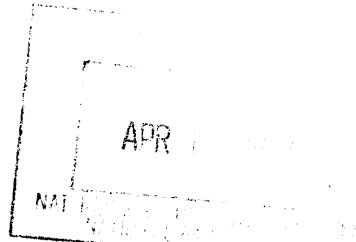


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form



This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Downtown Shreveport Historic District

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number bounded roughly by Commerce, Travis, Common & Lake N/A not for publication

city or town Shreveport N/A vicinity

state Louisiana code LA county Caddo code 017 zip code 71101

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this 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 meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Jon Fricker April 10, 1997
Signature of certifying official/Title Jonathan Fricker, Date
Deputy SHPO, Dept of Culture, Recreation and Tourism
State of Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register
 See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain:)

Edson F. Beall Signature of the Keeper Date of Action 5/27/97

Name of Property

County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private, public-local, public-State, public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- building(s), district, site, structure, object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Table with 2 columns: Contributing, Noncontributing. Rows for buildings, sites, structures, objects, Total.

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

108

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

- Commerce/trade: business, financial institution, specialty store, department store, warehouse
Social: meeting hall
Government: courthouse
Religion: religious facility
Recreation & Culture: theater
Transportation/rail-related

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

same as historic except for transportation/rail-related

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

- Italianate, Classical Revival, Moderne, Italian Renaissance, Gothic Revival

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

- foundation brick, concrete
walls brick, stucco, stone
roof other: tar and gravel
other stone, terra cotta

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Downtown Shreveport Historic District, Caddo Parish, LA

Section number 7 Page 1

This submission will replace the existing National Register form on the Shreveport Commercial Historic District, which was listed on the Register in March 1982. Its goals are to expand the present district, provide up-to-date descriptive information on the overall resource, and adequately address its significance. The proposed expansion roughly doubles the acreage of the existing district and adds forty-eight new contributing elements. The total number of buildings in the expanded district is 238. Contributing elements range in date from an 1860s bank to a 1946 car dealership, although most are from the twentieth century. Particularly important are major buildings from the teens and '20s when Shreveport experienced explosive oil boom growth and prosperity. Styles include Italianate, Classical Revival in various forms, other historic revival styles such as Gothic and Italian Renaissance, and, finally, Modernistic. In terms of building use, the boundaries encompass commercial buildings and numerous institutional buildings of the type one would expect to find in an urban downtown (governmental, religious, fraternal, etc.). In many blocks the district has an impressive three to five story scale. There are also several historic skyscrapers. Despite a 34% non-contributing rate and vacant lots and parking lots where historic buildings once stood, the Shreveport CBD retains its Register eligibility. It and the New Orleans CBD, as will be explained in Part 8, are without equal in Louisiana.

METHODOLOGY

Downtown Shreveport, one of the state's most important resources, has never been addressed comprehensively in terms of the National Register. Instead, a piecemeal approach has been taken. In 1979 a ten building district was listed in the 800 block of Texas Ave. Then in March 1982 a larger historic district (Shreveport Commercial Historic District) was listed. In the ensuing years various landmarks have been listed individually. This submission is an attempt to redress the matter, with the proposed boundaries encompassing the previously listed properties plus many more.

The Division of Historic Preservation has known for some time that the boundaries of the principal listing, the Sheveport Commercial Historic District, were flawed and that the form did not do justice to the resource. Very importantly, fifteen years have passed, and the fifty year cutoff now includes the 1930s and part of the 1940s when the downtown's Modernistic buildings were constructed. In terms of the boundaries, the original nomination concentrated on the two main commercial arteries, Milam and Texas, with their tightly packed party wall character. As is noted in the boundary justification: "Boundaries were drawn to

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**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Downtown Shreveport Historic District, Caddo Parish, LA
Section number 7 Page 2

encompass the tightly packed urban core of Shreveport which dates from the late 19th to the early 20th century.” The justification went on to recognize that there were a number of historic structures in the CBD outside the boundaries, but that there was a sharp change in character outside the “solid core,” primarily in terms of land use and concentration of pre-1930 buildings (the date used in the nomination as the 50 year cutoff).

In short, the boundaries were drawn conservatively based on the tightly packed party wall core and were based on 1930 being the 50 year cutoff. Also, even with these considerations taken into account, it is clear that there were a few instances of unexplainable exclusions. A prime example is the 1925 Italian Renaissance YMCA which is immediately outside the boundaries.

The impetus for this submission was a request from the Shreveport Downtown Development Authority that the boundaries be examined to determine if they could be expanded. The DDD’s interest was fueled by various developers who were interested in buildings outside the boundaries and needed the 20% tax credit to make the projects feasible financially. The Division of Historic Preservation’s National Register Coordinator made a three-day trip to the city, walking the downtown street by street. At that point it was clear that the current boundaries would not “stand up in court” and that a considerable expansion was warranted.

It also became clear that more than a boundary expansion was needed. The form was fairly old by National Register standards and the documentation was not to the level of today. Also, the district was listed 15 years ago, and any resource changes over time, particularly an urban CBD with constant development pressure. Hence, as noted at the beginning, this is a complete overhaul of the existing form, bringing it up-to-date and adequately addressing the significance of the resource.

THE SETTING AND GENERAL BACKGROUND

Downtown Shreveport lies on the west bank of the Red River. Immediately to the north Cross Bayou flows into the Red. Almost all of the district lies on the original townsite as laid out in 1836. The Shreve Town Company imposed a rigid grid plan, eight blocks deep from the river. Texas Street developed as the grand commercial thoroughfare of the downtown, beginning at the river and culminating with the First Methodist Church at its head. (The church in the nineteenth century was Gothic; today’s is a 1913 grand neo-classical

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Downtown Shreveport Historic District, Caddo Parish, LA

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building with a pedimented portico.) Other streets to develop as major commercial arteries in the nineteenth century were Milam, which parallels Texas, and Commerce Street, along the river. Extending from the original grid at an angle is Texas Avenue, the beginning of the old road to Texas.

Critical to understanding the district is Shreveport's role as a major regional transportation/distribution hub, initially through steamboat traffic on the Red River. By the late nineteenth century, railroads had superseded steamboats, and by the turn of the century Shreveport had no less than seven railroads running from it in every direction imaginable. In today's district there is a rail line running north/south between Commerce and the river and a line running east/west at the southern end of the district. In the nineteenth century Commerce Street was lined with warehouses and cotton factoring houses reliant upon the Red River. By the late nineteenth century these buildings, and others to be built in the twentieth century, relied upon railroads. Today's district retains various warehousing facilities on Commerce and along the previously mentioned railroad at the southern end of the district plus an early twentieth century freight depot.

At the end of the nineteenth century Shreveport's commercial arteries were lined with party wall Italianate commercial buildings (like those found today in certain parts of the district), and streets such as Crockett were residential. All of this was to change, however, in the new century due to a phenomenal oil boom which literally changed the face of downtown Shreveport. Old Victorian houses and commercial buildings were torn down as new commercial and institutional buildings took their place. The pace of construction was so rapid in the teens and '20s, when the population of the city doubled in a ten year period, that the local paper carried on the front page a standing feature called "See Shreveport Grow" as each day it heralded new building permits. It is from this period that one finds the grand institutional buildings, impressive commercial buildings, and many of the skyscrapers that contribute so much to the urban character of downtown Shreveport.

In terms of changing land use patterns, one must also mention the considerable impact of the automobile. Occurring simultaneously with the feverish construction of oil boom prosperity were the early years of the automobile age. Older buildings were razed to make room for specially built auto dealerships, service stations, parking garages and surface parking lots. This pattern of development is particularly evident in the southern part of the district, which does not have, and for the most part never had, the tightly packed party wall character of Milam and Texas. Along Crockett and Cotton and Texas Avenue one finds two auto dealerships, two historic parking garages and three service stations mixed in with free-standing

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Continuation Sheet**

Downtown Shreveport Historic District, Caddo Parish, LA
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buildings and some party wall construction. Sanborn maps show many other long-gone automobile related resources, including service parking lots, which we tend to think of as a modern land use pattern. The southern end of the district is also characterized by various large warehouses adjacent to the railroad corridor. Most of these are free-standing.

BREAKDOWN BY STYLES

The following is a percentage breakdown by styles, based upon a building-by-building evaluation by the Division of Historic Preservation. Broadly speaking, there are two generations of buildings in downtown Shreveport. The early generation (1860s to 1900) consists of two and three story commercial buildings which were almost entirely builder designed and which share similar motifs. Italianate was the overwhelming choice of style. The work of the academically trained architect is rare. (There appear to have been two architects practicing in Shreveport by the late nineteenth century. One, N. S. Allen, designed residences for prominent families and various other buildings. There was also an architect named McNabb. He designed at least one commercial building in the district -- an elaborate c.1900 Italianate building in the 100 block of Texas.)

The early twentieth century generation of buildings represents something of a "coming of age" for a city the size of Shreveport. By this time there were a number of academically trained architects in the city, designing buildings in a wide variety of styles. In the building boom of the 1920s, with over 20 million dollars spent on major construction projects, the city's architects received numerous important commissions. The most prolific among them were Edward F. Neild and William and Sam Wiener. The latter are particularly important. Sam Wiener, the older of the brothers, designed in a variety of styles over a long period of time, from various revival styles to pioneering works in the International Style. His younger brother William is known for his International Style designs in the 1930s, '40s and into the '50s.

Also, during these years the city was sufficiently prosperous and sophisticated to employ prominent out-of-state architects, such as Mann and Stern of Little Rock, and, very importantly, the prestigious New York firm of McKim, Mead and White.

Italianate (16%)

Late nineteenth century photographs show downtown Shreveport with block after block of splendid Italianate commercial buildings. Despite the rebuilding of much of the downtown

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Continuation Sheet**

Downtown Shreveport Historic District, Caddo Parish, LA
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in the teens and twenties and more modern encroachments, there are a surprising number of examples remaining, most of which are quite impressive within the context of Louisiana. Most are located close to the river, particularly along Commerce and in the 100 block of Texas. The latter, known as Shreve Square, is particularly important because of its concentration and overall quality.

The survivors range in date from the 1860s through the turn of the century. Generally speaking, regardless of the date, they share the following characteristics. They are two to three stories in scale, with the first story usually taking the form of a plate glass shopfront with cast-iron columns. Also, it can be said that architectural richness is achieved largely through elaborate brickwork.

But despite some similarities, there are two distinct phases of the Italianate in downtown Shreveport. The early phase follows the tradition of the mainstream American mid-Victorian commercial Italianate. These buildings are modular and generally have a continuous level roofline (see, for example, photo #39). Architectural richness is achieved through cornices, ornamentation of the upper story openings, and decorative cast-iron work at the shopfront. Here one sees the so-called stilted segmental arch, in which the arch consists of two straight sides above the impost block and a segmental curve (photo #38). This feature, which appears on four or five of the district's buildings, has been identified by architectural historian Marcus Whiffen as one of the hallmarks of what he terms "the high Victorian Italianate." Most of the district's early Italianate buildings, however, feature more typical segmental head windows, many of which have cast-iron lintels. A popular lintel design is a pediment shape resting on consoles.

Later Italianate buildings (c.1900) utilize a different and more comprehensive approach to achieve architectural richness. They are intensively articulated, in terms of massing, number and variety of openings and wealth of ornamental features. There is seldom even a square foot of uninterrupted wall. Boldly formed pilasters divide the facades into different size units with numerous openings of various sizes and shapes and numerous instances of grouped openings. This is in sharp contrast to the modularity (or regularity) of the earlier generation. Great effect is achieved through decoratively shaped parapets. Usually this takes the form of a central projecting section crowned by a shaped parapet. Turn-of-the-century examples also feature the most intricate brickwork, with pronounced corbelled tables, blind arcading and various decorative panels. In addition, unlike the early examples, in which the construction is confined to brick, stucco and cast-iron, c.1900 buildings also feature the use of decorative stone and cast concrete for accent, adding further to their complexity. Perhaps the most elaborate turn-

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of-the-century Italianate buildings are the Justin Gras Building, with its free-standing colonnettes (photo #58), and an architect designed building in the 100 block of Texas, with its massive central round arch and sunburst spandrels and very elaborate parapet accented by a central tablet framed by pencil-thin "towers" (photo #84).

Classical Revival/Beaux Arts (18%)

To a large extent this category represents the rebuilding of much of downtown Shreveport in the teens and twenties due to unprecedented oil boom prosperity. Millions of dollars were spent on both private and public building projects, with each building seemingly trying to outdo all others. While some buildings in this category are not as fully developed as others, many are grand monuments to the city's Great Gatsby era wealth.

This is a large category with wide-ranging examples, making it difficult to generalize. Nonetheless, several overall observations are possible. The district contains a goodly number of mainstream landmark neo-classical buildings in permutations ranging from opulently Beaux Arts to severe and restrained classicism. Obviously, there are also more low-key examples in which classical features are applied to a squarish masonry commercial building, sometimes sparingly. There also are a few buildings in which classical features are used in a playful, very anti-classical way. The most striking example is the Allen Building at the corner of Texas and Louisiana with its hugely oversized, almost caricatured jack arches (photo #68).

Because it is difficult to generalize about this category of buildings, perhaps a brief discussion of major landmarks would be illuminating. Most would agree that the grandest neo-classical landmark in downtown Shreveport is the huge seven story Caddo Parish Courthouse, which stands majestically on a tree-shaded city block (photo #30). The upper four stories are recessed from the main building mass to form a massive colonnaded block with three story free-standing Ionic columns. Dedicated in 1928, the building also exhibits the emerging Modernistic taste in some of its detailing. Four other major institutional buildings in the classical mode ornament the downtown -- the Beaux Arts Scottish Rite Cathedral, with its over scaled coupled composite order columns and its elaborately symmetrical silhouette; the B'nai Zion Temple, with its massive pedimented portico (photo #10); the Old Municipal Building, with its severe facade culminating in a tall range of flat Ionic pilaster strips (photo #21); and the 1913 First Methodist Church at the head of Texas Street with its grand pedimented portico and extensive classical ornamentation (photo #69). (Flanking complementary pavilions were added to the church in the 1960s. The steeple was added in 1972.)

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Downtown Shreveport Historic District, Caddo Parish, LA

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In terms of grand classical commercial monuments, perhaps the most striking is the neo-Baroque Strand Theatre, which has a corner entrance crowned by an openwork dome (photo #20). This opulent, richly decorated building is more akin to world's fair architecture than urban commercial architecture. Of particular interest in the landmark category is Fibleman's Department Store, a huge four story building at the corner of Texas and Louisiana (photo #63). This temple of commerce is truly Roman in grandeur with pronounced three story composite pilasters and a wealth of classical bas relief ornamentation. Its principal facade is crowned by four large urns. Finally, in the landmark category are three skyscrapers ornamented with classical motifs (see skyscraper section below).

Other Styles (4%)

This category includes a handful of buildings, almost all of which are major landmarks. In the Gothic Revival style, one finds the Slattery Building, a 1920s skyscraper (see below); a richly articulated brick church (St. Mark's Episcopal Church, 1905); and a four story commercial building with arched windows. There are three buildings in the district which are specific references to the Italian Renaissance: the Old Shreve Memorial Library (1923), designed in the manner of an Italian villa; the Old Federal Building (1912 - photo #72), which takes the form of a grand sixteenth century palazzo; and the YMCA (1925), with a design inspired, albeit remotely, by the Villa Medici in Rome.

Modern Movement (4%)

There are twelve buildings in downtown Shreveport which reflect the Modernistic taste, which is a significant number for a CBD in Louisiana, even a large one. They represent various forms of Modernism, from a classic Art Deco Salvation Army building (photo #19), to the streamlined moderne Andress Motors Company Building, built in 1946 at the corner of Texas and Grand (photos 11 & 13), to the undulating Pittsburgh Plate Glass warehouse on Cotton next to the railroad (1939 - photo #5).

Two of the Modernistic buildings are skyscrapers. Of the New York City setback type is the Commercial National Bank, 1940, designed by McKim, Mead and White, with Sam Wiener acting as local architect. The builder was James Stewart and Company of New York. The base of the bank has smooth unadorned limestone walls with a large, rather solemn entrance accented with reeded curving walls. To each side is a stylized bas relief eagle. Crowning the building are a series of setbacks with a modicum of decoration. The other skyscraper influenced by Modernism is the 1930s Medical Arts Building (see skyscraper

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Downtown Shreveport Historic District, Caddo Parish, LA

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section below).

Finally, there are two rather individualistic examples of Modernism in the district -- the 1930s Andress Motors Building (photo #18) which preceded the previously mentioned 1946 dealership and the Municipal Auditorium (photo #14, 1929, Sam Wiener, architect). The Andress car dealership is a predictable boxy building in terms of massing, but has extremely unusual, very three-dimensional geometric ornamentation. The huge Municipal Auditorium relies upon massing and ornamentation to achieve its effect, although largely the latter. (As an aside, the building is also well known as the venue of a radio program called "The Louisiana Hayride," where many prominent entertainers got their start, including Elvis Presley.)

One other example of Modernism deserves mention, the Palais Royale Department Store (photo #52), an older building which was completely remodeled in 1946. Located on a prominent corner across from the courthouse, the severely articulated four story building curves boldly around the corner, with wide facades on both streets. Large expanses of wall surface are completely unadorned, reflecting the International Style penchant of the architect, William Wiener. Ribbon-like windows, also reflecting the International Style, light the second, third and fourth floors.

No Style (24%)

These are the types of buildings one finds in any historic downtown. Although they do not fit into stylistic categories, the Shreveport examples are often well detailed, featuring decoratively shaped parapets, brick panels, decorative belt courses, etc. The percentage of no style buildings in downtown Shreveport is inflated by numerous utilitarian buildings which are important from a historical standpoint -- specifically, a freight depot and railroad-related warehouses and some automobile related resources, including three gas stations and two historic parking garages. While the no style buildings do not contribute specifically to the architectural significance of downtown Shreveport, they provide a complete picture of a historic CBD and contribute to the district's role as a major center of commerce, both retail and wholesale, as described in Part 8.

Non-contributing (34%)

The non-contributing category includes buildings which are less than fifty years old and

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Downtown Shreveport Historic District, Caddo Parish, LA

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historic buildings which have been severely altered. Most of the district's non-historic construction is small in scale (one or two story buildings with a relatively small footprint). Also, there are a handful of historic looking buildings (at least to the untrained eye) which were constructed in the last decade or so. All of these are one or two stories.

The exceptions to the relatively small scale, low key character of the non-contributing elements are six non-historic skyscrapers, four modern multi-story (three to four story) parking garages, and a bus station with distinctive canvas canopies. The skyscrapers range from 1950s relatively innocuous brick examples to dark glass towers constructed within the last twenty years. Easily the most intrusive is the Commercial National Bank Tower, a glass and limestone monolith built within the last ten years adjacent to the 1940 CNB skyscraper noted above. A glass atrium connects the two. Although this building admittedly dominates the Shreveport skyline as you approach the city, its presence is not nearly as intrusive at street level within the CBD, as it is hoped photos accompanying this submission will demonstrate. The building blends in better at street level for various reasons. Its first several stories are of largely unadorned smooth faced limestone construction, much like the nearby 1940 CNB skyscraper, apparently an attempt made by the architect to complement the older building. Also, stylized eagles like those on the 1940 building were used to accent the entrance. Finally, when viewed from along Texas it is one of three closely grouped skyscrapers, two of which are historic and almost as tall. (For views of the CNB Tower from Texas Street, see photos 61, 74, 75, & 77.)

TALL BUILDINGS

During the nineteenth century commercial architecture in the district maintained a strict two to three story scale, with downtown church spires towering above the surrounding commercial building-scape. This began to change after the turn of the century. Sometime between 1902 and 1904 the Vordenbaumen-Eastham Co., Ltd. constructed a five story brick and stone building on Milam Street (middle of photo #56). At the time, it was hailed as a great event. One source noted, "The building is at the present time the tallest in the city of Shreveport, and looms up prominently in the center of the business section." This essentially stripped down classical building also features rockface voussoirs and lintels - hesitant touches of the Richardsonian Romanesque.

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Downtown Shreveport Historic District, Caddo Parish, LA

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Steel frame construction, which, along with the elevator, formed the basis of the American skyscraper movement, first appeared in Shreveport in 1910 with the construction of the Hutchinson Building (photo #71). Located on Texas Avenue, this fairly narrow six story terra cotta faced building features groupings of slender, delicate shafts which rise to a series of elliptical arches crowned by a pronounced cornice. The facade is mainly windows, made possible by the steel framing. The building's numerous terra cotta panels, with their repetitive designs, have an overall Sullivanesque character.

Shreveport received its first true skyscraper the same year the Hutchinson Building was constructed (1910) when Mann and Stern of Little Rock designed a ten story building at the corner of Texas and Edwards for the Commercial National Bank (photo #80). The district's only fully developed Chicago style skyscraper, the building features ebullient terra cotta ornamentation in the top two stories, giving it a Baroque feeling.

Two other skyscrapers in the district should be viewed within the tradition of the Chicago style. Here the base-shaft-capital articulation, though present, is less pronounced. Eight and ten stories in height, they are richly ornamented in classical motifs. (See photos 44-46, 49, & 50.)

In 1924 the Slattery Building (photo 47) departed from the Chicago style. Designed by Mann and Stern and built at a cost of 1.5 million, it soared to an unprecedented seventeen stories, with the top three stories set back at the corners in a manner reminiscent of New York skyscrapers. Its limestone exterior is richly plied with French and English Gothic details, a distinctive treatment that marks the Slattery Building as one of only two Gothic style skyscrapers in Louisiana. (The other is the 1925 Pere Marquette Building in New Orleans.)

A far more pronounced New York style skyscraper is the previously mentioned "new" Commercial National Bank Building (photos 75, 76), a soaring limestone shaft which rises to a series of cutaway setbacks. It was built in 1940 as a new home for the Commercial National Bank which was vacating its 1910 skyscraper (see above).

Finally, the nine story Medical Arts Building (photos 66,67) employs a form of modernism developed by Finnish architect Eliel Saarinen in his unsuccessful design for the Chicago Tribune Tower. The exterior is articulated as a series of slender vertical shafts with windows set between. Constructed in the 1930s, this building is also noteworthy for its numerous intricately worked cast concrete panels of conventional flowers and grapes on the lower stories and stylized flowers thrusting skyward at the upper level.

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Downtown Shreveport Historic District, Caddo Parish, LA

Section number 7 Page 11Assessment of Integrity

There are basically two issues involved in assessing the district's integrity: the nature and scale of the 34% non-contributing buildings and instances of vacant lots and parking lots where historic buildings once stood. The overall character of non-contributing elements has been described already. It should be stressed that in most instances the non-contributing buildings are dominated visually by the district's strongly articulated, often large-scale historic buildings. Admittedly, it is hard to mitigate six modern skyscrapers. However, it should be noted that the district's skyline is shared by several historic skyscrapers. Thus the overall effect is that of a mixed skyline in which the historic flavor is still clearly evident. This is particularly true when viewed from the south within the district, as shown in photo 27. In this view one sees four historic and three non-historic skyscrapers. (One of the latter is outside the district boundaries due to considerable modern construction in the north part of the original 1836 grid.) For other views showing non-historic skyscrapers, see photos 22, 49, 53, 59, 61, 70, 74, 75, & 79.

Perhaps the district's most unusual non-contributing element is the bus station mentioned above. Although the building itself is long and low in scale (one story), the facility "makes a statement" due to its canvas canopy treatment. But despite its admitted distinctiveness, the bus station is absorbed better than one might think (due largely to the scale of nearby contributing elements). See photos 30 and 31.

As one would expect in a large urban area under considerable development pressure, there are also instances of historic buildings being demolished for surface parking and parking garages. And while this is an issue in downtown Shreveport, it is not serious enough to threaten the district's Register eligibility in the opinion of the State Historic Preservation Office. Most of the surface parking lots are along Crockett and Cotton in the southern part of the district, which Sanborn maps show as not having the dense party wall character of Texas and Milam by the 1930s. These land use patterns, caused partly by the automobile, are described more fully elsewhere in Part 7. Suffice it to say, that the southern part of the district had a more open character in the 1930s and '40s than Texas and Milam, including surface parking lots and small gas stations on otherwise vacant parcels. Yes, there are more parking lots today, and yes, the loss of historic buildings is regrettable; however, the change in land use is not as dramatic as one might think without the foregoing knowledge.

In summation, even with the "blemishes" noted above, the Shreveport CBD is an immensely impressive resource with a strong historic character, as can be seen in the photos

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Downtown Shreveport Historic District, Caddo Parish, LA
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accompanying this submission. Its wealth of well-detailed, intensively styled buildings, many of which are monumental in scale, make it and New Orleans without question the state's most architecturally significant CBDs. Finally, it easily retains sufficient historic character to convey its role as a local and regional center of commerce, as explained in Part 8.

PHOTO INFORMATION COMMON TO ALL

Photographer: Donna Fricker
Date Taken: September/October 1996
Location of Negatives: LA SHPO

CONTRIBUTING ELEMENTS PREVIOUSLY LISTED ON REGISTER

Shreveport Commercial Historic District (88)
Texas Avenue Historic District (10)
Municipal Memorial Auditorium
St. Mark's Episcopal Church
B'nai Zion Temple
Central Fire Station
Scottish Rite Cathedral
Strand Theatre
Jefferson Hotel
Old Municipal Building
Taylors Wholesale Grocery Warehouse/Lee Hardware Warehouse
YMCA
TOTAL OF 108

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations N/A
(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

commerce

architecture

Period of Significance

c.1865 - 1946

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

various architects

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested (previously
- previously listed in the National Register listed properties
- previously determined eligible by the National within boundaries)
- 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

Name of repository:

Downtown Shreveport Historic District
Name of Property

Caddo Parish, LA
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property approx. 110 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

| | | | |
|---|------|-------------|---------------|
| 1 | 1 5 | 4 2 9 6 6 0 | 3 5 9 7 9 4 0 |
| | Zone | Easting | Northing |
| 2 | 1 5 | 4 3 0 3 0 0 | 3 5 9 7 2 2 0 |

| | | | |
|---|------|-------------|---------------|
| 3 | 1 5 | 4 2 9 4 4 0 | 3 5 9 6 5 2 0 |
| | Zone | Easting | Northing |
| 4 | 1 5 | 4 2 9 0 2 0 | 3 5 9 7 0 2 0 |

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Donna Fricker, National Register Coordinator

organization Louisiana Division of Historic Preservation date October/November 1996

street & number P. O. Box 44247 telephone 504-342-8160

city or town Baton Rouge state LA zip code 70804

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name multiple ownership

street & number _____ telephone _____

city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Downtown Shreveport Historic District, Caddo Parish, LA
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The Downtown Shreveport Historic District is of statewide architectural significance. The CBDs of Shreveport and New Orleans are unmatched in Louisiana due to their urban scale and incomparable historic buildings. The period of significance under architecture spans from c.1865, the date of the district's earliest contributing elements, to 1946, the date of its latest (and also the fifty year cutoff). Downtown Shreveport is of local and regional commercial significance because it was a major focus of both retail and wholesale commerce. The period of significance under commerce is also c.1865 to 1946. Shreveport was a hub of commerce from its founding in the 1830s up through and past the 50 year cutoff. (Circa 1865 is the beginning date because it is the date of the oldest commercial buildings in the district.)

ARCHITECTURE

Downtown Shreveport's architectural significance rests upon its superiority in various categories, as detailed below.

Shreveport's superb collection of Italianate commercial buildings is something of an architectural signature of the downtown. During the period from about 1860 to 1900 Italianate was the most popular style for buildings of commerce in cities and towns across the nation. Marcus Whiffen describes it as "the practical style of the day. It was not an ecclesiastical or a governmental style but a domestic and (above all) commercial one." In these years, any town of any size would have had a significant complement of Italianate commercial buildings. Period photographs of Louisiana central business districts reveal that this was true in the Pelican State as well. But in the hundred or so years since the style faded from fashion, the overwhelming majority of examples in the state have been lost. While a number of communities may have two or three Italianate commercial buildings, only two, New Orleans and Shreveport, retain a significant collection. These two large urban areas should be considered centers of Italianate commercial architecture within the state. These buildings contribute mightily to the two cities' architectural identity and interest. Indeed, in the Shreveport district, sixteen percent of the building stock is in the Italianate style. All are convincing examples and many are quite elaborate, particularly in massing and decorative brickwork.

Of course, much of the district's architectural significance is related directly to the immense prosperity of the early twentieth century. It is clear to even the casual observer that there was money to spend in the teens and twenties, much of it going to

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Downtown Shreveport Historic District, Caddo Parish, LA

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monuments of progress in the downtown. During these years classicism, in its various permutations, succeeded Italianate as the style of choice for commercial buildings and also became the norm for private and public institutions. In this downtown Shreveport was typical of towns and cities across the country. What is special about Shreveport, within the context of Louisiana, is the number and quality of major landmarks. One-third of the district's Classical Revival buildings are fully developed, very well detailed examples of the style. These landmarks, many of which are monumental in character, feature convincingly rendered pilasters of stone or terra cotta with sculpted capitals (in contrast to brick pilasters with molded capitals); free-standing columns; the colossal order; pedimented porticoes; and a wealth of ornamentation, including bas relief roundels and panels and rooftop sculptural elements.

The district's two most intensely detailed classical commercial buildings are Fiebleman's Department Store and the Strand Theatre, both from the mid-1920s. Fiebleman's, a large four story corner building, is truly Roman in its grandeur. This extremely well detailed temple of commerce has impressive three story fluted pilasters with intricate capitals, each featuring a winged female face. Other details include bas relief stone and bronze panels depicting griffins, female heads, etc.; innumerable roundels with figure sculpture; and four large rooftop urns. The almost Baroque Strand, complete with an openwork dome, is resplendent with ornate classical features, including caryatids, rooftop urns and urns above one entrance, niches, and intricately worked decorative panels.

A smaller, often unnoticed, but well detailed classical building is the Giddens Building on Milam across from the courthouse. In addition to terra cotta cartouches and a rooftop balustrade, the building is ornamented with large panels of figure sculpture featuring a woman's head atop a shield flanked by volute scrolls. Framing each composition is an overscaled swag motif.

Also reflecting the Great Gatsby era prosperity of Shreveport is a small but significant number of buildings representing eclectic alternatives to mainstream neo-classicism. These convincingly styled buildings add considerably to the architectural richness of the district and contribute to Shreveport's identity as a center of twentieth century eclecticism within Louisiana. Examples in the downtown range from a small Italian villa, to a grand Renaissance style palazzo, to a very unusual Gothic Revival skyscraper. Then there is the very Italian YMCA, with its courtyard, loggia, and towers reminiscent of Rome's Villa Medici.

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Downtown Shreveport Historic District, Caddo Parish, LA

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Shreveport is also well known as a center of the Modern Movement in Louisiana. Downtown Shreveport and downtown New Orleans have the largest collections of Modernistic buildings in the state, and it can be argued that the collection in the Shreveport CBD is of greater architectural interest and significance because of its variety and distinctiveness. Examples cover the broadest range of the Modernist tradition, from textbook Art Deco, to a New York style skyscraper designed by McKim, Mead and White, to curving and undulating buildings in the streamlined moderne mode. Then there are two very individualistic buildings -- the Municipal Auditorium, with its overwhelmingly intense ornamentation, and the 1930s Andress car dealership, with its almost rock-like geometrical projections. By contrast, while the New Orleans collection is important, almost all of its examples are conventional Art Deco institutional buildings. Finally, it is interesting to note that the Modernistic style in Louisiana is almost entirely confined to institutional (mostly government) buildings. By contrast, in downtown Shreveport, all but two of the examples are commercial.

Finally, the district's seven or eight historic skyscrapers (the number depending upon the definition) contribute to its statewide architectural significance. Downtown Shreveport has Louisiana's only fully developed Chicago style skyscraper outside New Orleans, the 1910 Commercial National Bank Building, and two of the three skyscrapers in the New York setback style outside New Orleans. Also, Shreveport's skyscrapers are of interest because Gothic Revival is added to the more typical stylistic choices of Classical Revival and Modernistic.

COMMERCE

Due to its excellent transportation facilities, first via the Red River and later a plethora of railroads, Shreveport historically was a major crossroads of commerce for what is known as the Ark-La-Tex region. Downtown Shreveport was home to innumerable wholesale concerns and was the focus of the city's status as an important interior cotton market. Also, as a large city (population of about 100,000 in 1940), Shreveport was a major retail center for not only its citizens but the surrounding area of small towns and farmland.

Commerce has been central to Shreveport from the very beginning. The town was founded in 1836 as a business venture by a group of investors known as the

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Downtown Shreveport Historic District, Caddo Parish, LA

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Shreve Town Company. With the removal in the 1830s of the "Great Raft," a series of logjams on the Red River, the new town became the head of steamboat traffic. By 1850 Shreveport had grown to a town of 1,728 persons, and in 1860 the population was 2,190.

Steamboats, loaded with various products, most notably cotton, reigned supreme until the mid-1880s, by which time they had been supplanted by railroads. The bustling commerce of steamboat era Shreveport is captured so well in the following description from 1871 that it deserves quoting at length:

We are willing to back the business appearance of the levee yesterday afternoon against any other levee of its size in the world. The wharf was lined with the elegant steamers . . . , all busy as bees, but one. The landing was packed with freight from one end to the other, which innumerable drays were endeavoring to carry off, but judging from the progress they made, it will take them two or three days to do it. Every description of freight from a box of marches to a steam cotton compress . . . could be scattered broadcast. Hugh piles of bacon, flour, whiskey, lard, pork, hay, oats, bran and corn could be seen in front of the *Lockwood*, while the *Anna* made a beautiful display of furniture of all kinds from a trundle bed to a set of parlor furniture. All of this was flanked by rows of cotton and bales of hides for the loading steamers. The streets, alleys and all available space around the different warehouses, were blocked with cotton, and the street proper was jammed with cotton wagons. . . . The sidewalk was one dense mass of people, moving to and fro the best they could amidst the thousand and one packages of freight tumbled in and out of the stores. . . . Take it all in all, it was a bully sight, and almost enough to make a poor man feel rich.

The indisputable importance of cotton to Shreveport 's economy is confirmed in *The Commercial Directory of the City of Shreveport for the Year 1875* which lists nine cotton warehouse keepers, two cotton compresses, and fifteen cotton factors and commission merchants.

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Cotton remained an important component of the Shreveport economy throughout the historic period. But by the late nineteenth century, as occurred throughout Louisiana, it was shipped more and more by railroads, with steamboating entering a period of decline and eventual demise. Shreveport's first rail service (linking it to nearby Marshall, Texas) came in 1866, and by 1873 the line had been completed further west to Dallas. It was the decade of the 1880s, however, that was the true beginning of Shreveport's emergence as a railroad center. In 1882 service was established with New Orleans, and in 1883-84 the Vicksburg, Shreveport, and Pacific was built from Monroe, Louisiana, some 100 miles to the east, over the Red River to Shreveport. In short, there was a north-south line to New Orleans and a major east-west line. Of course, this rapid expansion of railroads meant the end of the colorful steamboat era. By 1884-85 railroad freight receipts exceeded those of steamboats. Additional railroads came to Shreveport in the late nineteenth century, until by 1904 the city was pierced by no less than seven trunk lines. Railroads ran from the city in many different directions in much the manner of spokes on a wagon wheel, or as one source termed it "like the tentacles of a giant octopus."

This excellent railroad network enabled Shreveport to become in the early twentieth century and throughout the historic period a major distribution center for the Ark-La-Tex region. Cotton remained very important to the local economy, with Shreveport being exceeded only by Memphis and Dallas as interior cotton markets. There were several years in the early twentieth century when freight receipts reached 250,000 bales. Railroads also made possible various other important factors in the city's early twentieth century economy, most notably the lumber industry and various wholesale concerns. Particularly prevalent among the latter were wholesale grocery firms, and in fact, Shreveport is said to have had the largest concentration of wholesale grocers in the state. A 1904 publication boasted that the city's wholesale merchants "cover a tributary field spreading in all directions from 100-300 miles of almost undisputed territory." By 1937 the city had 162 wholesale concerns doing a gross annual business of \$30,000,000 and employing 2,015 people.

Added to an already vibrant economy was the discovery of one of the world's largest oil fields, the Caddo Field, in 1905. In addition to conventional oil wells dotting the landscape, Caddo Lake was home to what are regarded as the world's first off-shore oil wells. Oil boom towns sprang up overnight throughout the area, and Shreveport was awash in money as the financial and support center for the Caddo Field. Big oil companies had their headquarters in the city and various support facilities

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Downtown Shreveport Historic District, Caddo Parish, LA
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were located there (for example, warehousing for oil field supplies). Production in the Caddo Field as well as the opening of new fields in adjacent East Texas helped Shreveport escape the worst of the Great Depression, not to mention the opening in 1933 of a large Army Air Corps (later Air Force) base, Barksdale, just over the river in Bossier City.

The foregoing commercial themes are well represented in the Downtown Shreveport Historic District, most notably wholesale warehousing for various products, ranging from cotton, to hardware, to groceries, to oil field supplies. As would be expected, these buildings are concentrated along Commerce Street with its railroad and the Red River beyond and along the rail corridor in the southern section of the district. Notable examples on Commerce include the two story c.1900 Hicks Company Limited Wholesale Grocery firm at Travis Street; Ardis and Company, Ltd., Wholesale Grocers and Cotton Factors, with a large building at the corner of Caddo and Commerce constructed sometime between 1899 and 1904; and a large four story building across the street remodeled in the 1930s and used as a cotton warehouse (per 1935 Sanborn map). A particularly important building along Commerce is the early twentieth century Illinois Central freight depot, one of only two depots surviving in the city. (The other is to the south of the district and is individually listed on the Register.) The extremely long one story brick Illinois Central depot is very well preserved on the exterior, retaining all of its original details, including segmental head openings, freight doors, a bracketed roof, and freight platforms.

The importance of the railroad is also well represented in the southernmost section of the district, where there is in effect a warehouse district. The largest is the Taylor Wholesale Grocers and Cotton Factors Warehouse/Lee Hardware Company building located at Edwards and Cotton. It was built in 1904 as a wholesale grocery and cotton warehouse, but in 1910 was taken over by Lee Hardware. A four story 1920s building with neo-classical details at Crockett and Market, now known as the United Jewelers building, appears on the 1935 Sanborn map as the Lee Dry Goods wholesale warehouse. Other warehouses in this section of the district include the 1930s Pittsburgh Plate Glass Warehouse, wedged between the rail line and Cotton Street, and various buildings labeled on the 1935 Sanborn map as oil well supply warehouses.

In addition to its status as a regional wholesale center, Shreveport, of course, was a major retail center for its citizens and those in the surrounding towns, villages

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Downtown Shreveport Historic District, Caddo Parish, LA
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and farmland lured by "big city" shopping. According to a 1933 publication, the city's retail stores in 1930 reported to the census annual sales of more than forty million dollars. A 1937 source describes a retail trade that served approximately 500,000. Also, one can imagine the dazzling variety of stores there must have been, for example, in the booming 1920s. A 1933 source bragged: "In the stores of Shreveport one finds a ready answer to every need, whether it be thumb tacks or automobiles, soda crackers or Paris gowns." Of course, there are innumerable buildings in the nominated district to represent this retail ascendancy, whether they be large department stores or smaller specialty shops. Perhaps more than any other the Fiebleman Department Store represents the Babbitt-like optimism and boosterism of 1920s Shreveport, a decade in which the population doubled and when 20 million dollars worth of major construction projects were completed. With its Roman-like grandeur, it symbolizes the enthronement of commerce so characteristic of the era.

Finally, it is worth noting that the downtown Shreveport district retains a significant complement of buildings which housed automobile related commerce, both goods and services. These survivors include three car dealerships (one on Spring Street in addition to the two Andress dealerships mentioned previously), three service stations, an auto supply business, and two historic parking garages. This is an impressive number given the nature of the business and how fast it changes and especially given the modern development pressures in a large metropolitan area.

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Thomson, Bailey and Meador, Patricia L. *Shreveport: A Photographic Remembrance, 1873-1949*. LSU Press, 1987. This volume is of more importance than its title might imply. In addition to including scores of historic photos from the excellent collection at LSU-S Archives, the authors provide a good overview of the broad trends in Shreveport's history.

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Boundary Description:

The boundary is shown as a solid black line on the accompanying map. The shaded portion of the map corresponds to the existing National Register district (Shreveport Commercial Historic District).

Boundary Justification:

Boundaries were chosen to correspond to the concentration of historic buildings in downtown Shreveport. There are a few scattered historic commercial buildings outside the boundaries to the northwest and southeast but they are isolated from the district by non-contributing elements. This is particularly true to the northwest, where the original grid has been almost completely redeveloped. There are a handful of historic buildings in this area, but they could not be included without taking in a "wall" of modern skyscrapers along Travis. In short, Travis is an obvious boundary to the north because it is almost entirely modern in character.

Also excluded from this submission is a string of commercial buildings (about a block and a half) along Texas Avenue to the southwest of Grand (see map - southwest corner). These buildings, which begin at Austin Street, were excluded because they are visually separated from the main part of the CBD by a block-long vacant expanse of land. Because these buildings literally back up to the Ledbetter Heights Historic District (St. Paul's Bottoms), they are being nominated as a boundary increase to that district. This action was taken in consultation with NPS Register reviewer Marilyn Harper.