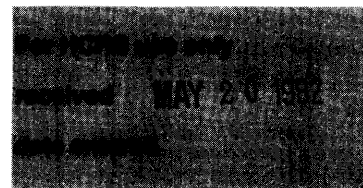


**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

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



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

1. Name

historic Simon Hershheim House (Columns Hotel)
~~XXXX~~ common Columns Hotel

2. Location

street & number 3811 St. Charles Avenue N/A not for publication
 city, town New Orleans N/A vicinity of Orleans Parish congressional district 2nd--Lindy Boggs
 state LA code 22 county Orleans Parish code 071

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<u> </u> district	<u> </u> public	<u> X </u> occupied	<u> </u> agriculture
<u> X </u> building(s)	<u> X </u> private	<u> </u> unoccupied	<u> </u> commercial
<u> </u> structure	<u> </u> both	<u> </u> work in progress	<u> </u> educational
<u> </u> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<u> </u> entertainment
<u> </u> object	<u> N/A </u> in process	<u> X </u> yes: restricted	<u> </u> government
	<u> N/A </u> being considered	<u> </u> yes: unrestricted	<u> </u> industrial
		<u> </u> no	<u> </u> military
			<u> X </u> other: hotel

4. Owner of Property

name Claire and Jacques Creppel
 street & number 3811 St. Charles Avenue
 city, town New Orleans N/A vicinity of Orleans Parish state LA 70115

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Department of Conveyance, City Hall
 street & number 1500 Perdido
 city, town New Orleans state LA 70112

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Ia. Historic Sites Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes X no
 date 1981 federal X state county local
 depository for survey records Ia. State Historic Preservation Office
 city, town Baton Rouge state LA

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one	
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date <u> N/A </u>
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Columns Hotel was built in 1884 as a grand frame Italianate residence along St. Charles Avenue, one of New Orleans' most prestigious residential streets. Presently three stories in height, it was originally built as a two-story residence with an attic. The attic story was enlarged in this century after the house had ceased to serve as a single family residence. Despite many alterations over the years, the house retains enough of its original architectural features to stand both as a noteworthy example of its architect's work and as a landmark in its own right.

The St. Charles Avenue facade is asymmetrically arranged, with a large semi-octagonal bay projecting out from the right side of the structure. This bay is flanked on the left by the huge columnar porch which has given the hotel its name. According to both period Sanborn Insurance Maps and a recently discovered photograph, the original facade was less monumental, with a double gallery across the facade which was approximately 4 to 6 feet deep, in contrast to the depth of the present porch which exceeds 20 feet. While it is not possible to determine the exact date or individuals responsible for this change, it is likely that this work was executed after the great hurricane of 1915, which is rumored to have damaged the house, specifically, destroying the upper two floors of the four-story tower which rose from the semi-octagonal bay noted earlier. This tower featured an open fourth story which must have afforded a superb view of the city. In reviewing the records of the Real Estate Assessors for the early years of the century, a dramatic increase in the valuation of the property took place between 1916 and 1918, a fact which indicates that the remodeling of the facade was probably undertaken at that time. The exterior surfaces are covered with ship-lap siding of the type so often used on frame houses in New Orleans at the end of the nineteenth century. The window openings of the first floor are segmentally arched and feature heavy entablatures with dentiled cornices. The windows of the second floor are round arched and feature pedimented entablatures. The openings onto the porch are full length so as to provide access from the rooms within. The porch itself is supported by four colossal Tuscan columns which support an overscaled entablature. The location of the remodeled porch partially obscures the five sided bay which once rose to a height of four stories. The main entrance door is set alongside the five sided bay, framed by a pair of pilasters set upon paneled bases which support a simple pediment. The double doors themselves feature two molded panels below with glazing above. The glass is composed of a series of small octagonal panes of glass leaded together. A simple transom is set above the double doors. The elevation towards General Taylor Street features a five sided bay which serves to illuminate the west parlors inside the house. The detailing found on the St. Charles facade is repeated on this bay. The modillioned cornice, original to the design of the house, can best be seen along the side elevations. The Peniston Street elevation has undergone some modifications in this century, the most notable of which is the enclosure of the side porches for interior bathroom space. The arches which once graced these side porches are still intact, however. Towards the rear of the structure on the Peniston Street side are a pair of three-sided bay windows with leaded glass transoms. According to the outline of the house on the 1896 Sanborn Map, these bays did not exist, but one does appear on a survey of the property prepared in 1911. Presumably, the second bay was added shortly thereafter, as the two are nearly identical in terms of their detailing. Due to the location of the house in relationship to the trees in front of it and the great size of the front porch, the third story is scarcely visible from the street and should not be considered to detract or add to the character of the exterior.

(CONTINUED)

United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

Continuation sheet Columns Hotel

Item number 7

Page 2

7. Description (Continued)

Entrance to the interior is through the double doors on the St. Charles Avenue facade. Once through these doors, one is standing at the end of a center hall which divides the main floor of the house into two halves. The hallway is approximately 12 feet wide and 35 feet in length. The ceiling in the hallway has been slightly dropped, but investigations have determined that the original coved plaster ceiling is intact above the more recent ceiling and will be re-exposed in the future. Immediately to the right as you enter the front door is what must have served as a drawing room or sitting room when the house was first built. Set at the base of the once four storied tower, this room is six sided, and features one full length window opening which opens onto the front porch. The other three windows in the room feature molded panels below which create the impression of four full length openings facing the avenue. The mantel-piece in this room is of exceptional quality, combining oak and burl walnut. The fire-back is set within a finely detailed copper frame, which is decorated on its face with a pulvinated frieze with a floral motif that is complemented by the tiled hearth design.

The room to the left of the entrance hall was described at the time of Simon Hemsheim's death as the west parlor, and given the character of its decoration, its use as a parlor or formal living space should not be disputed. Approximately 40 feet in length and 18 feet wide, the room is articulated by a series of Composite columns on paneled bases which serve to divide the room in half and also separate the main area from the small six sided nook which projects towards General Taylor Street. A substantial plaster cornice runs around the room, including the nook area. Two alabaster mantel-pieces are situated on the outside wall of the west parlor. While there is no documentation to substantiate the claim, it is highly likely that these mantels were acquired from the Mexican government's exhibitions at the Cotton Centennial Exposition held in New Orleans at the time the house was being built. It is known that stonework of this type was shown by Mexico at the exhibition, with one such mantel now located in the Gresham House in Galveston, Texas.

Following the hall towards the staircase, the next room to the right side of the hall originally served as the dining room, with the small room adjacent serving as the music room. The dining room features a splendid mantelpiece and overmantel, and features the same high quality hearth and fireback design seen earlier in the drawing room. Alongside one wall stands the original built-in sideboard, set within a niche framed by pilasters on bases. The survival of such an important piece of integral and architectural furniture is of special interest and significance as it is the only such piece still in place in any of the surviving houses designed by Thomas Sully. The ceiling of this room is paneled in mahogany, with the panels framed by a series of beams supported on the sides of the room by corbels of mahogany. It is also paneled from the floor to a height of about four feet.

CONTINUED

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

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



Continuation sheet

Columns Hotel

Item number 7

Page 3

7. Description (Continued)

At the end of the hallway, one stands at the bottom of the staircase, the most dramatic feature of the house. The stairwell is approximately 17 feet square, and the first tread of the stair is positioned on line with the front door. Largely of mahogany, the stair takes three turns to reach the second floor. The wall sides of the stair are paneled, as is the soffit of the stair. The bottom of the staircase features an elaborately carved newel to the left, with the right hand end of the handrail simply turning down and terminating in the first tread of the stair, which is an unusual treatment. The quality of the woodwork on the stair is exceptional and in completely original condition. The stair rises up to the attic level, and is illuminated from above by an extraordinary skylight of stained glass which features a sort of stylized sunburst motif. The combination of dark woodwork rising up to the skylight is highly dramatic and creates one of the greatest residential interior spaces still extant in New Orleans.

The second floor features a total of six bedrooms, each of which features its own fireplace. With the exception of the front bedroom on the Peniston Street side, which is a later addition, all of these mantels are of grey marble which has been decorated by simple carvings of flowers. The rear bedroom on the General Taylor side features a fine overmantel.

A note should be made regarding the room which currently serves as the dining room for the hotel. Located behind the original dining room with the mahogany ceiling, this room has undergone a series of alterations. As was noted in the description of the exterior, the double bays which illuminate this room were added in the early twentieth century. The ceiling has been dropped more than a foot, obscuring the original coved plaster ceiling, which partially survives. It is highly likely that when the structure was converted for use as a boarding house, this room must have been remodeled to serve as a community dining room. Given the existence of the original dining room and parlors, it is doubtful that the HERNSHEIMS would have had any reason to need another large room for entertaining.

It is significant to note that this structure is the sole survivor of what were a large group of houses designed by Sully in 1883-85 which were very much Italianate in character. Many of these pre-Queen Anne style houses are documented in the collection of Sully's architectural drawings preserved at Tulane University. While none of these drawings shows a tower of the type originally on the HERNSHEIM House, all feature exterior walls finished in drop siding with colonnaded galleries similar to those on the HERNSHEIM House. What is interesting is that the interior, with the sole exception of the classically detailed west parlor, owes very little to any characteristic of the Italianate style in New Orleans. The great majority of the interior detailing, especially the paneled ceiling of the dining room and the fine mantelpieces, are more typical of Sully's later work in the Queen Anne style. The great staircase does not rise out a true living hall in the Queen Anne manner, although its detailing can be said to be of that style. Given the scale of the stair, it is more reminiscent of the interiors of some late-nineteenth century English country houses, in which the stair served an almost ceremonial purpose.

(CONTINUED)

United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form



Continuation sheet Columns Hotel

Item number 7

Page 4

7. Description (Continued)

A further word is required regarding the alterations to the main facade of the structure. While there is no way of verifying whether or not the upper half of the tower was actually destroyed in the great hurricane of September 1915, we can assume that it had been removed prior to the first revision to the 1908 Sanborn maps which was undertaken in the early 1920's, as the tower is not shown. The significant increase in the assessed valuation of the property mentioned earlier leads one to believe that the tower may have been removed after the hurricane, with the great columned porch added at the same time. The building permit records for the years between 1902 and 1926 are lost, so there is virtually no way of locating the name of either the contractor or architect associated with the remodeling, if one was even used.

Summary of Alterations:

Alterations include:

- (1) the loss of the top two stories of the tower (c.1915).
- (2) the replacement of the original front porch with the present portico (c.1915).
- (3) the filling in of a side porch for bathrooms (c.1915).
- (4) the addition of two bay windows in the rear wing (c.1911).
- (5) the enlargement of the original attic into a finished third story (c.1915).
- (6) the installation of slightly lower plaster ceilings in the central hall and in the rear dining room. Historic ceilings remain entirely intact in the hall and partially intact in the rear dining room above these false ceilings.

Assessment of Integrity:

The house is significant as the only example of the Italianate phase of Thomas Sully's career in New Orleans. This remains true despite the alterations. The house still possesses many of the vital features which mark it as an example of Sully's Italianate work.

- These include:
- (1) the elaborate exterior woodwork around most of the windows and doors.
 - (2) most of the exterior cornice work and wooden quoining.
 - (3) the east parlor with its elaborate oak and bur1 walnut mantel.
 - (4) the mantel, overmantel, built-in sideboard, and the elaborate mahogany woodwork in the dining room.
 - (5) the grand columnar articulation of the west double parlor as well as its elaborate plaster work.

CONTINUED

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

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



Continuation sheet

Columns Hotel

Item number 7

Page 5

7. Description (Continued)

- (6) the staircase with its dramatic Baroque spatial effect and elaborate paneled woodwork.

In addition to the Sully association, the house retains its landmark status in its own right on the state level because the surviving interior features are still among the finest of the period in Louisiana.

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 checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input 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 1884, c. 1915 **Builder/Architect** Architect for c. 1915 not known
 Builder: Simon Hemsheim
 Architect: Thomas Sully

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Criterion C

The Hemsheim House/Columns Hotel is significant on the state level in the area of architecture for two reasons:

- (1) It is the work of Thomas Sully, who is considered to be the most important architect in New Orleans during the last quarter of the nineteenth century.
- (2) Its interiors are among the finest in the state for the period. For this reason the property is being nominated for significance on the state level.

Thomas Sully's career as an architect had its start in the offices of the Austin, Texas firm of Lammour and Wheelock in the late 1870's. He spent the first two years of the 1880's in the office of J. Morgan Slade in New York City. Slade is perhaps best noted today for the cast-iron fronted structures he designed in the SoHo district. Sully returned to New Orleans in 1882, and first appears in the city directories as an architect in 1883. Evidently his career here began to rise rapidly, for the newspaper accounts of new construction for the 1880's are full of references to his name. By the end of the decade, he had firmly established himself as the predominant figure in New Orleans architecture, and had established a partnership in 1887 with Albert Toledano which lasted until 1893. Sully is perhaps best known for his large residential designs, many of which have since been lost to demolition. Of equal importance are the many important commercial buildings he designed, the majority of which were located in the central business district of the city. The most famous of these was the St. Charles Hotel, erected in 1894-95 and demolished in 1974. His most important surviving works include the Whitney National Bank at 619 Gravier Street, the Maritime Building at 201 Carondelet Street, and the former New Orleans National Bank at the corner of Camp and Common Streets, for which he also designed the furniture. He was also responsible for a number of hotels located throughout the South, among them were the Great Southern Hotel in Gulfport and the Lookout Mountain Inn in Chattanooga, Tennessee, which still survives and is known as Covenant College. Sully effectively retired from active practice in 1905, and died in New Orleans in 1939.

While no original drawings survive for the Hemsheim House, the linkage of the structure with the career of Sully is substantiated by a report in the Daily Picayune of September 1, 1884 which read: "Mr. Simon Hemsheim's new residence on St. Charles Avenue between General Taylor and Peniston will be completed by January 1st. and will be one of the finest dwellings in the city. It is being built by Mr. Sully. It is two stories with an attic."

Although the exterior of the house has been altered somewhat, the interiors, which are more significant, remain relatively unchanged. The most noteworthy features in this regard are as follows:

1. the east parlor with its elaborate oak and burl walnut mantel
2. the mantel, overmantel, built-in sideboard, and the elaborate mahogany woodwork in the dining room

(CONTINUED)

9. Major Bibliographical References

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property approx. .58 acre

Quadrangle name New Orleans East.La.

Quadrangle scale 1=24000

UMT References

A

1	5	7	8	0	3	4	0	3	3	1	4	0	8	5
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

Please refer to sketch map.

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

state N/A code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title John Ferguson, Architectural Historian
New Orleans Historic District

organization Landmarks Commission

date August 1981

street & number 830 Julia Street

telephone 504-586-4051

city or town New Orleans

state LA 70113

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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Robert B. DeBlieux

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date May 7, 1982

For HCERS use only

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

Keeper of the National Register

date 6/24/82

Attest:

date

Chief of Registrar

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

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

Continuation sheet

Columns Hotel

Item number 8

Page 2

8. Statement of Significance (Continued)

3. the grand columnar articulation of the west double parlor
4. the staircase with its dramatic Baroque spatial effect

It is important to note that these interiors, and the remaining exterior features, constitute the sole survivor of a large group of houses designed by Sully in 1883-85. These houses, which were more or less in the late Italianate style, comprise the pre-Queen Anne phase of Sully's career. In addition, the survival of the original built-in sideboard in the dining room is of special interest and significance because it is the only such piece still in place in any of the surviving houses designed by Sully.

Finally, the house's interior features previously described are significant in and of themselves, regardless of who designed them. The Hemsheim House interiors are among the grandest known in any late-nineteenth century Louisiana residence. In particular, the stairhall, with its mahogany staircase rising up to a square dome and skylight, is very dramatic and creates one of the most striking residential interior spaces still extant in the state.

HISTORICAL SKETCH:

Simon Hemsheim, the client for this structure, was the president of S. Hemsheim Brothers & Co., the largest manufacturer of cigars in the United States at the end of the century. Hemsheim was noted for his philanthropy, which was known to extend to both his workers and to the less fortunate that Hemsheim never knew. His obituary noted his charitable works in the most reverent terms possible. Hemsheim's most noted gift to the city came after his death when his heirs gave \$50,000 to the New Orleans Public Library, then a fledgling institution.

John R. Norman, a prosperous cotton planter and banker, bought the house in 1900 from Hemsheim's heirs. In 1914, he sold the property to Hubbard Moylan Feild, in whose family the house remained until 1953.

The first evidence that the house had been converted into a boarding house is found in the 1917 issue of Soard's New Orleans City Directory, which lists a Mrs. H. B. Gardes as proprietress. During the next thirty-six years it was operated as one of the most elite boarding houses in the city. In 1953, the Feild family sold the property to Richard O. Baumbach, who converted the house into a hotel, an operation which has continued under various owners until the present (except for a brief period c. 1976-77 when it was closed). In the mid-1970's, Paramount Studios used the Columns as the setting for shooting Louis Malle's film Pretty Baby. The current owners, Claire and Jacques Creppel, purchased the property in 1980 and are in the process of restoring it to its original grandeur.

Relationship of Integrity to Significance----See Item 7.

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service
National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet Columns Hotel

Item number 79

Page 2

9. Bibliography

Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Louisiana, Volumes I and II. Chicago: The Goodspeed Publishing Company, 1892.

National Register Nomination Form for Columns Hotel Prepared by Karen Graham Wade, Architectural Historian, 1976.

New Orleans Daily Picayune, September 1, 1884.

Notarial Archives, 1300 Perdido Street, New Orleans.

Obituary for Hubbard Moyland Feild. Times-Picayune, April 12, 1920.

Obituary for John R. Norman. Times-Picayune, August 24, 1929.

Real Estate Assessment Records, New Orleans Public Library.

Real Estate Conveyance Records, Department of Conveyance, 1300 Perdido Street, New Orleans.

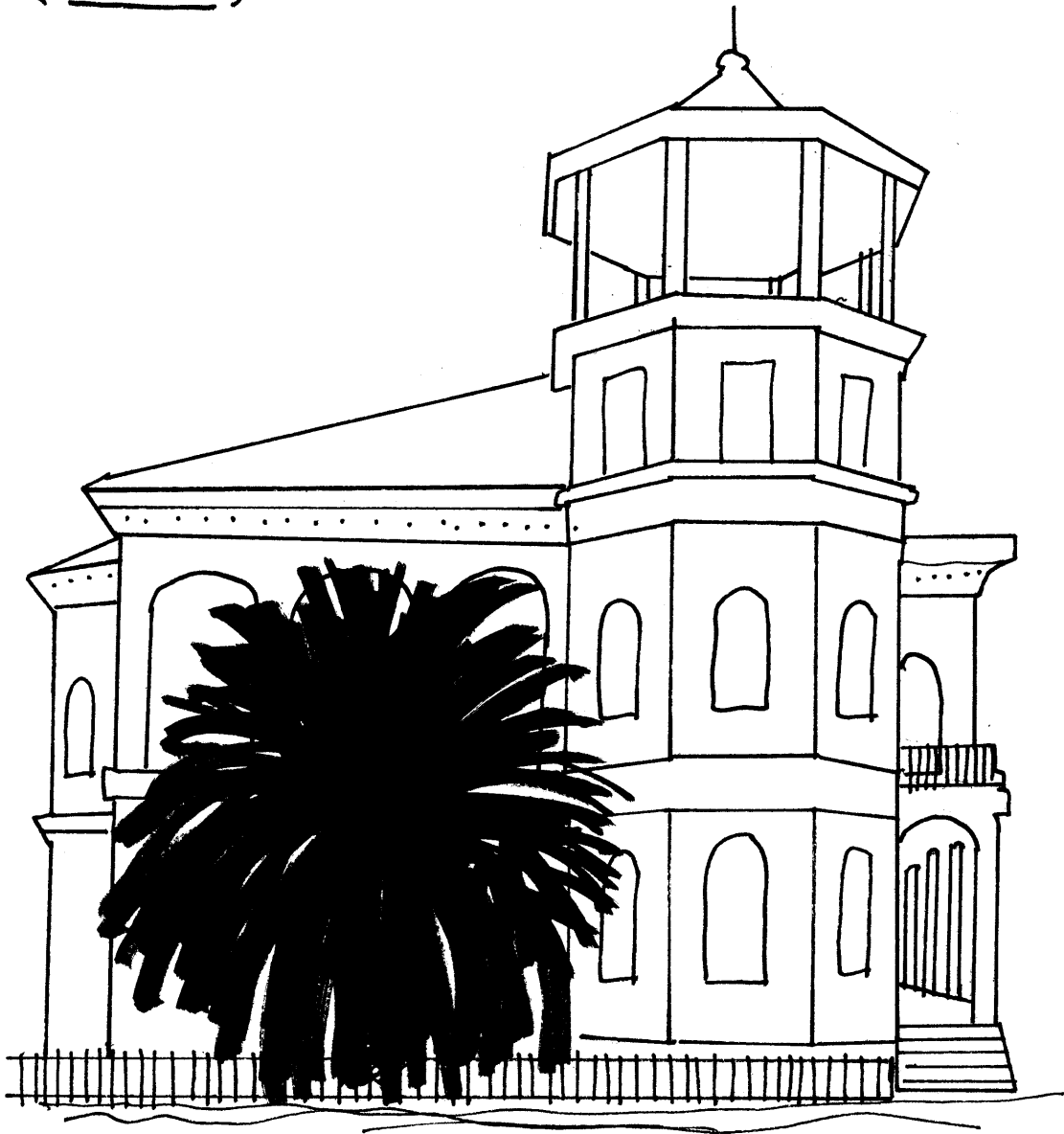
Sanborn Insurance Maps, New Orleans, various dates.

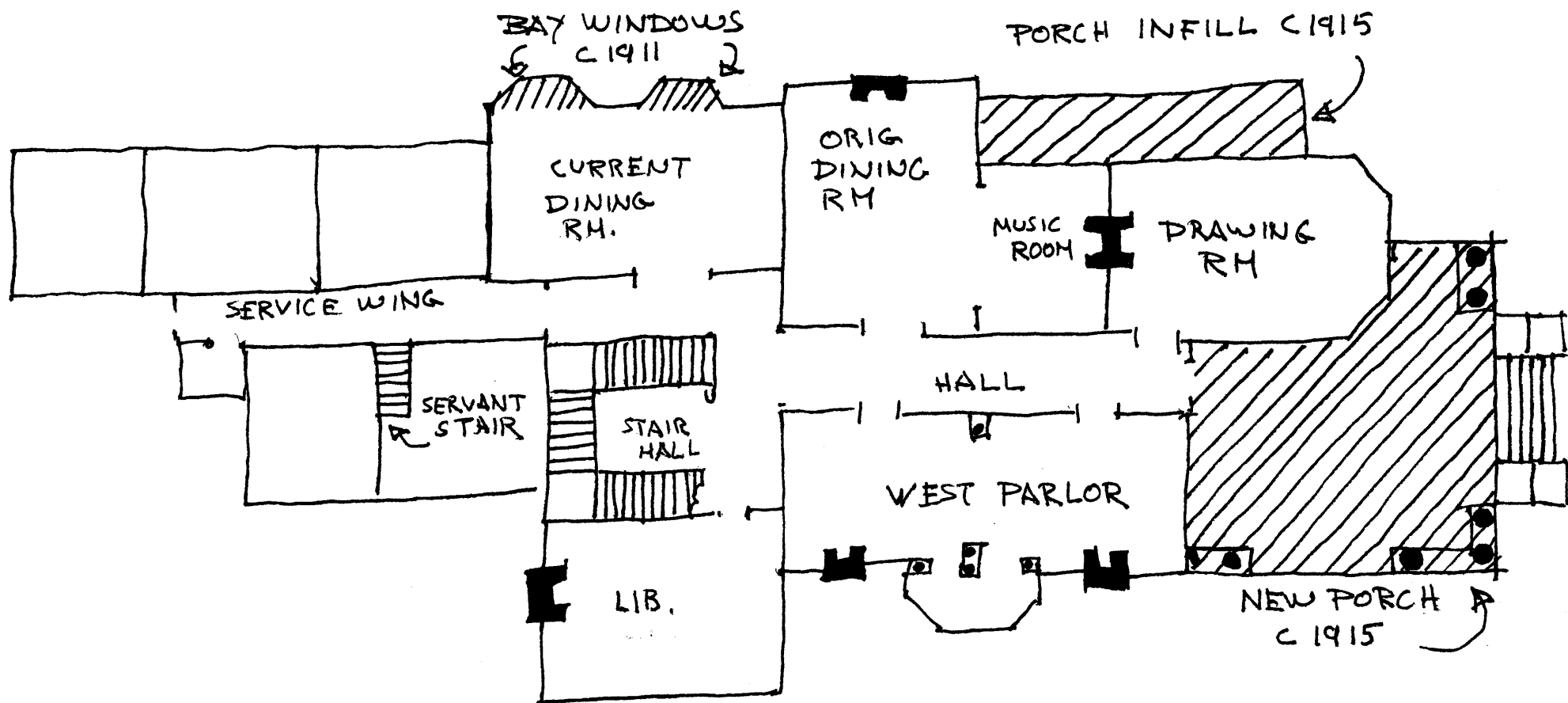
Soard's New Orleans City Directory, various years. Louisiana Division, Public Library, New Orleans, Louisiana.

COLUMNS
HOTEL

ORIGINAL FRONT
ELEVATION
(SKETCH)

TAKEN FROM
C. 1900 PHOTO.





COLUMNS
HOTEL

ROOM
LAYOUT SKETCH

(NOT TO SCALE)

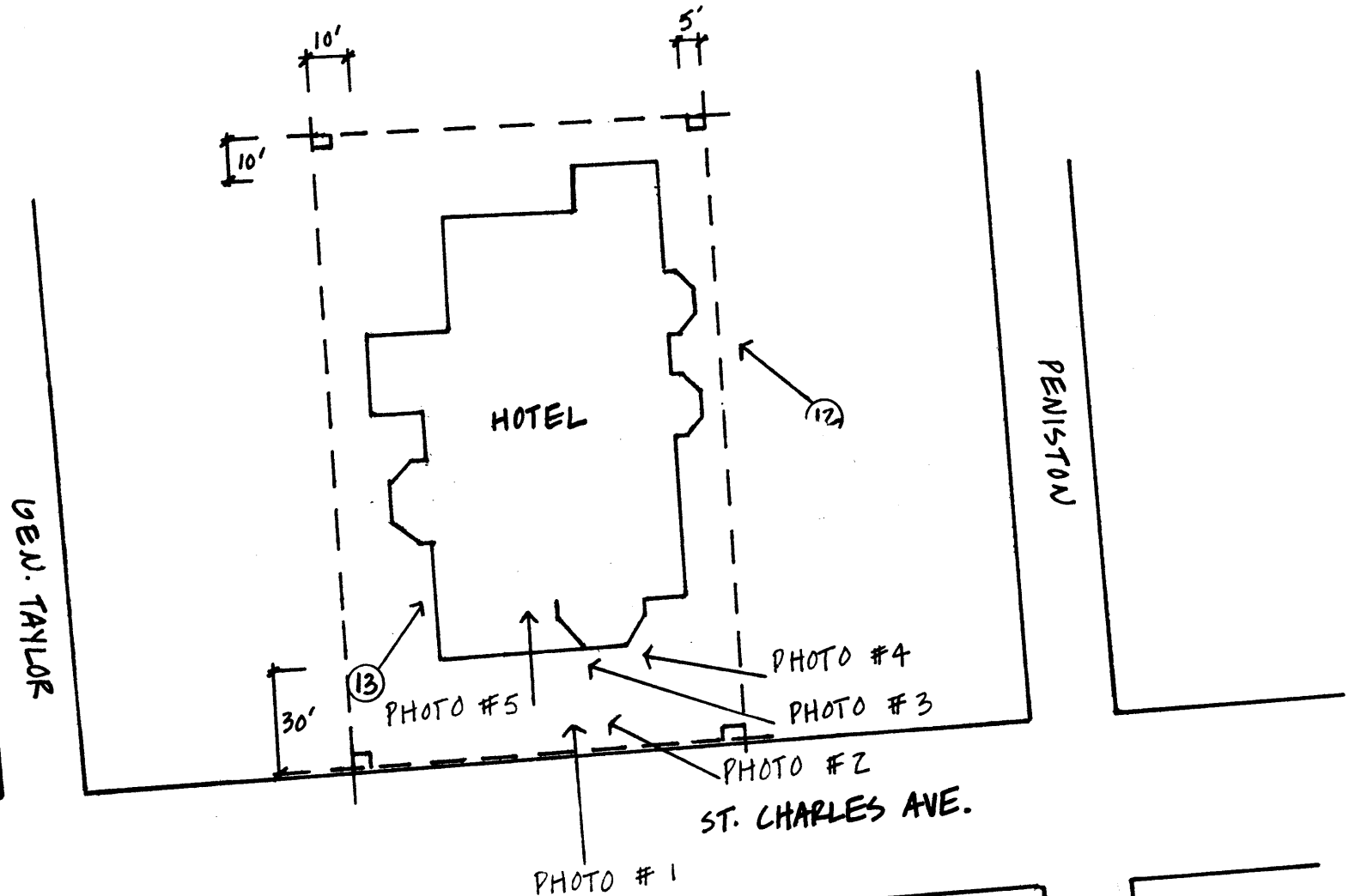
□ ORIGINAL HOUSE

▨ ALTERATIONS

COLUMNS HOTEL

NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA

(SIMON HERNSHEIM HOUSE)



SITE BOUNDARIES ARE PARALLEL TO
BLDG. FACADES AT DISTANCES SHOWN.
THE BLDG. FACES ST. CHARLES AVE.

SCALE 1" = 50' APPROX.