

**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

1. Name

historic Front Row Historic District

and/or common Cotton Row Historic District

2. Location

street & number South Front Street between Monroe and Gayoso Avenues ___ not for publication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	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	___ agriculture	___ museum
___ building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial	___ park
___ structure	___ both	___ work in progress	___ educational	___ private residence
___ site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	___ entertainment	___ religious
___ object	___ in process	___ yes: restricted	___ government	___ scientific
	___ being considered	___ yes: unrestricted	___ industrial	___ transportation
		___ no	___ military	___ other:

4. Owner of Property

name Multiple Ownership

street & number

city, town ___ vicinity of ___ state

5. Location of Legal Description

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

street & number 160 North Main

city, town Memphis state Tennessee 38103

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Historical and Architectural Survey has this property been determined eligible? ___ yes no

date July 1972 ___ federal state ___ county ___ local

depository for survey records Tennessee Historical Commission, 4721 Trousdale Drive

city, town Nashville state Tennessee 37220

7. Description

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

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Front Row Historic District consists of two disconnected areas in downtown Memphis. The first of these includes twenty-six historically or architecturally significant buildings, two noncontributing buildings, and two vacant lots in an area bounded by Monroe Avenue on the north, Gayoso Avenue on the south, Wagner Place on the west, and Center Lane Alley on the east. The majority of the buildings in this area are multi-story commercial establishments erected during the second half of the nineteenth century and which house cotton brokerage firms or establishments which cater to the employees of these businesses. Cotton brokerage houses have operated in this section of Memphis since before the Civil War.

About 100 yards west of the western boundary of the above mentioned area is a strip of land approximately 400 yards in length; the width of this area varies according to the river stage. This area was a steamboat landing from the midnineteenth century until the early years of this century; it is now used as a parking lot. The landing is bounded on the north by Jefferson Davis Park, on the south by Tom Lee Park, on the east by Riverside Drive, and on the west by the Mississippi River. The early cobblestone surface largely remains intact as do the iron tie rings for anchoring boats.

The cotton bales were temporarily stored on the cobblestone landing during the loading or unloading of the boats. Processing and more permanent storage was accomplished in the brokerage houses; the sale and purchase of the cotton was and still is done in the cotton exchange.

The space between the western boundary of the brokerage house area and the eastern edge of the landing contains Riverside Drive, a four-lane highway; the Illinois Gulf Central tracks; vacant space used for parking; and Wagner Place. Historically this was a transit area through which the carts carrying the cotton bales passed to or from the landing. It seems unlikely that permanent buildings of any type ever stood in this area since it was subject to flooding; if there were buildings, they were very likely temporary shanties. Modern improvements have considerably altered the topography of this area.

Buildings and sites contributing to the character of the district:

2. Fitzhugh Building (69-71 Monroe Avenue): 1920, Art Deco, stucco painted white, openings accented with moldings, ca. 1960 remodeling to part of the facade.
3. Mid-South Cotton Growers Association Building (44 South Front Street): 1936, concrete with window openings separated by fluted detailing simulating pilasters; although less than 50 years old, this building functionally relates to the district.
4. Hart Building (48 South Front Street): ca. 1900, Romanesque Revival brick building with limestone trim, vestigial turrets accent the upper corners, cast iron columns frame the entrances, outside windows on third floor are framed by limestone arches with keystones.
5. Boyd Building (52 South Front Street): 1915, three story brick building with dentiled brick cornice, remodeled first story facade, star-shaped terminals to six tie-rods
6. Ketchum Building (60 South Front Street): late 19th century, 3 story brick building, third story window openings feature columns as window dividers, second story window openings are surmounted by fanlights each filled with a scalloped shell motif, first story facade has been remodeled.

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 type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates

Builder/Architect

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

From 1826, when 300 bales were brought to Memphis by wagon, to the present, cotton has been important to Memphis. On the eve of the Civil War Memphis had become a major river port, with bankers, manufacturers, and brokers involved in the cotton business. By the end of the century the city had become the world's foremost inland cotton market and the largest producer of cottonseed oil. Because of the 400,000-700,000 bales transported yearly into Memphis in the 1880s and 1890s, cotton brokers wielded great power. Many other groups--spinners' buyers, buyers for export, cotton classers, weighers, compress hands and clerks--received their livelihood from cotton. The cotton business dominated the city's economy for many years.

The buildings of Front Row which were erected during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are unpretentious and utilitarian and in sharp contrast to buildings located in the next block east, which housed fashionable retail establishments. Although built during a period of exuberant architectural expression, the Cotton Row buildings are primarily a product of function rather than prevailing fashion. A few exceptions to this functionalism appear, such as the Joseph N. Oliver Building (No. 21) and the Hart Building (No. 4), in which facade design assumes some importance.

Most of the buildings were designed to provide facilities for the cotton brokerage houses (known as factories) and incorporate features necessary for their business. For example, the buildings usually have north-facing skylights, which afford natural light for grading cotton. Large, open interior spaces were designed to accommodate the storing and handling of the 500-pound-cotton bales. The buildings have facilities for loading and unloading shipments of cotton. Furnishings include large tables upon which the cotton was spread out for grading. Even the location of the buildings reflects the demands of the cotton trade; they stand near the cobblestoned river landing, but above the high point of the periodic Mississippi River floods.

A few buildings are not devoted to the sorting and storage of cotton. The trade organization, the Mid-South Cotton Growers Association, has its headquarters at 44 South Front Street (No. 3) and the cotton is bought and sold at the Cotton Exchange Building (No. 9). Still other buildings house restaurants and stores which seek the patronage of the brokerage house employees.

Altogether, the buildings of this district, together with the nearby cobblestoned river landing, illustrate the middle stage of the cotton industry--the stage between production and manufacturing. As such, it shows a major aspect of commerce in the South and in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Capers, Gerald M., Jr. Biography of a Rivertown; Memphis: Its Heroic Age. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1939.
 McIlwaine, Shields. Memphis Down in Dixie. New York: Dutton, 1948.
 Shelby County Tax Records
 Memphis City Directories

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 20
 Quadrangle name Northwest Memphis Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

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

Verbal boundary description and justification The property nominated includes two tracts of land which are bounded as follows: (Area which includes Nos. 1-30); beginning at the southeast corner of Union Avenue and Wagner Place; thence south along the eastern edge of Wagner Place to the northeast corner of Wagner Place and Gayoso Avenue; thence east along the

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 Ann K. Bennett, Preservation Planner
 organization Memphis Landmarks Commission date October 1978
 street & number 22 North Front Street telephone (901) 528-2834
 city or town Memphis state Tennessee 38103

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 L. Hays date 6/11/79
 title Executive Director, Tennessee Historical Commission

For HCRS use only	
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register	
<u>Shelby County</u>	date <u>8.1.79</u>
Keeper of the National Register	
Attest: <u>Jann H. Gilmore</u>	date <u>7/16/79</u>
Chief of Registration	

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

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

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DATE ENTERED	

COTTON ROW HIST. DIST.

CONTINUATION SHEET

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- | | | |
|---|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Simon Wener | 1046 Park Center Drive | Clarksdale, MS 38614 |
| 2. Louise Fitzhugh | 69 Monroe Avenue | Memphis 38103 |
| 3. Mid-South Cotton Growers
Assn. | 44 South Front Street | Memphis 38103 |
| 4. Virginia E. Hart | 4123 Lindenwood Drive | Matteson, Illinois 60443 |
| 5. Lelia & Martha Boyd | 1503 Union Avenue, Rm. 210 | Memphis 38104 |
| 6. A. W. Ketchum | 105 Lucerne Blvd. | Birmingham, Alabama 35209 |
| 7. Lyman Aldrich & Assoc. | 66 South Front Street | Memphis 38103 |
| 8. Lyman Aldrich & Assoc. | 66 South Front Street | Memphis 38103 |
| 9. Murff & Co., Inc. | 84 South Front Street | Memphis 38103 |
| 10. Murff & Co., Inc. | 84 South Front Street | Memphis 38103 |
| 11. Francis Hugh & Co., Inc. | 90 South Front Street | Memphis 38103 |
| 12. C. L. & E. M. Patton | 92 South Front Street | Memphis 38103 |
| 13. Frank M. Weathersby, Jr. | 94 South Front Street | Memphis 38103 |
| 14. Marjorie B. Sims | 275 S. Holmes | Memphis 38111 |
| 15. One Hundred and Four
South Front St. Corp. | 104 South Front Street | Memphis 38103 |
| 16. W. C. Johnson | 110 South Front Street | Memphis 38103 |
| 17. Third National Bank
Trust Dept. | | Nashville, TN 37219 |
| 18. F. G. & James H. Barton | 115 South Front Street | Memphis 38103 |
| 19. Lyman Aldrich & Assoc. | 66 South Front Street | Memphis 38103 |
| 20. Pier One Restaurant II | #4555 Fleour Drive | Des Moines, Iowa 50321 |
| 21. Pier One Restaurant II | #4555 Fleour Drive | Des Moines, Iowa 50321 |
| 22. Weil Bros. Cotton, Inc. | 95 South Front Street | Memphis 38103 |
| 23. National Bank of
Commerce, Trustees | 1 Commerce Square | Memphis 38103 |
| 24. National Bank of
Commerce, Trustees | 1 Commerce Square | Memphis 38103 |
| 25. Marvin A. Woolen, Sr. | 49 Union | Memphis 38103 |
| 26. Marvin A. Woolen, Sr. | 49 Union | Memphis 38103 |
| 27. Timpani Properties
c/o Carol Coletta | 41 Union | Memphis 38103 |
| 28. Swift & Co. | 35 Union | Memphis 38103 |
| 29. Harold Gordon | 199 Jefferson | Memphis 38103 |
| 30. Lyman Aldrich & Assoc. | 66 South Front Street | Memphis 38103 |
| 31. City of Memphis | Memphis City Hall | Memphis 38103 |

Lyman, to
LYMAN D. ALDRICH, PRESIDENT
ALDRICH & ASSOCIATES
66 S FRONT ST.
MEMPHIS, TN 38103

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7. Bluff City Cotton Company Building (64 South Front Street): late 19th century, three story brick building with vestiges of the original architectural treatment including East Lake-type columns on the first story, brick pilasters on the second story; filled and altered openings on all floors, new cornice.
8. Weathersby Building (70 South Front Street): ca. 1890, 3 story brick building, almost all of the first story drastically remodeled, remaining first floor facade features columns and arched accenting of some window and door openings, the second and third stories are punctuated by windows with segmental arches separated at intervals by paired pilasters.
9. Cotton Exchange Building (84-86 South Front Street): 1925, 12 story steel frame building with arcaded stone veneer on first two stories and brick veneer above, terracotta window ledges.
10. Murff Building (88 South Front Street): 1880s, three story brick building, 1/2 first story facade drastically remodeled ca. 1970, 1/2 first story facade retains two cast iron columns, second and third story windows accented with connecting label molds, cornice features six round windows and brick dentils.
11. Hugh Building (90 South Front Street): late 19th century, brick building presently appearing to be three stories in height, possibly originally taller, drastically altered, retaining few original architectural details.
12. Patton Building (92 South Front Street): late 19th century, 2 stories plus an attic story, first story facade remodeled, second story windows with segmental arches presently infilled with brick, attic windows with segmental arches, brick cornice with dentils.
13. Weathersby Building (94 South Front Street): late 19th century, 2 story brick building with an attic story, first story features cast iron columns joined to the building with lattice-type supports of iron.
14. Sims Building (96 South Front Street): 19th century, 3 story brick building with gable roof behind a parapet facade, facade remodeled, rectangular windows at second and third stories.
15. One Hundred and Four South Front Street Corporation (104 South Front Street): 1871, 3 story brick building with an attic story, first floor windows infilled with plywood, second and third story windows feature segmental brick arches with brick keystones separated by brick pilasters with stone capitals, attic windows covered with decorative iron grills.

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16. Johnson Building (110 South Front Street): ca. 1900, 3 story brick building with attic story, first story facade drastically remodeled, second and third story windows feature segmental arches, string courses separate all stories, cornice features segmental section flanked by capped posts.
17. Perkins-Golden Company Building (116 South Front Street): 1882, 2 story brick building with both first and second stories crowned with dentiled trim, 3 columns accentuate the ground story, second story windows feature brick segmental arches with brick keystones.
18. Barton Building (115 South Front Street): ca. 1865, 2 story, brick, remodeled early 20th century. Remodeled facade features 2 cast iron columns flanking door, decorative cornice, tie rods with star-shaped terminals anchor facade to old building.
19. Vergos Building (109 South Front Street): ca. 1893, 3 story brick building with attic story, first story facade veneered with marble in recent remodeling, stone string courses define the stories, decorative cornice flanked by engaged vestigial turrets.
20. Stewart Building (105 South Front Street): ca. 1900, 3 story brick building with cast iron pillars, detailed brick cornice topped by brick parapet which contains name of building.
21. Joseph N. Oliver Building (99,101,103 South Front Street): 1905, five story brick and stone building, 1st story stone, entrance topped by cartouche, center 3 bays of second, third, and fourth stories are brick with middle bay distinguished by Gibbs surround with cartouche keystone, outer 2 bays are stone, fifth story brick with stone window surrounds, foliated frieze contains name of building beneath dentiled and modillioned cornice surmounted by stone parapet with anthemaea detailing.
22. Weil Brothers Cotton, Inc., Building (95 South Front Street): late 19th century with early 20th century facade, 2 story brick building with brick detailing simulating pilasters separating bays, decorative panels serve as capitals for the pilasters, cornice features diamond-shaped details above two brick panels flanked and separated by three rosettes.
23. Riley Building (91 South Front Street): early 20th century, two story brick building, later applied modillion cornice, rectangular openings.
25. Woolen Building (49 Union Street): ca. 1848, 3 story stuccoed brick building with first story facade drastically remodeled ca. 1955, second and third stories retain older window openings with arched-headed and rectangular windows separated by pilasters.

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26. Woolen Building (45-47 Union Street): ca. 1848-50, 3 story brick building, first story retains cast iron square columns but that section of facade otherwise altered, second and third stories retain original fenestration of segmentally arched and circularly arched windows respectively, brick cornice with scrolled brackets and attic vents with iron gills, star-shaped terminals to tie rods.

27. Timpani Properties Building (41 Union Street): ca. 1923, 2 story brick building being remodeled for condominiums.

28. Swift and Company Building (35 Union Street): ca. 1925, 3 story brick building with concrete parapet trim, door treatment and caps to pilaster-like divisions between windows.

31. Mississippi River Landing (Riverside Drive): This area is approximately 1,200 feet in length and the width varies from 400 feet at the widest point to 200 feet at the narrowest; the above measurement of the width reflects the normal river stage, and it varies considerably as the level of the river rises or falls; the majority of the surface is cobblestoned and large iron tie rings are interspersed over the area.

Nonconforming intrusions detracting from the integrity of the district and vacant lots:

1. Wener Building (73 Monroe Avenue): ca. 1910, remodeled ca. 1947 and ca. 1965, brick building with modern facade.

24. Vergos Building (77-81-85 Union Street): ca. 1843, drastically remodeled ca. 1920, stuccoed brick, 2 stories, diamond-shaped attic vents, trim painted contrasting dark color.

29. Vacant lot (100 South Front Street)

30. Vacant lot (111 South Front Street)

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northern edge of Gayoso Avenue to the northwest corner of Gayoso Avenue and Center Lane Alley; thence north along the western edge of Center Lane Alley to the southwest corner of Center Lane Alley and East Barbaro Alley; thence west along the southern edge of East Barbaro Alley to a point opposite the southeast corner of No. 14; thence north along the eastern lines of Nos. 14, 13, 12, 11, 10, and 9 to the northern edge of Union Avenue; thence east along the northern edge of Union Avenue to the northwest corner of Union Avenue and Center Lane Alley; thence north along the western edge of Center Lane Alley to the southwest corner of Center Lane Alley and Monroe Avenue; thence west along the southern edge of Monroe Avenue to the southeast corner of Monroe Avenue and South Front Street; thence south along the eastern edge of South Front Street to the southeast corner of South Front Street and Union Avenue; thence west along the southern edge of Union Avenue to the beginning. (Area No. 31, the Mississippi River Landing); beginning at a point on the western edge of Riverside Drive opposite the southeast corner of Court Avenue and Riverside Drive; thence south along the western edge of Riverside Drive to a point opposite the northeast corner of Beale Street and Riverside Drive; thence west to the Mississippi River; thence northward along the east edge of the river as it meanders (at normal river stage) to a point directly west of the beginning point; thence east to the beginning. Additional information is contained on the attached map entitled "Front Row Historic District, Memphis, Tennessee"; this sketch map has not been drawn to scale.

Boundary Justification

The property nominated, which contains Nos. 1-30, includes buildings associated with the cotton brokerage business, related buildings such as Nos. 3 and 9, and buildings which contain businesses which are patronized by area employees. East and south of the Front Row Historic District is the Gayoso=Peabody Historic District, an area which will be nominated later this year. The block on the east side of South Front between Madison and Monroe Streets has the Shrine Building, a National Register property, and the ca. 1930 Union Planters Bank Building. The block bounded by Court Avenue, Riverside Drive, Monroe Avenue, and South Front Street, contains the U. S. Post Office, which has been or will be nominated under Executive Order 11593 by the U. S. Postal Service, and the Cossitt Library, a late nineteenth-century building which no longer retains its integrity of design and materials as a result of a ca. 1960 remodeling. A modern fire station stands on the area bounded by Monroe Avenue, Riverside Drive, Union Avenue, and South Front Street. The area west of the district is vacant except for the railroad tracks and Riverside Drive. South of the district is a modern parking garage and a building included in the proposed Gayoso-Peabody Historic District.

The Mississippi River Landing is bounded on the north and south by twentieth century parks. Riverside Drive limits the eastern edge of the area and the river forms the western boundary.

FHR-8-300A
(11/78)

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The region between the two areas of the district has been used for transit and has no direct historical relationship to the cotton brokerage business. Riverside Drive and the railroad cut are modern improvements which alter the topography of the area.