

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: REMOVAL

PROPERTY Cohn High School
NAME:

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: LOUISIANA, West Baton Rouge

DATE RECEIVED: 2/13/15 DATE OF PENDING LIST:
DATE OF 16TH DAY: DATE OF 45TH DAY: 3/31/15
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 04000638

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

☒ ACCEPT ☐ RETURN ☐ REJECT 3.31.15 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

RECOM./CRITERIA Remove

REVIEWER Edson Beall

DISCIPLINE History

TELEPHONE _____

DATE 04000638

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

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

OMB No. 1024-0018

Cohn High School, West Baton Rouge Parish, LA

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National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: Cohn High School

Other Name/Site Number:



2. LOCATION

Street & Number 805 North 14th Street

Not for publication: NA

City/Town Port Allen

Vicinity: NA

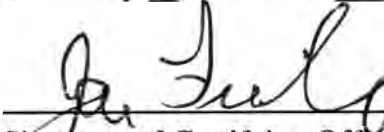
State: Louisiana Code: LA County: West Baton Rouge Code: 121 Zip Code: 70767

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

5/11/04

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:

- ☒ 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

6/22/04
Date of Action

5. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property

Private: _____
Public-Local: X
Public-State: _____
Public-Federal: _____

Category of Property

Building(s): X
District: _____
Site: _____
Structure: _____
Object: _____

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

3

3

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: Education

Sub: School

Current: Vacant

Sub: Not in Use

7. DESCRIPTION

Architectural Classification: No Style

Materials:

Foundation: Concrete

Walls: Asbestos (gym), Concrete Block (Classroom Buildings)

Roof: Asphalt Shingles

Other:

Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

Cohn High School stands on a corner in a residential neighborhood of the West Baton Rouge Parish town of Port Allen. It consists of three unstyled buildings -- two, one-story concrete block structures erected during the 1949-1950 school year and known as Buildings A and B and a frame one-story gymnasium which was moved to the site before the start of classes in the late summer of 1949. The masonry buildings stand side-by-side with a small court-like space between them. The gym stands behind the masonry buildings and is centered upon the court. The high school now shares its campus with an adjacent elementary school also named Cohn. However, it was the only facility on the site when it opened. Each of the three historic buildings which form the high school has received some alteration. However, the candidate retains its National Register eligibility as a milestone in the educational and ethnic heritage of West Baton Rouge Parish.

The gabled roof gymnasium was the first building on the site. It began life as a pre-fabricated, portable building at Baton Rouge's Ryan Airfield, a World War II military base, and was moved across the Mississippi River to West Baton Rouge Parish as part of the preparations for the school's opening.¹ It is a large open space with a stage at one end and bleachers along both sides. The parish school board installed asbestos shingles on the gym's exterior at some point during the 1950s, but no further changes have been made on the interior. Entrance is through four sets of double doors, two on the building's east side and two on the west. One of the east entrances is served by a recently added handicap ramp, as the gym is still used by the children attending the elementary school.

Buildings A and B are similar in appearance, with rectangular shapes and hipped roofs. Each is pierced by several large openings containing bands of metal windows with horizontal panes. Most of the windows are boarded over to protect them from vandalism. Both buildings have hallways with concrete floors, while the classroom floors are tiled. The concrete block walls separating the hallways and classrooms are pierced by large transoms and doors featuring large panes of glass in their upper halves. Porous tiles installed in a grid pattern form the ceilings. Both buildings are now used for storage but are otherwise vacant. Neither has been maintained and both have suffered from this neglect. Ceiling tiles have fallen and many floor tiles are broken. The glass transoms are painted over and some of the glass panels in the doors are broken or entirely gone. In addition, covered walkways have been attached to the buildings to

¹ Although the gymnasium was moved to the Cohn High School site from across the river, it is not being treated as a moved building under National Register guidelines because it was moved before the school opened and remains on the site where it was placed in 1949 in preparation for receiving the school's first students.

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facilitate movement among the structures and the modern school with which they share the site.

The building's floorplans are not identical. Building A contains a hallway shaped like the letter "L". Double doors piercing the north and west elevations provide access to both parts of this corridor. In addition to classrooms, this building contains a small teachers' lounge and boys and girls restrooms. At some point kitchen facilities were installed on one end of Building A, but it has not been otherwise altered. Building B's interior is organized around a long central hall with classrooms on each side and double doors on each end. Both long elevations of this structure have been altered by the installation of upward rolling metal doors -- one on the east elevation and two on the west -- where windows once existed.

Except for the metal doors in Building B, the changes to the school are insignificant. The gym's asbestos shingles have been in place almost from the school's opening and, as a popular 1950s sheathing material, do not look out of place. The windows are intact behind the boards. The three buildings certainly retain enough integrity to meet National Register standards, as any former teacher or student of Cohn High School would easily recognize the facility should he or she return to the site today. As the first secondary school for African American children in West Baton Rouge Parish, Cohn High School is an outstanding candidate for the National Register.

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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:

Education, Ethnic History/Black

Period(s) of Significance:

1949-1954

Significant Dates:

1949

Significant Person(s):

NA

Cultural Affiliation:

NA

Architect/Builder:

Goodman & Miller, Architects-Engineers
A. B. Broussard, Sr., Contractor

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

Cohn High School is locally significant in the areas of education and ethnic heritage because its opening in the fall of 1949 represented the first time secondary education was available within West Baton Rouge Parish for African-American children. Although the nomination's period of significance ends in 1954 (the fifty-year cutoff), the school continued to be the only source of secondary education for black students until integration began to impact the parish's educational program in the 1960s.

Located directly across the Mississippi River from the city of Baton Rouge, West Baton Rouge Parish is rural and agricultural in nature. Given this background, the parish's attempts to provide education for its children did no more than mirror those of most other parishes in the state. For many years these attempts came nowhere close to meeting the need. Louisiana, for the most part, did not make significant progress in public education until the early twentieth century, whether for whites or blacks. The watchword among late nineteenth century politicians was retrenchment, and although provision for public education was made in various statutes, funding was woefully inadequate for even a single school system, let alone the dual system mandated by segregation. Another factor was the general lack of interest in public education. Private education, such as that offered by the Catholic Church in South Louisiana, was considered more desirable. Public education bore the stigma of "pauper" education. In short, its customers were those too poor to go to private schools.

What developed in the post-Reconstruction years under the name "public education" was often a public-private system in which the state contributed some funding, with local sources providing the building and other necessities. Among African-Americans, churches played a prominent role. An important phenomenon across the state was a so-called public school being held in a church or in a building on church property. As T. H. Harris, State Superintendent of Education from 1908-1940, reported in his autobiography: "In most cases Negro churches were used for schoolhouses and the only equipment in these churches were the benches used for church services."

These efforts were augmented with various private philanthropic funds aimed at improving African-American education in the South. The most notable among these was the Rosenwald Fund, which made possible the construction of 393 elementary schools in Louisiana between 1914 and 1932. At roughly the same time a combination of philanthropies addressed secondary education through what were called parish training schools. Here the emphasis generally was upon industrial/agricultural work rather than the classic academic high school curriculum. In the 1920s full-fledged high schools were limited to a handful of good size cities (4-5).

Public education for blacks in West Baton Rouge Parish remained quite limited even into the post World War II era. A 1947 document describing West Baton Rouge's resources sums up the situation quite succinctly:

The parish has 12 negro [sic.] schools located at Addis, Arbroth, Chamberlin, Choctaw, Erwinville, Lobdell, Lukeville, Mulatto Bend, Port Allen [a Rosenwald School], Silvery, St. Paul and Winterville, with a total registration of 1,098. These schools are so located that they serve the majority of the negro pupils [i.e., they were located near plantations accessed by unpaved lanes].

There are 38 white teachers, 24 negro teachers, a visiting teacher and a Jeanes agent. The average number of white students per teacher is 25.5 whereas, the number of negro students per teacher is 36.4. . . .

Six of the 12 negro schools are in Parish-owned buildings, the other six are housed in churches and lodge halls. The present buildings are not large enough to accommodate the negro children. The Parish does not offer education facilities beyond the seventh grade.

This last statement comes as something of a shock because, by this date, almost all other Louisiana parishes had

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provided some type of secondary education (either parish training schools or full-fledged high schools). The source also fails to clarify that some of the elementary schools still lacked indoor toilets, heat and electricity.

Children wishing to pursue an education beyond the seventh grade had few and difficult choices. By the 1940s, secondary schools for African-Americans existed in Iberville Parish (immediately south and west of West Baton Rouge) and the city of Baton Rouge (across the river to the east). There may also have been one in Pointe Coupee Parish, which borders West Baton Rouge on the northwest. Some students left their parents' homes to live with family or friends or board with strangers so that they could attend these schools. Others walked from home to the Port Allen ferry landing, paid to ride the ferry, and then either walked or rode a city bus to McKinley High School or the Southern University Lab School in Baton Rouge. (One former student remembered how difficult it was for an African-American child to obtain seats on the ferry and the bus.) However, most teenagers could not afford to board or ride public transportation. Nor did they have access to automobiles which could take them from their isolated rural homes across the bridge to Baton Rouge.

The first step toward a high school for West Baton Rouge's black citizenry occurred in October 1948 when the Cohns (a white family), through two family corporations, donated land for a school to the local school board. The deed stipulated that the land should never be used for any purpose other than education, the new school should be built within five years, the building should be named in honor of Henry Cohn, Jr. and Sophie Farmbacher Cohn, and it should contain a suitable plaque commemorating this dedication. The population the school was intended to serve was not stipulated in the deed. Whether there might have been a private understanding that the school was to serve African-Americans is unknown, but a high school for black teenagers was certainly the parish's most pressing educational need at that time.

Several steps had to be completed before Cohn High School could open. Local officials hired Goodman & Miller, an architectural and engineering firm, to plan two new classroom buildings for the site. As mentioned in Part 7, they also obtained a large, pre-fabricated building from Ryan Airfield in Baton Rouge and moved it across the Mississippi River to the school's campus. Recruiters hired a teaching faculty of three men and three women; all came from outside the parish because no African-American living in West Baton Rouge Parish was qualified.

Although construction on the new buildings was far from complete, the school opened at the start of the fall 1949 term. All the children, including transfers from the African-American high schools in other parishes, met in the former military building. To facilitate this temporary usage, math and shop teacher James Gray, assisted by his shop students, partitioned the interior into ten classrooms (five on each side), a central gym with a stage at one end, a small kitchen (the children ate lunch at their desks) and restrooms/showers. Once buildings A and B opened, Gray and the youngsters converted the old military facility into a larger gymnasium by removing the classroom partitions and building bleachers along the sides where the classrooms had previously been located. (They left the stage in place.)

There is some confusion concerning the number of grades offered at Cohn High. Although at that time high school was generally considered to be grades 9 - 12, Mrs. Wilhemenia Williams DeCuir states that she attended grade seven there when the school opened in 1949. Course offerings remembered by Mrs. DeCuir and other former students include social studies and American history, English, math (including geometry), science (Biology and Chemistry), home economics, and industrial arts (shop). One also remembered business courses, i.e., typing and shorthand; but another former student contradicted that statement. It may be that the curriculum expanded as time passed. Drama must have been an early elective, for a historic photograph in an old annual shows that the school offered its first play in the gym in 1949. The English teacher supervised this effort. The gym allowed some physical education and sports activities; before long the school fielded boys' and girls' basketball teams. Within a short time, the girls' team won the championship of the African-American league. The gym also served as the site for events such as PTA meetings, fashion shows and other community activities.

The two new buildings opened in the fall of 1950. In addition to indoor restrooms, heat and electricity, they offered several general classrooms as well as specialized spaces for subjects needing laboratories. (All the laboratories were too small, and even a single class could not use them at the same time.) Former students interviewed for this nomination also remember an office and a teacher's lounge. One remembered being allowed to eat lunch in the home economics classroom. Another remembered a library, but by 1957 all library books for the African-American students

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were housed in a different school. One classroom had a piano, which allowed the teaching of music, and by 1952 part of the gym had been partitioned off to create a band room. Band members had to furnish their own instruments. The band had no uniforms; so the children attempted to dress alike whenever they marched.

Early attendance figures are unavailable, but former students remember that the school served teenagers from twenty plantations scattered across the parish. One bus (which was probably privately owned) was provided to transport them to class, but they had to walk out to the buses when rain made the rural dirt roads impassable. According to another historic photo, the school's first graduating class (spring 1950) counted sixteen young men and women. In 1956 (two years beyond the period of significance but the earliest year for which information is available), 319 children enrolled at Cohn High School.

Interviews with former students show what a major impact attendance at Cohn High had on their lives. According to Mrs. DeCuir, the school provided "a better opportunity to learn." Going to this school "... was a wonderful experience. It felt like you were floating on top of the world to be able to go to your own school with sports and activities. The school served all African-American students in West Baton Rouge Parish, and it broadened our horizons to meet people from outside Port Allen."

Ruby Scott, who transferred to Cohn from McKinley High in Baton Rouge for her last two years of schooling, also commented on the importance of the school in her life. Mrs. Scott was very young when she had to leave home to live with others in Baton Rouge in order to attend McKinley. Her ability to return to her home parish to graduate was, she said, a dream come true for her parents. Mrs. Scott was the only child from a family of seven children to graduate from high school.

Betty Jackson Nelson, another 1949 enrollee, credited the school with changing her life. The school "... meant my whole life. I was married with a child but was able to go to college. Cohn prepared me to further my education and was an inspiration because of its setting and its family oriented atmosphere." After Cohn opened, Mrs. Nelson states, more African-American students attended college than ever before, even attending out-of-state colleges and universities. Later, some of these people returned to West Baton Rouge Parish to teach. Others became doctors, nurses, engineers, i.e., became proficient in occupations they never could have entered had it not been for Cohn High School. Mrs. Nelson is now a member of the Port Allen City Council.

A building for an elementary school was moved to the Cohn campus in 1952. Named Cohn Elementary, it was eventually replaced by a modern building which is still in service. However, as integration changed the makeup of West Baton Rouge Parish schools, the need for a centralized African-American high school decreased. As a result, Cohn High School closed in 1969. The school is deserving of National Register listing because its opening (and its very existence) was a milestone in the educational and ethnic history of West Baton Rouge Parish.

NOTE:

Plans are underway to make the historic Cohn High School an early learning center for the children of West Baton Rouge Parish. Toward this end, a group of six African-American men, known as DOC-DHL, has formed and will soon begin raising funds to restore the buildings. The group hopes to use the federal tax incentive program "to make the numbers work." It is believed that National Register listing will assist in the fund raising efforts.

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9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Anderson, James D. *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988.

Deeds transferring the land for Cohn High School from the Cohn Subdivision Company, Inc. and the Carolina Planting and Lumber Company to the West Baton Rouge Parish School Board, September 23, 1948; copies in National Register file.

Historic photos showing first drama presentation, first faculty, and first graduating class of Cohn High School; copies in National Register file.

Historical sketch of Cohn High School taken from an early school annual; copy in National Register file.

Interviews with former Cohn High School students Betty Jackson Nelson and Ruby Scott, December 10, 2003; notes in National Register file.

Interview with former Cohn High School student Wilhemenia Williams DeCuir, September 3, 2003; transcript in National Register file.

Interview with J. W. Vaughn, December 10, 2003. Mr. Vaughn did not attend Cohn High but served as the principal of the elementary school placed on the campus in the early 1950s. Because of the proximity of the two schools, he was well acquainted with the facility and witnessed much of what happened during the high school's early years.

West Baton Rouge Parish Development Board. *West Baton Rouge Parish Resources and Facilities*. Baton Rouge, LA: State of Louisiana Department of Public Works, Planning Division, 1947.

West Baton Rouge Parish Development Board. *West Baton Rouge Parish Resources and Facilities*. Baton Rouge, LA: State of Louisiana Department of Public Works, Planning Division, 1957.

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: 2.1 acres

UTM References: **Zone Easting Northing**

15 671080 3370880

Verbal Boundary Description:

See attached sketch map.

Boundary Justification:

Boundaries are drawn to include the high school's immediate setting while excluding the elementary school building and playground with which the candidate shares a campus. The boundary line was drawn at a diagonal at the southwest corner to exclude the non-contributing elementary school.

11. FORM PREPARED BY

Name/Title: National Register Staff

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

Telephone: (225) 342-8160

Date: February 2004

PROPERTY OWNERS

West Baton Rouge Parish School Board

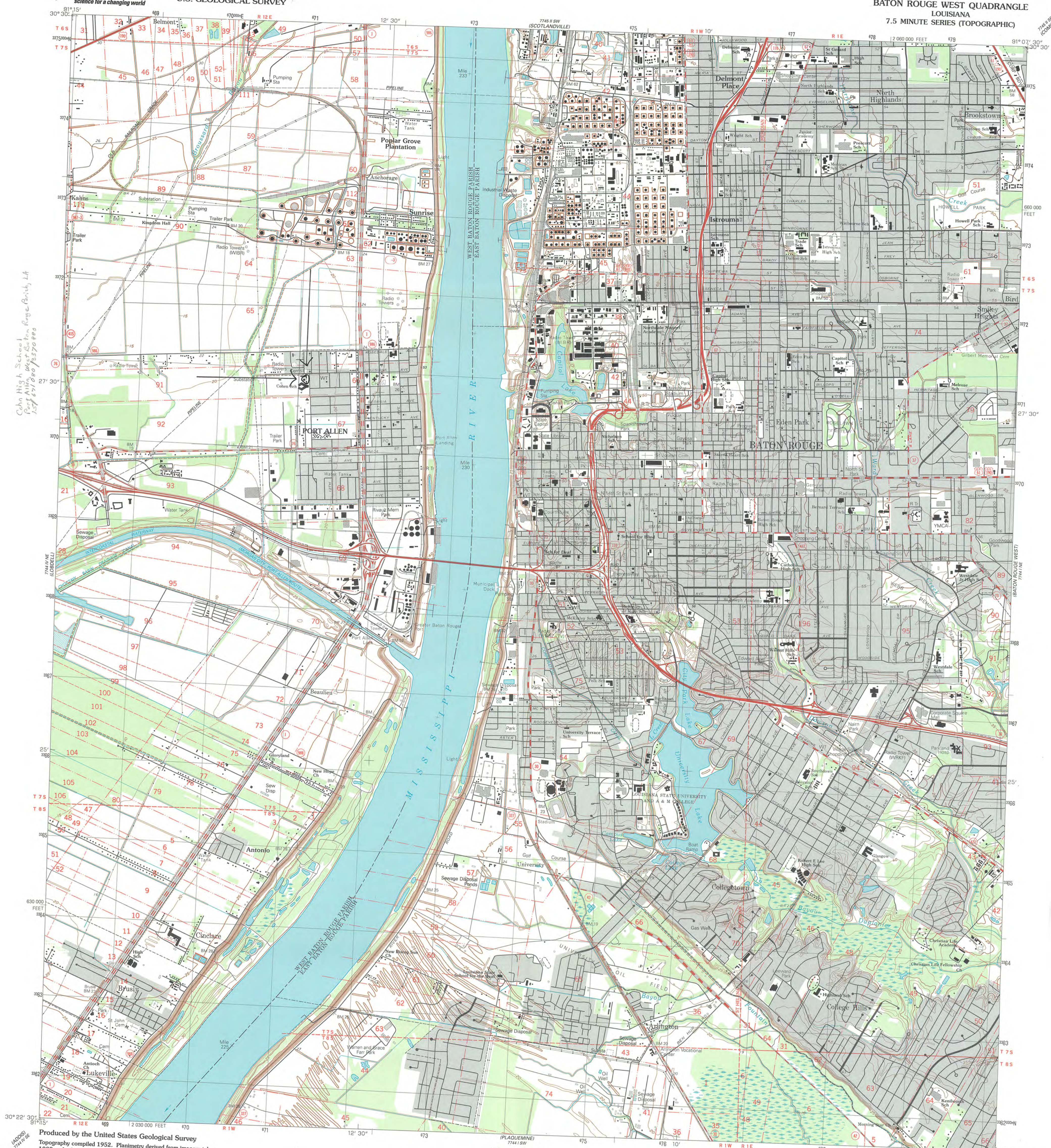
Jerry T. Lowe

Acting Superintendent

Acting Secretary-Treasurer

3761 Rosedale Road

Port Allen, Louisiana 70767



Produced by the United States Geological Survey
Topography compiled 1952. Planimetry derived from imagery taken 1989 and other sources. Photointerpreted using imagery dated 1995; no major culture or drainage changes observed. PLSS and survey control current as of 1991. Boundaries, other than corporate, verified 1998
North American Datum of 1927 (NAD 27). Projection and 10 000-foot ticks: Louisiana coordinate system, south zone (Lambert conformal conic)
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid, zone 15
North American Datum of 1983 (NAD 83) is shown by dashed corner ticks. The values of the shift between NAD 27 and NAD 83 for 7.5-minute intersections are obtainable from National Geodetic Survey NADCON software

UTM GRID AND 1998 MAGNETIC NORTH
DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET

SCALE 1:24 000
NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929
TO CONVERT FROM METERS TO FEET, MULTIPLY BY 3.2808
THIS MAP COMPLES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, P.O. BOX 25286, DENVER, COLORADO 80225
AND LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND DEVELOPMENT, BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA 70804
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

ROAD CLASSIFICATION
Primary highway, hard surface Light-duty road, hard or improved surface
Secondary highway, hard surface Unimproved road
Interstate Route U. S. Route State Route

BATON ROUGE WEST, LA.

1995

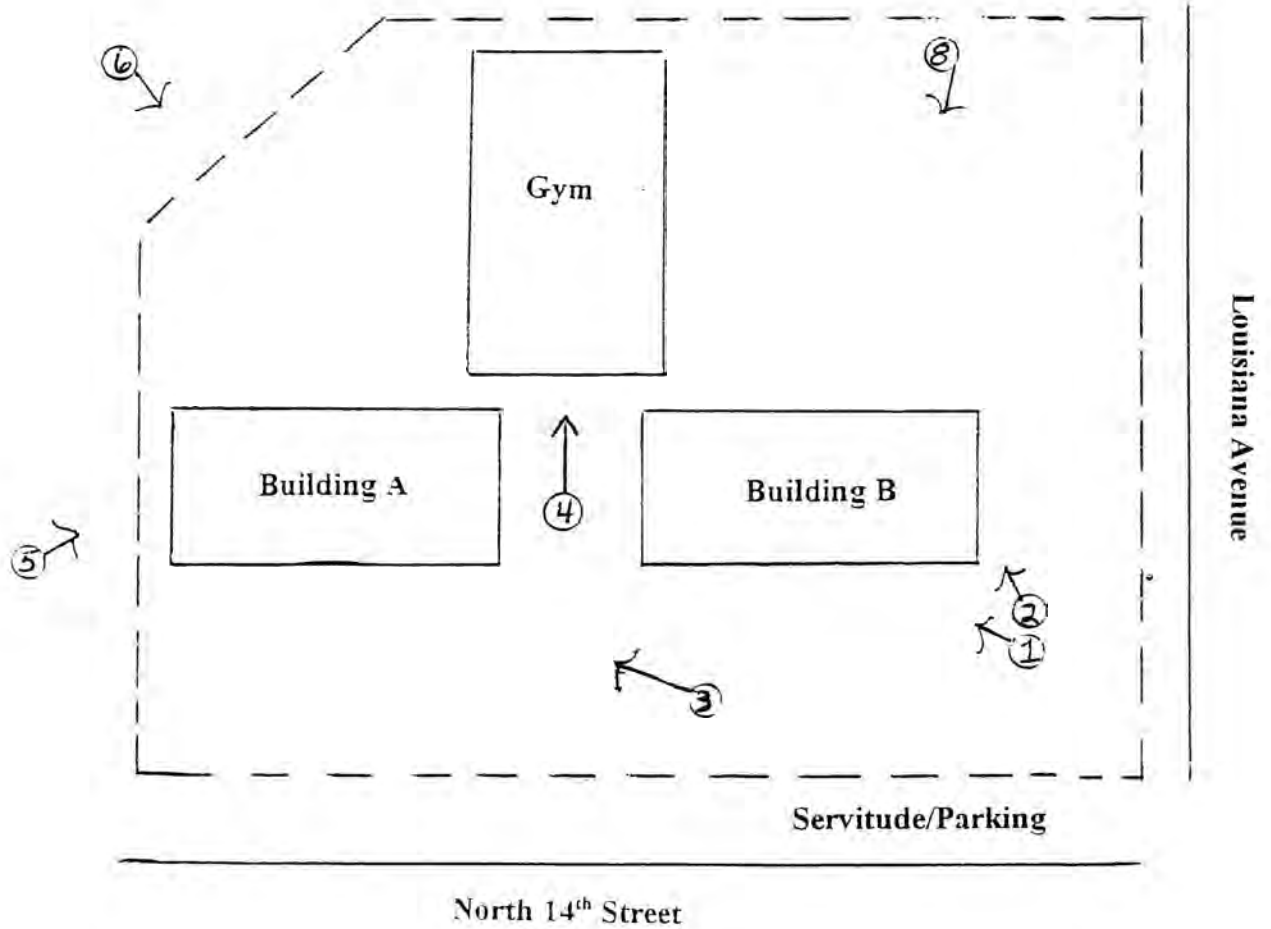
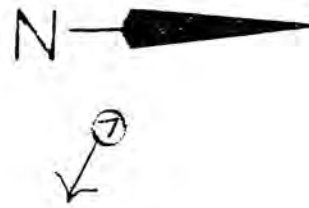
NIMA 7744 I NW-SERIES V885

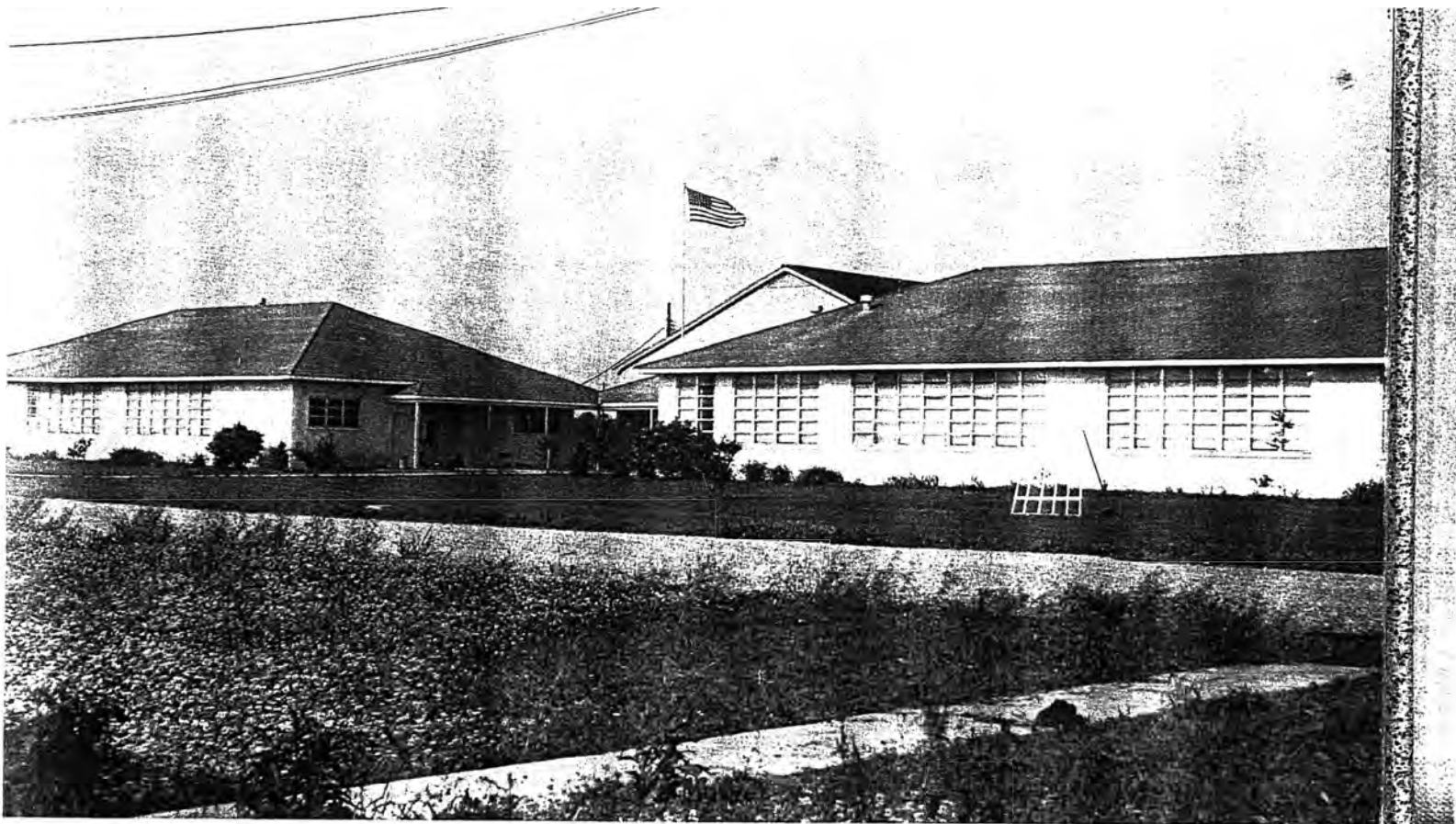
COHN HIGH SCHOOL

Port Allen, West Baton Rouge Parish, LA

Boundary: — — — —

Scale: 1" = 75'





Cohn High School
West Baton Rouge Parish
Louisiana

mid-1950s photo



Cohn High School - Building B
Port Allen, West Baton Rouge Parish, LA

Patricia Duncan

February 2004

LA SHPO
Southwest

Photo No. 1



Cohn High School - Building B
Port Allen, West Baton Rouge Parish, LA

Patricia Duncan

February 2004

LASHPO

Southwest

Photo No. 2



Cohn High School-Building A
Port Allen, West Baton Rouge Parish, LA

Patricia Duncan

February 2004

LA SHPO

Southwest

Photo No. 3



Cohn High School - Gym
Port Allen, West Baton Rouge Parish, LA

Patricia Duncan

February 2004

LASHPO

West

Photo No. 4



Cohn High School - Building A
Port Allen, West Baton Rouge Parish, LA
Patricia Duncan
February 2004
LA SHPO
Northwest

photo No. 25



Cohn High School - Building A
Port Allen, West Baton Rouge Parish, LA
Patricia Duncan

Patricia Duncan

February 2004

LA 54 P 6

North East

9. 20. 40



Cohn High School - Gym
Port Allen, West Baton Rouge Parish, LA
Patricia Duncan
February 2004
LASHPO
Southeast
Photo No. 7



Cohn High School - Building B
Port Allen, West Baton Rouge Parish, LA

Patricia Duncan

February 2004

LA SHPB

East

Photo No. 8



Cohn High School
Port Allen, West Baton Rouge Parish, LA

Patricia Duncan

February 2004

LASHPO

Interior

Photo No. 90



Cohn High School
Port Allen, West Baton Rouge Parish, LA
Patricia Duncan

February 2004

LASHPO

Interior

Photo No. 10



COHN ELEMENTARY
WEST BATON ROUGE PARISH

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Cohn High School

Port Allen, West Baton Rouge Parish, LA

Patricia Duncan

February 2004

LASHPO

Interior

Photo No. 11

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Cohn High School
NAME:

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: LOUISIANA, West Baton Rouge

DATE RECEIVED: 5/12/04 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 6/03/04
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 6/18/04 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 6/25/04
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REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

☒ ACCEPT ☐ RETURN ☐ REJECT 6/23/04 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in the
National Register

RECOM./CRITERIA _____

REVIEWER _____ DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the
nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.



MITCHELL J. LANDRIEU
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

State of Louisiana
OFFICE OF THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR
DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE, RECREATION & TOURISM
OFFICE OF CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT
DIVISION OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ANGELE DAVIS
SECRETARY

PAM BREAU
ASSISTANT SECRETARY

May 11, 2004

National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
1201 Eye Street, NW, 8th floor
Washington, D.C. 20005



Re: Cohn High School, West Baton Rouge Parish, LA

To Whom It May Concern:

Enclosed please find a nomination form with supporting materials for the above referenced property. Should you have any questions, please contact me at 225-342-8160.

Sincerely,

Donna Fricker

Donna Fricker
National Register Coordinator

DF/df

National Register of Historic Places

Note to the record

2015 - Correspondence related to removal



JAY DARDENNE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

State of Louisiana
OFFICE OF THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR
DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE, RECREATION & TOURISM
OFFICE OF CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT
DIVISION OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION

PAM BREAU
ASSISTANT SECRETARY

February 9, 2015

James Gabbert
National Register of Historic Places
1201 "Eye" Street NW
Washington, D.C., 20005

RE: Delisting of Cohn High School, West Baton Rouge Parish, LA

Dear Mr. Gabbert:

The purpose of this letter is to notify you of our intent to delist the above property from the National Register of Historic Places. Originally listed on the Register on 6/22/2004, the above property was demolished in November of 2014. Per 36 CFR 60, Sec. 60.15 (a)(1), we are requesting that the above property be officially delisted based on the fact that the property has ceased to meet the criteria for listing in the National Register because the qualities which caused it to be originally listed have been destroyed. To support this claim, we have included in this submission newspaper articles discussing the impending demolition as well as a letter from the School Board stating that the buildings were demolished in November 2014.

We have notified the property owner and the chief elected official and have included copies of those letters with this submission. We did receive a letter response from the owner, which is included with this submission.

If you have any questions concerning our request, please contact our National Register Coordinator, Jessica Richardson via email at jrichardson@crt.la.gov or by phone at 225-219-4595.

Sincerely,

Pam Breau
State Historic Preservation Officer

PD:JR/jgr
Enclosure



JAY DARDENNE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

State of Louisiana
OFFICE OF THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR
DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE, RECREATION & TOURISM
OFFICE OF CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT
DIVISION OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION

PAM BREAU
ASSISTANT SECRETARY

January 5, 2015

The Honorable Richard Lee, III
PO Box 468
Port Allen, LA 70767-0468

RE: Delisting of Cohn High School, West Baton Rouge Parish, LA

Dear Mayor Lee:

The purpose of this letter is to notify you of our intent to petition for the removal of the above referenced property from the National Register of Historic Places, a process known as delisting. This step is important as we strive to maintain an accurate record of properties in our state that are listed in the Register, still extant, and maintain integrity per National Register Criteria.

According to the Federal National Register regulations [36 CFR 6-15 (a)(1)], a property may be delisted if it has ceased to meet the criteria for listing on the National Register because the qualities which caused it to be originally listed have been lost or destroyed. Cohn High School was listed on 6/22/2004, and based on recent newspaper articles and television coverage, we have learned that it was demolished in November 2014. The final delisting decision will be made by the Keeper of the National Register at the National Park Service.

The regulations [36 CFR 60.15 (g)] also require that the property's owner and the chief elected official be given an opportunity to comment on the proposed action. If you choose to comment, please respond via letter by **February 9, 2015** to the following address:

Pam Breau
State Historic Preservation Officer
Louisiana Division of Historic Preservation
PO Box 44247
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

If you have questions concerning the delisting petition or any other National Register issue, please contact National Register Coordinator, Jessica Richardson, by email at jrichardson@crt.la.gov, or by phone at 225-219-4595.

Sincerely,

Pam Breau
State Historic Preservation Officer



JAY DARDENNE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

State of Louisiana
OFFICE OF THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR
DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE, RECREATION & TOURISM
OFFICE OF CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT
DIVISION OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION

PAM BREAU
ASSISTANT SECRETARY

January 5, 2015

Parish of West Baton Rouge School Board
3761 Rosedale Road
Port Allen, LA 70767

RE: Delisting of Cohn High School, West Baton Rouge Parish, LA

To Whom it May Concern:

The purpose of this letter is to notify you of our intent to petition for the removal of the above referenced property from the National Register of Historic Places, a process known as delisting. This step is important as we strive to maintain an accurate record of properties in our state that are listed in the Register, still extant, and maintain integrity per National Register Criteria.

Our research shows you to be the owner of the land where Cohn High School stood, which was listed on the National Register on 6/22/2004. According to the Federal National Register regulations [36 CFR 6-.15 (a)(1)], a property may be delisted if it has ceased to meet the criteria for listing on the National Register because the qualities which caused it to be originally listed have been lost or destroyed. Based on recent newspaper articles and television coverage, we have learned that Cohn High School was demolished in November 2014.

The regulations [36 CFR 60.15 (g)] also require that the property's owner and the chief elected official be given an opportunity to comment on the proposed action. If you choose to comment, please respond via letter by **February 9, 2015** to the following address:

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State Historic Preservation Officer
Louisiana Division of Historic Preservation
PO Box 44247
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

If you have questions concerning the delisting petition or any other National Register issue, please contact National Register Coordinator, Jessica Richardson, by email at jrichardson@crt.la.gov, or by phone at 225-219-4595.

Sincerely,

Pam Breau
State Historic Preservation Officer

PB:JR/jgr
Enclosure



West Baton Rouge Parish Schools

Wes Watts
Superintendent

January 15, 2015

Jason P. Manola
Board President

Dr. Atley D. Walker, Sr.
Vice President

Teri B. Bergeron

G. Alden Chustz, Jr.

Leon N. Goudeau

Ronald P. LeBlanc

Michael A. Maranto

Rose L. Roché

Craig M. Sarradet

Toby Sarradet

Pam Breaux
State Historic Preservation Officer
State of Louisiana
Division of Historic Preservation
P O Box 44247
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

RE: Delisting of Cohn High School

Dear Pam,

Regarding your letter of January 5, 2015 concerning delisting of Cohn High School from the National Register. The West Baton Rouge Parish School system is in full agreement that this property should be removed from the list. All structures were demolished in November of 2014. The reasons for demolition were:

- 1) All buildings no longer safe to occupy, use or even enter.
- 2) Buildings had been condemned by certified building inspector.
- 3) Buildings had issues with asbestos and mold.
- 4) Buildings were an eyesore and a hazard to school and surrounding neighborhoods.
- 5) Buildings were structurally unsound and too costly for School System to renovate.
- 6) Outside groups were unable to raise funds to assist us.
- 7) It was in best interest of everyone involved to demolish and remove buildings.

On behalf of West Baton Rouge Parish and the School System, we thank everyone for their help, cooperation and understanding.

Sincerely,

Jeff Kershaw
Maintenance Director
West Baton Rouge Parish Schools

RECEIVED

JAN 20 2015

ARCHAEOLOGY

OCDADMIN.

JAN 21 2015

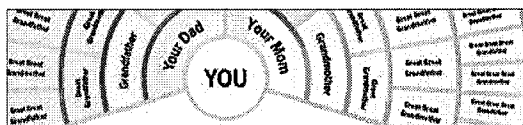
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3761 Rosedale Road Port Allen, Louisiana 70767 ** Phone: 225-343-8309 ** Fax: 225-387-2101
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LOCAL NEWS

Port Allen school to be demolished, remembered

Posted: Jul 28, 2014 6:02 PM by Rob Krieger

Updated: Jul 28, 2014 6:02 PM

Source: WBRZ

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PHOTOS VIDEO



Topics: Cohn, Port Allen, School, demolish, education

PORT ALLEN - The old building that once housed Cohn High School students will soon vanish, once the West Baton Rouge School Board lands a crew to demolish the crumbling facility.

The buildings are filled with asbestos, mold and termites and must come down, but some alumni aren't ready to see it go.

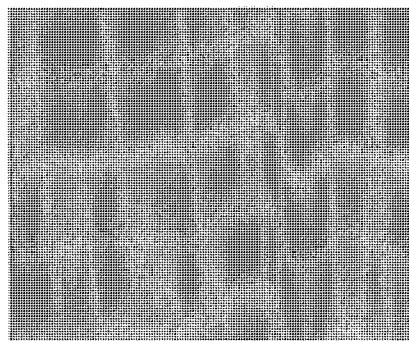
"There's a lot of memories in here all the people that went to Cohn High, I don't think the school should just disintegrate like that," said Wendell Hamilton, an alumni of the school.

The West Baton Rouge School Board plans to put up a memorial marker for the school and will allow alumni to take part in future building decisions.

"I would rather restore it, but in time, sometimes you have to give up on some of the things you have for

modernization, you can't keep holding onto the same things, you have to move on," said Leon Goudeau, a School Board member and alumni of Cohn.

Goudeau hoped to have the buildings demolished, before school begins for Cohn Elementary students next door, but that likely won't happen. They're currently seeking bids for the work.



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 Lieutenant Governor Jay Dardenne

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WBR School Board to demolish historic Cohn High School buildings

By Terry L. Jones

tjones@theadvocate.com

PORT ALLEN — The West Baton Rouge Parish School Board made its first steps Wednesday toward demolishing the old Cohn High School campus, authorizing school district officials to begin the bidding process to tear down the historic buildings.

The board's action comes after years of complaints that the campus, closed for several decades, had become an eyesore and likely a setting for illegal activity.

"It needs to be torn down," Superintendent David Corona said about the derelict buildings before Wednesday night's meeting. "No one in the community wanted to have any illegal activity taking place there. But the board is sensitive to the history of Cohn High and its importance to the community."

Cohn High, built in 1949 along North 14th Street in Port Allen, was the city's first black K-12 public school during the days of segregation.

Members of the Cohn High Alumni Association attended the School Board meeting in a show of support for the demolition. The group also urged the School Board to keep them in the loop on any future plans for the site.

"This is a touching moment, to see what's about to happen," said Wilhemenia Decuir, a 1955 graduate of the school. "We know it's good for the community. We just hope as you move forward you will not forget Cohn High School."

Board President Jason Manola said the school district intends to erect a marker at the site after the buildings are torn down.

In an unrelated matter, the School Board unanimously adopted the Copsync911 Alert System, which will be installed at all of the parish's public schools.

The threat alert system will be installed on the computers of all faculty and staff members at the district's 10 campuses to serve as virtual panic buttons in case of severe threats.

The computer program provides for an immediate connection to local law enforcement by sending distress signals to the five closest law enforcement officers after a staff member activates the distress signal. The software also provides law enforcement officials with a diagram of the school to aid in their response.

Corona said West Baton Rouge Parish is the first school district in the state to install the software, which has been popular in parts of Texas.

The software will be installed this summer and is expected to be operational for the 2014-15 school year. Copsync911 will cost the district approximately \$32,000 to implement in its first year and an additional \$15,000 annually.

“This is money well spent in my opinion,” Corona said. “Based on all the unfortunate events that have been taking place at schools recently, the board realized that time is of the essence to eliminate a threat on campus. The sooner you can get law enforcement on campus when you have an active shooter, the more lives you will save.”

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One man's protest against demolition of historic high school

Posted: Nov 04, 2014 4:13 PM CST

Updated: Nov 04, 2014 4:39 PM CST

By Samantha Morgan **CONNECT**

PORT ALLEN, LA (WAFB) - One man sat alone on the steps at Cohn High school Tuesday morning in an attempt to save the historic school from being demolished. His effort, however, was unsuccessful and he's now marked with a battle scar.

"I got five stitches over my right eye," said Caster Brown, an alumnus of the historic Cohn High school. "It happened when the police officer slammed me into a wall."

WAFB News attempted to contact Port Allen Police Chief Esdrin Brown, but he has not yet returned our call.

"The police chief came out and talked to me about it," Brown noted. "He said he agreed with me, but there was nothing he could do. They ended up letting me go on my own accord. They charged me with refusing to remove and resisting arrest."

Brown attended Cohn High for 9 years. He was transferred to Port Allen High in 1969 after Cohn closed due to desegregation.

Cohn was the only school for blacks in West Baton Rouge Parish from 1949 to 1969.

"I've lived here my entire life," Brown noted. "I live one block from the school. This is extremely personal for me."

Over the years, the school has fallen into disrepair, so the school board voted to demolish the building.

"My question is, they spent the money to repair the other schools and kept them, why is this the only school they didn't spend money on?" Brown asked. "We felt it should have been repaired."

At one point the school board did give the building to another non-profit, and there was a restoration attempt. However, the plans were halted after Hurricane Katrina caused additional damage to the structure.

"All the contractors say it would have been easy to fix," said Brown, who is a member of the Cohn High Alumni Association, "It was an eye sore, but they should have gotten on the school board to fix it."

The Alumni Association did attempt to get the court involved to stop the demolition, but was unsuccessful. So that brought Brown to make his final stand.

"I took a seat on the steps in front of the bulldozer," Brown said with a tone of pride. "There were about 15 to 20 people on the other side of the fence, watching."

Although Brown was removed and the demolition continued, he feels he did the right thing.

The West Baton Rouge Museum removed some items from the school prior to the demolition for an exhibit.

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These pictures came from an online article by WAFB, a Baton Rouge news station, dated November 4, 2014, and show Cohn High School buildings being torn down.