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United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

SEP 29 1989

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

NATIONAL REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name (Old) Lake Charles City Hall
other names/site number currently Lake Charles City Court

2. Location

street & number Ryan St. (at Kirby Street) N/A not for publication
city, town Lake Charles N/A vicinity
state Louisiana code LA county Calcasieu Parish code 019 zip code 70601

3. Classification

Ownership of Property: private, public-local (checked), public-State, public-Federal
Category of Property: building(s) (checked), district, site, structure, object
Number of Resources within Property: Contributing (1), Noncontributing (0 buildings, 0 sites, 0 structures, 0 objects), Total (1)
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.
Signature of certifying official Leslie Tassin, LA State Historic Preservation Officer, Dept of Culture, Recreation and Tourism
Date September 29, 1989

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.
Signature of commenting or other official
Date
State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:
entered in the National Register. (checked) See continuation sheet.
determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.
determined not eligible for the National Register.
removed from the National Register.
other, (explain:)
Signature of the Keeper
Date of Action

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**6. Function or Use**

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Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

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GOVERNMENT/city hall

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Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

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GOVERNMENT/city courthouse

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**7. Description**

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Architectural Classification  
(enter categories from instructions)

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Italian Renaissance

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Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation concretewalls brickroof tileother cement

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**Describe present and historic physical appearance.**

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The Lake Charles City Hall (1911) is a brick and cement two story monumental building whose style is derived from a variety of Renaissance sources. It is located on a well treed public square across from the Calcasieu Parish Courthouse in downtown Lake Charles. Alterations have been relatively minor, and are confined almost completely to the interior.

This building was constructed at almost the same time as the Calcasieu Parish Courthouse across the street. In addition, it was designed by the same architectural firm, Favrot and Livaudais. It is interesting to note that the city hall is not merely a smaller and less monumental version of the parish courthouse, as one might expect. Instead, it represents a completely different approach to Renaissance styling, and thus has a completely different personality. While the courthouse features a monumental pedimented portico surmounted by a dome, the city hall culminates in a greatly enlarged campanile. Thus while these two buildings are both striking and monumental, they do not compete with each other.

The city hall consists of a three bay central mass with a pair of three bay recessed side wings. Its principal feature is a four story central campanile tower whose base forms the principal entrance to the building. The top story of the tower is open, featuring corner piers, free-standing columns, enormous brackets and a pyramidal roof. Below this opening the tower features a clock face on each side with flanking cartouches and copious brincade. The massive clock mechanism occupies the third story of the tower. Most of the windows of the city hall are set within large segmental arches, some with decorative keystones. In contrast to this, the main entrance is set in a round arched opening surmounted by a balcony resting upon double oversized consoles. These consoles are echoed at the roofline with massive pairs of brackets which are so large they almost resemble hammer beams. Surmounting most parts of the building is a system of red pantile hipped roofs.

As previously mentioned, the city hall is derived from a variety of Renaissance sources. Of course, the bold campanile tower and pantile roofs are derived from the Italian Renaissance. In addition, the large brackets are derived from the Italian Mannerist period. The extensive use of cement quoins set in contrast to the red brick exterior is derived from provincial architecture of France and England of the seventeenth century. The use of segmental arches and copious brincade was probably inspired by French eighteenth century architecture.

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Continuation SheetOld Lake Charles City Hall, Calcasieu Parish, LA  
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The plan features a central entrance which leads to a single corridor running from end to end of the building. Behind this is a small, linear rear courtroom consisting of three bays which are marked by pilasters and entablature beams. The pilasters are noteworthy, being both ornamented with egg and dart motifs and oversize brackets. The corridor is divided into bays with pilasters like those in the courtroom. Staircases at each end of the corridor feature elaborately worked newel posts that echo the styling of the previously mentioned pilasters. The stairs lead to the much larger principal courtroom on the second floor. It occupies the main block of the building and has a central front alcove which is actually the second story of the campanile tower. This alcove contains an openwork staircase leading to the clock mechanism above and ultimately to the open top story of the tower. The courtroom itself features wainscoting and various pedimented doorways. In recent years the ceiling of this room has been lowered and carpeting has been installed.

Assessment of Integrity:

Aside from the lowered ceiling and carpeting in the main courtroom, the only other changes have been the installation of metal awnings over some of the ground story windows and lowered ceilings in some of the offices. In the opinion of the State Historic Preservation Office, these changes are minor when one considers that the building is virtually unaltered on the exterior and retains the bulk of its original noteworthy interior features.

**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally  statewide  locally

Applicable National Register Criteria  A  B  C  D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)  A  B  C  D  E  F  G N/A

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

architecture  
politics/government

Period of Significance

1911  
1911-1939

Significant Dates

1911  
1911-1939

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Architect: Favrot and Livaudais

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Lake Charles City Hall is locally significant as an architectural landmark within the city of Lake Charles, a distinction which is enhanced by its highly creative and original design. The city hall is also locally significant in the area of politics/government as the focal point of municipal history from its construction through the 1930s (the fifty year Register cutoff).

Architectural Significance:

The city hall's landmark status is particularly pronounced because the city of Lake Charles has lost so much of its historic non-residential architecture. Due to booming prosperity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Lake Charles had a truly outstanding downtown with numerous landmarks. Old photographs show a very impressive, very urban-looking central business district.

Although the city retains a significant and large collection of historic residences, its downtown has been almost completely destroyed, due largely to the relentless campaign of demolition and modernization waged in the prosperous 1950s, '60s, and '70s. The end result is that Lake Charles has only about ten architecturally noteworthy non-residential buildings left, one of which is the city hall. While all of these buildings are significant, the city hall enjoys special importance because its design is probably the most original. Unlike most municipal buildings, it achieves its striking grandeur not through the use of a portico and dome or through the use of a conventional boxy Beaux Arts design. Rather, it features the creative use of a large Italian hill town looking campanile tower as its central monumental feature. In many ways its design is derived more from villa architecture than public architecture. In addition, the design successfully combines several Renaissance sources in a cohesive whole which has a strong character of its own.

See continuation sheet

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

Lake Charles City Hall Cornerstone.

Cagle, Robert B., Jr. "The Political Development of the City of Lake Charles, 1890-1930." M.A. thesis, Louisiana State University, 1967.

See continuation sheet

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
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of property approx one acre

UTM References

A 

1	5
Zone	Easting

4	7	9	1	2	0
Northing					

3	3	4	3	6	4	0
Northing						

C 


Northing					

Northing							

B 

Zone	Easting

Northing					

D 


Northing					

Northing							

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description Boundary lines follow the property lines of the city block upon which the building stands, said block being bounded by Ryan, Kirby, Bilbo and Iris streets and measuring 250 feet by 250 feet.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification Boundary lines follow property lines of the city block upon which the building stands.

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title National Register Staff

organization Division of Historic Preservation date August 1989

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city or town Baton Rouge state LA zip code 70804

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Old Lake Charles City Hall, Calcasieu Parish, LA

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Historical Significance:

The Lake Charles City Hall is of local significance in the area of politics/government because it was by definition the focal point of Lake Charles' governmental history. The period of significance is from 1911, when the building was completed, through the 1930s (to follow the Register's fifty year cutoff).

The present city hall was built to replace an earlier one that had burned in the disastrous fire of 1910. Shortly after it was completed, the city made the major change from the old aldermanic system of government to the more progressive, more "business-like" commission form. The aldermanic system was considered outmoded and inefficient for a city of Lake Charles' size. There were also charges of poor leadership and fiscal extravagance. Considered by historians to be an important reform of the Progressive Era, the commission form was adopted unanimously by the Lake Charles City Council on April 4, 1912. The electorate voted upon the proposal in December, with the election results proclaimed in a headline which read, "Lake Charles Throws off the Shackles by Ten to One Vote."

The commission form sought to get the city on a sound financial basis and to run it like a business. Commissioners over the next two decades presided over a city in transition. The Lake Charles economy had long been dependent upon lumber, but by World War I the industry was on the decline. The next several years were a period of transition as new industries such as oil came to Lake Charles and the economy became more diversified. The climax came in 1926, with the completion of a locally funded deep water port which launched Lake Charles as a major industrial center.