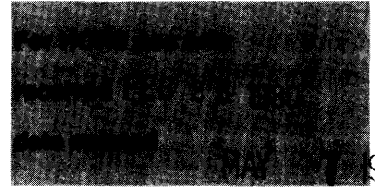


**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections



980

## 1. Name

historic Bank of Commerce and Trust Company Building

and/or common National Bank of Commerce

## 2. Location

street & number 45 S. Second Street      not for publication

city, town Memphis      vicinity of      congressional district Eighth

state Tennessee code 047 county Shelby code 157

## 3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<u>    </u> district	<u>    </u> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<u>    </u> agriculture	<u>    </u> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<u>    </u> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial	<u>    </u> park
<u>    </u> structure	<u>    </u> both	<u>    </u> work in progress	<u>    </u> educational	<u>    </u> private residence
<u>    </u> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<u>    </u> entertainment	<u>    </u> religious
<u>    </u> object	<u>    </u> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<u>    </u> government	<u>    </u> scientific
	<u>    </u> being considered	<u>    </u> yes: unrestricted	<u>    </u> industrial	<u>    </u> transportation
		<u>    </u> no	<u>    </u> military	<u>    </u> other:

## 4. Owner of Property

name National Bank of Commerce

street & number 45 S. Second Street

city, town Memphis      vicinity of      state Tennessee 38103

## 5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Shelby County Registrar's Office

street & number 160 North Main Street

city, town Memphis      vicinity of      state Tennessee 38103

## 6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title      has this property been determined eligible?      yes      no

date           federal      state      county      local

depository for survey records     

city, town           vicinity of      state

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## 7. Description

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<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		date _____

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**Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance**

The Bank of Commerce and Trust Company building is located on the southwest corner of Second and Monroe Streets in downtown Memphis. It was designed by the architects Hanker and Cairns, built by the S & W Construction Company, and opened to the public in November of 1929. In 1969, the National Bank of Commerce commissioned Roy P. Harrover and Associates, architects, to design an office tower and parking garage to add on to the existing bank building. The architects were also responsible for a renovation of the main banking room. The work was completed in 1973.

The main bank building adjoins two intersecting streets and presents symmetrical and nearly identical facades to each. Unadorned pilasters rise from a podium of Stone Mountain granite to support a Doric entablature and define a pair of bays on either end. Two pairs of engaged columns of the Doric order define the three main bays of the seven bay system and push the facade toward the center, which helps to define the entry.

The entry bay at the center displays a medallioned frontispiece featuring brackets enriched with acanthus leaves which support a moulded cornice. Bronze revolving doors permit easy access in and out of the main banking room. The coffered bronze doors on the outside of the revolving doors and the grillwork over the transom light continue the Doric spirit. Large windows, seven lights across by six lights down, penetrate the massive limestone walls in each bay to illuminate the interior. Above both entries is a transom light window seven lights across by four lights down. The bays flanking these on either side display tall, narrow windows of three lights across by six lights down. Smaller, single light windows are paired and centered beneath each large window and reinforce the feeling of massiveness. The exception to this is found in the single lights beneath the tall, narrow windows of the bays adjoining the entry.

Two attic stories rest upon the entablature and are stepped back to reduce the impact of the building from the street. Double-hung sash windows with two lights are grouped in sets of twos and threes and centered above each bay below. Low relief paired pilasters support a simplified entablature on the first attic story, while the second attic story is free from ornament with the exception of a decorative copper band running along a simple cornice. A standing seam copper roof caps the building and completes the composition.

The new office tower and parking garage were added respectively to the west and east sides of the bank. The three buildings establish a dialogue in several ways. Precast concrete panels, made to complement the limestone of the original bank, face the new buildings. The black slate walls and paving of the plaza provide a base in much the same way that the polished granite functions for the original building. Large bands of windows penetrate the office tower, and for the first three stories are at the same level as the windows in the existing building. A fourth-floor veranda breaks the planar surface of the office building at a point that corresponds with the stepped-back attic story. These new buildings are sympathetic to the existing bank while maintaining their individual integrity. However, this nomination includes only the original bank building.

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 2

The seven bay arrangement of the exterior facades are projected through to the interior and form a square main banking room. The entries from Monroe, Second Street, and the new tower lobby all reveal a large, skylit open space spanning 110' x 6' (3 x 5 bays) in the center of this central space. The volume of this space echoes the massing of the exterior. As a result of the bank renovation in 1973, which involved raising the original skylight from the second to the third level, an open corridor on the third level now provides an interesting view of the main banking space not seen before. The underside of the third level exposes the original single band of coffers, a decorative band of egg and dart enrichment, and a double width bank of geometric decoration. The second level, which is divided into three bays per side, has double-hung sash windows, one window per bay, which are covered with the same style of bronze grillwork that covers the transom lights on the exterior. This surface treatment is very similar to the exterior surface treatment on this level.

On the main banking level, twenty-two Ionic columns of Bottichino marble rise from octagonal bases to support a decorated coffered ceiling and define a structural bay system. The voluted column capitals also feature a band of egg and dart enrichment. The fluted shaft of the column tapers up from the torus moulding at its base. Restoration and articulation of the columns, coffers and the architectural enrichment was also included in the renovation of 1973. Engaged marble pilasters reflect the structural grid at the wall surfaces. Large windows allow natural light into the space from the north and east.

The west wall opens between pilasters to reveal the new bank tower lobby and mezzanine floor, which were sensitively designed to relate to the geometry of the main banking room. The precast concrete panels used in the new building harmonize with the Bottichino marble and the limestone wall surfaces of the main banking room. A brown wool carpet now covers the original marble, oak, and cork tile floors to unify the space and provide a more desirable acoustical environment. The tellers' cages, which originally enclosed the marble colonnade, were removed in 1973 to contribute to the feeling of openness which this room now has. New accessories include marble check-writing stands and a tellers' counter, cylindrical planters, and wood and leather seating and desk areas.

As a result of the renovation and addition, the space has found a new vitality. Improved access to the space has increased activity and usage. Sensitive mixing of old and new has provided a smooth transition between the two.

# 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates

Builder/Architect

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

The Bank of Commerce and Trust Company building is a significant building and worthy of preservation for a number of reasons. Its association with the Memphis downtown district has made it a landmark in the city as well as in the Mid-South region. The general excellence of the building itself, both in its design and construction, is of primary significance. Its adherence to the Neo-Classical tradition, in overall feeling and in detail, is noteworthy, as is the municipal and regional stature of the banking institution that built it.

During the Twenties, Memphis participated in the general prosperity that the nation enjoyed during the post-World War I era. Many other significant buildings in Memphis were built during this period. Among the more notable examples are Southwestern College, the Columbia Mutual tower, the Scottish Rite Temple (Hanker and Cairns), the Shrine Building (Hanker and Cairns, 1923), the Sears and Roebuck tower (1927), and the "new" Peabody Hotel (1925). Generally these buildings were constructed with modern building techniques, using the traditional architectural styles popular during that period.

At the time that the Bank of Commerce and Trust Company built the building, the cost of construction was two million dollars. The building was acclaimed as one of the outstanding bank buildings of its type in the country in terms of the quality of its construction and design. The design of the building was greatly influenced by the Mellon Bank in Pittsburgh, which was a prototype in America for banking houses of that period.

The building features many characteristics of the Neo-Classical style. The combination of symmetry and monumental proportions creates a feeling of monumentality. Both smooth and polished stone wall surfaces sheath the exterior and are also apparent on the interior. Colossal columns of the Doric order adorn the exterior, while Ionic columns support the roof over the spacious main banking room. Large, double light sash windows penetrate the two unadorned attic stories that step back from the street facades.

The Bank of Commerce and Trust Company, which is now the National Bank of Commerce, has been an integral part of Memphis and the Mid-South business community since 1873, when it was formed to meet a need for strong banks during the era of Reconstruction. The bank has continued its growth and close association with the vital factors of economic progress and development of Memphis and its surrounding area.

All of these factors combine to make this property worthy of National Register stature. As banking operations have changed through the years, the building has continued to maintain its historical integrity.

The boundaries for this nomination were drawn to include the parcel of land which the building occupies.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

1. Blumenson, John, J-G - Identifying American Architecture, A Pictorial Guide to Styles and Terms, 1600-1945. American Association for State and Local History Nashville, 1978.
2. Crawford, Charles - Yesterday's Memphis, E.A. Seeman Publishing, Inc. Miami, Florida, 1976.

# 10. Geographical Data

UTM NOT VERIFIED

Acreeage of nominated property .51  
 Quadrangle name Northwest Memphis, Tenn. **ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED** Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A	1 5	7 6 8 5 7 0	3 8 9 2 7 4 0	B			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C				D			
E				F			
G				H			

Verbal boundary description and justification

The nominated property is outlined in red on Shelby County Tax Assessment Map Number FG -6-B, and is a rectangular lot measuring 149.15' x 148.90'.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
state	code	county	code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Day Smith  
 organization Roy P. Harrover and Associates date November 1979  
 street & number 1 Commerce Square, Suite 2710 telephone 901/522-1406  
 city or town Memphis state Tennessee

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Herbert E. Hoyer  
 title Executive Director, Tennessee Historical Commission date 2/21/80

For HCRS use only I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register	
<u>for W. Ray Luse</u> Keeper of the National Register	date <u>5/7/80</u>
Attest: <u>Kristen J. O'Connell</u> Chief of Registration	date <u>5/6/80</u>

FHR-8-300A  
(11/78)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE 2

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3. The Commercial Appeal (Memphis) November 12, 1929, November 11, 1929, November, 1973 (Supplement)
4. Talley, Robert, 80th Anniversary, National Bank of Commerce, Memphis Tennessee, April, 1953.