

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received DEC 17 1980
date entered DEC 16 1980

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

1. Name

historic Shepis Building
and or common same

2. Location

street & number Main Street N/A not for publication
city, town Columbia N/A vicinity of
state LA code 22 parish Caldwell code 021

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	N/A in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	N/A being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: vacant

4. Owner of Property

name SEE CONTINUATION SHEET
street & number
city, town _____ vicinity of _____ state _____

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Caldwell Parish Courthouse
street & number Main Street P, O. Box 328
city, town Columbia state LA 71418

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title LA Historic Sites Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no
date 1980 federal state county local
depository for survey records LA State Historic Preservation Office
city, town Baton Rouge state LA

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date <u> N/A </u>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Nicholas J. Shepis Building (c.1916) is a two story cast concrete commercial building in the Italian Renaissance style. It is located in the old downtown section of the small town of Columbia. Despite some deterioration on the interior, the building retains its National Register eligibility.

Local legend asserts that the builder was a patriotic Italian immigrant who wanted to exemplify both his Italian roots as well as his new-found Americanism. Judging by the design, this could well be true. The facade is very specifically Italian, resembling Renaissance stlyar palazzos of the mid-fifteenth century. The building consists of a two story main block with a pair of single story side wings. The ground story features a more or less conventional period shopfront, but the piano nobile is elaborately articulated with Renaissance elements. At the base of the piano nobile is a balcony resting on a row of heavy consoles. The five bays are marked by Ionic pilasters supporting an ornamental entablature. The central bay has a molded doorway with an entablature of its own surmounted by a quatrefoil. The other bays contain Renaissance double arched windows also with inset quatrefoils.

The building is surmounted by a parapet with a central tablet flanked by statues of Christopher Columbus and George Washington. Washington is holding a draped American flag and Columbus is holding a draped Italian flag. The tablet is surmounted by an eagle with its wings spread. At each end of the parapet is an urn on a base. Each of the side wings is surmounted by a recumbent lion.

The facade is given added texture by the use of rock-faced concrete "stone" between the pilasters. Here again the effect is similar to early Renaissance palazzos. The rear and sides of the building are unornamented.

The interior features elaborate pressed metal ceilings in very poor repair. Most of the wall covering material has been lost and the ground floor boards are gone.

Assessment of Integrity

Despite the interior deterioration, the Shepis Building retains its facade intact, which is the source of its architectural significance. The only exterior change appears to be the boarding over of some of the shopfront windows, which of course is very minor.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates c, 1916

Builder/Architect Builder; Nicholas John Shepis

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph) Criterion C

The Shepis Building is of statewide significance in the area of architecture because it is a very distinctive work of early twentieth century architecture within the context of Louisiana.

The Shepis Building does not fit easily within recognized architectural trends because in many ways it is a very personal statement. Nonetheless, because it involves the conscious choice of a particular historical style, it can be viewed within the general context of early twentieth century eclectic architecture. The very personal quality of the design contributes to the importance of the Shepis Building within this context. Perhaps because it was a more or less direct Italian import, it has an unusual purity. Its significance within Louisiana eclectic architecture stems from its very unusual and specific style. The early Italian Renaissance of Alberti and Brunelleschi is recognized as a distinct phase of the overall Renaissance, but it was very seldom the choice of architects and builders in Louisiana. In fact, the Shepis Building stands almost alone in this regard. In a larger sense, it is not merely that this particular phase of the Renaissance was chosen, but that any particular phase should have been chosen at all. In contrast to the Shepis Building, most attempts to evoke the Italian Renaissance in Louisiana involve a mixture of Renaissance, Mannerist, and Baroque elements in a more general sort of "Mediterranean look."

The Shepis Building resembles mid-fifteenth century Renaissance stilar palazzos in the following respects:

- 1) Rather flat trabeated articulation superimposed on a rough or rusticated "stone" facade.
- 2) The use of Renaissance style double arch windows.
- 3) The squarish palazzo form.
- 4) The use of "stone" consoles.

Historical Note:

Conveyance records reveal that Shepis purchased a portion of the property in question in September 1914 and the remainder in September 1916. The building appears on the August 1919 Sanborn map and is labeled "To Be General Merchandise." At this point the State Historic Preservation Office knows very little about Shepis. He is said to have been an architect in Sicily before coming to America, but we do not know if this is true or not.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Conveyance Records, Caldwell Parish, Sanborn Insurance Company Map, Columbia, 1919. Woods, H. Ted. Caldwell Parish in Slices: Biographies. Baton Rouge, Claitor's Publishing, 1983.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property @1/6th of an acre
Quadrangle name Columbia, LA Quadrangle scale 1:62500

UTM References

A	1 5	5 8 7 6 0 0	3 5 5 2 4 0 0	B			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C				D			
E				F			
G				H			

Verbal boundary description and justification

Please refer to enclosed sketch map. As noted, the northeast and southwest boundary lines follow party walls; the southeastern boundary follows the curblin; and the northwestern boundary follows the rear property line.

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

state	N/A	code	county	code
state		code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title National Register Staff ASSISTED BY OWNERS
 Division of Historic Preservation

organization State of Louisiana date October 1985

street & number P. O. Box 44247 telephone (504) 922-0358

city or town Baton Rouge state LA 70804

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *Robert B. DeBlieux*
 Robert B. DeBlieux
 title State Historic Preservation Officer date December 11, 1985

For NPS use only
 I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register
for Allison Byers
 Keeper of the National Register date 1-16-86
 Attest: _____ date _____
 Chief of Registration

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National Park Service**

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date entered

Continuation sheet Shepis Building Item number 4 Page 1

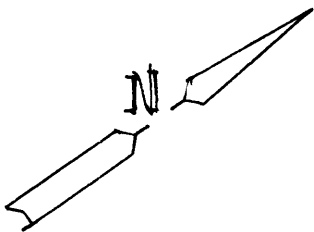
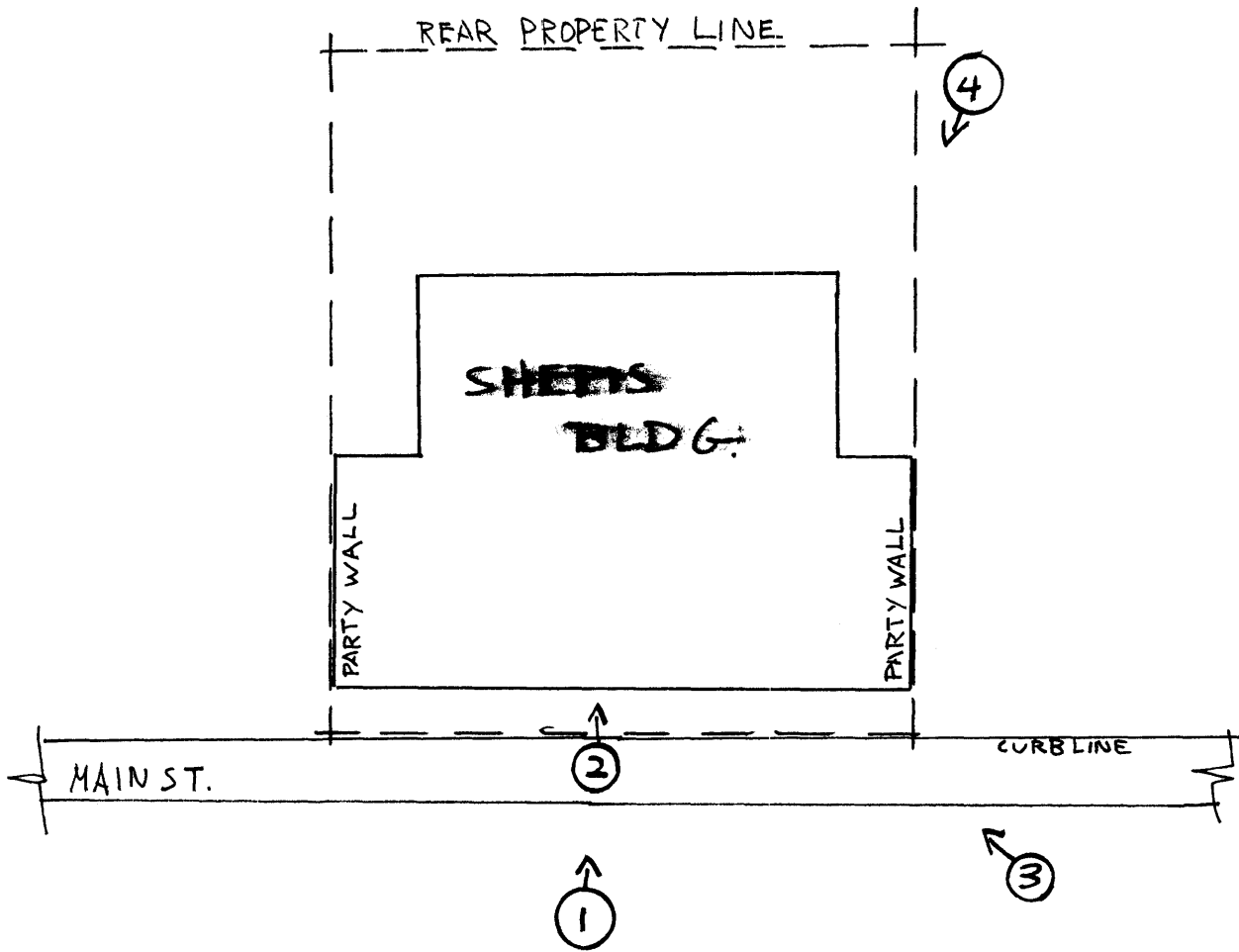
Caldwell Parish, LA

OWNER OF PROPERTY

Cynthia Woodard
P. O. Box 1029
Columbia, LA 71418

Mr. and Mrs. Allen Hale
P. O. Box 111
Columbia, LA 71418

Shepis Bldg.
Columbia, Caldwell Parish, LA



BOUNDARY

(NOT TO SCALE)