

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED NOV 9 1976
DATE ENTERED APR 18 1977

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC
Dr. D. T. Porter Building
AND/OR COMMON
Continental National Bank Building

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
10 North Main Street (Mid-America Mall) ___NOT FOR PUBLICATION
CITY, TOWN
Memphis CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
Eighth
STATE
Tennessee VICINITY OF
Eighth
CODE
47 COUNTY
Shelby CODE
157

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input 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 type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input 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 See continuation sheet

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

VICINITY OF

STATE

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Shelby County Office Building

STREET & NUMBER
160 North Main Street

CITY, TOWN

Memphis

STATE

Tennessee

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
Tennessee Historical and Architectural Survey

DATE

October 1976

___FEDERAL STATE ___COUNTY ___LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS Tennessee Historical Commission

CITY, TOWN

Nashville

STATE

Tennessee

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

EXCELLENT
 GOOD
 FAIR

DETERIORATED
 RUINS
 UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

UNALTERED
 ALTERED

CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE
 MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Dr. D. T. Porter Building, originally constructed as the Continental National Bank Building in 1894-1895, stands on the Mid-America Mall (formerly Main Street) at the southwest corner of Court Square in downtown Memphis. Rising twelve stories, the Porter Building was the city's first skyscraper. As such, it is characterized by a fireproofed structural steel skeleton covered by a non-load bearing curtain wall of red brick, stone, and terra cotta. Designed by the architectural firm of Jones, Hain and Kirby, it represents one of the last commissions of the senior partner, Edward Culliat Jones. The firm of Dun Perley and Company, General Contractors, erected the structure.

From its corner site the Porter Building commands the approach to Court Square from the south, along the Mall. From the north it effectively punctuates the end of the row of buildings which enclose the south side of Court Square. The two story high band of Alabama limestone at street level both relates to the scale of the pedestrian and emphasizes the dominant location of the original main banking room which has been raised slightly above sidewalk level.

Of the four sides of the building, only the west and north facades are highly fenestrated. The style of these two facades is perhaps best described as eclectic, with elements of both the Northern Italian Renaissance and the Richardsonian Romanesque. The west facade, divided into six structural bays, is of particular interest due to its asymmetrical composition and variety of fenestration.

The main entrance, located in the fifth bay, is marked by a shallow portico framed on either side by Corinthian columns with red granite shafts and limestone capitals. Granite steps rise approximately four feet above street level to the second floor. The first floor, located partially below grade, is entered by separate steps on the west facade. Above the main entrance, carved in stone, is the inscription, "Dr. D. T. Porter". A similar inscription is found on the north facade. The limestone facing which extends to the top of the second story is terminated by the first of numerous cornices and features egg-and-dart molding. Seven tall plate-glass windows open into the main banking room on the second floor.

Fenestration of both the west and north facades above this level is rich and varied. A second cornice occurs above the fifth floor and from early photographs can be seen to be a response to the prevailing cornice height of adjacent buildings which have since disappeared or been altered. Immediately below this cornice the third, fourth, and fifth bays of the west facade are visually terminated by round masonry arches springing from Corinthian pilasters. The differentiation of these three bays by this device lends a note of asymmetry to the facade which is continued to the full height of the building. Other windows at this and the upper levels are capped by ornamented terra cotta lintels. At the eighth floor, cornices and arched windows recur except in the third, fourth, and fifth bays. These bays continue uninterrupted to the tenth story. Windows in the fourth bay are further emphasized by ornate terra cotta frames. At the eleventh story, the highest full floor, smaller masonry arches occur except in the third and fifth bays of the west facade where heavy carved terra cotta lintels are substituted. At

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/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1894-1895

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Jones, Hain and Kirby

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Dr. D. T. Porter Building was the first skyscraper constructed in Memphis and represents one of the last buildings designed by Edward Culliat Jones. It is architecturally significant not only for its steel structure but also for the excellence of its masonry curtain wall and the material and workmanship of the interior finishes. Originally built as the Continental National Bank Building, it was later acquired by the heirs of Dr. D. T. Porter, for whom it was renamed as a memorial. Porter, a mayor of Memphis, is credited with leading the city through the troubled years following the forfeiture of the City Charter.

In 1894 construction began on a new twelve story office building for the Continental National Bank of Memphis; it was advertised as the largest national bank in West Tennessee. Located on North Main Street overlooking Court Square, the new high-rise building was the first of its kind in the city with a structural steel skeleton and was the world's tallest building heated by a hot water system. When the new building was opened in 1895, special excursions by train and river boat brought the curious public to ride the elevators to the roof garden to enjoy the unprecedented view.

The Continental Building was designed by the local architectural firm of Jones, Hain and Kirby, the senior partner of which was Edward Culliat Jones (1822-1902). Originally from Charleston, South Carolina, where he designed many fine Classical Revival buildings Jones came to Memphis in 1866. Among his many other local commissions were the Fontaine and Lee houses (originally the Woodruff and Goyer residences) designed in partnership with Mathias Harvey Baldwin. Both houses are included in Victorian Village, which is listed in the National Register.

By 1899 the Continental National Bank had fallen prey to the financial turbulence of the "Gay Nineties" and was in liquidation. In a public auction held on the front steps of the building, it was sold to the heirs of Dr. D. T. Porter, who then renamed it as a memorial to him.

As a result of the devastating yellow fever epidemics of the 1870s, as well as a debt-ridden local government, the city of Memphis surrendered its charter in 1879. David Tinsley Porter (1827-1898) was appointed president of the Taxing District of Shelby County, an office equivalent to mayor of Memphis. Using state controls, he was successful in restoring financial stability. In addition, Porter was instrumental in building the city's first public sewer system.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Coppock, Paul R., "Industrious Dr. Porter Cured Man of Memphis' Ills," The [Memphis] Commercial Appeal, May 12, 1974.

"Great Bank and Big Building," The [Memphis] Commercial Appeal, February 24, 1895.

Hughes, Mrs. Thomas P. Jr., Two Master Architects of Early Memphis: Edward Culliat Jones, 1822-1902 and Mathias Harvey Baldwin, 1827-1891, unpublished manuscript in the Memphis Room, Memphis Public Library and Information Center, 1971.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY .5

UTM REFERENCES

A

1	5	7	6	8	5	2	0	3	8	9	2	9	4	0
ZONE				EASTING				NORTHING						

B

ZONE				EASTING				NORTHING						

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

James Floyd Williamson, Jr.

ORGANIZATION

Keith Kays and Associates, Architects

STREET & NUMBER

83 Madison Avenue

CITY OR TOWN

Memphis

DATE

October 1976

TELEPHONE

(901) 525-3040

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 National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

Herbert L. Hayden

TITLE

Executive Director, Tennessee Historical Commission

DATE

11/5/76

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

CHIEF *[Signature]*
DIRECTOR OF OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE

4/18/97

ATTEST

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

3-18-77

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Mrs. Philip Belz
4 Belleair Drive
Memphis, Tennessee 38117

Mr. Morris J. Kriger
81 Madison Avenue
Memphis, Tennessee 38103

Mr. Alvin Kriger
81 Madison Avenue
Memphis, Tennessee 38103

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the twelfth floor, or penthouse, small Corinthian columns frame the windows. The penthouse, which occupies only the northernmost two bays of the building, is emphasized by its greater height. In addition, these two bays are differentiated from the third, fourth, and fifth bays as discussed above. Both the penthouse and the southern portion of the west facade are crowned with heavy, ornate terra cotta cornices and balustrades.

The south and east facades are, by comparison, quite plain. On the south the unfenestrated masonry facade has recently been adorned by a large contemporary "super-graphic." The east facade is broken into two masonry masses, unfenestrated except for the area between, where windows are found.

The interior of the Porter Building has allowed to deteriorate over the years. Nevertheless, it is possible to detect numerous traces of the original finishes. The main entrance stairs open into a small elevator lobby on the second floor. Immediately to the north was located the main banking room. Here the original Corinthian scagliola columns, ornate ceiling beams, red marble wainscotting, and mosaic floor tile remain. The original oak fixtures, finished with oxidized silver metal work, have vanished. Behind the east wall of this room, built at a later date, may well be concealed the original vaults. These vaults have been described as being constructed of laminated steel, encased in an ornamental jacket, and surrounded with concrete.

From the lobby two elevator shafts extend to the eleventh floor. Immediately adjacent to the elevators, at the southeast corner of the building, is located the single large, open, skylighted stairwell which extends to the roof of the eleventh floor. From the roof, which was originally used as a garden and observatory, a fine view of downtown Memphis and the Mississippi River is offered.

The condition of the upper office floors is at present poor. For the most part, however the original oak doors and trim survive. The penthouse, reached by a separate interior stair, contains a small office in which the fine original paneled oak walls and molded plaster ceiling remain.

The building is heated by hot water. It was originally the tallest building in the world equipped with such a system.

Over the years several alterations have partially changed the original appearance of the Porter Building. In 1947 a mezzanine floor was constructed in the main banking room, partially lowering the high ceiling and enclosing the area where the vaults are thought to be located. Also at this time the south end of the second floor and part of the west facade were altered to create a small retail space at street level. In 1976 the first floor was converted to a restaurant and part of the limestone exterior facing was covered with wooden paneling. At the present time, only the first and second floors are occupied. The entire building above the second floor has been vacant since 1966.

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The Porter Building became one of Memphis' best known buildings and for many years was fully occupied by a variety of professional and commercial tenants. By 1966 all floors above the second story were vacated, and the building has continued to be largely unoccupied up to the present time. A Memphis architectural firm is presently investigating the feasibility of restoring and reusing the building.

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Memphis City Directory, 1894.

"News of Bygone Days: August 15, 1894," The [Memphis] Commercial Appeal,
August 15, 1969.

"Satisfactory Sales," The [Memphis] Commercial Appeal, June 18, 1899.