

THE EDWARDS HOTEL:  
SIGNIFICANCE AND THE POLITICAL LANDSCAPE OF THE DEEP SOUTH

By

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by

Charlene Marie Eiffert

To my parents

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I would like to thank God for placing me in the right place at the right time: in a loving family, amidst a supportive academic community, in Gainesville during Hurricane Katrina and in the Mississippi Department of Archives and History on March 15. So many things in my life would be different if I were left to my own devices, so being in good hands has everything to do with my success.

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Abstract of Thesis Presented to the Graduate School  
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Cochair: Roy E. Graham  
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The Edwards House was the political center. I guess eighty percent of the members of the legislature lived at the Edwards House. We could have our meetings there, our sub-committee meeting. Well, “smoke-filled room” meetings

–John Junkin, *Mississippi Politics*

The future of the Edwards Hotel in Jackson, Mississippi, vacant for forty years, is the focus of discussion relative to downtown Jackson redevelopment efforts. The present building, built in 1923, served downtown business and social needs, and as the residences for lobbyists and politicians during legislative sessions at the nearby capitol. The historical significance of the Edwards Hotel is currently being debated on the state and local levels. However, state and regional significance, primarily due to the political and cultural history of the Deep South has not been considered in discussions about the hotel’s future. The focus of this research is to explore the significance of the Edwards Hotel in its local context and within the urban environment. Additionally, it investigates the hotel’s role in the urban environment and in the development of a capital city in a primarily rural state in the Deep South.

The study will investigate significance within the historic preservation field by looking at several definitions for it as seen across the profession. Oral histories and archival research are employed to explore the history of the Edwards Hotel with an emphasis on political and social significance to the state of Mississippi. Case studies from Baton Rouge, Tallahassee, and Alabama will explore the hotel's significance to the political landscape of the South, particularly in the first part of the twentieth century. Based on the history of the sites and the hotel's period of significance as determined by the National Register of Historic Places, the dates in focus for the study are approximately 1890 to 1940.

This study is important to understanding the role of hotels in the development of the urban South, because it explores the social and political significance of the Edwards Hotel. The study contributes to the understanding of significance by expanding it to include regional patterns. The research also reinforces the role of history within historic preservation.

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

This study examines the issue of historical significance, focusing on regional history relevant to an historic southern hotel. An abandoned landmark hotel in the heart of a small downtown in Jackson, Mississippi has been sitting vacant for forty years. The structure, the former Edwards Hotel, is the subject of debate in metropolitan Jackson, as redevelopment plans repeatedly failed to rally enough support and funding. Changes in the political structure including a current mayor with a proactive approach to downtown redevelopment have put the building, once one of Jackson's signature structures, in the spotlight once again. Within the last year, the Mayor's office has threatened demolition should plans for rehabilitation not take immediate shape. For this reason, the community and its public officials are in need of the fullest understanding of the hotel's contribution.

The site was home to the original Confederate House hotel built in 1861, which was replaced by a frame and brick hotel in 1868. In 1923 the current structure, the Edwards Hotel, was built. In 1954, the hotel was purchased by Dumas Milner, who removed many character-defining features, including a decorative stained glass skylight. Interior features and spatial massing were altered, and the hotel was marketed as a convention and business center renamed the King Edward Hotel. Milner's modern convention center hotel, with rooftop pool and conference facilities lasted only until 1967, when the King Edward Hotel closed. Despite National Register status in 1976 and city landmark status in 1991, remains vacant to date. From 1967 to 2004 the King

Edward suffered from “false starts, empty promises and unfounded rumors from hotel owners and half-hearted investors” (Lynch: 2005, 17).



Figures 1-1 and 1-2. Forty years of vacancy have taken their toll on the Edwards

(Photograph taken by Charlene M. Eiffert)

Suggestions for use include another hotel, demolition and mixed use developments. As of 2004, the Jackson Redevelopment Authority approved a development package for the hotel from a partnership that includes Historic Restoration, Incorporated (a New Orleans renovation-based development giant), Saints running back Deuce McAllister, and Jackson Attorney David Watkins. The structural assessments that this partnership is currently undertaking are the closest the vacant King Edward has come to redevelopment and rescue in nearly forty years.

Known by all in the community as the “King Edward,” those who see any value in it attribute it to nostalgia, a familiar landmark in a familiar part of downtown. Local governmental support is low, and the mayor is growing impatient with the “eyesore”, now restricted from public access because of structural instability and health concerns. In 2001, Ward 3 Councilman Kenneth Stokes declared the King Edward “is only historical now to the pigeons” (Mayer: 2001, 1).



Figure 1-3. Editorial cartoon generalizing public view of the hotel's significance.

The community sees the Edwards Hotel as a nostalgic *artifact*, while its significance goes far beyond this concept. *The Edwards Hotel: Significance and the Political Landscape of the Deep South* examines the role that the structure played in shaping Mississippi history. The Edwards Hotel is key to understanding the political culture of Mississippi and the Deep South. Further, this study shows a pattern of these hotels in capital cities across the region, and utilizes these structures to learn more about the development of the South. The historical research presented here illustrates that the hotel is significant to the cultural history and the heritage of Mississippi and to the political landscape of the Deep South, particularly in the first part of the twentieth century. In examining the Edwards Hotel and case studies in neighboring states, this thesis outlines the significant role of such hotels in Southern, regional socio-political history, and forms the basis for a thematic study of such hotels.

The study utilizes publications and census information to provide historical context support for the Edward's Hotel. A series of oral histories were gathered to collect accounts of happenings in and around the structure. Case studies are introduced and developed to suggest the existence of a pattern across the Deep South. The hotels used as

case studies are from capital cities in states with rural, agricultural traditions: Baton Rouge, Louisiana, Tallahassee, Florida, and Montgomery, Alabama. Together, they illustrate the role of the luxury hotel in the development of a “legitimate” urban environment and the progress of politics in the Deep South.

## CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature regarding the habits of early twentieth century American hotel living became available as early as the 1920s. There is less literature to be found on the political legacy associated with these institutions, particularly for the southeastern region of the United States. Several resources on these topics contributed greatly to this study. Among them are “Hotel Life and Personality,” which provides information on the behavioral characteristics of hotel residents during the 1920s. “The First-Class Hotel and the Age of the Common Man” explains the history of the urban hotel and its civic role. *Living Downtown* observes similarities between social position and luxury hotels, and investigates the role of the structures in the urban environment. This collection of publications provides concepts for this study, which will focus on political patterns in the Deep South, to build upon.

### **Hotel Life and Personality**

The March 1928 publication of the *American Journal of Sociology* included the Norman S. Hayner article “Hotel Life and Personality.” The extensive article profiles personality patterns in the hotel environment in the era of its publication and heralds the hotel as “one of the great machines that serve men in this Iron Age” (Hayner: 1928, 793).

“Hotel Life and Personality” is separated into three parts. The first deals with habits for travelers. Hayner finds that people who lived in hotels did so for freedom, conveniences and protection. The second section contains a discussion of the types of

people who reside in hotels. Childless families and professional men are cited as primary occupants. Hayner discovers that the individual grows “accustomed to living, eating and all but sleeping in public” (Hayner: 1928, 793).

The third and final section of the publication describes the behavior of hotel occupants while away from home. Hotel life, Hayner finds, is marked by a tendency to act upon impulses rather than on the ideals or standards that he or his peers would normally use (Hayner: 1928, 794). Men in hotel life “surely come in contact with life in all its streaked regalia. They have caught prohibitionists drunk and reformers with women” (Hayner: 1928, 792).

Hayner’s research focuses primarily on characteristics of hotel life. Specific attention is given to personality patterns in the hotel environment. This study explains that these behaviors were manifested in the political realm during the time. Further, this study illustrates how the political characteristics of hotel living lend significance to these structures.

### **The First-Class Hotel and the Age of the Common Man**

The Edwards Hotel is of political significance, but it also had a notable social effect in the cultural landscape. Doris E. King’s 1957 contribution to the *Journal of Southern History*, “The First-Class Hotel and the Age of the Common Man,” discusses social implications of these structures, though her research fails to bring attention to such patterns specific to the South.

Somewhat out of sequence, King eventually defines her term “first-class hotel” with several characteristics, suggesting most should be present for first-class designation. These characteristics include an imposing, public-looking building style, costly and

luxurious construction that is “awe-inspiring,” independence from government management, and operation by a well-trained staff or servants (King: 1957, 181).

King discusses the rise of the American hotel from the British-inspired taverns. The study compares the hotels to British boarding houses, finding that American hotels have more the architectural characteristics of public buildings, even architecturally. She notes general British reactions to hotel life at the turn of the century. Generalizing this reaction, King states that “Americans are by nature a gregarious people who loved to live in public, to see and be seen, to hear and be heard” (King: 1957, 177). Thus, the American “first-class hotel” has a specific social function.

The focus is not entirely of a comparative nature, as the first-class hotel is classified as a “peculiarly American institution” (King: 1957, 175). King perceives the story of the development of the first class hotel as “part of the story of the Rise of the Common Man” (King: 1957, 173). Giving the American hotel’s history, King credits Boston’s Exchange Hotel which, built in 1809, served as a “bold and daring precursor” to the twentieth century hotel by establishing a lobby and by designating hotel bar rooms (King: 1957, 179).

The hotel’s relevance to civic identity is of particular focus in King’s study. By 1840, the typical American hotel was owned by “civic-minded merchants and was considered a show place necessary for the honor of the town” (King: 1957, 179). In 1860, a Baltimore circuit judge ruled a certain hotel could not be closed because a first-class hotel was a “public necessity” (King: 1957, 179). This facilitated interaction, including informal opportunities for local officials to meet, and contributed towards civic identity, with specific focus on the southern region of the United States.

### **Living Downtown**

The most notable contribution to literature on the development of hotel culture is Paul Groth's *Living Downtown*, which addresses the history of residential hotels in the United States. This description is insufficient, however, as his body of research expands into architecture, social and cultural implications, and urban planning. Groth (1957) discusses conflicting ideas about hotel life and similarities among hotel standards and social structure.

He suggests that the hotels match the social statuses of their residents, as emphasized by a New York hotel keeper in 1903:

We have fine hotels for fine people  
Good hotels for good people  
Plain hotels for plain people  
And some bum hotels for the bums (Groth: 1957, 20).

Material culture therefore reinforced, not merely reflected, social position and power (Groth: 1957, 20). Luxury hotels offered the greatest advantage in the instant social position conferred upon residents. For this reason, the lobbies and barrooms of expensive hotels had a concentration of political, business and social life. Groth (1957) explains that sojourning politicians comprised a significant amount of hotel residents.

Through the 1800s, each urban political party patronized a particular hotel (Groth: 1957, 20). This study will show that in smaller urban areas, all political parties would meet in one luxury hotel, and will illustrate that this habit of political patronage lasted well into the first half of the twentieth century in the Deep South. Groth (1957) also reviews the history of the role of hotels in the United States, observing that they were often the most important landmark in a city until the prominent office buildings replaced

them in the 1890s. This study suggests that this trend lasted until around 1940s in the South.

The most unique observation made in *Living Downtown* concerns the civic role that the downtown luxury hotel plays. Groth (1957) explains that cities did not have the power to “enforce greater urban organization” until the 1920s (187). Hotel owners played a role in this by helping to specialize districts in which they stood. These structures influenced ideas about arrangements of urban space by acting as a “scale model of a successful future city” (Groth: 1957, 53). According to Groth, hotels present a “total scheme for a diverse but centrally planned set of activities and spaces” (Groth: 1957, 53). Hotels, according to Groth (1957) changed the nature of downtowns.

The literature reviewed herein discusses the lifestyles of typical hotel residents. The sources explain personality patterns and social implications as well as address motives for hotel living. This study of the Edwards Hotel will show its role in the development of Jackson, Mississippi. Further, the case studies used herein will suggest similar patterns in capital cities in the Deep South.

## CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODS

Several methods of research were implemented for this study in order to gain a multi-faceted understanding of the Edwards Hotel. Archival research was done in Jackson, Mississippi and in each capital city in which a hotel was reviewed. On-site visits were made, an extensive collection of oral histories were examined, and informal interviews were conducted. Specific historical literature was also reviewed. Most importantly, case studies provided invaluable information about regional patterns. The combination of these research types yields the fullest understanding of the subject for research of this scope.

Site visits proved especially beneficial when looking at the proximity of the hotel and state government buildings. During the visit, seeing the scale of the Edwards Hotel (in relation to adjacent structures in use at the time) aided in understanding the impact that the hotel had on the developing urban environment.

This study reviews literature to obtain contextual histories of the South, the state of Mississippi and the city of Jackson itself. These resources illustrate the unique relationship between politician and constituents that was found throughout the South at this time, and highlight the important economic trends that were found across the region. The study of southern history and culture using these resources supplements the historical facts about the Edwards Hotel.

Informal meetings held with leaders in politics and planning in Jackson, Mississippi made clear the current attitudes about the vacant hotel. Municipal leaders vary in their assessment of the hotel's significance, and these meetings made this range abundantly clear. The need for these municipal leaders to be further informed regarding the building's history also was confirmed as a result of these meetings.

State archives were extensively used in Mississippi and in each state reviewed. The Mississippi Department of Archives and History was an invaluable resource throughout the researching process. Extensive records on the development of metropolitan Jackson provided necessary contextual evidence for the study of the Edwards Hotel.

The Mississippi Department of Archives and History maintains an extensive oral history series that it makes available in its Special Collections Room. These oral histories provided a resource that made this study possible. Oral histories were conducted decades ago by professional historians. Included among them are the oral histories of the former owner of the Edwards Hotel, several members of the staff, and local journalists who wrote about political happenings in Jackson. Of most value were the oral histories with politicians who spoke about their legislative career and, subsequently, their interactions at the Edwards Hotel.

Mississippi and Louisiana both have site files for their respective hotels. Additionally, all cities' state archives had site files for individual politicians relevant to the established period of significance for this study. Reviewing the correspondence for legislators revealed their social habits and their dependence on the Edwards Hotel for caucuses. Newspaper resources dating back to 1900 provided information about social responses to the hotel that emerged in Jackson and in each of the case study cities.

Utilizing case studies in this study was the most effective way of reviewing the patterns of Southern hotels in capital cities. The case studies used are the Heidelberg Hotel in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, the Cherokee Hotel in Tallahassee, Florida, and the Jefferson Davis Hotel in Montgomery, Alabama. These hotels were chosen because of their location in capital cities in what is commonly referred to as the Deep South. These hotels were also built within a decade of one another, and were all within a close proximity to the capitol buildings in their respective cities. The case studies are used to illustrate consistencies in hotel use by political figures, dignitaries and citizens.

## CHAPTER 4 DEFINING SIGNIFICANCE

Historic preservation in the United States encompasses more than its founders in house museums and garden clubs could have ever imagined. Like never before, preservationists are looking to the future as much as to the past, planning new directions for the movement. New applications including landscape preservation and cultural resource management are finding their place among the Monticellos and Mount Vernons upon which the movement was founded.

An awareness of the history and theoretical concepts in preservation movement has been developed, allowing self-reflection. Where has the profession been? Where is it going? Concepts once more narrowly applied are being carefully reexamined. With this examination, room for expansion of ideas becomes possible. One such concept receiving deserved attention is that of significance, which is no longer primarily concerned with famous places, events or personages. Significance is now being applied to intangibles in our surroundings. Phrases like *sense of place* and *cultural landscape* are more than just popular preservation concepts. These expanding arenas for preservation allow for recognition of value among resources of every type: archaeological, environmental, historical, and architectural.

For this reason, before addressing the “significance” of a certain site, a definition of the term is necessary. Because it characterizes so many persons, places and things, the word often is dismissed as synonymous with “importance.” Unfortunately, this word gets

us no closer to criteria by which to judge historic structures. What is more, defining this term faces more challenges than just its subjectivity.

Ideas about significance are changing within the preservation field. Activists, professionals and academics are actively debating how inclusive preservation should be. It can be argued that a broader, more conceptually flexible standard for applying the term significance can cheapen the honor bestowed upon high-style nominees for historic landmark status. This argument is not always made aloud, but can be seen in action through review boards and heard in the stories of rural architectural examples being refused several times for local and state listing.

Others apply the label of “significance” more liberally:

We are finding that everything and every place may in fact be important to somebody, all of these places may be significant in some frame of reference to someone. This situation leads to the oft-heard charge that preservation professionals consider everything to be significant to someone in a pluralistic society. (Lyon: 1998, 46)

Liberal application of the term “significance” can undermine the credibility of the preservation movement. Most, however, including the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the National Register of Historic Places and International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) generally agree that the conceptual expansion of preservation to include previously ignored groups of people and structures is beneficial. Because of this expansion of preservation’s concepts, a clear and consistent understanding of “significance” is critical.

As part of understanding the meaning of the term significance as it is used in preservation, investigations into how significance is acquired can help define the term. One can look to the National Trust for Historic Preservation for assistance with defining

significance. This non-profit organization, established in 1949, includes in its objectives “the identification of important national preservation issues, the support of preservation efforts, and the expansion of private and public financial resources for preservation activities” (Murtagh: 2006, 28). The National Register of Historic Places has a fifty year minimum for buildings being considered for its listing of nationally valued historic structures. This guideline can imply that age can determine significance. But the fifty year minimum standard is for successful fulfillment of the word *historic* and lends nothing to determining significance. The National Register considers some exceptional properties to have acquired this illusive quality of significance that fall short of the fifty-year threshold. Significance is therefore not dependant on age.

Significance, more than any preservation officer would like to admit, is a matter of perception. Constructed socially, which is to say it is shaped by people’s relationships and perceptions of a particular structure and their relationship to it, significance can change when the facts do not. For example, in 1955 the federal government attempted to sell Ellis Island because its services were no longer needed. Today, the island is preserved and now serves as one of the nation’s most popular museums. “It was not the past that changed. The meaning men and women gave to it changed: men and women with the ability to do something about what they believed” (Green: 1994, 91). Significance as a perceived human response can be applied to a building by the people and places around it, past and present. If this definition of significance seems transient, perhaps it is. If so, it serves as a testimony to the importance and the urgency of the work done within historic preservation because resources can be dismissed and demolished so easily.

In the National Register's *Bulletin 15*, significance is in "objects that possess integrity...and that are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history." The very definition by the National Register uses significance as a defining characteristic! In spite of this, two satisfactory pieces of information from this description of significance are evident: the elements of significance within the context of historic preservation (1) transcend architectural value, and the elements are (2) associated with a *broad pattern of history*.

The National Register has made strides to illustrate that the contributions of an historic building go beyond architectural value. Before the establishment of the National Register, the concept of significance was already heavily debated. The idea of a building having "significance" for purely architectural reasons was new and in question, since the earliest buildings deemed "significant" were associated with famous figures in American history. There are presently four recognized criteria through the National Register that serve as the "basis for judging significance, at the national, state, and local levels" (Murtagh: 2006, 181). These four criteria include (a) association with events that have made a contribution to broad patterns of history, (b) association with the lives of persons in the American past, (c) embodiment of distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that are representative of a master's work, and (d) informative (or likely to be informative) about prehistory or history (National Trust: 1996, 1).

In more recent years, as preservation shifts to quality of life and smart growth initiatives, the National Register of Historic Places has become more comprehensive since the passage of the 1966 Historic Preservation Act. Intangible aspects of

preservation, such as culture and sense of place, are now considered. Both of these terms refer to a distinctive character that is unique and deeply connected to the beliefs and social entities of a community, and that contributes to the significance of a place.

The National Register's definition of significance also brings to light that a building has a value within the "broad patterns of history" (National Register: 1966, 1). Patterns of history, a network of events with a common thread, lend significance to an object. Significance comes from the sum of a building's history, what happened before and after its construction, and what happened to buildings with common historical elements.

Historical details must be painstakingly researched. When investigating the significance of a building, a great deal of history is unwritten, conflicting accounts surface, and unpopular ideas about buildings can stir mixed emotions in communities, even diminishing support for a project. These broad patterns of history can occur across state lines, throughout regions, and extend beyond the job description of a state preservation officer or special interest group. Professionals within preservation have a responsibility to cultivate a shared understanding among special interest groups, classes of people, and across state lines about the layers of significance that a structure can have.

The quality of significance in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. (Murtagh: 2006, 181)

This definition of significance forms the foundation of this investigation of the Edwards Hotel.

## CHAPTER 5 CONTEXTUAL SUPPORT

The historical significance of the built environment far exceeds architectural style. It extends into social, cultural, and even political histories of a place. For this reason, contextual information, even about events that may not have taken place inside the four walls of the structure, can provide meaning to it. Architectural context can explain the development of a particular movement in building style. A building that has elements consistent with the patterns of that style can be better understood, even if the contextual examples are in another region.

Likewise, cultural context can provide insight into architectural characteristics as, for example, that of the Quakers and their aversion to displays of wealth. This religious organization produced characteristically modest structures that are better appreciated within their cultural context. Economic context can be especially helpful when looking at the development of a site and the structures on it. Fluctuations in period of construction, particularly within groupings of buildings, can be a reflection of times of economic hardship or success. Political context in this study, paired with social and historical context, will be of particular value when explaining the role that the Edwards Hotel played in Jackson, the State of Mississippi, and the Deep South. Finally, case studies from Louisiana, Florida and Alabama will provide a regional context that places the Edwards Hotel in a grouping of equally significant structures.

### **The Hotel as an American Tradition**

Though this study focuses on the first decades of the twentieth century, the role of the capital city hotels within the political arena is not confined to these dates. At the time of America's founding, European royalty was characteristically unapproachable. The humble beginnings of our nation set a standard of approachability within American government that has only recently been drastically changed for purposes of national security. The concept of lobbying was born of this approachability. In Washington, D.C., the Willard Hotel began it all. Nathaniel Hawthorne described it best:

This hotel, in fact, may be much more justly called the center of Washington and the Union than either the Capitol, the White House, or the State Department. ... You exchange nods with governors of sovereign states; you elbow illustrious men, and tread on the toes of generals; you hear statesmen and orators speaking in their familiar tones. You are mixed up with office seekers, wire pullers, inventors, artists, poets, prosers ... until identity is lost among them. (Edsall: 2004, 1)

Like America's beginnings, the Willard Hotel was a modest collection of humble dwellings. The 1816 row house-style guest rooms were given a common façade in 1850. The business-savvy Henry Willard recognized his Pennsylvania Avenue address as marketable to a certain clientele. Since 1850, the hotel has serviced the Country's powerful and their companions. This includes every American president beginning with Abraham Lincoln.

As noted to the visitors of the now "meticulously restored" Willard Complex, this hotel's lobby was the favorite post-Oval Office respite for President Ulysses S. Grant (Edsall: 2004, 2). Businessmen and "power brokers" began vying for the President's attention and support on a wide spectrum of issues while he reclined with cigar and brandy in the hotel lobby. Grant described these men, without realizing the term's future permanence in the American vocabulary, as "lobbyists" (Edsall: 2004, 2).

Since the nineteenth century, hotels have been observed as a distinctive cultural element in America. And, though not limited to political significance, the National Trust for Historic Preservation also recognizes the contribution to American history and culture that historic hotels make. In 1989, the National Trust, the national, non-profit organization, established Historic Hotels of America, an organization which identifies and grants membership to hotels on or eligible for status on the National Register of Historic Places. The membership is not discriminatory based on size, rates or ownership, but hotels must have “faithfully maintained their historic integrity, architecture and ambience” (Historic Hotels: 2005, 1). Based on the success of the program (there are over two hundred members in forty-one states, District of Columbia and Puerto Rico), supporters of the program say that historic hotels bring significant value to the American traveler’s experience.

This value is not entirely for the traveler. Popular investment magazines have begun to note the rising values of these historic hotels, even when compared with the numerous hyper-marketed modern hotels. Historic hotels had 10 percent higher occupancy rates than the national average over the last several years. They also reported rates of \$165, more than double the national average (Chapman: 2006, 1). These statistics suggest that many patrons consider sense of place is worth the often significant price difference.

### **Historical Context: The Deep South**

With this general background and history, attention should be turned towards providing a more detailed context within which to examine the case for the Edwards Hotel. The contextual information will illustrate the importance of *place*, not merely time. The South at the time of the hotels’ height of significance, 1890-1940, was

distinctly different than the northern and western United States. Several of the founding states of the Confederacy, particularly Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana, are often in history and literature referred to as the “Deep South.” Socially, attitudes about race, tensions left from the Civil War and Reconstruction, and strong ties to religion epitomized living in the Deep South. Economically, industry and oil were struggling to find their place amongst the agricultural dependency in the region. Politically, Prohibition and a tug-of-war between the old way of life and the new created new parties and new party lines. A brief review of each of these aspects of turn of the century life in the Deep South can paint a clearer picture.

Socially, the South the time of significance of the hotels is dealing with the consequences of the loss of the Civil War, and the loss of its legal ownership of a human workforce. In the 1890s, Jim Crow laws were developed beginning segregation laws throughout the South. While southerner’s established these regulations to refrain some control over the recently freed slaves. In this way, the South is completely backwards from the Northern social structure. This is due to these struggles to evolve from a time that is rooted in a caste system with an abundance of free manual labor (Ayers: 1992, 233).

The migration of blacks out of the Jim Crow South is essential to Southern social structure in the first decades of the twentieth century. There was nothing short of a mass exodus of blacks from the South to the North to escape the tensions and lynching laws of the South (Ayers: 1992, 212). This Great Migration of blacks was due in large part to greater job availability in the urban, more industrial northern locations during and after the First World War. Because of World War I, the South is forced to come to terms with

a disappearing work force, making a comparatively less progressive part of the country suddenly desperately interested in newer technologies and industrialization (Ayers: 1992, 216). Technology begins to make its way into the South.

From 1900 to 1949, the South also differed economically from the North. The Civil War, although decades before, had a direct effect on the following century. The economics of the South after emancipation shifted from slave-based capital to land-based capital (Wright: 1996, 7). The new capitalist landowners, used to free labor and for many decades following emancipation, were willing to pay very little for a workforce. For this reason, virtually no migration of workers occurred into the emancipated South. The Southern economy remained totally distinct for nearly eighty years after the Civil War (Wright: 1996, 7).

Economic dynamics in the South changed again in the 1930s. The New Deal ushered in forced changes in industrial wages. After this, the once economically backwards South began to more closely resemble the economic structure of the rest of the United States. This distinctiveness was gone after the labor and goods demand of World War II (Wright: 1996, 8). The economic distinctions of the South prior to World War Two further set the stage for the significance of the early twentieth century luxury hotel. The hotel is a reflection of the economic progress of the rural South.

Since this study illustrates the political significance of the Edwards Hotel, a luxury hotel in the Deep South, understanding political context is essential. The two sides of the southern political coin come down to this: on one side, the view of the South as compared directly to the entirety of the nation; on the other, the independent development of each southern state and the political battles therein (Key: 1984, 11).

Unlike the two-party system that dominates the present political arena, power in the South before the twentieth century rested upon the Democratic Party. Distinctions within were not more than “transient and amorphous political factions...ill designed to meet the necessities of self-government” (Key: 1984, 11).

As an answer to this ill-fitting political system, the Populist Party emerged from the rural farmlands of the Deep South. What began as a series of alliances around the Deep South was forming into much more. This group, called the Farmers’ Alliance, began convening annually and started taking the form of a political party more than a union of workers. These Southern farmers knew change was inevitable, but held tightly to their dissolving way of life in light of industrialization:

They were dismayed by the politics of sectionalism but proud of the Confederacy. They were distrustful and contemptuous of black politicians but eager for black votes. They were hopeful about the (Farmers’) Alliance but fearful about abandoning the Democrats. (Ayers: 1992, 249)

This is not to say that Populists wanted a return to their father’s time, forsaking technology and progress. “The Populists, judging from their words and their backgrounds, wanted a fair shot at making a decent living as it was being defined in the Gilded Age” (Ayers: 1992, 281). With this desire as a motivating force, the Southern farmers at turn of the century sought reform through governmental office.

Politicians began seeing opportunities in a “broad, uncoordinated” series of reforms called Progressivism (Ayers: 1992, 413). Within this series of reforms in the twentieth century was the increasing control over corporations. As new industries were established, legislators saw new opportunities but also new threats. Foreign (meaning Northern) corporations promised wealth and progress to the Deep South. Rural

Southerners looked to their (often equally rural) political leaders to weed out the “bad apples” within this influx of industry and change.

### **Mississippi Politics**

“Northerners, provincials as they are, regard the South as one large Mississippi” (Key: 1984, 229). Southerners, eager to separate themselves from this distinction, place Mississippi in a class all its own. Some Southern states consider Mississippi to be a place of still despairing civilization, while other states view their political history as the sign of a backward culture. Both Northern and Southern states tend to regard twentieth century Mississippi as nothing more than a hotbed of racial intolerance. True, many political issues in Mississippi history in the twentieth century involve racism and segregation. However, the political factions in the state reflect its two distinctive regions and the socio-demographic differences associated with the predominant livelihoods in these regions.

The Delta, a region of fertile soil that stretches out on either side of the Mississippi River, extends about two counties outward of the riverbank. This area was controlled by the wealthy, “old money” families of the antebellum period. Still profiting from cotton, these Mississippi elites used the marginally more ethical system of sharecropping in place of slavery. In the early parts of the twentieth century, the Delta produced one million bales of cotton each year, in some years a tenth of the American crop, and ranked at the top of the cotton-producing regions of the world. “Their common battle against the River is in itself enough to unite the planters; but like men of property everywhere they are bound together in the promotion and protection of their own interest” (Key: 1984, 231). These interests are, in part, embedded in self-preservation. The best, most fertile soil in the state is in the Delta. These lands were maintained by the

established hierarchy of the old “Delta planter and the Negro,” and any influx of new, roughneck whites was considered a disintegration of the system and a dilution of its purity.

Meeting the eastern edge of the Delta is a less refined, non-pedigreed lineage living in the “Hills” of Mississippi. These significantly less successful, predominately white tenant farmers worked the less fertile soils of the rest of the state. The “rednecks” from the Hills were embittered by the class system that bound them to the land, and the financial success denied them by the Delta planters, who employed predominately black tenants. “The ‘Hills’ are supposed to be the habitat of the redneck, the white tenant farmer, the lesser white farm-owner...the hardest labor produces only the most miserable livelihood. The white must eke out a livelihood on the farms of the Hills” (Key: 1984, 231).

Though outnumbering the Delta planters in overall population and farm acreage, the combined poverty of the Mississippi hills kept these farmers from improving their situation with consistent political power. Thus the delta region had the benefit of political power in many elections. The state as a whole was still rural. Only twelve towns exceeded 10,000 people in 1940, and these towns served as supply points for surrounding agricultural regions. Legislators from hill counties were often farmers themselves, though it is difficult to say how many since many self-proclaimed farmers were actually primarily lawyers who listed themselves as “lawyer and farmer,” perhaps to better appeal to their constituents (Cresswell: 1995, 12).

Neither group, the Delta nor the Hills, had a distinct political faction to identify with. They both voted Democrat, as did nearly every Southern state at this time.

From campaign to campaign divisions among voters change- a fluid factionalism. The political life-cycle of a southern Senator may follow an often-repeated sequence. He manages to get himself elected, perhaps by a rabble-rousing appeal, and then builds his fences so well with moneyed interests that no opponent can raise a campaign fund large enough to make much of a fight against him. Reelection succeeds reelection without serious contest. (Key: 1984, 247)

Even though these divisions among voters existed, it was usually not enough to replace the lawmaker in power. In this way, state senators from Mississippi become incumbents, wielding extensive control over their counties, voting in likeness with one another to advance their individual or regional power. The Mississippi Legislature become a powerhouse of representatives from the Delta and the Hills, butting heads and meeting secretly to strategize for battle on the floor of the Senate or House.

The Delta and the Hills did not differ solely in matters of economics. Wealthy Delta dwellers were reputedly “wet”- against alcohol prohibition in the state. Wealthy, more gentlemanly elites in this part of the state saw no problem with an activity they considered social. In the Hills, prohibition gave fuel to a growing Protestantism movement in the Deep South. Fights over prohibition pulled people into the political debate who had been generally excluded from politics and fed into the anxieties of the times (Ayers: 1992, 178). The preachers of the Hills fight the “demon rum” and their followers vote for prohibition, while the “sinful” Delta votes for liquor. Walter Sillers, former Speaker of the House and Delta dweller from Rosedale, Mississippi, recalls traveling to Jackson for sessions by train with legislators from around the state.

“Everybody on the train was bound for the Edwards House and there was lots of wit and humor exchanged. They used to kid me about being from ‘the wicked delta’ and in fact they would go even farther and say I was from the center of iniquity, Rosedale” (Stroupe:1960, 2).

### **Jackson History**

The period of significance for the Edwards Hotel parallels a period of significance in Jackson’s history. The period from 1890 to 1940 pushed the capital city and the state of Mississippi into an industrial era that was already in progress in states in the North. Agricultural and industrial changes occurred around the state. These statewide events affected Jackson and can illustrate its progress. Specifically, the significance of this period is quantified in terms of population, transportation, industry and policy changes.

Jackson’s growth in the last decade of the nineteenth century was, in large part, a result of black in-migration from rural areas. The newcomers increased county population by 33 percent, bringing the Jackson population in 1890 to approximately 6,400. Of these, over 71 percent were black (United States Census Bureau: 1890). The citizens of Jackson in the late nineteenth century experienced the development of Jim Crow. This affected the entirety of the Deep South but by 1890 was paired with a new state constitution in Mississippi that further disenfranchised blacks. Racial segregation was upheld strictly in Jackson and affected nearly every aspect of life in the state capital. These racist attitudes, now legitimized by law, set the tone for social and political activities during the next half century in Jackson.

City leaders in Jackson took active steps to bring industry into the city during the last decade of the nineteenth century. In 1895, the Jackson Board of Trade began raising money from local businessmen and investors to attract new industry (Jaeger, 23). These

marketing programs paired with incentive programs were successful in recruiting business to Jackson, but freight costs from railroads prevented Jackson from becoming the regional city that it had envisioned itself as before the turn of the century. Until 1922 regulations that standardized rates, freight costs in Jackson were higher as compared to considerably more competitive rates of steamboat operations along the Mississippi River, in towns like Vicksburg, Mississippi (Jaeger, 24). The slow progress was not for lack of railroads. More than a dozen passenger trains and many freight trains arrived and departed daily on the rail lines that converged from across the state at the depot downtown. The city self-proclaimed “Jackson has become a great railroad center” (1884). An increased number of travelers by rail had a positive effect on the city’s hotel industry, which flourished around the depot. The Edwards Hotel is directly adjacent to where the station still stands.



Figure 5-1. View of the Jackson Train Depot from the Edwards Hotel

(Photograph by Charlene M. Eiffert)

An increase in downtown visitors was more than a result of an increased number of travelers from around the state. Transportation for citizens of Jackson also improved with the reorganization of the electric streetcar system in 1890. The company, originally known as the Jackson City Railway Company, was restructured under the name Edwards Hotel and City Railroad Company. The President of the streetcar line was also the owner of the Edwards Hotel (Jaeger, 30). By 1898, another streetcar line was authorized by a city ordinance allowing Jackson Light, Power and Railroad Company to operate another system in town. To Jacksonians, streetcar improvements were a sign of prosperity and progress. “The first evidence of renewed prosperity are shown in the new coats of paint the cars are taking on” (1884).

The citizens of Jackson looked for signs of progress all around them. With the turn of the century, grew from 7,816 in 1900 to over 21,000 in 1910 (Jaeger, 37). The immigration of blacks from rural communities was balanced by the trends of the Great Migration, and the population stabilized. In the next ten years, the population grew by only 1,555 people. Streetcar suburbs to the west and south of town became incorporated into the city limits, and by 1911 the city had doubled in size (Jaeger, 38).

The new supply of citizens became useful in 1914 as the country became involved in World War I. Jackson became like most communities, engaged in the war industry and the ensuing industrial development was met with a ready workforce. By 1920, Jackson was no longer dependent on an agricultural economy; rather, it developed into an industrial and transportation-centered city. Once again, these changes were met with enthusiasm and proclamations of the wonders of progress and human achievement:

Immense factories with smoke from their funnels towering heavenward attest to the great development in manufacturing activity...Five railroads

leading out in several directions are the arteries of trade that swell the bulk of commerce to immense proportions...Miles upon miles of siding, spurs, etc. are being constructed in or near the city for the use of 37 manufacturing plants already in operation and other building...Knockers, chronic grumblers and leeches have been buried or exported and only a live citizenship is in charge! (Jackson Board of Trade: 1904, 14)

Socially, this period of twenty years, from 1900 to 1920, saw a transition in Jackson. The city moved from a system of informal social networks and voluntary organizations to a system of formal clubs and organizations and professionalized city departments (Jaeger, 50). The city's elite and the city's services were closely tied. These groups linked together for the development of green spaces and beautification of Jackson. As roads and railroads developed around Jackson, the progressive City Beautiful movement developed nationally (Jaeger, 58). Jackson showed evidence of this movement with the construction of its new, Beaux-Arts style State Capitol Building in 1903, the installation of sidewalks, the development of the Jackson Zoo in 1913 and Livingston Park in 1916.

The 1920s in Jackson saw the continuation of progress and industrial development. In 1922, the Interstate Commerce Commission in Mississippi revised the freight rates for Jackson, making the transportation of goods to and from the capital more affordable. In the eight years following the revisions, approximately thirty additional industries had come into Jackson, either opening new businesses or buying out struggling ones (Black: 1953, 315).

The downtown streetscape changed drastically in the 1920s in the "leading wholesale and retail center of Mississippi" (Jaeger, 70). For much of the decade, the downtown was largely under construction as the city received several new high-rise buildings into its commercial center. One of which, The Edwards Hotel, changed the

streetscape dramatically when its developers demolished an earlier structure in 1923, resulting in a transition from a modest structure to twelve-story landmark within a year. The steel-frame hotel was a sign of progress and technological advancement. Its Chicago-style architectural composition introduced design elements and ideals not yet seen in the newly booming urban city. The addition of this hotel to the streetscape of downtown Jackson meant a new sophistication and legitimacy for citizens. Some felt its citizens should begin to act accordingly. When a child was injured from a misfired shot between two quarreling men in downtown Jackson, the daily newspaper spoke out against such uncivilized, frontiersman-like conduct:

The people of Jackson need a new law. It shall be unlawful for any one to shoot at another...and miss him between the hours of 7am and 12pm. The clinching argument against the practice is that Jackson can't afford to be behind the times and this habit is out of vogue in front of leading New York hotels. It just isn't being done in up-to-date towns. (1920, 2)

The city also saw the construction of the Lamar Life building, completed in 1925. The Gothic Revival style building included a clock tower and terra cotta gargoyles and stood ten stories on the city's center avenue, Capitol Street. The Lampton Building, another ten-story structure, opened in 1928 and provided the city with office space for its expanding industry. Finally, the eighteen-story Merchants Bank building and the nineteen-story Standard Life Tower were both completed in 1929.

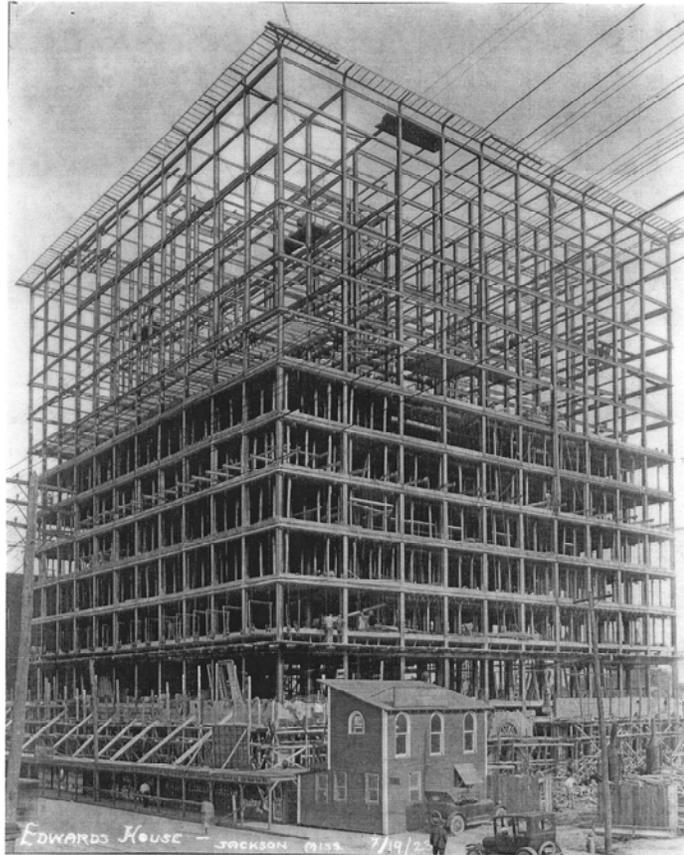


Figure 5-2. Steel frame of the Edwards Hotel, 1923

(Photograph in Mississippi State Historic Preservation Office, Edwards Hotel site file)

During the 1930s, population increased 22%, from 42,282 in 1930 to 62,107 in 1940. Much of this population growth was a result of in-migration by failed farmers trying to survive the Depression years (Wilson and Ferris: 1989, 717). Farmers with cotton surpluses, unable to sell their product, would come to the Edwards Hotel and sell to those who could buy “as much as they could buy and just hold it off of the market” (McPhail: 1976, 49). The bales of cotton would sit stacked five to ten at a time outside of the Edwards Hotel’s drugstore, remembers the barber who used to work in the hotel (McPhail: 1976: 50).

While the rest of the country was suffering disastrous effects of the stock market crash, the discovery of natural gas in Mississippi gave Jackson the economic push it needed to survive the 1930s. The 1939 discovery of oil in Hinds County, Jackson's own, furthered the economic growth of the city and state. Local offices for oil companies were established in Jackson, some in the Edwards Hotel.

Industries were attracted to Jackson by the convenience of transportation, general location and labor supply. The oil discovery provided local materials yielding reduced rates in fuel. These reduced rates, paired with the ease of rail line transportation and immigration of rural workers made Jackson in the 1930s "the central place to purchase, sell, and ship livestock, produce, and other agricultural products from the still very rural state of Mississippi." (Jaeger, 96).

With the end of the 1930s came the end of an era in Jackson's history. Streetcar lines were removed and replaced with a bus system. New Deal legislation changed labor laws and melted the Deep South economy and labor force into conformity with the rest of the nation. World War II broke out, removing men from industries around the city and state and ending the building boom around downtown. Jackson's growth and struggles during this period, from 1890 to 1940, are unique to any other time in Mississippi history. The significance of the Edwards Hotel is built upon this foundation of history- social, economic and political. After a discussion of the hotel's past, the significance of the Edwards Hotel will be supplemented through a comparative study of regional hotels with similar roles. This analysis will provide insight into the role of downtown capital city hotels within the South.

## CHAPTER 6 THE EDWARDS HOTEL

A building's significance is, in part, defined by the history of its site. This building is no exception. Predating the existing vacant structure was another hotel. This site has housed lodging establishments since 1861: three structures in total. The first, the Confederate House, was built by Major R.O. Edwards in 1861. Destroyed by Union troops in a fire in May of 1863, the site sat vacant through the end of the Civil War. Construction was underway in 1867 for the Edwards House, owned by the same R.O. Edwards. The name Edwards has since been associated with every structure on the site. The earlier hotel remained in operation until 1923, when it was demolished to be replaced with a larger, more modern version.

The new Edwards Hotel made news since the day it opened its doors. Hailed as the "Most Modern in the Country" in the headlines days before its grand opening, statewide media gushed over the lobby that, upon entering, leaves one "almost appalled and smothered with the magnitude of its beauty" (New Edwards Hotel: 1923, 1). Every compliment available was given to the amenities available to both guest and employee of the Edwards Hotel. One article gushes:

The New Edwards is a thing of beauty and it will be a joy to the traveling public...each room is equipped with the most comfortable beds...most attractive views...most up-to-date appliances...the complete electrically operated bakery prepared to supply the most modern pastries...a complete ice cream plant and ice cream storage with the most modern freezers...the main lobby is not only electrically lighted but is provided with art glass overhead for day lighting...the main dining room is by far the most beautiful room of its kind. (New Edwards Hotel: 1923, 1)

### **Jackson Develops**

The Edwards Hotel offered more to Jackson than aesthetics and modern amenities, especially when viewed in light of social and economic conditions in the Deep South at this time. The historical context of the hotel's role in the socio-political history of Jackson previously discussed lends a fuller understanding of this historic property. Also important is the role the hotel played in Jackson's development. A hopeful sentiment in Jackson accompanied the hotel's construction and opening. This hotel could easily belong in New York, Chicago, or some other major American metropolis. No one seems to believe it possible that "so much elegance, with such splendid taste could be possible in a hotel in a city the size of Jackson" (New Edwards Hotel: 1923, 1). For the owners of the new establishment, the Edwards Hotel contributed to the dream of the citizens that Jackson would be one of the leading cities in the South. In the rural, agriculturally-driven Deep South, this hotel was equated with progress. It earned the small capital city legitimacy at a time when the South was struggling to socially justify itself, socially, politically and economically.

In 1927, the Edwards Hotel welcomed Charles Lindbergh, who was "elaborately and enthusiastically received" as part of a plan to help spur Jackson's citizens to follow through with their ideas of building an airport (Jaeger, 80). The visit and the related fanfare truly inspires the citizens- the day after Lindbergh's visit, the city approved a special bond issue for the purpose of acquiring land. Within one year, the airport was constructed and dedicated. Representative Walter Sillers remembered Lindbergh's visit to the hotel well- he was "decked out in a full dress suit" and spent leisure time in the

hotel's civic club (Overby: 1967, 6). Citizens recall Lindbergh's visit to the Edwards Hotel, not just Jackson, and attribute this visit to the progress of transportation in Jackson.

### **Political Significance**

The site of the Edwards Hotel has a legacy of political significance. In 1876, the Edwards House was already being advertised as a place for senators and representatives to take up residence while in Jackson, Mississippi for legislative sessions (Edwards Hotel: 1976, 7). Captain H.C. Myers, Secretary of State of Mississippi, stayed in the Edwards House in 1878. Walter Sillers Sr., Mississippi legislator and father of Mississippi Speaker of the House Walter Sillers Jr., would stay at the Edwards House when he was in Jackson beginning in 1886. In 1900, stationary for the hotel reads "Commercial and Political Headquarters for the State". From 1908 to 1909, while the Governor's Mansion underwent remodeling, Governor Edmond F. Noel made the Edwards Hotel his official residence.

The Edwards Hotel continued to house political happenings significant to Jackson's history well into the next decade. Before the 17<sup>th</sup> Amendment was passed in 1913, United States Senators were elected by the state legislature. In 1910, the legislature sat to elect a United States Senator, and the distinguishing battle between the "Delta" and the "Hills" became clearer than ever.

The careers of LeRoy Percy and Theodore Bilbo personify, even caricature, the chasm between the Delta and the Hills (Key: 1984, 238). With the impending 1910 election, the great Delta blueblood LeRoy Percy saw no one currently volunteering to run that he deemed satisfactory. As his son described it, "confident that no Delta man and no gentleman could possibly be elected, Father consented" to enter the race. The other four

candidates slated to challenge the Hills candidate, James K. Vardaman, dropped from the candidates list and threw their support behind the Delta planter (Key: 1984, 238).

What followed was what is referred to as the “secret caucus,” which, according to Speaker of the House Walter Sillers resulted in LeRoy Percy defeating James K. Vardaman. Speaker Sillers, famous ringleader of the Edwards Hotel caucuses and Delta man himself, deemed it the “greatest historical events around the Edwards Hotel” (Stroupe: 1960, 2). The decision was actually made in these caucuses, what Sillers described as “a gathering of leaders who discuss an issue and work out their differences so they know how to meet opposition on the House floor when the real test comes” (Stroupe: 1960, 2).

As predicted, the decisions and loyalties determined at the Edwards Hotel stood firm against opposition. Two months after the election, Theodore Bilbo, a lieutenant of the defeated Vardaman, stood before the legislature waving currency he alleged he accepted as a bribe to vote for Percy. The stronghold in the House was unrelenting, the charge proven untrue, and the representative from the Hills of Mississippi was saved by only one vote from expulsion by his fellow legislators (Key: 1984, 239). The always dignified and currently victorious Delta legislators, proud of the maintained results of their secret caucus labors at the Edwards Hotel, settled for a heavy censure of Bilbo:

Resolved, in view of the unexplained inconsistencies and inherent improbabilities in the testimony of Senator Bilbo, his established bad character and lack of credibility, that the Senate of Mississippi does hereby condemn his entire bribery charge. Resolved further...the Senate pronounces Bilbo as unfit to sit with honest, upright men in a respectable legislative body, and he is hereby asked to resign. (Key: 1984, 239)

Later, using his persecution as a stepping stone in his political career, Bilbo went on to rally the people of his Hills roots. He won the governorship in 1915, again in 1927, and

United States Senate seats in 1934 and 1940. The condemnation of Bilbo is expunged from all records in the Senate.

The event is vividly remembered by participating members of the Edwards Hotel secret caucus. Also remembered are the altercations resulting in the Edwards Hotel lobby. Guests recall seeing legislators and delegations “mad as a wet hen with Bilbo here in the lobby. They would be shaking their fingers in his face and giving him down the river” (Overby: 1967, 6). Bilbo was apparently unshaken. “Old Bilbo would just sit there and puff on his cigar...he would say just a few words and they’d all smile and hug him.” Hotel residents remember not-so-happy endings to confrontations. “There were even some brawls in the lobby. With politicians there, there were some violent words and actions” (Nagle: 1984, 1).

The Edwards Hotel continued to serve a political purpose. Eventually, the hotel became dependant on its legislative clientele during the otherwise slow winter months. When the original Edwards Hotel was demolished in 1923, it was imperative that the new hotel be open before the first day of the new legislative session. Agreements were made with the railroad company, Illinois Central, whose tracks ran alongside the site. In order to transport such a massive amount of material, a total of 975 freight cars averaging four cars of material a day were unloaded at the site (New Jackson Miss.: 1924, 37). The construction and completion of the new Edwards Hotel took a total of ten and a half months, giving this “Million Dollar Hotel” the nickname “Hotel Quickly Built.”

The nicknames should have mentioned the role that lobbying played in the political events at the Edwards Hotel. Nearly all legislators stayed at the luxury hotel during legislative sessions, unlike the legislators of more recent times who stay in

apartments or second homes around the city (Cossar: 1973, 3). This proximity, paired with adjacent offices of oil and transportation companies, offered an ideal location for lobbyists to mix with politicians who were in legislative session.

With the discoveries of oil being made around the state in the first half of the twentieth century, stakes were high for the oil industry. These industrial tycoons found themselves up against the Populist Party's concern for the rural farmer, under whose land oil was being found. Legislators from these counties tended to support a greater profit sharing between the oil companies and the landowner, and these legislators nearly always voted together. During sessions of the legislature, some of the people in the oil and gas industry, in return for "friendly treatment of legislation," paid the hotel bill and tabs for legislators (Minor: 1974, 2).

As mentioned, legislators voted as a result of activities at the Edwards Hotel. The 1916-1944 member of the Mississippi House of Representatives and eventual Speaker of the House Walter Sillers took up residence in the hotel during sessions. From his corner suite 601, he would hold private caucuses in the evenings with eighty-two members of the House banded together. Said one legislator of the time, "we met and mapped out our strategy as to how we were going to meet the various problems, and we all stuck together" (Junkin: 1975, 14). Former legislator John Junkin spoke of the power this group had when they organized: "Legislator Thompson McClellan would get up and he'd say 'Anybody here now that don't believe in going along with what we're going to do, now is the time to leave'" (Junkin: 1975, 14). Examples such as these have led many to comment that more laws were passed at the Edwards Hotel than on the floor of the Senate. Sillers himself has asserted that "Everything that happened in politics, at the

State Capitol and around the legislature basically began at the Edwards House” (Stroupe: 1960, 2). Says one newspaper heading, there are three houses of the legislature: “The Upper House, the Lower House and the Edwards House” (Stroupe: 1960, 2).

### **Social Side of Politics**

The Edwards Hotel’s political significance included legislators mixing business with pleasure. Politicians and the statewide elite came together on November 1<sup>st</sup>, 1909 at the original Edwards House. The citizens of Jackson, Mississippi hosted a banquet in honor of President William Howard Taft. Formal meetings and events such as this were not as frequent as they are for legislative groups now; not as many public commitments dominated a legislator’s schedule Minor: 1974, 2). Groups of friends from within the Senate and House would convene for long, leisurely breakfasts in the Edwards Hotel. One of the more popular breakfast clubs included the “Big Four” in the legislature in the 1930s: Walter Sillers, Tom Bailey, Joe George, and L.T. Kennedy (Junkin: 1975, 1). Sillers himself remembers more members. “I remember we all used to eat breakfast together. There were Senator Roberts of Bolivar County, Oscar Blesdoe, Tom Bailey, Lawrence T. Kennedy...and many more” (Stroupe: 1960, 2).

Wyatt Sharp came to Jackson from the Delta in 1926 as a trombone player for the Edwards Hotel’s lunch and evening band, entertaining legislators and lobbyists. He explains that the hotel was where Jackson people went to dine, and where “the lobbying was done for the legislature” (Nagle: 1984, 1). According to legislator George P. Cossar, who entered politics in 1932, the social life usually revolved around the hotel rooms of the Edwards Hotel. “They entertained practically every night...it was all centered around the hotel” (Cossar: 1973, 8). The social scene at the hotel made partygoers out of even straight-laced legislators. “It’s funny...fellows that wouldn’t drink, come (sic) up here

and drink after they'd be elected. I never saw so much whiskey in my life" (McPhail: 1976, 16). Walter Sillers describes his fellow politicians as a "funny lot," particularly with their words and their contradicting actions at the Edwards Hotel. "They'd cuss each other out in the paper then go upstairs and drink together" (Overby: 1967, 6).

### **Politics and Prohibition**

With the turn of the century came a new focus on alcohol and its contribution to the problems in American society. Mississippi made alcohol illegal in 1907, years before the federal prohibition law was passed in 1919. In the Edwards Hotel, however, it seems few took notice. Hotel employees would later note that Prohibition wasn't in effect at the Edwards Hotel. Legislators would too: "Lots of water has run through those hotel lobbies in all those years- and often it was more than water that was flowing" (Stroupe: 1960, 2). During the three-month sessions of the legislature, whiskey would be stacked thirty cases high in the lobby.

Lawmakers developed the habit of using alcohol to their advantage when discussing upcoming legislation. One such personage was Walter Sillers, longest serving legislator in Mississippi and Speaker of the House. Eventually serving over 44 years, Sillers was regarded as the "patriarch of all politicians" at the hotel. After moving into the Edwards Hotel when elected in 1916, he had the reputation of handing out a drink or two to the "little fellows" to prepare them for a vote. When a Sillers-supported bill came up, "They'd be ready to vote! And they'd pass the law!" (McPhail: 1976, 29).

Walter Sillers also made good friends with the barber at the Edwards Hotel, Allen McPhail. In 1943, Sillers met McPhail at the Hotel's drugstore and ten chair barber shop for a haircut and a drink. There, Sillers confided in McPhail that he was considering running for Governor (McPhail: 1976, 24). Sillers' decision not to run was based on the

hot-button issue of Prohibition around the State. A month after their drugstore drink, Sillers told McPhail, “I’m for whiskey being legalized. I don’t like this way they’re doing it a bit. I’m wet, and I’ve talked to people and they said, you know, that it wouldn’t do any good to run” (McPhail: 1976, 31).

In the later years of Prohibition, greater care was taken to protect the goods from being confiscated or broadcast to pro-Prohibition hotel guests. In the 1930s, the Hotel kept a whiskey room, and a “Negro” named Gales Foster, the night porter, kept the key (Butler: 1976, 19). The room was located on the west end of the main floor, midway among the twenty sample rooms, in a closet. Legislators coming in for the beginning of a session would bring along their supply of liquor, and staff at the Edwards Hotel would assist them in unloading it (Abney: 1975, 3). Guests could request a glass from the dining room, but were encouraged to drink in their rooms. This practice became so popular, that objections were being made by other hotel guests because “they got so open with it- everybody knew what was going on” (Butler: 1976,19). To maintain appearances, the hotel began insisting that guests ignoring Prohibition laws ask for *cups* instead.

The presented evidence suggests that the Edwards Hotel played an important role in the social and political development of Jackson, Mississippi. This idea lends further significance to the structure. In the following chapters, facts about similar hotels in capital cities around the Deep South will be investigated. These case studies provide a means of discovering similarities and differences in capital city hotels, and investigating regional patterns of Southern urban development.

## CHAPTER 7

### CASE STUDY A: THE HEIDELBERG HOTEL

Beyond the specific histories of the Edwards Hotel and its predecessor and its role in the city of Jackson and Mississippi, the Edwards Hotel reflects a broader significance. It is part of a regional tradition found in similar structures in other parts of the Deep South. Connected by a shared historic context, these structures are located in Louisiana, Alabama and Florida and form a network of significant structures with a shared history and role in state politics. By examining the history of these other politically-centered hotels in the Deep South, the Edwards Hotel reaches its fullest potential in its contributions to the broad patterns of Southern and American history.

The most effective illustration for comparison to the Edwards Hotel comes from perhaps the most predictable resource for political fascination in the Deep South: Louisiana, and its Heidelberg Hotel. Like the site of the Edwards Hotel, the Heidelberg's riverfront address once held a mansion-hotel. Built in 1825, the Bonnacaze similarly hosted dignitaries and political celebrities and developed a reputation for accommodating them. Most famously, the structure was frequented by the twelfth President of the United States, Zachary Taylor, who stayed in Baton Rouge in 1845 (Reed, 1). More fortunate than the original Edwards House, this structure survived the Civil War. In 1927, just four years after the Edwards Hotel was built on the razed surface of its predecessor, the old mansion was razed to make room for the luxury hotel, the Heidelberg.

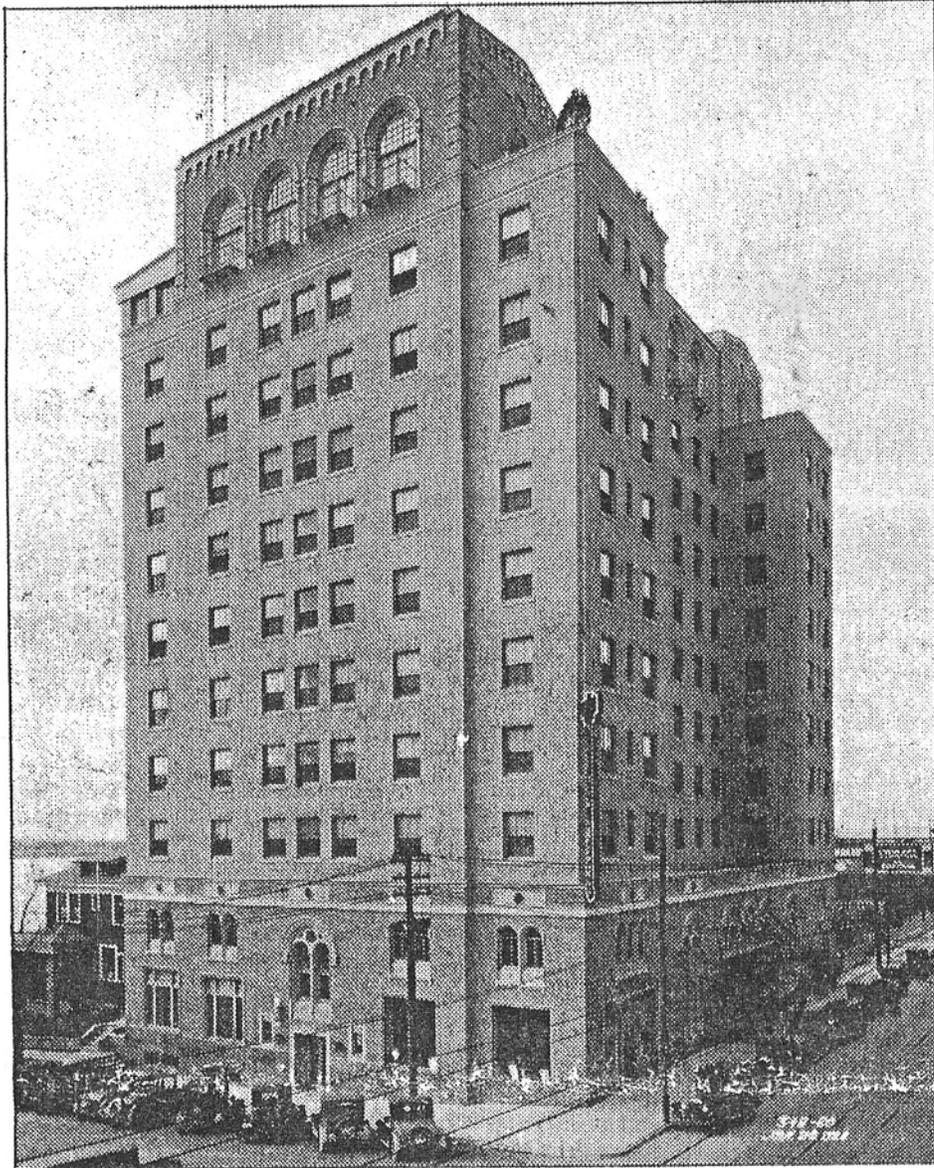


Figure 7-1. The Heidelberg Hotel in 1928

(Photograph from Louisiana State Historic Preservation Office site file)

The Heidelberg Hotel was, like the Edwards Hotel, the rural state's first "Million Dollar Hotel" (Reed: 1977, 1). The rent its very first year in operation was a sky-high five dollars a night. Like the Edwards Hotel, the Heidelberg Hotel had in-house amenities: a private drugstore, a beauty salon and modern dining facilities. Its proximity

to the railroad station and the state capital earned it the in-state reputation as a social and political mecca almost immediately.

Baton Rouge in the 1920s and 1930s was under the rule (a word carefully chosen for its imperial overtones) of Huey P. Long, a man both famous and infamous in the state and region. Much like Mississippi's Governor Theodore Bilbo, Long was a product of the rural, impoverished Louisiana heartland. He won his political power by being a governor of the common people, harshly answering critics and coercing his opponents using whatever tactics necessary. Like Bilbo, Long was directly associated with the luxury hotel in his capital city. Telling his wife he simply was not meant for normal family life, Long took up residence in Baton Rouge's Heidelberg Hotel, in spite of the newly built Governor's Mansion (White: 2006, 115). He had a notorious obsession with monitoring and furthering his power in the state, and the Heidelberg Hotel was the primary location for chaperoning of peers and opponents. From there he lived his public life, received guests and press, and wrote extensively, including his autobiography *Everyman a King* ( Figure 7-2) (Reed: 1982, 6).



Figure 7-2. Huey Long received press and associates in the Heidelberg Hotel, where he lived a public life. Seen here, Long at work in his pajamas at the Heidelberg.

(Photo courtesy of Louisiana Department of Archives and History)

Most memorably, the Heidelberg Hotel was the site of the state capitol, if only for a brief time. In 1930, Governor Huey Long won a seat in the United States Senate. Having broken with his lieutenant governor, Paul Cyr, soon after their gubernatorial election, Long waited nearly two years to take his oath of office in the Senate to prevent Cyr from taking over the governorship (Williams: 1970, 212). After the 1932 gubernatorial elections secured the victory of Alvin O. King, Long's "hand-picked successor," Huey Long traveled to Washington to take his oath of office, with instructions for King in Baton Rouge to immediately be sworn in (Reed, 1977, 3).

Before this could happen, Cyr "impetuously declared that Long had vacated the office by his election to the Senate and announced that he would set up his 'seat of government' in the Heidelberg, from which he would govern as the State's chief executive" (Reed: 1977, 3). The Heidelberg was Cyr's second choice to the Capitol itself, but he was barricaded by guards from entering the building. On January 3, 1932, Cyr issued a formal proclamation listing Long's misconduct, recounting the events he felt earned him governorship and announcing

I do now proclaim that the seat of executive government of Louisiana is now established, pending the present insurrection, at Room 443, Heidelberg Hotel, in the city of Baton Rouge, where I will maintain my executive office as governor. Either myself or Leon Gray, my secretary, the secretary to the governor, will be found there at all times. (Cyr: 1932, 1)

The Heidelberg did not stay the seat of power in Louisiana for too long; for, upon hearing this news, Huey Long called the manager of the hotel and had the self-proclaimed governor evicted from the hotel.

More of Huey Long's enemies took up residence in the Heidelberg Hotel. Oil discoveries were creating big business in Louisiana, as was happening across the South at

the time. Just as in Jackson, Mississippi, the oil industry expected legislative assistance to further its success. President of the Louisiana division of Standard Oil, Daniel Weller, paid \$25,000 for an apartment on the top floor of the Heidelberg Hotel. Weller paid a lobbyist known only as “Jim” who was to be responsible for the courting of the legislators. Unfortunately for Weller and Standard Oil, Jim was a Long loyalist and maintained full disclosure with him throughout the legislative sessions (Reed: 1977, 3). He had the unsuspecting Weller reserve the entire tenth floor of the Heidelberg Hotel for Standard Oil, and was able to steal time between floors to keep Long “fully aware of what was going on” (White: 2006, 199).

These are just a sampling of the political happenings at the Heidelberg Hotel.

Huey Long’s son, Senator Russell Long, recognizes the contribution the hotel made to

Louisiana:

Prior to the days of legislative reform, committees held caucuses, political deals were finalized, and compromises on important pieces of legislation were hammered out in the privacy and comfort of the Heidelberg. Oftentimes, the vote on the floor of the Louisiana Senate and House merely confirmed a decision made earlier in an informal meeting in the Hunt Room bar (in the Heidelberg Hotel). (Reed: 1977, 4)

The Heidelberg, deserving of independent focus and research, serves here to illustrate the distinct role that the downtown capital city hotel played in Deep South politics during this time. As supplementary evidence of the role these structures have played, it lends significance across state lines to the Edwards Hotel in Jackson, Mississippi.

## CHAPTER 8 CASE STUDY B: THE CHEROKEE HOTEL

The Cherokee Hotel is cited in picture and text alongside the greater commercial buildings and homes of late nineteenth and early twentieth century Tallahassee (Figure 8-1). Described as the “Pride of Tallahassee,” the hotel was the temporary residence of legislators and the choice of other elite visitors to the state’s capital (Dunn: 1974, 140). The hotel’s dates of highest use, the early 1920s through 1940, are consistent with the Edwards House and the Heidelberg Hotel. Also consistent are the descriptions in local newspaper articles detailing every exciting step in the process to the opening of this progressive, modern, luxury hotel. Tallahassee’s *Daily Democrat* detailed the days leading up to the opening, sharing with its readers the modern kitchen equipment and “everything else of the latest and improved type” that was being placed in the four-story structure (“Opening Date for the Cherokee”, 1924). The morning after its opening, the paper asserted “The Cherokee hotel became a West Florida institution last night” (“Hotel Cherokee Opens”, 1924).

This instant landmark status is consistent with the previous case studies, particularly the Edwards Hotel. Consistencies also exist with relation to attention given to modern facilities and amenities. Attention given such luxuries assisted in separating hotels like the Cherokee Hotel from its more moderately-priced counterparts. Also separating it from other institutions was the attention given by statewide industrial and political leaders.

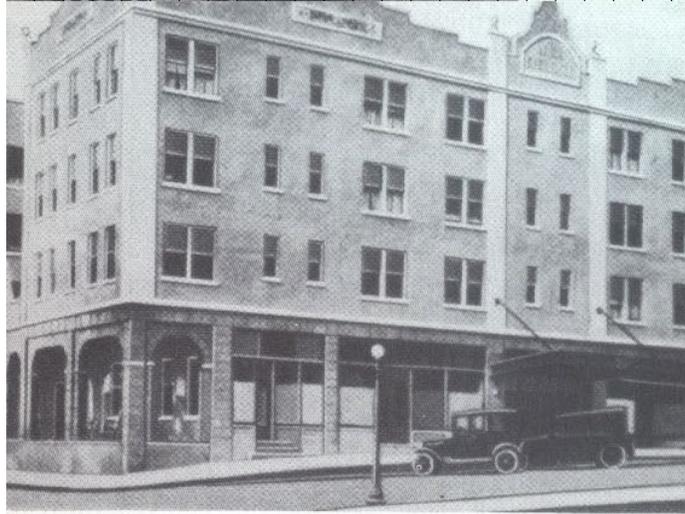


Figure 8-1: The Cherokee Hotel

(Photograph courtesy of Florida Department of Archives and History)

William Lee Popham, described as a “poet, author, promoter and developer,” had ties to the Cherokee Hotel. The pioneering “Oyster King” and developer of St. George’s Island had an influence in Florida that was immediate and that resonates through the end of the twentieth century (Rogers: 1998, 266). A candidate, though unsuccessful, for Florida’s House of Representative in 1922, Popham became Mayor of Apalachicola in 1923, with the opposition receiving only two votes. Charged with fraud in 1923, the local stir created by his trial prompted Popham’s lawyer to petition for a change of venue. All involved personages in the trial moved into the Cherokee Hotel in Tallahassee, where they stayed until his conviction. Before being sent from the Cherokee Hotel to a federal prison in Atlanta, Popham was considered the lead candidate for the governor’s race in Florida (Rogers: 1998, 289).

The Cherokee Hotel also had a politically significant role in the 1926 Senatorial race in Florida. The election and its primaries are referred to as having more possibilities for the state of Florida than most any other election (Flynt: 1963, 142). Jerry Carter,

called “Mr. Democrat,” accepted the nomination to run, stating that the state needed to be represented by a “vigorous man of progressive ideas” (Flynt: 1963, 145). In what can be interpreted as a reflection of his progressive nature, Carter formally announced his campaign headquarters would be the Cherokee Hotel.

The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 came just fifteen years too late for the Cherokee Hotel in Tallahassee, Florida. This hotel, once located in the heart of downtown, was demolished in 1951. Since its demolition predates site files and National Register nominations, State Archives and Historic Preservation offices come up empty handed when asked about this piece of Florida’s state history. When placed within the context of this study, the hotel belongs to a network of politically significant hotels in the first parts of the twentieth century Deep South. Its loss seems suddenly tragic.

Evidence for significance, though initially seeming minimal, comes greatly from its context within the fabric of the pre-World War II political Deep South. Based on patterns of history during this time and within this region, significance can be assured. Equally assured, Tallahassee and the Deep South alike are remiss for the loss of such an asset.

## CHAPTER 9 CASE STUDY C: THE JEFFERSON DAVIS HOTEL

Alabama is Mississippi's rural neighbor and rival for the most frequent target of Southern stereotypes. Often called the "twin states" because of geographical similarities, the two states share much more than state lines and coastal access. Alabama shares Mississippi's rural history, agricultural beginnings and nineteenth century Populist sentiments. Moreover, Alabama supplements (and is supplemented *by*) the Edwards Hotel and its regional significance. Alabama's capital city Montgomery boasts possession of a fitting addition to this study- the Jefferson Davis Hotel.

Like the Edwards Hotel, the Jefferson Davis opened in the 1920s. Hopeful sentiments in Montgomery replicate those in Jackson, Mississippi at the arrival of the Edwards Hotel. As in Jackson, the new hotel was the state's first million-dollar hotel, with final construction costs averaging over 1.2 million dollars (Neeley: 1979, 2). Citizens and local journalists marveled at the "most up-to-date" engineering and amenities, and with due cause (Figure 9-1). Just as in the Edwards Hotel, guests had an available coffee shop, barbershop, café and more without needing to leave hotel property.

Entertainment was also provided by the colorful interactions in the lobby of the hotel, with the politicians who frequented the Jefferson Davis. As soon as its two-year construction was completed in 1929, it became the "most popular place for legislators" in Montgomery during Alabama legislative sessions (Neeley: 1979, 3). Governor George C. Wallace and attorney General Bill Baxley held events at the Jefferson Davis Hotel.

These two politicians served their official elected terms after the period of significance applied to the study of the Edwards Hotel, which may indicate an extended period of significance in this particular case study.



Figure 9-1: The Jefferson Davis Hotel

(Photograph from National Register Nomination form)

## CHAPTER TEN OBSERVATIONS

In examining the Edwards Hotel informal by these supplementary case studies, important patterns emerge. Research on these structures yields results that, when combined, form a collection of capital city hotels that reflect a high level of historical significance. During this study's selected time frame, from 1890 to 1940, the Edwards Hotel has associations with broader regional concepts distinctive to the South. The hotel and its case studies also reinforce a need for greater cooperation among history and preservation professions.

### **Industry Interaction**

The Edwards Hotel, as in its supplementary case studies, is a location for the interaction of industry and politics. In some cases, industry representatives make these hotels their offices, indicators of profitable possibilities for the future, industrialized South. At the Edwards Hotel, Standard Oil Company paid for hotel rooms for legislators of more rural backgrounds and modest means. They also paid restaurant and bar tabs, and provided women for the legislators. The president of Louisiana's division of Standard Oil also had an apartment in Baton Rouge's Heidelberg Hotel and at one time occupied an entire floor of the hotel. Florida's Cherokee Hotel housed politician and oyster industrialist William Lee Popham as well as all related parties for his trial, due to the local stir it caused. Perhaps this relocation served dual purpose: to secure "face time" with other state politicians before Popham's impending gubernatorial election.

### **Unofficial Creation of Legislation**

Patterns appear within the research suggesting that these hotels provided a location drafting, discussing and finalizing legislation. As seen in the Edwards Hotel, legislators admit to creating and informally voting on legislation from the suites of the hotel. Caucuses held in the Edwards Hotel among well-organized legislative alliances decided what legislation would be supported in the following days' sessions. Extensive review of the Baton Rouge case study shows consistencies with this pattern of events. Chapter Nine reviews Russell Long's evidentiary statement that decisions on the Senate floor merely confirmed decisions made at the Heidelberg. Evidence is less explicit for the Cherokee and Jefferson Davis hotels. However, legislative residency within these spaces during the time of characteristically unreformed political activity and more casual methods of lawmaking warrants further investigation.

### **Urban Justification**

An unexpected result of this study is the pattern of "urban justification" that accompanies the opening of each of the hotels. Urban justification used as a term herein refers to the transformation in the eyes of the citizens. The cities, with dirt roads and agricultural dependencies, now had a point of pride and, most importantly, a sign of progress. This is not to imply that Jacksonians looked to the Edwards for assistance with urbanization, rather that it acted as an indicator of the oncoming transformation to a legitimate urban environment. The Edwards Hotel is of steel-frame construction, a revolutionary concept that hailed from Chicago, reflecting modern architectural technology and thought. The same type of construction were used for the Heidelberg and

Jefferson Davis Hotels. The facilities and mechanical systems in the Edwards are the most modern for its time and were announced in statewide publications as they were for the Heidelberg, Cherokee and Jefferson Davis. The words “Million-Dollar Hotel” are used time and again.

The luxury hotel during the first decades of the 20th century played an important role in defining the Deep South at a time where politicians and citizens felt like rural colonists in their own, quickly industrializing nation. Newspaper stories insisted that the Edwards Hotel was hardly believable in a city and state of agricultural means. The Edwards Hotel gives its small capital city prestige and legitimacy. It serves as a source of pride and proof of a civilized society in a part of the country whose social structure was not easily understood by outsiders.

### **Gilded Age Ideals**

Generally accepted dates for America’s Gilded Age place its final years somewhere near the beginning of the twentieth century. Research cited in the historical context chapter of this study, and in subsequent chapters that discuss industry and social attitudes, suggests Gilded Age ideals reach full fruition in the Deep South during the time periods of the hotels’ construction (approximately 1920-1930). While the Gilded Age begins around the time of Reconstruction in northern urban areas (accepted dates for the Gilded Age, a term popularized by Mark Twain, are 1865 to 1901), there is a delay in progress in the South due to the extensive financial and social costs of unsuccessful warfare and geographical distance.

In spite of this delay, characteristics of the Gilded Age are apparent in the capital cities of the Deep South. The influx of railroad construction in the United States is not reflected in the South until the late 1880s. The influx of rural Americans into urban

environments during the American Gilded Age is also notable in the South, though years after the accepted dates for the period. True, shifts towards Jackson begin taking place in the black population in the immediate decades following emancipation, but this migration increases dramatically, by approximately 170 percent between 1900 and 1910.

Urbanization after the end of the First World War shows signs of a decreased dependency on agriculture and a substantial interest in railroad transportation and industry in Jackson. These trends accompany a significant jump in population and, moreover, resemble Gilded Age developments that had long since occurred in northern states.

This shift to an industrial focus means appears in the period surrounding the Edwards Hotel's construction. After the 1920s, Southern urban areas saw significant interest from a prominent corporation that emerged during the Gilded Age, John D. Rockefeller's Standard Oil Company. There was similar interest from Standard Oil in Louisiana, as seen with the floors they occupied in the Heidelberg Hotel for proximity to policymakers.

The Edwards Hotel during its period of significance stood as a center for political and social activity in Jackson, in a particularly progressive time in the city's history. It was the location of business meetings among industrialists, and, for the citizens, legitimized Jackson. The hotel celebrated the achievement of a growing urban area and celebrated excessive luxury. The innovative steel-frame construction, seen in Jackson for the first time in large scale, was a sign that progress and prosperity was on the horizon. The construction of the hotel affected the actions of those around it, as though it somehow silently demanded more polished behavior. In these ways, the Edwards Hotel

stood as a physical representation of the development of Gilded Age ideals in the Deep South. This concept also applies to the Heidelberg, Cherokee and Jefferson Davis Hotels.

### **Preservation and History**

There are larger implications of this study that can contribute to the overall understanding of the present preservation movement. The Edwards Hotel and buildings like it are of greater value to our national history than originally considered. There had not yet been a complete realization of the contextual and thematic issues common among these prominent Southern hotels during this period.

This lack of acknowledgement is an error shared by historians, preservationists and interest groups alike. Historians can be accused of a disassociation with buildings and their value, perceiving them as work for architects and historic preservationists. Preservation is often misunderstood, confused with the “bricks and mortar” preservation rather than encompassing broader concepts such as cultural landscapes.

Preservationists, in a desperate effort for local or National Register listing, sift through facts and building materials until enough evidence is found for a successful nomination. Perhaps for lack of funding or *because* of specific types of funding, activities following National Register listing focus on maintenance of the resource and education of the public. While these ideals are worth pursuing, a commitment to furthering an understanding of how the resource contributes *regionally* should also be a priority. While many can agree that this concept is worthy of appropriate action, regional patterns of history fall outside of the already congested job description of State Historic Preservation Officers. With loaded schedules and limited funding, State Historic Preservation Officers begin to resemble members of a legislative body- their first loyalty

is to their constituents. Unfortunately, this can result in a lack of attention to significant preservation issues that extend beyond state lines.

The greatest contribution to the preservation movement can also be to its detriment. Special interest groups initiated the historic preservation movement, and their concerns about protecting the past began the house museum and historic battlefield designations. Unfortunately, special interest groups are generally homogeneous in the composition of their members. Because of this, the special interest group, an overall asset to the preservation and American community, tends to produce an inherently flawed product. The Edwards Hotel, for example, is undoubtedly a location that prostitutes frequented. There is little likelihood that a potential benefactor to the interpretation of the site as a source of pride for Mississippi would wish to include information about prostitution and the social elite. The issue of handling unpopular or unflattering history is controversial, and the risk of losing relevant facts about historical events is real.

When any of these groups act independently or pursue self-interests, even innocently, history becomes a segmental series of stories instead of a comprehensive and interrelated one. Selecting what perspective is *best* for a site, these groups categorize “good” history and “bad” history- a dangerous concept. Further, built history and American history are likewise not two distinct concepts- or rather they should not be. Perhaps the greatest observation to be made from the study of the Edwards Hotel’s significance is that historic preservation can benefit from *regional* patterns in history- an idea that stretches beyond bricks and mortar and ties patterns and themes together that are more than similarities in building materials and ornamentation. There is an unquestionable, invaluable dependence upon history within the preservation movement.

Too often preservationists forget that everything pertaining to humanity's development is grist for the historian's mill- that however important and distinct architectural history may be; it overlaps with social, economic, urban, intellectual, and other forms of mainstream history. Conversely, historians forget too frequently that places in the built environment and cultural landscape are documents that merit attention from scholars in fields far beyond architectural history. In short, preservationists and mainstream historians can learn from one another to a greater extent than is presently the case. (Striner: 1998, 137)

As preservation expands to include new concepts, such as vernacular architecture, sense of place and intangible culture, history is at risk of being simplified and categorized to make room for new and popular preservation priorities. The preservation movement must maintain a commitment to the most thorough methods of examining significance possible. This ensures structures such as the Edwards Hotel, and others like it, can contribute more fully to the present.

Additionally, these hotels were a place for politicians to meet and make decisions. The ethical issues surrounding this type of policy-making are questionable at best, but they must be viewed in light of their illustration of a period in history. This “back room” approach to lawmaking was certainly not new, nor is it now completely a memory; but, its location in the early twentieth century luxury hotel brings it to light in a new way that relates it to the built environment.

Buildings can lend and receive significance for one another. This is a valuable concept to be taken from this study. Within Florida, the historic preservation offices have little information about the Cherokee Hotel. While attempting thorough research of the former structure, virtually no information was available to contribute to the study. Anything more significant than the few sentences available in dusty old guidebooks of the city was considered lost information. Now with the similarities in times of

construction, periods of significance, and commonality of social climate, the Edwards Hotel and the others studied here provide thematic material to build a case for the Cherokee Hotel. Further, for purposes of this study, the significance of the Edwards House in the Deep South can be more fully realized given the common and distinctive characteristics associated with it. Supplemented by one another, these hotels achieve a depth of significance otherwise unachievable.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

The luxury hotel's role in the Deep South has been established as significant for more than architectural value. By the end of the 1930s, the Edwards Hotel had a political subculture within the city of Jackson. Outside of the political arena, the citizens of Jackson saw their community legitimized by the construction and success of the structure. Similarities in case studies evaluated herein reinforce this idea as a trend across the region. Further study into the similarities between the meaning that these structures gave to their urban environments and the ideals of the Gilded Age and Progressive Area may reveal a later influence of these Ages in the southern region of the United States.

The Edwards Hotel saw its demise due in part to the migration of legislators to other hotels during desegregation. Politicians who would otherwise welcome blacks into their homes found themselves moving out of the Edwards during desegregation because of social pressures and the necessity of maintaining an appropriate public image (Abney: 1975). "There was just one or two [politicians] that moved out and started the run and the rest of them had to go. That's politics" (Abney: 1975, 2). Further study is needed to identify the connections between desegregation and the public and private buildings that were affected by it. This information can be beneficial to both historians and

preservationists by providing information about the way whites and blacks interacted with their built environments during such a pivotal time in American history.

This study focuses on a rural capital city within the Deep South. During the period of significance, Jackson and the case study cities were transitioning from agricultural centers to more urban and industrial environments. Having identified the powerful role that the luxury hotel played, further study on more urban capital cities would be a beneficial contribution to the body of knowledge on this subject. Luxury hotels in larger capital cities such as Atlanta were potentially received much differently. Information within a larger scope would aid in the understanding of the perception of the built environment during this time in Southern history.

The Edwards Hotel, with the supplementary evidence provided by the Heidelberg, The Cherokee and the Jefferson Davis Hotels shows regional patterns of significance within a certain time and social era. Regional patterns of history are not a new concept, but the association of these patterns with the built environment is underdeveloped. Further research should be done to understand the value of regional preservation efforts. The history and historic preservation professions can benefit immensely from the production of a model for best educating the public on networks of structures across regions of the country. If these structures are primarily urban (that is that they are not closely associated with a valuable parcel in the natural environment), new developments in understanding cultural landscapes may leave these structures behind. Future study investigating opportunities within the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the National Register of Historic Places, and the role of State Historic Preservation Officers may find ways to efficiently link regions together for the increased sharing of resources.

APPENDIX A  
TIMELINE FOR THE EDWARDS HOTEL

- 1861:** Construction of the Confederate House by Major R.O. Edwards.
- 1863:** Civil War, General Sherman's forces burn and destroy the hotel.
- 1867:** Major Edwards begins rebuilding.
- 1868:** Edwards dies, property is completed, named Edwards House.
- 1900:** Property is acquired by the Enochs Brothers.
- 1908-1909:** Edwards House is official residence of Governor Edmond Noel.
- 1919:** Enochs Brothers dissolves, hotel passes to Edwards Hotel Company.
- 1923:** Old wood frame hotel is demolished, steel-frame constructed Edwards Hotel is erected and opened.
- 1946:** Hotel is reacquired by Enochs family.
- 1956:** Dumas Miller buys the hotel property for one million dollars, renames it the King Edward Hotel, and begins renovations and removal of many character-defining features.
- 1967:** The King Edward Hotel closes.
- 1967:** Standard Life Insurance Company buys the hotel. Hotel is placed on National Register.
- 1981:** Hotel is sold to M.M. Laurence and D. Morley of Virginia for \$500,000.
- 1991:** The Jackson City Council names the hotel a city landmark.
- 1992:** William C. Windham and John S. Turner Jr. of Bossier City, LA propose a six million to seven-million dollar project to convert the building into apartments for the elderly. The Jackson Realty Company proposes renovating the hotel as office space.
- 1995:** Xanadu Limited of Detroit proposes to turn the hotel into a casino.

**1997:** Renovating the hotel is included in a multi-million dollar Capitol Complex proposal to legislators.

**1999:** The Mississippi Telecommunications Conference and Training Center Commission votes 5-3 on January 19 to negotiate a contract with The Alexander Company of Madison, Wisconsin to develop the hotel into a conference center.

**2000:** The Telecommunications Conference and Training Center Commission abandons plans to convert the hotel.

**2001:** City Council approves moving forward with legal action, including possible condemnation.

**2004:** The city acquires the vacant structure, beginning the process of either renovation or demolition.

**2005:** The Jackson Redevelopment Authority approves a development package for the hotel, allowing HRI Incorporated of New Orleans, New Orleans Saints player Deuce McAllister, Matt Bataille of Mandeville, LA and Jackson Attorney David Watkins to do interior structural testing. The deal includes a 2 million dollar interest-free loan from the Mississippi Development Authority.

**June 15, 2006:** Jackson Mayor Frank Melton, impatient with the redevelopment's progress, meets with billionaire investor from Texas, Gene Phillips although the project is under contract. The Mayor states that he will proceed with Phillips plan, which uses no public funds, if the currently contracted group does not begin work by August.

APPENDIX B  
REVIEW OF HOTEL PATTERNS

Table B-1. Review of Hotel Patterns.

	Edwards Hotel	Heidelberg Hotel	Cherokee Hotel	Jefferson Davis Hotel
Date of Construction	1923	1927	Circa 1920	1929
Legislative residents	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Association with politician	Wilson Minor, Governor Bilbo	Huey Long	Popham	George Wallace and Bill Baxley
Association with industry	Oil, Transportation (railroad)	Oil	Popham, called the "Oyster King" is associated with the hotel.	
Social implications	Activities not done in front of hotels in "up-to-date towns" (p.30)	Site of entertaining for politicians and dignitaries	Yes- called "Pride of Tallahassee," became "social institution overnight."	Social events sponsored by politicians, dignitaries
Current Condition	Vacant	Rehabilitation in progress	Demolished in 1950s	Rehabilitated
Economic effects	Yes- first "million-dollar hotel" in Jackson	Yes- first "million dollar hotel" in Baton Rouge		Yes- first "million dollar hotel in Montgomery"
Proximity to amenities	In-house barber shop, restaurant, adjacent to railroad station, near capital building	In-house restaurant, drugstore, beauty salon, near capital building	Modern facilities, near capital building	Modern facilities, near capital building

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## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Charlene Eiffert, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Albert David Eiffert, is a sixth-generation New Orleanian. In 2001, Charlene graduated from St. Mary's Dominican High School and began the Bachelor of Science program at Mississippi State University in interior design. Her love of art and foreign cultures led her to two minors, in art and Spanish. In 2003, Charlene spent a summer in Andalusia, Spain studying the history, architecture, language and culture of the country. Her degree was conferred in 2005, upon completion of a design internship at Historic Restoration, Incorporated in New Orleans, Louisiana, where she worked primarily on adaptive use projects and compatible design for a Hope VI project in the Lower Garden District. Her four years of study in Mississippi coupled with Historic Restoration, Incorporated's role in the King Edward redevelopment initiatives are the source of her interest in the history of the structure.

In August of 2005, Charlene began her graduate studies in Historic Preservation at the University of Florida in the College of Design, Construction and Planning. She traveled across the country to Portland, Oregon and to Chicago, Illinois for a series of Preservation conferences. She worked through Christmas and Spring Break seasons in the Gulf Coast region, documenting historic structures damaged by Hurricane Katrina. With a team of her peers, she documented and disassembled a damaged residence known as the Hecker Cottage, slated for demolition, and placed into storage the original structure with the intentions of finding an alternate site for its interpretation. These experiences

afforded her the opportunity to share what she learned with the Historic Gainesville Commission at their annual Champagne Update in January of 2006.

Upon completion of her summer spent with the Preservation Institute: Nantucket program, Charlene will seek employment opportunities in the architectural and adaptive use aspects of historic preservation. Charlene enjoys expanding her modest architectural library and learning about foreign culture and dance. Her interests include early twentieth-century architecture, particularly the Chicago School and Art Nouveau, photography and New Orleans history and culture.