

**The Roosevelt Hotel  
123 Baronne Street**

**Landmark Designation Report  
December 4, 2009**

**Architectural Rating:** Blue  
**Construction Date:** 1908  
**Architect:** Toledano and Wogan architects  
**Site Description:** Square 266  
**Municipal District:** 1  
**Assessment District:** 05  
**Zoning:** CBD-1  
**Owner:** First Class Hotels, LLC  
C/O FCH Manager, LLC  
401 Keyser Avenue  
Natchitoches, LA 70145

**Date Nominated:** March 6, 2001

The nomination of this property was based upon its architectural and historical significance. City Ordinance No. 6699 MCS defines a Landmark or Landmark site as: A building(s) (landmark) and/or its lot of record or any part thereof or vacant sites (landmark site), wheresoever located in the Central Business District of the City of New Orleans subject to the jurisdiction of the Central Business District Historic District Landmarks Commission, of particular historic, architectural, or cultural significance, which said landmark and/or landmark site meets at least one of the following criteria: 1) Exemplify or reflect the broad cultural, political, economic, or social history of the nation, state, or community; or 2) Are identified with historic personages or with important events in national, state, or local history; or 3) Embody distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type specimen, inherently valuable for a study of a period, style, method of construction, or indigenous materials or craftsmanship; or 4) Are representative of the notable work of a master builder, designer, or architect whose individual ability has been recognized.

## History of the Property

The thirteen-story building was built as the Hotel Gruenwald, named after its owner Louis Gruenwald, a German immigrant. It opened in 1893 as "The Gruenwald". In 1908, a major 400 room expansion was added. This expansion was designed by the Milwaukee architectural firm, H. C. Koch & Sons with the local firm of Toledano and Wogan architects. A 1908 drawing of the building shows that except for the original marquee over the entrance on University Place, the building has not been altered (figure 3). When erected, it had a rusticated and ornamental base, rows of bay windows and a heavy cornice. The interior provided every luxury of the period, including hot and cold water, long distance telephones in every room, public baths on every floor, porcelain lavatories and tubs and carpeted corridors. The masonry building has been enlarged from its original form and now spans the width of the square and has entrances on both Baronne Street and University Place.



University Place. Hotel Gruenwald (Roosevelt Hotel). From *Architectural Art and Its Allies* (1908). (Courtesy New Orleans Public Library.)

*Figure 3. Drawing of the hotel from 1908.*

In 1923, a group of New Orleans investors purchased the Hotel and renamed it "The Roosevelt Hotel", in honor of late former president Theodore Roosevelt. In 1965, Fairmont Hotels and Resorts acquired the hotel. Although the hotel was officially renamed The Fairmont (at first the "Fairmont Roosevelt", later the

"Fairmont New Orleans"), New Orleanians continued to call it "The Roosevelt" for decades.

The building was damaged in Hurricane Katrina in 2005 and closed indefinitely. On August 24, 2007, Dimension Development Company of Natchitoches, Louisiana, announced the purchase of the Fairmont Hotel for \$17 million from the owners, Roosevelt Ventures, LLC. Also announced was the plan to spend \$100 million to convert the hotel to one of Hilton's premium hotels in their Waldorf Astoria Collection chain.

The hotel was sold to Hilton Hotels. Hilton remodeled the 504-room 135-suite luxury hotel as part of corporation's Waldorf-Astoria line that opened in June 2009.

**Criteria 1. Exemplify or reflect the broad cultural, political, economic, or social history of the nation, state, or community;**

The Roosevelt is an icon of New Orleans as it has catered to the local residents and those visiting the city through out its history. When the hotel was the Grunewald it hosted "The Cave", a nightclub that featured waterfalls, stalactites, and chorus girls dancing to Dixieland jazz. In 1910, the Roosevelt opened a rooftop garden, one of the first in the South.

When the hotel changed to the Roosevelt in 1923, a new night club, "The Blue Room", was opened and became a famous for being a venue of nationally touring musical acts.

Louisiana Governor Huey Long maintained a 12th-floor suite at the hotel. During the 1930s, while was a U.S. senator, Long used a suite at the Roosevelt as his Louisiana headquarters and residence while in Louisiana.

The Roosevelt was acquired by Fairmont Hotels and Resorts in 1965 and renamed the Fairmont. The Fairmont was known for the Sazerac Bar and the Sazerac Room for the finest dining. Another restaurant in the Fairmont called "Bailey's" was known for decades as one of the few places open all odd hours of the night and early morning serving food significantly better than cheap diners or bar food. The main lobby area was elaborately decorated each Christmas season, and many locals made visiting the Christmas display at "the Roosevelt" part of their yearly holiday tradition.

On reopening of the hotel in 2009, Hilton reverted the name of the hotel to the "Roosevelt" title it had held from 1923 to 1965, and the name many locals never ceased calling the hotel.

**Criteria 3. Embody distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type specimen, inherently valuable for a study of a period, style, method of construction, or indigenous materials or craftsmanship**

The Roosevelt hotel embodies the distinguishing characteristics of the Beaux Arts style popular in the United States from 1885-1930. The Beaux Arts style is a classical style and has many of the same details found in other styles of Renaissance classical inspiration, which, however, seldom have the exuberant surface ornamentation that characterizes the Beaux Arts. The Roosevelt has the Beaux Arts cornice line that is accented by elaborated moldings, dentils, as well as its modillions and elaborate window crowns and moldings. The Roosevelt has definitive Beaux Arts decorative garlands, floral patterns, and shields that ornament the facades. The

University Place elevation has a rusticated first story with exaggerated stonework joints that is a defining feature of the Beaux Arts style. The flat or low-pitched roof is common for Beaux Arts buildings, based on the Italian or northern European Renaissance models. The Roosevelt Hotel is a good example of the elaborate Beaux Arts style in New Orleans.



*Beaux Arts detailing of shields, floral design, elaborate cornice and rusticated walls.*

**Criteria 4: Are representative of the notable work of a master builder, designer, or architect whose individual ability has been recognized.**

The Roosevelt Hotel was designed by the Milwaukee architectural firm, H. C. Koch & Sons with the prominent local firm of Toledano and Wogan. Albert Toledano was born at Reserve plantation, parish of St. John the Baptist, Louisiana Sept. 27, 1858. Toledano was educated in the private schools of New Orleans and later studied architecture in the office of the late architect, James Freret. After having completed his studies, he began the practice of his profession in 1883, and during the 10 years dating from that year to 1893 was a member of the architectural firm of Sully & Toledano. In the latter year he formed a new partnership with Mr. F. Reusch, under the firm name of Toledano & Reusch. In the year 1900, the firm of Toledano & Wogan, architects, was formed, with Toledano as the senior member, and under this name the business grew. Toledano has designed many impressive buildings in New Orleans as well as a number of similar structures in other cities. Among these are the Hotel Monteleone, the De Soto hotel, the Macheca building, the Werlein music house, the Lorraine apartments, the Winter Garden (also known as the Hippodrome), the Union brewery, the New Orleans sanitarium (also known as the Presbyterian Hospital), the Orleans Parish Medical Society building, and the beautiful Monteleone Memorial entrance to City Park. Among the numerous palatial New Orleans residences that have been designed by Toledano should be noted those of Isidor Newman, W. T. Jay, Nicholas Burke, Henry P. Dart and Peter Fabacher. Toledano was also associate architect in designing the Pickwick club building. Toledano was a member of the Roman Catholic church, and affiliated with the following organizations: The Boston club, Louisiana Historical society, Athenee Lonisianais, Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks, and the Louisiana Chapter of the American Institute of Architects. On Oct. 28, 1886, Mr. Toledano was married to Miss Anna Wogan, daughter of C. N. and Adeline Augustin Wogan of New Orleans.

**Staff Recommendation**

The staff recommends that the Roosevelt Hotel be designated as a landmark as it fulfills three of the four criteria required to establish significance. It exemplifies and reflects the broad cultural, political, economic, or social history of the nation, state, or community. It is significant as it embodies distinguishing characteristics of the Beaux Arts architectural style, and is representative of the notable work of master architect, as it was designed by the Milwaukee architectural firm, H. C. Koch & Sons with the prominent local firm of Toledano and Wogan whose individual ability has been recognized.

Report prepared by:  
Nicole Hernandez  
Architectural Historian  
Historic District Landmarks Commission  
1340 Poydras Street, Suite 1152  
New Orleans, LA 70112

## Bibliography

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