

Louisiana National Register Review Committee Meeting

December 3, 2015, 1:30pm
Capitol Park Welcome Center
702 N. River Rd
Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Minutes

Chairman J. Lynn Lewis called the December 3, 2015 regular meeting of the National Register Review Committee to order at 1:32 p.m. In addition to Mr. Lewis, members present included Kelly Rich, Turry Flucker, Dr. Rebecca Saunders, Martha Saloman, John Sykes, Sue Turner, Dr. Robert Carriker, Tarah Arcuri, and Peggy Lowe. Dr. Matthew Savage was unable to attend.

Mr. Lewis asked for a motion to approve the agenda. Dr. Saunders so moved, with Turry Flucker seconding. This motion passed unanimously.

National Register Coordinator, Jessica Richardson, welcomed the audience and Committee members as well as introduced all Review Committee members present to the audience.

Dr. Saunders asked for a motion to approve the minutes of August's meeting. Lynn Lewis so moved, with Dr. Carriker seconding. This motion passed unanimously.

Under New Business, the Committee considered ten new National Register nominations.

Louisiana Superdome, Orleans Parish, LA

Presented by Amanda Keith, nomination preparer

Prior to the presentation beginning, Jessica Richardson announced that objection letters from the owners, the Louisiana Stadium and Exposition District (which is a state agency/political subdivision of members appointed by the governor), was passed among the Review Committee members to review. The LSED is objecting to the nomination; however, as pointed out in National Register Federal Regulations, only private property owners' objections are officially counted.

The Louisiana Superdome (here in referred to as the Superdome) is located in the downtown Central Business District of New Orleans and is an icon of the city's skyline. The structure sits on 52 acres of land and the building itself covers 13 acres. It is a steel frame circular structure with a domed roof that is 273 ft. in height and 680 ft. in diameter - the largest single span dome in the United States. The foundation is poured concrete, the framing steel, and the roof is made of steel, polyurethane, and Hypalon waterproof coating. The sides are clad in champagne colored anodized aluminum siding, made specifically for the Superdome. The Superdome was designed by renowned modernist New Orleans architects Curtis and Davis in 1967, and resembles a giant spaceship. Completed in 1975, the Superdome has undergone several renovations, but has maintained its use as a stadium and entertainment complex as well as its overall historic integrity.

The Superdome is the largest single span dome in the nation. Additionally it is an example of Modernist architecture by a nationally recognized firm, Curtis and Davis. For these reasons, the Superdome should be considered eligible under Criteria C in embodying the distinctive characteristics of a period, work of a master, and method of construction. It is significant both architecturally and in engineering because of the design of the single span dome. The Superdome played a significant role in Social History as a shelter of last resort for the people of New Orleans during hurricane Katrina in 2005. In its forty years it has also served as an exceptional multi-purpose entertainment venue, hosting the most Super Bowls of any stadium as well as various sports and entertainment events ranging from basketball to pro-wrestling to a record breaking Rolling Stones concert, and the Republican National Convention. Designed in 1967 and completed in 1975, the Superdome has achieved exceptional significance (Criterion Consideration G) in its 40 years through engineering, architecture, social history, and remains eligible for listing on the National Register.

Peggy Lowe asked how the nomination for the Superdome came to be. Ms. Keith responded that it was part of a school project and she chose to finish it through the process.

John Sykes moved that the nomination be recommended to the State Historic Preservation Officer. Martha Saloman seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Oak Grove Community House, West Carroll Parish, LA

Presented by Noel Haynes, nomination preparer

The Oak Grove Community House is located in Oak Grove, West Carroll Parish, Louisiana. It is a one-story, horizontal log construction meeting hall with a porch wrapping three sides of the building and was designed in a variation of the Rustic style that was popularly used on buildings constructed during the 1930's, primarily those associated with the Works Progress Administration and Public Works Administration. The Community House is located within the Oak Grove City Park, which was part of the overall Civil Works Administration project that funded the construction of the park and the Community House. The building has a cross gable roof of asphalt shingles, a large brick chimney on the eastern side, a T-shaped floor plan, original six-over-six wood windows, shingles applied in the gables as well as just below the porch, exposed rafter rails, and original five-panel wooden doors. The interior features an exposed wooden ceiling structure, wood floors, log and horizontal plank walls (all stained), and the original brick fireplace on the eastern wall. Very few changes have been made since the building was constructed in 1933-34 and for these reasons, the Oak Grove Community House remains eligible for listing on the National Register.

Built in 1934, the Oak Grove Community House is significant at the local level under Criterion A: Social History and Criterion C: Architecture. The Community House is an excellent example of the Rustic Style, used in many Works Progress Administration and Public Works Administration projects throughout the Great Depression. Its exposed log construction, exposed rafters, and brick fireplace are all important features found in Rustic style buildings of the 1930s. It is also significant under Criterion A for its association with the documented work relief activities of the Civil Works Administration within West Carroll Parish. The period of significance under Criteria A and C is 1933-34.

Mayor Adam Holland was in attendance and spoke in support of the nomination. There were no questions from the committee. Peggy Lowe then moved that the property be recommended to the State Historic Preservation Officer and Kelly Rich seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Hotel Lesage, Grant Parish

Presented by Robert Wolfe, nomination preparer

Hotel Lesage was built by Joseph Victor Lesage in 1902 and is located at 101 Main Street in Colfax, Louisiana. The building is a two story masonry commercial style building at the end of Main Street facing the street and the Red River to the west. It was used as a hotel, restaurant, and also housed a separate store during the period of significance catering to both locals and travelers. It has retained many original characteristics including bead board on the walls and ceilings, original main staircase, several original fireplaces and mantels, and the majority of the original floor plan, particularly on the second floor where the hotel rooms were. The first floor has received some alterations recently as the building was converted to a single family residence, but there is plenty of integrity intact, on the decorative brick and stone exterior and the interior, that anyone from the historic period would recognize the Hotel Lesage. Thus, it remains eligible for listing on the National Register.

Hotel Lesage is significant at the local level under Criterion A: Commerce and Social History because of its role as a center of social and business activity in Colfax. It served as the city's principal and only hotel from its 1902 construction date until the 50 year cutoff in 1965.

The review committee asked what the proposed use is for the building and what criterion it is being nominated under. Mr. Wolfe responded that it is being used as a personal residence and Jessica Richardson added that it is being nominated under Criterion A.

John Sykes moved that the property be recommended and Turry Flucker seconded that the property be recommended to the SHPO. The motion passed unanimously.

JE Byram House, Rapides Parish, LA

Presented by Dr. Milton Rhea, nomination preparer

The JE Byram House was constructed in 1938 on the highest lot in Alexandria on the most western edge of the community above and across from Hinson Bayou. The original owner, J. E. Byram, was a wealthy sawmill owner able to select the finest hardwoods and hardest bricks (center kiln) and to use the premier architect of the day, Charles Roberts, to meticulously study and represent the plantation style of Colonial Georgian and Federal architecture found along the James River in Virginia. Truly, the two story brick Byram house represents an icon of Colonial Revival. The house retains many original features on the interior and exterior including the interior layout, eight over eight double hung wood windows, entry doors, front porch details, and built ins. Because of this high degree of integrity, it is eligible for listing on the National Register.

The JE Byram House is locally significant under Criterion C: Architecture as it embodies the characteristics of the Colonial Revival style within Alexandria and Rapides Parish. Originally constructed in 1938, the house has remained intact, both on the interior and exterior, and retains many of its original Colonial Revival details. One of the architects, Charles Roberts, traveled to the James River area in Virginia to get plans and ideas for this house, which is clearly evident in the meticulous detail and true to form Colonial Revival features. The building has received only minor alterations since it was built and it stands today as a prime example of the Colonial Revival style in Alexandria. The period of significance is 1938, the year the house was constructed.

The review committee had a couple questions concerning the floor plan and the use of the rear section of the first floor, which Dr. Rhea answered, as well as a question about the roof material.

John Sykes then moved that the property be recommended to the SHPO and Sue Turner seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Rapides Parish Library, Rapides Parish

Presented by Paul Smith, nomination preparer

The Rapides Parish Library is a single story rectangular building located in downtown Alexandria that has a central massing that rises 4' above the outward-projecting extensions on all four sides. The main entrance, located on the northwest façade, is enclosed in a vestibule while the rest of the facade is supposed by slender, geometrically stylized columns of white cast onyx aggregate with flared capitals. All other sides feature an overhanging roof covering a sidewalk. The upper roof is covered with two rows of raised elongated geometric vaults, the cross section of which are bell shaped. Smaller vaults are aligned along the lower roofs of the northeast and southwest porch extensions from the front to a point about ½ the depth of the building. The outer walls of the building are composed of pre-cast white concrete panels featuring nearly full height slender arches with radial arch tops. These openings are infilled with either glazing or cast aggregate of a slightly darker hue than that of the arch tracings and the supporting columns. At the rear of the building is a projecting large flat roofed open air structure supported by columns identical to those of the main structure. The interior of the library is primarily a single large space divided into functional areas by furnishings. On the interior, the function of the roof vaults is revealed to be very effective as light wells and the clear story glazing and the glazed arches admit an abundance of natural light while the variation in ceiling heights and the form of the vaults add interest to the space. The columns along the perimeter of the building transect the outer wall and are seen from the same aspect whether viewed from outside the building or inside. Likewise, the precast concrete panels that make up the exterior wall are finished identically on the exterior and interior surfaces. The effect of the design is to blur the boundary between inside and outside. The only changes made to the building include minor cosmetic changes and two small, easily removable additions to the rear of the building; thus, the Rapides Parish Library retains a high degree of integrity and remains eligible for listing on the National Register.

The Rapides Parish Library is significant at the local level under Criterion C: Architecture because it embodies the distinctive characteristics of the New Formalism style. It reads as a virtual textbook example of the style and includes such elements as a classical form (the barrel vault) in a new inverted manner and is constructed

using cast in place concrete. Additional features such as the pre-cast concrete columns and aggregate wall panels, mimicking marble and stone help to create elongated classical colonnades giving the building a form and monumental feel. The thoughtful design of the interior space uniquely facilitates the function of the structure. Nearly every defining element and technique of the New Formalist style is to be found in the Rapides Parish Library. If the objective of the style was to create public buildings with a “temple-like” feel, that objective was most certainly achieved by architect Eugene Glankler in his design of the Rapides Parish Library. The period of significance for the library is 1964, the year of its construction.

The review committee had no questions. Peggy Lowe then moved that the property be recommended to the SHPO and Tarah Arcuri seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

10 Minute Break

Adolph Meyer School, Orleans Parish

Presented by Annie Cambria (Recovery School District, Recovery School District representative)

The Adolph Meyer School is a neighborhood elementary school originally constructed in 1917 and later expanded in 1924. Both the original building and addition were designed by the New Orleans Parish School Board’s architect, E. A. Christy. The school is two-stories and built in a rectangular ‘O’-shaped configuration with a courtyard at the center. There are three buildings on the site, all contributing: the school building, adjoining annex, and the caretaker’s cottage (also referred to as custodial cottages) at 2020 Diana Street at the southeast corner of the site.

Adolph Meyer School is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its association with the developments in education during the early-twentieth century and the growth of the Orleans Parish School District and the City of New Orleans. The school is an example of the ideals in public education fostered during the Progressive Era. The school’s design addressed issues of ventilation, natural light, and hygiene while balancing the needs of an expanding neighborhood and growing enrollment. It is also eligible under Criterion C: Architecture, as it embodies the characteristics of the Craftsman style and is one of only 2 Craftsman style frame schools left in the city of New Orleans and Orleans Parish. The building has been used as a school since it was originally constructed in 1917 and expanded in 1924; it continued to be used as a neighborhood school until January 2014. The school is eligible for listing at the local level and the period of significance extends from its initial construction in 1917 through 1965 in compliance with the National Register 50-year guideline.

John Sykes asked why architecture was not included as an area of significance. Jessica Richardson added that she agreed that was a good idea and would be sure to add that prior to sending the nomination up to the National Park Service.

John Sykes moved that the nomination be recommended to the SHPO and Peggy Lowe seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Bristow Tower, Orleans Parish

Presented by Donna Fricker, nomination preparer

The Bristow Tower is a free-standing, ten story, International Style apartment building designed by Mathes, Bergman and Associates, a local firm. Construction began in 1963, and the building was dedicated on March 6, 1964. The structure is a reinforced concrete frame with a veneer mainly of flat white stucco panels. Brick shafts on the side elevations serve to accentuate and set off the whiteness of the building. Architecturally, the design is exemplary of the classic International Style as it emerged in Europe in the 1920s and 30s. Though vacant for many years and significantly deteriorated on the interior, the building has been little altered since its construction.

Bristow Tower is located on the campus of Ochsner Baptist Hospital, historically known as Southern Baptist Hospital. The campus occupies a city block in an early twentieth century neighborhood of Uptown New Orleans. The gleaming white apartment tower is located at the corner of Magnolia and Cadiz streets, which

increases its visual profile. Immediately adjacent is a white spiral parking ramp for a campus garage built a year earlier. Two non-historic additions can be found at the front right corner and at the rear of the building. There is also a utilities corridor that is not functionally related to the Bristow Tower, but that is attached to the building.

The Bristow Tower is eligible for the National Register under Criterion C (architecture) at the local level of significance. It is a particularly accomplished example of the International Style within the City of New Orleans, embodying the classic trademarks of what was considered a revolutionary aesthetic. Like other International Style influenced buildings in New Orleans, Bristow Tower illustrates that post-war modernism was far from monolithic. Some of the styles from before World War II (such as the International Style and Art Moderne) continued to be built in the post-war years. The period of significance is 1963-64, the years of its construction and completion.

The committee had no questions. Greg Ensslen and Chris Melone, developers of the project, spoke in support of the nomination.

Dr. Saunders moved that the nomination be recommended to the SHPO and Turry Flucker seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Gem Theater, Orleans Parish

Presented by Greg Ensslen, nomination preparer

The Gem Theater is located at 3940 Thalia Street, just a few blocks outside of the Broadmoor National Register Historic District. Designed in the Art Moderne style, the theater was built in 1951 as an African American Theater. It is a two story space with a stepped stucco façade with yellow and maroon tiles along the bottom of the façade and a projecting aluminum marquee flanked by movie poster display windows on each side. The side walls have multi lite metal windows and there are two small one story non-contributing additions added to the rear in the 1960s. The interior has lost many of its finishes, but the overall bones of the building comprising the large theater space with second floor mezzanine is intact. The original bathroom spaces and concession space are also still intact. The building has suffered significant structural damage to the floor necessitating its removal and leveling. The removal of original finishes has affected the integrity of materials to a degree, but the Gem Theater retains the other aspects of integrity and remains eligible for listing on the National Register.

The Gem Theater is eligible for the National Register under Criterion A: History because it was an important source of entertainment and recreation for the Uptown/Broadmoor neighborhood's African American residents. Additionally, it is a good example of a first class theater built specifically for African Americans in their respective neighborhood. Theaters such as the Gem were symbolic during a time of segregation and allowed for the African American residents to have their own theater where they were not specifically relegated to one section due to segregation. The period of significance for the Gem is 1951-1960 representing the years it functioned as an African American theater.

The review committee asked when the front doors were removed. Mr. Ensslen explained this likely happened in the 1970s when it became an auto parts store. They also asked about the new use, which is proposed to be a small brewery. Turry asked if any of the interpretation in its new use will reflect its historic use as an African American theater. Mr. Ensslen stated that it will certainly discuss its former use as a theater, but is unsure if it will discuss specifically the African American history. Mr. Flucker added that it is certainly important to keep the whole history of the theater alive as part of its interpretation.

Martha Saloman moved that the nomination be recommended to the SHPO and Peggy Lowe seconded. There were seven yeas and three nays. The motion passed.

Lafitte Avenue Project Buildings C-47, E-45, and #46, Orleans Parish

Presented by Jill Enersen, nomination preparer

The Lafitte Avenue Project Buildings C-47, E-45, and #46 of the former Lafitte Avenue Project, completed in 1941, are located on 1.1 acres of the original 27.2-acre site adjacent to three National Register Historic

Districts (NRHD) – Esplanade Ridge, Mid-City, and Parkview. The development, now named *Faubourg Lafitte*, is bounded by Lafitte Avenue (formerly Carondelet Walk), Orleans Avenue, North Claiborne Avenue, and North Rocheblave Street. Representative of the high-density urban subtype of public housing, the two former residential buildings and former administration building feature brick exteriors, tile side-gable roofs, brick chimneys, and porches with wrought iron columns and railings with ornamental grillwork.¹ Although the overall site has experienced extensive demolition, Buildings C-47, E-45, and #46 remain eligible for National Register listing as they retain the historic character of USHA-funded urban public housing buildings in Louisiana built between 1935 and 1950.

The Lafitte Avenue Project Buildings C-47, E-45, and #46 are of statewide significance under Criterion A in the area of Social History as the three remaining buildings of the USHA-funded Lafitte Avenue Project in Orleans Parish. Buildings C-47, E-45, and #46 have direct association with and meet the requirements of Property Subtype – High-Density Urban under Buildings found in Section F of the *United States Housing Authority (USHA)-funded Public Housing in Louisiana, 1935-1950* Multiple Property Submission. Buildings C-47, E-45, and #46 are eligible under Criterion A as examples of the USHA-funded urban housing development in Louisiana during World War II. The period of significance ranges from 1940 to 1950 in association with the historic context.

The review committee had questions about the additions on E-45, which are stairwells, and whether these additions will be retained. The owner, Matthew Morrin, spoke about how the additions and work done to E-45 and #46 had gotten SHPO approval (likely through Section 106 review).

John Sykes moved that the nomination be recommended to the SHPO and Turry Flucker seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Bayou Paul Colored School, Iberville Parish

Presented by Reginald Grace, nomination preparer

The Bayou Paul Colored School is a small one-room wooden frame structure built on an open-pier cement foundation. Access to the front porch is by a two-rung wooden step. The building is located in the middle of the Amanda Anderson Grace Memorial Park, located about one quarter of a mile from its original location. It was moved in 2006 and is being used as the Bayou Paul Colored School Museum in honor Mrs. Grace, who taught at the school from 1936-1955. It is a vernacular building without a distinct style and while it has been moved, its new location is very close to its original and the building still sits within the rural community of St. Gabriel along Bayou Paul Lane. Besides the move, the building itself retains many original features on the exterior and interior including wood siding, double hung wood windows, wood floors and interior walls, and interior layout. It is easily recognizable to former students. Bayou Paul Colored School retains integrity of setting, feeling, association, materials, design, and workmanship, and thus, is eligible for listing on the National Register.

The Bayou Paul Colored School is of local significance in the areas of education and ethnic heritage because for three decades, it was the only school in a rural area of Iberville Parish where African-American children could get an education. It provided grades one through eight to children in this rural, agricultural community from 1920-1955. The period of significance is 1920-1955, representing the years the school operated as the only African American primary educational opportunity in St. Gabriel.

Sue Turner moved that the nomination be recommended to the SHPO and John Sykes seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Richardson announced that 7 of the 9 August nominations have been approved.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:32 p.m.

¹ National Register of Historic Places, USHA-funded Public Housing in Louisiana 1929-1950, Louisiana, National Register #14000692, Section F page 20-27.