

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

Bloom's Arcade (1930) is a Modernistic brick and concrete shopping arcade located in downtown Tallulah. Despite a few alterations, the arcade clearly retains its original character as a unique Louisiana example of what is essentially a European phenomenon.

A forerunner of the shopping mall, Bloom's Arcade is a commercial block with an interior pedestrian corridor running through the center. Off each side are party wall shops, each occupying one or more bays. In effect this amounts to a commercial historic district turned inside out. Bloom's Arcade is primitive compared with certain European examples which feature multi-story complex shopping spaces. By contrast, Bloom's has a single story and contains a single straight interior corridor. When it opened it contained a variety of stores, a post office, and a theatre fitted with a "Nu-Air" cooling system.

The arcade has twelve interior bays marked by brick pilasters with teas relief block capitals. These are surmounted by a five-tier box cornice which amounts to a corbel vault. The arcade space culminates in a continuous skylight of translucent glass. The storefront bays were originally of the type found on exterior commercial shopfronts of the period -- i.e., transoms, kickplates, and display windows. In most cases, the glass and door and window features have been replaced, though the configuration is the same. This is also true of the shopfronts which face onto the exterior of the arcade commercial block.

Overall, the exterior of the block has a low-key character. The only exception to this are the entrances at each end of the pedestrian corridor. Each of these matching openings is framed by a build up of superimposed piers culminating in a striking central parapet block consisting of alternating pilasters and strips and copious Meso-American teas relief. This flat cast-concrete teas relief accents other parts of the building as well, including corners, exterior brick piers, and interior pilaster capitals. There is also a massive teas relief beam accenting each end of the pedestrian corridor. Other noteworthy features include the checkerboard terrazzo floors, the pressed metal paneled ceilings in many of the shops, and the original fixed awning which shades the front and rear of the block.

Assessment of Integrity:

Of course, some of the pressed metal ceilings have been lost and some of the terrazzo has been covered with linoleum. In addition, as previously mentioned, the interior and exterior shopfronts have been altered. However, these changes should be considered minor when one considers how much of the original character and fabric remains. Salient features such as the arcade space, its ornamentation and its entrances remain completely intact.

Significant dates	1930
Architect/Builder	Architect: W. M. Overstreet, Jackson, MS Builder: Tom Wilmoth, Camden, Ark.

Criterion C

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

Bloom's Arcade is of state significance in the area of architecture as a unique commercial archetype within the context of Louisiana.

The shopping arcade as we know it is a European phenomenon pretty much confined to the nineteenth century. It began as an exclusive assemblage of small specialty shops catering to the tastes of rich and fashionable urbanites. These small shops were arranged around a top-lit passageway which assured that ladies and gentlemen could shop, socialize, see, and be seen in an environment secure from the noise, filth, and inclement weather of the public street. The very first arcade was begun in Paris in 1781, and the idea quickly became fashionable. The Industrial Revolution contributed to the development of arcades by providing the technology to build large glass vaulted spaces and by providing an affluent middle class to shop in them. As the nineteenth century progressed, the shopping arcade tended to grow in size and lose its wholly upper-class associations. Some became the centerpiece of commercial development in expanding industrial

cities; some were merely an adjunct to downtown. Most were given a consistent architectural treatment which was often more fanciful than one could find on the exterior of a commercial building.

Through European influence, the shopping arcade spread throughout much of the rest of the world. It is not known how many were ever built in the United States, but many of the major Eastern and Midwestern cities had them at one time. Most are thought to have vanished, but at least a handful remain, notably the Greek Revival Weybosset Arcade in Providence, Rhode Island and the Italianate Cleveland Arcade.

As far as the State Historic Preservation Office is aware, Bloom's Arcade is the only example of a European-type shopping arcade in Louisiana. It therefore represents a unique chapter in the state's commercial architectural history.

#### Major Bibliographical References

The Madison Journal, various issues in 1930 and 1931.

MackKeith, Margaret. The History and Conservation of Shopping Arcades. London and New York: Mansell Publishing Limited, 1986.