

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number _____ Page _____

**St. Paul's Bottom (Boundary Increase and Additional Documentation)
Caddo Parish, LOUISIANA**

I hereby certify that this property is entered in the National Register.

for M. J. M. Way

for Signature of the Keeper

7/9/99

Date of Action

St. Paul's Bottoms Historic District
(Boundary increase and additional documentation)

Name of property

Caddo Parish, LA

County and State

NPS Form 10-900-a
(8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

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Section 1-3, 5 Page 1

- Section 1: St. Paul's Bottoms (Boundary Increase & Additional Documentation)
- Section 2: 1002-1162 Texas Avenue, 959-1057 Texas Avenue, 1127 Milam, Shreveport, LA 71101
- Section 3: As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFT Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant locally.


Signature of certifying official/title
Jonathan Fricker, Deputy SHPO

5/25/99

Date

Dept. of Culture, Recreation and Tourism

State or federal agency and bureau

- Section 5 Add 16 contributing buildings
Add 10 non-contributing buildings

Number of contributing resources previously listed on National Register:

1 (Antioch Baptist Church)

St. Paul's Bottoms Historic District
(Boundary increase and additional documentation)
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Section 6

Historic Functions: Add recreation and culture: auditorium, music facility
 Add social: meeting hall, clubhouse
 Add subcategories for commercial (business,
 professional, specialty store)

Current Functions: Add vacant/not in use
 Add commerce/trade: specialty store
 Add religion/religious structure

Section 7

Architectural classification: add Italianate, Classical Revival, no style

Materials: foundation – masonry and concrete
 walls – masonry
 roof – other: tar and gravel

Section 8

Add Criterion A
Add for areas of significance: commerce, social history and ethnic heritage
(black)

Period of significance: c.1920-1949

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The requested boundary extension to the St. Paul's Bottoms Historic District (Ledbetter Heights), a black shotgun neighborhood in Shreveport, adds twenty-seven buildings. All are commercial, except for the Antioch Baptist Church (NR), with historic elements dating from 1901 to c.1945. Despite integrity issues such as loss of buildings, new construction, and alterations to historic buildings, the proposed addendum would still be recognizable to someone from the historic period who shopped, worked and socialized in what was at the time a thriving black CBD. This addendum will also add to the statement of significance (see Item 8 continuation sheets).

As originally conceived in the early 1980s and as listed in 1984, the St. Paul's Bottoms district encompassed mainly residences. Scattered here and there in the district are small commercial buildings (31 at the time of nomination) and a few churches. The district boundaries did not include the immediately adjacent commercial strip along Texas Avenue. This roughly two-block-long largely African-American CBD was known in its heyday (1920s through 1940s) as "The Avenue," and is still known fondly by this name by older adults today. The clientele of the black-owned and/or occupied buildings lived immediately behind Texas Avenue in the Bottoms and in other nearby predominantly black neighborhoods. The only building being added that is not on Texas Avenue is a two story brick commercial structure at the corner of Austin Place and Milam. (This building is located about a block from Texas Avenue -- see map).

The proposed boundary increase is also located near the boundary of the Shreveport Commercial Historic District (NR). But it is separated from this district by about a block of mainly parking lot and vacant land. Because the buildings in question are physically and/or historically more closely related to St. Paul's Bottoms, they are being appended to that district (per a consultation with the National Park Service).

Historically the 1000 block of Texas had a solid party wall character. Today there are two gaps where historic buildings once stood (a theater between #s 10 & 11 and a building to the south of #23). The 1100 block, at least per a 1935 Sanborn map, did not have a solid party wall character. For example, in 1935 there was a wide gap on either side of #6. There is a one building gap in the 1100 block (between #s 1 & 2).

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The proposed addendum's masonry buildings (brick veneer or stucco over brick) range from one to four stories in height. While some of the buildings are very plain, others have notable decorative brickwork, and five are strongly styled (see inventory below).

INVENTORY

NOTE: Contributing/Non-Contributing status was based on age (Register's fifty year cutoff) and integrity.

1. Contributing element. Circa 1905 two-story brick corner Italianate commercial building with particularly elaborate decorative brickwork; one story rear portion; shopfront replaced, although it retains the basic historic configuration.
2. Contributing element. Circa 1905 two-story brick commercial building with decoratively shaped parapet, corbeling, round head windows. Shopfront replaced.
3. Contributing element. Circa 1915 two-story commercial building featuring cornice with dentils and paired brackets. Quoin-like rustication separates facade into four bays. Windows on second floor replaced; shopfront replaced.
4. Non-contributing. Modern one story Caddo Parish Communications building -- recessed from street.
5. Non-contributing. Modern one story masonry commercial building.
6. Contributing element. Historically free-standing, this fairly narrow but deep one story commercial building has a pediment-shaped parapet crowned with sculpture -- a spiky element at each corner and an urn on a base in the middle. Below each sculpture is a decorative tile square set within the brick. The long side elevations retain their original industrial-looking windows. Although the shopfront fenestration pattern has been lost, the building retains enough of its original character (particularly the distinctive decorative features) to warrant inclusion as a contributing element.

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7. Non-contributing element. A used car lot is located here with a small building set several yards back from the street.
8. Contributing element. This one story brick building has a wide facade along Texas and then wraps around the corner (Lawrence Street). The center of the Texas Avenue facade features a cornice with modillions (perhaps marking the entrance or distinguishing one shop from another). The remainder of the building has a much simpler brick cornice. The most notable alteration is an inappropriate V-shaped sign which extends over the sidewalk. The all-glass shopfront follows the basic configuration of a historic shopfront from the 1930s and '40s, although it is more recent.
9. Contributing element. Two story 1920s brick commercial building with shaped parapet; various decorative brickwork details at the parapet level, including strapwork and diamond patterns. Building retains most of its original two over two windows at second story of facade and long side elevation. Some of windows on facade are covered. Shopfront level boarded up, but historic configuration is clearly discernible.
10. Contributing element. Two story 1920s brick commercial building with decorative brick band near top; windows replaced; shopfront level bricked in.
11. Non-contributing. One story masonry commercial building.
12. Contributing element. Wide one story brick commercial building with decorative brick band near top (with brick corners facing outward); shopfront level replaced.
13. Non-contributing element. Very wide one story brick and stucco-over-brick auto painting shop with garage door openings.
14. Non-contributing element. One story brick building with modern in-fill taking up two-thirds of facade. (This appears to be a 50 year old building, but the alterations are severe enough to warrant a non-contributing designation.)

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15. Yorke Hotel (McAdoo Hotel). Contributing element. Circa 1910 three story hotel located on the corner of Texas and Austin Place. Built on the edge of Ledbetter Heights, this was not an African-American hotel. Distinguishing features include numerous segmental arch openings, pronounced brick corbeling at the top, and an original arched canopy on the side elevation. Shopfront level along Texas has been reworked.
16. Antioch Baptist Church (1901, National Register, N. S. Allen, Architect). Brick Romanesque Revival landmark with four towers.
17. Contributing element. Simple two story c.1915 brick building which historically housed a fraternal lodge and ballroom on the second floor and commercial space on the lower. By the 1935 Sanborn map, there was an auto repair facility in much of the ground story; hence the garage opening may be historic.
18. Non-contributing. Two story stucco commercial building (altered historic building).
19. Contributing. Simple one story c. 1930 brick commercial building; transoms covered although spaces clearly discernible; shopfront appears to be 50 years old.
20. Contributing. Wide 1920s brick commercial building with decoratively shaped parapet and paired brackets above vertical rusticated strips. Marked on 1935 Sanborn map as a garage. Garage openings on each side have been bricked in; center portion (presumably a glass shopfront) has also been bricked in.
21. Non-contributing. Metal one story building.
22. Non-contributing. Small one story masonry building which appears to be less than fifty years old.
23. Calanthean Temple, 1923. Contributing element. This four story Classical Revival brick building with limestone accents housed black professional offices, the Calanthean black women's organization and a roof-top ballroom (among other things). The limestone-faced ground story's entrance features a pediment

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accented with a scroll volute bracket on each side. The second and third stories are set within a system of brick pilasters with acanthus leaf limestone capitals. Above the pilasters is a limestone entablature and above that balustrades in front of the fourth floor windows. Alterations (besides deterioration) include bricking in the first floor facade openings and covering the windows on one side elevation. (There was once a party wall building on the other side.)

24. Contributing. Tiny c. 1940 one story brick building which shares a wall with the Calanthean.
25. Contributing. This wide 1920s one story brick building is labeled "use car sales" and "auto repair" on the 1935 Sanborn map. Piers dividing the bays extend above the parapet line as does a central roundel. Parapet also features a decorative brick cornice. Wide garage openings remain but some have been covered with metal panels, as have four of the five transoms.
26. Non-contributing. Very small one story brick and glass cafe.
27. Corner Milam and Austin Place. Contributing. 1920s utilitarian two story brick building identified on 1935 Sanborn map as a bottling plant; retains virtually all of its original industrial-type windows.

Assessment of Integrity:

The chief integrity issues are changes to historic buildings and loss of historic buildings. In reference to the former, most of the historic buildings have received notable shopfront level modifications (as is typical in commercial architecture). Some of the multi-story buildings have had windows either replaced or covered over.

Each historic building was evaluated by the state's Register coordinator and a judgment call made on contributing/non-contributing based upon the amount of historic fabric remaining, the visual distinctiveness of that fabric, and the nature of the modifications (low-key versus intrusive). Oftentimes, for example, the basic historic configuration of the shopfront remained.

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Missing historic buildings have been identified above. Three of these housed important African-American businesses (a theater, a beauty school, and a newspaper). As sad as these losses are, "The Avenue" fortunately retains some particularly important African-American commercial and social landmarks (see Part 8). In short, while someone from the area's heyday would notice many changes, he would still recognize what was the commercial and social heart of Shreveport's African-American community.

While the district's 37% non-contributing rate is on the high side, there are other Register districts in Louisiana with a similar rate. Of course, one must look beyond mere numbers and instead examine the size and scale of the non-contributing elements and their impact upon the adjacent historic buildings, or vice versa. In this case, there is one two-story building; the remainder are one story, and some are quite small. Finally, it should be noted that higher non-contributing rates generally are accepted by the National Park Service for the edges of historic districts (which this is). In fact, this project was reviewed informally by NPS before the nomination process began.

Overall, the resource in question is so significant within Shreveport's African-American history that it merits National Register listing despite the foregoing integrity issues. It is hoped that this recognition will call attention to the area and, very importantly, will "jump-start" preservation projects through the Register's 20% tax credit.

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The area being added to the St. Paul's Bottoms Historic District is significant in Shreveport's African-American commercial and social history because it was the main business and social area for blacks in Shreveport and surrounding rural areas from c.1920 into the post-WWII era.

In the general period 1900-40 Shreveport's black businesses were located in the 800 to 1100 blocks of Texas Avenue. However, there is a clearly discernible shift in focus from the 800/900 blocks to the 1000 block as the twentieth century progresses. By c.1920 and into the post-World War II era, it is clear from city directories and other sources that the 1000 block was the heart of business and social activities for African-American Shreveporters. By the 1920s the long 800 block and the short 900 block are no longer majority black. (Because the 800 and 900 blocks are closer to downtown Shreveport, they are located in that Register district.) Also in the nominated area is one side of the 1100 block, which historically had a mixture of white and black businesses.

Many of the major entities in the social and business life of black Shreveport were along "The Avenue" -- retail stores, professional offices, oil companies, fraternal organizations, social venues, etc. While the principal patrons of this once flourishing CBD were locals, old-timers remember rural workers flocking to the area on the weekends. Local African American historian Willie Burton writes that "The Avenue" was "a social outlet for the many domestic workers, porters, and laborers who worked in the white areas during the day, but could go down to The Avenue and 'be somebody.' "

Blacks were encouraged to start businesses along The Avenue and in other areas of the city by the local black newspaper, *The Shreveport Sun*, founded in 1920. For example, the paper's founder in a 1925 editorial challenged his readers (40% of the population at that time) to move from being "a race of spenders and not producers," citing that blacks owned less than one percent of the city's businesses. Two organizations served as support groups for black entrepreneurship: the Shreveport Negro Business League, founded in the 1920s, and the Shreveport Negro Chamber of Commerce, founded in 1940 and with an office on The Avenue (Building #9).

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The most important surviving African-American related buildings on The Avenue are as follows:

(1) The Antioch Baptist Church (1901), Shreveport's oldest black church building and its oldest black congregation.

(2) The two story brick building adjacent to Antioch (#17) housed at one time or another during the historic period a Masonic lodge; the Plamoore Ballroom (a social institution for black Shreveporters); and a myriad of businesses and offices. The later included offices for doctors, insurance companies, and Charles Roberson, considered to be the city's first black attorney, plus a beauty shop, dental lab, tailor, and photography studio. Among the most important businesses with an office there was Universal Oil, Gas & Mining, a black firm organized in 1930. According to Mr. Burton, it was "the only Negro oil company in existence to that date [1930] and was manned and directed entirely by Negro personnel." In the 1930 and '34 city directories auto storage is listed at 1053 Texas. In the 1940s the black VFW and USO were located in this building.

(3) Calanthean Temple (#23). Built in 1923 by a black woman's organization called the Grand Order of Calanthe, this too was a multi-purpose building. The Court of Calanthe occupied the fourth floor. Over the years various entities had rooms elsewhere in the building -- a Masonic lodge and professional offices for notaries, dentists, doctors, insurance companies, etc. The 1924-25 city directory has the Penny Rock Cafe at this address and the 1930 city directory lists the Ideal Pleasure Club as located in the basement. The Calanthean also housed offices for Tiger Oil and Gas Corporation and a major local realty company (E. D. Green). Fondly remembered is the temple's rooftop garden, a major social venue where all the greats (Louis Armstrong, Cab Calloway, etc.) played to packed audiences.

(4) 1054-56 Texas (#10). This two-story brick building housed various professional offices (mainly doctors, dentists, insurance companies) and, in the 1940s, the office of the Negro Chamber of Commerce.

(5) 1058 Texas (#9). This two-story brick building housed at various times in the 1920s, '30s and '40s businesses such as The Avenue Pharmacy, The Avenue Barber Shop and Shine Parlor, M and T Cleaners, a tailor, and shops selling cigars and soft drinks.

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St. Paul's Bottoms Historic District
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Name of property

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Major entities that no longer have a building to represent them are: the Star Theater (the gap between #s 10 & 11); Henrietta's Beauty College (next door to the Calanthean Temple); and *The Sun* newspaper. By comparing addresses in city directories and the 1935 Sanborn map, it appears that the building where *The Sun* had an office is where a non-contributing building is located today.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Burton, Willie. *On the Black Side of Shreveport: A History*. Second edition, 1994, n.p.

Sanborn Insurance Company Maps, 1935.

Shreveport City Directories, various years from 1899 to 1945.

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Section 10

Boundary increases along with the current boundaries are shown on the enclosed adjusted copy of the original district map, which substitutes for a verbal boundary description. The USGS map shows only the revised boundaries. Because the boundary expansion is so small when compared to the original district, the UTM's for the expanded district are the same for the original. In short, the expanded district fits within the same polygon as the original.

Add approx. 8 acres to original total.

Boundary Justification: As explained in the narrative, boundaries were chosen to add the city's historic African-American CBD/social center along Texas Avenue which is immediately adjacent to the listed district. The clientele of the black-owned and/or occupied buildings lived immediately behind Texas Avenue in the existing district (St. Paul's Bottoms) and in other nearby predominantly black neighborhoods.

One commercial building being added, at the corner of Austin Place and Milam, was not historically part of the black CBD/social center described in the nomination. It is being appended to St. Paul's Bottoms because it clearly relates much better visually and physically to this district (see map) than it does to the nearby Shreveport Commercial Historic District (NR). St. Paul's Bottoms lies immediately across the street in one direction and a house within the district is next door (see map). By contrast, the building in question is separated from the Shreveport Commercial Historic District by almost a full large block of mainly vacant land.