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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

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

OMB No. 1024-0018

PEOPLE'S NATIONAL BANK, Iberia Parish, LA

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United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: People's National Bank

Other Name/Site Number: Poncio's



2. LOCATION

Street & Number 119 West Main Street

Not for publication: NA

City/Town New Iberia

Vicinity: NA

State: Louisiana Code: LA County: Iberia Code: 045 Zip Code: 70560

3. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria.

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:
Nationally:___ Statewide:___ Locally: X

Jonathan Fricker
Signature of Certifying Official/Title Jonathan Fricker

February 2, 2006
Date

LA Deputy SHPO, Dept of Culture, Recreation and Tourism

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of Commenting or Other Official/Title

Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

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4. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is:

- Entered in the National Register
Determined eligible for the National Register
Determined not eligible for the National Register
Removed from the National Register
Other (explain):

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

5. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property
Private: X
Public-Local:
Public-State:
Public-Federal:

Category of Property
Building(s): X
District:
Site:
Structure:
Object:

Number of Resources within Property
Contributing
1

Non contributing
buildings
sites
structures
objects
0 Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 0

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing: NA

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6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic: Financial Institution Sub: Bank
Current: Specialty Store Sub: Clothing Store

7. DESCRIPTION

Architectural Classification: Classical Revival, Egyptian Revival

Materials:

Foundation: Concrete
Walls: Brick, Stone
Roof: Slate
Other: NA

Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

The People's National Bank stands in a prominent location on West Main Street in downtown New Iberia, the seat of Iberia Parish. Part of a row of party-wall commercial structures which parallels Bayou Teche in the first block inland from the waterway, the bank faces the town's gazebo and the bayou behind it. The two-story, brick and stone building has various Classical Revival details, many of which are articulated in a manner evocative of ancient Egyptian styling (although not archaeologically correct). Local custom dates the bank's construction to 1902. However, the 1904 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map shows the building under construction. Although neighboring structures stood quite close by, at that time the bank remained unattached to its neighbors. The building has received alterations but remains eligible for National Register listing.

The utilitarian side and rear walls of the bank are composed of brick. A thin limestone veneer covers the façade, where all of the decorative motifs are located. Here, four sets of unusual and exotic stacked columns are suggestive of those found on ancient Egyptian temples. Although actually carved from single pieces of limestone, all are articulated to resemble columns formed of stacked cylindrical stones, called drums, found on Egyptian monuments of the period c. 1500 B.C. The lower columns rise from tall square plinths to capitals flaring outward in the Egyptian manner. These feature a boldly carved Classical egg and dart motif which, in this instance, substitutes for the Egyptian lotus flower capital. The capitals support limestone masses articulated as large rounded brackets supporting square blocks with patera. A band of egg and dart molding, with a band of beaded molding beneath it, runs between the blocks to separate the first and second floors. The four second story columns rise from the blocks to capitals identical to those below. These capitals support shallow segmental arches (one per bay). The second floor columns are engaged, as were the columns on the lower level before a mid-1970s renovation recessed and changed the storefront while leaving the columns in place (see alterations section, below).

The stacked columns divide the façade's first and second levels into three bays, of which the center is larger than the two on the sides. On the lower level, the space between the columns is open except for signs suspended between the columns. Behind the signs the façade is now recessed as mentioned above to create a loggia-like space. On the upper level, single one-over-one windows fill each of the side bays. The central bay contains two one-over-one windows separated by a pier rising to a simple capital supporting the central arch. These windows are curved slightly, giving the impression of a shallow bay window. Underneath the bay window, a carved semi-elliptical element connects it to the plane of the façade.

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The heavy, block-like treatment of the area between the second story windows and the top of the cornice is also reminiscent of Egyptian temples. This space features the above mentioned heavy arcade; a band of boldly carved egg and dart molding with a band of beading beneath; a smooth frieze; and a cornice suggestive of the Egyptian gorge or cavetto cornice. In archaeologically correct examples, this cornice would be composed of a large cavetto (round, concave molding) decorated with vertical leaves, with a roll molding below. On the bank, modillions, each featuring two vertical gouges and curved at the top, substitute for the more accurate cornice treatment. However, the requisite roll molding spans the façade below the modillions. Another band of beading ornaments the façade above the modillions. A heavy soffit separates the cornice from a deeply paneled parapet with stone coping.

Today the bank's original floor plan remains largely intact, but few of its other interior features survive. A large banking room (now used for retail purposes) fills most of the space. It contains three counters (one possibly original, the other two relatively recent additions). A large vault occupies the rear, and a small side hall leads from the area in front of the vault to the original rear door (see below). The plan of the second floor copies that of the first, including a second floor vault. On this level, the turn-of-the-twentieth century window surrounds remain intact. Per the 1909 Sanborn Map, access to the upper floor originally came via two stairways. One ascended to the second floor from one of the shopfront doors. A fire escape provided access on an exterior wall. Both staircases are now gone. However, the door leading to the fire escape survives.

In addition to the removal of the staircases, alterations to the bank include:

1. construction of a large one-story rear addition some time after 1931, the date of the last Sanborn Map for New Iberia. It contains four spaces: a large office, a closet-like area, a small bathroom with an intact period tile floor, and a staircase rising from a new rear door to the second floor of the main building. A line is visible on the southeast elevation where a stepped wall extending upward from the addition's side joins the older structure. The purpose of this wall is apparently to hide an exposed portion of the rear stair. The plat map accompanying the current owner's deed also shows the one-story area as an addition.
2. the previously mentioned mid-1970s loss of the original storefront which, according to a historic photograph, consisted of doors in each side bay and a large window above a stone panel in the center. Above the windows and doors, transom windows spanned the entire first floor level. The new recessed, stucco-covered shopfront contains three arched openings, two having large single panes of plate glass serving as windows and one holding a large glass door. Cast iron burglar bars cover the windows, and a moveable cast iron gate protects the door.
3. removal from the frieze of the applied lettering which formerly spelled out the bank's name.
4. covering of almost all the interior surfaces on both floors (original building, vault interior, and rear addition) with modern paneling, carpet or floor tiles, and a grid of acoustic tiles that lowers the ceilings. On the exterior the first floor columns' plinths have been covered by thin decorative granite slabs, and parts of the lower columns now are covered by thin concrete panels hiding the rough surfaces where they were detached from the original facade.
5. construction of a small dressing room and an equally small elevator shaft in the banking room's rear corners.

Although the loss of the bank's original storefront and the related setback of the first floor façade wall are regrettable, these changes have not negatively impacted the decorative features contributing to the building's architectural significance. The historic shopfront, while attractive, had no monumental or exotic features other than the Egyptian-like columns, which remain. The stylistic treatment of the façade's upper reaches remains exactly as it appeared originally. As one of about 10 architectural landmarks found in the New Iberia Central Business District, the People's National Bank is a strong candidate for National Register listing.

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8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Applicable National Register Criteria: A__ B_ C_X D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): NA A__ B__ C__ D__ E__ F__ G

Areas of Significance: Architecture

Period(s) of Significance: 1904

Significant Dates: 1904

Significant Person(s): NA

Cultural Affiliation: NA

Architect/Builder: Unknown

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State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.

The People's National Bank is locally significant in the area of architecture as a landmark in the New Iberia Central Business District.

New Iberia, known as the "Queen City of the Teche," is among Louisiana's oldest towns, having been founded in 1779 by a band of Spanish settlers under the direction of Don Francisco Bouligny and originally named "Nueva Iberia." It was incorporated in 1839 as the "Town of Iberia," and in 1847 the charter was amended and the name changed to New Iberia. When Iberia Parish was created in 1868, New Iberia was selected to be the parish seat. During the antebellum period the town achieved importance as a port due to the flourishing steamboat trade on Bayou Teche. The railroad arrived in the town in 1879, and steamboating entered a period of decline. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, New Iberia's economy was based upon such industries as sawmills, a sash and blind factory, a shingle mill, brick factories, a foundry, and rice mills.

Despite the town's great age, little survives from before the late nineteenth century. New Iberia's CBD is one of the largest in Acadiana, but unfortunately the historic building stock has suffered over the years. Numerous historic buildings have been demolished to make way for new development. For example, in the 1970s a whole block was removed to make room for a bayou side park. Today, roughly 60 to 75 historic buildings survive. The majority of these are either significantly modified on the exterior or are very simple, featuring little decoration and no recognizable architectural style.

The CBD, however, is noteworthy for the quality of its landmarks. The People's National Bank is one of about 10 landmark buildings identified by the SHPO (and confirmed by the parish survey) in downtown New Iberia as worthy of individual Register listing. The bank is one of the most important surviving buildings in the downtown because of its Classical Revival elements and its rare and exotic Egyptian Revival styling. Of course, the Egyptian taste was never as popular in Louisiana or elsewhere as the other less exotic revival styles (for example, Gothic Revival). Examples are generally confined to above ground tombs, with the exception of the badly mutilated old Jefferson Parish Courthouse, papyrus leaf capitals on the U. S. Custom House, and the Southwest Reef Lighthouse. To find Egyptian-influenced styling in a small Louisiana community such as New Iberia is, indeed, surprising. For these reasons, the People's National Bank is a strong candidate for National Register listing.

Historical Note:

Founded in 1889, the People's National Bank is New Iberia's second oldest banking institution. After moving to the candidate in 1904, the bank operated in that building until the mid-1970s. In 1975 the bank sold the property to Francis C. Schuler. Schuler operated Poncio's, a formal wear business named for his wife's family. A recent recipient of a Louisiana Main Street façade grant, Poncio's is now run by Schuler's daughter, Francine Garzotto.

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9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Conrad: Glenn R. *New Iberia: Essays on the Town and Its People*. Lafayette, LA: Center for Louisiana Studies, University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1979.

Division of Historic Preservation, Historic Standing Structures Survey of Iberia Parish, 1979.

Plat map accompanying deed of conveyance; copy in National Register file.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps for New Iberia, Louisiana, 1903, 1904, 1909, 1925, 1931.

Site visit by National Register staff.

Undated historic photograph of People's National Bank; copy in National Register file.

Previous documentation on file (NPS): NA

Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.

Previously Listed in the National Register. (partially)

Previously Determined Eligible by the National Register.

Designated a National Historic Landmark.

Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: #

Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: #

Primary Location of Additional Data:

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State Agency

Federal Agency

Local Government

University

Other (Specify Repository):

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10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreeage of Property: Less than 1 acre

UTM References: **Zone Easting Northing**
 15 613940 3319880

Verbal Boundary Description:

A certain lot of ground with all buildings and improvements thereon and thereunto belonging, and all rights, ways, privileges and servitudes thereto appertaining, situated in the City of New Iberia, Parish of Iberia, Louisiana, measuring twenty-three and 25/100 (23.25) feet front on the South side of West Main Street, by a depth between equal and parallel lines of one hundred sixty-seven and 7/10 (167.7) feet, and having a rear width of twenty-three and 25/100 (23.25) feet, bounded on the North by West Main Street; on the South by New Iberia Hardware Company, Inc.; on the East by Joseph A. Daigne Estate; and on the West by Gaston Patout Estate; and being a portion of LOT 11, BLOCK 214, City Map, New Iberia, Louisiana.

Boundary Justification:

Boundaries follow property lines of the parcel of land historically associated with the candidate.

11. FORM PREPARED BY

Name/Title: National Register Staff

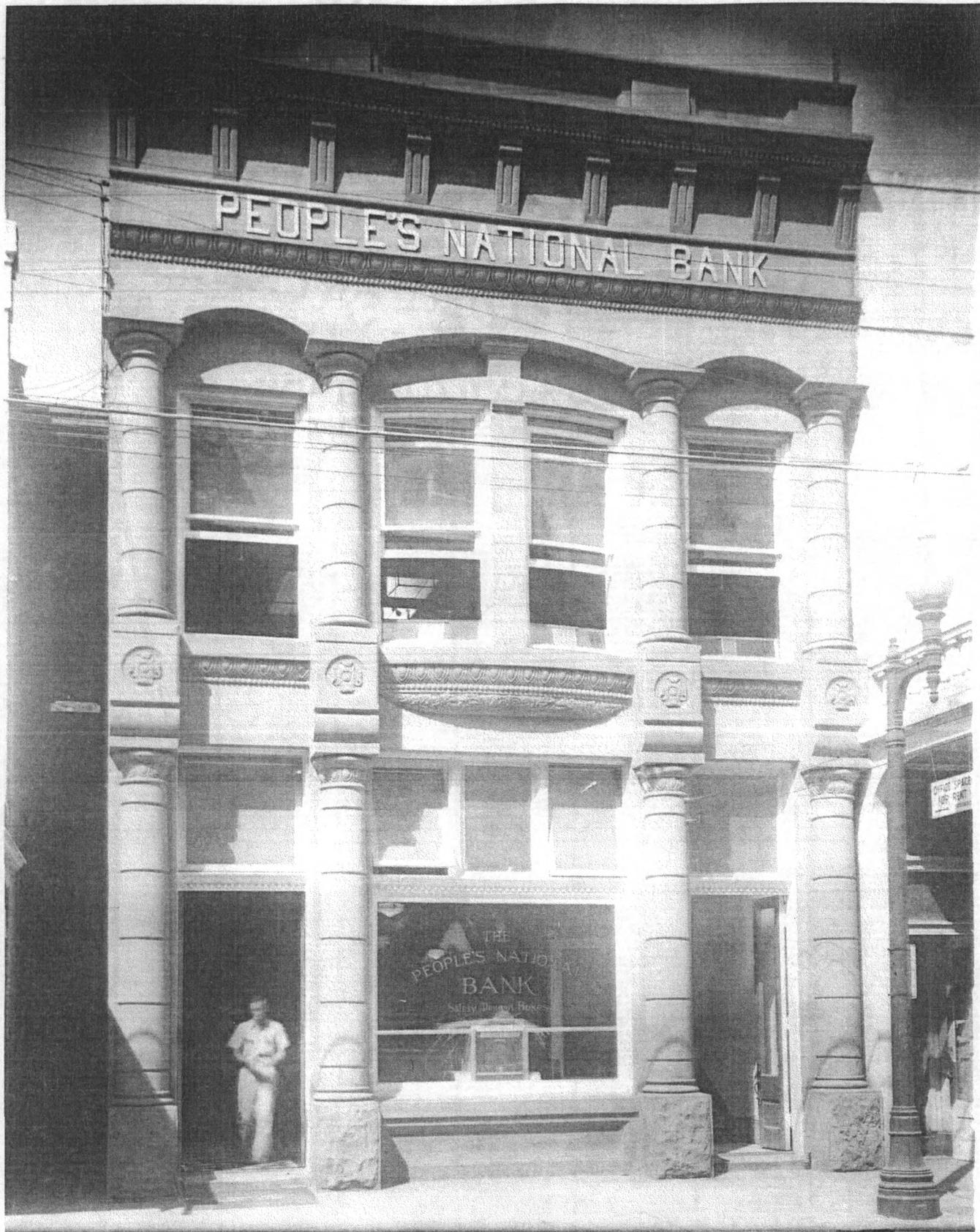
Address: Division of Historic Preservation, P. O. Box 44247, Baton Rouge, LA 70804

Telephone: (225) 342-8160

Date: Summer 2005

PROPERTY OWNERS

Francine Schuler Garzotto
Poncio's Formal Wear
119 West Main Street
New Iberia, Louisiana 70560
(337) 369-9352



People's National Bank

New Iberia

Iberia Parish, Louisiana