

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Scottish Rite Cathedral (1915) is a brick and terra cotta Beaux Arts style building located on the edge of downtown Shreveport. Although it appears to have only two stories from the front, there is also a basement and third story mezzanine. Over the years the building has received only a couple of minor alterations.

The Cathedral's grand entranceway leads to a large axial hypostyle lobby. The front to rear axis leads to an enormous rear dining room measuring 60 by 88 feet. The secondary side axis leads to the main staircase on one side and to the parlor and library on the other. The second story is given over almost entirely to the "meeting room," which is actually an auditorium with various ancillary spaces. The auditorium is very large, with a mezzanine, a fly gallery, and a 60 foot proscenium.

Although the Scottish Rite Cathedral is a free-standing monumental structure; not all of its elevations are treated architecturally. The rear elevation is not articulated at all, and one of the side elevations is only partially articulated.

Of course, the front elevation is where the cathedral's flamboyant Beaux Arts expression is most evident. The five bay facade is approached via a monumental flight of steps with a Roman-looking candelabrum lamp at each end. The massive loggia features coupled, colossal, composite columns with an oeil-de-boeuf entablature. This is surmounted by an oversized parapet with figure sculpture at each end. The figures are of double headed eagles, the symbol of the order. The facade culminates in a crowning pediment-shaped mass with a Greek key entablature and a central heraldic symbol.

The principal side elevation features elaborate quoining, colossal composite pilasters, and Roman lunettes, among other things. Here, as on the entrance facade, one can see the use of numerous receding wall planes in the composition.

The principal interiors are ornamented with free-standing columns, colored marble floors, and openwork ceilings. The ceilings are crisscrossed with entablatures which divide the space into bays. Each bay is ornamented either with a secondary cornice, or an enlarged coffer. The auditorium proscenium is very elaborate with numerous moldings in various ornamental patterns and a crowning double headed eagle in deep relief.

Since construction the Cathedral has been fitted with an elevator, but this has not disturbed any of the principal spaces. The only other change has been the installation of new mechanical equipment. We feel that these alterations should be regarded as minor because they have certainly not affected the building's architectural integrity.

Specific dates 1915
Builder/Architect Architect: Edward F. Neild

Statement of Significance line one paragraph)
Criterion C

The Scottish Rite Cathedral is locally significant in the area of architecture as a landmark in downtown Shreveport as well as the work of a prominent practitioner.

Until fairly recently Shreveport was Louisiana's second largest city. Its central business district is still regarded as second only to New Orleans in terms of architectural distinction. Downtown Shreveport was largely rebuilt in the early twentieth century due largely to a local oil boom. As a result, most of the city's older structures tend to date from this period. There are somewhere about 500 buildings in the greater downtown area, most of which appear to be at least 50 years old. The vast majority of these are party wall commercial buildings or warehouses. But there are also eighteen or so grander structures -- free-standing monumental buildings which constitute the architectural gems of the Central Business District. The Scottish Rite Cathedral enjoys a special place among this group because of its flamboyant Beaux Arts character. In fact, it is Shreveport's only fully developed example of the Beaux Arts style. In addition, few of downtown Shreveport's other monumental buildings can rival the Scottish Rite Cathedral's emphatic, intensive articulation. Most other

examples tend to be more severe. Some are skyscrapers with historically derived details applied here and there. Others are chaste examples of the 1920's neo-classical style.

Finally, the Cathedral is important as the work of Edward F. Neild, the leading architect of his generation in North Louisiana. Neild was born in Shreveport in 1884. He rose to prominence in the 1920's, '30's, and '40's designing many of Shreveport's most important buildings. These include the nine-story Henry C. Beck Building, the Municipal Building, the Caddo Parish Courthouse, the massive exhibit center at the Shreveport fairgrounds, the Veterans Administration Hospital in Shreveport, and many of the Caddo Parish school buildings.

Neild's rise to national prominence began in 1928 when Judge Harry Truman visited Neild's recently completed Caddo Parish Courthouse. Truman was impressed and engaged Neild to design the Jackson County Courthouse in Missouri. This formed a lasting friendship between Truman and Neild which led to other commissions. Neild died in 1955 while working with a Kansas City colleague on the design for the Truman Memorial Library in that city. He also designed courthouses in Phoenix, Arizona; Ruston, Louisiana; and Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

Major Bibliographical References

History of Scottish Rite Cathedral submitted by applicant, based upon research in organization's records.

Thomson, Bailey, editor. Historic Shreveport. Published by Shreveport Journal, 1980.