

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



1206

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 Guaranty Bank, Park Avenue Branch

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 403 Bolton Ave.

NA not for publication

city or town Alexandria

NA vicinity

state Louisiana code LA county Rapides code 079 zip code 71301

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 at the following level(s) of significance:

national ___ statewide local

Pam Breaux
Signature of certifying official Pam Breaux

12-3-2012
Date

State Historic Preservation Officer Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism
Title 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:)

[Signature]
Signature of the Keeper

1/23/2013
Date of Action

Guaranty Bank, Park Avenue Branch

Rapides Parish, LA

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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.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		district
		site
		structure
		object
1	0	Total

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

NA

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE: Financial institution

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Vacant/Not in Use

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Other: mid-century modern

Modern Movement/Wrightian

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation: concrete

walls: Brick, glass

roof: Other: torch down roll roofing

other: _____

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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 Guaranty Bank Building, Park Avenue Branch (1953) is a modest-size free-standing commercial building located at the corner of Bolton and Park avenues, about half a mile west of the traditional Alexandria Central Business District. (While it has a Bolton Avenue address, the bank faces Park Avenue.) Bolton Avenue developed as a focus of commercial activity in the post-WWII years. The building's striking asymmetrical modern design reflects the strong and pervasive influence of Frank Lloyd Wright in the mid-twentieth century. The bank has received various alterations and has been enlarged. However, it retains its essential and noteworthy Wrightian elements. Additionally, its state of integrity will only improve once a pending tax credit project is completed because the new owner intends to restore the building to its original appearance.

Narrative Description

Guaranty Bank is set on a corner lot and is meant to "read" from a three-quarter view. As in the Wrightian genre, the two main interior spaces are clearly articulated on the exterior, but blended together in a single composition - form and function being one.

While describing a candidate elevation by elevation is preferred with National Register nominations, it would not be meaningful for such a dynamic geometrical composition as Guaranty Bank. Please refer to attached pictures and floorplan. The bank is anchored by a large rectilinear brick mass, with no exterior openings, set near the corner of Bolton and Park avenues (on the right as you face the building). This section, which contains the main security vault, provides an overall vertical element. By its position and shape, this more-or-less solid brick mass is analogous to the articulated brick masses that form the kitchen and hearth in Wright's Usonian Houses. In addition, it is constructed of Wright's signature narrow and extra wide Roman Brick - in this case in a deep organic red color (since painted white) and with a slight texture. The vertical mortar joints are carefully hand-filled with extra mortar to make them flush with the surface of the brick. The horizontal mortar joints are recessed from the brick surface almost half an inch. This gives the broad brick walls a strong series of horizontal lines, especially under strong sunlight. This horizontal, "hug the ground" aspect is another Wrightian touch.

Jutting from the side of the brick mass is the other major space, the banking hall, a lower largely glass-contained space that extends to form the Park Avenue façade (the principal façade). The banking hall is horizontal, playing off the vertical character of the brick mass. Essentially the banking hall consists of two long spaces that run parallel. On the Park Avenue façade is the public banking area set under a very distinctive angular roof. Behind it is the shallower teller's area under a lower flat roof.

The form and shape of the public banking area is the most unusual and distinctive aspect of the design. It indeed has a dramatic and singular spatial character. The roof rises toward Park Avenue about 20 degrees above horizontal. The front wall of the banking hall extends downward from the roof at an angle. As a result, the wall meets the ground outside the plane that would be formed if the wall stood at a 90 degree angle from the roof. In its downward course, the wall pierces a strongly formed horizontal overhang or ledge (the latter another "hug the ground" element). The current overhang is wider than that shown in a pre-construction rendering (see alterations, below). Below this ledge the wall becomes a bank of large windows - huge sheets of glass framed in brushed aluminum. Above the ledge the façade wall is of brick. Boldly articulated fin-like structural ribs, set at the same angle as the glass wall, divide the Park Avenue façade into three bays.

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The ribs begin above the roof, pierce the overhang, and continue to the ground. The place where the facade wall comes to the ground is accented with an unpainted long Wrightian Roman Brick planter. (The latter is currently partly obscured by vegetation.)

The public banking area's unusual shape and complex geometry play off the more blocky brick frontal mass. Each space is honestly defined and portrayed.

The banking hall design resembles one of Wright's most famous works -- the broad studio at Taliesen West in Scottsdale, Arizona, begun in 1937. Taliesen West was well publicized at the time as a seat of the great master. And its design was well known to architects and the broader art world. Although Guaranty Bank is certainly not a copy, and one cannot document that the architect had Taliesen West in mind, its resemblance is notable.

The rear elevation of the banking hall is a low Roman Brick wall with only one window. Originally the bank had an auto banking window accessed from Bolton Avenue. This opening must correspond to that function.

The building is accessed via a small glass vestibule that opens to the banking hall. The previously noted ledge/overhang extends beyond the hall to form a flat roof for the vestibule. It extends still further to form a flat covered entrance. Here the entrance is marked by an acute-angle "V" pole support of the type so popular in mid-century modern architecture. Access to the vestibule and hall is provided through glass double doors with brushed aluminum details.

There is disagreement concerning whether or not there was a second public entrance to the banking hall in its eastern wall. The surviving architectural evidence is contradictory. The area adjacent to that wall contains two offices flanking a hallway. Logically, the latter would have led to a door. However, a historic, pre-construction rendering shows a brick and glass wall, part of which survives in the rear office. If the door existed, it was removed as part of a later renovation.

The long and shallow banking hall is divided lengthwise by a long counter with teller's positions. (The counter and its fin-like dividing members are not original.) Approximately half of the banking hall's space is behind the counter in the teller's area. Here is found an open front area for teller transactions, a small back office, a bathroom and a second (smaller) vault. Extending beyond the teller's area, behind the corner brick mass, are public restrooms. The roof over the teller's area and the bank of public restrooms is flat, as is the ceiling.

Original lighting adds further to the banking hall's interior character. A large rounded cove, set over the counter, contains fluorescent lights that bathe the sharply angular ceiling with indirect light. Creating "interior space in light" is much a Wrightian design ideal. Wright also made frequent use of indirect lighting and cove lighting. The ceiling surface itself is marked by shallow square plaster panels with inset "can" incandescent lights. These two elements form a notable geometric pattern.

In the rear (eastern) corner of the building is a large rectangular office featuring a Roman brick interior wall identical to those on the exterior. Evidently this housed the bank's administrator.

Alterations:

The bank was renovated and enlarged in 1967 and again in 1976. The net effect of these two projects is as follows: An extended flat roof was attached to the side of the banking hall (along Park Avenue), continuing but widening the previously noted strong horizontal ledge. The original ledge may exist within this larger feature. This addition provided for a new auto drive-up banking area with auto customer stations, pneumatic tubes, etc. A small section of the banking hall (in the front, northeast corner) was enclosed to create an office. Within the past thirty years a lowered celotex ceiling (perhaps by eighteen inches) was installed in the banking hall following the distinctive angle of the original. At that time the present counter was added. (Its location is roughly the same as the original, and it has the same visual weight.) The counter is

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marked by vertical fin-like elements that connect the counter with the lowered ceiling. That all of this is more recent than the original ceiling, and indeed the building itself, is obvious when one pulls back the celotex tiles.

After it ceased to be a bank, the building was acquired by Greyhound for use as a bus depot. At that time all the brickwork was painted over in white, a rolling door was installed in a space cut into the building's eastern rear corner, and a large sign depicting the company's stylized greyhound logo was added to the façade of the upward-thrusting front brick building mass. Originally a sign proclaiming "Guaranty Bank" in applied letters was in this location.

Despite these changes, the building's original distinctive and dynamic massing remains visually dominant. The building also retains the great majority of its historic openings and fenestration pattern. Fortunately, the banking hall's lowered ceiling is slated for removal as part of an upcoming federal and state tax credit rehabilitation. In sum, Guaranty Bank still strongly conveys the profound influence of the great American master and remains easily Alexandria's most noteworthy mid-century modern commercial building.

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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)

architecture

Period of Significance

1953

Significant Dates

1953

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

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above)

NA

Cultural Affiliation

NA

Architect/Builder

Bank Building Corporation of America

Period of Significance (justification) See below.

Guaranty Bank's period of significance is 1953, the date the building was constructed.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary) NA

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

Guaranty Bank, Park Avenue Branch is of local significance in the area of architecture (Criterion C: Design) as the most noteworthy and distinguished work of mid-twentieth century modern commercial architecture in the City of Alexandria. Its Wrightian elements mark it as a work of consequence and notable artistic worth. (Wrightian is a recognized subcategory of mid-twentieth century modern architecture.)

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

Triumph of Modernism in Banking Industry

In the years following World War II, modernism triumphed in the United States for commercial and institutional buildings. The new modern look was embraced with huge enthusiasm by the banking industry ("Banking on the Future: Modernism and the Local Bank," by Carol J. Dyson and Anthony Rubano of the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency). In the mid-twentieth century, write Dyson and Rubano, "an industry steeped in tradition rapidly transformed its architectural iconography from classicist to Modernist. . . . Bank buildings were transformed from dark, ornate, awe-inspiring temples guarded by the prestigious banker, to open, glowing, glassy stores, incorporating the newest technologies, aesthetics, and materials"

The authors highlight Midtown Manhattan's branch of the Manufacturer Trust Company as "the most famous postwar Modernist bank." This 1954 masterpiece by Gordon Bunshaft of Skidmore, Owings and Merrill is described quite correctly by Dyson and Rubano as a "clear glass box . . . delicately contained by a grid of projecting aluminum mullions." It was truly transparent.

But, of course, this was high style modernism of the first rank - not the typical rank-and-file modern banks found in small cities and towns across America. Dyson and Rubano describe what they call the "vernacular Modern bank" as "a compact, asymmetrical composition of masonry volumes and glass curtain walls, locked together by a flat planar roof edged with aluminum." (They could well be describing Alexandria's Guaranty Branch Bank.)

Alexandria Context:

Alexandria, with its population of 48,164, is one of five second-tier cities in Louisiana. Like its fellows, it is the economic hub of a region of the state. Also, like its fellows, it experienced explosive commercial growth in the two decades following World War II.

Bolton Avenue, just west of the historic central business district, emerged in the immediate post-war years (roughly 1945-1955) as the primary focus for new commercial development. "Everyone was moving there [Bolton Avenue]: Rapides Bank, Guaranty Bank [the candidate], Sears, Borden's," notes on-line material of the Alexandria History Museum ("Alexandria Retrospective"). A secondary area was Jackson Avenue, where several small professional office buildings were constructed.

Today most people associate commercial development in Alexandria with MacArthur Drive, which began in WWII as a military transport route. During the war, central Louisiana was the locus of a massive military buildup. There were several purpose-built military bases within a thirty mile radius of Alexandria. Camp Claiborne alone trained over one-half million servicemen. To facilitate transport, the federal government blazed a bypass roughly two miles west of the old downtown for tanks and other heavy equipment. Named for General Douglas MacArthur, the eight lane highway opened in 1944. Initially only military vehicles could use the center four lanes. When it was built, MacArthur Drive traversed undeveloped farm land. By the 1960s, it had become the main focus for commercial redevelopment pressure. (For example, Guaranty Bank had built a branch on MacArthur by 1964, per a city directory of that year.)

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As a result, MacArthur Drive drew redevelopment pressure away from Bolton Avenue and Jackson Avenue. This pattern of development explains to a great degree the relatively large number of surviving mid-twentieth century commercial buildings in Alexandria. These are relatively small individual commercial or professional office buildings. As for steel and glass skyscrapers, the other major property type associated with mid-twentieth century commercial development, none were ever built in Alexandria. So the city's surviving smaller commercial and professional office buildings are its commercial legacy from the post-war era.

Like their counterparts in other cities and towns, these buildings have certain characteristics that mark them as products of their era. Unlike their early twentieth century predecessors, they are not party wall buildings set flush with the sidewalk. Instead, they are free-standing independent compositions. They are set far enough apart from nearby buildings to provide for parking. Some are recessed from the street to provide for parking in front. The largest, a few, occupy as much as half a city block - with setback for parking. Rarely are they more than one story.

Guaranty Branch Bank:

The most complete documentation found to date on the Park Avenue Branch Bank is from the November 1953 issue of *Louisiana Banker* (the official journal of the Louisiana Bankers Association). A drawing of the bank graces the cover. The caption above reads: "The South's Finest in Ultra-Modern Bank Design." Less boastful is the caption below: "Guaranty of Alexandria's Park Avenue Branch sets the pace in new style architecture."

The accompanying article notes that construction began in August of that year and was expected to be complete by January 1, 1954. Bank Building Corporation of America is given as the designer and construction company, at a cost of approximately \$150,000. The earliest known extant photo of the bank is found in the Alexandria City Directory for 1960.

To evaluate this "ultra-modern bank" as an example of mid-twentieth century commercial architecture, the preparers undertook a windshield survey of all high-probability areas within the city of Alexandria. These included the traditional central business district and its extended periphery, Bolton Avenue, Jackson Street, and the MacArthur Drive corridor. (Note: The survey did not include filling stations or industrial buildings.)

The survey identified a total of seventy mid-twentieth century commercial and/or professional office buildings. While relatively large in number, almost all of the buildings are undistinguished architecturally. The vast majority of the seventy would be described as very basic: a squarish masonry or stucco form with a flat roof and simple rectangular openings. Nine would best be termed late International Style (generally very watered-down late International Style). Six have touches of the Art Moderne. One features an Eichler-style roof (although symmetrically articulated rather than the more typical and striking asymmetrical composition).

Only two of the buildings in Alexandria display the striking asymmetrical massing associated closely with mid-century modern commercial architecture. And Guaranty Bank, Park Avenue Branch is far and away the more distinguished of the two. And it is the only mid-century modern commercial building in the city displaying strong Wrightian influence. The Guaranty Bank Building features consummate and dynamic three-dimensional massing, consistent detailing, and a dramatic and distinctive internal spatial design - all very much in the Wrightian mode. From the standpoint of architecture, and the broader context of artistic worth, it is clearly the most distinguished of all the city's mid-twentieth century commercial/professional buildings.

It should be stressed that veneration of Frank Lloyd Wright was a major mid-twentieth century phenomenon in architectural circles. Architectural historians agree that he really was on Mount Olympus so-to-speak in those days - the last decade or so of his long life. British architectural historians John Fleming, Hugh Honour and Sir

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Nikolaus Pevsner (in *The Penguin Dictionary of Architecture*) term Wright "the greatest American architect to date." His work is "never repetitive, routine or derivative." Wright is credited with creating a distinctively American architecture that stands out against the vast body of the country's building tradition, which is almost wholly derived from the styles and manners of old Europe.

Buildings designed in the manner of Frank Lloyd Wright have a secondary, but still important, place in the scope of his total contribution to architectural style in America. Marcus Whiffen, in his landmark work *American Architecture Since 1780: A Guide to the Styles* (1969), underscores this point. In his chapter on post-war American architecture, Whiffen denotes "Wrightian" as one of the era's primary developments. This is now accepted as a recognized genre of mid-twentieth century modern design. Whiffen notes that "Wrightian architecture is more easily recognized than described." He then identifies the following characteristics "of nearly all of it": a "prevailing horizontality" and "the importance given to the roof as a character-defining feature." Other features, the author continues, are the clear delineation of interior spaces on the exterior and strongly horizontal exterior sheathing. All of the foregoing would apply to the Guaranty Bank.

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)

City Directories, Alexandria, 1954, 1960, 1964.

Dyson, Carol J. and Rubano, Anthony. "Banking on the Future: Modernism and the Local Bank." *Preserving the Recent Past 2*. Washington, D.C.: Historic Preservation Education Foundation, National Park Service, Association for Preservation Technology International, 2000.

Fleming, John; Honour, Hugh; and Pevsner, Nikolaus. *The Penguin Dictionary of Architecture*. London: Penguin Books, 1991.

Louisiana Banker. November, 1953.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Company Map, Alexandria, LA, 1953.

Spletstoser, Frederick M. *Talk of the Town: The Rise of Alexandria, Louisiana, and the "Daily Town Talk."* Baton Rouge, LA: LSU Press, 2005.

Whiffen, Marcus. *American Architecture Since 1780: A Guide to the Styles*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The M.I.T. Press, 1969.

www.alexandria-louisiana.com.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- 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 _____

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one acre
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage)

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

1	<u>15</u>	<u>551700</u>	<u>3463740</u>	3	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	4	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing

Verbal Boundary Description (describe the boundaries of the property)

Legal property description: Lots 9, 10, 11 & 12, Square 29, West Alexandria Addition to the City of Alexandria, Rapides Parish, Louisiana

Boundary Justification (explain why the boundaries were selected)

Boundaries follow the property lines historically associated with the candidate.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Jonathan and Donna Fricker

organization Fricker Historic Preservation Services, LLC date August 2012

street & number 6016 North Shore Dr. telephone 225-246-7901

city or town Baton Rouge state LA zip code 70817

e-mail jonathanfricker@gmail.com

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)

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Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive black and white photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property: Guaranty Bank, Park Avenue Branch

City or Vicinity: Alexandria, LA

County: Rapides Parish

State: LA

Photographer: Donna Fricker

Date Photographed: July 2012

Location of Original Digital Files: LA Division of Historic Preservation Digital Archives

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

Photo 1 of 7
Camera facing east
Park Avenue façade (main elevation)

Photo 2 of 7
Camera facing east
Park Avenue façade closeup (main elevation)

Photo 3 of 7
Camera facing east
Park Avenue façade (main elevation) – showing non-historic auto banking bays

Photo 4 of 7
Camera facing northeast
V-shaped post at entrance

Photo 5 of 7
Camera facing west
Rear and side elevation

Photo 6 of 7
Banking hall interior

Photo 7 of 7
Banking hall interior

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.

Guaranty Bank
Park Ave Branch
Alexandria
Rapides Parish

Park Ave.

Bolton Ave.

