

1338

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

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

OMB No. 1024-0018

Southern Railway Freight Office, Orleans Parish, LA

Page 1

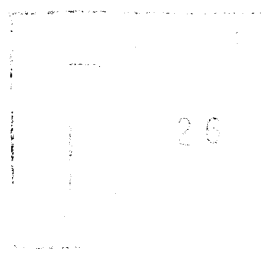
United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: Southern Railway Freight Office

Other Name/Site Number: New Orleans Terminal Co. Freight Office



2. LOCATION

Street & Number 1201 St. Louis St.

Not for publication: NA

City/Town New Orleans

Vicinity: NA

State: Louisiana Code: LA County: Orleans Code: 071

Zip Code: 70112

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: Locally: X

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

Date October 25, 2004

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:

- 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):

Edson H. Beall
Signature of Keeper

12/6/04
Date of Action

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: transportation

Sub: rail-related

Current: vacant

Sub:

7. DESCRIPTION

Architectural Classification: Modernistic

Materials:

Foundation: concrete

Walls: plaster

Roof: other: tar and gravel

Other:

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Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

The Southern Railway Freight Office was constructed in 1904 as a freight office for the New Orleans Terminal Company (see Part 8). The three story building achieved its present low-key Modernistic appearance circa 1945. Historically it served a vast freight warehouse complex located just northwest of the Vieux Carre, all of which is now gone, including the rail lines. Today the candidate's immediate environment is largely devoid of historic buildings. Just northwest (where the warehouses were located) is a "big box" grocery store with a sprawling parking lot. The freight office easily retains enough of its circa 1945 appearance to convey its historic role in railroad freight transportation.

As constructed circa 1904, the freight office was a symmetrical low-key neo-classical building nine bays wide and five bays deep. On the façade the three central bays jutted forward slightly to form an entrance pavilion. Archival drawings show a more or less full entablature and a belt course below the second story windows. Offices are lit by one-over-one sash windows. The drawings are design drawings; there are no known close-up as-built photographs. The various historic photos unearthed are aerial views, most with the candidate at a great distance. Even with these shortcomings, it seems clear that the building originally was sheathed in exposed dark brick and that the entablature was a contrasting light color.

Because of the foregoing limitations, the building's architectural development is difficult to ascertain with absolute precision. It is clear from the photographic evidence that sometime after the 1920s the building was renovated (perhaps in stages) to its present low-key Modernistic style. The entablature was removed as was the belt course (if indeed it ever existed). The building was stuccoed and painted white. A stylized Modernistic entrance porch with repeating open side panels was added. Above it was the name "Southern Railway System" in distinctive stylized lettering. Finally, the now smooth walls were capped with a slight finishing ledge. Southern Railway acquired the New Orleans Terminal Co. in 1916. (Obviously the renovation was later than that.)

The precise date for the renovation (or renovations) is impossible to establish, despite an exhaustive search of accessible primary sources. In New Orleans the heyday of the Modernistic taste was the mid-to-late 1930s and into the 1940s. The archival evidence uncovered to date can be summarized as follows: A 1936 aerial view of the city (albeit distant) still shows a dark brick appearance (the old appearance). A 1952 aerial view shows a white building (the new appearance). (Unfortunately, the entrance, where the Modernistic styling is found, is not visible.) Another aerial view thought by archivists to date from the late 1940s (and clearly a few years earlier than the 1952 view) shows a white building as well, with the correct window configuration. So, given the foregoing, it appears that the building received its present appearance between 1936 and the late 1940s. This, of course, is entirely consistent with the building's architectural treatment (i.e., when the Modernistic style was in its heyday in New Orleans.) For the purposes of this nomination, a date of circa 1945 is being used. The foregoing aerial views also show the massive collection of railroad warehouses once served by the freight office.

The candidate is presently (September 2004) under rehabilitation for use as offices. The original one over one windows survived on only the second story. Those on the top story had been replaced with metal windows, presumably in the 1960s. The lower story windows had been filled in (sometime between 1958 and 1983, per photos). (See attached xeroxed photo from summer 2004, before work began.) The original windows have been removed for repair. They are being used to replicate windows for the entire building. (Work was in progress when the photographs for this submission were taken. Most of the window openings were boarded over for security.)

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Subsequent to the circa 1945 remodeling, an elevator was added, which necessitated a small rooftop addition for mechanical equipment. Also, the interiors, which once contained corridors and offices, are now largely gutted. An unadorned staircase remains.

Assessment of Integrity:

The freight office easily conveys its historic appearance from the exterior. There is no question that a person from the historic period (circa 1945-1954) would recognize the building as the nerve center of a bustling belt railroad and railroad warehousing operation.

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8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Applicable National Register Criteria: A X B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): NA A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance: transportation

Period(s) of Significance: circa 1945-1954

Significant Dates: NA

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 Southern Railway System Freight Office is locally significant in the area of transportation as a very rare surviving resource to represent the vital role of railroad support for the functioning of the deep-water oceanic Port of New Orleans. Its period of significance spans from circa 1945, when the building acquired its present Modernistic appearance, until 1954, the Register's present 50 year cutoff. (Railroads continued to be the dominant freight carriers through the 1950s, and even beyond.)

Railroads in New Orleans:

New Orleans lagged far behind other United States cities in establishing railroad connections. The city did not squarely enter the railroad age until the late 1800s. Quite simply, New Orleans in the pre-Civil War years put all its eggs so-to-speak in one basket – the Mississippi River. The city's first railroad, the Pontchartrain, opened for business in 1831, but it was only five miles long. Through 1850, New Orleans had only a few short intra-urban lines such as the Pontchartrain. A projected New Orleans and Nashville line, chartered in 1837, constructed only a few miles of road before being crushed by the financial panic of that year. In 1853, the General Assembly of Louisiana authorized the issuance of state bonds to four major railroads to connect the city with the rest of the country. By the eve of the Civil War, New Orleans had rail connections to the North. This foundation, of course, was shattered with the Civil War.

New Orleans' great railroad boom came in the 1880s and '90s, with some major lines arriving in the first few years of the twentieth century. In addition to passenger service, railroads played a critical role in the transporting of goods to and from the Port of New Orleans (see below). By 1926, there were nine freight carriers in the city: Missouri-Pacific Railroad; Illinois Central, Yazoo and Mississippi Valley Railroad; Louisville and Nashville Railroad; Louisiana Railway and Navigation Company; Morgan's Louisiana and Texas Railroad (Southern Pacific); New Orleans Great Northern Railroad; New Orleans and Lower Coast Railroad; Southern Railway Systems; and the Texas and Pacific Railroad. (The number of major rail lines in the mid-1950s was eight.) These carriers served a vast inland area roughly bounded by the Appalachian Mountains in the east and the Rocky Mountains in the west.

Until 1935, railroad lines running westward had to traverse the Mississippi River via barge. Southern Pacific's barge, "The Mastodon," billed itself as the largest of its kind in the world. All this changed with the dedication of an engineering marvel, the Huey P. Long Bridge, on December 6, 1935. This thirteen million dollar, four-and-a-half mile long highway/railroad bridge gradually rises to the height of a 36-story building at the top of its span.

The Port of New Orleans:

With little heavy industry of its own, New Orleans traditionally was (and is) more heavily dependent on overseas trade than most other metropolitan areas. For example, during the middle years of the twentieth century New Orleans annually received over four times the per capita value in overseas trade than did New York or Baltimore. And the port was vast and busy. Indeed, in 1952 it handled two billion dollars in import/export business, which was twice the mark set in 1947. To quote a 1952 article appearing in *Newsweek*, "The Port of New Orleans, in sixteenth place after the first world war, has moved into second place among the nation's shipping centers [behind New York]." The following year, another article noted

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eighty-nine public wharves with seven million square feet of covered storage and berthing for two hundred deep-water vessels.

Vital to the effective functioning of the port was the operation of small local rail lines designed to off-load commodities from ships and convey them to major rail yards and warehousing. These local short lines (belt or switching lines) also conveyed goods to ships brought to the port by rail carriers from across the country. These local lines connected the port with what, in 1949, was over 40,000 miles of main line trackage reaching far into the interior. During the 1940s and 1950s rail carriers' principal in-bound commodities included asphalt, cotton, pulpboard, oil, lumber, brick, rice and flour. Principal out-bound commodities included bananas, oil, lumber, alcohol, shells, fertilizer, raw sugar, coffee, rubber and molasses. In 1955, there were 469,500 freight car loadings in the city. In 1962, New Orleans led all United States ports in railroad cars of cargo unloaded, according to the Association of American Railroads. (Although the last statistic is from past the period of significance for this nomination, it was included to illustrate the continuing importance of railroads as freight carriers.)

The New Orleans Terminal Company/Southern Railway "Back Belt":

The main short "belt" (switching) line conveying goods to and from ships and rail yards was the New Orleans Public Belt Railroad. Chartered in 1908, it ran for some twenty miles along the riverfront. But it never gained a monopoly on belt railroad activities. The New Orleans Terminal Company, which lost in the competition for the riverfront belt line, operated a "back belt line" running from the wharves in Chalmette in St. Bernard Parish to those in Jefferson Parish (see attached map). (During the historic period for this nomination, the Port of New Orleans stretched from St. Bernard through New Orleans to Jefferson Parish. Today there are separate port authorities.) The Southern Railway System acquired the New Orleans Terminal Co. in 1916, although it continued to be known by the original name for some time. By 1939 the Southern Railway "back belt" controlled eighty-eight miles of main line and side trackage. Southern's freight office oversaw a vast complex of railroad warehouses (with numerous spur lines) located immediately to the northwest (now demolished – see attached Sanborn map). The freight warehouses, divided between in-bound and out-bound, with tracks between, extended back all the way to Claiborne Avenue (roughly 1350 feet, or 4/10ths of a mile). Easily the biggest were the three out-bound warehouses, the largest of which was roughly 550 feet by 100 feet.

Railroad Resources Surviving in New Orleans

Today, aside from tracks, very little survives to represent the critical importance of railroads to the functioning of the Port of New Orleans (or for that matter, railroads as transporters of passengers). Sanborn maps and other primary sources show innumerable rail-related buildings and structures (freight warehouses, round houses, freight depots). Easily the most important survivors are the Huey P. Long Bridge (slated to be enlarged and modified beyond recognition) and the Southern Railway System Freight Office. As such, this unpretentious building takes on a vast, if under-appreciated, historical importance. The only other freight-related railroad survivors are a few switching towers for the New Orleans Public Belt Railroad, which are slated to be removed. New Orleans also retains nothing to represent the heyday of railroad passenger service. The city's various large passenger stations were demolished in the early 1950s to make way for a new Union Station, dedicated in 1954.

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9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Reeves, Sally K. and William B. Report and follow-up report (August 2004) on candidate based on extensive primary research, including photos, Sanborn maps, 1904 design plans, etc. Copies of both documents in National Register file, Louisiana Division of Historic Preservation.

Irvin, Hilary S. Preliminary research report (March 2004) on candidate, also based on extensive primary research. Copy in National Register file, Louisiana Division of Historic Preservation.

“Crescent City Choo Choo.” *Nutrias.org*. An on-line exhibit on the history of railroads in New Orleans by the New Orleans Public Library, based upon primary sources in the facility’s collection.

Vertical files, “New Orleans Harbor.” State Library of Louisiana. These files contain various newspaper and magazine articles from the 1940s and ‘50s. Particularly valuable was a *Newsweek* article from September 8, 1952.

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: 1 acre

| | | | |
|-----------------|-------------|----------------|-----------------|
| UTM References: | Zone | Easting | Northing |
| | 15 | 782720 | 3317740 |

Verbal Boundary Description: See attached property plat map. The nominated acreage is shown as Lot N.O.T.C. - 1B.

Boundary Justification: The acreage owned by the Southern Railway Co. has been subdivided over the years. The boundaries chosen for this nomination follow current property lines of the parcel of land upon which the candidate is located.

11. FORM PREPARED BY

Name/Title: National Register staff

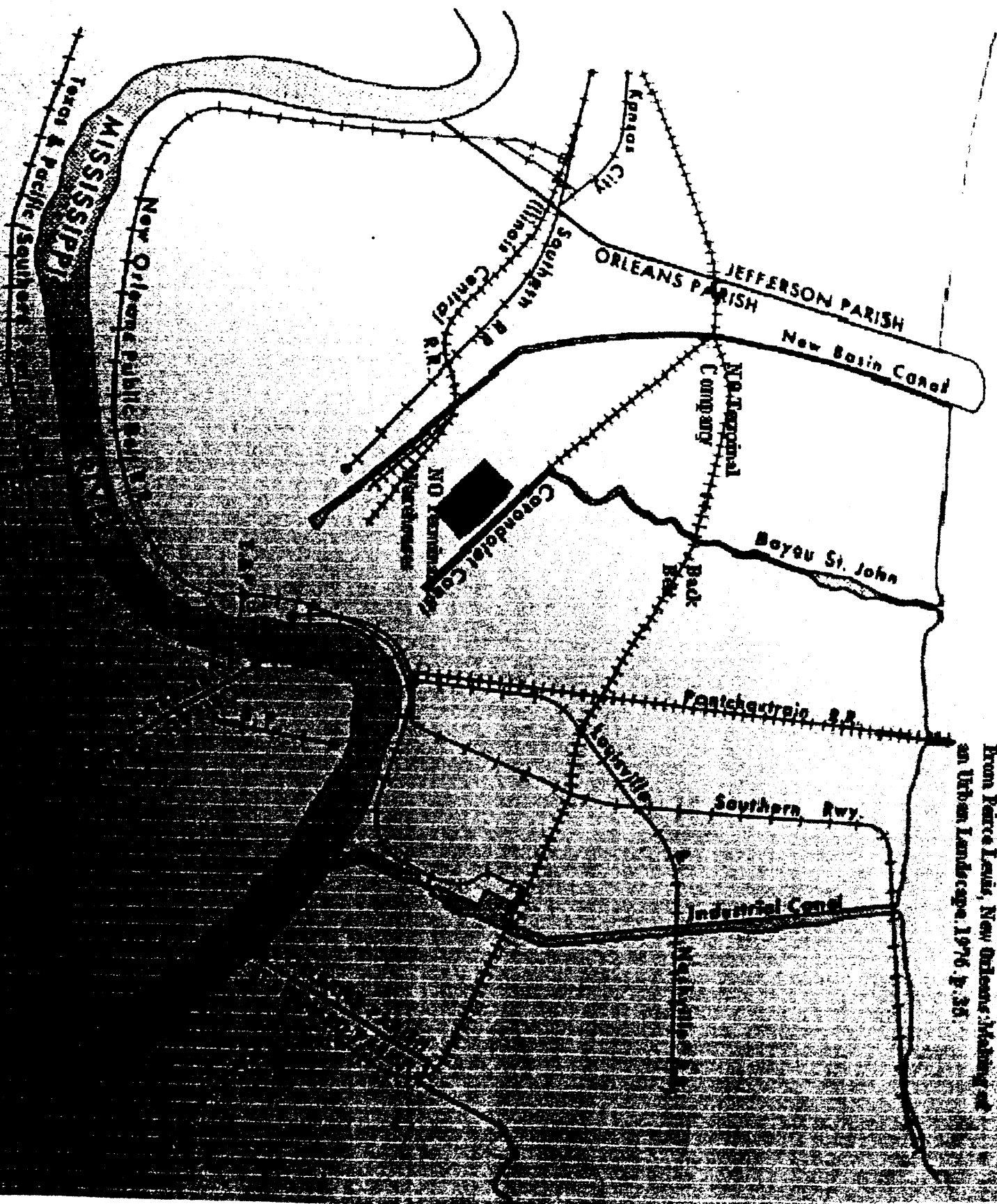
Address: Division of Historic Preservation, P. O. Box 44247, Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70804

Telephone: (225) 342-8160

Date: September 2004

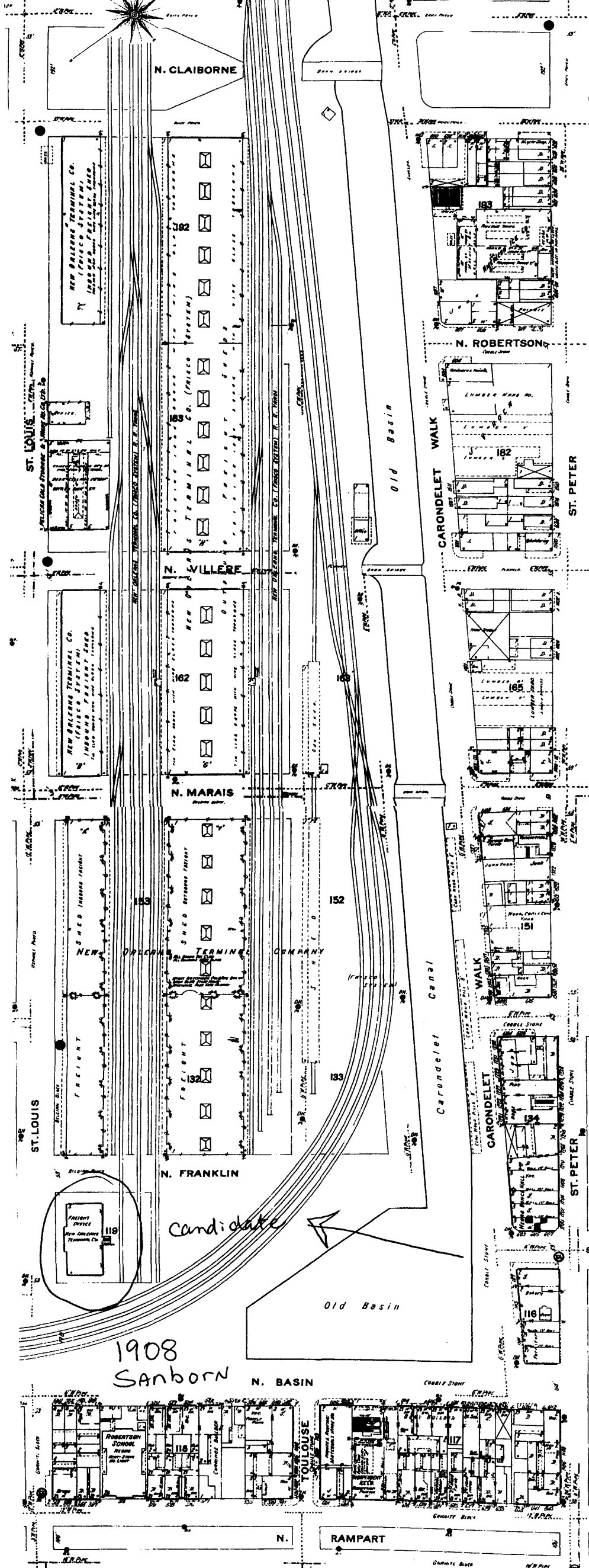
PROPERTY OWNERS

Valentino Investments, LLC
Michael Valentino, Managing Partner
830 Conti Street
New Orleans, LA 70112



From Pierre Louis, New Orleans: History of an Urban Landscape, 1976, p. 38

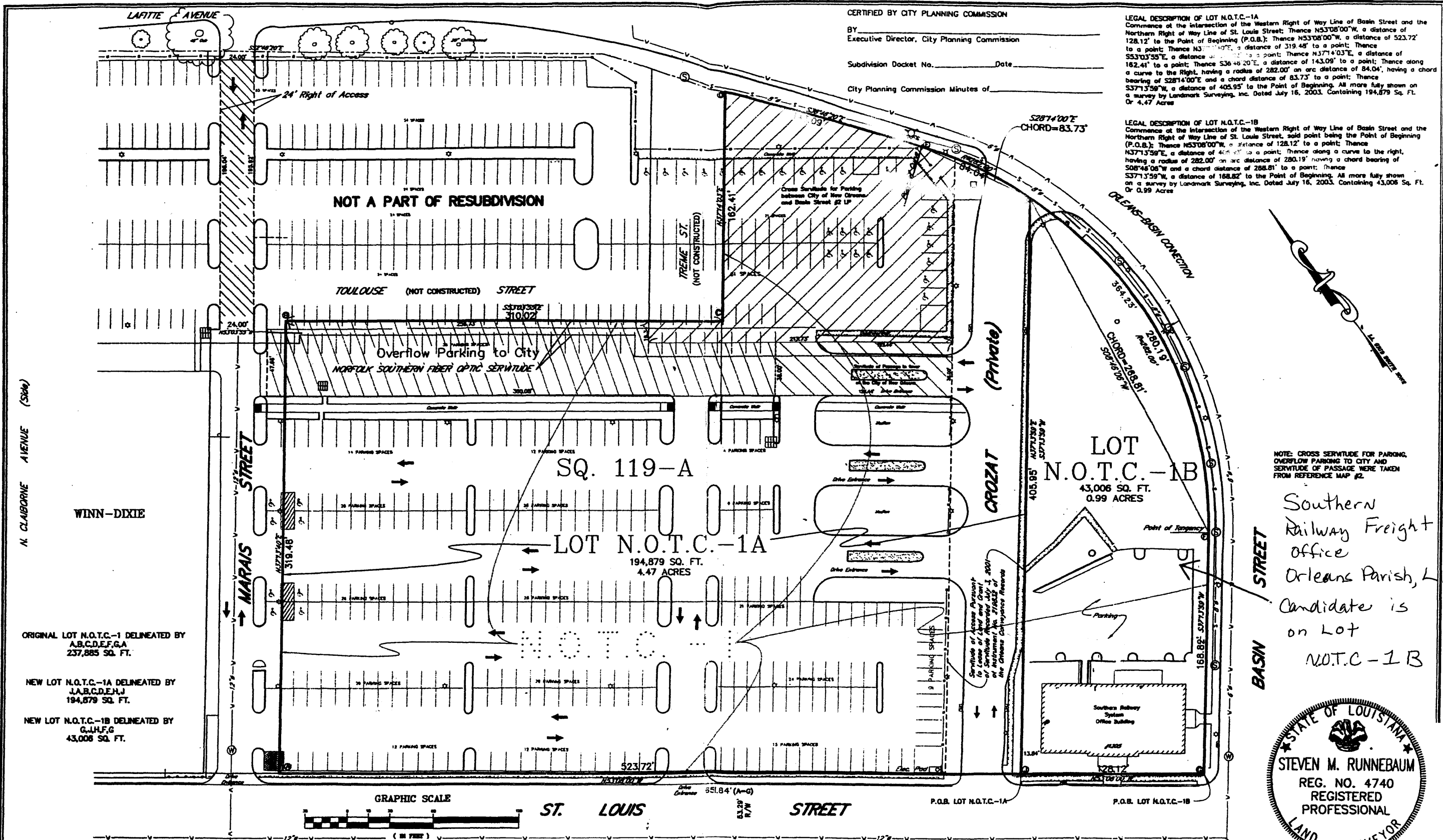
Southern Railway Co. Freight Office Orleans Parish, LA
 Southern Railway "back belt" shown by former name (N.O. Terminal Co. I.)



1908
Sanborn

1908 Sanborn
Map
Showing candidate
& warehouses it
serviced

Southern Railway
Freight office
Orleans Parish,
LA



CERTIFIED BY CITY PLANNING COMMISSION
 BY _____
 Executive Director, City Planning Commission
 Subdivision Docket No. _____ Date _____
 City Planning Commission Minutes of _____

LEGAL DESCRIPTION OF LOT N.O.T.C.-1A
 Commence at the intersection of the Western Right of Way Line of Basin Street and the Northern Right of Way Line of St. Louis Street; Thence N53°08'00"W, a distance of 128.12' to the Point of Beginning (P.O.B.); Thence N53°08'00"W, a distance of 523.72' to a point; Thence N37°13'59"E, a distance of 319.48' to a point; Thence S53°03'55"E, a distance of 182.41' to a point; Thence N37°14'03"E, a distance of 182.41' to a point; Thence S36°48'20"E, a distance of 143.09' to a point; Thence along a curve to the Right, having a radius of 282.00' on an arc distance of 84.04', having a chord bearing of S28°14'00"E and a chord distance of 83.73' to a point; Thence S37°13'59"W, a distance of 405.95' to the Point of Beginning. All more fully shown on a survey by Landmark Surveying, Inc. Dated July 16, 2003. Containing 194,879 Sq. Ft. Or 4.47 Acres

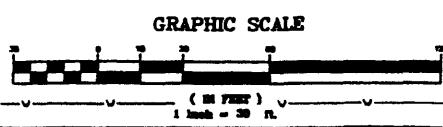
LEGAL DESCRIPTION OF LOT N.O.T.C.-1B
 Commence at the intersection of the Western Right of Way Line of Basin Street and the Northern Right of Way Line of St. Louis Street, said point being the Point of Beginning (P.O.B.); Thence N53°08'00"W, a distance of 128.12' to a point; Thence N37°13'59"E, a distance of 405.95' to a point; Thence along a curve to the right, having a radius of 282.00' on an arc distance of 280.19' having a chord bearing of S06°48'06"W and a chord distance of 288.81' to a point; Thence S37°13'59"W, a distance of 168.82' to the Point of Beginning. All more fully shown on a survey by Landmark Surveying, Inc. Dated July 16, 2003. Containing 43,006 Sq. Ft. Or 0.99 Acres

NOTE: CROSS SERVIDUTE FOR PARKING, OVERFLOW PARKING TO CITY AND SERVIDUTE OF PASSAGE WERE TAKEN FROM REFERENCE MAP #2

Southern Railway Freight office
 Orleans Parish, LA
 Candidate is on Lot N.O.T.C.-1B



ORIGINAL LOT N.O.T.C.-1 DELINEATED BY A,B,C,D,E,F,G,A 237,885 SQ. FT.
 NEW LOT N.O.T.C.-1A DELINEATED BY J,A,B,C,D,E,H,J 194,879 SQ. FT.
 NEW LOT N.O.T.C.-1B DELINEATED BY G,I,H,F,G 43,006 SQ. FT.



SURVEY MADE AT THE REQUEST OF:
NORFOLK SOUTHERN CORPORATION

| NO. | DATE | DESCRIPTION | BY |
|-----|------|-------------|----|
| | | | |
| | | | |

GENERAL NOTES:
 1) SURVEY BY SANDOLFO, ALAN & ASSOC. 700 GRAND PALAIS CASINA, INC. DATED 6-16-03
 2) AS BUILT SURVEY OF HIGH-CRUISE MARKET PLACE FOR SAUER & COMPANY DATED 4-22-02 REVISED 6-1-02 BY LANDMARK SURVEYING, INC.
 BEARINGS REFER TO REFERENCE MAP #1.

LANDMARK SURVEYING, INC.
 1400 Deale's Avenue, Suite A
 Harahan, Louisiana 70123
 Phone: 504-734-4387 Fax: 504-734-4387

There is no representation that all applicable servitudes and/or restrictions have been shown hereon. Any servitudes and/or restrictions shown on this plat are limited to those set forth in the description and/or information furnished the undersigned. A title or public record search for such information was not made by the undersigned in compiling the data for this survey.
 I certify that this plat represents an actual ground survey made by me, or by those under my direction, that no visible encroachments and other irregularities of the property lines exist shown hereon and that this survey, and plat, are in accordance with the accepted Louisiana Minimum Standards for Property Boundary Survey for a Class C Survey.

Steven M. Runnebaum
 PROFESSIONAL LAND SURVEYOR

RESUBDIVISION OF LOT N.O.T.C.-1 INTO LOTS N.O.T.C.-1A & N.O.T.C.-1B, SQUARE 119-A, SECOND MUNICIPAL DISTRICT CITY OF NEW ORLEANS ORLEANS PARISH, LOUISIANA
 JOB NO. 03-0193 DATE: JULY 16, 2003 DRAWING No. EE-3569