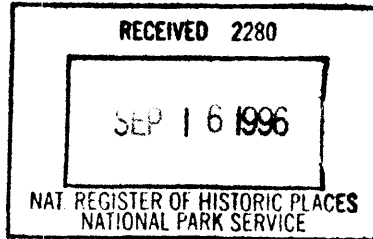


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service



National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Downtown Columbia Historic District

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location

street & number Main Street and Pearl Street NA  not for publication

city or town Columbia NA  vicinity

state Louisiana code LA county Caldwell code 021 zip code 71418

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)  
Jonathan Fricker 9/9/96  
Signature of certifying official/Title Deputy SHPO, Dept of Culture, Recreation and Tourism Date  
State of Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting official/Title Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register  
 See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

Edson H. Beall Signature of the Keeper Date of Action 10-18-96

Name of Property

County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

- XX private
XX public-local
public-State
public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

- building(s)
X district
site
structure
object

Number of Resources within Property (Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Table with 2 columns: Contributing, Noncontributing. Rows for buildings, sites, structures, objects, and Total.

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

NA

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

1 (Schepis Building)

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

- Commerce/Trade - Department Store
Commerce/Trade - Business
Social - Meeting Hall
Commerce/Trade - Financial Institution
Government - Courthouse

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

- Commerce/Trade - Specialty Store
Commerce/Trade - Restaurant
Social - Meeting Hall
Government - Courthouse
Recreation and Culture - Museum

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

- Other: No style
Italian Renaissance
Modernistic

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

- foundation concrete
walls brick, concrete, metal
roof other: tar and gravel
other

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Downtown Columbia Historic District, Caldwell Parish, LA

Section number 7 Page 1

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The nineteen buildings which comprise the Downtown Columbia Historic District represent the historic portion of the only commercial center within the rural parish of Caldwell. The district consists of one and two story mainly brick commercial buildings located within a roughly two block area east of U.S. Highway 165 and immediately south of the Ouachita River. Because of a high levee built for the purposes of flood control, the river cannot be viewed unless one is standing on the second floor of nearby buildings. Contributing elements range in date from c. 1909 through the 1930s. Boundaries were drawn to include all structures within the central business district which retain sufficient historic character while excluding other buildings which have lost their integrity or are less than fifty years old. The district has a low non-contributing rate of only sixteen percent.

All of the district's buildings stand flush to adjacent sidewalks, and approximately three-fourths are connected by party walls. As a result, most mass closely together along the streets, with only a few gaps between structures. With the exception of the highly ornamented Schepis Building and the parish courthouse, the majority of the buildings in the district are fairly simple, flat-roofed structures. Some, however, feature decorative brickwork, as detailed below. Canopies are also prominent features.

Contributing Elements

All 50+ year old buildings which retain sufficient integrity are considered contributing elements for the purposes of this submission. Although the parish courthouse does not relate to the district's commercial significance, it is being counted as a contributing element because it is individually eligible for the National Register. It is a rare example of the Modernistic style within Caldwell Parish (most likely the only example). In addition, it is one of the most highly ornamented buildings in the community.

Non-Contributing Elements

There are three non-contributing elements in the district. One is a seriously compromised historic building (#6). Another is a 1960s bank which has been recently remodeled so that its appearance will better harmonize with nearby historic structures (#10). The third is a brick building currently under construction as infill between two of the district's historic structures (#8).

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Downtown Columbia Historic District, Caldwell Parish, LA

Section number 7 Page 2

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### Breakdown of Buildings by Date

Downtown Columbia was all but destroyed by fires in 1876, 1900, and 1909. The only Sanborn Fire Insurance Map detailing the town is dated 1919. It shows a small CBD not much larger than the one being nominated. Whenever possible, buildings were dated by using architectural evidence in combination with this information. A breakdown by date follows.

1909 - 1919	9
1920 - 1930s	7
non-contributing	3

### INVENTORY OF BUILDINGS IN DOWNTOWN COLUMBIA HISTORIC DISTRICT

- 1) Contributing Element. This two-story 1920s brick building features a second floor balcony with a cast iron balustrade, a second level canopy, and ornamental brickwork on the facade and one side elevation. This brickwork consists of pilasters dividing the second floor level into bays, a coping atop a parapet, and, on the facade, a decorative band of bricks laid with the corners facing outward. The storefront appears to be original.
- 2) Contributing Element, Schepis Building, 107 Main Street, National Register. This c. 1916 building consists of a two-story main block flanked by small one story wings. Its facade is constructed of concrete blocks cast to resemble rusticated stone. An example of the Italian Renaissance style, it features a piano nobile elaborately articulated by Ionic pilasters, a molded doorway, double arched windows, quatrefoils, a parapet with a central tablet, and statues and urns along the roofline. The first floor storefront contains a conventional period shopfront.
- 3) Contributing Element. Built between 1909 and 1919, this fairly plain one story brick building features a heavy pier at each corner. Up until the last few months,

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United States Department of the Interior  
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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Downtown Columbia Historic District, Caldwell Parish, LA

Section number 7 Page 3

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the building had been very badly altered and would have been a non-contributing element (mansard-like projection and plywood shopfront). It has just been rehabilitated. Work included the removal of the mansard-like projection and the addition of a shopfront which is more in keeping with the building (three-part division, transoms and large display windows).

- 4) Contributing Element. Built between 1909 and 1919, this one story building also has a facade featuring concrete blocks cast to look like rusticated stone. The structure features heavy corner pilasters with simple capitals. Blocks suggesting modillions form a band immediately below a prominent entablature. The shopfront appears to be largely original.
- 5) Contributing Element, Pendola Building, 119 Main Street. Like building No. 1 described above, this two story brick structure has a cast iron balcony and a second floor canopy. Cast iron pilasters on the storefront are painted in contrasting colors in order to emphasize their decorative motifs. A double door with an arched transom enlivens the facade's second story. Immediately below the cornice with stone coping is a band of brickwork laid in an ornamental pattern. The building was constructed between 1909 and 1919.
- 6) Non-Contributing Element, corner of Pearl and Main streets. This one-story fairly plain historic corner commercial building was significantly modified within the last 10 or 15 years. The only original fabric is at the very top.
- 7) Contributing Element, East Pearl Street. This c. 1930 one-story brick structure houses three businesses. Its only decorative features are brick lozenges above each entrance. The shopfront appears to be largely historic except where the eastern-most shop is located. Here it has been partially filled in with speckled brick.
- 8) Non-Contributing Element, East Pearl Street. This two-story brick building is currently under construction. Its style will be compatible with the historic structures in the district.
- 9) Contributing Element. 100-104 East Pearl Street. This c. 1930 one-story brick building lacks ornamentation. Its storefront appears to be largely original.

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United States Department of the Interior  
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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Downtown Columbia Historic District, Caldwell Parish, LA

Section number 7 Page 4

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- 10) Non-Contributing Element, corner Main and East Pearl streets. This 1960s one-story bank building was recently sheathed in brick and generally remodeled to give it a more historic appearance.
- 11) Contributing Element. This plain one-story 1920s brick building was recently rehabilitated according to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards. The shopfront had been lost except for slender decorative cast-iron pilasters. A period looking shopfront was installed.
- 12) Contributing Element. This simple 1920s two story brick structure features molded brick panels above original one-over-one windows. Like No. 10, the shopfront had been lost except for slender decorative pilasters. A period looking shopfront was inserted following the Secretary of the Interior's Standards.
- 13) Contributing Element, Citizens' Progressive Bank. This two-story brick building was constructed between 1909 and 1919. It features brick bands outlining its transoms and its original second story windows with decorative brick panels. The transoms have been filled. The storefront appears to be largely historic.
- 14) Contributing Element. This c. 1930 plain commercial building has a covered transom and a reworked storefront, although it is not glaringly inappropriate. Portions of the original slender decorative cast iron pilasters survive.
- 15) Contributing Element, Caldwell Parish Courthouse. This 1937 Modernistic style courthouse was designed by J. W. Smith and Associates of Monroe and built by Nile E. Yearwood. It is one of the most highly ornamented buildings in the historic district. Composed of a three story central block flanked by two story wings, it features pilasters inscribed with multiple narrow vertical bands of brick, windows which appear to be framed by double brick bands, bas relief chevrons and human figures, and entrances enhanced by egg and dart molding and stylized dentil bands. A two-story unsympathetic modern addition is appended to one side.

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**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Downtown Columbia Historic District, Caldwell Parish, LA

Section number 7 Page 5

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- 16) Contributing Element, Masonic Lodge. 140 Main Street. This c. 1909 two story brick structure contains retail space on the first level and a lodge hall on the second floor. Its most distinctive decorative feature is a shaped parapet suggestive of the Spanish Mission style. Arched and Baroque quatrefoil shaped panels enhance the facade, which has received a stucco covering. The side of the building which faces a cross street features a molded brick cornice and a molded belt course between the floors. The building's shopfront with decorative cast iron pilasters is completely original. However, the present canopy supported on slender posts is of recent vintage.
- 17) Contributing Element. 128 Main Street. This two story brick structure, built between 1909 and 1919, is enhanced by elaborate brickwork in the form of a belt course beneath the second floor windows, a shaped parapet featuring brick molding, and two bands composed of bricks laid with their corners pointing outward. Although the second story windows are modern, the shopfront is largely original.
- 18) Contributing Element. This one-story plain brick building lacks ornament except for a simply molded parapet. It was built between 1909 and 1919.
- 19) Contributing Element. This simple metal clad building has a gable front roof, filled transoms, and what appears to be a largely historic shopfront. It also dates to the years between 1909 and 1919.

Assessment of Integrity

A few buildings in Columbia's central business district are being excluded from this National Register submission due to loss of integrity. For example, there are three considerably altered historic buildings immediately beyond #14. Here the boundary is a party wall. Also, it should be noted that the Columbia CBD has always been very small. The commercial buildings being nominated are the vast majority of those present during the historic period.

All in all, the district's contributing elements are well-preserved. The most serious alteration is that of the unsympathetic addition which has been appended to the 1930s courthouse. However, the Modernistic styling of the structure's large original portion is so distinctive and rare

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**United States Department of the Interior  
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**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Downtown Columbia Historic District, Caldwell Parish, LA

Section number 7 Page 6

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within the context of Columbia that it easily stands forth as the most visually impressive part of the building.

Of special note in downtown Columbia is the number of original or largely original shopfronts which survive. Period storefronts were usually the first element of a structure to be changed when owners of what were once considered outdated buildings attempted to update their businesses' facades. Where original shopfronts have been lost, most have been replaced with appropriate period looking storefronts, some according to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards. In summary, the buildings of the Downtown Columbia Historic District still easily convey the historic role of the CBD as a commercial center for the rural parish of Caldwell (see part 8).



**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

NA

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Commerce

**Period of Significance**

c. 1909 - 1946

**Significant Dates**

NA

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

NA

**Cultural Affiliation**

NA

**Architect/Builder**

NA

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):** NA

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

\_\_\_\_\_

Name of Property

County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property @ 3 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 15 587280 3552470
Zone Easting Northing

3 15 587320 3552270
Zone Easting Northing

2 15 587400 3552400

4 15 587190 3552350

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title National Register Staff

organization Louisiana Division of Historic Preservation date May 1996

street & number P. O. Box 44247 telephone (504) 342-8160

city or town Baton Rouge state Louisiana zip code 70804

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Multiple

street & number telephone

city or town state zip code

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 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 Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Downtown Columbia Historic District, Caldwell Parish, LA

Section number 8 Page 1

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The Downtown Columbia Historic District is locally significant in the area of commerce because of its important role as the trading center for the large agricultural parish of Caldwell. The period of significance spans from c. 1909, the date of the oldest commercial building, to 1946, the fifty year cutoff. Downtown Columbia continued to be a major provider of goods and services to the surrounding area until well past World War II, when the general availability of the automobile and paved highways made shopping trips to larger communities such as Monroe desirable.

Columbia quite naturally emerged as a commercial center for not only its citizens but those living in nearby hamlets and on farms. Caldwell Parish was and is a decidedly rural parish, with the parish seat of Columbia being the only town of any size. Columbia is also one of North Louisiana's oldest communities. Because of its location at a ford of the Ouachita River, the area began developing as a center of trade as early as 1823. The first residence was constructed in 1827. A post office opened in 1837. When Caldwell Parish was founded in 1838, Columbia was designated as the parish seat and a log courthouse and jail were built. The town was incorporated in 1847. Growth was steady but slow, and for many years the community remained very small. For example, after a devastating yellow fever outbreak in 1856, only three stores, five saloons, and six families were located there in the fall of 1857.

Although early Columbia had stage connections with Monroe and Alexandria via one of the earliest roads constructed in the parish, the town's role as a commercial center during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was based largely upon its status as a river port. In fact, the river trade was so important that a major steamboat company, owned by the Blanks family, operated with Columbia as its home base. Farmers from as far as forty miles away brought cotton, timber and other products to the town, either selling the crops there or shipping them via steamboat to outside markets. Before returning home, they purchased goods which the boats had carried northward from New Orleans. In addition to housing facilities for all this trade, the town also had a thriving stave-production business. The prosperity created by all this business caused the town to grow. A second governmental charter was issued in 1874, and by 1880, the first year for which figures are available, 219 persons claimed residency in the town. Although the river's importance was challenged by the arrival of the Missouri Pacific Railroad in the 1890s, river traffic continued to be important to the town's economy until the mid-1920s. After that, the construction of a bridge across the Ouachita River at Columbia in the mid-1930s ensured that the town would continue in its role as commercial leader of the parish for the foreseeable future. By

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**United States Department of the Interior  
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**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Downtown Columbia Historic District, Caldwell Parish, LA

Section number   8   Page   2  

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1944 the town's population was 1,000.

Despite its long history, Columbia's central business district consists only of early twentieth century buildings. This is because the CBD suffered major fires in 1876, 1900, and 1909. The 1919 Sanborn Fire Insurance map mentioned in part 7 clearly illustrates how the nominated buildings contributed to the community's role as a trading center. In that year, the following businesses, some of which were owned by Italian immigrants, could be found within these buildings: a wagon shop, an insurance office, a drug store with offices on its second floor, a general store sharing a building with a Masonic lodge, a bank which also had offices on its second floor, and six general merchandise stores. The latter provided everything from clothing, to furniture, to patent medicines, to buggy harnesses. With its river, railroad, and automobile connections to the outside world, Columbia was able to provide the goods and services needed by its residents and parish farmers throughout the historic period and beyond.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Downtown Columbia Historic District, Caldwell Parish, LA

Section number 9 Page 1

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**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Brasseaux, Carl A., Conrad, Glenn R., and Robinson, R. Warren. *The Courthouses of Louisiana*.  
Lafayette, LA: Center for Louisiana Studies, University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1977.

Historic photographs of several downtown Columbia buildings; copies in National Register file.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Map for Columbia, Louisiana, 1919.

Site visits by National Register staff.

Woods, H. Ted. *Caldwell Parish in Slices: Beginning a Brief History of Caldwell Parish, LA.,  
1838-1971, vol 1*. Baton Rouge, LA: Claitor's Publishing Division, 1972.

Woods, H. Ted. *Caldwell Parish in Slices: Continuing a Brief History of Caldwell Parish,  
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**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Downtown Columbia Historic District, Caldwell Parish, LA

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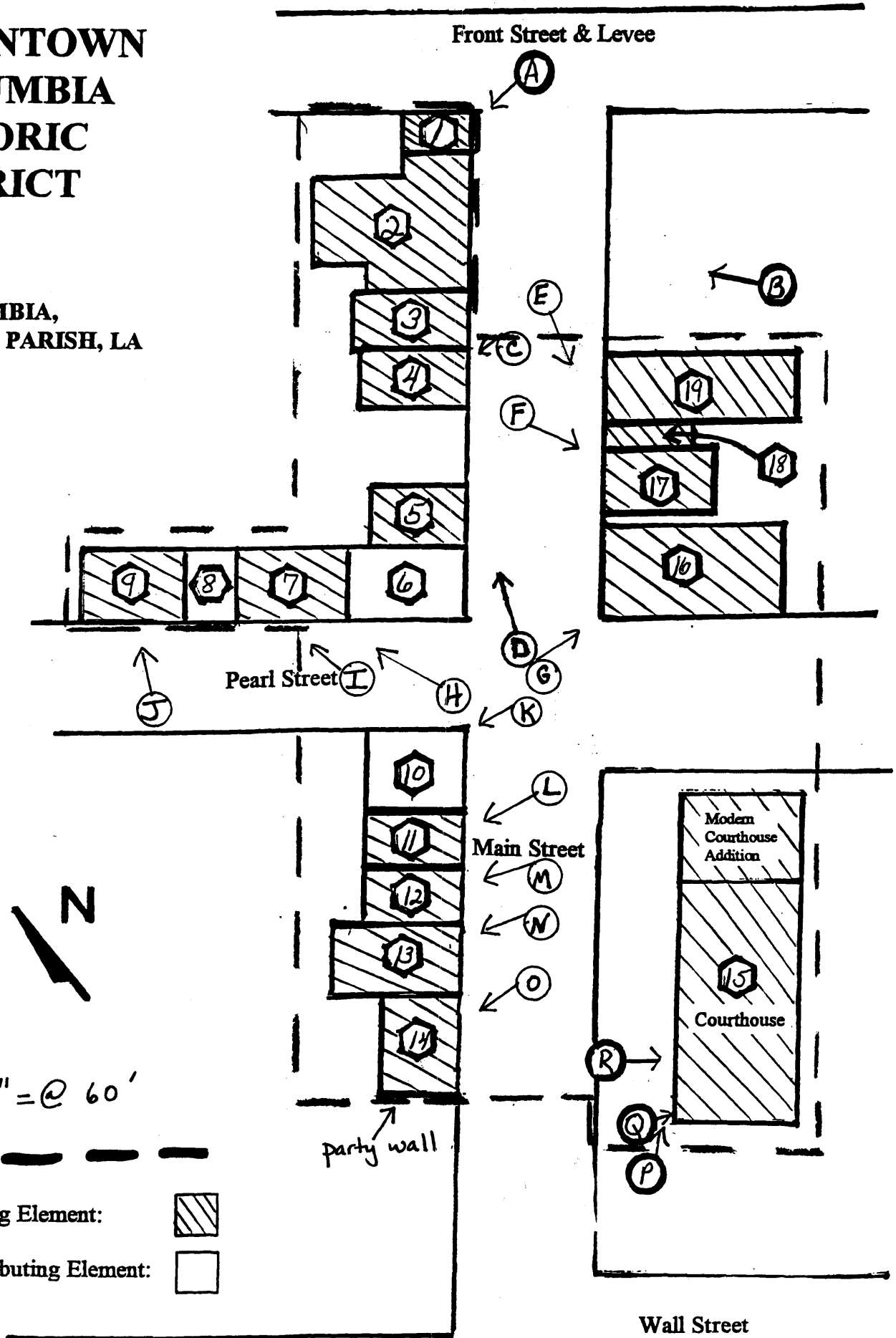
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Boundary Description: Please refer to enclosed sketch map.

Justification: Boundaries were chosen to correspond to the concentration of historic commercial buildings in the CBD which retain sufficient integrity. The parish courthouse was included because it is an integral part of the CBD. As noted elsewhere, although it does not relate specifically to the district's commercial significance, it is individually eligible for its local architectural significance. There are a few commercial buildings outside the boundaries which are fifty years old but have been seriously modified -- most notably the three immediately beyond #14. Here the boundary is a party wall.

# DOWNTOWN COLUMBIA HISTORIC DISTRICT

COLUMBIA,  
CALDWELL PARISH, LA



Scale: 1" = @ 60'

Boundary: 

Contributing Element: 

Non-Contributing Element: 

Wall Street