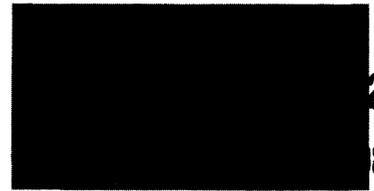


**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**



2
82

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

1. Name

historic Court Square Historic District

and/or common N/A

2. Location

*Roughly bounded by Riverside Dr., N. 2nd St.,
Madison and Jefferson Aves.*

street & number See Attached Map N/A not for publication

city, town Memphis N/A vicinity of congressional district Eighth

state Tennessee code 47 county Shelby code 157

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name Multiple Ownership (See Continuation Sheets)

street & number N/A

city, town N/A N/A vicinity of state N/A

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Office of the Shelby County Register, County Clerk

street & number 160 North Main Street

city, town Memphis Tennessee state

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title N/A has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date N/A N/A federal state county local

depository for survey records N/A

city, town N/A N/A state

7. Description

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

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Court Square Historic District is located in the downtown area of Memphis, Tennessee (pop. 680,000), which is on the fourth Chickasaw Bluff overlooking the Mississippi River. Situated on a relatively flat site of approximately sixteen acres, the district contains thirty-nine commercial buildings ranging from one to twenty stories. Thirty-six of these structures were constructed between 1860 and 1928 and three from 1936 to 1965. Besides a few simple vernacular structures, there are good examples of the eclectic use of Romanesque, Byzantine, and Renaissance elements. The principal building materials are brick, terra cotta, and stone. All but two of the buildings are in good structural condition and only four do not contribute architecturally to the district. Also within the district are two landscaped public parks, Court Square (1819) and Confederate Park (1908). These open spaces and the district's thirty-six contributing buildings all retain their original integrity despite some modifications to street-level storefronts.

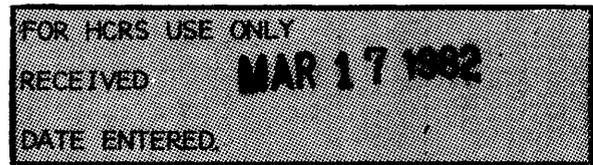
The city is on one of the highest points in the relatively flat central Mississippi Valley and is surrounded primarily by open farmland. The proposed district is bounded on the north by government buildings, on the east by parking lots and recent construction, on the south by the city's financial district, and on the west by the Illinois Central Gulf Railroad.

Laid out in 1819 as part of the original plan of the city, Court Square is the visual focus of the district and is somewhat to the left of its approximate center. The grounds of the square are casually landscaped with meandering paths and randomly planted trees and shrubs. The park has been relandscaped periodically in its history, most recently in 1976, with a majority of the existing trees being planted in 1907. The current (1976) path configuration follows more closely the romantic mid-nineteenth-century pattern in Court Square than the early-twentieth-century wheel-shaped one it recently replaced. Relatively unaltered permanent structures in the square include a bandstand (ca. 1912) and a large cast-iron fountain (1876), which is in the center of the park. There are also a few memorials and historical markers in the square. Both Court Square and Confederate Park are heavily used by downtown workers and shoppers.

On the western edge of the district, Confederate Park (1908) is rectangular in plan with concrete paths dividing the park into large geometric spaces with randomly planted trees and shrubs. Since the park drops off sharply at its western boundary with the ICG Railroad, there is a low stone wall at that point overlooking the Mississippi River. In addition to an occasional memorial monument, there are four World War I field guns facing the Mississippi River from behind the stone wall. The only significant change to the park since the early twentieth century has been the erection of the statue of Jefferson Davis in 1965 in front of the park's central parterre.

The buildings in the district represent a wide range of styles illustrating the building boom in Memphis from the 1880's to the Great Depression. Both simple and elaborate examples from each decade can be seen in the district, beginning with the vernacular Gaston Hotel (1883) contrasted with the Classically ornate buildings at 63-69 N. Main (1878, partially covered with recent metal panels) and continuing through a comparison of the John Gerber Company, conservatively remodeled around 1925 in the Chicago Commercial style, and the fanciful Columbian Mutual Tower (1924), a miniature version of New York's Woolworth Building. Especially noteworthy are the Byzantine/Romanesque Tennessee Club (1890) and the former Beaux Arts offices (1906) of the

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Court Square
CONTINUATION SHEET Historic District ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 2

Commercial Appeal, a major Memphis newspaper. The architecturally unifying feature of the district is the traditional, yet eclectic, use of details from past historical styles and periods rather than an experimentation with the elements of modern architecture developing during the years covered by the district.

Although brick is the most common building material in the district, the area contains some of the city's best examples of terra cotta. These include the polychrome garlands, cartouches and eagle's heads on the Kress Building, the griffins at the top of the Hotel Devoy, and the Porter Building's window surrounds and balustrade. Within the district are also two of the three finest copper roofs in Memphis, the pyramidal roof and cupola of the Columbian Mutual Tower and the mansard roof and cornice of the Exchange Building.

A majority of the buildings are from four to six stories, the remainder being from ten to twenty with a few one or two-story structures. This continuous change in the roof lines has given additional variety to the district's streetscapes. The principal facades of all the buildings are flush with the sidewalks.

All of the buildings in the Court Square district are in good condition except for the Hotel Devoy and Gerber's Tea Room, which because of neglect are in fair condition. The four buildings which do not contribute to the district are relatively small structures which have completely lost their historical character or are of incompatible design; 17 and 51 N. Main, 18 and 24 N. Second.

Although all of the district's buildings were originally constructed as non-residential structures, except for three hotels, two former office buildings (107-113 S. Court and 39 N. Main) have now been converted to apartments. The top floors of most of the smaller buildings are vacant. The current businesses in the district include restaurants, grocery stores, clothing stores, dime stores, and law and other professional offices.

By the turn of the century, the streets in the district were paved with granite blocks. In 1976 the sections of N. Main and N. and S. Court within the Court Square area were covered with brick tiles as part of the conversion of Main Street into the Mid-America Mall. The other streets are now surfaced with asphalt, but granite curbs remain in some places.

An architectural survey of the Court Square Historic District was conducted during the summer and fall of 1981 by Lloyd Ostby, Preservation Planner, Memphis Landmarks Commission, and Michael Bates, Intern, Tennessee Valley Center for Minority Economic Development. Preliminary research for the nomination was done in 1978 by Libby Moore, Landmarks Researcher, Memphis Landmarks Commission. Further information was gathered at the Memphis and Shelby County Public Library and the Office of the Shelby County Tax Assessor. This combined material was the basis for determining

FHR-8-300A
(11/78)

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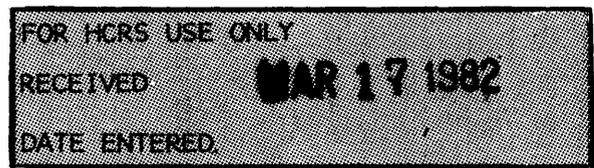
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Court Square

CONTINUATION SHEET Historic District ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 3

the historic boundaries and significance of the district. Each building was inspected and researched to establish its importance in the district. Interviews with property owners and local historians supplemented the above-described research.



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Court Square

CONTINUATION SHEET Historic District ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 4

Inventory of Buildings in the District

The historical name of a building is listed in parenthesis, as is the name of the architect if known. The current occupant of each building is listed at the end of each description.

Contributing structures (C) are significant in the historic and architectural development of the district, possess compatible design elements, and maintain the scale, use, and texture of the district. Also listed as contributing are buildings whose historical or architectural significance is less than fifty years old or whose historical facades have been considerably, but not irreparably, altered. Included are three buildings with outstanding late nineteenth-century facades currently hidden behind removeable metal panels. Non-contributing structures (N) disrupt the scale and texture of the district or have little or no historic or architectural significance.

1. Confederate Park (bounded by Jefferson, N. Front, Court, and ICG Railroad). Ca. 1908. Concrete walkways radiate from center of park; most of current trees planted in 1908; statue of Jefferson Davis erected in 1964. 2.68 acres. (C)
2. Court Square bounded by N. Court, N. Second, S. Court, and N. Main). Ca. 1819. Paved walkways meander through park; most of current trees planted around 1907; casual landscaping; park relandscaped several times; 2.07 acres. (C)
 - A. Hebe Fountain. 1876. Cast-iron, double-tiered; surmounted by statue of Hebe, goddess of youth; nine figures of children; twenty feet high; 7,000 pounds. Probably cast by J. L. Mott Iron Works of New York/ Restored in 1980.
 - B. Bandstand. Ca. 1912. Wooden; octagonal in plan; hipped roof; octagonal piers; raised basement.
3. 110-114 N. Court (B. Lowenstein & Bros. Wholesale Dept.). Ca. 1898. Commercial Vernacular. Six-story, six-bay brick; flat roof with parapet; prominent cornice; attic story, terra cotta garlands. Most windows on front facade have been bricked in. Vacant. (C)
4. 128 N. Court (Taylor Building, Goodbar Building). Ca. 1890. Commercial Vernacular. Four-story, three-bay brick; flat roof; cast iron pilasters on first story. Fifth and sixth stories added in 1909 recently removed. Vacant. (C)
5. 130 N. Court (Tennessee Club). Ca. 1890 (Edward Terrell). Eclectic with Byzantine and Romanesque elements. Four-story, three-bay brick; multiple roof forms including a large dome; various window shapes including ogee and semicircular arches. Burch, Porter, and Johnson, Attorneys. (C)
6. 103-105 S. Court (Gaston Hotel). Ca. 1883. Commercial Vernacular. Three-story, six-bay brick; flat roof. Original fourth and fifth stories removed. Mid-America Books, Court Square Cafe. (C)

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CONTINUATION SHEET Historic District ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 5

7. 107-113 S. Court (Turley Building). Ca. 1928. Commercial Vernacular. Three-story, six-bay brick; flat roof; recent bay windows; bank of three windows in each bay. Court Square Apartments. New Dimension Hair Design. (C)
8. 119 S. Court. Ca. 1890, ca. 1925. Neo-classical Revival. Four-story, four bay brick; flat roof; cast stone facade with colossal pilasters added ca. 1925. J. B. Maize Insurance. (C)
9. 123-125 S. Court (Court Square Building). Ca. 1927. Commercial Vernacular. Six-story, two-bay brick; flat roof; terra cotta dentil and cornice detail; bank of four windows in each bay. Memphis Photo Supply. (C)
10. 22 N. Front (Falls Building). 1910 (John Gaisford). Beaux Arts. Eleven-story, four-bay brick; flat roof; large metal cornice, cast stone cartouches and garlands; bank of four windows in each bay. Various offices. (C)
11. 30 N. Front (Gerber's Tea Room). Ca. 1880. Commercial Vernacular. Three-story, eight-bay brick; flat roof; cast iron window caps. Vacant. (C)
12. 44 N. Front (National Garage). 1927. Commercial Vernacular. Nine-story, thirteen-bay brick; flat roof. National Garage. (C)
13. 69 Jefferson (Elk's Club, Hotel Devoy, Hotel King Cotton). 1927. Eclectic with Italian Romanesque details. Twelve-story, twelve-bay brick; flat roof; elaborate terra cotta ornamentation around top story with balconets. Vacant. (C)
14. 79 Jefferson (Rodgers Building). Ca. 1904. Romanesque Revival. Four-story, eight-bay brick; flat roof with parapet and attic story; semicircular arch windows; cast iron pilasters on first story. Jefferson Square Restaurant. (C)
15. 85 Jefferson. Ca. 1895. Commercial Vernacular. Three-story, three-bay brick; flat roof; cast stone lintels. Vacant. (C)
16. 9 N. Main (S. H. Kress and Co.). 1927. Eclectic. Four-story, three-bay brick; flat roof with parapet; low central tower with pyramidal roof and flagpole; brightly colored terra cotta facade with garlands and cartouches; bank of windows in each bay. S. H. Kress and Co. (C)
17. 10 N. Main (Dr. D. T. Porter Building). 1895 (E. C. Jones). Eclectic with Romanesque details. Twelve-story, six-bay brick; flat roof with parapet; foliated terra cotta window surrounds. Samovar Old World Eatery, Kedalo's Subway. National Register 4-18-77. (C)
18. 17 N. Main (Baker's). Ca. 1965. Commercial Vernacular. Two-story, three-bay brick; flat roof; windowless second story with metal panels. Baker's Shoes. (N)

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19. 25 N. Main (John Gerber Company). Ca. 1870, ca. 1925. Commercial Vernacular. Six-story, six-bay brick; flat roof with attic story; terra cotta details; bank of four windows in each bay. Vacant. (C)
20. 39 N. Main (Edward Hunter and Co.). Ca. 1900. Commercial Vernacular. Five-story, four-bay brick; flat roof; prominent metal cornice; semicircular arch windows on top story. Fisher Optical, Salad Bowl, West Court Apartments. (C)
21. 47 N. Main. Ca. 1870, ca. 1925. Commercial Vernacular. Four-story, three-bay brick; flat roof; tripartite windows. Original facade removed. Friedman's. (C)
22. 49 N. Main. Ca. 1870, ca. 1937. Commercial Vernacular. Four-story, one-bay brick; flat roof; tripartite windows; Cararra glass. Original facade removed. Rhealee. (C)
23. 51 N. Main. Ca. 1870, ca. 1940. Commercial Vernacular. Four-story, one-bay brick; flat roof; windowless top stories. Original facade removed. Mangel's. (N)
24. 55 N. Main (Oak Hall). Ca. 1885, ca. 1920. Commercial Vernacular. Three-story, three-bay brick; flat roof; cast stone facade with colossal pilasters and foliated spandrel panels. Original facade removed. Vacant. (C)
25. 60 N. Main (Columbian Mutual Tower). 1924 (I. A. Baum). Eclectic. Twenty-story, seven-bay brick and terra cotta; mansard roof; tower with copper pyramidal roof and cupola. Various offices. National Register 7-24-78. (C)
26. 61 N. Main (Goodlet Building). Ca. 1883. Commercial Vernacular. Four-story, six-bay brick; flat roof. Original Victorian Gothic facade covered with metal panels. J. W. Woolworth Co. (C)
27. 63 N. Main. Ca. 1878. Eclectic with colossal Corinthian pilasters. Three-story, two-bay brick; flat roof. (C)
28. 64-68 N. Main. (B. Lowenstein & Bros. Wholesale Dept.). Ca. 1883, ca. 1962. Commercial Vernacular. Five-story, four-bay brick; flat roof. Original Victorian Romanesque facade covered with metal panels. Vacant. (C)
29. 69 N. Main. Ca. 1878. Commercial Vernacular. Three-story, four-bay brick; flat roof. Original facade identical to 63 N. Main but now covered with metal panels. Vacant. (C)
30. 76 N. Main. Ca. 1890. Eclectic. Three-story, three-bay brick; flat roof; terra cotta bull's-eye-window surrounds, fleur-de-lis, laurel wreaths. Jack's Food Sotre. (C)
31. 80 N. Main. Ca. 1880. Commercial Vernacular. Two-story, four-bay brick; flat roof; cast iron window caps. Easy Way Store #3. (C)

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32. 84 N. Main. Ca. 1920. Commercial Vernacular. Two-story, one-bay brick; flat roof with pedimented parapet; tripartite window on second story. Howard L. Klein, O.C. (C)
33. 86 N. Main. Ca. 1880. Commercial Vernacular. Three-story, three-bay brick; flat roof; brick hood molds. Sandwich Chef. (C)
34. 88 N. Main. Ca. 1880. Commercial Vernacular. Four-story, three-bay brick; flat roof; plain stone lintels. Corner Deli. (C)
35. 9 N. Second (Exchange Building). 1910 (N. M. Woods, Jr.). Beaux Arts. Twenty-story, nine-bay brick; mansard roof with dormers; decorative spandrels; rusticated base. Vacant. National Register 5-8-79. (C)
36. 10 N. Second (Deluxe Arcade). Ca. 1936. Art Deco. Two-story, three-bay concrete; flat roof; L-Plan; fluted pilasters; name above Second Street and Madison Avenue entrances. Yogury, Jiffy Print, and various stores. (C)
37. 18 N. Second (Ayres Block). Ca. 1860, ca. 1959. Commercial Vernacular. Two-story, three-bay brick; flat roof. Original facade, third and fourth stories removed. Harrison, McCarroll, Attorneys. (N)
38. 22 N. Second (Ayres, Block, James S. Robinson Apothecary). Ca. 1860, ca. 1925. Commercial Vernacular. Four-story, three-bay brick; flat roof; terra cotta facade with colossal pilasters and decorative spandrel panels; single bank of windows on top stories. Original facade removed. Vacant. (C)
39. 24 N. Second (Ayres Block). Ca. 1860, ca. 1960. Commercial Vernacular. Four-story, three-bay brick; flat roof; single bank of windows on top stories. Original facade removed. Goodwill Industries. (N)
40. 26-28 N. Second. Ca. 1911. Commercial Vernacular. One-story, three-bay brick; flat roof; parapet with central cartouche. Walter Buford, Attorney. (C)
41. 30 N. Second (Commercial Appeal). 1906 (Shaw & Pfeil). Beaux Arts. Four-story, three-bay brick; flat roof with attic story; terra cotta cornice; engaged Ionic columns on west facade; rusticated first story. Welcome Wagon. (C)

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" 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 1819-1928 **Builder/Architect** N/A

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Court Square Historic District is nominated under criteria A and C.

Encompassing the oldest surviving planned urban space in Memphis, the Court Square Historic District contains a locally significant concentration of architecturally and historically important commercial buildings and public parks dating from the early nineteenth century to the Great Depression. Court Square is the only public square included in the original plan of Memphis which retains its early character and use. In addition to good examples of vernacular architecture, the district has some of the most architecturally ornate commercial structures in the city. By the 1890's the Court Square Historic District had become the most prestigious location for the city's leading retail businesses and professional offices as well as its social/humanitarian organizations. Consequently, the buildings in the district reflect the economic and social history of the city from around 1880 to 1930.

When Memphis was laid out in 1819, the founders of the city decided that a certain amount of land should be reserved for public use. Four square parcels and a river bluff promenade were placed at various intervals in the city plan. The purpose of each square was designated by its name: Market, Auction, Exchange, and Court. Along with their immediate surroundings, Market and Auction Squares no longer retain any physical reminder of their past historical significance and survive only as small, derelict open spaces. The site of Exchange Square is now occupied by the city's municipal auditorium. The concept of a river bluff promenade was never realized because over the years the city allowed a customs house, a railroad, a public library, and parking garages to be built on the vacant land intended as public open space. Only Confederate Park, established in 1908, is left as a reminder of the original plan for the use of the river bluff.

Court Square was originally intended as the site of a future courthouse, which eventually was built elsewhere. Before the Civil War no permanent structure was constructed on the site with the exception of a log building which served as a school, church, and meeting place during the early years of the city. There is some evidence that there also may have been a crude fire house on the square in the 1850's. In 1876 an elaborate cast-iron fountain, a gift of Memphis residents, was dedicated, making the park the major downtown open space. Court Square was the city's official greeting place for visiting dignitaries such as the Grand Duke Alexis of Russia and Presidents Cleveland, Harrison, and McKinley. Beginning in the nineteenth century, the park was also the location of the main reviewing stand for military and holiday parades.

Few buildings were constructed around the park before the 1850's, because the center of the town was further north. Although none of these pre-Civil War structures remain except for the much altered Ayres Block, it is known that they were primarily commercial buildings rather than residential.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet

10. Geographical Data

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

Acreeage of nominated property approx. 16 acres

Quadrangle name Northwest Memphis, TN-Ar

UTM NOT VERIFIED

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

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

B	1 5	7 6 8 6 8 0	3 8 9 2 8 6 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing

C	1 5	7 6 8 3 3 0	3 8 9 3 0 4 0
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D	1 5	7 6 8 4 1 0	3 8 9 3 1 8 0
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E			
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F			
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G			
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H			
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Verbal boundary description and justification

See Continuation Sheet

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

state	N/A	code	county	N/A	code
-------	-----	------	--------	-----	------

state	N/A	code	county	N/A	code
-------	-----	------	--------	-----	------

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Lloyd Ostby, Preservation Planner

organization Memphis Landmarks Commission

date December, 1981

street & number 22 N. Front Street

telephone (901) 528-2834

city or town Memphis

state Tennessee

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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Norbert L. Hays

title Executive Director, Tennessee Historical Commission

date 3/1/82

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Entered in the National Register

date 4/15/82

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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Court Square

CONTINUATION SHEET Historic District ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

Memphis experienced a tremendous building boom from the late nineteenth century to the Great Depression, which is reflected in the architecture of the Court Square district. Near the southeast corner of the park, the mansard-roofed Exchange Building (NR 1979) was erected in 1909 as the new home of the Merchants and Cotton Exchanges. In 1895 the city's first modern steel-skeleton skyscraper, the eclectic Porter Building (NR 1977), reached the dizzying height of eleven stories opposite the square's southwest corner. By 1900 the leading department stores of the day, Lowenstein's and Gerber's, occupied Main Street locations facing Court Square. Also in the district by the turn of the century were other prominent clothing stores, such as Oak Hall, Caradine and Pennel, and Summerfield's. S.S. Kress began his national dime store chain opposite Court Square in 1896 near the site of the company's current ornate terra cotta building (1927). Also within the proposed district, Clarence Saunders in 1916 opened the nation's first modern self-service supermarket, the Piggly-Wiggly, at 79 Jefferson (Rodgers Building, 1904).

During its peak years from around 1890 to 1950, the Court Square district also contained hotels and the meeting halls of several social organizations. Facing Court Square was the vernacular-style hotel (ca. 1883) owned by the local philanthropist John Gaston, which was popular with out-of-town celebrities such as Oscar Wilde. Built in 1927 the Italian Romanesque Hotel Devoy, later the Hotel King Cotton, was one of the city's most elaborate hotels and contained the meeting rooms of the Elks Club. Other fraternal organizations, including the Odd Fellows and the Chickasaw Guards, maintained impressive facilities overlooking Court Square. The most socially prominent and architecturally distinctive of these facilities was the Tennessee Club (1890) with its Byzantine dome and Romanesque elements. The building was the scene of many important Memphis social events, including receptions for Presidents Taft and Theodore Roosevelt.

Despite a decline in the last two decades because of suburban shopping centers, the economy of the district has been showing a considerable recovery within the past few years. Major rehabilitation work on the Falls and Gerber buildings, as well as the Ayres Block, are scheduled to begin in early 1982. The owners of the Porter, Lowenstein Wholesale, and Exchange buildings are planning significant conversions of these properties into luxury apartments.

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Court Square

Continuation sheet Historic District

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Continuation sheet Court Square
Historic District

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This district is bounded on the north by government buildings, on the east by parking lots and recent construction, on the south by the city's financial district, and on the west by the Illinois Central Gulf Railroad. These boundaries encompass an architecturally and historically significant concentration of buildings and public parks which is important as the oldest surviving planned urban space in Memphis. Street boundaries; Jefferson, Second, South Court, and Front. See attached map with boundary outlined in red.

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

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received
date entered

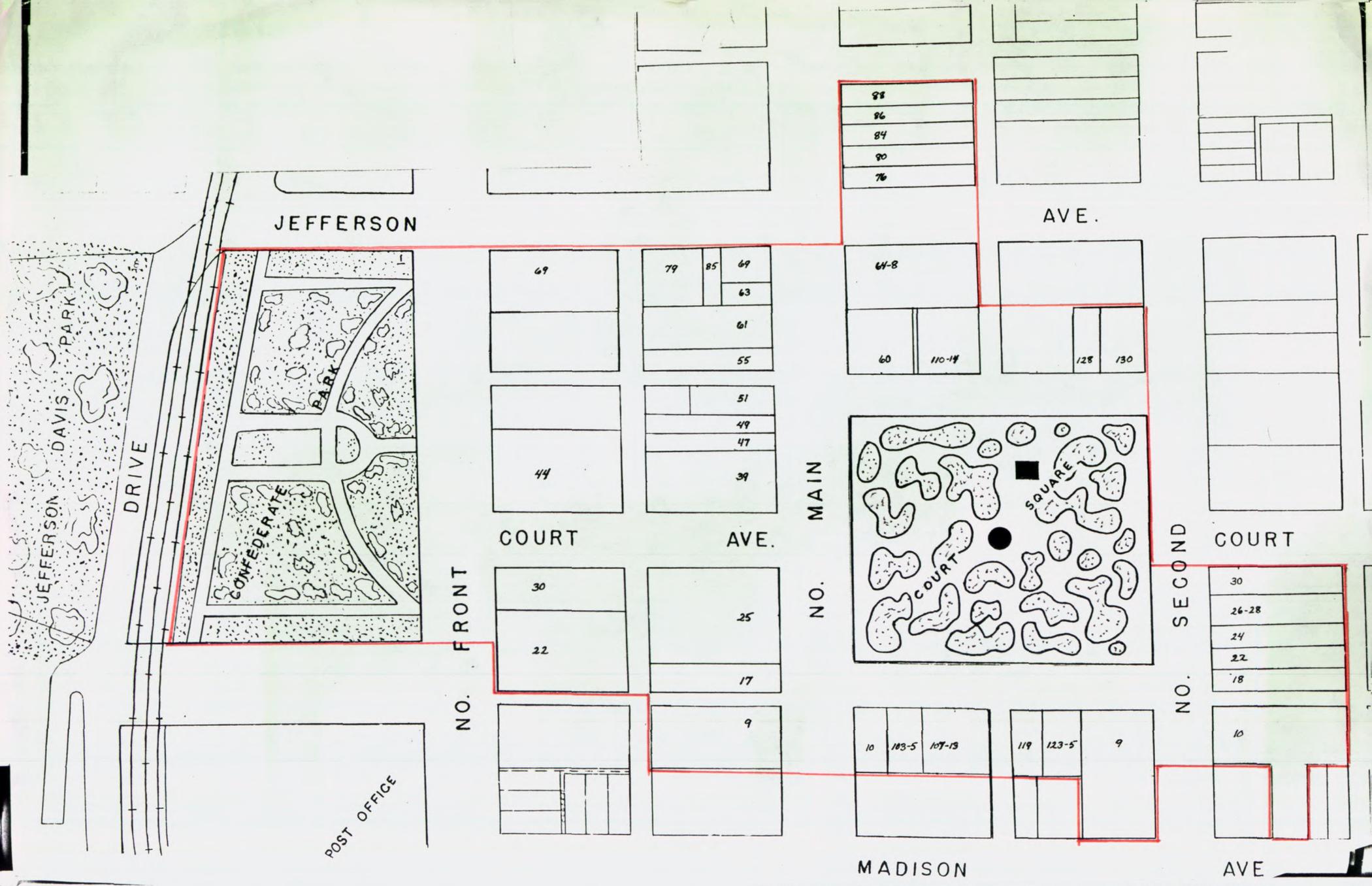
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Historic District

Item number 11

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COURT SQUARE HISTORIC DISTRICT

MEMPHIS

