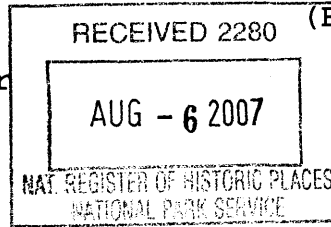


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service



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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 any 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

historical name **Pan-American Life Insurance Company Building**

other names/site number **N/A**

2. Location

street & number **2400 Canal Street** not for publication NA  
city or town **New Orleans** vicinity NA  
state **Louisiana** code **LA** county **Orleans** code **071** zip code **70119**

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant      nationally X statewide      locally. (     See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Jonathan Fricker Signature of certifying official Jonathan Fricker Date 8/1/07  
Deputy SHPO, LA Dept of Culture, Recreation and Tourism

State or Federal Agency or Tribal government

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

Name of Property

County and State

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this 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):

*Eason H. Beall* 9.19.07

*for* Signature of Keeper Date of Action

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: COMMERCE/TRADE

Sub: Business

Horizontal lines for listing historic functions.

Horizontal lines for listing historic functions.

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: VACANT/NOT IN USE

Sub:

Horizontal lines for listing current functions.

Horizontal lines for listing current functions.

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

MODERN MOVEMENT: International Style

Horizontal lines for architectural classification.

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE

roof ASPHALT

walls GLASS

other ALUMINUM

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

See attached.

Name of Property

County and State

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.
X 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 (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.) NA

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
B removed from its original location.
C a birthplace or a 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)

ARCHITECTURE

Four horizontal lines for entering additional categories.

Period of Significance

1951

Significant Dates

1951

**Pan-American Life Insurance Building**  
Name of Property

**Orleans Parish, LA**  
County and State

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)  
N/A

Cultural Affiliation  
N/A

Architect/Builder **SKIDMORE, OWINGS, AND MERRILL** (architects)  
**HOOTON, CLAUDE** (architect)  
**BRAAE-JENSEN, JENS** (structural engineer)  
**GAMBLE, CARY** (mechanical engineer)  
**GUNN, RALPH ELLIS** (landscape architect)

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.) See attached.

=====  
9. Major Bibliographical References  
=====  
(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.) See attached.

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  
 State Historic Preservation Office  
 Other State agency  
 Federal agency  
 Local government  
 University  
 Other  
Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**Pan-American Life Insurance Company Building**  
Name of Property

**Orleans Parish, LA**  
County and State

=====  
10. Geographical Data  
=====

Acreage of Property approx 2 acres

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

15/781320/3318260

Verbal Boundary Description: Square 553, First District, City of New Orleans  
(block bounded by Canal, S. Rocheblave, Cleveland and S. Tonti)

Boundary Justification: Boundaries correspond to historic boundaries (city  
block on which building was constructed).

=====  
11. Form Prepared By  
=====

name/title **Karen Kingsley, Ph.D., Professor Emerita, Tulane University School  
of Architecture**

organization **N/A**

date **November 27, 2006**

street & number **200 Cross Keys Road, apt. 45**

telephone **410 323 6232**

city or town **Baltimore**

state **MD**

zip code **21210**

=====  
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)

**Pan-American Life Insurance Building**  
Name of Property

**Orleans Parish, LA**  
County and State

=====  
Property Owner

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

name \_\_\_\_\_  
street & number See continuation sheet for ownership information 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.). A federal agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to range from approximately 18 hours to 36 hours depending on several factors including, but not limited to, how much documentation may already exist on the type of property being nominated and whether the property is being nominated as part of a Multiple Property Documentation Form. In most cases, it is estimated to average 36 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form to meet minimum National Register documentation requirements. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, 1849 C St., NW, Washington, DC 20240.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 1

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**Pan-American Life Insurance Company Building  
Orleans Parish, LA**

**Description**

The Pan-American Life Insurance Company Building is a large six-story office/commercial structure with a two-story wing at the rear, occupying an entire city block bounded by Canal, S. Rocheblave, and S. Tonti streets and Cleveland Avenue. The building faces Canal Street. Constructed between 1950 and 1952, the building's modern design and materials identify it as an International Style structure. It has a steel frame and glass walls, and the upper four floors have aluminum louvers that shield the interior from the sun. Designed by the internationally-renowned New York and Chicago firm of Skidmore, Owings and Merrill (SOM), with Claude E. Hooton as associate architect, the building represents the firm's innovative approach to design and structure. The building was the headquarters of the Pan-American Life Insurance company, which was founded in 1911 to provide insurance to businesses and individuals in Central and Latin America and the United States.

The building is located in the center of its site. It consists of a six-story rectangular block that faces Canal Street and a two-story rear extension that surrounds an open-air patio. The building has a steel frame, glass curtain walls, stone trim, and aluminum sun screens. The main block's five upper stories rise from a podium over the basement story, which is enclosed by granite walls and is partially obscured on the front elevation by a landscaped embankment that carries a curved driveway for automobiles. From this driveway, a double flight of stairs leads to the podium and the building's central entrance. The podium forms a terrace around the building and has a low perimeter wall that is hollowed out along its upper edge to hold plants. The building's central entrance is recessed under the upper four floors, giving the impression that these upper floors hover over the base, which is an identifying feature of the International Style.

The building's four upper floors are defined by thirteen-foot-high aluminum louvers on all four sides (592 in total), which shield the interior from heat and direct sun. These louvers are the SOM firm's first use of wraparound sun-screening of a façade and possibly the first large-scale use of that feature in the United States. Because the main block is oriented with the long sides facing northeast and southwest, the fins, thirty inches deep, are placed at right angles to the walls and are set into the cantilevered concrete floor slabs. They are placed thirty-two inches out from the wall line. The building is finished with a flat roof, another identifying feature of International Style architecture. The rectangular unit on the roof enclosing the elevator shafts and mechanical systems is faced with ceramic tile.



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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 2

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**Pan-American Life Insurance Company Building  
Orleans Parish, LA**

**Description (continued)**

On the interior, the steel structural frame allows for a clear floor span throughout, giving flexibility for interior space planning, a feature that was demanded in office buildings of the time. The spacious lobby has terrazzo floors made from marble imported from Verona, Italy. Walls are finished with hardwood paneling and piers are faced in black and white marble. The two banks of elevators have polished stainless steel doors and mahogany paneling. The interior included offices for the directors and staff and, on the second floor, a medical director's office and four medical examination rooms. Offices have suspended ceilings with lighting panels to give the daylight effect typical of office buildings of the time. When the company moved in, it occupied only the first three floors, renting the upper two floors. But the building was designed for the company's possible expansion.

The first floor of the two-story rear extension accommodated the company's print shop, telephone and public address systems, a room for fifteen IBM machines, the air-conditioning control room that serviced the twenty different air-conditioned zones in the entire complex, and a kitchen. On the second floor was a cafeteria for 200 people, a recreation room, and a meeting room. This entire area could be re-arranged to form an auditorium to seat 500 and a paneled stage could be pulled out of the far wall. The executive dining room also was on this floor. Plate glass walls provided views to the patio. The patio, sixty square feet in area and for use by the employees, had terrazzo paving and was embellished with trees, shrubs, and plants, and a fish pool.

Interior furnishings and fittings were designed by V. de Vernay Gibbins assisted by William Beach of the New Orleans firm of the Hemenway Company. Office furniture was provided by the General Fireproofing Metal Business Furniture Company.

At the rear of the building (Cleveland Avenue) are two drive-in entrances to the surface parking area for 180 cars. Two areas behind the building were landscaped by landscape architect Ralph Ellis Gunn (he also did the patio) with grass and shrubs for outdoor relaxation. The site also included two 850-foot deep wells for the air-conditioning system; the used water was pumped outside to irrigate plants.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

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**Pan-American Life Insurance Company Building  
Orleans Parish, LA**

**Description (continued)**

**Alterations/Assessment of Integrity**

While there has been some damage from neglect, the building has experienced no major changes on the exterior. Damage to the exterior consists of some staining to the walls, broken windows, some damage to the stone cladding of the two-story section, and the handrails to the entrance stairs are missing, but these do not impact the building in terms of its original appearance.

The building was used for many years in more recent times as a city hall annex. The most notable interior changes can be summarized as follows: extensive partitioning; cutting of a security window in the lobby's marble wall; the loss of teak paneling on the southwest face of the elevator core; and the addition of carpeting to most office spaces.

**Statement of Significance**

The Pan-American Life Insurance Company Building is of state architectural significance as one of the few International Style buildings within Louisiana. It is one of only three buildings in Louisiana designed by the internationally-renowned firm of Skidmore, Owings and Merrill (SOM). Moreover, the Pan-American Building is an early and innovative design in the firm's body of work, showing how the architects experimented with new architectural features. The building incorporates the firm's first use of wraparound sun-screening of the façade, which is possibly the first large-scale use of that feature in the United States. (The author and the Louisiana SHPO, however, feel that state significance is the most appropriate level for National Register documentation.) The design of the building is a perfect example of post-World War II American architecture in the International Style as well as in its combination of steel frame, glass, and aluminum.

The Pan-American Life design was highly influential on architects practicing in other states. The use of wrap-around aluminum sunscreens or louvers to shield the interior of a glass-walled building became widespread in the years following its construction. Examples include Richard Neutra's Northwestern Mutual Fire Insurance Office (1951) in Los Angeles; Valley Federal Savings and Loan (1954) by Hutchison, Kinsey and Larson in Los Angeles; and Great National Life Insurance Company (1963, now Salvation Army Offices) by Grayson Gill in Dallas. And Skidmore, Owings and Merrill used variations on vertical aluminum louvers or fins in their award-winning designs for Reynolds Metals Company Executive Office Building (1953-58) in Richmond, Virginia, and for the U. S. Air Force Academy Chapel (1956-62), Colorado Springs, Colorado.

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 4

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**Pan-American Life Insurance Company Building  
Orleans Parish, LA**

**Statement of Significance (continued)**

Historical Background and Significance

The International Style flourished in the United States in the years following World War II. Its forms and ideas were based on European architecture of the 1920s and 1930s, which were introduced in the United States by the International Style exhibition in New York of 1932 and the book with the same title by Philip Johnson and Henry R. Hitchcock. The style is identified by austere forms, lack of traditional decoration, and emphasis on structure and materials as an aesthetic. Although this style is found throughout the United States and the world, it never became popular in Louisiana and its use was almost exclusively limited to commercial buildings in the state's cities, such as the Texaco Building (1955) and Shell Building (1952) in New Orleans and the Beck Building (1956) in Shreveport, and to a few residential structures in New Orleans by Curtis and Davis, by John Desmond in Hammond, and by Samuel and William Wiener in Shreveport. The Pan-Am Building is one of only a handful in the style in Louisiana and thus of prime importance. The building has additional significance for it was designed by an internationally renowned firm.

Skidmore, Owings and Merrill (SOM) was the most prestigious American architectural firm of the second half of the twentieth century, designing buildings throughout the world. The firm's designs are famous for their innovative construction and technical feats. As well as designing New York's famous Lever House (1952), which was built at the same time as the Pan-American building, SOM designed the U.S. Air Force Academy (1958) in Colorado Springs and the John Hancock Building (1969) and the Sears tower (1973) in Chicago. In Louisiana, the only other SOM-designed buildings are the former John Hancock Mutual Life Insurance Company Building (1960-1962, now known as the K&B Building), where they again used wraparound sun-screening although this time with concrete fins, and the fifty-one-story tall One Shell Square (1972), both in New Orleans. In the Pan-American Building, Louisiana can boast an early and innovative work that illustrates a major step in the evolution of the firm's body of work, and it is SOM's first building in the state.

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**Pan-American Life Insurance Company Building  
Orleans Parish, LA**

**Statement of Significance (continued)**

For the Pan-American Company, SOM worked in association with Claude E. Hooton. Hooton (1905-1963), born in Mansfield, Louisiana, graduated from Rice University in Houston in 1928. From 1931 to 1941, he taught architecture at Rice and maintained an architectural practice in Houston. Some of his drawings were published in the journal *Pencil Points*. Hooton was elected to membership of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) in 1935. After World War II, Hooton also maintained an office in New Orleans. An important design by Hooton in New Orleans is the former Texaco Building of 1955.

The Pan-American Life Insurance Company was founded in New Orleans in 1911 in order to provide insurance to businesses and individuals in Central and Latin America. It is believed that it was the first American insurance company to serve the Americas. The company was conceived by Crawford H. Ellis, Vice-President of the United Fruit Company. The United Fruit Company imported produce to the United States from Central and South America, primarily through the port of New Orleans. Ellis saw the need for insurance for his suppliers and their employees. To form the company, he joined with corporate lawyer Eugene J. McGivney, Dr. Edward G. Simmons, an expert on life insurance, and physician Dr. Marion Souchon, who became the company's medical director (Souchon was also a well-known artist). Pan-American issued its first life insurance policy in March 1912.

The company first occupied space in the Whitney Building in New Orleans's business district, but by 1950 it had expanded from the initial 25 employees to 290 and had clearly outgrown its space. Further, the company desired a signature building for its new headquarters and a major architectural firm to convey its status, vision, progressive nature, and success. Thus, the directors turned to the Chicago and New York-based firm of Skidmore, Owings and Merrill, which in those same years was also designing the Lever Building in New York.

A building permit for the Pan American building was issued on 28 July, 1950. The building is recorded as costing \$3.5 million to construct. Its dedication on 7 January, 1952, was attended by officials from Central and South America, two of the architects, Louis Skidmore and Claude Hooton, and the mayor of New Orleans, de Lesseps "Chep" Morrison. A ballad was written for opening day.

The Pan American building was awarded a Merit Award for its design by the American Institute of Architects Gulf States Chapter in 1952.

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
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**Pan-American Life Insurance Company Building  
Orleans Parish, LA**

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- Wilson, Samuel, Jr. *A Guide to the Architecture of New Orleans, 1699-1959*. New York: Reinhold Publishing Corporation, 1959: 63.
- <http://www.estostock.com>. Image 8899200002 and 8899200003
- Architectural Drawings, dated 1951, Skidmore, Owings and Merrill and Claude Hooton in the New Orleans Public Library.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
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Section Add'l Documentation Page 7

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**Pan-American Life Insurance Company Building  
Orleans Parish, LA**

Ownership:

2400 Canal Street LLC

Principals:

Cesar Burgos  
3632 Canal Street  
New Orleans, Louisiana 70119-6111  
504) 488-3722

Bill Boles  
1818 Avenue of America  
P.O. Box 2065  
Monroe, LA 71207-2065  
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David M. Waldheim  
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