



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

900

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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. 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 certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

1. Name of Property

historic name Lincoln Theater

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 1305 Myrtle Walk

| | |
|----|---------------------|
| NA | not for publication |
| NA | vicinity |

city or town Baton Rouge

state Louisiana code LA county East Baton Rouge code 033 zip code 70802

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 at the following level(s) of significance:

 national statewide x local

Phil Boggan Phil Boggan, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer 10-14-2010
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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

Signature of commenting official _____ Date _____

Title _____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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:)

Joe Edson *W. Beall* 12-7-10
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property (Check only one box)

Number of Resources within Property (Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Ownership checkboxes: private (checked), public - Local, public - State, public - Federal

Category checkboxes: building(s) (checked), district, site, structure, object

Table with 2 columns: Contributing, Noncontributing. Rows for buildings, district, site, structure, object, and Total.

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

na

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Recreation and Culture: theater

Commerce/Trade: professional

Commerce/Trade: specialty store

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Vacant/Not in use

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

International Style; Moderne

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation: concrete

walls: brick (vener over concrete)

roof: other: tar and gravel

other:

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

Summary Paragraph

The Lincoln Theater (1950) is a two story brick veneer-over-concrete building located at the corner of Myrtle Walk and Eddie Robinson Street in a modest early to mid-twentieth century neighborhood about a half mile southeast of downtown Baton Rouge. The rectilinear building features hesitant touches of the International Style as well as some holdover Art Moderne styling. Exterior and interior alterations since construction have been relatively modest. Thus the building would be easily recognizable to someone from the historic period and easily retains its National Register eligibility.

Narrative DescriptionFloorplan:

While mainly a theater, the Lincoln historically also housed other businesses and professional offices. Because its floorplan, based on the different uses, is essential to understanding the exterior articulation of the building, it will be described at the beginning of this document. The main entrance is off center on the Myrtle Walk (south) elevation, the building's principal facade. It opens to a small lobby with bathrooms on the right and a concession counter immediately on the left. The lobby's rear opens to the theater, a long rectangular two-story space that runs parallel to the Myrtle Walk facade, occupying the entire back two-thirds of the building's footprint.

Flanking the lobby/bathroom/concession counter configuration are commercial shopfront bays, three bays to the left (west) and one bay to the right (east). Historically these spaces housed a barber shop, a laundry and a pharmacy. The commercial spaces back up to the theater space, sharing a common wall.

On the second story in the front, above the lobby and the commercial spaces, is a range of five professional offices (with windows on the facade) serviced by a single-loaded corridor. The corridor shares a wall with the upper portion of the theater. Offices are single rooms except for the one on the far west end which houses a two-room suite. The upper story professional offices are accessed via a secondary double-door entrance at the east (right) end of the main facade. This opens to a staircase that ascends to the aforementioned corridor in two stages. At the head of the stairs is a second set of bathrooms. A second stair provides access to the office floor from Eddie Robinson Street (the west elevation).

Main Façade:

The Myrtle Walk elevation is sheathed in brick veneer painted white. The off-center theater entrance is marked by a shiny metallic fixed awning surmounted by a large Art Moderne electrical sign, or marquee, set at a right angle to the facade. The marquee bears the words "Lincoln, Now Playing." The recessed entrance doors feature brushed metallic frames and plate glass. Immediately to the right (east) is the ticket booth, which takes the form of an outward projecting right angle. It is marked by distinctive bands of maroon and cream tile set below the ticket window. To the right of the ticket office are four hinged metal cabinets designed for displaying performance and attraction posters.

Of the main façade's commercial shopfront bays, only one retains its plate glass display window – the barber shop to the right (east) of the main entrance. About ten years ago the three bays to the west were fitted with a vertical board treatment with transoms above. This was done to combine the commercial bays and convert the space into a museum honoring Baton Rouge civil rights leader Reverend T. J. Jemison.

The upper story is marked by a continuous band of brushed aluminum casement windows that light the professional offices. The band obviously takes its cue from International Style ribbon windows (though these do not turn the corner). The façade terminates in a level parapet wall that conceals a flat built-up roofing system. Surmounting the roof is a large electrical sign (no longer functioning) suspended on metal poles. Placed parallel to the façade, it still bears quite clearly the name "Lincoln." The faint outlines remain of an image of the theater's namesake pointing to the words, "Theatre, Pharmacy, Barber Shop, Wash-It."

West (Side) Elevation:

Also of brick veneer painted white, this secondary elevation is largely feature-less. It contains a single bay shopfront (altered in a similar manner to the ones previously mentioned), a pair of egress double doorways (set either side of the theater's stage), and a single door accessing the secondary stairway to the upper story professional offices.

Rear and East Elevations:

The theater's rear and east elevations are of plain brick and completely feature-less.

Interior Details:

The theater space itself has a most unusual configuration for an entertainment venue, occupying, as noted above, the back two-thirds of a very wide building. The stage, with a slightly rounded front, is set against the short west wall facing what is a very deep and narrow auditorium. There is no proscenium, nor is there a fly gallery. The theater floor ascends from the ground-level stage a full story, gradually, to meet the rear wall. This ascent is interrupted briefly with a level passage that connects with the entrance lobby.

The unadorned theater space features hard plaster walls and a celotex ceiling. The lobby has tilework similar to that marking the ticket office's exterior. The lobby also features a red and yellow-beige terrazzo floor which extends into the west commercial bays. The barber shop is in an excellent state of preservation from the historic period. It retains its original sinks, metal cabinets, mirrors, recessed lighting and checkerboard linoleum floor. Apparently it did not have fixed-in-place barbers' chairs.

Alterations:

Aside from the commercial shopfront infill previously described, the only exterior alterations have been the installation of modern aluminum awnings over most of the commercial bays along Myrtle Walk and deterioration and losses on the signage. On the interior, the theater space survives intact, as does the lobby. There have been only minor cosmetic alterations to the commercial spaces and professional offices.

All in all, alterations to the Lincoln Theater are minimal in scope and visual impact. There is no doubt that the building would be easily recognizable to someone from the historic period who remembers its heyday as an entertainment focal point for the city's African-American population.

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.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Entertainment/recreation

Ethnic heritage: black

Period of Significance

1951-1960

Significant Dates

NA

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above)

NA

Cultural Affiliation

NA

Architect/Builder

unknown

Criteria Considerations

(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 old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.
- N/A Criteria Considerations not applicable

Period of Significance (justification) See below.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary) NA

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria)

The Lincoln Theater is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A: History because it was an important entertainment focal point for Baton Rouge's large African-American population. Additionally, it represents an important phenomenon – the development of first-class theaters in black neighborhoods specifically for blacks. These entertainment meccas were of real and symbolic value in the segregated world of separate but typically unequal. The period of significance spans from 1951, when the facility opened, to 1960, the present National Register 50 year cutoff. The Lincoln continued to be an entertainment focal point for African-Americans up to and past that date.

A possible additional area of significance, in the city's civil rights history, is indicated at the end of this section. Further research is needed to document this area of significance to National Register standards.

Narrative Statement of Significance (provide at least one paragraph for each area of significance)

Baton Rouge city directories show the Lincoln under construction in the 1950 volume. The 1951 city directory lists the Lincoln Theater, Lincoln Pharmacy, and Lincoln Barbershop at the building's address. The facility was built by Dr. A. L. Chatman, a local African-American physician. According to his niece, Verader Loreatha Chapman, Chatman was born Chapman. He changed his name in college, apparently because a favorite professor's last name was Chatman. Dr. Chatman was also responsible for the construction of the Lincoln Hotel, also in Baton Rouge.

When the theater opened, it was one of three African-American theaters in the City of Baton Rouge. The other two were the McKinley, about one-half mile to the west of the Lincoln, and the Temple, located in the Prince Hall Masonic Temple, about a mile to the north of the Lincoln. Later in the 1950s, the Lincoln was one of only two, the McKinley having closed. Black neighborhood theaters such as these were built either by white businessmen who saw an economic opportunity or by African-Americans themselves. Obviously, African-Americans preferred welcoming neighborhood theaters over the "colored" balcony of one of the city's white theaters, accessed by a secondary "colored" entrance. As historians of segregation have observed, blacks daily had to deal with various indignities and humiliation – from seats at the back of the bus, to separate drinking fountains, to separate entrances and seats in the balcony. By its very nature, segregation implied inferiority.

When asked what distinguished the Lincoln from the city's other two African-American theaters, one woman spoke for many when she said, it was "the modern thing." Another person interviewed for this nomination quickly replied "because it was a first class theater." The Lincoln was the newest, most up-to-date of the three. Roscoe Perry, whose father was the Lincoln's first projectionist, explained that sometime in the 1950s, the theater became even more up-to-date when it acquired a larger screen with cinemascope projection. (When the theater opened, the screen was smaller.)

In an age before the ubiquitous television set, movie theaters across America were major sources of entertainment. And in hot weather places like Baton Rouge, their air-conditioned interiors were reason enough to pay the admission price, regardless of the film. The Lincoln was air-conditioned from the beginning, according to Roscoe Perry. He recalled a "huge unit," and that people went there sometimes just to be cool.

The Lincoln is also believed to have had the largest seating capacity of the three African-American theaters referenced above. Little is known about the McKinley, which opened in the mid-1930s and closed in the late-1950s. The theater at the Prince Hall Masonic Temple (National Register) is definitely smaller. (The main entertainment venue at the Temple was the famed rooftop garden, with its live performances by countless legendary black entertainers.)

But sometimes the Lincoln's seats (500 to 600) were not enough. The *Weekly Leader*, a local African-American newspaper, in its April 5, 1952 issue, published a photo of the seemingly endless line in front of the Lincoln for the three-day feature *Street Corner*. The caption noted that the movie "brought thousands to the Lincoln Theatre last week." An accompanying editorial praised the Lincoln's management for its handling of the situation. Management, noted the editorial "took into consideration the vast crowd that stood in long-drawn-out lines to see the special feature. The lines were continuously long for three days. On several occasions a huge crowd was turned away until a later show." Jesse Hebert was manager of the theater at the time.

The Lincoln stage also hosted numerous live performances by big-name entertainers. Lionel Hampton and Orchestra appeared there on March 1, 1952. In this instance, about a month before the above referenced movie crowds, the *Weekly Leader* reported upon "an undisciplined crowd rushing madly" to enter the special midnight concert. Verader Loreatha Chapman, age 75, recalled a Nat King Cole concert in the 1950s as her most memorable time at her uncle's theater. Roscoe Perry, the son of the first projectionist, remembers his father operating the spotlight for the Ink Spots in the early days of the Lincoln.

The Lincoln Theater closed in the mid-1980s, and the building has been vacant most of the time since then. In 2009, the Louisiana Black History Hall of Fame purchased the Lincoln for its future home, thanks to a \$350,000 appropriation from the Louisiana legislature. Also assisting the effort was the Foundation for Historical Louisiana, which donated funds to help with the appraisal and closing costs. At present the effort to restore the theater and reopen it as a museum is in the fundraising and planning stages.

Possible Additional Significance:

The Lincoln has associations with Baton Rouge's civil rights history, but to date they have not been documented to a sufficient extent to meet National Register requirements. In the summer of 1953, Baton Rouge's African-American community launched a bus boycott that is generally seen as an important precursor to the better known Montgomery Bus Boycott, 1955-56, led by the then unknown Reverend Martin Luther King. The Baton Rouge boycott was led by Reverend T. J. Jemison and the United Defense League, the latter formed specifically to organize the boycott. There are tantalizing bits of information to indicate that perhaps the Lincoln figured prominently as a meeting place for boycott leaders. Civil rights attorney Johnnie Jones of Baton Rouge, in an interview with Brenda Perry of the Louisiana Black History Hall of Fame, indicated that the United Defense League (UDL) had its headquarters, at one time, at the Lincoln. City directories show the UDL at the Lincoln only for the year 1955, some two years after the boycott. Among the outstanding research questions are: (1) Did the UDL meet at the Lincoln during the bus boycott? (2) What were the activities of the UDL for the year 1955, when the organization is shown in city directories as having an office at the Lincoln? (The author of this document was unable to reach Mr. Jones for an interview.)

One of the individuals interviewed for this nomination, Adolph Byrd (age 88), recalled seeing Reverend King entering the Lincoln Theater building for a meeting with bus boycott leaders. He cannot recall whether it was during the boycott or afterwards. King, in his autobiography, refers to visiting with Reverend Jemison by phone about the boycott.

The Lincoln also appears to have played a role in voter registration efforts in the African-American community. An article in the July 17, 1953 issue of the Baton Rouge *Morning Advocate* mentions that "headquarters" for a voter registration campaign were being set up "in the Lincoln Building on Myrtle St., where a 'registration school' will be conducted." Further research should focus upon whether the "registration school" was ever established at the Lincoln and the role that it played in comparison to other extant buildings in the city associated with voter registration drives.

Developmental history/additional historic context information (if appropriate)

See above.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form)

Baton Rouge City Directories, 1950-1961.

Baton Rouge *Morning Advocate*. July 17, 1953.

Baton Rouge *Weekly Leader*. March 8, 1952, April 5, 1952.

Boyd, Adolph. Phone Interview with Donna Fricker, April 10, 2010.

Chapman, Verader Loreatha. Phone Interview with Donna Fricker, March 15, 2010.

Hebert, Tsehaye Geralyn. "The Lincoln Theatre." Recollections of the daughter of Jesse Hebert, who managed the Lincoln in the 1950s and early 1960s. Typescript, 2010.

Perry, Roscoe. Phone Interview with Donna Fricker, March 15, 2010.

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 # _____
 Not applicable – no previous documentation on file

Primary location of additional data:

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

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____ NA _____

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **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. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

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.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Lincoln Theater

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: LOUISIANA, East Baton Rouge

DATE RECEIVED: 10/21/10 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 11/22/10
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 12/07/10 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 12/06/10
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 10000980

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 12-7-10 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

**Entered in
The National Register
of
Historic Places**

RECOM./CRITERIA _____

REVIEWER _____ DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.



Lincoln Theater
East Baton Rouge Parish, LA

~~Donna Fricker~~
Donna Fricker

Summer 2010

LASHPO Digital Archives

Northeast

LA-East Baton Rouge Parish-Lincoln Theater-0001.tif



Lincoln Theater
East Baton Rouge Parish, LA

Photo 4 of

Donna Pricker

Summer 2010

LA SHPO Digital Archives

North

LA-East Baton Rouge Parish- Lincoln Theater- 0002.tif



Lincoln Theater
East Baton Rouge Parish, LA

Photo 2 of
Dorina Fricker

Summer 2010
LA SHPO Digital Archives

Northeast

LA - East Baton Rouge Parish - Lincoln Theater - 0003.tif



Lincoln Theater
East Baton Rouge Parish, LA

Photo 7 of
Penna Fricker

Summer 2010

LA SHPO Digital Archives

Northwest

LA - East Baton Rouge Parish - Lincoln Theater - 0004.tif



Lincoln Theater
East Baton Rouge Parish, LA

Photo 5 of

Danna Fecker

Summer 2010

LASHPO Digital Archives

Southeast

LA - East Baton Rouge Parish - Lincoln Theater - 0005.tif



Lincoln Theater

East Baton Rouge Parish, LA

Donna Fricker

Summer 2010

LA SHPO Digital Archives

Interior

LA-East Baton Rouge Parish-Lincoln Theater_0006.tif



Lincoln Theater

East Baton Rouge Parish, LA

Patricia Duncan

June 2009

LA SHPO Digital Archives

Interior

LA_East Baton Rouge Parish_Lincoln Theater_0007.tif

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Fuj1, F0000, 09/08/10



Lincoln Theater
East Baton Rouge Parish, LA

Patricia Duncan

June 2009

LA SHPO Digital Archives

Interior

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Lincoln Theater
East Baton Rouge Parish, LA

Donna Fricker

Summer 2010

LASAPo Digital Archives
Interior

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Lincoln Theater

East Baton Rouge Parish, LA

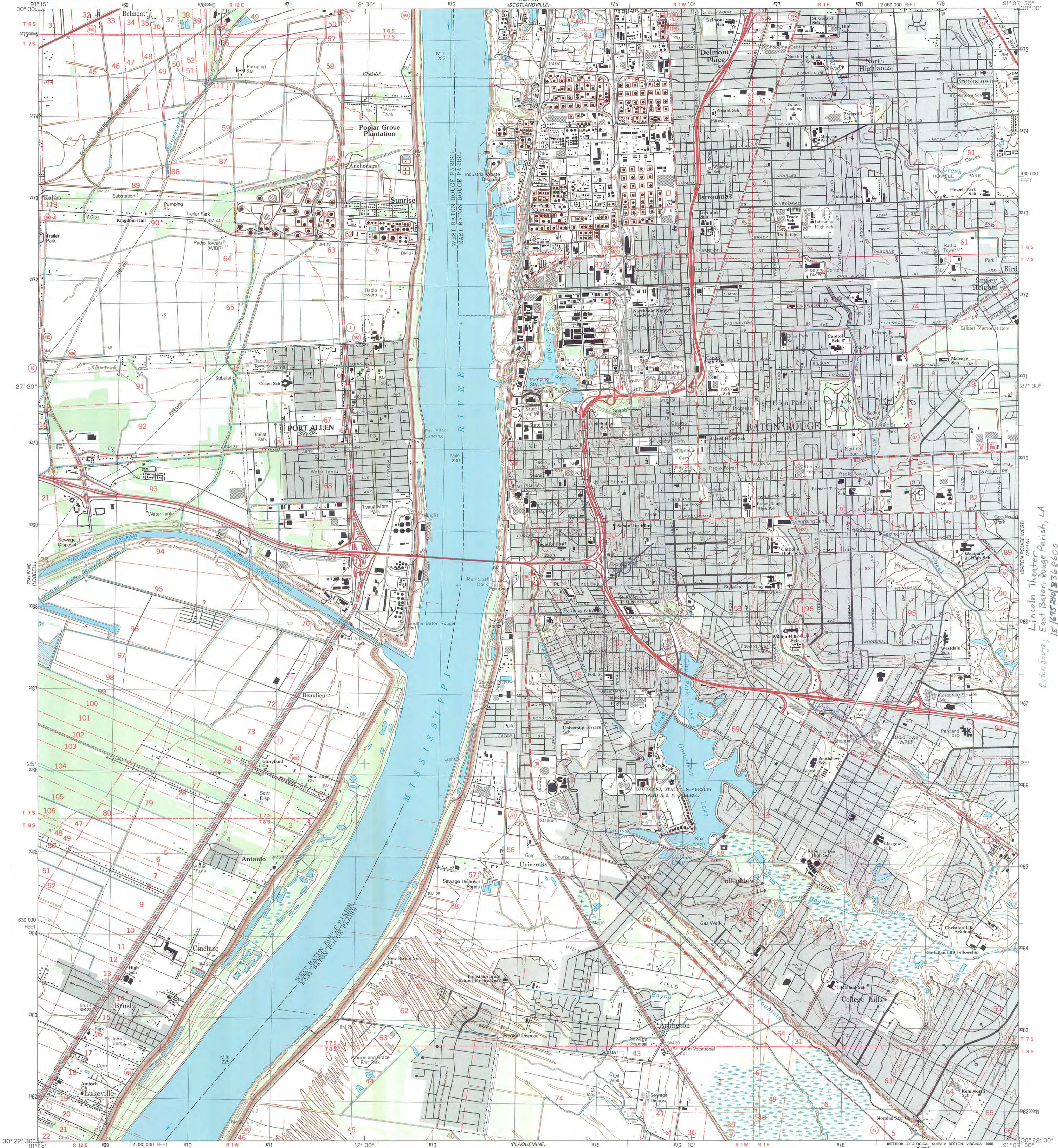
Donna Fricker

Summer 2010

LA SHPO Digital Archives

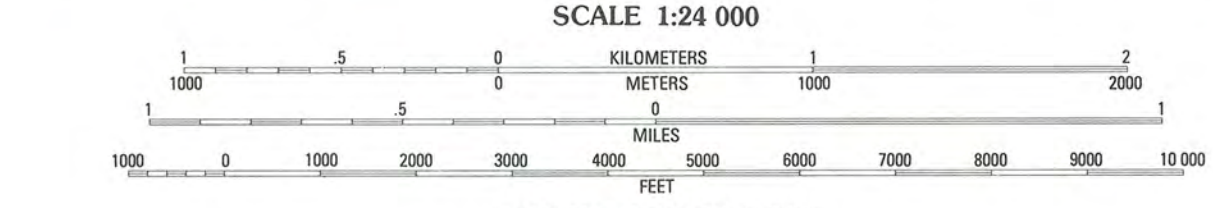
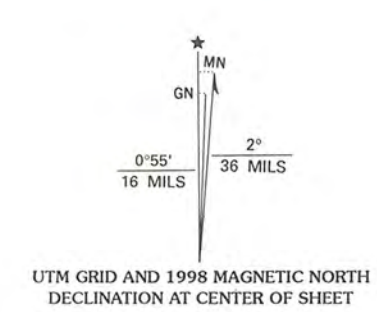
Interior

LA - East Baton Rouge Parish - Lincoln Theater - 0010.tif



*Lincoln Theater
 East Baton Rouge Parish, LA
 Baton Rouge, 15/1615440/336660*

Produced by the United States Geological Survey
 Topography compiled 1952. Planimetry derived from imagery taken 1989 and other sources. Photoinspected using imagery dated 1995; no major culture or drainage changes observed. PLSS and survey control current as of 1991. Boundaries, other than corporate, verified 1998
 North American Datum of 1927 (NAD 27). Projection and 10 000-foot ticks: Louisiana coordinate system, south zone (Lambert conformal conic)
 1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid, zone 15
 North American Datum of 1983 (NAD 83) is shown by dashed corner ticks. The values of the shift between NAD 27 and NAD 83 for 7.5-minute intersections are obtainable from National Geodetic Survey NADCON software



CONTOUR INTERVAL 5 FEET
 NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929
 TO CONVERT FROM METERS TO FEET, MULTIPLY BY 3.2808
 THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
 FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, P.O. BOX 25286, DENVER, COLORADO 80225
 AND LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND DEVELOPMENT, BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA 70804
 A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

ROAD CLASSIFICATION

| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Primary highway, hard surface | Light-duty road, hard or improved surface |
| Secondary highway, hard surface | Unimproved road |
| Interstate Route | U. S. Route |
| | State Route |

BATON ROUGE WEST, LA.

1995

NIMA 7744 1 NW-SERIES V885

ISBN 0-607-10386-4
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SCOTT ANGELLE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

State of Louisiana
OFFICE OF THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR
DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE, RECREATION & TOURISM
OFFICE OF CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT



October 14, 2010

National Park Service 2280, 8th Floor
National Register of Historic Places
1201 "I" Street, NW
Washington, DC 20005

RE: Lincoln Theater, East Baton Rouge Parish, LA

To Whom It May Concern:

Enclosed please find a nomination form with supporting materials for the above referenced property. Should you have any questions, please contact me at 225-219-4595.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Patricia Duncan".

Patricia Duncan
Architectural Historian
National Register Coordinator

PD/pld
Enclosures