

Louisiana National Register Review Committee Meeting

November 29, 2012, 1:30 p.m.
Capitol Park Welcome Center
702 North River Road
Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Minutes

Chairperson Lynn Lewis called the November 29, 2012 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, Glenna Kramer, Lestar Martin, Mrs. Sue Turner, Mrs. Ann Williams, Dr. John Hall, and Mary Louise Christovich. Wayne Coco and Gary Cooper were absent.

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

After this formality, National Register Coordinator Patricia Duncan welcomed the Committee and audience to the meeting. Duncan informed the audience that a copy of the state's open meetings law was present in the room and then explained a little about the National Register process. Next she shared with the Committee a copy of the new owner objection instructions prepared as a result of confusion over the issue at a previous Review Committee meeting. She also shared a copy of the new National Register form so members may become accustomed to it. Finally, Duncan introduced each member of the Committee to the audience.

Turning to approval of the minutes, Mrs. Kramer moved that they be approved as circulated. The vote was unanimous after Dr. Hall's second. The Committee then turned to the review of the four nominations on the agenda.

Tallulah Coca-Cola Bottling Plant, Madison Parish Presented by Jonathan Fricker

The Tallulah Coca-Cola Bottling Plant is a brick industrial building built c.1930 and almost doubled in size c.1940. It is mainly single story, with a partial second story set at the building's front. Designed in a generally classical style, the building is set along one side of a triangular block near the east bank of Brushy Bayou and on the edge of downtown. Almost all of the bottling equipment is gone. However, the exterior retains a high degree of architectural and historical integrity. The building is significant under Criterion A: Event, in the area of Industry because it is a graphic reminder of a development which revolutionized Coca-Cola, among the most recognized American institutions in the world. Local significance has been chosen because the building, along with two other extant plants, represents the huge Biedenharn dynasty of Coca-Cola bottlers, with plants in Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas, and Texas.

The building is owned by the City of Tallulah, which was represented at the meeting by Mayor Eddie Beckwith, Jr., Marilyn Bedgood, and Geneva Williams. Mayor Beckwith spoke in favor of the nomination, thanking Mr. Fricker, Ms. Bedgood and Ms. Williams for their efforts. The city hopes to use the building as a Coca-Cola museum. Mr. Lewis wished to make the

motion to recommend the nomination but, as chairman, could not do so. Therefore, Mr. Martin moved and Mrs. Turner seconded that the candidate be recommended to the State Historic Preservation Officer. The motion passed unanimously.

Guaranty Bank, Park Avenue Branch, Rapides Parish
Presented by Jonathan Fricker

The Guaranty Bank Building, Park Avenue Branch (1953) is a modest-size free-standing commercial building. Its striking asymmetrical modern design reflects the strong and pervasive influence of Frank Lloyd Wright in the mid-twentieth century. The bank has received various alterations and has been enlarged. However, it retains its essential and noteworthy Wrightian elements. Additionally, its state of integrity will only improve once a pending tax credit project is completed because the new owner intends to restore the building to its original appearance. The bank is of local significance in the area of architecture (Criterion C) as the most noteworthy and distinguished work of mid-twentieth century modern commercial architecture in the City of Alexandria. Its Wrightian elements mark it as a work of consequence and notable artistic worth. (Wrightian is a recognized subcategory of mid-twentieth century modern architecture.) This project will take advantage of the applicable tax credit programs.

Fricker explained that this building was discovered indirectly as a result of the mid-century historic contexts his firm produced for the Division of Historic Preservation and credited Paul Smith and the Central Louisiana Historical Association with its discovery. The building is currently being adapted to function as a pharmacy. The work is expected to be completed by sometime in the spring. Owner Joe Williams spoke in favor of the nomination and explained how his appreciation of historic preservation has evolved as a result of this project. Mr. Martin commented that in certain Louisiana cities, specific architects introduced the Modern Movement to the landscape. These included Curtis and Davis in New Orleans and the Wiener Brothers in Shreveport. (However, the specific architect of the candidate is unknown.) Modern style buildings eventually became so common that they are now often overlooked. Martin felt this to be an excellent nomination. Mrs. Christovich expressed her wish to see more 1950s Modern Movement works recognized and preserved. Mr. Lewis commented that these buildings are destroyed because they now seem so commonplace. After this discussion, Mrs. Christovich moved that the nomination be recommended to the SHPO and Dr. Saunders seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Pecan Grove Plantation House, St. Bernard Parish
Presented by Heather Ruoss

Pecan Grove Plantation House is a 1½ story, late 18th century or early 19th century French Creole house located on the east bank of the Mississippi River on a large suburban tract in Meraux in upper St. Bernard Parish. Dates of c. 1800 and c. 1930 (added as a result of the Committee's recommendation) are being used for the purposes of this nomination. This early *brique-entre-poteaux* (brick-between-post) dwelling experienced an exterior alteration in the French Colonial style in the 1930s, but this change is now historic. Thus, the building's integrity and National Register eligibility remain intact. Pecan Grove is locally significant in the area of architecture, Criterion C, as a rare and important remnant of St. Bernard Parish's vernacular French Creole architectural heritage. Its periods of significance are c. 1800 and c. 1930 (also

added at the Committee's suggestion), the estimated date of original construction and the estimated date of the exterior French Colonial remodeling.

Owners Robert and Gayle Buckley spoke in favor of the nomination. Mrs. Buckley has been working toward restoring and listing the house for twenty years. St. Bernard Parish has lost all but a handful of its early buildings. Mr. Martin complimented the nomination and asked a question concerning the way in which the house was rolled back from its original location. Mr. Buckley confirmed that, according to the home's previous owners, the house was moved by the power of only one animal. Local government supports the attempt to list the building on the Register.

Mrs. Kramer expressed concern over the 1930s alterations, which were played down in the nomination as submitted to the Committee. She felt that the exterior is now more in the French Colonial style. Mrs. Buckley said they discussed the Creole vs. French Colonial stylistic issue with experts and eventually decided to go with the Creole designation. Mr. Lewis asked if the current designation might cause the nomination to fail. National Register Coordinator Duncan explained the review process in Washington. Mr. Sykes pointed out that the nomination lists eight specific Creole features present in the home. After much discussion, Mrs. Kramer moved that the staff and consultant be directed to revise the nomination to recognize the French Colonial elements of the dwelling as well as its Creole elements. Dr. Saunders seconded. The motion passed with eight in favor and one member (John Sykes) opposed. Mrs. Turner then asked about the home's roof shape and steel covering. Consultant Ruoss explained the changes to the roof that occurred c.1930. Duncan reminded the members that a few years ago they approved a French Creole house in West Baton Rouge Parish that had a similar roof. At the end of the discussion, Mrs. Christovich moved and Mrs. Williams seconded that the nomination be recommended to the SHPO after its amendment by the consultant. This motion passed unanimously.

Plaza Tower, Orleans Parish

Presented by John Williams and Mary Lane Carleton

Constructed between 1964 and 1969, the Plaza Tower is a 45 story skyscraper standing on the western edge of the New Orleans Central Business District. The exterior is clad in white Cherokee marble and Duranodic aluminum with Solar Bronze windows set in aluminum frames also with a Duranodic finish. The style of the visually complex building is a mixture of elements from every significant architectural movement of the twentieth century, including elements of constructivism, futurism, expressionism, modernism and the work of Frank Lloyd Wright, according to Architectural Historian Karen Kingsley. Thus, the term mixed is being used as the style designation for the purposes of this nomination. Although the interior has been gutted, the building has undergone few exterior changes, and retains a high degree of exterior integrity. Although not yet fifty years of age, the Plaza Tower qualifies for the National Register under Criteria Consideration G: Exceptional Significance, and is locally significant in the area of engineering under Criterion C: Design, because its construction represented an important engineering breakthrough. It was the first high rise building in New Orleans to utilize a new method of engineering relating to driven pile foundations (the Brunspile Connector) that allowed a greater height and pile load than ever attempted before in the city's alluvial soils. In its engineering, the Plaza Tower set the standard by which New Orleans' high-rise skyline would continue forward. Other notable skyscrapers, including the city and state's current tallest

building, One Shell Square, were able to be built based upon precedents set in the design and completion of Plaza Tower. The period of significance for this eligibility argument is 1964-1969. This will hopefully be a state and federal tax credit project.

Mrs. Williams asked presenter John Williams the plans for the building's use. John Williams explained that plans are for mixed use, including office or retail on the lower floors. He also explained that the space is flexible enough for either office or residential use. However, he would not be more specific concerning usage plans because this will be impacted by whether or not the building must meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation due to tax credit program requirements. Mrs. Williams then asked if Louisiana has nominated a building less than 50 years of age before. Coordinator Duncan explained that a building has not been so nominated for Criterion C. However, the state has successfully nominated buildings where historic events occurred in the recent past (Criterion A) using Criteria Consideration G. Duncan then emphasized that the nomination is based on the Brunspile Connector engineering breakthrough rather than the building's architectural design. Ms. Carleton emphasized that waiting until the building is 50 years old will not make it any more important; the importance already exists. Mr. Lewis asked if the connector has been used anywhere else. Carleton explained that it is not needed anywhere else; it is the city's soil conditions that necessitated its invention. Mrs. Kramer expressed the opinion that Louisiana should try to nominate this building because its rehabilitation could inspire further development in its immediate area. It was pointed out that New York has successfully nominated buildings that are only forty years old. Mrs. Williams then moved that the nomination be recommended to the State Historic Preservation Officer and Mrs. Christovich seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

After the nominations were considered, Coordinator Duncan suggested to the members that nominations and minutes be delivered to them electronically in the future. Other states are doing this quite successfully. All members present agreed to try this new system, which Duncan will create.

Under announcements, Duncan informed the members that Dr. Philip Cook has informed her of his intention to resign from the Committee for health reasons. Mr. Lewis then apologized to the members for forgetting to bring the certificates showing they completed the state's mandated ethics training at the August meeting. He also reminded them that they will have to take the training again next year.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:15 p.m.