

United States Department of the Interior
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National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form

This form is used for documenting multiple property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in *How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form* (National Register Bulletin 16B). Complete each item by entering the requested information. For additional space, use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

New Submission Amended Submission

A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

Historic and Architectural Resources of Wharton, Wharton County, Texas

B. Associated Historic Contexts

(Name each associated historic context, identifying theme, geographical area, and chronological period for each.)

Community Development in Wharton, Texas, 1875-1942

C. Form Prepared by

name/title Ed Galloway and Ralph Newlan (assisted by Dwayne Jones and Alan Carey, THC)
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D. Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Curtis J. Russell 27 Jan. 1993
Signature and title of certifying official Date
State Historic Preservation Officer, Texas Historical Commission
State or Federal agency and bureau

I hereby certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

Antoinette Albee 3/18/93
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

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Provide the following information on continuation sheets. Cite the letter and the title before each section of the narrative. Assign page numbers according to the instructions for continuation sheets in *How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form* (National Register Bulletin 16B). Fill in page numbers for each section in the space below.

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Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN WHARTON, TEXAS, 1875-1942

INTRODUCTION

Wharton is the county seat of Wharton County, and is located in the east-central portion of the county. It is approximately 50 miles inland from the Gulf of Mexico and some 60 miles southwest of Houston on the level Coastal Plains of southeast Texas. The Colorado River flows through the central part of the county from northwest to southeast with Wharton being located on the northeast bank of the river. Various small streams drain the land in and near Wharton, including Peach, Caney, Mustang and Sandy creeks, and contribute to the Colorado River and San Bernard River watersheds. The dry Caney creekbed roughly parallels the Colorado River and, at its closest point to the river, lies a few blocks north of the central business district. Except for the banks of the Colorado River (which are lined with willow, cottonwood, hackberry and pecan trees), grasses, occasional stands of pecans and oaks and non-indigenous trees used for urban landscaping dominate the region. As county seat Wharton serves as government center for an area of 1,086 square miles and an estimated 39,595 inhabitants (1987). Wharton itself covers nearly five square miles with an estimated (1987) population of 8,892.

First settled in 1846, the city's growth and development has been slow, sporadic, and generally unplanned. Its initial development occurred in response to the needs created by the growth of farming in the region and later to take advantage of the commerce and trade opportunities afforded by the railroad. The city also has prospered as the county seat and a measure of its growth may be credited to the evolving, formalized function of county and city government.

The historic districts and individual properties identified in this nomination are representative of the community's growth and development in the late 19th century and early 20th century. Whether that development was a result of economic forces such as agricultural trade, government services, or railroad-related industry, the nominated properties are connected at a more fundamental level because of the geography of the area. The growth of retail and business activity, historically concentrated in the central business district, occurred because of the fertility of the soil, extended growing season, and availability of extractive resources on the land surrounding Wharton. The growth of the retail and business activity is discussed, and the central business district is recognized in the Wharton County Courthouse Historic Commercial District (NR, 1991). Further commercial expansion skipped several blocks westward from the central business district to the West Milam Street Mercantile Historic District, mostly revolving around the railroad service. This district also prospered because of the increasing productivity of the agricultural land in the late 19th century. The remaining properties are mostly residential and reflect designs and, when appropriate, architectural styles that indicate a sensitivity to the climate and natural resources of the area. The exception may be the 20th century properties (residences and churches), that follow popular movements or designs across the country identified by prosperous and cosmopolitan residents. A final exception are the bridges which follow technological and engineering advances on a state and national scale and are typical of the period of development.

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Overall, the following nominations are the result of the interaction between culture and geography. The latter includes climate and natural resources, mostly water, soils, and minerals, and is manipulated by the former consisting of largely Lower South Anglo-American culture and African-American culture. The culture and geography interaction forms a rich environment that differs from many other parts of Texas in two ways. First, Wharton retains many of the properties and the community ethos from the earlier periods of development. Second, the community resources do not reflect the extensive overlapping ethnic diversity (German, Hispanic, East European) common in other parts of the state.

EARLY HISTORY AND SETTLEMENT (1823-1875)

In 1823 the first Anglo-American immigration and development in the area began under a colonization program supported by the Mexican government. Moses Austin of Missouri received permission to settle lands mainly between the Colorado and Brazos Rivers in Texas (including land just east of present-day Wharton). Upon his death, his son Stephen F. Austin and the "Old Three Hundred" group of original settlers continued the colonization and 25 of the group received title to land near and south of present-day Wharton (Webb 1952, II:890). Although large tracts of land were granted for settlement, most of these were never settled. Dispersed development continued in the county for the next decade and through the period of Texas independence from 1836-1846. Aside from an occasional farming settlement, the area where Wharton is now was nearly unbroken wilderness, heavily overgrown with cane brake and wild grains. There were few houses in the region, save the extensive plantation complex of Albert Clinton Horton, a few miles south of Wharton toward Matagorda (Wharton Journal-Spectator July 2, 1971:6). Horton was a successful cane and cotton planter from Alabama who moved to the area in 1834.

Following statehood in 1846, the county of Wharton was created from territory in Colorado, Jackson and Matagorda counties. As part of the county designation, William Kincheloe, county land owner and farmer, gave a block of land from his league for the courthouse square and county seat townsite. The county and city were named for brothers William H. and John Austin Wharton. William H. Wharton was an early leader in Texas' efforts to gain independence from Mexico. Following the revolution, he was appointed by President Sam Houston to be Texas' first ambassador to the United States and successfully secured Texas' formal recognition as an independent country before his death in 1839. John Austin Wharton, like his brother, was active in the Texas Revolution and served with Sam Houston in the Battle of San Jacinto. He was appointed Secretary of War following Texas independence and served briefly as a distinguished leader prior to his untimely death in 1838.

The original townsite was surveyed in 1846 by Virgil Stewart and Captain W. J. E. Heard, two of the original settlers, with the courthouse square (called Monterey Square) a hundred yards, or one block, north of a sharp bend in the Colorado River. Stewart and Heard laid out a 3-block deep grid on a north/northeast axis with Monterey Square in the center, and five blocks lining the riverfront. Narrow lots drawn on 310 foot blocks surrounded the courthouse site. The narrow lots served to maximize the number of potential businesses near the square.

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With the townsite laid out, a group of early settlers met in September, 1846 to elect necessary county officers and contract for their first courthouse building. The courthouse, built of cottonwood timber, was completed the same year and replaced a few years later by a small 2-story handmade brick building which lasted until the present structure was completed in 1889. With the establishment of county government and the service and administrative demands accompanying it came a scattering of attorneys and clerks. Many assumed prominent positions in the community, and among these was Colonel Isaac N. Dennis who arrived in Wharton in 1852 and opened a law practice with County Judge George Quinan. Dennis' son, J. H. H. Dennis, became the first mayor of Wharton in 1902 (Wharton Journal-Spectator July 2, 1971:7).

Among the first businessmen and traders in the city was Jackson Rust who arrived in Wharton in the early 1850s and opened a general store on the south side of the square. Also arriving at this time was Colonel Burr Harrison who developed a sugar cane plantation on Peach Creek, east of Wharton, and opened a small sugar mill on Caney Creek land a few hundred yards north of the courthouse square. He also acquired and sold large amounts of land west of present-day Richmond Road, near the town's center, before establishing and moving to the community of Burr, east of Wharton, about 1903.

Later, the growing significance of county government, and the services county and local government came to provide, ensured a good part of the new county seat's growth, and, as was typical in most early county seats, the courthouse square evolved to address nearly all the county's economic and social needs, such as legal services, consumer goods purchases and agricultural trade.

As in nearly all regional settlements of the time, agriculture-related production and trade played a pivotal role in Wharton's historic development. The rich, deep soils of the county were ideal for cotton and sugar cane production and led to the establishment of sizable plantations by planters and farmers moving to the region from the Lower South states. Increased population, greater yields of local farmers and rising commodity prices prior to the Civil War brought prosperity and expansion to the community as farmers and traders generated more disposable income.

By 1860 Anglo settlers in the area generally led a comfortable life. There was profitable trade in Wharton for the cotton, sugar cane and corn grown locally and adequate consumer goods were available for residents, brought on riverboat up the Colorado River from Matagorda or on the overland route which ran from near Wharton east to the market centers of Richmond and Houston. However, because of the size of land-holdings and the labor intensity of the produced crops, the wealth and prosperity of local planters relied heavily on slave labor. In 1850, for example, the U.S. Census counted 1,242 slaves in the county which had a total population of 1,752; in 1858 there were 2,181 slaves out of the total county population of 2,861 (Johnson 1914:65). The abundance and availability of slave labor enabled Wharton County to become one of the principal cotton-growing slave counties in the state, and the new community of Wharton found a quick measure of prosperity in meeting the needs of the area's farmers and planters.

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The Civil War period was disastrous for Wharton and similar Southern towns. The burgeoning trade community of a few years prior was stymied by a lack of market access as Union ships frequently blockaded Southern ports. With no market for the cotton or sugar, the Wharton farm area saw plummeting land values, a depreciating property tax base, assets held as worthless Confederate securities and a county government increasingly unable to meet the populace's needs such as road maintenance and law enforcement (Graham 1939:7).

After the Civil War, land-owners and planters around Wharton were without slave labor or much capital and they soon found cotton too expensive to grow and market. An agricultural, and by extension commercial, depression ensued in the region and large area plantations were neglected or simply used as cattle ranges.

In the city of Wharton, the steady growth of the previous decades halted by 1865. The scattering of frame storefronts around the courthouse were mainly vacant and there was almost no construction activity in the city. Unclaimed cattle and livestock roamed through the small town (Jones 1936:8). As in many southern towns, the Reconstruction Era saw northern immigrants and recently emancipated African-Americans elected to many local government offices. Wharton's first black neighborhood, Freedman's Town, was settled just two blocks southeast of the town square, east along Elm Street and south along the Colorado River.

PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE (1875-1942)

Wharton's revitalization started in the late 1870s with the arrival of new, mostly western European settlers, cultivation of newer and smaller landholdings, the creation of small-scale agricultural industry and the expansion of county and local government. More importantly in 1881, the New York, Texas and Mexican Railroad reached Wharton and greatly contributed to the town's subsequent economic and physical growth (Webb 1952, II:890).

Like other regional communities of the time, Wharton in 1875 was a crude, agrarian community, unincorporated with few public improvements. With only a few hundred residents, it was the primary trading and population center of the county, as El Campo, Wharton's present-day rival for commerce and population, was not founded until 1881, 14 miles southwest. W.J. Godsey's Greek Revival Style House on Richmond Road (Joseph Andrew Hamilton House, Site No. 656), a few blocks northwest of the courthouse, was likely one of Wharton's grandest homes of the period. Very little other physical evidence remains of Wharton's pre-1880 appearance.

Prior to the Civil War, the most influential group of settlers to the region were farmers and planters, who along with their slaves, laid the foundation for the subsequent agricultural economy. Following the war, however, as the local agricultural economy was being rebuilt and restructured, the newly arriving merchants and small-scale industrialists attained a more prominent role in the town as their business operations expanded.

Many of these new merchants were Jewish immigrants from Western Europe, and among the first of this kind of businessmen in Wharton offering manufactured and finished goods was Louis Peine. The Wharton where he settled in the

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mid-1870s was not much more developed than the community of 20 years earlier: dirt streets spotted with small frame storefronts and residences surrounded the square while a few dwellings were along the roads which led to neighboring communities. A native of Denmark, Peine arrived in Wharton a refugee from a hurricane in Indianola, Texas, in 1876 and is credited with financing construction of one of the early brick buildings (razed) on the north side of the courthouse square where he operated his jewelry store.

In the 1870s and 1880s in Texas, the stimulus for most community growth was the development of expanded railroad lines. Prior to the railroad, Wharton residents were forced to rely on unimproved county roads and un dependable Colorado River navigation for the movement of goods and supplies to and from market. A free ferry was the only means of traversing the Colorado River and transportation and the shipping of goods in the county west over the river from Wharton was both difficult and time consuming (Houston Chronicle January 1, 1940:10). The railroad, however, would provide a dependable and efficient link to the western part of the county and the rest of South Texas by traversing the river.

The New York, Texas and Mexican Railroad, one of the state's more curious lines, was the first to reach Wharton in 1881. The line was begun by Count Joseph Telfener, an Italian nobleman who envisioned a line from Richmond, county seat of Fort Bend County, about midway between Houston and Wharton, along the coast to Brownsville on the Mexican border in the lower Rio Grande Valley. Strapped for adequate financing, Telfener only developed the line from Richmond to near Victoria, 65 miles southwest of Wharton. A few years after its opening, the company fell into receivership and ultimately was taken over by the Texas and New Orleans Railroad (later part of the Southern Pacific system). The rail's path extended in a northeast-southwest direction, which the present day Highway 59 roughly parallels to the east. Its main terminus was near the West Milam Street crossing which linked the rail line with the courthouse square, five blocks to the west (See Texas and New Orleans Railroad Depot, Site No. 614). The railroad's arrival enticed businessmen to establish several industrial and commercial enterprises one block south and several blocks north of West Milam and, later, new businesses along West Milam Street itself (See West Milam Mercantile Historic District).

In Wharton, the arrival of the first railroad in the early 1880s, combined with a more stable farm economy and the disposable income generated by an increasing population, is credited with generating a new round of capital investment in the region. The railroad provided a more efficient and reliable system of transporting and marketing locally grown commodities and brought a diversity of industrial materials, consumer goods and new immigrants to the Wharton area. An era of economic growth began, and Texas Farm & Ranch Magazine commented in 1884 that the "only thing necessary to complete (an) era of prosperity (in Wharton) is an influx of farmers" and on that account "visitors are arriving on every train" (Texas Farm & Ranch 1884:13). By 1890, the Wharton Gin & Milling Company, a cotton seed oil mill and a second gin were operating near West Milam Street.

In the 1880s, new businessmen, lawyers and physicians began operations in Wharton, capitalizing on the demand for finished mercantile goods and professional services. Beginning operations during this period were Aaron

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Finkelstein (general trader), Joe Schwartz (dry goods), Edwin H. Hawes (attorney), Dr. John C. Davidson, Toby Gordon (dry goods) and M. Alpard (grocer).

The growing economy enabled business owners to improve their shops and stores and offered a wider variety of goods to the town's consumers. The construction of three brick buildings in the late 1880s and early 1890s ushered in a new era of the town's development and began a steady movement to replace the wood commercial buildings with more substantial brick ones. Thomas Calloway's 2-story brick business house built on the north side of the square in about 1888 (Wharton County Courthouse Commercial Historic District, NR 1991) is representative of the first generation of substantial commercial buildings.

An expanding economy also provided necessary capital for new residential construction at this time. Many of Wharton's prominent and successful families lived in the neighborhoods just north of the courthouse. Richmond Road was lined with Victorian-era homes of H.J. Bolton (Site No. 658), P.G. Brooks (See Linn Street Historic District), Green Davidson (Site No. 178) and other leading citizens. Just north and northeast of the courthouse were the homes of the families of Judge Wiley J. Croom (Site No. 366), G.Q. Rust (razed), Edwin Hawes (Site No. 800), and Gerard A. Harrison (Site No. 278). Development patterns in these peripheral areas were erratic, for planned additions to the community with regular street grids and lot size were still unknown in Wharton. As late as 1919, a several-acre cotton field remained one block north of the courthouse between Richmond Road, Fulton, Caney and Alabama streets. Formally structured additions occurred after the turn-of-the-century primarily north of Alabama Street and west of Richmond Road.

In the late 19th century the central public square was the most vital part of the fabric of Texas communities, particularly so when the town was the county seat and the public space contained the courthouse. The retention of the courthouse square concept, which evolved in Wharton similar to the Shelbyville Plan, proved important for commercial, legal and social reasons (Robinson 1972:342). In Wharton, as in other county seats of the time, commercial lots facing the courthouse were the most desirable land in the community. Speculators and business owners jockeyed for positions fronting on the center of town and county activity (Williams 1972:174). Hotels such as the Watts House (later Riverside Hotel) and the Ford Hotel (later Nation Hotel) were built relatively early in the formal development of the square (1870s), with saloons like Asa Dowdy's and the Club Saloon in operation on the west side. (See Wharton County Courthouse Commercial Historic District, NR 1991).

The steady increase in population of the county (3,426 in 1870 to 16,942 in 1900) brought greater demands for county government services and resulted in a more formalized structure and approach to meet the demand. By 1885 Wharton County had an organized administration with elected officers, such as Tax Assessor-Collector, County Clerk, County Attorney and related staffs. In addition, the county had created other service providers like county surveyor, hide inspector and health officer (Williams 1972:382). The erection of the new brick courthouse building in 1889, made possible by 16th Texas Legislature's allowance of county bonds for construction financing, was an appropriate symbol of Wharton's success and permanence.

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Wharton, with more voting blacks than whites, elected blacks to various positions through the 1870s and 1880s, including: Henry Phelps, State Representative (1873), Mingo Hodges, first Wharton School Board member (ca. 1875), W. M. Burton, State Senator (1875, 1881), Jacob Freeman, State Representative (1879), C. P. Young, County Clerk (1888), R. H. Tisdale, County Commissioner (1888), and J. A. Speaker, an African American County Commissioner (1888). Tisdale and Speaker were on the County Commission that selected and contracted with Houston architect Eugene Heiner to construct the 1889 courthouse building. J. A. Speaker also was the father of two prominent Wharton residents, one a school principal (Site No. 200) and the other a grocer who operated a store on the east side of the square.

Bolstering the town's position as a regional commerce and trade center was the arrival of the Gulf, Colorado and Santa Fe Railroad in 1899. The G.C. & S.F. line was laid out eight blocks north of the square with small passenger and freight depots (razed) flanking North Fulton Street. While the Texas & New Orleans line stimulated commercial and agricultural processing activity on the west side, neighborhoods around the G.C. & S.F. line remained predominately residential.

The late-19th century economic development in Wharton also generated added capital which some area farmers used to construct houses in Wharton and, in some cases, finance business operations on the square and along West Milam Street. The expanded railroad market, improved agricultural techniques and increased acreage production of cotton, corn, potatoes, fruits and vegetables and later, rice, led to a diversification of the farm industry and greater profits for county farmers. The growth and production of rice was mainly concentrated west of the Colorado River, opposite from Wharton. The community of El Campo benefitted more directly from the rice industry than did Wharton, as rice mills and crop marketing enterprises were concentrated there.

The introduction of irrigation to the county in 1900 enabled local farmers to grow rice and sugar cane which, with cotton, remain the chief crops today. Abel Head (Shanghai) Pierce imported Brahman cattle to the region in the early 1900s and later formed Armour Meat Co., which opened a meat products plant adjacent to the railroad on W. Milam Street in 1912. A sugar plant and cottonseed oil mill built around 1915 boosted the county economy, as did oil discovered near El Campo a few years earlier. Sulphur was discovered in the Newgulf area, east of Wharton, in 1923 and led to the development of one of the largest sulphur mines in the world.

The importance of farming to the region's economy was reflected in the increased total assessed value of county land during the period (\$ 348,763 in 1870 to \$ 6,176,550 by 1903). Total acreage in production increased from 23,675 acres in 1890 to 73,570 acres in 1900 to 133,053 acres in 1930 (Williams 1972:92). Likewise, the greater yields of area farmers multiplied disposable capital which was invested in farm homes, equipment, labor and goods.

The City of Wharton was incorporated on August 25, 1902, and became part of the spinoff of municipal reform begun in Galveston following the 1900 hurricane. A month later a special city election was held to select the first municipal officials, and J. H. H. Dennis was elected mayor (Site No. 455) and

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W. O. Victor, Dr. Green Davidson, County Judge Wiley J. Croom, Henry Becker and J. W. Teague were elected alderman. These six men initiated a program of municipal improvements which included a sanitary waterworks system, complete drainage of Caney Creek (which sometimes flooded lands where Alabama, Resident and Rusk streets are now) and an arrangement of sidewalks around the commercial area at the courthouse.

By 1902 the newly incorporated city, with a population of near 1,200, boasted over 65 businesses, including the Gifford Mercantile Company. complex on West Milam Street with its grocery store, hay and grain store, harness factory and lumber store. Offices in the rear and above the drug stores operated around the square by L. B. Outlar, W. F. Linn and J. T. Bolton were occupied by the town's physicians and dentists and several of the city's attorneys maintained offices in the Gifford (later Wharton Bank & Trust) Bank. In 1894 only three businesses were housed in brick buildings but by 1906 that number increased to 17. While many of the structures were erected because of the expanding local economy, some replaced frame structures that were destroyed or damaged in a hurricane in 1900 and a fire in 1902.

Sanborn Fire Insurance maps of 1894 and 1906 reveal greater diversification in the types of stores that operated in downtown Wharton and reflected a more demanding and enriched populace. For example, in 1894, dry goods stores, general stores and grocery stores were by far the dominant businesses, totaling 16 operations. Restaurants, drug stores and saloons operated in fewer numbers and the town square had one bank and one hotel. By 1906 furniture stores, hotels, offices, millinery stores, bakeries and jewelers also were prominent business operations.

The attraction of a railroad system and the advent of more mechanized agricultural production enticed other kinds of businessmen to establish industrial and retail enterprises in the city around the turn of the century. The J.C. Payne Grist Mill, a modest operation on West Caney and another "grist mill and corn shellar" as part of the Gifford Mercantile Company (West Milam Street Mercantile Historic District) were processing grain by 1906. Two substantial brick buildings on either side of the tracks housed wholesale grocery companies in 1906, including the Deaton Company (West Milam Street Mercantile Historic District) and the Wharton Ice and Cold Storage Co. (razed) was also west of the tracks and north of Milam.

Increased activity on West Milam encouraged many merchants to establish stores along this thoroughfare in subsequent years, replacing frame dwellings and business houses and making the street the city's primary commercial artery. Businesses along the street included several dry goods, bakeries, saddle shops, livery stables, boarding houses and lumber and building materials stores. The railroad also influenced the community's physical growth by creating a demarcation between substantial commercial and residential development east of the railroad and development of the city's second black neighborhood west of the tracks. The Macedonia Baptist Church on Old Spanish Camp Road (altered) and the public school for blacks (razed) served as this segregated community's primary social centers. The houses in west Wharton were modest vernacular structures of economical construction, often built by white landowners. These tenant structures were most often 1-room, 2-room, shotgun and small L-plan houses.

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The downtown was the business center for the entire community including the local African American population and as late as 1920, Sanborn maps indicate four black-owned businesses that operated in buildings facing onto the courthouse square. Such a trend is uncommon in Texas, as most communities had either separate black commercial sections (such as in Waxahachie, see Historic Resources in Waxahachie, Texas, NR 1986) or relegated black-owned businesses to less desirable and visible location, i.e., on secondary streets (such as in Ennis, see Historic Resources of Ennis, Texas, NR 1986). Black-owned businesses in Wharton included restaurants and grocery stores that catered to the substantial black population concentrated in Freedman's Town, directly east of the courthouse square and stretching south near the Colorado River.

A series of exceptionally abundant cotton crops in the early 1900s helped finance construction of the Jules Leffland-designed brick buildings on the east side of the square which comprise a part of the Wharton County Courthouse Commercial Historic District. The Roberts-Gifford Building at 115-17 S. Fulton Street was built by Ed Roberts, a black landowner/farmer, as an investment in office and store space on the popular town square. Roberts also founded the nearby community which bears his name.

As the town grew in population (1,505 in 1910; 2,346 in 1920; 2,691 in 1930; 4,386 in 1940) the demand for city services and neighborhood development increased. The city's small boundaries gradually expanded north and east, away from the river and flood plain and on the west side of the railroad tracks. Initial neighborhood growth after incorporation occurred just west of Richmond Road on Caney, Colorado, Cloud and Burleson streets in the Gallagher I and II and Godsey additions. These areas and the land along the banks of the former Caney Creek in the Edwin Hawes Addition north of Caney Street were the most desirable sections of town for residential construction. At the same time land near the river (old Freedman's Town) and the McCain and Harrison additions west of the railroad tracks were black neighborhoods (Abel 1989).

Later, several more areas were sold to developers for more substantial residential construction: Linn Street Addition in 1910 (expanded as College Heights, named for the close-by high school, in 1933) (See Linn Street Historic District); Victor Addition in 1911 (north of Alabama Road); and Barber Addition in 1912 (near Pecan Street) (Wharton County Abstract Records: Various).

As the community grew in population and diversity, educational, social and spiritual facilities were required. The first public school for white children was a 2-story brick building (razed) about seven blocks northwest of the square off of Richmond Road. Several religious denominations were organized by the early 1900s, including the Baptist, Methodist, Episcopal, Presbyterian, Lutheran, African American Baptist (Macedonia and Mother Zion), and, somewhat later, Roman Catholic and Jewish. Many of these congregations built substantial, new sanctuaries in the 1910s, although only the former Presbyterian Church built in about 1910 (altered), the First Methodist Episcopal Church South (1912, replaced in 1927, Site No. 735), both on North Fulton, survive from this period. Dr. Green Davidson, with others, founded the Caney Valley Hospital in 1913 and constructed a new facility on North Resident (altered).

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At least 230 of the town's 1,500 residents were farmers in the early 20th century (Graham 1939:235), and the productive years in agricultural diversification and expanded marketing contributed significantly to the town's slow but steady expansion and era of well-being. With an expanded tax base and direction from mayors like Joe Burger, Sr. (1920) and R. E. Vineyard (1922), the community financed improvements in city and public utility services: deep water wells, natural gas mains, power and light connections, sewerage systems, city parks and gravel or hard surface paving of most streets in the 1920s. A new city hall followed in 1931. New schools serving the separate white and black populations were constructed in the 1920s, and more substantial churches serving the six different congregations of the city were in place.

In the 1920s and 1930s, the emerging elite and a growing middle class built modern bungalows, Prairie Style influenced houses and revival styled homes to fill out the neighborhoods north to the G.C & S.F. railroad and ten blocks east to Alabama Road. Businessmen like civic leader R.H. Vineyard, grocers Leon Abovitz (Site No. 817) and Ben Davis (Site No. 795), merchants Moses Bernstein (Site No. 665) and John L. Roten (Site No. 116), farmers Willie Banker Jr. (Site No. 753) and E.C. Elliot and banker L.F. Worthing (Site No. 857) whose success in a moderately expanding economy, enabled them to build or buy new houses during this period.

At least five attorneys maintained offices in buildings facing onto the square, and the community had at least nine doctors and dentists in the early 1920s including three African American physicians -- Drs. Martin, McCann and Burford who practiced in their homes (Graham 1939:236).

African Americans, the majority of whom were engaged in farming and other labor-intensive jobs, remained segregated into two neighborhoods. They mainly occupied simple shotgun dwellings like those built along Spanish Camp Road by dry goods merchant Toby Gordon or those on Elm Street constructed about 1919 by Charles Brightling who operated a barber shop on the square (Cline 1989).

With the responsibility of economic growth on the shoulders of the public sector in the 1930s, Wharton's city, county and federal facilities were targeted for upgrading, mostly as a result of public works projects. The city built new municipal offices in 1931. County citizens passed a bond in the mid-1930s to remodel the courthouse and old jail which resulted in the art deco designs that distinguish the buildings today. A new, economically detailed post office was finished on East Milam, one block east of the square. By 1938, a new, large jail compatible in design to the deco buildings, was completed. Although new commercial construction starts declined during the decade, the publicly financed construction, appearing streamlined and modern, provided an incentive for commercial facelifts around the square. Owners covered many 1890s-1910s facades with plan or Art Deco inspired stucco facades, most noticeably on the square's north side.

In 1932, a syndicate of local business leaders, including W. J. Hudgins, B. C. Roberts, Dr. T. L. Davidson, Wiley J. Croom, Joe Schwartz and Sol Alpard began the Wharton County Fair Association to market and promote the local farm

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industry. Substantial exhibit halls of restrained Art Deco design were erected on the 20-acre site at Alabama Road and FM 1301, and the accompanying the fair grounds and buildings housed the Wharton County Fair until 1942. A year later, the buildings were converted into housing for German prisoners of war and served as a military prison camp until 1945. In 1946 they became classrooms for the newly-created Wharton County Junior College and recently served as vehicle maintenance garages. The larger exhibit hall was demolished by the college in 1989.

The 1930s witnessed continued growth and development in Wharton. Abundant and diversified crops, combined with relatively stable farm and land prices and an increasing population, gave rise to a new sense of community optimism. The advent of truck farming in the region, with easy and efficient farm-goods marketing and Wharton's advantageous geographic location near the burgeoning city of Houston, increased the town's importance.

Incidental residential development occurred north of the G.C. & S.F. Railroad and east of Alabama Road before World War II. These neighborhoods filled in during the two decades after the war with tract homes, shopping centers, schools including Wharton County Junior College and new churches. Far north, about three miles out on Richmond Road, a large, planned neighborhood was laid out as Wharton's first suburb in the late 1920s, although only sporadic development followed for the next few decades. By World War II, dense development of Wharton's black neighborhoods had extended east to Alabama Road, south of East Milam, five block along the river and on the larger west side, several blocks west and north along the south side of Old Spanish Camp Road. Development of new housing in these area continued in the vernacular tradition, with small houses built in traditional vernacular or modest bungalow forms.

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OUTLINE OF ASSOCIATED PROPERTY TYPES

A. Residential Buildings

1. Pyramid-roof Houses
2. Center-passage Houses
3. L-plan Houses
4. Modified L-plan Houses
5. T-plan Houses
6. Two-room Houses
7. Shotgun Houses
8. Queen Anne Houses
9. Bungalows
10. Tudor Revival Houses
11. Classical Revival Houses
12. Spanish Colonial Revival Houses

B. Institutional Buildings

1. Churches
2. Public Buildings

C. Commercial Buildings

1. Retail Stores
2. Warehouses
3. Hotels
4. Railroad Depots

D. Transportation-Related Structures

1. Parker-Through Truss Bridges

A. PROPERTY TYPE: RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS

Description

Residential Buildings dominate Wharton's historic built environment and about 85% of the 1025 buildings identified in the 1987-88 historic resources survey are examples of this property type. They range in date of construction from as early as ca. 1875 to ca. 1939, more than the 50-year age requirement for the National Register. This period spans a critical era in the history and development of domestic architecture in America, and Wharton's residential buildings, to a large extent, reflect many of the changes that occurred in the way dwellings were built, designed and detailed. No single style or type prevails, and as a consequence, Wharton claims a wide range of domestic architectural forms which are discussed in greater detail later in this section.

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Despite these differences, local Residential Buildings share many associative and physical traits that distinguish them from other property types in the city. They are found in virtually every section of the community.

Properties within this category were built for domestic purposes and include single-family houses, duplexes and apartments. A few have been converted into commercial or office spaces. Virtually all residences in Wharton are detached, free-standing buildings with landscaped yards. Wood-frame construction far outnumber other types and methods of construction, especially in 19th and early 20th century buildings. Wood siding was the most commonly applied exterior sheathing material although numerous examples of houses with brick or stuccoed veneers of post-1920 construction stand in Wharton. These frame dwellings have pier-and-beam foundations with brick, concrete or, in a few cases, wooden support blocks.

Wharton's historic houses, as a whole, reflect the community's conservative and unpretentious character, and few "high-style" or academic examples of domestic architectural expressions are in the city. Many of the dwellings display elements of a certain style but are more accurately defined as vernacular interpretations. In many instances, architectural detailing that is associated with a particular style is merely applied to a traditional vernacular form, and this pattern is quite common in local houses built in the late 19th century. Several houses of that era have elaborate Queen Anne style ornamentation but are not "text book" examples of the style. Accordingly, they are vernacular houses and described by their form (i.e. two-room, shotgun, etc.) rather than stylistic influences.

Because of the large number of vernacular dwellings in Wharton, more discussion follows on the classification and characteristics of these buildings. Vernacular residences are sometimes called folk houses and include a wide variety of forms. Despite the temptation to classify vernacular houses by their architectural ornamentation, such a method fails to understand the many kinds of vernacular houses and the evolution of their forms and plans. Indeed, such ornamentation is often applied at various times in the building's history and can actually be misleading to ascertain much about a residence. Therefore, another classification system is used to categorize vernacular buildings and it relies upon the plan type and form. This method looks beyond superficial detailing and distills the houses down to their primary components. This approach has proven effective for architectural historians and others who have devoted their careers to the study of vernacular residences.

The primary subcategories of vernacular residences in Wharton are pyramid-roof, center-passage, L-plan, modified L-plan, T-plan, two-room, and shotgun houses, and each is easily identified by its distinctive form and massing. Subsequent paragraphs identify the principal subtypes of the various Residential Buildings.

Residential Buildings: Pyramid-roof Houses

Pyramid-roof Houses are classified by their most dominant feature, a large hipped roof appearing as a pyramid. Some of these roofs actually

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terminate in a point, but quite often the roof is truncated in a ridge. These houses are a vernacular design sometimes called "southern pyramid-roof" or "square cottages." The houses generally fall into two categories, both are present in Wharton. First are houses of a modest means, usually 1-story, that typically have four, roughly equal-sized rooms with no interior hallway. The construction is sometimes referred to as "box-frame" meaning that the interior partitions are not framed as load-bearing walls but are single ply. This allows a degree of flexibility for the interior spaces. Second are houses of a much grander scale that can be either 1- or 2-story with an imposing roof that covers porches supported by columns. In many examples, one or more of the roof slopes will have a gable or hipped roof dormer allowing additional use of the roof space. This house form is common in the deep South and Texas, especially in coastal areas where the warmer months may be prolonged. The roof height allows for retention of cooler air and thus is well suited for the warmer climatic areas. The form was used from the 19th century into the early years of the 20th century and may be embellished with Classical or Victorian features.

Residential Buildings: Center-passage Houses

The center-passage house is another common category of vernacular houses and was built from the 1870s until the first decade of this century. A center-passage house has a central hallway that divides the building into two equal-sized halves. The typical center-passage house in Wharton has one room on each side of this central hallway. All local examples have a side-gabled roof, and some have exterior gable-end chimneys. The front elevation has a central door that opens onto the hallway and window openings in the outer bays. 5-bay fronts are most common, although 3-bay versions are also found. A shed- or hip-roofed porch typically extends across the front and can have any of a variety of columns, such as chamfered posts, or turned-wood supports or box columns. Ornamentation varies depending upon the building's date of construction or remodeling. An early (circa 1880s) version may have Victorian era detailing such as jigsawn porch brackets while a center-passage remodeled in the 1920s may have bungalow-like detailing.

Residential Buildings: L-plan Houses

Perhaps the most recognized category of vernacular houses is the L-plan house which often is associated with Victorian-era architectural traditions. The form was popular locally from the 1880s to about 1900, and as its name suggests, utilizes a plan that is L-shaped. The core of the house is parallel to the street but a wing projects from one side of the front, thus creating an L-shaped plan. This house form has intersecting gables, generally of the same pitch and proportions, covering the front and, where applicable, rear ell. The front projecting wing often has angled corners creating a 5-sided bay with cantilevered, squared overhangs. Non-structured jigsawn brackets and corner pendants usually adorn the projecting soffits. The porch, which typically has turned-wood supports and a wooden floor, fills the front ell of the house. Windows are double hung with wood sashes and often have 2/2 lights with vertical muntins in each sash.

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Residential Buildings: Modified L-plan Houses

The modified L-plan house is easily identified by its massive, steeply pitched, hipped roof intersected by front and side gables. It was built locally from the late 1890s until about 1910. Like an L-plan house, this kindred form has an off center projecting gable-roofed wing on the front and a perpendicular projecting wing, but as secondary components to the dominate hipped roof center mass. An L-shaped porch wraps around the center mass, terminating at the projecting wings. It is sometimes curved and has turned-wood or Doric-like supports. The entrance provides access to the center mass beneath the porch and usually includes a transom and sometimes sidelights. Windows are double-hung with wood sashes, typically with 1/1 or 2/2 lights.

Residential Buildings: T-plan Houses

The T-plan house is recognized by the perpendicular intersecting roofs forming a "T" shape. The projecting gable front usually contains windows, either one or two, while the longer sides have similar fenestration. A projecting porch generally covers doorways on both sides. Windows are usually 2/2 or 4/4 wooden double-hung sashes. These houses are among the rarest of the vernacular house types. Most were built between 1880 and 1920 and are wood frame covered in weatherboard siding. Ornamentation, if any, typically consists of jigsawn brackets, simple turned balustrades, turned columns, and jigsawn bargeboards. Rear additions are sometimes attached to the rear often with a gable-end chimney.

Residential Buildings: Two-room Houses

The two-room or double-pen house, which dates from the 1880s to the early 1900s, is a small vernacular dwelling that has two adjoining rooms that are aligned parallel to the street. A typical two-room house has a side-gabled roof and a 4-bay front with two single-door entrances in the inner bays and double-hung wood-sash windows, either 1/1 or 2/2 lights, in the outer bays. A few local examples have 3-bay fronts with a central entrance giving the house a balanced and symmetrical appearance.

Residential Buildings: Shotgun Houses

The shotgun house is another well-known vernacular house form and was built locally from the late 19th century to the early 1940s. Most local examples date to the 1920s. A shotgun house has a linear room arrangement similar to a two-room house; however, the adjoining rooms are front-to-back rather than laterally arranged. The shotgun's gable end faces and typically includes a single-door entrance and a window opening. Single-bay shed or gable porches protect the entries. The number of lights in the sashes of windows on a shotgun varies greatly; some have 1/1 configurations while others have as many as 4/4 patterns. Local shotguns are void of decorative architectural ornamentation such as turned or jigsawn trim.

Residential Buildings: Bungalows

The most common early 20th-century architectural form in Wharton is the bungalow, and local examples date from the 1910s to the late 1930s. A bunga-

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low, in contrast to late 19th and turn-of-the-century architectural forms, presents a solid, simply detailed dwelling with strong horizontal emphasis. Broad expansive porches with stout supports, low-pitched roofs, and clustered window and wide door openings are typical. Wharton bungalow's are 1- or 1 1/2-story frame buildings with wood siding, either drop or weatherboard. Nearly all local examples rest on pier-and-beam foundations and many have tapered or canted foundation skirt walls that hide their underpinning. The roof is usually gabled and has exposed, and occasionally decorative rafter ends, as well as triangular knee brackets in the gabled ends. Exterior brick chimneys are sometimes incorporated in the design, especially on earlier versions. The most distinctive detail of a bungalow includes the porch supports which are almost always tapered and rest on brick or wood pedestals.

Although they were built over a relatively short period of time, numerous forms and variants of this popular architectural expression exist in Wharton, and to a great extent, they reflect trends that typify the rest of the state and nation. McAlester and McAlester (1986:452-463) provide a useful framework in which to categorize the many kinds of bungalows, and they base their classification system on the roof type, including front-gabled, cross-gabled and side-gabled bungalows.

The front-gabled bungalow is the most common in Wharton. As its name suggests, it has a front-facing gabled roof that covers the main section of the house. A secondary gable is often attached to the front and covers a partially inset porch. The porch typically includes a broad single span with tapered box supports at each end.

Earlier bungalows in Wharton are likely to have side-gabled roofs and incorporate more finely crafted details. Numerous examples are found in the Linn Street Historic District where the porches on the bungalows have noteworthy craftsmanship. The side-gabled bungalow is often a 1 1/2-story building in contrast to the other subcategories which typically are only a single story. All bungalows have a horizontal emphasis; however, that effect is more pronounced in a side-gabled bungalow because of its low-pitched roof that extends across the front. Shed or gabled dormers are common on the roof's front slope, and the porch is almost always inset beneath the roof.

The cross-gabled bungalow has a roof with gables that intersect at right angles. A side-facing gable typically covers the house's core and a front-facing gable extends over the porch. Most local versions of this subcategory are 1-story frame buildings with drop siding. The porch usually has a single bay with tapered box supports at each end.

Residential Buildings: Queen Anne Houses

Queen Anne-style houses were built during the late 19th century when domestic architectural tastes called for eclectic designs with irregular forms and exuberant detailing. The Queen Anne style was popular locally from the 1880s until the turn of the century and was chosen almost exclusively by Wharton's wealthiest and most prominent citizens. As a consequence, Queen Anne-style residences are among the grandest in the community.

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Local Queen Anne houses, like their counterparts elsewhere, utilize asymmetrical plans and have steeply pitched roofs which emphasize the style's distinctive vertical character. Hip roofs and smaller gabled extensions are common. Most local Queen Anne-style houses are 1- or 2-story dwellings with wood-frame construction and weatherboard siding. Although a variety of exterior sheathing materials (wood shingles and masonry) typifies most Queen Anne houses, such a trend is not common in Wharton where these dwellings typically have only wood siding. Shingles are sometimes used, however, in gable ends.

Other distinctive physical traits of Queen Anne-style houses include their richness and variety of ornamentation and detailing, seen most dramatically on porches and in gable ends. Turned-wood porch supports and balusters, as well as jigsaw brackets and friezes, are common features. Classically inspired elements, such as a pediment over the front entrance bay, are occasionally incorporated into the design. Gabled ends often have jigsaw bargeboards and trim which add to these building's exuberance and ornate detailing. Windows are double hung with wood sashes and typically have 2/2 lights with upright muntins which subtly reinforce the building's overall verticality.

Residential Buildings: Tudor Revival Houses

The Tudor Revival style gained considerable popularity in Wharton during the late 1920s and 1930s, and numerous examples were documented in the 1987-88 historic resources survey. The style is adapted from an old English architectural tradition and is representative of a desire to return to a simpler, though highly romanticized, era. Few local houses are "high-style" illustrations; nonetheless, many display elements associated with this architectural expression. Local examples are 1- or 2-story dwellings of frame construction, although a few exceptions are built of load-bearing hollow tile or concrete block. The typical Tudor Revival house in Wharton has a brick veneered exterior with steeply pitched multi-gabled roofs. The front is arranged asymmetrically and usually includes a gabled bay with Faux half-timbering in the gable ends and a round-arched entrance. Although casement windows typically adorn Tudor Revival dwellings, most local examples have double-hung windows with 1/1 lights.

Residential Buildings: Classical Revival Houses

Residences classified as examples of the Classical Revival style exhibit architectural features whose origins are traced to Greek and Roman traditions. They were built in the first or second decades of the 20th century as a reaction to the organic, irregular forms of the Victorian era. A Classical Revival house, which typically is 1 or 2 stories, presents a more formal character and appearance. Its front is symmetrically composed with a central entrance and flanking window openings. The porch is a dominant architectural element and has Doric, Tuscan Composite, or Corinthian columns. The roof is either gabled or hipped although the former is more common. The front entrance usually includes a transom and sidelights that occasionally is decorated with pilasters, an entablature and oval glazing. Classical Revival houses in Wharton are the most impressive and architecturally significant of the residences found in Wharton. The majority were built originally in that style but many others are older buildings that were remodeled, incorporating Classical Revival elements onto an existing dwelling.

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Wharton, Wharton County, Texas**Residential Buildings: Spanish Colonial Revival Houses**

The Spanish Colonial Revival style was popular locally at about the same time as the Tudor Revival style, 1925-1940. Unlike the latter, which was derived from English traditions, the Spanish Colonial Revival style, as its name indicates, is based upon Spanish forms derived from the distinctive features of the house such as its stuccoed exterior and red clay tile ornamentation. Window and door openings typically have round arches, and metal grillwork is sometimes used as a decorative element. The Spanish Colonial Revival style is the least common of the three revival styles found in Wharton.

Significance

Residential Buildings can have both historical and architectural significance and, therefore, can be eligible for listing in the National Register under Criteria A, B and C. Those with historical significance are associated with important events or patterns in local history (Criterion A) or are associated with individuals who made noteworthy contributions to and played pivotal roles in the city's development (Criterion B). Those eligible under Criterion A are perhaps the most difficult to recognize and ascertain because the concept is both broad and abstract. However, **Residential Buildings** built in a certain era can reflect widespread growth and prosperity in Wharton's history and economic development. As a consequence, **Residential Buildings** can be indicative of patterns in local history, especially if these dwellings are grouped in historic districts.

Historical significance also involves associations with individuals who were important in Wharton's history. To be eligible for the National Register in this way, a dwelling must be the home of a person who achieved his or her significance while residing in that building. For example, the house was occupied by the owner of a dry goods store in Wharton and who later opened branch stores in nearby communities.

Residential buildings are usually nominated to the National Register under Criterion C as noteworthy examples of an architectural style or type, most of which are identified and discussed in the Description section of the property type **Residential Buildings**. As Wharton developed, many new residences were built often with a style or type indicative of prevailing architectural tastes at the time of construction. For example, a number of bungalows were built in the 1920s when the city experienced a period of relative growth and prosperity. Some of the local houses were designed by architects, most were not.

Registration Requirements

Residential Buildings can be considered for nomination to the National Register if they are at least 50 years old and retain a significant amount of their integrity. They should be recognizable to their period of significance which, in most cases, is the date of construction. To be listed in the National Register, **Residential Buildings** must meet at least one of the four National Register Criteria.

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The vast majority of historic dwellings being nominated are eligible under Criterion C as noteworthy examples of an architectural style, type or method of construction. Physical integrity is a key element in evaluating properties in this category, and a building's exterior detailing should appear almost exactly as it did when originally constructed or when it achieved significance (i.e., if it was altered over 50 years ago). While it is inevitable that architectural fabric deteriorates over time, restoration, rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts should be sensitive to a dwelling's historic character and should utilize shapes, forms and materials that are indistinguishable from original detailing. The installation of historically inappropriate elements can detract from a building's integrity and, therefore, make it ineligible for the National Register. Common alterations which can compromise a building's integrity include the replacement of wood-sash windows with modern metal-sash windows, the installation of wrought-iron supports and/or a concrete porch floor, or the application of vinyl, asbestos or aluminum siding over original wood siding. The removal of architecturally significant details can also compromise a dwelling's historic integrity.

Properties nominated under Criterion A or B are those with strong historical associations, including direct links with important trends and events in our past and associations with individuals who have been historically significant. It is important, however, to establish the relative significance of these historical factors and how they are associated with nominated properties. For example, a building cannot be nominated because it merely was the residence of an important and influential individual in Wharton's business community. A strong argument must be presented to describe his or her accomplishments and contributions to the local history. Also, such a property must have been used by that person when significance was achieved and/or be the residence most closely associated with that individual. The dwelling need not be a particularly noteworthy example of an architectural style but must retain enough of its integrity to be recognizable to its period of significance.

B. PROPERTY TYPE: INSTITUTIONAL BUILDINGS

Description

The property type, **Institutional Buildings**, includes churches and public buildings such as the county courthouse, county jail, municipal building and the post office building. All were erected with institutional monies, some public and some not, and built to house a community function/activity (i.e. government or religious). Therefore, they are important to the entire community. They are significant symbols both historically and socially and are among the most visible physical landmarks in Wharton. They are prominently sited on major streets; the county courthouse, for example, occupies the central square and is the focal point of Wharton. **Institutional Buildings** are also found in concentrations because of their specialized functions and the desire to have them erected in central locations that are easily accessible and visible to all residents. **Institutional Buildings** are usually well maintained and in good condition.

Institutional Buildings range in date of construction from 1888 to the 1930s and, as a consequence, display a variety of architectural influences.

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Because the institution operating within the building may be quite varied in spatial needs, the exterior features of churches are very different from public buildings. The significance and registrations requirements may also vary slightly. Therefore, the following discussions elaborate on the two subtypes:

Institutional Buildings: Churches

The subtype, Churches, includes the various buildings built by local religious groups and because of this associative quality, they are grouped together as a single subtype. Although churches were erected early in Wharton's history, none of the original buildings survive. The oldest ones date to the late 19th and early 20th centuries when most of Wharton's extant historic buildings were erected. Examples stand throughout the city in residential areas or along the city's busiest thoroughfares and are not found in significant concentrations. Less than one percent of the 1025 properties identified in the historic resources survey of 1988-89 are churches.

Churches also share many physical traits that distinguish them from other local properties. They are among the largest and most impressive buildings in the city, an obvious reflection of their importance to the residents of Wharton. They often have noteworthy stylistic features and the Classical and Gothic Revival styles are the most common. Others, however, are vernacular buildings with little or no stylistic detailing. Nevertheless, most churches occupy corner lots and sometimes have bell towers which make them highly visible landmarks in the community. Construction methods and exterior sheathing materials can vary, however. Churches with wealthier members are more likely to have brick load-bearing walls. Churches whose members are less affluent typically utilize less expensive wood-frame construction with drop or weatherboard wood siding.

Churches with Classical Revival features have detailing that is associated with Greek or Roman architectural traditions. The front is symmetrical with a balanced and orderly composition. Pedimented porticos with free-standing or attached columns are common. These columns have capitals in the Doric, Corinthian or Composite order.

Churches with Gothic Revival detailing are easily identified by their use of Gothic or pointed-arch window openings. Unlike the Classical Revival, this architectural expression is one that is asymmetrically composed, especially on the front where an off-center bell tower is often used. Decorative buttresses and crenelation are other common features.

Significance (Churches)

While they are important social and cultural landmarks in the city, Churches are significant primarily for architectural reasons and are nominated to the National Register under Criterion C. They often display noteworthy stylistic ornamentation which can make them prominent architectural landmarks in the community. They are most likely to exhibit features associated with the Classical Revival or Gothic Revival styles. Churches can also be associated with locally important trends or individuals (Criteria A and B).

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Churches are nominated to the National Register primarily for their architectural merits (Criterion C) and they often display noteworthy stylistic detailing and features. To be eligible, a church must be at least 50 years of age and retain its original exterior finish and distinguishing architectural ornamentation. The covering of the exterior with nonhistoric materials or the removal of important details can have a profound negative impact on the building's historic appearance. Doors and windows should be originals and not replacements, although the installation of nonhistoric stained-glass windows rarely detracts from the church's historic character. Smoky glass lights, on the other hand, can compromise the building's integrity, especially if the property is being considered for individual nomination. Clear protective lights can be placed over stained-glass windows without compromising the building's integrity. Ideally, a church should be unaltered with no additions; however, if a building program has resulted in the construction of, for example, a new education wing, the addition should be unobtrusive and not a dominant element of the property. The addition must be of a compatible design that does not have a great impact on the church's historic character; thus, the building's overall integrity is maintained.

A church can be nominated to the National Register for its historical associations (Criterion A or B) but is not considered for such distinction if its historical significance is derived from the fact that it represents the congregation of a particular denomination or its members included locally significant and influential citizens. A strong argument must be made to demonstrate how the church played an important role in Wharton's development. For a church being nominated solely for its historical associations, architectural integrity remains an important consideration but is not as critical as those being nominated under Criterion C. Nevertheless, the building should still be recognizable to the time it achieved its historical significance.

Institutional Buildings: Public Buildings

Description

The subtype, Public Buildings, includes the county courthouse, county jails, municipal building, and post office. The old county jail and courthouse, completed in 1888 and 1889 respectively, originally exhibited Victorian Italianate features including segmental arches, hood molds and quoins. Both were remodeled in the 1930s and the buildings were given "facelifts" with the application of Art Deco-styled motifs. The 1938 jail, which replaced the earlier (1888) facility, and the municipal building also display Art Deco features such as their box-like massing and stylized geometric detailing. The post office, erected in 1935, has a strong Classical Revival stylistic influence and remains virtually unaltered. It is the only example of a Public Building with that type of detailing.

Significance (Public Buildings)

Public Buildings are most likely to be nominated to the National Register under Criterion A (for association with significant local historical

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events) or C (as noteworthy examples of an architectural style). To be eligible under Criterion A, the property should be directly related to an event or events important in the community's development. Under Criterion C, these properties become eligible because they are among the city's most outstanding architectural specimens and display exceptional craftsmanship and design qualities.

Registration Requirements (Public Buildings)

Because Public Buildings often were (and are) important symbols to the community, they typically are prominent architectural landmarks and thus are usually considered for National Register distinction under Criterion C. Architectural significance is most likely achieved by the building being an outstanding example of a style or type. In order to be eligible under this criterion, the property must be at least 50 years of age and its integrity is a crucial factor. The building must retain much of its architectural features. Historic fabric must be maintained, and additions and alterations cannot detract from the building's overall historic character. An exception is the 1888-89 county courthouse which was remodeled in 1934. Since these changes were completed over 50 years ago, the alterations are considered to have gained historic significance in their own right and reflect the county's prosperity of the 1930s.

C. PROPERTY TYPE: COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS

Description

Commercial Buildings is a property type that includes a diverse collection of buildings with distinctive physical characteristics and historical associations that distinguish them from other buildings and property types in Wharton. **Commercial Buildings** includes retail stores, warehouses, hotels, and railroad depots. Most of these buildings are in Wharton's Central Business District (CBD) or line West Milam Street between the CBD and the Old Texas and New Orleans Railroad depot. A historic resources survey, completed in July 1988, identified 127 commercial buildings within the city limits of Wharton, and this figure represents about 12% of the 1025 historic resources inventoried in the survey.

One of the most distinctive features of **Commercial Buildings** as a property type centers around the use or function of buildings in this category. Without exception, they were built for the exchange of goods and/or services and are the most obvious and direct link to Wharton's commercial development. They housed businesses that enabled local consumers to purchase goods and merchandise or obtain professional services.

Because the time limits of the associated historic context are so broad (1875-1942), the kinds of buildings within this property type vary greatly depending on the date of construction; however, they still share many common physical attributes and characteristics that allow them to be grouped under a single property type. Virtually all feature an open rectangular plan that conforms to the long and narrow lots where **Commercial Buildings** typically are found. The most dramatic examples occur on the courthouse square where street frontage was a critical factor. The majority of Wharton's **Commercial**

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Buildings are 1- or 2-story buildings with brick load-bearing walls, although several utilize frame construction with some type of horizontal wood siding. Those in the latter group typically have gabled roofs with "boomtown" parapets. Otherwise, local commercial buildings have flat roofs with built-up tar-and-gravel used as a covering.

Wharton's commercial buildings were constructed throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries; as a consequence, stylistic ornamentation and architectural detailing vary greatly depending on a building's age and original use. A retail store, for example, tends to be richly detailed when compared to a more utilitarian building such as a warehouse. Much of this ornamentation is seen in the parapet and, if a building is two or three stories, around upper floor window openings. Noteworthy architectural detailing is generally seen only on the front elevation; however a building that occupies a corner lot typically has such detailing on both the front and street-facing side elevations.

Of all the identified property types, **Commercial Buildings** are most likely to be found in dense concentrations, and groupings thus are often strong candidates for historic district designation. Areas with the greatest concentration include lots facing onto the courthouse square and along West Milam Street which extends east-west from the courthouse square to the Texas and New Orleans Railroad depot.

Although these areas historically represent Wharton's commercial center, suburban sprawl since World War II has resulted in a more decentralized pattern of development, and many of the businesses that formerly occupied buildings around the courthouse square or on West Milam Street moved to new locations on local highways. As a consequence, many of the historic commercial buildings have been vacated and stand today in fair condition. Some store owners who remained attempted to counter this trend and, as early as the 1950s, remodeled their buildings to generate greater interest in their businesses. Until the 1980s, the kinds of physical changes to the buildings often compromised their historic integrity. Common alterations include the removal of original architectural elements (windows and doors, for example) and the installation of "modern" equivalents. Other alterations include covering the original exterior finish with aluminum false fronts or applying stucco onto exterior walls surfaces. With the City's participation in the Main Street Project, many reversible alterations have been removed or mitigated, and several historic commercial buildings have been restored close to their original appearance.

Commercial Buildings: Retail Stores

Retail stores are the most prevalent subtype of **Commercial Buildings** in Wharton. The majority stand on the courthouse square or on West Milam Street, although a few isolated examples are found in residential areas throughout the city. Retail stores were built for businesses that offered goods to local consumers and include grocer, dry goods, hardware and other establishments. Banks, restaurants and offices also fall within this subtype and all share many physical attributes.

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Although retail stores in Wharton range in size to as many as three stories in height, 1- and 2-story examples are most common. Load-bearing masonry construction is typical and many are row buildings that share party walls. Most of these are on the courthouse square. Retail stores of frame construction typically are free-standing, detached buildings although there is a contiguous row of frame stores along the 600 block of West Milam Street. Despite these variances, all local retail stores are in a rectangular plan.

Most local retail stores have a 3- or 4-bay storefront with large display windows and double-door entrances. The entrances are often recessed with angled display windows. Fixed transoms extend across the front above the window and door openings. Canopies or awnings are also typical.

The most significant architectural detailing is reserved for those elevations with street exposures and typically is seen only on the front. Buildings at street corners have two, more ornately detailed, exterior walls. This detailing, which involves fenestration and surface treatment on the walls, as well as the type of ornamentation in the parapet, usually exhibits varying degrees of influence from "high-style" or academic architectural styles. Many of the 2-story brick buildings erected in the late 19th century, for example, have round- or segmental-arched windows with brick hood molds on the second floor. Extended brick parapets have a tripartite configuration and elaborate masonry work with corbeling and other labor-intensive brick detailing. Many retail stores erected in the early 20th century have more classically inspired features such as an entablature with a cornice and dentils in the parapet. When the courthouse was remodeled in the 1930s and Art Deco detailing was applied to the building, many local store owners likewise renovated their buildings and utilized similar architectural motifs. Other retail stores in Wharton have Spanish Colonial and/or Mission influences as evidenced by the use of clay-tile pent roofs and curvilinear parapets.

Some retail stores, especially those of frame construction, are more straight forward in their design and often lack any pronounced stylistic influences in their ornamentation. These vernacular buildings, as they are called, typically have 3-bay storefronts with large fixed-glass display windows and central double-door entrances. An unadorned 1- or 3-part parapet is another common feature of vernacular retail stores. Such parapets are often called "boomtown storefronts" and make these buildings appear to be larger and more substantial than they really are. Several examples are found in Wharton that date to the early 20th century.

Commercial Buildings: Warehouses

Although few in numbers, warehouses are another subtype of **Commercial Buildings** in Wharton and they typically are of frame construction with wood siding and metal sheathing, or have brick load-bearing walls. Warehouses often have greater amounts of floor space than retail stores and usually encompass two or more city lots. They are less ornate in their detailing because of their more utilitarian function, and such a pattern is common throughout the state. At least one local warehouse does, however, display noteworthy architectural detailing. The Deaton Grocery Co. Building in the West Milam Street Mercantile Historic District has segmental-arched second and third floor windows and corbeled brickwork in the parapet.

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Commercial Buildings: Hotels

A third subtype are hotels. Although only a single example survives in Wharton, it is grouped with Commercial Buildings because it housed a for-profit business. The only extant hotel is a 2-story frame building with a U-shaped plan contained near the business district. Hotels served a number of purposes in small towns including providing brief and long-term accommodations, regular meals, and services to businessmen. These buildings were generally 2-stories or more in height, divided into multiple rooms, and located in or near the central business district. At the turn of the century several hotels were in Wharton.

Commercial Buildings: Railroad Depots

A fourth subtype are railroad depots. Again, only one example remains in Wharton. This depot, like many others, is a 1-story brick building with a massive roof, wide overhangs, and architectural features similar to residential buildings (mostly bungalows). Railroad depots served a utilitarian function, i.e. providing a loading space for the railroad cars, and a community space, i.e. waiting rooms for passengers. However, the overriding purpose was to promote the commercial enterprise of the railroad company. These properties are located near railroad tracks and other commercial or industrial activities.

Significance

Commercial Buildings can be significant for their historical associations and architectural merits and, therefore, can be eligible for listing in the National Register under Criteria A, B and C. A property with historical associations can be significant because it is indicative of a broad theme, trend or pattern in local history (Criterion A) or because it is directly linked to an individual who played a pivotal role in the historic development of the community (Criterion B). As discussed in the historic context, the most important historical themes affecting local commercial buildings involve Wharton's development into a regional center that relied on an agriculture-based economy and the town's designation as the county seat. As local farmers prospered during the early 20th century, for example, merchants erected new brick buildings to attract more business. Moreover, these brick buildings were regarded as symbols of permanence and stability of the businesses and often were considered a key ingredient to financial success and profitable operation. Commercial Buildings can also be associated with an individual who played a pivotal role in the town's history. A local merchant who operated a dry goods store and used his profits to open branch facilities in nearby towns is an illustration of a locally significant individual that could warrant consideration for listing in the National Register under Criterion B.

Generally, however, Commercial Buildings are most likely to be significant for architectural reasons, either individually and collectively (as a historic district). Some are important as individual buildings that display noteworthy craftsmanship and/or design qualities and are outstanding examples of a style, type or form. They also may represent distinguishing commissions of an architect or architectural firm. Clusters or groupings of Commercial Buildings (historic districts) typically have significance derived from the

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buildings as a whole. Such concentrations can have several properties that are significant individually and/or can include buildings that may lack significance on an individual basis but are more important when grouped as a single unit.

Registration Requirements

To be eligible for the National Register, **Commercial Buildings** must be at least 50 years old and retain enough of their architectural integrity to evoke a date of construction or period of significance. A commercial building should maintain its original facade and/or fenestration, as well as its exterior finish. Superficial and easily reversible changes, such as the covering of transoms or the removal of signage, are less important than major remodeling or additions that can severely alter a building's historic character. Physical changes completed over 50 years ago sometimes are important in their own right and can represent the architectural evolution of a building over time. An example might be a frame building constructed in the 1910s but altered in the 1930s with the application of a brick veneer to the front. If essentially unchanged since that time, such an alteration may not necessarily be intrusive to the building's integrity and could be regarded as an architecturally significant feature.

Commercial Buildings can be eligible for the National Register under Criteria A, B and C. Those being considered for designation under Criterion C must be virtually unaltered and retain their historic integrity to a high degree. They can be outstanding examples of a particular style or type, or display noteworthy craftsmanship or detailing. If important or distinguishing architectural elements are changed, modified or removed, the building cannot be considered for National Register designation under Criterion C.

Commercial Buildings with strong historical associations should retain enough of their integrity to be recognizable to their period of significance. For example, a mercantile establishment that was the headquarters of a company that played a vital role in the economic development of a community need not be unaltered but should appear much as it did when the company used the building. Most but not all of the building's architectural fabric should survive in a relatively intact state. They can possess architectural significance if they maintain their integrity and most important physical features.

D. PROPERTY TYPE: TRANSPORTATION-RELATED STRUCTURES

Description

The property type, **Transportation-related Structures**, includes functional constructions built for purposes other than human shelter. These properties may be related to road (largely vehicular use), rail, water, or air transportation. In Wharton, the properties are generally either road- or rail-related. Although there were many structures developed for transportation, the only subtype presented for Wharton is the Parker-through Truss Bridge.

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Wharton, Wharton County, TexasTransportation-related Structures: Parker-through Truss Bridges

By mid 19th century, the premier bridge design was the all-metal truss bridge. Advancements continued into the late 19th and early 20th century as the network of rail and highway systems grew rapidly and the demand for high quality, durable bridges increased. The all-metal truss bridge became the preferred design by the early 20th century and a number of patented designs appeared. The most common are the Pratt, Warren, and Bollman trusses. Another popular bridge design is the Parker truss. The Parker is an offspring of the earlier Pratt truss design which has vertical compression members and diagonal tension members with top and bottom chords that run parallel to each other. In truss design structural members resist forces in two primary ways - compression and tension. The Parker applies a polygonal top chord (the center of the truss is taller than the ends) to the structure. The polygonal design increased the distance between the top and bottom chords and made the truss depth greatest at the center of the span where stress was highest.

Significance

An estimated 40 (road-related) Parker-through truss bridges remain in Texas (1992) that are within the range of 40 to 250 feet in length. (No estimate is available for rail-related bridges.) Most of these were constructed from the 1920s through 1940s with the largest number constructed in the 1930s. The bridge design became the preferred one of George G. Wickline, State Bridge Engineer (1918-1940), who promoted its use across the state. Wickline and other engineers chose the design because of its life expectancy and ease of construction. In addition, its efficiency allowed for a longer span with greater strength while using less steel, reducing both weight and cost. The relative scarcity of these structures and their role in historical growth and development of a community make those meeting the registration requirements important historic resources to preserve.

Registration Requirements

A Parker-through truss bridge is eligible for listing under Criterion A. This criterion is appropriate if the bridge is determined to be instrumental in the physical or economic growth and development of the area. The role of the bridge in facilitating growth by expanding access to and from the community should be presented. All discussion also should focus on the relationship of the structure to transportation systems. All nominated structures must address the integrity of the property as well, with the greatest leverage given to location, setting, materials, and workmanship.

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SURVEY OF IDENTIFICATION AND EVALUATION METHODS

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

This survey included identification and documentation of all non-archeological historic resources built before 1945 and now within the city limits of Wharton. The comprehensive survey followed procedures recommended by the Texas Historical Commission and the National Park Service, United States Department of the Interior. The emphasis of this survey was on field documentation that involved locating the buildings and recording physical data. Historical research was done to establish a connection between the properties and their early owners and significant events affecting the property. Names, dates and events recorded provided leads for subsequent research and assistance in the preparation of National Register nominations.

Overview

Before the fieldwork began, the Project Director examined records at the Texas Historical Commission and the Barker Texas History Center to become familiar with Wharton's historical and physical development. Publications on local history and historic maps of the county were most helpful as an introduction to the community. Texas Historical Commission survey records from the 1980 Houston-Galveston Area Council of Governments survey by Ellen Beasley were copied for incorporation into this survey. Information on Recorded Texas Historic Landmarks from the Texas Historical Commission was also used as a source of historical data. City maps were duplicated for research and fieldwork.

The overview proceeded with a windshield survey involving an inspection of every street within the city limits. The surveyor plotted each pre-1945 property's location on field maps, took one black and white photograph and, for the more significant sites, a color slide. For each historic structure identified an entry was made including: address, resource type, estimated date of construction, photographic reference and tentative preservation priority (see Preservation Priority Evaluation). This field data provided a working inventory to use for additional fieldwork and research on the more significant sites.

Documentation

The surveyor returned to the HIGH priority sites to take other views with black and white film and color slides. Additional photography included oblique views, elevations and occasionally, detail shots depending on the complexity and significance of the structure. At each HIGH priority site, the surveyor wrote a complete description, including the physical features, condition and the context of each property. This data was transferred to the final Texas Historical Commission Survey Form.

Concurrent with the follow-up field work, research began on the more significant sites' early ownership, construction dates and important events. The legal description and current owner of each HIGH and MEDIUM priority site was obtained from tax rolls. With the legal description, the succession of previous owners was reconstructed from tax abstracts and deed records. Mechanics liens were also referenced for some properties as a means of verifying

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construction dates. Sanborn Fire Insurance Co. maps also provided general construction dates and dates of remodelings. Lastly, and importantly, many citizens provided accounts of their historic buildings by returning questionnaires or being briefly interviewed by the surveyor.

Preservation Priority Evaluation

As the fieldwork and research phases were completed, each property was reviewed to assign a preservation priority rating. This evaluation should not be considered a static designation, but can and should be changed to reflect the evolving status of properties. Documented sites were evaluated on the basis of the following criteria:

Number of Properties:

112 HIGH PRIORITY - Contributes significantly to local history or broader historical patterns; is an outstanding, unique, or good representative example of architecture, engineering, or crafted design; is a good example of a common local building form, architectural style, or plan-type and retains a significant portion of its original character and contextual integrity; is a very significant modern or recent landmark; meets, in some cases, criteria for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places or is eligible for a Texas Historical Marker.

155 MEDIUM PRIORITY - Contributes to local history or broader historical patterns, but alterations or deterioration have diminished the resources's integrity; is a typical example of architecture, engineering or crafted design; is a typical example of a common local building form, architectural style, or type; is a modern or recent landmark.

758 LOW PRIORITY - Typifies a more recent common local building form, architectural style, or plan-type, with no identified historical associations; is a moderate to severely altered or deteriorated resource that exemplifies a distinctive building type or architectural style, or that has only minor historical significance.

1025 TOTAL NUMBER OF PROPERTIES IDENTIFIED

Once preservation priority ratings were finalized, based upon known historical and architectural data, all HIGH priority sites were considered for designation to the National Register. Each site was evaluated with respect to the historic context and respective property types to determine relative significance. Each property was scrutinized to ascertain 1) its overall historic integrity and how additions and/or alterations have detracted from or added to the structure's importance, 2) its historical associations and 3) architectural significance. Every effort was made to determine a cross section of both the types of properties nominated and the historical associations. As a consequence, opulent buildings with obvious significance were included, as well as other more modest properties with significance that may not be as recognizable but are nonetheless important and worthy of National Register designation.

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It is important to realize that the purpose of completing a Multiple-Property Nomination is provide the framework for nominating more properties to the National Register. Additional buildings should be nominated to the National Register, especially if more historical data is gathered and/or successful rehabilitation projects reveal architectural integrity.

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