

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

For NPS use only

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

received **JAN 11 1984**

date entered

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

1. Name

historic Hotel LaFontaine

and/or common Same

2. Location

street & number 200 West State Street N/A not for publication

city, town Huntington N/A vicinity of

state Indiana code 018 county Huntington code 069

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<u>N/A</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: Vacant

4. Owner of Property

name Ralph E. Biggs

street & number 522 S. 13th Street

city, town Decatur N/A vicinity of state Indiana 46733

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Recorder's Office

street & number Huntington County Courthouse

city, town Huntington state Indiana

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Indiana Historic Sites
title and Structures Inventory has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date August, 1981 federal state county local

depository for survey records Indiana Department of Natural Resources

city, town Indianapolis state Indiana

7. Description

Condition

excellent

good

fair

deteriorated

ruins

unexposed

Check one

unaltered

altered

Check one

original site

moved

date

N/A

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Hotel LaFontaine is located on the north corner of the intersection of State and Cherry Streets in the central business district of Huntington, which is composed of late 19th and 20th century buildings.

The Hotel, Colonial Revival in style, features a south-facing, six-story central pavilion, with a five-story wing on each side attached at approximately a 45° angle (Photos 1-3). There is a two-story section between the wings at the rear (see Photo 5). The elevator shaft extends one floor above the roof level and is surmounted by a large neon sign, "Hotel LaFontaine."

The central pavilion is four bays wide, and each of the wings has five bays on the ground floor and nine bays on the upper floors. The building is of steel-frame construction faced with vitrified shale brick, backed with hollow tile. The roof is flat.

The entry, not original to the building, is a glass and aluminum enclosure, with an aluminum canopy topped with neon letters, and two pairs of glass double doors. The inner doors are two pairs of French doors with three six-light windows above each pair. On each side of the entry is a large, multi-light window. The upper floors of the central pavilion have four pairs of double-hung windows per floor, with eight lights in each sash on the end bays, and six lights in each sash in the inner bays.

On the wings, windows are paired casements with eight lights in each sash, flanked on each side by an eight light, fixed sash, with a multi-light transom above. On the west wing there is an entrance, a multi-light single door with a classical entablature, multi-light sidelights and transom, in the second bay from the front. On the east wing there are entrances identical to this in the second and fourth bays from the front. Upper story windows on the wings are double-hung with eight lights in each sash.

The Hotel has a pressed metal entablature, enriched with dentils and modillions. Among other decorative elements are Bedford limestone molding between the first and second floors, projecting brickwork in panel-like arrangements between the first and second floors, between the first, fifth, and sixth floor windows, and surrounding second story windows. Windows on the third, fourth, and fifth floors are headed by a vertical row of bricks, with sills of projecting brick headers. There is a limestone water table surrounding the building at about one foot above ground level, as well as limestone coping at the top of the building. Projecting above the central pavilion is a low parapet wall with a shell and scroll motif.

The interior of the building includes a lobby designed to resemble a Spanish courtyard (see Photos 11 and 12), with a fountain made of tiles imported from Spain (see Photos 7 and 10), and a multi-colored terazzo floor (see Photo 8). The dining room is in the Old English tavern style with imitation Caenstone walls above dark oak paneling and a hand-molded clay biscuit tile floor. An Adamesque ballroom (see Photos 15 and 16) with decorative plaster moldings, and a Viennese style summer dining room are among other features of the Hotel. One of the highlights of the LaFontaine is the Egyptian swimming pool (see Photo 13) in the basement. When it opened in 1927, it was the largest pool known in any hotel in the nation. The wall in the pool area is covered with large mural paintings (see Photo 14) on canvas done by George Hamilton Thomas, of Chicago.

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 type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input 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 1925 **Builder/Architect** Robert W. Stevens, Architect

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

As the only major hotel building in Huntington, the Hotel LaFontaine is significant because of its architecture, interior decoration and construction methods, and for its role for many years as a commercial center for Huntington.

The original owner of the LaFontaine was J. Fred Bippus, descendant of a pioneer family. The hotel was named for Chief Francis LaFontaine, the last principal chief of the Miami Indian tribe.

Constructed in 1925, the building was equipped with a "dead level" roof, a type new at that time, designed so that additional floors might be constructed without removing the roof. The skeleton of the building was designed to carry two more floors on the main portion of the building if desired, while the rear of the building was planned to carry six more floors. Because no ordinary beams could be used to strengthen the floors above the swimming pool, the floor is spanned with four high steel girders, weighing six tons each, capable of carrying a total load of 625,000 pounds in the center. Steel joists are used in the floors as they were said to be more flexible than concrete and also reduced the weight.

The interior of the Hotel is also notable. The decoration includes luxurious materials and details which are unusual in a building in a town the size of Huntington.

The LaFontaine was recognized as the center of Huntington's commercial activity and, in fact, housed the Chamber of Commerce as long as it was open. In addition to providing office space for several industries, and well-designed sample rooms, the hotel itself was a highly successful venture for many years, playing host to many famous guests such as Ronald Coleman, Amelia Earhart, and Henry and Edsel Ford, who stopped here every year on their way to and from the Indianapolis 500 Race. Countless salesmen and vacationers would plan their itinerary especially to permit a visit to this incredible hotel, and the city enjoyed the benefits in a great many ways.

As the unofficial social and commercial center for nearly 50 years, the LaFontaine was woven into the life fabric of Huntington residents in so many different ways. It was the scene for countless graduation proms and parties, wedding receptions, anniversary and retirement celebrations and any number of other festive occasions. On its opening day it attracted a crowd of 8,000 as Johnny Weismuller and other noted athletes competed in a World Championship Swim Meet, where a new world record was set.

The Hotel LaFontaine closed in 1974 after a bankruptcy auction, and has been vacant since. The building has been neglected and vandalized. Although structurally sound, the building needs repair. A local incorporated group has prepared applications for federal funding to renovate the building as senior citizen housing.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Special Hotel Edition - The Huntington Press, October 17, 1925

The Village Columns - Huntington Herald Press, July 19, 1957 and June 8, 1975.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than 1 acre

Quadrangle name Huntington

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

1	6	6	2	6	8	0	0	4	5	2	6	4	3	0
Zone	Easting				Northing									

B

Zone	Easting				Northing									

C

D

E

F

G

H

Verbal boundary description and justification Lots 121 and 122 and 19.9 feet of uniform width off of the South end of Lots 108 and 109, all in the Original Plat of the town, now city, of Huntington.

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

state	code	county	code
N/A			

state	code	county	code
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title Jean Gernand, Secretary

organization Huntington Alert

date September 19, 1981

street & number R. 8, Box 326

telephone 219/356-4218

city or town Huntington

state Indiana 46750

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 Indiana State Historic Preservation Officer

date 1-3-84

For NPS use only

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

Delores Byers
Keeper of the National Register

Entered in the
National Register

date

2/9/84

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration