

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES NOMINATION**

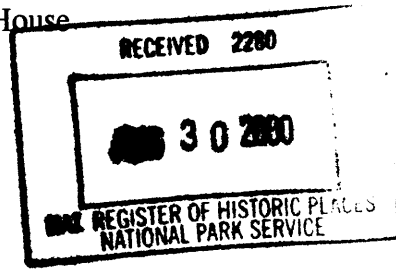
**Martin, Ed, Seafood Company Factory and House, Westwego, Jefferson Parish, LA**

1170

**1. NAME OF PROPERTY**

Historic Name: Martin, Ed, Seafood Company Factory and House

Other Name/Site Number:



**2. LOCATION**

Street & Number: 300 Sala Avenue (factory) and 306 Sala Avenue (house) Not for publication: NA

City/Town: Westwego Vicinity: NA

State: Louisiana Code: LA County: Jefferson Code: 051 Zip Code: 70094

**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

Gerri Hobdy  
Signature of Certifying Official/Title  
Gerri Hobdy, LA SHPO  
Dept. of Culture, Recreation and Tourism

August 21, 2000  
Date

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):

Edson H. Beall
Signature of Keeper

9-29-00
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
2
Noncontributing
0 buildings
sites
structures
objects
2 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: Agriculture Domestic      Sub: Processing Single Dwelling

Current: Agriculture Domestic      Sub: Processing Single Dwelling

**7. DESCRIPTION**

Architectural Classification:    factory: no style; house: Mediterranean Revival

Materials:    factory                      house

Foundation:    concrete                      brick

Walls:            brick, metal                  brick

Roof:             metal                            tile

Other:

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## **Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.**

The Ed Martin Seafood Company Factory and accompanying Martin Home are located in the Jefferson Parish community of Westwego. The two buildings stand side by side approximately two blocks from the west bank of the Mississippi River on a mixed commercial and residential street which historically served as Westwego's commercial core. The focus of the nomination is the factory, an unstyled two story brick structure built in 1943 and expanded by a large brick and metal rear addition c. 1945. The Mediterranean style house, also made of brick, is being counted as a contributing element because it has been associated with the factory since Martin had it constructed for his family in 1948. Despite some alteration, the resources maintain their integrity and National Register eligibility.

The factory's 1943 portion is quite utilitarian in appearance. It consists of a rectangular mass surmounted by a gable-end roof. The brick facade and both side elevations are pierced by large windows filled with glass block. In each window the glass block is pierced by a central, metal framed glazed opening installed to allow ventilation for the building. Each window also has a brick sill and lintel. In addition to windows, the facade contains two entrances -- one a single leaf door, the other a double. These openings are surmounted by concrete lintels. Neon signage advertising the business is located between the facade's first and second floor openings. Flanking the business's name are two images of sea creatures -- one a crab and the other a shrimp. The interior of the factory's 1943 portion is also very simple. Second story business office space surmounts a processing area occupying most of the first floor. (Unfortunately, none of the original processing equipment survives.) This large room has a granite floor in two colors -- the central area exhibiting one shade outlined by a contrasting border next to the walls. The lower level also has a small office with windows overlooking the processing space. This area is reached from an equally small entrance hall (also with a granite floor in contrasting shades) where a stair leads to the second floor.

Martin's business volume was such that he had to add a large work and storage space to the 1943 factory only a couple of years after constructing it. A large opening was cut into the processing room's rear wall to connect to the new area. The addition's lower level is built of brick and contains three rooms (one small and two larger) with concrete floors. The upper story is metal and has five rooms.

The factory has received the following alterations since the completion of the c. 1945 addition:

1. the placement of a corrugated metal panel in the facade's gable peak, the construction of a concrete block carport attached to the rear of the addition, and the construction (on one side of the building toward the rear) of a small two story space which projects at a right angle from the factory. This area housed shrimp picking machinery.
2. the installation of a celotex ceiling in the 1943 processing room.
3. the conversion of the second floor business office into living quarters for the current owner and the installation of a kitchen space in one front corner of the building's earlier first floor section. This change has made the facade's single leaf door inoperable.
4. the removal of all the original seafood processing equipment.

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### Contributing Element: The House

As mentioned above, Ed Martin had a home constructed on the lot next to his factory in 1948. (A small side yard separates the two buildings.) Sheathed by the same light colored brick which covers the factory, the house is raised several feet above grade. It is composed of one level at the front and two floors at the rear. The front area holds a living room, dining room, breakfast room, sunroom and kitchen. The rear upper floor contains bedrooms flanking a central hall. The rear lower area houses recreational and utilitarian spaces. The facade is distinguished by three arcades whose arches are supported by twisted columns. Also of interest are three bas relief figures (a crab flanked by shrimp) located above the front door. Other features of note include a concrete balustrade, a tile roof, and a porch floor and sidewalks covered in a mosaic of broken tiles. Twisted columns are also used on the interior to separate the living room from the dining area. In addition, the interior contains a Colonial Revival style mantel, mahogany doors whose surrounds (rounded at the top) are slightly reminiscent of the Art Moderne movement, and floors with inlaid contrasting wooden bands. The house remains almost completely unchanged, with the only alteration being the attachment of a carport to the rear. The latter is constructed of decoratively pierced concrete blocks.

### Assessment of Integrity

Despite the loss of the factory's original equipment and the other changes outlined above, there is absolutely no doubt that Ed Martin and his former workers would recognize the factory and house if they were to return to Westwego today. As an important symbol of the seafood industry which served as the community's economic base, the Ed Martin Seafood Company factory and nearby home are legitimate candidates for National Register listing.

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8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Applicable National Register Criteria: A X B \_ C \_ D \_

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): NA A \_ B \_ C \_ D \_ E \_ F \_ G \_

Areas of Significance: Industry

Period(s) of Significance: 1943-1950

Significant Dates: 1943, c. 1945

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 Ed Martin Seafood Company factory is locally significant in the area of industry because it is an important reminder of the seafood businesses which were the economic mainstay of Westwego from the late 1920s through the 1950s. The period of significance for this nomination ranges from 1943, the construction date for the candidate, through 1950, the required fifty year cutoff. In actuality, Edmond Martin Jr.'s family operated the factory until 1982.

Westwego is located along a now-filled canal built by local planters before 1800 to connect the Mississippi River to Bayou Segnette, the Barataria Estuary and New Orleans. Its main street, Sala Avenue, parallels this canal. Even after the community incorporated as a village in 1919, its population remained small. It numbered a little over 1,000 in that year and increased to 3,987 (1930); 4,992 (1940); and 8,323 (1950). As long as the canal remained open (see below), the seafood industry was the town's economic lifeblood. Reminiscences and photographs included in *Westwego: From Cheniere to Canal* (a local history by William D. Reeves) reflect the importance of the industry and give the impression that most families had at least one member working on a boat or in a processing plant. The factories were the town's primary employers, for Westwego's other businesses were small retail or service establishments which would have employed only one or two persons in addition to their owners. At least four canneries operated at some point during the historic period. Of these, the Robinson Canning Company was considered the industry leader; and it was this company which the U.S. Food and Drug Administration consulted when the sizing and grading of shrimp became an issue after World War II. The Ed Martin Seafood Company was Robinson's strongest competitor, especially for the raw seafood which formed the basis of their operations.

The canal made it possible for local fishermen to easily sail to waters where large catches of seafood (especially shrimp) could be obtained. Before local canneries opened, the fishermen usually sold their catches directly to buyers in New Orleans' French Market (which is only seven miles downstream from Westwego) or to draymen whose trucks hauled the seafood to that site. After arrival of the canneries, however, the fishermen routinely sold their catches to buyers representing local factories such as Martin's. The location of most factories on the west side of Sala Avenue bordering the canal allowed the sellers to bring their catches directly to the local seafood dock, which was located beside the canal behind the eventual site of Martin's business. (In time, Martin had his own small dock as well.) In addition to purchasing seafood here, buyers would also have obtained raw material from middlemen who purchased catches from fishermen in other South Louisiana locations and transported the raw food by truck to interested canneries.

Martin operated a seafood factory in Golden Meadow (Lafourche Parish) before moving his business to Westwego in 1934. Although his Westwego business eventually grew to be quite large, he began his operations in a small way. The small canal-side building in which he opened no longer survives. In 1935 he moved his operation to property he rented -- one galvanized tin and wood building and part of an existing brick ice plant. Martin utilized both spaces for processing, while the ice company used its portion of the ice plant for the production of that commodity. Soon Martin purchased the two buildings and began producing ice himself. (Ice was needed to cool catches of seafood stored on boats.)

Despite competition from other local processing plants, Martin prospered. According to local sources, in the 1940s his company was shipping shrimp in one and five pound cans, as well as in 100 pound boxes loaded in trailers holding up to 150 boxes. His customer base extended to 42 states on both coasts and a number of foreign countries as well. According to *Westwego: From Cheniere to Canal*, during this period

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Martin perfected a "fancy cooked shrimp" which lacked "sand veins," and this product ". . . became the basis of the popular shrimp cocktail." This success allowed him to replace the above mentioned galvanized tin and wood building around 1940. In 1941 Martin bought out a local trucking concern so he could transport his product to market without paying a middleman. Martin's seafood production, and his prosperity, increased even more during World War II, when the U.S. Army Quartermaster Corps purchased a large portion of his output. At that time the company processed about 200 barrels of shrimp daily and employed 125 people, many of whom were women or young girls. (At the time Westwego's population was about 5,000.)

The increased workload made it necessary for Martin to expand the factory. In 1943 he built the candidate (across Second Street from the older two-building facility). The shrimp packing operation was moved to the first floor of the new building. In addition, the new building became the company's headquarters, with offices on the second floor. Since the crab packing operation and ice house remained in the older plant, this move provided much more space for equipment and workers. However, the new building soon proved inadequate to serve the growing business and received a large two-story addition only a year or so later. The latter housed processing facilities on the first floor and warehouse space on the second. The company continued to prosper after the war, enabling the businessman to pay for the new home (described in Part 7) which he had built in 1948.

The closing and filling of the Westwego canal (the locks connecting the waterway to the Mississippi River were closed in 1939; the canal was filled between 1954 and 1962) made obtaining fresh seafood more difficult. However, Martin operated his cannery until his death in 1973. After that, his widow Myrtle Martin and her brother Robert Duplantis (also known as B.J.) ran the business until 1982. All portions of the plant now belong to other parties.

### Other Resources Associated with Westwego's Seafood Industry

The Ed Martin property is the only surviving historic seafood processing plant in Westwego (i.e., meeting the Register's fifty year requirement and retaining sufficient integrity). Two plants associated with his competitors survive, but one (Robinson) dates to a 1951-53 improvement program, and the other (Cutcher) was built in stages between 1938 and the mid-1960s.

In terms of properties associated with Ed Martin's business, as noted previously the small building in which he opened his Westwego operation in 1934 has been lost. The above referenced small building Martin had constructed c. 1940 and ice house do survive, but they are under separate ownership from this nomination's sponsors. They are located across Second Street about even with the main building's rear addition and do not read as part of the same plant. If the owner's permission is secured in the future, an addendum can be made to this nomination. In any event, the most important part of Martin's operation is being nominated -- the large two-story building that served as a shrimp canning facility and the company's headquarters. It is this building that symbolizes Ed Martin Seafood to locals -- in effect, the company's corporate image. As a rare survivor to represent Westwego's all-important seafood industry, the property is a strong candidate for National Register listing.



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9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Reeves, William D. Westwego: From Cheniere To Canal. Jefferson Parish Historical Series Monograph 14. Westwego, LA: Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Alario, Sr., 1996.

Site visit by National Register staff.

Telephone Interview with Alan Robinson, son of the founder of the Robinson Canning Company, June 22, 2000.

Telephone Interview with Anthony Cutcher, son of the founder of the Cutcher Canning Company, June 22, 2000.

Telephone Interview with Robert (B. J.) Duplantis, long-time plant manager for the Ed Martin Seafood Company, June 22, 2000.

Windshield survey of Westwego, Louisiana by National Register staff.

Previous documentation on file (NPS): NA

- \_\_\_ 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: #

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- X State Historic Preservation Office
\_\_\_ Other State Agency
\_\_\_ Federal Agency
\_\_\_ Local Government
\_\_\_ University
\_\_\_ Other (Specify Repository):

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**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

Acreege of Property: Approximately 1 1/2 acres

UTM References:	<b>Zone</b>	<b>Easting</b>	<b>Northing</b>
	15	775780	3312440

Verbal Boundary Description:

Lots 82A and 86A, Salaville, City of Westwego, Jefferson Parish, Louisiana

Boundary Justification:

Boundaries follow the property lines of the parcel of land historically associated with the Martin home and adjacent seafood factory.

**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

Name/Title: National Register staff

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

Telephone: (225) 342-8160

Date: June 2000

**PROPERTY OWNERS**

Factory: Trinh Dinh  
 300 Sala Avenue  
 Westwego, Louisiana 70094  
 (504) 348-1152

House: Myrtle Martin  
 306 Sala Avenue  
 Westwego, Louisiana 70094  
 (504) 341-6572