

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only
received APR 23 1986
date entered MAY 22 1986

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Commercial Hotel (Hart Hotel)

and/or common The Flomaton Hotel

2. Location

street & number 120 Palafox Street NA not for publication

city, town Flomaton NA vicinity of Congressional District 1

state Alabama code 01 county Escambia code 053

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture <input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial <input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational <input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment <input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government <input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial <input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	NA	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military <input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Wesley S. Allen

street & number P. O. Box 575

city, town Flomaton NA vicinity of state Alabama 36441

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Escambia County Courthouse (Judge of Probate)

street & number Bellview Avenue

city, town Brewton state Alabama

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Alabama Inventory has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1970-present federal state county local

depository for survey records Alabama Historical Commission

city, town Montgomery state Alabama

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Flomaton Hotel is located one block north of the L & N Railroad Depot in the business section of Flomaton, Alabama. Built in 1905 as a residential hotel, the two-story frame structure has a brick pier foundation, and in its massing, displays late Victorian or Queen Anne influence. In its detailing, however, the building mingles both Queen Anne features (such as fish scale imbrication) with Colonial Revival elements (such as the neoclassical columns of the porch). The roof has a truncated hip visible to Palafox Street, and is multi-gabled with overhanging eaves and a fish scale shingle pattern in each gable front. Each gable tops a projecting pavillion, and this treatment is continued along the sides of the building.

The single story flat roof porch is supported by six Corinthian order columns and extends the full width of the front of the house. The recessed double door entry has side lights and a transom. All windows are double sashes with two sidelights in each sash.

The building contains 18 rooms, each with its own fireplace. Original interior woodwork includes heart pine floors, doors, window trims, stairs, chairrails, baseboards and wainscotting. The walls were sheetrocked in the 1930s or 40s. The building has retained its original hardware and mechanical systems including iron door knobs, although an outdoor unit indicates that air conditioning has been recently installed.

The Flomaton still serves as a residential hotel, and is noted for its local charm. It has suffered few obvious alterations; however, in 1976, a two-story porch, with upright supports was added to the rear of the building.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1905 **Builder/Architect** architect unknown; builder - Joseph T. Fleming

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Criterion A - exploration/settlement; commerce

EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT: The Flomaton Hotel is significant for its associations with the early growth and development of Flomaton, Alabama. Initially a railroad junction (Pensacola Junction) serving as the intersection of two major lines, Flomaton, AL was one of several small towns that sprang up along the L & N Railroad lines during its rapid expansion beginning in 1879. The Flomaton Hotel was one of five hotels that pre-dated the 1908 incorporation of the town, and survives as the only hotel building of that era in the county.

COMMERCE: The Flomaton Hotel is also significant for its associations with commercial growth and development in Flomaton, Alabama. The 1904-05 construction of the hotel (then known as The Commercial Hotel) was a venture to relocate business near the depot in hope of directly tapping the railway passenger traffic and crews. One of the first and most successful hotels in the town, the Flomaton Hotel depended on the railway passenger traffic until the 1930s. In the early and mid-teens the hotel was noted as a favorite hideaway for honeymooners and quiet family vacations. In the 1920s under new management and a new name (The Hart Hotel), the hotel gained a good reputation for its fine "tablespreads," attracting the Pensacola affluent to Flomaton for Sunday dinner and a fifty mile train outing. The 1930's depression and the advent of the automobile retarded the passenger train patronage, as well as the business of the hotel; however, during WWII, the hotel was greatly patronized by servicemen awaiting train connections to overseas ports.

Once again under new management, and gaining yet another name (The Flomaton Hotel), the hotel's character and patronage changed to that typical of "residential hotels," accommodating primarily the employees of the local oil companies. This pattern continues today. The owner plans to restore the hotel as a Guest House, targeting the patronage of antique buffs attracted to the local auctions.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Doster, James Fletcher. Railroads in Alabama Politics, 1875-1914, 1957.
 The Pine Belt News, 1904-1908 (Brewton, AL)
 The Flomaton Enterprise - 1908-1910 (Flomaton, AL)

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one

Quadrangle name Flomaton

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

1	6	4	7	5	2	5	0	3	4	2	9	4	2	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B

Zone		Easting				Northing							

C

Zone		Easting				Northing							

D

Zone		Easting				Northing							

E

Zone		Easting				Northing							

F

Zone		Easting				Northing							

G

Zone		Easting				Northing							

H

Zone		Easting				Northing							

Verbal boundary description and justification

Begin on SW corner of Cary and Palafox Streets.
 Run SE 80' on Palafox St. Run SW 43', SE 20', SW 94.5', NW 100' to Cary St. Run NE 137.5' to beginning. (Flomaton)

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state NA code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Shirley D. Qualls, Historic Resource Coordinator

organization Alabama Historical Commission date October 29, 1984

street & number 725 Monroe Street telephone 205 261-3184

city or town Montgomery state Alabama

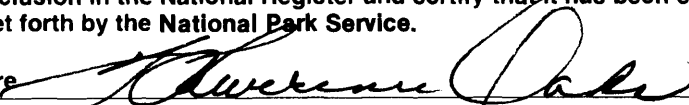
12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

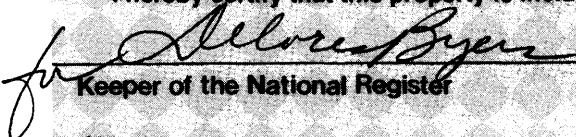


title State Historic Preservation Officer

date 4-16-86

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

for 

Entered in the
National Register

date 5-22-86

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 1

HISTORICAL SUMMARY

In March 1902 the Selma to Flomaton branch of the Louisville and Nashville Railroad was completed and opened for public service. Mushroom towns sprang up all along the line, each with the dream of becoming a prosperous railroad city. Flomaton, AL, then known as the Pensacola Junction, served two major railway lines and was a connecting point for Mobile (New Orleans, LA) and Pensacola, Florida to L & N's northbound main artery through Alabama. By 1904, area newspapers began commenting on the "town's" growth stating that "Our citizens are about waking up to the fact that the town is on a boomlet ... The proprietors of the Commercial Hotel are preparing to erect a \$3,000.00 hotel nearer the depot."

James A. Thornton, proprietor of The Commercial Hotel, had this building constructed on the corner of Palafox and Rhinegold Street on land "adjoining the L & N Railroad" (one block) in hope of drawing a monopoly on the railway passenger traffic and crews. Constructed of local lumber from the Cedar Creek Mill in Brewton, and by local labor (Fleming, a deaf carpenter and a brick mason named Holt), the "new and larger quarters" of The Commercial Hotel were completed in the spring of 1905. The appearance of a "beautiful little park near the depot" made the short trip to the hotel both picturesque and pleasant. Although the little village boasted "five commodious hotels" in 1906, newspaper accounts reveal that "there is not sufficient accommodations for the traveling public ... Yet new families are constantly moving... there is a great era of prosperity at hand."

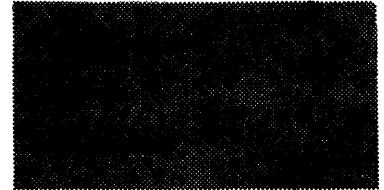
The depot was the major center of activity at Pensacola Junction as was typical of most late 19th and early twentieth century country depots. For almost a century and a quarter, the depots served as the hub and heart of the towns they served. Mail, news and people all came to town on the train. In October of 1905 the entire Flomaton village flocked to the depot in honor of President Theodore Roosevelt, who stopped briefly to address the crowd. Earlier local legends recount sightings of 19th century outlaws such as John Wesley Hardin who would often "hide out" in nearby Pollard. Before his trial and conviction in Texas, Hardin was caught at Flomaton by Pinkerton Detectives and L & N Agents.

In April 1906 the old Pensacola Junction depot caught fire due to the explosion of a gasoline stove in the lunchroom. This was the second time the local depot had burned, and the incident may have affected the business of the Flomaton Hotel, as it closed briefly. It was leased and reopened by J. T. Gilbert (October, 1907) shortly after the new depot was complete.

Flomaton was incorporated in 1908. Later that year the town established its own newspaper (Flomaton Enterprise) which often recorded the distinguished guests of The Commercial Hotel. Up to the mid-teens, the hotel was a favorite hideaway for honeymooners and family vacations. However, Mrs. Sadie Hart purchased and renamed the hotel in 1918, and became known throughout the southeast for her culinary skills. Her Sunday "tablespreads" were so popular that wealthy Pensacolians often made the fifty-mile train trip to Flomaton for Sunday dinner at the Hart Hotel.

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 2

In 1943 Dennis Clarence Nolin of Victoria, Alabama purchased the hotel, accommodating servicemen awaiting train connectings to the overseas ship ports. Nolin changed the hotel's name to The Flomaton. Having acquired the hotel shortly after the late 1930s decline of the railroad as the dominant land transportation in the country, he also changed the character of the hotel to one typical of "residential hotels." His patronage consisted primarily of employees of the local oil companies. This character, further compounded by the advent of the automobile and the contemporary interstate systems, continues today.

The old depot was razed in 1976. One of the few remaining remnants of its foregone presence, an old depot bench, sits in front of The Flomaton Hotel as a reminder of the hotel's early days. The present owner claims that there is seldom a vacancy, and wants to restore the hotel as a guest house, targeting the antique buffs drawn to the local auctions.