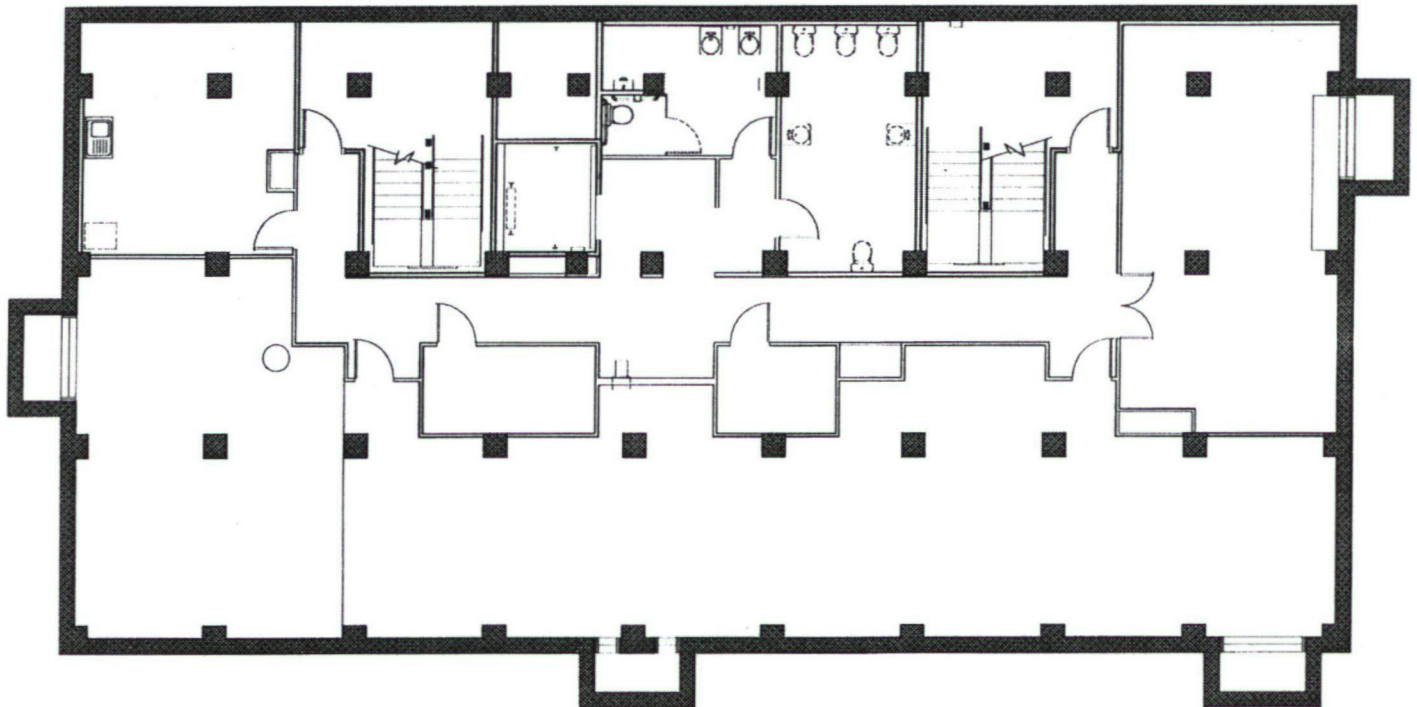
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La Salle Hotel  
Bryan, Brazos County, Texas

Plan, Basement



not to scale

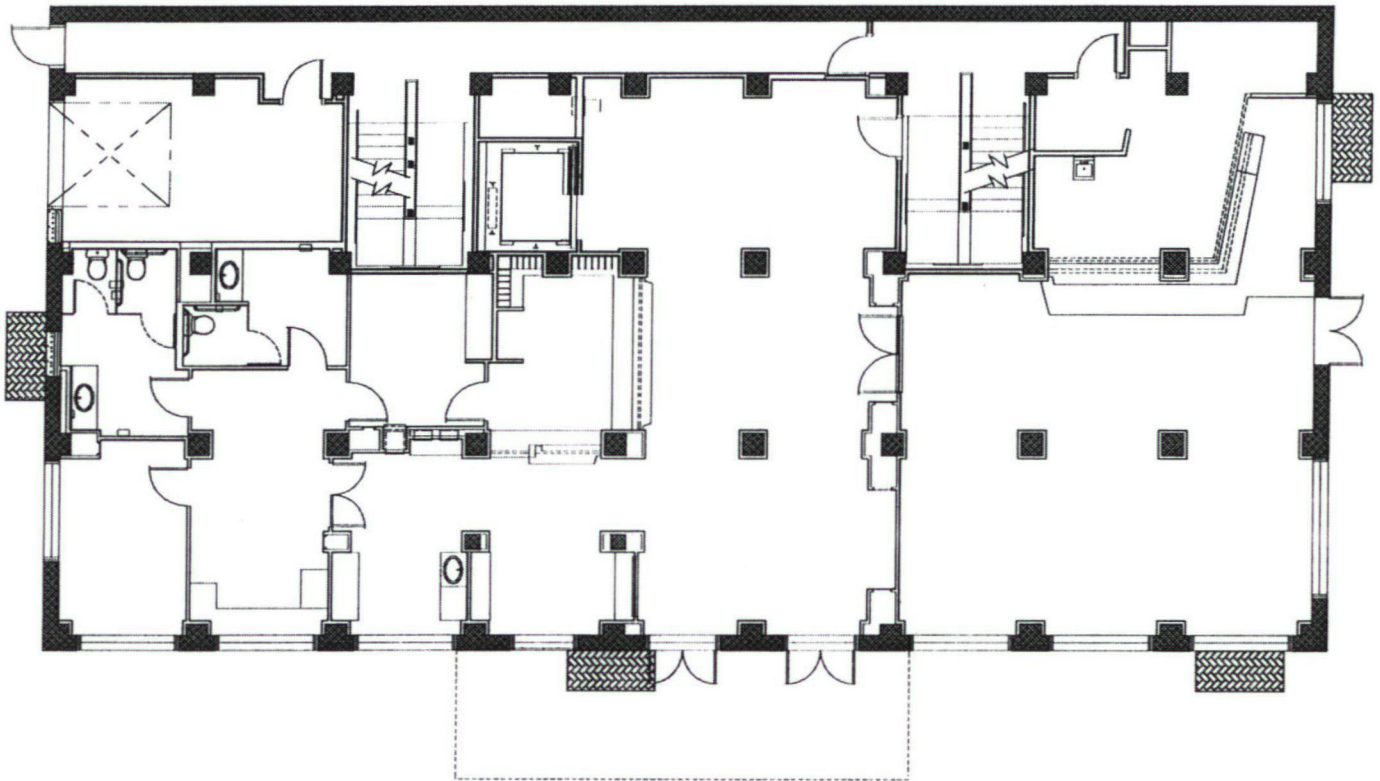
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La Salle Hotel  
Bryan, Brazos County, Texas

Plan, First floor



not to scale

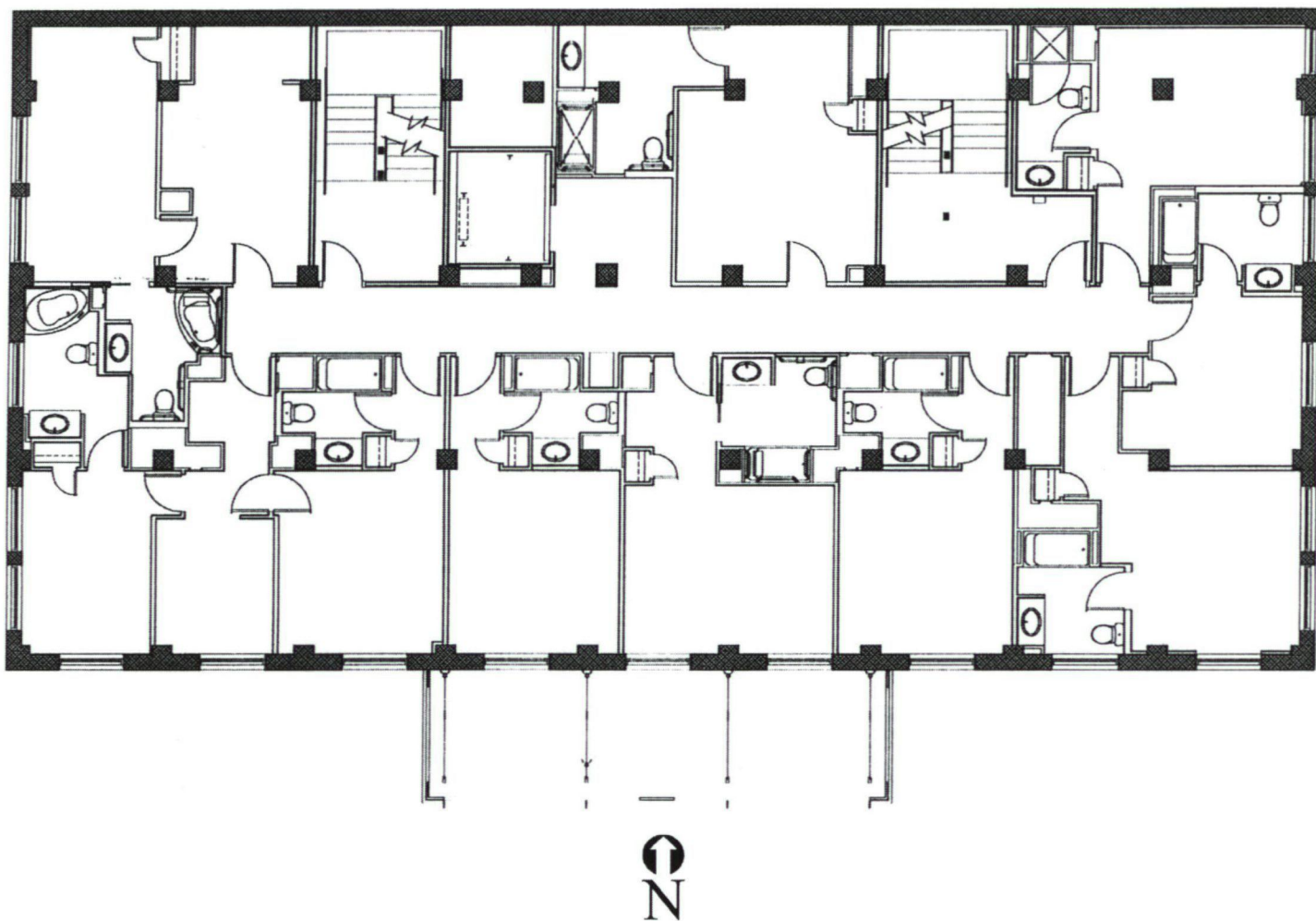
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La Salle Hotel  
Bryan, Brazos County, Texas

Plan, Second floor



not to scale

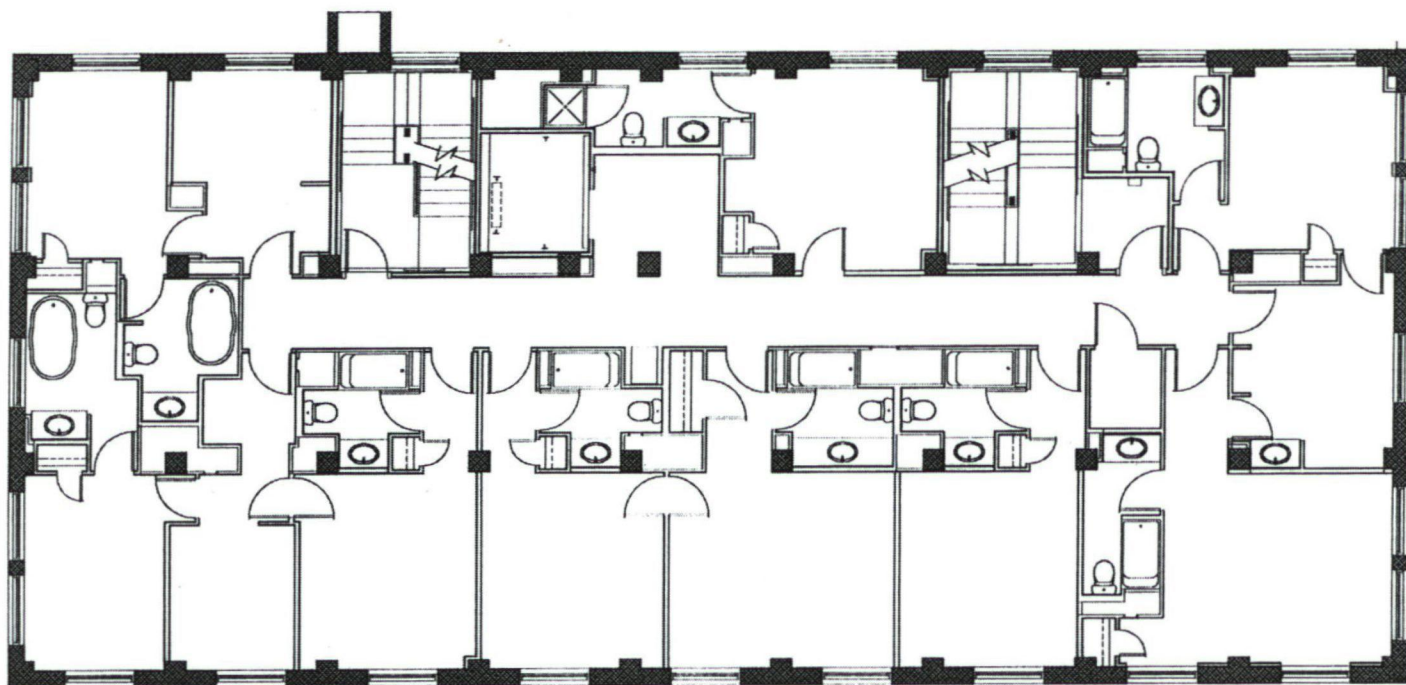
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La Salle Hotel  
Bryan, Brazos County, Texas

Plan, floors 3 through 7



not to scale

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## 8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

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### APPLICABLE NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA

- ☐ A PROPERTY IS ASSOCIATED WITH EVENTS THAT HAVE MADE A SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION TO THE BROAD PATTERNS OF OUR HISTORY.
- ☐ B PROPERTY IS ASSOCIATED WITH THE LIVES OF PERSONS SIGNIFICANT IN OUR PAST.
- ☒ C PROPERTY EMBODIES THE DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF A TYPE, PERIOD, OR METHOD OF CONSTRUCTION OR REPRESENTS THE WORK OF A MASTER, OR POSSESSES HIGH ARTISTIC VALUE, OR REPRESENTS A SIGNIFICANT AND DISTINGUISHABLE ENTITY WHOSE COMPONENTS LACK INDIVIDUAL DISTINCTION.
- ☐ D PROPERTY HAS YIELDED, OR IS LIKELY TO YIELD, INFORMATION IMPORTANT IN PREHISTORY OR HISTORY.

### CRITERIA CONSIDERATIONS:

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: Architecture

PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE: 1928

SIGNIFICANT DATES: 1928

SIGNIFICANT PERSON:

CULTURAL AFFILIATION:

ARCHITECT/BUILDER: George Louis Walling

NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (see continuation sheets 8-15 through 8-21).

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## 9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

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BIBLIOGRAPHY (see continuation sheet 9-22).

PREVIOUS DOCUMENTATION ON FILE (NPS): N/A

- ☒ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

### PRIMARY LOCATION OF ADDITIONAL DATA:

- ☒ State historic preservation office (*Texas Historical Commission*)
- ☐ Other state agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☒ Other -- Specify Repository: *Office of Michael Gaertner & Associates, Galveston*

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La Salle Hotel  
Bryan, Brazos County, Texas

The La Salle Hotel (1928) in Bryan, Brazos County, Texas, represents a type of hotel building popular in the 1920s throughout Texas, as more people traveling via railroad and automobile created a demand for overnight accommodation. Occupying a prominent corner in the southern end of Bryan's central business district, and strategically located directly across the street from the original Houston & Texas Central (H&TC) passenger depot, the 7-story reinforced concrete and brick building typifies the two-part vertical block form. Representative of early 20th-century commercial development in Bryan, the building with modest Classical ornament is nominated under the context *Historic Resources of Bryan, Brazos County, Texas* (NR 1987). The tallest hotel in Bryan, the La Salle Hotel meets Criterion C in the area of Architecture at the local level of significance. The recent rehabilitation of the building, restoring its historic function of mixed retail and hotel, makes the La Salle Hotel once again a significant member of Bryan's central business district.

### 20<sup>th</sup> Century Economic Development in Bryan

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Bryan was a major railroad stop between Houston and Dallas. Two railroads operated regular service in town, the Houston & Texas Central (H&TC – now Southern Pacific) and the International & Great Northern (I&GN – now Union Pacific). *Historic Resources of Bryan, Brazos County* describes the importance of the railroad in this community and county:

Bryan has been the agricultural and commercial center of the rich Brazos River valley farmlands since 1867, when the Houston and Texas Central Railroad initiated train service through the town. Within a few years, the city was linked by rail to major agricultural markets throughout the country. While Bryan is the county seat of Brazos County, its steady, sure growth was a function of its role as an agricultural and mercantile center. The long commercial district, with its broad Main Street, is the town's most striking feature. Organized along the axis of the rail tracks, the city's commercial development expanded as the city grew. While the original town plan was platted with respect to the north-south running railroad, subsequent development followed a more erratic pattern and was oriented generally at a 45-degree angle to the original town site. Bryan's historic, commercial and institutional structures were erected from the profits and proceeds of a flourishing cotton market economy. Turn-of-the-century neighborhoods developed around the business precinct and the academic institutions that operated in and near the city. Bryan's many early 20th-century domestic buildings document a period when prosperous circumstances allowed both the upper and merchant classes to invest in houses. In recent years, Bryan's population, as well as that of its sister city, College Station, has mushroomed and the two communities comprise a small metropolitan center between Houston and Dallas.<sup>10</sup>

Census records for Brazos County show a growth in the number of farms and the value of agricultural exports from 1910 to 1920, with a significant drop in the number of farms and the value of crops reported in the 1930 census. The population of the county fell only slightly in the 1920s, but rose again steadily through the 1930s. The value of agricultural production rose slightly in the 1930s. (see chart below)

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10 Hardy, Heck and Moore, *Historic Resources of Bryan, Brazos County, Texas*, 1986, Section 7, cover page.

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La Salle Hotel  
Bryan, Brazos County, Texas

For Brazos County, Texas.<sup>11</sup>

Year	# of farms	\$ value of crops	county population
1910	2,627	2,292,165	18,919
1920	3,023	2,832,917	21,975
1930	2,493	1,825,496	21,835
1940	n/a	1,988,621	26,977

The La Salle Hotel symbolizes the pre-Depression optimism of the local business community toward Bryan's future as the result of steady growth in the 1920s.<sup>12</sup> The La Salle was the city's largest and best-known hostelry and social spot for several decades following its opening in 1928.<sup>13</sup> Many early 20th-century Texas hotels were built in close proximity to the railroad to accommodate the traveling salesmen. "An extension of the wholesale market of the larger cities, these salesmen traveled by train during the 1910s and 1920s, and a proper commercial hotel was important both to them and to the town's retail merchants who were their customers."<sup>14</sup>

Bryan's business district stretches approximately nine blocks from Martin Luther King Boulevard south to West 28<sup>th</sup> Street, parallel to the tracks immediately to the west, while the courthouse is sited two blocks east of the tracks. The popular explanation of the town's plan argues that the scheme resulted from land speculation around what was to be the courthouse square. Businessmen balked at the high prices and retreated to Main and Bryan streets. It is more likely, however, that the engineers who platted the city's lots fixed its development. Bryan's plan is similar to other regional rail towns, such as Hearne, Calvert and Cuero, where the railroad, not the courthouse or public square, is the primary focus of the city's commercial center. The town's oldest domestic buildings are found in greatest numbers both east and west of the business district, while light industry facilities are common in the northern and extreme southern ends of the business district."<sup>15</sup>

During the early 20<sup>th</sup>-century, the southern part of the downtown grew substantially with the development of large businesses, such as hotels and theatres, and other institutions, including the Carnegie Library (NR 1976) and the Municipal Building. The northern end featured smaller businesses, including grocery stores, barber shops, and restaurants (some owned by African-Americans) housed in structures such as the Humpty Dumpty Store (MRA, 1987) and the Allen Building (MRA, 1987). Development was less dense north of 23<sup>rd</sup> Street as numerous mills, lumber sheds and cotton warehouses utilized most available land.<sup>16</sup>

The city's financial center grew up around the intersection of Main Street and 25<sup>th</sup> Street, where Main widens

<sup>11</sup> Census records, US Historical Census Data Browser, <http://fisher.lib.Virginia.EDU/census/>

<sup>12</sup> Fox, Stephen. Bryan, College Station, A&M: An Architectural Tour. Supplement to *Cite 41: The Architecture and Design Review of Houston*, Rice Design Alliance, Spring 1998, p. 4

<sup>13</sup> Hardy, Heck & Moore, La Salle Survey Form, Texas Historic Sites Inventory, Texas Historical Commission, July 1986.

<sup>14</sup> Henry, Jay C. Architecture in Texas: 1895-1945. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993, p. 129-130.

<sup>15</sup> Hardy, Heck & Moore section 7, p. 1.

<sup>16</sup> Hardy, Heck & Moore, section 7, p. 2

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considerably for two blocks before narrowing again at 23<sup>rd</sup> Street. The former First State Bank & Trust Co. Building at 200 North Main was built in 1929 at this intersection. Across Bryan Parkway at 120 North Main lay the ex-First National Bank Building (1919). At North Main and 26<sup>th</sup> Street, the four-story E. H. Astin Building was built in 1915 to house The City National Bank, Bryan's third bank.<sup>17</sup> The Hotel Charles (1912) and the Hotel Bryan (1911) located across South Main Street from the La Salle, The Masonic Hall (1910) and the Carnegie Library (NR 1976) evidence the importance of this two block area of town for both business, cultural and leisure activities.

**Development of the La Salle Hotel Property**

The first record found of the present La Salle Hotel property (located on Lot 1, Block 256, fronting 40 feet of Main Street, running back 100 feet to Bryan Avenue, and the adjacent 11 feet of 27<sup>th</sup> Street) dates back to 1866. On January 20, 1866, "the property was deeded by Groesbeck and Baker with adjacent properties to Wade C. Moseley, a prominent pioneer citizen. Mr. Moseley's estate was administered by his nephew, the late Jas. H. Batte, and included the property."<sup>18</sup>

The next transfer of the property was made when Judge John N. Henderson, family to Bryan's city attorney in the 1920s, purchased it in 1871 from the estate of Wade C. Moseley. Among those named in the records regarding the property during the intervening years are: The Odd Fellows Association, William McIntosh, and M. W. Shaw. Volney Cavitt, father of Mrs. Robert Armstrong of Bryan and one of the staunch citizens in the early days of Brazos County, bought the property in 1874 from F. W. McGraw for 2,500 gold dollars.<sup>19</sup> The lot remained vacant until 1875 when P. R. Smith contracted with Volney Cavitt to build one of the early 2-story brick business houses in Bryan. During the construction process, contractor P. R. Smith became heavily in debt to Volney Cavitt. Smith also owed money to Colonel Harvey Mitchell and his son-in-law W. H. Dean, and many others, for brick burned in their brick kiln. Later, all parties mutually agreed that Cavitt should complete the building, which he did. The first floor was rented as a business house, and the Academy of Music (Bryan's first theater and opera house) occupied the second story. In 1896, A. C. Carr (grandfather of Allen P. Carr of Bryan) and John Carr of Dallas, purchased the building from Volney Cavitt for \$3,000.

On September 24, 1898, the Carrs sold the property to W. E. Saunders and J. W. Johnson of Bryan for \$3,300. Saunders first came to Bryan in November of 1872 and worked as a clerk in a grocery store for McQueen & Davis. He worked there for ten years and later bought an interest in the business. He continued in the business with J. W. Johnson under the firm name of Saunders and Johnson.

**The 1928 La Salle Hotel**

On October 16, 1926, Robert Wistar Howell purchased the property from W. E. Saunders, and on November 18, 1927, deeded the same to the La Salle Properties, Incorporated. The Howell family was very involved in the economic development and advancement of Bryan. Robert's father, Dr. John W. Howell (b. 1848), worked in the firm Clarke,

<sup>17</sup> Fox, Stephen, p. 3-4.

<sup>18</sup> Bryan Daily Eagle, April 26, 1928, pp. 5-6.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

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Continuation Sheet**

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La Salle Hotel  
Bryan, Brazos County, Texas

Bryan and Howell, which chartered the First National Bank of Bryan in February 1886. In 1919, Robert and his brother John Webb Howell bought the Bryan Telephone Company. Robert later sold his interest to his brother, who in turn sold the Bryan exchange to the Southwestern States Telephone Company in 1925. Their brother Williamson S. Howell, one of Bryan's most enthusiastic and effective civic workers, served as president of the Howell Lumber Company and secretary of the La Salle Hotel Company.<sup>20</sup>

The La Salle Hotel, while not architecturally outstanding, serves as an important chapter in the story of early 20th-century urban development in Texas railroad towns such as Bryan. The hotel and its surrounding commercial buildings comprise the only urban setting in this otherwise rural county. The La Salle is similar in style, size, scale, materials and massing to many downtown hotels built across Texas in the late 1920s, such as Houston's 1924 Sam Houston Hotel, (Hedrick and Gottlieb, architects), and the 1927 Jean Lafitte Hotel in Galveston (Andrew C. Fraser, architect). This type of fireproof construction, utilizing a concrete frame and brick veneer, was typical in Texas in the 1920s, and many hotel buildings and other commercial and industrial edifices marketed their 'fireproof' rooms and construction. The 1939 Bryan City Directory lists four hotels, all in the vicinity of the La Salle and the railroad: the Hotel Charles (1912) at 201 South Main Street; the Hotel Bryan (1911) at 213 South Main Street; the La Salle (1928) at 102 West 27<sup>th</sup> Street, and the Commercial Hotel at 119 East 25<sup>th</sup> Street. These four hotels are the only overnight accommodations listed in subsequent city directories until 1957-58, when they are joined by a listing for the Hotel Williams, 905 North College, which offered lodging to African-American travelers. At the time of its completion, the La Salle was the tallest building in Bryan and today remains the second tallest building in downtown. The hotel was surpassed by the 1948 Varisco Building, designed by architects Philip G. Norton and S. C. P. Vosper for Brazos A. Varisco, a prominent member of Brazos County's Sicilian community.

The La Salle Hotel is a good example of a 2-part vertical block with restrained classical ornamentation, exemplifying the style in its simplicity, symmetry and detailing. The building's simple and elegant classical elements include the cast stone and limestone cornice, and engaged balusters on the parapet. The La Salle Hotel is Bryan's only mid-rise hotel building of this style and period, and reflects the early 20<sup>th</sup> century tendency to cloak the exterior surfaces of concrete frame buildings with brick facing and ornament in order to hide the starkness of concrete. It was not until the 1950s that reinforced structural concrete was also commonly expressed as an exterior finish.<sup>21</sup>

**George Louis Walling, Architect**

The La Salle Hotel's architect, Austin-based George Louis Walling (1901-1986), received commissions across the state and nationwide. Walling attended the University of Texas from 1919 to 1922, and spent the summers in the studios of Arthur O. Watson in Austin, and Ralph H. Cameron in San Antonio. During 1922-23 he attended the University of Colorado, and later that year worked with Samuel Charles Phelps Vosper of San Antonio before attending the Fontainebleau School of Fine Arts in Paris and the Atelier Carlu in Rome, where he worked on the restoration of the Capitoline Hill. It is likely that Walling's European travels instilled in him admiration for classical forms.

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<sup>20</sup> Bryan Daily Eagle, April 26, 1928, pp. 5-6.

<sup>21</sup> Slaton, Amy E. et al, pp. 94-97.

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National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 19

La Salle Hotel  
Bryan, Brazos County, Texas

In 1923 or 1924, Walling returned to Texas, established a practice in Austin, and worked on the building of the Hamilton Hotel in Laredo (NR 1992). The *Texas General Contractors Association Monthly Bulletin* (December 1924 - March 1925) notes Walling as "making plans for the 10-story, 300-room Laredo Hotel, M. Little owner."<sup>22</sup> This same source announced the opening of bids in Bryan on September 12, 1927, for a 7-story, 100-room reinforced concrete hotel, for R. W. Howell. In October of that same year, bids were opened for another of Walling's buildings, The Kyle Hotel (NR 1993) in Temple, a 13-story reinforced concrete hotel building. Also in 1928, Walling designed the Frank S. Lewis house in Toledo, Ohio. Walling met the Lewis's on an ocean voyage and the young architect designed their house, a replica of Versailles, on the Dixie Highway near Perrysburg. Walling's other commissions in Texas include the St. Martin's Evangelical Lutheran Church (1928, razed 1959) in Austin; the Walter Negley residence in San Antonio (1929, NR); the Tisdale House in Austin (1956); St. John's United Methodist Church in Austin (1957), and the Fatter House in Austin (1964).

During his career, Walling held architectural licenses in Texas, Maryland and Washington D.C., and had professional associations with Walling, Bickley and Sharp, Inc., and Horace Peasly, both of Washington D.C.; Rathbone DeBois of New Orleans, and Lockwood Green of New York. Sometime in the late 1930s, Walling worked for the National Park Service (NPS) in its Omaha office with George Nason, the NPS senior inspector for Texas from 1933 to 1936. Walling is known to have worked on the Lockhart and Longhorn Cavern State Parks in Texas in 1934 through 1936. It is likely he was associated with other Texas state parks during this time period.

#### La Salle Hotel, 1959-present

In 1959, J. C. Jacques bought the hotel from R. W. Howell and operated it as a nursing home until 1975, when federal regulations mandated wider hallways and doors than existed in the hotel.<sup>23</sup> The owner sold the building to his son John Jacques, and the La Salle became a resident hotel for the elderly with small individual apartments. The La Salle interested travelers and students from nearby Texas A&M University, so Jacques later opened his hostel and cafeteria to the general public. Due to a decreasing demand for the small apartment units, the La Salle was forced to close its doors in 1980 and has remained unoccupied ever since. In 1984, five Bryan women, Debra Miller, Carole Montgomery, Nell Stauch, Elizabeth Browning Smith and Sharyn Thornton bought the hotel and planned to renovate it for a reopening in 1986. Financial and legal problems, however, halted that effort. In December 1991, developer Reid Monroe bought the La Salle and planned to convert the building into a restaurant and apartments. On February 4, 1992, Monroe fell to his death from the roof of the building while lowering a measuring tape to a construction worker below.<sup>24</sup>

On October 27, 1997, the La Salle Hotel Ltd., a Texas Limited Partnership, bought the property from Ronnie Monroe Singer, the widow of Reid Monroe. A rehabilitation of the hotel, utilizing the investment tax credit program and following the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, is currently nearing completion (spring 2000). The project has undergone a Section 106 review due to the participation of the City of Bryan with funding from the

<sup>22</sup> *Texas General Contractors Association Monthly Bulletin*, December 1924-March 1925.

<sup>23</sup> *Bryan Daily Eagle*, June 19, 1975, "La Salle Hotel Approaches Fiftieth Birthday," p. 9B.

<sup>24</sup> *Bryan Daily Eagle*, March 26, 1996, "Council to Consider La Salle Hotel Renovations," p. 1A.

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**Continuation Sheet**

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La Salle Hotel  
Bryan, Brazos County, Texas

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Department of Housing and Urban Development.

**Past Preservation Efforts and Current Plans**

Each subsequent use of the building had an adverse effect on the floor plans on each level of the hotel, as did retrofitting for air conditioning and electrical service. One owner, John Jacques, in an article in The Bryan Daily Eagle (Sunday, June 19, 1977) described the plight of the building, "...each one [of the owners] took what he could out of the place, just bleeding it until he couldn't get any more out. Then it would be sold to someone who, in turn, would take what he could from it and leave it in a little worse condition."<sup>25</sup>

Working with the Galveston architectural firm Michael Gaertner & Associates and the College Station contractor C. F. Jordan, the developer/owner Morgan Hill is rehabilitating the building and restoring it to its original use as a 55 room hotel. The work, utilizing the Investment Tax Credit Program, is scheduled for completion in the spring of 2000. The building remains a visual landmark on South Main Street in downtown Bryan's central business district.

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<sup>25</sup> Bryan Daily Eagle, Bryan-College Station, Texas, June 19, 1977, p. 9B.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

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La Salle Hotel  
Bryan, Brazos County, Texas

Photo, c. 1930



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section 9 Page 22

La Salle Hotel  
Bryan, Brazos County, Texas

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**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

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**ACREAGE OF PROPERTY:** less than one acre

UTM REFERENCES	Zone	Easting	Northing
	14	751640	3396850

**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION:** Lot 1, Block 256, Bryan Original Townsite

**BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION:** The hotel is sited on the property line and occupies the entirety of Lot 1, Block 256 in Bryan's central business district. This boundary includes all property historically associated with the building.

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**11. FORM PREPARED BY** (with assistance from Gregory Smith, THC Historian)

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**NAME/TITLE:** Anna Mod

**ORGANIZATION:** Anna Mod Preservation Services

**DATE:** August 31, 1999

**STREET & NUMBER:** 4823 Fannin Drive

**TELEPHONE:** 409/770-0951

**CITY OR TOWN:** Galveston

**STATE:** Texas

**ZIP CODE:** 77551-4872

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**ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION**

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**CONTINUATION SHEETS:**

**MAPS**

**PHOTOGRAPHS** (see continuation sheet PHOTO-23)

**ADDITIONAL ITEMS**

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**PROPERTY OWNER**

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**NAME:** Morgan Hill, Morgan Hill Interests, for La Salle Hotel. Ltd.

**STREET & NUMBER:** One Riverway, Suite 1010

**TELEPHONE:** 713/355-1100

**CITY OR TOWN:** Houston

**STATE:** Texas

**ZIP CODE:** 77056

**United States Department of the Interior**  
**National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Section PHOTO Page 23

La Salle Hotel  
Bryan, Brazos County, Texas

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La Salle Hotel  
120 South Main Street  
Bryan, Brazos County, Texas  
Photographed by Morgan Hill  
January 2000  
Negatives on file with the Texas Historical Commission

Southeast oblique  
Camera facing northwest  
Photo 1 of 7

East elevation  
Camera facing west  
Photo 2 of 7

West elevation  
Camera facing east  
Photo 3 of 7

South elevation  
Camera facing north  
Photo 4 of 7

Main Street streetscape  
Camera facing northwest  
Photo 5 of 7

Main Street streetscape  
Camera facing southwest  
Photo 6 of 7

Northwest oblique  
Camera facing southeast  
Photo 7 of 7

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY La Salle Hotel  
NAME:

MULTIPLE Bryan MRA  
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: TEXAS, Brazos

DATE RECEIVED: 4/28/00 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 5/10/00  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 5/26/00 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 6/12/00  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 00000555

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N  
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N  
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

☒ ACCEPT ☐ RETURN ☐ REJECT 5/26/00 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in the  
National Register

RECOM./CRITERIA \_\_\_\_\_

REVIEWER \_\_\_\_\_ DISCIPLINE \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N



THE LASSALLE HOTEL  
A Division of The LASSALLE Hotel  
1000 Main Street, New York, N.Y. 10001  
Telephone: 212-691-1234

**JORDAN**  
COMMERCIAL GROUP  
NEW YORK CITY  
1000 Main Street

QUEEN

LA SALLE HOTEL

120 SOUTH MAIN STREET

BRYAN, BRAZOS CO., TEXAS

PHOTOGRAPH 1 of 7



EAST ELEVATION

LA SALLE HOTEL  
120 SOUTH MAIN STREET  
BRYAN, BRAZOS CO, TEXAS  
PHOTOGRAPH 2 of 7



LA SALLE HOTEL

120 SOUTH MAIN STREET

BRYAN, BRAZOS CO., TEXAS

PHOTOGRAPH 3 of 7



Subsidiary of  
**The LaSalle Hotel**  
A Project of Morgan Hill Investments  
Project Manager and Architect: Robert Gorman & Associates  
Construction Manager: C&B Build Co.

WEST 27

STOP

THC  
LA SALLE HOTEL  
120 SOUTH MAIN STREET  
BRYAN, BRAZOS CO., TEXAS

PHOTOGRAPH 4 of 7



VIEW  
BRYAN  
LA SALLE HOTEL  
BRYAN, BRAZOS CO., TEXAS  
1928

LA SALLE HOTEL  
120 SOUTH MAIN STREET  
BRYAN, BRAZOS CO., TEXAS

PHOTOGRAPH 5 of 7



LA SALLE HOTEL

120 SOUTH MAIN STREET

BRYAN, BRAZOS CO., TEXAS

PHOTOGRAPH 6 of 7



LA SALLE HOTEL

120 SOUTH MAIN STREET

BRYAN, BRAZOS CO., TEXAS

PHOTOGRAPH 7 of 7



1962  
PHOTOREVISED 1980  
DMA 6745 III NE-SERIES V882