

Louisiana National Register Review Committee Meeting

March 21, 2013, 1:30 p.m.
Capitol Park Welcome Center
702 North River Road
Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Minutes

Chairperson Lynn Lewis called the March 21, 2013 meeting of the National Register Review Committee to order at 1:35 p.m. In addition to Mr. Lewis, members present included John Sykes, Dr. Rebecca Saunders, Lestar Martin, Mrs. Sue Turner, Mrs. Ann Williams, Mrs. Mary Louise Christovich, and Wayne Coco. Dr. John Hall, Gary Cooper, and Mrs. Glenna Kramer were absent.

Mr. Lewis asked for a motion to approve the agenda. Mr. Martin so moved and Mr. Coco seconded. This motion passed unanimously.

After this formality, National Register Coordinator Patricia Duncan welcomed the Committee and audience to the meeting. Next she introduced the members of the Review Committee and Division of Historic Preservation staff. Two of the candidates from the November 2012 meeting -- Plaza Tower and the Tallulah Coca-Cola Bottling Plant—have been listed. She expects to hear positive news about the third candidate soon. Finally, Duncan reported on the negative impact the Governor's proposed change to the state's tax structure could have on the Division's tax incentive programs. Chairman Lewis, who is the mayor of Delhi, also commented on the Governor's proposal and its potential negative impact on Louisiana's smaller communities.

The next item on the agenda was approval of the minutes. Mr. Coco moved that they be accepted as distributed, Mrs. Christovich seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

Under New Business, Ms. Duncan discussed several items with Committee members before presentation of the National Register candidates. These included:

- 1) Acknowledgement of the presence of a copy of the state's Open Meetings Law in the room.
- 2) Discussion of the new digital nomination delivery system. Although there were some comments about printing long nominations, the Committee members agreed to continue receiving nominations via e-mail.
- 3) Ethics training. State law requires that state employees and board members receive ethics training annually. This training will be provided for members at the July 2013 meeting. Mr. Lewis agreed to monitor the training. Ms. Duncan encouraged all who can to obtain the training online to do so and share a copy of their completion certificate for the files.
- 4) Committee Chairmanship. Mr. Lewis' year as chairman ends with this meeting. Dr. Saunders is next in line to serve as chairman. There was some discussion about

appointing Mr. Lewis as permanent chairman, but the idea died for lack of a motion. Dr. Saunders agreed to serve for the next year.

- 5) Reappointment of members. The terms of the following members have already expired or will expire in June of this year: Mr. Sykes, Mrs. Christovich, Mr. Coco, Dr. Hall, Mr. Martin, Dr. Saunders, and Mrs. Williams. Ms. Duncan asked any member who wishes to end his or her service on the Committee to speak with her after the meeting or telephone her the following day.

After these announcements, Tax Credit Program Manager Alison Saunders provided a brief presentation on the success of her programs using before and after photographs. The presentation was well received. The Committee then turned to the consideration of National Register candidates.

Ouachita Coca-Cola Bottling Works/Ouachita Candy Co., Inc., Ouachita Parish
Presented by Douglas C. Breckenridge

A vernacular example of the Commercial Style, the Ouachita Coca-Cola Bottling Company, Inc. / Ouachita Candy Company, Inc. is located in Monroe, Louisiana (Ouachita Parish). It was constructed in 1920/21 with the additions added in 1924 and 1926; all of which are two stories in height and closely resemble one another in appearance. In 1937, there were alterations to the interior spaces, which consisted primarily of office renovations for the management staff of each corporation. Little permanent alterations have occurred since that time. The Original Component, as well as all subsequent additions, was constructed of load-bearing exterior and in some cases, interior load-bearing masonry walls with columns in the open spaces. All building elements retain a high degree of architectural and historical integrity.

The candidate is eligible for the National Register at the state level of significance under Criterion A: Event, in the areas of commerce and industry. State level significance was chosen (in consultation with Louisiana's federal National Register reviewer) because the candidate was the headquarters of the famous Biedenharn business dynasty of Coca-Cola bottlers and related businesses (founded by Joseph Biedenharn), with plants in Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas, and Texas. The Biedenarns were one of the nation's first families of Coca-Cola bottling. The period of significance for the nomination ranges from 1920 through 1965. Should the property be listed, it will become a candidate for federal and state tax credits.

Mr. Martin complimented Mr. Breckenridge on his presentation and stated that the building is a tribute to the Biedenharn family. He especially emphasized their participation in the establishment of Delta Airlines in Monroe. Mr. Lewis asked about the building's possible future use. Breckenridge stated that this has not been decided, but the hope is that it will contain retail space on the first floor and housing on the second. The owner is opening a restaurant in the historic building next door. This suggests that an appropriate use will be found for the candidate. Mr. Martin moved that the nomination be recommended to the State Historic Preservation Officer, Dr. Saunders seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

Our Lady of Peace Catholic Church, St. James Parish
Presented by Dr. Paul Leslie

Our Lady of Peace Catholic Church is located in Vacherie, St. James Parish, Louisiana. Construction began in 1893 and finished in 1900 at a cost of nearly \$43,000. Built of red brick, the building follows a Gothic Revival design and its verticality, including a 70 foot bell tower, dominates the surrounding area. The building has experienced little alteration and has never experienced serious neglect. It has local and parish wide significance under Criterion C: Design in the area of Architecture because it is the only architectural landmark in the St. James Parish community of Vacherie as well as being an architectural landmark parish wide. Additionally, it is the most notable example of the Gothic Revival architectural style in St. James Parish. The period of significance for this case is 1893—1900, the years when construction of the church took place.

Our Lady of Peace is also locally significant under Criterion A: Event in the area of Ethnic Heritage/Black because it sponsored local efforts to achieve racial equality during the Jim Crow Era. These efforts included involving all parishioners, whether black or white, in the building's construction, giving blacks equal access to church facilities, and providing education for blacks. The periods of significance for this case are 1893—1908 and 1942—1956. The church was the site of some of these efforts (direct association) and remains the focus of others that were instigated by the church in the broader community. Since some of the locations of the latter no longer survive or can no longer be identified, the church is the surviving resource most directly associated with these events.

After the presentation, Mrs. Turner commented upon the church's mural. Then Mr. Lewis recognized those in attendance in support of the nomination. They included Father Henry Gautreau, the church historian; Pam Folsie, editor of the local newspaper; and Father Michael Miceli, the current pastor. Mrs. Williams asked about the appropriateness of submitting two significance cases for the nomination. Ms. Duncan responded that in recent years the National Park Service has welcomed multiple cases for listing a single property. Mr. Sykes asked about the church's tile floor and the possibility of its falling into the category of the Arts and Crafts style due to the inclusion of different tile styles in the design. Dr. Leslie and Father Gautreau stated their belief that the difference in tile design is the result of the fact that the tiles were obtained during three separate trips to Spain by Father Magin Palmer. Father Gautreau emphasized that some of the tiles are clearly marked on the back as having been manufactured in Barcelona. Mr. Coco asked staff to strengthen the nomination's introduction and conclusion by emphasizing the role all parishioners played in the building's construction. Ms. Duncan promised to do so. Dr. Saunders asked if there were any Native Americans in the church parish. Dr. Leslie said that there was something of a Native American presence due to the fact that Acadians and Native American intermarried in Canada before the Acadians came to Louisiana. Mr. Coco commented that the church's architecture reminds him of that found in the town of Cluny in France. After doing a quick calculation on the Internet, Mr. Lewis shared that, in today's funds, the \$43,000 building would have cost \$1 million to construct today. Mrs. Turner then moved that the nomination be recommended to the State Historic Preservation Officer and both Dr. Saunders and Mr. Sykes seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Alexandria Post War Suburbs Historic District, Rapides Parish
Presented by Donna Fricker

Fricker explained that Alexandria is leading the way in recognizing the Mid Century Modern architecture of Louisiana. In addition to this nomination, which is the state's first mid twentieth century historic district, a mid century bank in the city was recently listed. At this point, Alexandria Director of Planning Dolores Brewer read a proclamation from the mayor in support of the nomination. She then presented a framed copy of the document to Chairman Lewis. In addition to Ms. Brewer, Dave and Judy Curry, Robert Jones, Joe Betty Sterks, Megan Lord, and Paul Smith attended the meeting in support of the nomination.

The boundaries of the Alexandria Post-War Suburbs Historic District encompass 149 houses. The nominated district is located some two miles southwest of the old downtown in an area of mature vegetation. A small stream (Bayou Hynson) defines the eastern edge. Contributing elements include ranch houses and contemporary houses (far more of the former). They range in date from 1945 to 1963, except for two houses (dating from 1964 and 1968). The latter are being counted as contributing because they reflect the design ethos of the district and are almost fifty years old. The scale is one story, and almost all contributing houses are clad in brick veneer. With only a nine percent non-contributing rate and well-preserved contributing houses, the district is a strong statement from the post-war period.

The district is locally significant in the area of architecture (Criterion C) because it is an exemplary post-World War II neighborhood. It achieves this distinction in the following respects: (1) It has a strong concentration of ranch houses that display the quintessential characteristics of the type. (2) It exhibits design influences that have come to be deemed of significant artistic value – specifically the contemporary style (whether a ranch house with contemporary features or a contemporary house) and the veneration (and imitation) of Frank Lloyd Wright. (3) It is also notable for its high degree of integrity. The context for evaluation is the City of Alexandria. The period of significance spans from 1945 to 1963. The latter date corresponds to the present fifty year cutoff, but more importantly, it happens to coincide quite well with construction in the district. Very few houses were built post-1963. Two of these (dating from 1964 and 1968) are being counted as contributing because they reflect the design ethos of the district and are almost fifty years old.

After the presentation, Alexandria preservationist Paul Smith asked staff member Alison Saunders to discuss the staff's first visit to the potential historic district. Saunders explained that several staff members were given a tour, became very excited over the rare and wonderful unaltered examples, and encouraged the neighborhood to move forward with a nomination. Mr. Coco commented that he is very familiar with the neighborhood and that he worked for local architect Frank Barksdale early in his career. It is his belief that Alexandria has always been in the forefront of contemporary architecture. He then expressed his concern that, with the possibility of many more ranch houses coming before the Committee in the future, the Committee will need education on how to distinguish the best examples from among the group. Duncan explained that all states are now dealing with this problem. Fricker informed the group that she and her husband have prepared a historic context document on the topic, and that document is available on the Division's web site. Integrity, and the presence or absence of the style's quintessential characteristics, are important factors in evaluating ranches according to Fricker. Historic Preservation Director Nicole-Hobson Morris (who arrived at the meeting after

introductions were made) spoke concerning the fact that the Section 106 Environmental Review program is now dealing with ranch houses. Mr. Coco then moved that the nomination be recommended to the State Historic Preservation Officer and Mrs. Williams seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

There being no further business, Mr. Lewis asked for a motion to adjourn. This motion was made by Mr. Coco, and the meeting adjourned at 3:10 p.m.