

Program Summary:

Rehabilitation of a historic two-story commercial building at the heart of a small town into a contemporary boutique hotel.

Program Statement:

Originally built in 1870 by a Prussian Jewish merchant family to house the family and their downstairs general store, this building will soon have new life as a nine-room boutique hotel. The rehabilitation will update to new codes, especially for lodging use, while preserving the historic defining features of the building. The project allows guests to experience a time when Washington was a thriving steamboat port. The original building was a general store serving the town for over 100 years as a 'pillar' business for its community. Later it was converted to residences, then an antique shop, and then fell into a period of dereliction.

The former merchant shop has been transformed into an elegant lobby and reception area. The space retains its high ceilings and large windows, creating a bright and welcoming atmosphere. Contemporary furniture and lighting complement the historic architecture. Original features such as decorative hand-painted murals, wood paneling, and fireplaces have been preserved and highlighted. The décor blends Victorian-era style with contemporary elegance.

The project focuses on the historic preservation and adaptive reuse of this Victorian jewel, transforming it into a contemporary boutique hotel. The project team's goal is to honor the building's rich past while creating a sophisticated and comfortable experience for today's travelers as well as a catalyst for the revitalization of its historic town.

The design team collaborated extensively with the National Park Service and the Louisiana State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) on this rehabilitation effort.

RR-255.01

Building Area: (sf)
8,169 SF

Cost per Square Foot:
\$197

Construction Cost
\$1,580,000

Date of Completion:
June 2024



RR-255.02

The town in which the hotel is located is the third oldest European settlement in Louisiana, founded by French settlers in the early 18th century. It served first as a major steamboat port on Bayou Courtableau, facilitating trade and commerce until the town became a railroad hub later in the 19th century. The town's historic buildings and architecture reflect its rich past and provide a window into the lives of the people who lived and worked there.

The rehabilitation of this general store building renders two distinct façades visible: the original general store building in two stories, dating to 1870, and a one-story addition dating to 1909. This breaks up the scale on the main street with different colors, different roof materials, and planting.

The roof over the 1870 portion was replaced with a metal S-panel to match the existing century-old roof cladding, while the one-story addition received a replacement roof of cedar shakes, a material dating from the period of significance of the building.

Window sashes and shutters were replaced on the 1870 portion. New windows were introduced in their historic dimensions and locations on the 1909 portion. The building was also extensively leveled throughout, notably at the front façade shown at left.



RR-255.03

'Before' photos at left show the condition in which the building was found in 2022. On the building's interior, the wall to the right of the stair shown in the photo had been completely removed and an infill wall had been built between the stair treads and the lobby ceiling.

In the hotel lobby, the banister and wainscoting were retained and restored. Fixtures and finishes, including paint, wallpaper, and luminaires, were chosen to reflect local flora, fauna, and flair, with an eye toward eco-tourism in Louisiana. Pairs of egrets punctuate the fresh wallpaper.

A decorative medallion shown at left, dating to the steamboat era of its town, was one of the found objects which provided inspiration for a Victorian color palette, which was developed throughout the interior and continued throughout the exterior. The color on the body of the two-story building is extended onto the lobby ceiling.



RR-255.04

Many of the hotel rooms had previously been built out in the 1970s during the building's inhabitation as a tri-plex.

Bathrooms of compact design were added to each room to respect the scale of the spaces. Wall-hung toilets and showers were installed. Modern ceiling fans are provided for climatic sensitivity.

Mantelpieces were restored and hearths were tiled in where summer screens were missing. Original hardwood floors were restored throughout the building.





RR-255.05

The approach to lighting takes full advantage of abundant natural daylight. Overhead lighting is avoided in favor of gentler light near the floor level.

Artwork was chosen for each room reflecting Louisiana flora and fauna featuring local photographers. The design team chose contemporary pieces to complement the historic details of the original building.

Elements repeated through every room include a bold patterned rug, SMEG refrigerators, a pink tabletop telephone in keeping with the overall color scheme, and Tivoli clock radios. Furnishings include custom cypress desks with Acadian detailing on legs.

RR-255.06

Color blocking (painting all surfaces in a room in a single, unifying color) provides a series of colors of light that suffuse each room with abundant natural lighting. Floor-to-ceiling drapes emphasize the height of the room and contrast with wall and ceiling colors.



RR-255.07

Max Klaus, the merchant who owned and operated the building during its period of significance, had renovated this space in 1909 to include an octagonal addition in plan. This plan repeats on the second floor. This room was the Klaus family's dining room where they hosted guests.

The adjacent butler's pantry was turned into the bathroom for this extra-large suite. Wainscoting and ceiling were restored.



RR-255.08

Second floor corridor: During the restoration, peeling back layers of wall finish, the design team found the original hand-painted *faux-marble* murals, which were painstakingly restored. The *faux-marble* is emblematic of the height of the steamboat era in the town.

The wainscoting which was added during Victorian times and the railroad era was also retained and restored, juxtaposing two eras of the building's history.

Pendant lights in the center of the corridor are original and were restored. The ceiling is painted in the updated light violet from the building's Victorian color palette.

Décor includes a six-piece Victorian parlor set, transforming this generous hallway, a key volume in the building, into a social space for hotel guests and visitors.



RR-255.09

A historic witness was left of salvaged wood from a railroad crate from the Schwartz Bros. company in New Orleans containing ticking fabric.

These crates were building materials used in construction of this fireplace above the mantel in the addition that Max Klaus made in 1909. Max Klaus's name appears painted by hand.

At right is a detail photo of the restored faux-marble and refinished wainscoting, flanked by part of the six-piece Victorian parlor set, which together form a complementary ensemble.



RR-255.10

The light violet color in this hotel room and restroom subtly shifts throughout the day with the natural light. Artwork above the bed shows a cypress wetland in South Louisiana.,

Bathrooms feature honeycomb floor tile. Three of the bathrooms were made out of a space that was originally a sleeping porch that had been significantly altered. Two of the windows had been covered when this space was converted to a second-floor kitchen during the building's time as tri-plex. The rehabilitation restores the windows to their former glory.



RR-255.11

Closeup of the second-floor corridor wall, looking into the room facing the main street:

The nearly floor-to-ceiling windows in the room feature slip headers in the original framing, in which new sashes were installed. This allows direct passage from the room to the balcony overlooking the street.

The original door leading to the balcony features a large lite of intricately patterned Florentine glass.

A cast-aluminum pediment on a historic commercial building directly across the street is visible through the door opening.





RR-255.12

In the lobby, guests are greeted by an antique mahogany folding desk with an orange mid-century modern office chair.

A modern Japanese cuckoo clock on the wall behind the desk continues the avian motif from the wallpaper.



RR-255.13

The building sits adjacent to nearly 60 city blocks of historic building stock located in its National Historic District. Very few of these have been recently rehabilitated, especially of this size or significance.

This rehabilitation will act as a catalyst on the central artery of the third oldest European settlement in Louisiana, a town of around 1,000 people with a strong local sense of place.

This architectural jewel is being put back into commerce to enhance visitors' experience during their stay in this historic town and allow them to stay in a piece of history that looks forward to many years ahead.

Project Name:
Hotel Klaus

Project Location:
Washington, Louisiana

Owner/Client:
Bayou Courtableau Investments

Architect(s) of Record:
(names and addresses)
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Southeast Engineers, Lafayette, LA
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