

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

USD/NPS NRHP Registration Form (Rev. 8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

Muller's Department Store Additional Documentation, Calcasieu Parish, LA

Page 1

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

433

1. Muller's Department Store Additional Documentation/Boundary Increase
2. Add 619 Ryan St., Lake Charles, LA 70112
3. As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets the National Register criteria.


Jonathan Fricker, Deputy SHPO, LA Div of Historic Preservation

4/2/07
Date



7 & 8

Summary:

This proposal is an addendum to the National Register nomination for Muller's Department Store in Lake Charles. The latter passed the State Review Committee for the National Register at its November 9, 2006 meeting and was listed on the Register February 15, 2007. The candidate, at 619 Ryan, is historically inter-related to Muller's. As explained below, it functioned as part of Muller's Department Store from 1943 up to and past the present Register fifty year cutoff.

Muller's was listed at the local level under Criterion A (in the area of commerce). 619 Ryan relates specifically to Muller's role as a commercial institution in Lake Charles and vicinity. Very importantly, it illustrates the constant refrain in Muller's history — expansion.

Background:

Founded by a young widow in 1882, Muller's went through various expansions before moving into a new three story, 45,000 square foot building in 1913. By 1939, the company had 103 employees. In February 1943, the company, wishing to expand further, acquired 619 Ryan, which shared a party wall. Built circa 1930 (per Sanborn maps and the architectural evidence), 619 Ryan housed Berdon-Campbell Furniture. In commenting on the purchase to the local newspaper, general manager Adolph Marx indicated that Muller's wished "to enlarge its services to its customers especially in household furnishings and that the addition of Berdon-Campbell will make it possible to expand the household furnishings department and to add other departments." Muller's final expansion came in 1949 with a large addition at the rear of the 1913 building. The department store closed in 1986.

To summarize, during the historic period for this addendum (1943-1956), 619 Ryan was part of Muller's Department Store. Various openings were cut in the party wall to facilitate the two buildings functioning as one commercial entity. (The openings are now filled in.)

Had the Division of Historic Preservation known of this historic inter-relationship at an earlier date, the two buildings would have been presented in one nomination as Muller's Department Store. Critical factors were the "slipcovering" of both buildings, the covering of interior walls on the main Muller's Building (which hid the filled-in openings cut between the two buildings), and different timetables for removal of the slipcovering. Two or three years ago the owner of the main Muller's Building approached the SHPO about a combination National Register – Tax Credit project. The SHPO advised that the modern materials would first have to be removed. This was done and the owner has now received Part II tax credit approval. The State Review Committee considered the Register nomination, as noted above, at its November 9, 2006 meeting.

In September 2006 the owner of 619 Ryan made contact with the SHPO with a request for National Register listing and tax credit. The building was still slip-covered (in the same material as the main Muller's building). The owner

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form (Rev. 8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

Muller's Department Store Additional Documentation, Calcasieu Parish, LA

Page 2

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

told staff that 619 Ryan was historically part of Muller's. Staff replied that primary documentation would be needed, which has been supplied. Staff then advised that the slip-covering would have to be removed before proceeding further. The removal occurred too late to adjust the Muller's nomination preparatory to the November 9 State Review Committee meeting. In consultation with Dan Vivian, National Register staff at NPS in Washington, the state's National Register Coordinator decided to pursue an addendum to the Muller's listing.

Building Description:

619 Ryan is a wide three story masonry building sheathed in off-white glazed terra cotta. Decorative bands are located above the second floor windows and between groupings of windows. Easily the building's most character-defining feature (in fact, something the Louisiana SHPO has never seen before) is a system of large show windows spanning the second story façade. Draped to resemble actual windows of a home (see historic photo), they showcased suites of furniture. Fortunately the windows survive behind the recently removed modern materials. SHPO staff has seen that they survive via a hole in modern covering on the interior. They are boarded over on the exterior. They are on a wall plane behind a modern awning that has not yet been removed. The modern awning has almost the character of a marquee. Above the show windows, at the third floor façade, are a series of typical one-over-one wooden windows.

Crowning the parapet, at the center, was a relatively small shaped tablet with a roundel at the middle. The tablet was knocked off when the building was slip-covered. The roundel was found on the roof and the owner is safekeeping it.

It is difficult to be certain about the ground level façade from the historic photograph. At present it is completely modern in character, and as noted above, an obtrusive modern awning is yet to be removed.

The interior of 619 Ryan is taken up almost entirely (at the first and second floors) by a mezzanine. The mezzanine retains its original balustrade composed of decoratively turned balusters and a wooden balustrade. The functional third floor presumably served as storage and office space.

9. Bibliography

Lake Charles *American Press*, February 1, 1943.

Early photo of Berdon-Campbell Store, copy in National Register file, LA Division of Historic Preservation.

10. No change to acreage (still less than an acre) and UTMs.

Add to verbal boundary description: Commencing 100 feet north of the northeast corner of Ryan and Division Streets, thence north along the east side of Ryan Street 80 feet, thence east parallel to Division Street 200 feet, thence south parallel to Ryan Street 80 feet, thence west 200 feet to point of beginning with all improvements thereon.