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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form (Rev. 8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

Kress Building, Baton Rouge, East Baton Rouge Parish, LA

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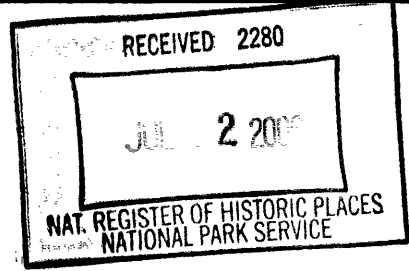
United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: Kress Building

Other Name/Site Number:



2. LOCATION

Street & Number 445 Third Street

Not for publication: NA

City/Town Baton Rouge

Vicinity: NA

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 of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria.

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

Nationally: ___ Statewide: X Locally: X

Jonathan Fricker
Signature of Certifying Official/Title Jonathan Fricker,
Deputy SHPO, Dept of Culture, Recreation and Tourism

July 11, 2006
Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

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

Signature of Commenting or Other Official/Title

Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

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4. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is:

- X 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 of Keeper (handwritten signature)

Date of Action (handwritten: 8/11/06)

5. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property
Private: X
Public-Local:
Public-State:
Public-Federal:

Category of Property
Building(s): X
District:
Site:
Structure:
Object:

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

1

Non contributing

buildings

sites

structures

objects

0 Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 0

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing: NA

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6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic: commerce Sub: department store
Current: vacant Sub:

7. DESCRIPTION

Architectural Classification: Art Deco

Materials:

Foundation: concrete
Walls: brick
Roof: other: tar and gravel
Other: concrete

Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

The Kress Building is a masonry decorative brick-faced party wall commercial building of two to four stories set in downtown Baton Rouge. Its current Modernistic architectural character dates from a mid-1930s renovation. Despite the gutting of the interior, the building is still recognizable from the historic period, when it was the site of a major event in the state's modern civil rights history – a March 1960 lunch counter sit-in. It also retains those features that make it a notable example of the Art Deco taste within downtown Baton Rouge.

The building's L-shaped plan runs through the interior of the block with a façade on 3rd Street (downtown's principal commercial thoroughfare) and another one around the corner on Main Street. This unusual configuration reflects a long period of growth and enlargement. The original Kress was a two story commercial building facing 3rd Street and penetrating to about half the block. It is shown as such on a 1911 Sanborn map. By 1916 it had acquired a rear wing, creating the L shape (but not to the present building's height or footprint). A later Sanborn Map indicates that the current building height and footprint were in place by 1947. They would appear to date from the time the present Modernistic facades were created. (An oblique mid-1920s photograph shows the 3rd Street elevation as a classical façade.) In all likelihood these facades (and hence the building's present appearance) date from the mid-1930s. In a further twist, the 3rd Street façade registers as a two story building while the Main Street façade registers as a four story mass. These two building masses join at the rear to form the L.

Both facades have a richness and texture that sets them apart – that defines their character and makes them distinctive in downtown Baton Rouge. This is achieved by the use of subtle, varying shades of yellow-beige iron spot brick laid up in different patterns. The brickwork is set off by cast concrete accents and boldly formed suspended pressed metal fixed awnings. As befits 3rd Street, this is the building's principal façade and the more intensively articulated of the two. It is anchored by a range of bold upward-thrusting piers that rise from the shopfront to above the parapet. These are formed of pairs of raised brick strips flanking brick surfaces entirely laid up in headers. They divide the façade unequally in three, with a wide, more or less symmetrically placed, central section. This central section is pronounced, five windows wide,

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and features the Kress name in strong Arts and Crafts lettering. It gives the façade an overall feeling of symmetry though it is actually asymmetrical.

Verticality is also emphasized by brick header strips that divide the upper story windows. Below the upper story windows and above the transom windows are intricately worked brick panels that both recess and protrude. At the north end of the façade is a stair tower that rises dramatically almost a full story above the building mass. Styled after the piers, it features a large area of bricks laid up in headers flanked, and set off, by double brick recesses. Like the piers, its protruding form is registered and accented at the roofline by cast concrete blocks and fluted panels. The somewhat lower parapet is capped by a band of three-dimensional chevron panels. Chevron panels (with inset illumination) also accent the fixed awning. Finally, above the upper story windows are five articulated waterspouts (non-functional).

The boxy, four story Main Street façade is more straightforward than the one on 3rd Street, but it has many of the same elements. Two bold piers with headers and double recesses set off the façade. A wider third pier, with two pilaster strips inset, divides the façade perfectly in half. The roofline is similarly styled to the 3rd Street elevation, though it does not include an articulated tower element. Such above-the-roof features that are functionally needed are set back from the façade and are not a part of its styling. Overall, though it makes a strong statement, the Main Street elevation should be regarded as secondary – perhaps even an afterthought.

As is typical, over the years the commercial interior has been renovated and altered many times. It is currently gutted. On the exterior the shopfronts (between the piers) were replaced in the 1970s. In addition, at that time all the upper story windows were replaced with tinted glass units. Despite these changes, the building's pronounced architectural character, as described above, is visually dominant. The Kress building also retains its character-defining two-façade configuration and footprint. There is no doubt that the students who staged the sit-in at Kress would recognize the property today. And in terms of the building's local architectural significance, it retains all those features that make it a locally notable example of the Art Deco taste.

Recently scheduled for demolition, the Kress building has new owners who are committed to its restoration, along with two adjacent buildings being nominated separately. The National Register tax credit is critical to the development of these long-vacant buildings in downtown Baton Rouge. The Kress building's civil rights history will be interpreted in its new use.

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8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Applicable National

Register Criteria: A X B _ C X D _

Criteria Considerations

(Exceptions): A _ B _ C _ D _ E _ F _ G X

Areas of Significance: ethnic heritage, social history, architecture

Period(s) of Significance: 1960 (ethnic heritage, social history); c.1935 (architecture)

Significant Dates: 1960, c.1935

Significant Person(s): NA

Cultural Affiliation: NA

Architect/Builder: unknown

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State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.

The Kress Building is significant at the state level in the area of ethnic heritage and social history as the site of one of the major events of the Civil Rights Movement in Louisiana. On March 28, 1960 seven students from Southern University (a state-sponsored college for African-Americans located in North Baton Rouge) attempted, through non-violent direct action, to integrate the five and dime store's "whites only" lunch counter. The next day Southern students conducted sit-ins at two other Baton Rouge locations. Collectively known as the Baton Rouge Sit-Ins, these were the first sit-ins in Louisiana's modern civil rights movement. The justification for granting exceptional significance will be discussed below (Criteria Consideration G: Properties Achieving Significance within the Past Fifty Years).

The Kress Building is of local architectural significance as a good example of the Art Deco style within downtown Baton Rouge.

STATE SIGNIFICANCE (ETHNIC HERITAGE AND SOCIAL HISTORY)

Historical Background: The Age of Jim Crow

The late 19th and early 20th centuries were a particularly bleak and repressive period for African-Americans in Louisiana and throughout the South. By the early twentieth century rigid separation of the races (segregation) defined the region. Beginning in the 1880s and continuing into the new century, state after state segregated everything imaginable as statute after statute was passed. These laws were and are known as Jim Crow, a name based upon a derogatory minstrel show routine called "Jump Jim Crow" created in the 1830s.

Louisiana joined the Jim Crow chorus in 1890 when the state legislature passed the "Separate Car Law." It forbade any railroad passenger to enter "a coach or compartment to which by race he does not belong." Law after law followed. A law in 1894 required separate waiting rooms for the races in railroad depots. Suffrage restrictions were passed at a constitutional convention held in 1898. By 1900 only four percent of the state's registered voters were black, down from 44 percent in 1897. New Orleans segregated its streetcars in 1902.

The U. S. Supreme Court in 1896 upheld legal segregation in the landmark case *Plessy vs. Ferguson*, a test case originating in Louisiana. The majority opinion ruled that segregation was constitutional as long as both races were provided equal facilities – the famous (or infamous) "separate but equal" doctrine. The "equal" rarely was true in practice. The icons of the Jim Crow decades were signs emblazoned everywhere saying "whites only" or "colored." And insults and violence often accompanied the enforcement of Jim Crow laws. The Age of Jim Crow was the most violent in the history of southern race relations. Between 1882 and 1903, for example, Louisiana ranked third in the nation in the number of black lynchings, usually for trivial or non-existent offenses.

Generally speaking, segregation was more pervasive in towns and cities like Baton Rouge, as opposed to the countryside – simply because rural areas had less to segregate. In places where segregation wasn't practical (for example, banks and stores), blacks were expected to "know their place." This meant observing certain unwritten rules of behavior like entering the homes of whites through the back door, stepping off the sidewalk to let whites pass, waiting until all whites had been helped before receiving service in stores, avoiding eye contact when speaking with whites, and addressing whites as Mister or Miss while

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themselves being called "boy" or "girl." Eventually, blacks and whites were segregated from the cradle to the grave in almost all aspects of their lives.

Despite segregation's grasp, African-Americans began fighting for their rights well before the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and '60s. "With no support from the authorities," Herb Boyd explains in *We Shall Overcome*, "black Americans began finding new ways of getting their message heard." After World War I and even more so after World War II, blacks began pressing for equal treatment in the military. In 1937 Congressman Arthur L. Mitchell began a lawsuit that would eventually end segregation in Pullman railroad cars after experiencing discrimination during a train trip. Blacks learned that they could pressure the federal government when, writes Boyd, labor activist A. Philip Randolph "threatened President Franklin Delano Roosevelt with a march on Washington in 1941 unless he put an end to discrimination in the defense industry." The tactic worked. Finally, African-Americans organized local, state and national groups such as the NAACP to help with the fight for their rights.

The NAACP chose a policy of challenging segregation through the courts. Easily the most important court case was *Brown vs. Board of Education* (1954), in which Chief Justice Earl Warren, writing for a unanimous Supreme Court, concluded in the now famous words, "that in the field of public education the doctrine of 'separate but equal' has no place." "Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal." In what came to be known as *Brown II*, issued in 1955, the Supreme Court ordered schools to desegregate "with all deliberate speed." While *Brown* referred specifically to schools, its larger implications were clear.

Louisiana's blacks also found ways to fight Jim Crow segregation. Among the most important collective protests in the state's civil rights movement was the Baton Rouge Bus Boycott of 1953 – some two-and-a-half years before the famous Montgomery, Alabama bus boycott and a year before *Brown*. Frustrated by laws demanding that they give up their bus seats to whites, and inspired by the oratory of organizer Reverend T. J. Jemison, hundreds of African-Americans, most of whom needed bus transport to reach their jobs, boycotted city buses for a week. Although their protest did not immediately end segregation on buses, this, the first large-scale boycott of the civil rights movement, was a bold sign that blacks were tired of Jim Crow segregation.

Louisiana's African-Americans originally saw the *Brown* decision as a hopeful sign that Jim Crow segregation would soon end. As Adam Fairclough explains in *Race & Democracy, The Civil Rights Struggle in Louisiana, 1915-1972*:

Recent southern history was littered with rhetorical "nevers" that had become obsolete soon after their utterance. Between 1944 and 1954 whites had, in fact, accepted a degree of change that would have been unthinkable fifty or even twenty years earlier.

However, these changes in race relations had occurred in areas such as library service, where contact between the races could be expected to be brief. Southerners viewed the possibility of children of different races occupying the same classrooms on a daily basis as a different matter entirely. Rather than ending Jim Crow in the schools, the *Brown* decision caused a backlash of new initiatives and laws that made segregation in Louisiana worse instead of better.

State Senator and ultra segregationist William M. Rainach of Claiborne Parish led the charge. Joined by other conservative politicians as well as prominent citizens throughout the state, this attack on black rights included crippling the NAACP in Louisiana, disenfranchising thousands of black voters, and uniting whites "behind an all-out defense of segregated schools" (Fairclough).

Although the number of blacks removed from East Baton Rouge Parish's voter rolls by Rainach and his allies is not available, other evidence provided by Adam Fairclough provides a picture of the environment

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in which blacks lived in the Capitol City when the sit-ins took place. According to the historian,

Most blacks stayed on the bottom of the occupational ladder while whites steadily ascended. In Baton Rouge, 86 percent of black workers held manual jobs in 1960, compared with 48 percent of whites; 22.7 percent of white families enjoyed an annual income of \$10,000 or more compared with only 2.7 percent of black families. Here, in the heart of Louisiana's petrochemical industry, one of the most prosperous areas in the state, half of all blacks lived at or below the official poverty line, compared to a white level of 11 percent.

At the time of the sit-ins, black leadership in Baton Rouge was generally weakened and fragmented, according to Fairclough. Like others throughout the state, the city's branch of the NAACP had been shut down; it would not resurface until 1962, and then only with a much-reduced membership. Reverend T. J. Jemison, the city's most prominent black leader, was focused mainly on the National Baptist Convention (which he hoped to lead). At the same time ultrasegregationists were becoming increasingly influential in the city. With the exception of Jemison's 1957 lawsuit to integrate the buses, "blacks in Baton Rouge [had] made no attempt to . . . directly challenge segregation" from the time of the June 1953 bus boycott to the March 1960 sit-ins (Fairclough).

The Sit-In Movement

Lunch counter sit-ins were a type of protest called non-violent direct action. Black students sat down at a lunch counter reserved for whites and attempted to order, knowing that they would be asked to leave and eventually be taken to jail. As soon as they left, more protestors would take their place. It was important for the students to dress well and behave in a polite, dignified manner. Behavior like this, a signature of sit-ins, impressed friends and enemies alike and did much to build public sympathy.

Scattered sit-ins had occurred in the 1940s and '50s, but they never became a major movement. (They never "took off," so-to-speak.) By contrast, the demonstrations that began in early 1960 "spread like wildfire" (NPS study, "Racial Desegregation of Public Accommodations"). The first occurred in Greensboro, North Carolina on February 1, when four freshmen from North Carolina Agricultural and Technical College attempted to integrate the lunch counter of a Woolworth's store in downtown Greensboro. This store routinely sold merchandise to black customers but refused them food service. The four young men remained quietly at the counter, without being served, until the store closed at 5:30 p.m. Unsure of their next step, the activists sought help from a prominent local black dentist, who asked them to wait before taking further action. He, in turn, asked the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) for assistance. One week later a CORE representative arrived and organized more student sit-ins. These targeted Woolworth's, Kress, and a third retail establishment. Once again, personnel manning each store's lunch counter refused to serve the students and, once again, the students remained quietly at the counters after service had been denied.

Although it appeared so at the time, the actions of "the Greensboro four" were not completely spontaneous and did not occur in a vacuum. African-Americans, and especially younger blacks, had become discouraged over the slowness of change. They felt that the NAACP's policy of challenging segregation in the courts, and then waiting for years while segregationists did everything possible to delay the cases, was simply not working. Students at Nashville's Fisk University were planning their own demonstrations when Greensboro beat them to it. They had weeks of training in nonviolent protest, led by Vanderbilt University graduate theology student James Lawson, under their belt. "By 1960," says Herb Boyd, author of *We Shall Overcome*, "many black campuses in the South had heard of the nonviolence workshops."

Word of the Greensboro sit-ins spread quickly across the nation, and soon other students joined the protest. The Nashville group first put its training to the test on February 18, when 124 students sat-in at

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several downtown stores. A "sympathy" sit-in occurred in Tallahassee, Florida. In *Eyes on the Prize, America's Civil Rights Years, 1954-1965*, author Juan Williams quotes a *New York Times* editorial stating that by the end of February the movement had moved from North Carolina to Virginia, Florida, South Carolina and Tennessee and involved fifteen cities. Boyd states that over 100 American cities had experienced sit-ins, many of which resulted in arrest of the student demonstrators, by November 1960. According to National Park Service authors in a study of the Civil Rights Movement:

The sociologist Martin Oppenheimer has calculated that in the first year after Greensboro demonstrations took place in 104 communities. In sixty-nine of them, the protests turned out favorably, and in twenty-nine they proved unsuccessful. Overall, he computed a 56.5 percent success rate. In March 1961, CORE reported a higher scorecard of progress. According to the organization's figures, 138 communities had agreed to some measure of integrated facilities since February 1, 1960.

The sit-in movement would continue until the summer of 1962.

Today scholars recognize sit-ins as a distinct and very significant phase of the Civil Rights Movement and a watershed in the history of black protest in the United States. The students' quiet dignity impressed people across the nation (including many whites), and their non-violent demonstrations accelerated the pace of social change in America. They proclaimed that blacks were no longer willing to accept the second-class citizenship imposed by Jim Crow segregation. They showed that a new and younger class of black leaders had emerged. They inspired other efforts to demand integration through direct action rather than waiting for the outcome of prolonged court battles. They led to the formation of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), which attracted some of the nation's best young people (black and white) to work for integration and voting rights over the next several years. And finally, the sit-ins generated court cases that helped overturn segregation. *Garner v. Louisiana* (the case overturning the convictions of the Baton Rouge sit-ins students), for example, was one of the cases the United States Supreme Court used to affirm the principle that a licensed public business could not discriminate or operate in a segregated fashion.

In the oft-times violent world of Jim Crow segregation, it took great courage to participate in a sit-in or other form of protest. Sit-ins were considered assertive, even radical, with students physically challenging segregation. Sometimes the police quietly hauled them to jail without incident. Other times whites jeered and pelted protesters with food and police were less than gentle in their approach. The young "foot soldiers" of the sit-ins, who remained non-violent despite physical attacks upon them, exemplified the very best of the civil rights movement – ordinary people taking extraordinary actions (within the context of the times) to effect change.

The Baton Rouge Sit-Ins

In spite of the hostile climate described above, seven courageous black students brought the sit-in movement to Louisiana on March 28, 1960. At 2:00 p.m. that afternoon, five male and two female students from Southern University, one of Louisiana's few black public colleges, entered the downtown S. H. Kress store on Third Street and asked to be served at its "whites only" lunch counter. The well-dressed and well-behaved students included education major Marvin E. Robinson, 25, who served as president of Southern's student body; law majors Felton Valdry, 23, John W. Johnson, 25, Donald T. Moss, 22, and Kenneth Johnson, 22; psychology major Jeannette Hoston, 20; and Jo Ann Morris, 19, a member of the freshman class.

Kress personnel instructed the students to move to the "colored" counter elsewhere in the store, but they refused the order. Someone called the police, and soon the authorities, accompanied by the press,

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arrived. As the Baton Rouge *Morning Advocate* explained the next day, Chief of Police Shirley Arrighi

. . . told the students they couldn't be served but the Negroes ignored him. Arrighi [then] called in four patrolmen who had been waiting outside in a patrol car and a paddy wagon and placed the students under arrest [for disturbing the peace].

The sit-downers stood up at Arrighi's order and filed quietly out to the paddy wagon with police officers escorting them. Police searched them for weapons and the Negro men helped the two women up the steps into the paddy wagon.

The seven protesters spent less than six hours in jail before being released on bond--\$1,500 per person for a total of \$10,500.

The students told reporters their protest had been spontaneous. In reality, Major Johns, another Southern student and a local church leader, had helped the protesters organize their demonstration. Apparently energized by the broader sit-in movement, Reverend T. J. Jemison had spoken on campus before the local sit-in and at some point promised that the black community would bail arrested students out of jail. Reminiscing in 2004, Morris and Moss admitted they had known they would receive no service at the Kress lunch counter and would be arrested. They also knew their actions could be dangerous. "We didn't have any fears," Moss explained. "We had already made a commitment that we would give our lives that day if it came to it." Although the ultimate sacrifice was not necessary, the students were not treated with kid gloves. They especially remembered the rough ride in the paddy wagon, stating that the driver deliberately made jerking stops and starts so that the occupants would be tossed around and bruised.

After leaving the jail, the seven students returned to the Southern University campus in a triumphant procession that included their lawyer, Johnnie Jones, and Reverend Jemison. Word of their release had spread, and the group was met by almost the entire student body. Reverend Jemison addressed the assembly, praising the sit-ins and asking students to contribute to a bail fund. Inspired by the seven and probably coached by Johns, nine more students protested the next day. Seven sat-in at Sitman's Drug Store, while two protested at the Greyhound bus terminal. These nine people were also arrested. The following day (March 30), almost the entire student body abandoned classes to attend a "prayer meeting" held on the grounds of the State Capitol downtown.

At this point, the story of the Baton Rouge sit-ins became inextricably linked with that of Southern University. It should be remembered that, as a black school in a state that had disenfranchised the majority of its black citizens, Southern existed only at the pleasure of white politicians who held the purse strings. In addition, administrators at the state board of education, which held ultimate responsibility for Southern, were also all white. Thus, any controversial action by its students could cause dire consequences for the university.

As word had spread of the Greensboro sit-ins and the subsequent nonviolent protests it had inspired, Louisiana officials had taken action. First, Superintendent of Education Shelby Jackson asked black college presidents (including Felton Grandison Clark of Southern) to investigate rumors that "out-of-state organizers were on their campuses fomenting sit-ins" (Fairclough). Soon thereafter, Fairclough continues, Jackson instructed black educators under his supervision "to take the sternest measures possible against any students engaging in demonstrations."

In a sense, Southern was Clark's personal fiefdom. His father, Joseph Samuel Clark, had preceded him as university president; and the younger Clark had the strongest possible professional and emotional ties to the school. For this reason, he interpreted any action that might even indirectly harm Southern as a direct attack on the school. Thus, Clark had responded to Superintendent Jackson's warnings by trying to prevent

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the sit-ins and warning student leaders of grim repercussions should they bring the movement to Baton Rouge. However, all his efforts had failed.

Clark was left with no options when the students began their sit-in campaign. Late on the afternoon of March 30, the president announced that he had suspended the sixteen arrested demonstrators as well as organizer Major Johns. The impacted students, however, saw no distinction between being suspended and being expelled. The frustrated and angry students asked their peers to boycott classes until they were readmitted. The student body agreed, with the result that Southern's classrooms stood empty.

Felton Clark moved swiftly to save his school. Fairclough explains:

On the evening of March 31 and into the early hours of the next morning he [Clark] visited campus dormitories, urging students to reject "ill-meaning advisers" who were out to destroy the university. At a faculty meeting on April 1 he made it clear that every staff member was expected to assist in ending the student boycott: their jobs were on the line. Later, he met a hastily assembled "citizens committee," headed by Robert Tucker and T. J. Jemison, which pressed Clark to readmit the expelled students, or at least show some flexibility. Clark insisted that the board of education had allowed him no room for maneuver, but he did agree to meet the students.

After the disciplined students met with Clark, the classroom boycott began to falter. Many in the student body did not know how to react when the suspended demonstrators sent mixed signals on whether or not to continue the protest. Those who had already gone home wondered if they should return, and those without train or bus fare to get home had nowhere to go. As a result, most gradually went back to campus. "About seven hundred students quit the university," says Fairclough, "but most returned to classes."

Southern University had survived, but blacks in Baton Rouge would have to wait for lunch counters to be integrated. Additional sit-ins by students, led by CORE, occurred in December 1961. In 1963 a biracial committee created by city-parish government to address various racial issues finally negotiated the desegregation of twelve downtown lunch counters. Thus, while the student sit-ins did not specifically end lunch counter segregation in Baton Rouge, one can't imagine it happening when it did without their protests.

All of the arrested Southern University students were convicted of disturbing the peace by a local judge. Future Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall and Louisiana NAACP attorney A. P. Tureaud represented them before the Louisiana Supreme Court, where they also lost. However, as previously mentioned, the U.S. Supreme Court overturned these verdicts in December 1961.

Postscript: Although available sources conflict concerning the fate of the seventeen students suspended by Southern University President Felton Clark, the following is known. Jo Ann Morris transferred to Central State University in Ohio. In 2004, she taught English at a university in Alabama. Vernon Jordan, one of the two students who protested at Sitman's Drug Store on March 29, 1961, transferred to what is now the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff. There he earned a degree in political science. Later he returned to Baton Rouge, where he worked for ExxonMobil and several other industrial plants. Jeanette Hoston Harris became a historian for the city of Washington, D.C. Kenneth Johnson finished law school and eventually became a judge. Donald T. Moss enrolled in Howard University's law school, but family pressures forced him to withdraw.

Statewide Significance:

Louisiana's civil rights movement tends to be given only scant mention in general histories, guidebooks and exhibits. Most of the attention goes to Alabama and Mississippi. And while the Pelican

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State did not shock the world as much as its neighbors, it most definitely had a notable civil rights movement – and a sometimes violent one. As noted above, the first large-scale bus boycott of the civil rights movement occurred in Baton Rouge in June 1953 – two-and-a-half years before Rosa Parks and Montgomery. The sit-in movement came to the state with the Baton Rouge Sit-Ins of March 1960 – the subject of this nomination. The next sit-in would not occur until September 1960 (in New Orleans, in a Woolworth's now remodeled beyond recognition). "The sit-ins," concludes historian Adam Fairclough, "added a new dimension to the civil rights struggle in Louisiana. Youth and elan invigorated what had become a tired campaign presided over by elderly men."

One of the nation's major battles in court-ordered desegregation occurred in Louisiana -- the New Orleans School Crisis of 1960, precipitated by the arrival of four black first graders at two previously all white schools. Federal marshals protected the young girls from the abusive crowds. The battle that waged in the summer of 1960 between the State of Louisiana and the courts, prior to "Desegregation Day" (November 14), is generally regarded by historians as a prime example of the southern post-*Brown* manifesto of "massive resistance."

And no summary of the state's modern civil rights movement could leave out the town of Bogalusa. Dubbed by one reporter "Klan Town USA," the paper mill town of Bogalusa was indeed a challenging (and life-threatening) place to hold civil rights demonstrations. It is not surprising that notable violence occurred in and around the city, including the murders of two African-Americans. Washington Parish, where Bogalusa is located, adjoins Mississippi on two sides, and civil rights workers considered the two to be almost one and the same. But the local black population was far from cowed. To the contrary, the Bogalusa movement is known for its militancy, including a legendary chapter of the Deacons for Defense and Justice. (Formed in the North Louisiana town of Jonesboro, this was an organization of black men armed in self-defense – to protect blacks from white violence.) Violent clashes were becoming commonplace in Bogalusa as local black activists and CORE workers "tested" the Civil Rights Act of 1964, protested and marched on city hall. The U. S. Justice Department intervened on various legal fronts in 1965 – what the department termed "legal saturation . . . to bring the force of federal law into play in an unusually tough mill town." The climax of the movement in Bogalusa was a 106-mile march to Baton Rouge, the state capital.

The foregoing are generally regarded as the most notable events in the state's modern civil rights movement. They are major events in the major "fronts" of the movement – court-ordered desegregation, boycotts, sit-ins, etc.

Exceptional Importance:

The National Register requires that properties be of "exceptional importance" if their significance occurred less than fifty years ago. This is because it usually takes time to understand events and make an informed and dispassionate evaluation of their true significance. Part of the Civil Rights Movement is now fifty years old, and part is not. As *National Register Bulletin 22: Guidelines for Evaluating and Nominating Properties That Have Achieved Significance Within the Last Fifty Years* explains, the 50 year threshold was not designed "to be mechanically applied on a year by year basis. Generally, our understanding of history does not advance a year at a time, but rather in periods of time which can logically be examined together." Additionally, *Bulletin 22* states that events which have received scholarly evaluation may qualify despite the age requirement. Both the Baton Rouge sit-ins and the broader sit-in movement of which they were a part (and both of which are only four years shy of the fifty year threshold) have been the subjects of careful scholarly study.

Perhaps the best argument for "exceptional importance" rests on the historical force which the Baton

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Rouge Sit-Ins represent: the Civil Rights Movement. There is no question that this extraordinary movement, which changed the lives of millions, is of "exceptional significance" in American history. African-Americans, aided by the courts, pivotal legislation, and their own direct actions, re-gained the fundamental rights secured some one hundred years ago during Reconstruction. Surely, the Civil Rights Movement and the Cold War are the two most important historical phenomena of the second half of the twentieth century. Among the direct actions are sit-ins, which are widely recognized as significant because they changed the movement's tactics and moved it forward at a time when opponents were successfully blocking the older court-challenge approach to segregation.

The Baton Rouge Sit-Ins, as explained above, are considered one of the most important events of the Civil Rights Movement in Louisiana. Sitman's Drug Store and the Greyhound bus terminal, the sites of the other lunch counters targeted by the Southern students in early 1960, no longer exist. Thus, as the only surviving site and the first site targeted by the Baton Rouge Sit-Ins, the S. H. Kress store is certainly of exceptional importance in Louisiana's civil rights history.

Local Architectural Significance:

The Kress Building is of local architectural significance as a good example of the Art Deco taste within downtown Baton Rouge.

Baton Rouge is a quite old city, tracing its founding to the early eighteenth century. The small river town (population 2,269 in 1840) was designated the state capital in 1846. Although population growth in the late nineteenth century was steady, Baton Rouge remained a fairly small town, only a few blocks deep from the river, into the first years of the twentieth century. The population in 1900 was 11,269. Rapid growth occurred in the 1910s and '20s, with the population doubling between 1910 and 1930. Among the most important players in the economy (if not the most) was Standard Oil Company of Louisiana. Incorporated in the state in 1907, Standard Oil soon built a large refinery and launched Baton Rouge as a major petro-chemical center.

Unfortunately for historic buildings, Baton Rouge's petro-chemical driven economy remained prosperous through the mid-twentieth century. And in a drama played out all over America, the old downtown, with its once splendid buildings, suffered significant demolition and alteration. The extent of the loss is documented in old photographs, oral accounts, and Sanborn maps. Among the 60-70 surviving historic commercial buildings, the vast majority are c.1900 to c.1950 vernacular structures that would be termed "no style" or simply styled. Many of the survivors have been altered significantly (metal panels covering the façade, for example). In addition, the Central Business District contains many new buildings and parking lots where historic buildings once stood.

In addition to commercial buildings, there are a number of historic institutional buildings in the downtown of Louisiana's capital city – mostly twentieth century. Several of the new buildings mentioned above are major government buildings erected by the State of Louisiana within the last five years.

There are six examples of the Art Deco taste in downtown Baton Rouge: the candidate, the State Capitol (a skyscraper accorded National Historic Landmark status), the State Capitol Annex (a fairly subdued composition of five stories), a small former library building, the Federal Building, and a neo-classical bank with an Art Deco interior. Art Deco was seldom seen in Louisiana in commercial construction, and this is certainly borne out in downtown Baton Rouge, where there are only two examples.

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But rareness aside, the Kress Building is a compelling example of what in its day would have been downtown's most advanced architectural taste. Indeed, the Third Street (principal) façade makes a striking architectural statement, culminating in a dynamic upward-thrusting side tower. Additional interest is derived from a well composed and complex interplay of vertical and horizontal elements. The Modernistic taste is fully integral to the design, rather than merely applied touches. Even the patterns of brickwork support the Modernistic effect (by reinforcing the interplay of horizontal and vertical).

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

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Williams, Juan. *Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Years, 1954-1965*. N.P., Penguin Books, 1987.

Previous documentation on file (NPS): NA

Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.

Previously Listed in the National Register. (partially)

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 (Specify Repository):

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10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: less than an acre

UTM References:	Zone	Easting	Northing
	15	673960	3369940

Verbal Boundary Description:

Legal Property Description: A certain piece or parcel of ground, together with the buildings and improvements thereon, situated in that part of the City of Baton Rouge known as Devall Town and being portions of Lots 10 and 11 of Square 4 of said subdivision, or Square 63, according to the official map of the City of Baton Rouge made by F. F. Pillet, C.E. and adopted by the Commission Council of the City of Baton Rouge on October 21, 1930, and being more particularly described as follows: Beginning at a point on the south side of Main St. 65 feet 9 inches, title, (65.75 feet actual) west of the southwest corner of the intersection of Main and Thirds streets, thence in a southern direction parallel to Third Street and along the western line formerly owned by Cohn, Levy and Mrs. Sol Kahn (formerly Mrs. Jacques Walsh) a distance of 96 feet 7 1/2 inches, title (96.62 feet actual) to the northern boundary of land belong to King H. Knox, thence in a westerly direction along said northern boundary line of King H. Knox land a distance of 62.25 feet to the eastern boundary line dividing Lots 11 and 12, thence along the line dividing Lots 11 and 12 in a northerly direction and parallel to Third Street a distance of 96 feet 7 1/2 inches, title (96.62 feet actual) to the south line of Main Street in an easterly direction a distance of 62.25 feet to the point of beginning.

Boundary Justification: Boundary lines follow property lines of the parcel of land historically associated with the candidate.

11. FORM PREPARED BY

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Telephone: 225-342-8160

Date: May 2006

PROPERTY OWNERS

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