

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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NATIONAL
REGISTER

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Belisle Building

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 344 and 350 Third Street N/A not for publication

city or town Baton Rouge N/A vicinity

state Louisiana code LA county East Baton Rouge code 033 zip code 70802

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility 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 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Gerri Hobdy 9/9/93
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Gerri Hobdy, Louisiana SHPO, Department of Culture, Recreation & Tourism
State of Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register. See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Marg M. [Signature]

10/19/93

Belisle Building
Name of Property

East Baton Rouge Parish, LA
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
2	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE/specialty store

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

VACANT/not in use

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Italianate

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete

walls brick

roof other: tar and gravel

other metal (cornice)

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Belisle Building, Baton Rouge, East Baton Rouge Parish, LA

Section number 7 Page 1

The Belisle Building (1912) is a vernacular brick party wall commercial structure located on a busy downtown Baton Rouge street. Although it displays some Italianate influence, the two-story East Baton Rouge Parish building cannot be attributed to a specific style. Despite alteration, it remains eligible for the National Register.

Like almost all historic commercial structures in downtown Baton Rouge, the Belisle Building has lost its original storefront. However, its other important exterior design elements survive at the second floor and parapet levels. The parapet features alternating panels and piers. The piers' corbelled tops protrude slightly above the parapet. Below the parapet the facade is distinguished by a bracketed pressed metal cornice in the Italianate style. The brackets are in three different sizes. Large paired brackets divide the cornice into four sections of equal size, while smaller brackets fill the space between the larger pairs. Finally, single oversized brackets terminate the cornice at each end. A dentil band spans the building directly below and behind these brackets. Below the cornice the facade features four bay windows whose locations correspond to the bays created by the cornice's paired brackets. The bay windows' roofs are surmounted by pinnacles, while the area directly beneath the windows is decorated by wooden panels. Additional panelling in the brick between and beside the windows marks the locations of the paired brackets above. Italianate segmentally arched openings are found on the rear and one side elevation. The Belisle Building's original load-bearing walls are eighteen inches thick.

The floorplan has experienced major changes over the years, so much so that much of its original configuration is unknown. Both stories are now largely subdivided into offices, and a new lobby space with an elevator has been inserted in the south front section of the structure. However, the building's original function as a dry cleaning and retail establishment can still be seen in some areas. For example, although slightly shortened, a large lower story sales room with an elaborate pressed metal ceiling survives on the north side. An original one-story, three room cleaning plant located a few feet behind the main building also survives with its floorplan unchanged. The center room of this structure features a clerestory designed to aid in ventilation. The second story of the Belisle Building originally served as residential space and cold storage for the cleaning firm. This floor's front double parlors with two doors embellished by Eastlake grilles survive.

As previously mentioned, the Belisle Building has experienced floorplan changes and lost its original storefront. Over the years the shopfront had been altered in various ways, giving it a most irregular appearance. A 1992-93 rehabilitation brought back a consistent look to the shopfront and restored its shape and overall appearance. However, certain aspects are not in keeping with the historic period, including the use of unpainted wood (Honduras mahogany), multiple panes of glass, and an arch design.

CONTINUED

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Belisle Building, Baton Rouge, East Baton Rouge Parish, LA

Section number 7 Page 2

Other alterations associated with the 1992-93 rehabilitation include:

- 1) the connecting of the main building and the rear cleaning plant via a roof and side wall,
- 2) the installation of stained glass in the building's side windows and large single plates of glass in the rear windows, and the addition of a rear stairway,
- 3) the shortening of the large lower floor sales room mentioned above. Accomplished by the construction of a new rear wall, this change was made in order to use the ceiling from the remaining portion to replace damaged pressed metal pieces in the front part of the room. A kitchen was then installed in the newly created area behind the sales room.
- 4) the installation of a metal canopy on the facade. Architectural evidence indicates that the structure originally had such a feature, but no evidence survives to show its original appearance.
- 5) the embellishment of both the exterior and the interior by the addition of woodwork and decorative elements not present on the original structure. Added exterior features include the urns surmounting the parapet's piers, the egg and dart molding outlining the parapet's panels, the swag and wreath motifs within the parapet and bay window panels, the lion's heads holding the canopy's supportive chains, and the large brackets beneath the bay windows. Added interior features include almost all of the woodwork on both floors and all of the first floor hardware.

Although the loss of the original storefront and the addition of classical elements to the facade are regrettable, the Belisle Building remains eligible for the National Register. Unfortunately, the loss of shopfronts is the norm for Louisiana's historic commercial buildings, and at least the Belisle's new storefront has the shape and overall appearance of the original. The added classical motifs do not overwhelm the building's Italianate cornice and striking bay windows, which are its most important design elements. In a downtown which has experienced the loss or major alteration of the overwhelming majority of its historic structures, the Belisle Building ranks as a significant architectural landmark.

Belisle Building
Name of Property

East Baton Rouge Parish, LA
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

N/A

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

N/A

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

architecture

Period of Significance

1912

Significant Dates

1912

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

unknown

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Belisle Building
Name of Property

East Baton Rouge Parish, LA
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than an acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1

1	5	6	7	4	0	0	0	3	3	6	9	8	4	0
Zone		Easting					Northing							

3

Zone		Easting					Northing							

2

Zone		Easting					Northing							

4

Zone		Easting					Northing							

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title National Register Staff

organization Division of Historic Preservation date July 1993

street & number P. O. Box 44247 telephone (504) 342-8160

city or town Baton Rouge state Louisiana zip code 70804

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Bob G. Dean, Jr.

street & number 343 Third Street telephone (504) 343-9152

city or town Baton Rouge state Louisiana zip code 70802

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Belisle Building, Baton Rouge, East Baton Rouge, LA

Section number 8 Page 1

The Belisle Building is locally significant in the area of architecture as one of downtown Baton Rouge's distinctive landmark structures. In spite of the alterations described in Part 7, it emerges as a landmark when compared to the majority of 50+ year old commercial buildings in the area.

Although the official founding date of the community is recognized as 1719, downtown Baton Rouge has retained only a relatively small number of historic commercial buildings with their integrity intact. This situation is due largely to the fact that the city remained prosperous after the Depression and into the 1950s and 1960s. As a result, it suffered considerable alteration and demolition. The extent of this loss is documented in old photographs, oral accounts, and Sanborn maps. The Architectural and Historical Survey of Downtown Baton Rouge, completed in 1984, also confirms these losses. It identifies only 124 surviving buildings 50 years of age or older within the commercial district, and half of this number are residences or institutional structures. Of the approximately 62 surviving commercial buildings, most are unstyled c. 1890-c.1940 vernacular structures, many of which have been significantly altered. In addition, the Central Business District also contains a number of new buildings, parking lots, and vacant lots where older commercial buildings or houses once stood.

Against this background, perhaps a dozen individual landmark commercial buildings of real architectural quality remain, and the Belisle Building ranks as one of these. Its significance derives from two design elements. The first is the facade's striking row of four bay windows. Nothing else like this can be found in downtown Baton Rouge. The building's second architectural feature of merit is its bracketed cornice. Although the structure is not a fully developed example of the Italianate, the style's influence on the building makes it an important example in a business district with only three other Italianate buildings.

Historical Note

The Belisle Building was constructed for Charles A. Belisle as the headquarters for his dry cleaning firm. The structure housed the family business on the right side of the lower floor, and the left half was rented to Werline's Music Store. The Belisle family lived on the second floor. In 1933 Bates & Thigpen Men's Store moved into the building, where it remained until 1965. Although currently vacant, the newly rehabilitated building is available for lease as office space.

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Belisle Building, Baton Rouge, East Baton Rouge Parish, LA

Section number 9 Page 1

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Architectural and Historical Survey of Downtown Baton Rouge. Foundation for Historical Louisiana and City of Baton Rouge - Parish of East Baton Rouge, July, 1984.

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Continuation Sheet**

Belisle Building, Baton Rouge, East Baton Rouge Parish, LA

Section number 10 Page 1

Legal Property Description

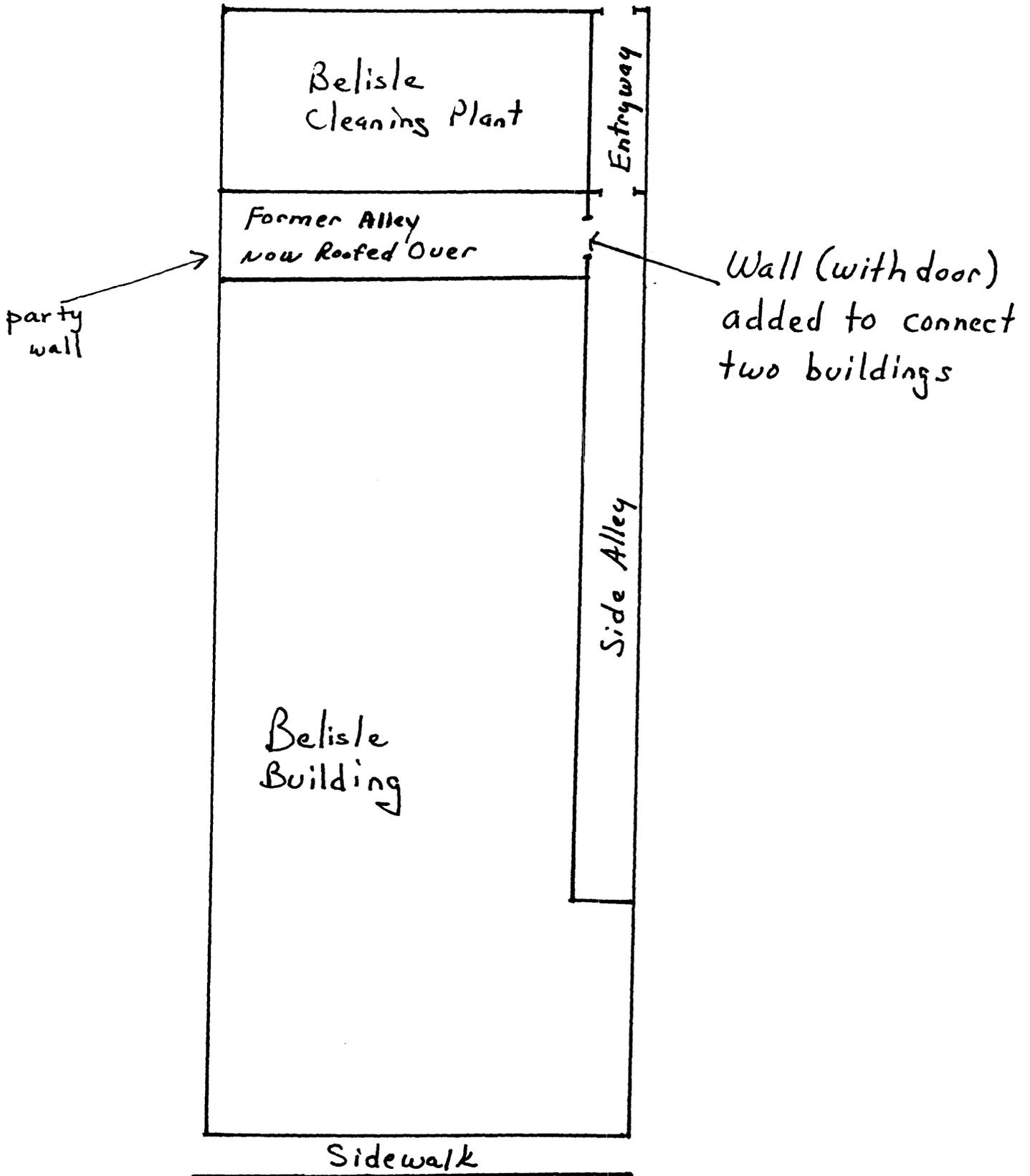
A certain parcel of ground, together with all of the buildings and improvements thereon, situated in that part of the City of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, known as Devall Town, fronting fifty feet on the east side of Riverside Mall (formerly Third St.) by a depth between equal and parallel lines of one hundred twenty-eight feet, being composed of parts of Lots 1 and 2 of Square 6 or 82, Devall Town, according to an official map of the city made by F. F. Pillet, C.E., approved on October 21, 1930, located fifty feet south and distant from the intersection of the south side of Laurel Street and the east side of Riverside Mall (formerly Third St.).

Boundary Justification

Boundary lines follow property lines.

Belisle Building
Baton Rouge, East Baton
Rouge Parish, LA

← North



Third Street