

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. Name of Property

Historic Name: Port Arthur Downtown Historic District
Other name/site number: NA
Name of related multiple property listing: NA

2. Location

Street & number: Roughly bounded by West Reverend Doctor Ransom Howard Street, Fort Worth Avenue, Lakeshore Drive, and Waco Street
City or town: Port Arthur State: Texas County: Jefferson
Not for publication: [] Vicinity: []

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this [X] nomination [] request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property [X] meets [] does not meet the National Register criteria.

I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following levels of significance:
[] national [] statewide [X] local

Applicable National Register Criteria: [X] A [] B [X] C [] D

Signature of certifying official / Title: Mark Wolfe, State Historic Preservation Officer
Date: 12/6/2020
Texas Historical Commission
State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property [] meets [] does not meet the National Register criteria.
Signature of commenting or other official
Date
State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:
[] entered in the National Register
[] determined eligible for the National Register
[] determined not eligible for the National Register.
[] removed from the National Register
[] other, explain: _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Port Arthur, Jefferson County, Texas

5. Classification

Ownership of Property: Private; Public-Local

Category of Property: District

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
14	1	buildings
0	0	sites
0	1	structures
0	0	objects
14	2	total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 2 (First National Bank of Port Arthur and US Post Office and Federal Building)

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions: COMMERCE/TRADE: business, department store, financial institution, restaurant, specialty store, warehouse
 DOMESTIC: hotel
 GOVERNMENT: city hall, courthouse, government office, post office
 INDUSTRY/PROCESSING: communications facility
 TRANSPORTATION: depot

Current Functions: GOVERNMENT: city hall, courthouse, government office
 WORK IN PROGRESS: business, department store
 VACANT: business, department store, depot, financial institution, hotel, outdoor entertainment, post office, restaurant, specialty store, warehouse

7. Description

Architectural Classification: LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS: Classical Revival, Mission/Spanish Colonial Revival, Beaux Arts
 LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS: Craftsman, Prairie School
 MODERN MOVEMENT: Art Deco, New Formalism, Modern
 NO STYLE

Principal Exterior Materials: BRICK, STONE (granite, limestone), STUCCO

Narrative Description (see pages 9-14)

Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Port Arthur, Jefferson County, Texas

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria: A, C

Criteria Considerations: NA

Areas of Significance: Community Planning and Development; Architecture

Period of Significance: 1912-1970

Significant Dates: 1912, 1915, 1926, 1929, 1936

Significant Person (only if criterion b is marked): NA

Cultural Affiliation (only if criterion d is marked): NA

Architect/Builder: James Knox Taylor, Tom Lovell & Sons, H.C. Mauer, Favrot and Livaudais, Fred C. Stone, Llewellyn W. Pitts, Charles L. Wignall, Joseph Finger

Narrative Statement of Significance (see pages 15-28)

9. Major Bibliographic References

Bibliography (see pages 29-31)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested. (*Adams Building, approved 10-17-2019*)
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office (*Texas Historical Commission, Austin*)
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository:

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): NA

Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Port Arthur, Jefferson County, Texas

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: 20.9 acres

Coordinates: (see page 32)

Verbal Boundary Description: (see page 33)

Boundary Justification: (see page 33)

11. Form Prepared By

Name/title: Erin Tyson/Architectural Historian and GIS Specialist
Organization: HHM & Associates, Inc.
Street & number: P.O. Box 9648
City or Town: Austin State: Texas Zip Code: 78766
Email: etyson@hhminc.com
Telephone: 512-478-8014
Date: March 2, 2020

Additional Documentation

Maps (see pages 34-43)

Additional items (see pages 44-55)

Photographs (see pages 56-93)

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

Photograph Log

Port Arthur Downtown Historic District
Port Arthur, Jefferson County, Texas

Photo No. 1

Contextual view of the 400 and 500 blocks of the northeast side of Austin Avenue, facing southeast.
Photographed by Erin Tyson, January 2020

Photo No. 2

Contextual view of the 500 block of the northwest side of Procter Street and the 400 and 500 blocks of the northeast side of Austin Avenue taken from Procter Street, facing northwest.
Photographed by Katherine Duffield Hill, August 2019

Photo No. 3

Contextual view of the 400 and 500 blocks of the northwest side of Fifth Street, facing north-northeast.
Photographed by Erin Tyson, January 2020

Photo No. 4

Contextual view of the 300, 400, and 500 blocks of Austin Avenue toward the southeastern terminus of the historic district, facing southeast.
Photographed by Erin Tyson, January 2020

Photo No. 5

Contextual view of the 400 block of the northeast side of Austin Avenue and the northeast side of the 500 block of Procter Street, facing east-southeast.
Photographed by Erin Tyson, January 2020

Photo No. 6

Contextual view of the 400, 500, and 600 blocks of the southwest side of Austin Avenue. The Motiva refinery can be seen in the background in the far right of the photo, facing northwest.
Photographed by Erin Tyson, January 2020

Photo No. 7

Contextual view of the 500 and 600 blocks of the southeast side of Procter Street, facing southwest.
Photographed by Erin Tyson, January 2020

Photo No. 8

Contextual view of the 500 and 600 blocks of the southeast side of Procter Street, facing northeast.
Photographed by Erin Tyson, January 2020

Photo No. 9

Contextual view of 400 block of Fifth Street, facing northeast.
Photographed by Katherine Duffield Hill, August 2019

Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

Photo No. 10

Contextual view of the 500 and 600 blocks of the southwest side of Austin Avenue. Motiva's refinery can be seen in the background in the far right of the photograph, facing northwest.

Photographed by Erin Tyson, January 2020

Photo No. 11

Contextual view of the 300, 400, and 500 blocks of the southwest side of Austin Avenue, facing southwest

Photographed by Erin Tyson, January 2020

Photo No. 12

Contextual view of the 300 and 400 blocks of the southwest side of Austin Avenue. City Hall can be seen in the background, facing southeast.

Photographed by Erin Tyson, January 2020

Photo No. 13

Contextual view of the 400 block of Fifth Street, facing southwest.

Photographed by Erin Tyson, January 2020

Photo No. 14

Contextual view of the 300 and 400 blocks of the northeast side of Austin Avenue, facing northwest.

Photographed by Erin Tyson, January 2020

Photo No. 15

Contextual view of the rear of the buildings fronting the northeast side of Austin Avenue within the 400 and 500 blocks, facing south.

Photographed by Erin Tyson, January 2020

Photo No. 16

Contextual view of the 600 block of the southwest side of Austin Avenue, facing northwest.

Photographed by Erin Tyson, January 2020

Photo No. 17

Contextual view of the 300 block of Waco Avenue, facing northwest.

Photographed by Erin Tyson, January 2020

Photo No. 18

Detail view of the sculptural forms on the top floor of the Vaughn Hotel (Resource 11), facing southeast.

Photographed by Katherine Duffield Hill, August 2019

Photo No. 19

Oblique view of the South Jefferson County Office Building (Resource 6), facing north.

Photographed by Katherine Duffield Hill, August 2019

Photo No. 20

Contextual view of the government district and Lakeshore Drive (Resources 15-16), facing northwest.

Photographed by Erin Tyson, January 2020

Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

Photo No. 21

View of the landscaping surrounding the government district at the southeast end of the historic district, facing southwest.

Photographed by Erin Tyson, January 2020

Photo No. 22

View of Sabine Lake. Photograph taken from Lakeshore Drive immediately southeast of the South Jefferson County Office Building. Pleasure Island can be seen across the lake in the far right of the photograph, facing northeast.

Photographed by Erin Tyson, January 2020

Photo No. 23

Façade of the Port Arthur Southern Pacific Passenger Depot (Resource 1), facing southwest.

Photographed by Erin Tyson, January 2020

Photo No. 24

Oblique view of the Railway Express Agency, Inc. Office and Warehouse building (Resource 2), facing west.

Photographed by Erin Tyson, January 2020

Photo No. 25

Façade view of one of the two noncontributing buildings in the district (Resource 3), facing southeast.

Photographed by Katherine Duffield Hill, August 2019

Photo No. 26

Oblique view of the Fred Miller Bicycle & Gun Repair/ Paint Shop building (Resource 4), facing north.

Photographed by Erin Tyson, January 2020

Photo No. 27

Façade of the John R. Adams & Co. Building (Resource 5), facing northwest.

Photographed by Erin Tyson, January 2020

Photo No. 28

Façade of the US Post Office and Federal Building. (Resource 6), facing north.

Photographed by Erin Tyson, January 2020

Photo No. 29

Oblique view of the Merchants National Bank building, which now houses the City of Port Arthur Health Department (Resource 7), facing south-southeast.

Photographed by Erin Tyson, January 2020

Photo No. 30

Oblique view of the John R. Adams Building (Resource 8), facing east-southeast.

Photographed by Erin Tyson, January 2020

Photo No. 31

Oblique view of the First National Bank of Port Arthur Building (Resource 9), facing north-northwest.

Photographed by Katherine Duffield Hill, August 2019

Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

Photo No. 32

Oblique view of the Port Arthur Downtown Pavilion (Resource 10), one of the two noncontributing buildings in the historic district. Vaughn Hotel (Resource 11) can be seen behind the pavilion, facing north-northeast.

Photographed by Katherine Duffield Hill, August 2019

Photo No. 33

Oblique view of Vaughn Hotel and the one-part commercial block building adjoining it to the northeast (Resources 11-12), facing south.

Photographed by Katherine Duffield Hill, August 2019

Photo No. 34

Façade of the one-part commercial block building located at 608 Procter Street (Resource 12), facing southeast.

Photographed by Erin Tyson, January 2020

Photo No. 35

Façade of the Port Arthur-Beaumont Interurban Railway building (Resource 13), facing northeast.

Photographed by Erin Tyson, January 2020

Photo No. 36

Oblique view of the *Port Arthur News* building (Resource 14), facing north-northeast.

Photographed by Katherine Duffield Hill, August 2019

Photo No. 37

Oblique view of City Hall (Resource 15), facing east.

Photographed by Katherine Duffield Hill, August 2019

Photo No. 38

Façade of the South Jefferson County Office Building (Resource 16), facing northwest.

Photographed by Katherine Duffield Hill, August 2019

Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

Narrative Description

The Port Arthur Downtown Historic District encompasses nine city blocks and includes extant buildings within the historic commercial core and the government center along Lakeshore Drive, between Dallas and Waco Avenues.¹ The district contains a high percentage of commercial buildings in addition to a few important governmental buildings and two transportation-related properties, all associated with the development of the city. Historic resources date from 1912 to 1970 and include a high concentration of early-twentieth-century brick commercial buildings in a variety of styles, including Renaissance Revival, Art Deco, and Late Modern. The district is anchored by several pivotal buildings reflecting significant trends in the history of Port Arthur development, commerce, transportation, and government. The majority of resources within the district retain a good degree of integrity, but most of them sit vacant and in various stages of disrepair. As the only remaining cohesive collection of buildings in downtown Port Arthur that reflect significant commercial and governmental trends in the development of the city, the district serves as an important tangible link to the past. The historic district itself contains little non-historic infill, although vacant lots resulting from the economic downturn in the latter half of the twentieth century and damage from hurricanes in the twenty-first century surround the district. Within the district boundaries, the historic commercial core retains much of its density. The district features 16 resources (15 buildings and one structure), of which 14 (88 percent) are contributing.

Geography and Terrain

Located in the Coastal Plain/Gulf Prairie region of far southeast Jefferson County and Texas, Port Arthur sits 17 miles southeast of Beaumont and 35 miles southwest of Orange; together the three cities compose what is known as “the golden triangle,” an important regional industrial center.² Port Arthur hugs the lower west bank of Sabine Lake, where the Sabine, Neches, and Angelina Rivers converge and drain into the Gulf of Mexico. A seven-mile-long estuary separates Sabine Lake from the outlet to the Gulf of Mexico. With its proximity to Sabine Lake and the Gulf of Mexico, Port Arthur is surrounded by an elaborate network of bayous, marshes, and islands. The Port Arthur ship canal, along the west shore of Sabine Lake and thus directly southeast of downtown Port Arthur, connects with the Sabine and Neches Rivers, providing deepwater ports at Beaumont, Port Arthur, Nederland, and Port Neches.³ The terrain in the area consists of marshy saltgrass and coastal prairie, conducive to livestock grazing and rice growing. The elevation is low and flat, with altitudes ranging from sea level to roughly seven feet. The climate of Port Arthur is subtropical, humid, warm, and breezy. With its location along the Gulf Coast, the area is prone to destructive hurricanes.

Evolution and Development of the Historic District

Port Arthur was conceived of as a railroad town and a potential deepwater port; the town was founded with the key mission to establish a direct railroad and shipping point between Midwestern states and the Gulf of Mexico. Thus, development in the city followed the Kansas City, Pittsburg & Gulf Railroad (KCP&G), reaching Port Arthur in 1897. The city’s first buildings, such as passenger and freight depots, were constructed along the southeastern terminus of Houston Avenue, which runs adjacent and parallel to the railroad tracks. One of the intersecting streets—Procter Street—extending two blocks northwest of and parallel to the lake, emerged as a major

¹ As part of urban renewal efforts during the 1960s, the city established a Government District in the noted area in an effort to consolidate federal, county, and city offices into one geographic zone. Prior to this, governmental offices and buildings were scattered throughout Port Arthur, often occupying older spaces no longer in use. “Urban Renewal Project Developed Through Cooperation and Understanding,” *Port Arthur News*, Oct. 18, 1970, www.newspaperarchive.com.

² Paul E. Isaac, “Beaumont, TX,” *Handbook of Texas Online*, June 12, 2010 and updated Nov. 7, 2018, accessed Jan. 22, 2020, <https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hdb02>.

³ Diana J. Kleiner, “Jefferson County, TX,” *Handbook of Texas Online*, June 15, 2010, accessed Jan. 22, 2020, <https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hcj05>.

Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

thoroughfare within a few years of Port Arthur's founding. The founder of Port Arthur also envisioned the city as a tourist destination and quickly constructed a large hotel and other attractions along the lakeshore between Austin and Waco Avenues. Early buildings, mostly establishments catering to tourists, also fronted the shoreline of Sabine Lake. By 1900, Austin Avenue had become lined with businesses that served the everyday needs of residents. Additionally, a second railway, the Texas and New Orleans Railroad (T&NO), built a line into Port Arthur in 1908, terminating near Austin Avenue and Seventh Street; freight and passenger depots were built nearby. Hence, the intersection between Procter Street and Austin Avenue—the two main thoroughfares where the earliest businesses emerged—became the hub of commercial development in Port Arthur. Over the first two decades of the twentieth century, as the population and economic prosperity in Port Arthur increased from its status as a major shipping center and with the oil boom, development along Procter Street and Austin Avenue evolved from a dispersion of simple wood-frame buildings to a dense network of more substantial commercial buildings composed of permanent building materials and featuring distinct architectural stylistic influences. By the 1920s, this density extended across the original townsite. The concentration of business activity remained consistent across downtown Port Arthur until the 1950s and 1960s. At this point, the statewide trend of decentralization out of urban areas, driven by individuals' preferences to bypass congested city centers, had taken hold in Port Arthur. During this period, business owners began to move their commercial establishments from the downtown to areas along the expanding highways north of Port Arthur, mostly in Nederland.

In the 1960s, another significant development occurred affecting the layout of the downtown. Up to this point, no designated centralized zone existed for government buildings. Rather, the various government entities operated out of existing buildings originally intended for other uses that were scattered throughout the city. As part of urban renewal efforts launched in the mid-1960s, a government district was established along Lakeshore Drive, between Dallas and Waco Avenues. An important government building, the Jefferson County Office Building (sub-courthouse) (Resource 16; photos 19-20 and 38) constructed in 1936, already occupied this zone. With an existing prominent building situated there, and in consideration of its proximity to the Port Arthur ship canal, the area was chosen as the designated government district. City Hall (Resource 15; photos 11-12, 20-21, and 37) was erected there soon after establishment of the district in 1970, and federal, county, and city governments consolidated their offices there. The area continues to serve as the government district.

In addition to the origins of commercial development and the establishment of the government district, natural disasters that have hit the Gulf Coast in the twenty-first century have shaped the development of downtown Port Arthur. Hurricane Rita of 2005, Hurricanes Dolly and Ike of 2008, and Hurricane Harvey of 2018 each caused significant property damage to buildings in Port Arthur and rendered many of the buildings downtown beyond repair. As a result, entire blocks or groupings have been demolished, leaving a large number vacant throughout the downtown area. Many of the buildings spared by the hurricanes remain vacant, boarded up, and in disrepair because of the high cost of repairing such extensive damage.

The district thus encompasses the remaining cohesive collection of buildings in the downtown. It is composed of the historic commercial core of the central business district to the north and the government district to the south.

Circulation Patterns

The current grid pattern of the road network in the district developed at the end of the nineteenth century, when Arthur Stilwell's Port Arthur Townsite and Land Company laid out the town. With the city sited on the western banks of Sabine Lake, which has a bean shape with a northeast-southwest orientation, the original grid pattern the streets form was oriented at a diagonal so that it was orthogonal to the shore of the lake. Consequently, the axes of the grid run from northwest to southeast and southwest to northeast. This street grid extends across Port Arthur southeasterly to Fourth Street, one block north of the lakeshore. Consistent with the original layout of the town, the area between Fourth Street and the lakeshore features more open space, originally intended as a public park and areas for tourism and recreation.

Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

The thoroughfares running northwest-southeast are designated as “avenues” and are named after different cities across the United States. The roads perpendicular to the avenues, extending southwest-northeast, are numbered, beginning with Fourth in the southeast and running to Nineteenth Street at the northwest extent of the original townsite. Two thoroughfares disrupt the regular pattern just described. At the southeast edge of the central business district, the winding road Lakeshore Drive hugs the shoreline of Sabine Lake, its curvilinear shape appearing in stark contrast to the regular grid street pattern. The other exception to the naming convention for the streets is Procter Street, which sits between Fourth and Fifth Streets.

The current dimensions of the streets and avenues—their lengths and widths—reflect the historic street and avenue layout. The avenues and streets extend across the entire district and continue past the boundaries, except at the southeastern boundary, which abuts Sabine Lake. The streets are 60 feet wide, and the avenues are 70 feet wide. As a major thoroughfare, Procter Street is an exception and measures 100 feet wide. All the streets in the historic district have two vehicular lanes. Historic concrete sidewalks and curbs are located throughout the district. In areas near buildings where extensive damage from hurricanes has occurred, or where buildings have sat vacant for long periods of time, the sidewalks have not been maintained.

Relationship of Buildings to One Another

The concentration of surviving significant historic buildings include some of the most monumental and impressive buildings constructed in Port Arthur. The 400 and 500 blocks of Austin Avenue contain large buildings, such as the United States Post Office and Federal Building (Resource 6; photos 1, 4, 15, and 28; NRHP 1986), the Adams Building (Resource 8; photos 1-5, 15, and 30), and Merchant’s National Bank (Resource 7; photos 3, 5-6, 11-13, and 29). These edifices occupy quarter-block-sized lots, leaving little room for the development of the type of commercial-block buildings so commonly erected in dense historic commercial areas. These larger buildings clustered along Austin Avenue range in height between two and seven stories. The other resources forming the commercial zone of the district indeed include commercial-block buildings; however, due to the large number of vacancies surrounding the boundaries of the district, these stand as discreet, stand-alone buildings as opposed to their original configuration involving a dense series of uniformly sized commercial-block buildings that share party walls or have abutting exterior walls. The Vaughn Hotel (Resource 11; photos 7-8, 17-18, and 33), a ten-story building, rises higher than any other building in downtown Port Arthur.

In the government sector at the southeast end the district, the buildings sit in the middle of landscaped lawns with ample space around them (photos 19-21 and 37-38). Trees and public park space provide further delineation between the government buildings.

Property Types and Building Forms

Of the 14 contributing resources in the district, 9 were constructed for commercial functions. The various historic uses of these buildings include stores, banks, office buildings, a hotel, newspaper publishing, and a warehouse. Within the group of commercial property types, three feature one-part- or two-part commercial-block buildings; these include the Fred Miller Bicycle & Gun Repair/Paint Shop (Resource 4; photos 1 and 26), the John R. Adams & Co. Department Store (Resource 5; photos 4, 6, 10, 11, 13, and 27), and a store (Resource 12; photos 7 and 33–34) adjacent to the Vaughn Hotel. First National Bank of Port Arthur (Resource 9; photos 2, 5, 14, and 31; NRHP 2015) possesses a vault building form. The commercial buildings in the historic district where goods were manufactured or produced, such as the Railway Express Agency, Inc. office and warehouse (Resource 2; photos 10, 16, and 24) and *Port Arthur News* (Resource 14; photos 14 and 36), feature long, linear, rectangular building forms that offer ample space for the production of goods. Two commercial buildings in the district have building forms consisting of a three-part vertical-block: the John R. Adams Building (Resource 8) and the Vaughn Hotel (Resource 11). The Merchant’s National Bank (Resource 7) can be classified as an enframed block.

Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

Government buildings account for 21 percent of the contributing resources in the historic district. The United States Post Office and Federal Building (Resource 6) features an arcaded block building form. The Jefferson County Office Building (Resource 16) exhibits a central block with wings building form. City Hall's (Resource 15) building form can be classified as a high-rise office building.

The district encompasses two transportation resources. The Texas and New Orleans Railroad Company Passenger Depot (Resource 1; photos 16 and 23) has a rectangular building form, and the Port Arthur-Beaumont Interurban Railway Station (Resource 14; photos 14 and 35) features a one-part commercial-block configuration.

Common Construction Materials

Brick is the most prevalent building material found within the district. Brick was used throughout the period of significance for commercial and transportation resources. Stone, which was used in the construction of the government and commercial buildings in the district, is the second-most common building material in the district. Stucco appears on a transportation-related resource, although it may have been applied after the period of significance; and on a commercial building as well. Concrete was used in the construction of only one resource in the historic district, City Hall (Resource 15).

Architectural Styles

The architectural styles in the district generally followed statewide and nationwide trends. Three of the most common styles—which have equal representation within the district—are Renaissance Revival, Art Deco, and Modern. Other architectural styles embodied by buildings in the district include Mission Revival, Prairie School, Beaux Arts, Classical Revival, and New Formalism; however, these styles are only represented by one building each within the district.

Examples of buildings with Renaissance Revival architectural stylistic influences include the John R. Adams Building (Resource 8) and the Vaughn Hotel (Resource 11). The Adams Building features quoins, rusticated lower stories, belt courses, and elaborate entry porches, and the use of the Classical orders and motifs. Similarly, the Vaughn Hotel displays stone cladding at the first and second floors, rusticated treatments, curved archways, and Classical Revival sculptural forms.

Port Arthur-Beaumont Interurban Railway Station (Resource 13) and Jefferson County Office Building (Resource 16) embody the Art Deco style. The interurban station features repetition of horizontal lines on the canopy and across the façade of the building as well as a distinct parapet. The Jefferson County Office Building has fluted pilasters, gold-colored paneling, and stylized geometric motifs and detailing.

The *Port Arthur News* building (Resource 14) and City Hall (Resource 15) constitute the buildings in the district featuring the Modern architectural style. The defining features of the Modern style evident in the *Port Arthur News* building are the low roofline, cantilevered canopy, column supports with angled spandrels, and the decorative brick partition surrounding parts of the property. The monolithic character, "blockiness," and use of concrete in the City Hall building distinguish it as Brutalist, a variation of the Modern style.

Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

Integrity

Since the end of the period of significance in 1970, the built environment within the boundaries of the historic district has changed dramatically. The economic downturn of the latter half of the twentieth century and a series of hurricanes in the twenty-first century have left the vast majority of buildings in the district damaged, too costly to repair, and no longer in use. However, each of the buildings within the district's period of significance retain a sufficient degree of integrity to convey their significance and continue to serve as a tangible link to Port Arthur's past.

The majority of individual resources within the district retain their integrity of design, location, workmanship, and association to a high degree. Due to the number of vacant lots surrounding the historic district and the fact that most of the buildings in the district are no longer in use, the district's integrity of feeling and setting have been compromised. Among the most common alterations that buildings within the district have undergone are canopy removal, window and door removal and/or boarding, storefront replacement, and parapet modifications. Though less prevalent, some buildings within the district have had their original exterior materials replaced or covered outside the period of significance.

The district retains a fair degree of integrity of location, design, workmanship, and association. Few demolitions have occurred, resulting in a high number of extant historic buildings and very little non-historic infill within the district boundaries. The district also retains its historic streetscape patterns. The district contains the only remaining cohesive collection of buildings in downtown Port Arthur with sufficient integrity to reflect significant trends in the development of the city. Therefore, a lower threshold has been applied to assessing the overall integrity of the district.

Contributing and Noncontributing Resources

Contributing resources are those that add to the district's overall historic character and sense of place. A contributing resource must date to the period of significance (1912–1970) and retain most of its salient physical features and associative qualities to convey its historic character. Contributing resources must possess a sufficient degree of integrity, though they need not be unaltered; the greater the cumulative impact of the alterations, though, the less likely a historic property will be classified as contributing. Commercial buildings in Port Arthur, and across Texas and the nation, commonly underwent alterations over time, especially in a place prone to damage caused by natural disasters. The most common example of this in Port Arthur, both within and after the period of significance, is the covering of windows and doors with boards. Many of these buildings remain otherwise unaltered, therefore the alteration is not significant enough to classify the building as noncontributing. Additionally, when alterations occurred within the period of significance, they themselves may represent significant trends of the mid-century modernization movement. Other alterations to buildings within the district that do not detract from the resources' overall ability to convey their significance include the partial covering of original building materials and the removal of canopies. Although these alterations detract from a building's overall integrity, as long as the resource remains recognizable to the period of significance and adds to the district's historic character, it is classified as contributing.

Noncontributing resources detract from the district's historic character and include resources constructed outside the period of significance as well as drastically altered historic resources. The latter includes buildings that are unable to convey their architectural or historical significance due to multiple or severe alterations. The alterations to these buildings have compromised the historic integrity to such a degree that the buildings no longer visually represent the district's period of significance and therefore detract from the overall historic character of the district. The district includes 2 noncontributing resources constructed outside the period of significance (Resources 3 and 10; photos 8, 17, 25 and 32).

Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

Inventory

The 16 resources within the Port Arthur Downtown Historic District are listed in the inventory below. Addresses, name, dates of construction, style, and contributing/noncontributing classification are provided for each resource.

Inventory of Resources. C = Contributing, NC = Noncontributing

Resource ID	Address	Historic Building Name	Approximate Year Built	Stylistic Influences	C/NC
1	631 Austin Avenue	Texas and New Orleans Railroad Company Passenger Depot	1915	Craftsman	C
2	631 Austin Avenue	Railway Express Agency, Inc. Office and Warehouse	1948	No Style	C
3	440 Sixth Street	Commercial Building	1978	No Style	NC
4	526 Austin Avenue	Fred Miller Bicycle & Gun Repair/ Paint Shop	1915	Mission Revival	C
5	501 Austin Avenue	John R. Adams & Co. Department Store	1915	Prairie School	C
6	500 Austin Avenue	United States Post Office and Federal Building	1912	Beaux Arts	C
7	445 Austin Avenue	Merchant's National Bank	1965	New Formalism	C
8	448 Austin Avenue	John R. Adams Building	1926	Renaissance Revival	C
9	501 Procter Street	First National Bank of Port Arthur	1930	Classical Revival	C
10	500 Procter Street	Pavilion	2017	No Style	NC
11	600 Procter Street	Vaughn Hotel	1929	Renaissance Revival	C
12	608 Procter Street	Commercial Building	1929	No Style	C
13	320 Austin Avenue	Port Arthur-Beaumont Interurban Railway Station	1917	Art Deco	C
14	500 Block Fourth Street	Port Arthur News Building	1967	Modern	C
15	444 Fourth Street	City Hall	1970	Modern	C
16	525 Lakeshore Drive	Jefferson County Office Building (Sub-Courthouse)	1936	Art Deco	C

Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

Statement of Significance

The Port Arthur Downtown Historic District encompasses a cohesive collection of early- to mid-twentieth-century resources that provides a tangible link to significant events, patterns, and themes that impacted the physical and commercial growth of Port Arthur. Commercial buildings make up the majority of the resources within the district, but several significant governmental buildings also lie within its boundaries. Collectively, these resources reflect the emergence of Port Arthur as a tourist destination-turned-shipping outlet and its role as one of the nation's most important petrochemical centers. From its founding in 1895, to it becoming the home of some of the world's largest oil refineries, to its devastation from twenty-first century hurricanes, Port Arthur has a history largely influenced by its geography and the natural resources extracted and derived from the surrounding Gulf Coast environment. The district consists of the remaining intact buildings standing in downtown Port Arthur associated with the city's period of commercial prosperity and developmental growth. As extant resources, the collection of buildings also sheds light on Port Arthur's economic decline, which began in the mid-twentieth century, as well as the devastation imposed upon the city by hurricanes. The Port Arthur Downtown Historic District is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in the area of Community Planning and Development and under Criterion C in the area of Architecture, both at the local level. The district contains 16 resources, 14 of which are contributing. The period of significance is 1912-1970, from the year of construction of the oldest building in the district to year of construction of the most recent building.

Nestled along the lower west bank of Sabine Lake on the eastern edge of Jefferson County, the Port Arthur area has served as an important site for trade since long before the present-day city emerged. Its location within the Coastal Plain region at the extreme southeastern corner of Texas—where the Sabine, Neches, and Angelina Rivers converge and drain into the Gulf of Mexico—ties the history and development of the city to the resources that naturally occur in or are derived from the area's surrounding land, rivers, bayous, and marshes. The seven-mile-long estuary connecting Sabine Lake to the Gulf of Mexico, known as Sabine Pass, provides a natural access point to deep, navigable seawater and drew Native Americans and early Europeans for centuries to establish nearby settlements and to facilitate trade there.

Between 1837 and 1886, several attempts were made to establish permanent settlements in the area that would become Port Arthur, but both Aurora and Sparks—the two short-lived settlements—failed and were ultimately abandoned. Shortly after in 1895, Arthur Edward Stilwell—a spiritualist, author, railroad promoter, and town developer—established the first known permanent settlement on the western shore of Sabine Lake. Born in Rochester, New York, in 1859, Stilwell had nurtured a lifelong goal to one day establish a shipping connection between the Midwest and the Gulf of Mexico. Moving to Kansas City from New York was a first step in attempting to make his dream a reality. While in Kansas City, Stilwell helped found the Kansas City Suburban Belt Line Railroad and Grand Central Railway Station, offering public transit to the city's growing population. This among other business endeavors produced sufficient capital for Stilwell to pursue his grand vision. He began building the Kansas City, Pittsburg & Gulf Railroad (KCP&G) southward from the Midwest in 1893. Stilwell's ambition and drive to expand railway service had been inspired by the key mission to provide Midwestern farmers direct access to the international market via a shipping outlet on the Gulf of Mexico, a concept embraced in Kansas City as the Gulf Movement.⁴ The direct rail route to the Gulf Coast would enable grain, meat, and lumber producers to circumvent the Atlantic ports, which were over 500 miles farther away than Gulf ports.

After a fruitless pursuit to purchase land for facilities in Sabine Pass from Herman and Augustus Kountze, founders of the Sabine and Eastern Railroad, which offered passenger and freight service between Sabine Pass and Beaumont, Arthur Stilwell found a location he deemed suitable for his future terminal on the west shore of the lake. He designated sites for wharves and docks there and announced that the new city would be named after himself and

⁴ John R. Rochelle, "The Founding of a Port City: Port Arthur, Texas," *East Texas Historical Journal* 13, 2 (1975): 25.

Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

would be called “Port Arthur.”⁵ Stilwell’s KCP&G authorized \$2 million for the purchase of land and facilities under the corporate direction of the Port Arthur Townsite and Land Company.⁶ The company then acquired 4,000 acres extending from the townsite to Taylor Bayou, to the southwest, through a subsidiary, the Port Arthur Canal and Dock Company, and platted the town site in the winter of 1895.⁷ The subsidiary company engaged in a grand promoting effort to publicize Arthur Stilwell’s new shipping center on the Gulf. Lured by advertisements that appeared extensively throughout the country in newspapers and pamphlets, new settlers came from all over to establish themselves in the new town. When the newcomers arrived, they found a sprawling tent city where residents gathered for meals in a community dining hall and stayed in small makeshift structures while they built more permanent shelters.⁸

A detail of the 1897 map *Canal Harbor & Terminal Improvements at Port Arthur, Texas*, by KCP&G engineer Robert Gillham, illustrates the city’s planned layout, with the downtown core sited strategically near the railroad tracks and the lakeshore, while the land between Sabine Lake and Lakeshore Drive was intended to serve as a public park.⁹ Early businesses in Port Arthur included a general store, a saloon, and a lumberyard, all clustered near the intersection of Procter Street and Austin Avenue.¹⁰ Not only did Stilwell plan his namesake town to become a railroad and shipping center, he also envisioned it as a tourist destination. To attract businessmen and settlers to Port Arthur, in 1896 the KCP&G built a spacious three-story hotel, Hotel Sabine, and Pleasure Pier—a 2,000-foot-long pier over the lake that included an open-air restaurant and a natatorium. The hotel and pier were located near the southern terminus of Austin and Waco Avenues. By March 1897, Stilwell had completed the KCP&G depot along Houston Avenue at the eastern terminus of Procter Street, which by this point had become a main thoroughfare in the nascent town. During this early period, Procter Street consisted of a dirt road flanked by wood-frame buildings and board sidewalks. Several events in 1897, such as the founding of the city’s first two newspapers, the *Port Arthur News* and the *Port Arthur Herald*; the erection of a schoolhouse and post office, and regular religious gatherings, signaled the emergence of a vibrant community.

Emergence of Port Arthur as a Significant Port City

Several events in the late-nineteenth and early twentieth century laid the groundwork for Port Arthur’s emergence as a major shipping and commercial center. Stilwell understood that achieving his dream would require completing a deepwater canal to make Port Arthur an official seaport. After an intense legal battle with the Krontze family, who had their own plans to develop Sabine Pass into a larger port, the KCP&G completed a 25-foot deep channel hugging the west side of Sabine Lake from Taylor Bayou to Sabine Pass in March 1899.

The endeavors of the astute urban developer John W. Gates also influenced growth in Port Arthur. Gates, a Chicago-based billionaire and barbed-wire promoter and a stockholder in Stilwell’s companies, first came to Port Arthur in December 1899 to inspect the city’s canal and shipping facilities. Known for his penchant for gambling, which earned him the nickname Bet-A-Million Gates, he purchased lots from the Townsite Company and hired Chicago architect George Nimmons to build a mansion in the Classical Revival style for himself and a Pompeian Villa (NRHP 1973) for his business partner, Isaac Elwood.¹¹ This visit by Gates boosted his power and influence in Port Arthur; as his status rose, Stilwell’s role in the company and authority in southern Jefferson County dwindled.¹² Gates eventually supplanted Stilwell as head of the railroad, reorganized as the Kansas City Southern Railroad

⁵ Archie McDonald, *Water, Rails & Oil: Historic Mid & South Jefferson County* (San Antonio, TX: Historical Publishing Network, 2008), 15.

⁶ McDonald, *Water, Rails & Oil*, 15.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Rochelle, “The Founding of a Port City,” 26.

⁹ William Ford Stewart, *Collision of Giants: The Port Arthur Story* (San Antonio, TX: The Naylor Company, 1966), 5.

¹⁰ McDonald, *Water, Rails & Oil*, 15.

¹¹ The edifice built for Isaac Elwood remains extant, situated approximately one mile northeast of the nominated district along Lakeshore Drive, overlooking Lake Sabine.

¹² McDonald, *Water, Rails & Oil*, 22.

Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

(KCS).¹³ Not long after Gates obtained full control of the railroad company in 1900, he purchased the Port Arthur Channel and Dock Company, taking over the last of Stilwell's business assets in Jefferson County.¹⁴

John Gates further benefited from Stilwell's railroad and shipping facilities in Port Arthur when the Spindletop oil well blew nearby in 1901, bringing international fame to Texas, especially to Jefferson County, as a major oil source. Throngs of people moved to Beaumont to take advantage of the Spindletop oil boom. When Beaumont could no longer support the masses of investors, land speculators, and onlookers arriving each day, the overflow spilled into Port Arthur.

Oil production in the area made access to a deepwater port along the lower Sabine and Neches Rivers an urgent necessity. The deepwater canal dredged in 1899 connected Port Arthur to the Gulf of Mexico, but the nearby inland communities of Beaumont and Orange remained cut off from deepwater access to Sabine Lake and the gulf. In March 1904, in response to the marked demand for deepwater navigation brought on by the Spindletop bonanza, funding was passed for a ship channel stretching through Sabine Lake to the mouth of the Neches River.¹⁵ Construction of the Sabine-Neches Canal began in 1905; however, the channel extending from Sabine Lake up the Neches River to Beaumont was not completed until 1916. Additional dredging and improvements eventually reached up the Sabine River, establishing a deepwater connection to Orange, forming the Sabine-Neches Waterway.

By 1905, shipping tonnage out of Port Arthur had skyrocketed. While the people of Port Arthur enjoyed the prosperity ushered in by the oil boom, the city needed to become an official port of entry to remain competitive. John W. Gates took the matter into his own hands, going to great efforts between 1904 and 1906 to pressure government officials to grant Port Arthur the designation of port of entry for the Sabine district. In August 1906, Port Arthur Canal and Dock Company conveyed the ship canal, the turning basin, and a strip of land along the west side of the canal to the United States government for the establishment of an additional collection district in the state of Texas and a port of entry at Port Arthur. Port Arthur was finally designated an official US port of entry later that same year.

Another important event occurred in 1908, when the Texas and New Orleans (T&NO) Railroad Company (later the Southern Pacific Railroad) built a line into Port Arthur, terminating at the then edge of downtown at a freight depot near Seventh Street and Austin Avenue. By 1915, the company had built a passenger depot (Resource 1; photos 16 and 23) just south of the freight depot, at 631 Austin Avenue. The arrival of this railroad served as another economic driver by aiding existing industries as well as by bringing in more people and businesses to downtown Port Arthur. By 1909, Port Arthur was the 12th-largest US port and had a population of 5,000.¹⁶ During this period of prosperity in Port Arthur, plans were made for a federal building and a 700-foot business block downtown.¹⁷ Empty lots in the 400 and 500 blocks of Procter Street were increasingly developed, and residences began to occupy more properties in the 500 block of Fifth Street. Furthermore, John Gates launched a new era in Port Arthur tourism during this period when he built an impressive Spanish Colonial Revival complex to replace the Sabine Hotel, which had burned in a fire in 1903. The central business district served a citywide population of 7,663 in 1910.

Port Arthur Becomes a Major Center of Commerce and Shipping

Port Arthur's economic and physical growth continued into the 1910s, prompting yet another building boom in the city. Bids for municipal improvements—dredging the drainage canal, laying concrete curbing and sidewalks, and shelling streets—went out in January 1912.¹⁸ The city's status as a major center of commerce and shipping was

¹³ McDonald, *Water, Rails & Oil*, 23.

¹⁴ Works Progress Administration Writers' Program, *Port Arthur* (Houston, TX: The Anson Jones Press, 1940), 53; McDonald, *Water, Rails & Oil*, 23.

¹⁵ "Sabine-Neches Canal," *Galveston Daily News*, March 20, 1904, www.newspapers.com.

¹⁶ Works Progress Administration Writers' Program, *Port Arthur*, 68.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 68–69.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 75.

Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

reflected in the construction of the three-story Beaux Arts-style Post Office and Federal Building (Resource 6; photos 1, 4, 15, and 28; NRHP 1986) at the north corner of Austin Avenue and Fifth Street in 1912. The building, designed by the US Treasury Department Supervising Architect James Knox Taylor and built by Tom Lovell & Sons of Denton, Texas, housed the federal Postal, Customs, Immigration, Quarantine, Agriculture, Public Health, and Recruiting Services departments as well as the US Weather Bureau's Port Arthur office.¹⁹ Before the completion of the Post Office and Federal Building in 1912, mail was brought to Port Arthur by wagon from the Beaumont Post Office and was distributed through a small frame building at the southeast corner of Procter Street and Fort Worth Avenue. Once Port Arthur became recognized as a significant seaport, the head of the Public Building Committee in Washington, Gates C. Bartholdt, obtained an unusually large appropriation of \$200,000 to build the United States Post Office and Federal Building in the Gulf Coast port city in 1907.²⁰ Upon orders from the Treasury Department in Washington to secure a suitable site for the new edifice, Postmaster Dodge acquired the previously unoccupied property at the north corner of Fifth Street and Austin Avenue. Taylor, appointed Supervising Architect by the Treasury Department in 1897, became well known and respected during his 15-year tenure for the great extent to which his designs elevated United States Treasury Department buildings, earning him the nickname "the National Architect."²¹ The monumental concrete and brick-masonry edifice he designed in Port Arthur (Resource 6)—with its large arched windows, engaged pilasters topped by Corinthian-style capitals, second-story balconies, and elaborate cornice—exemplifies the grandeur of Taylor's Treasury Department buildings.

In December 1913, interurban rail service commenced between Port Arthur and Beaumont. The Jefferson County Traction Company and Beaumont Traction Company, both subsidiaries of the East Texas Electric Company, established the Port Arthur-Beaumont Interurban Railway to accommodate the rising demand for passengers to travel easily between the two cities. Interurban transportation service had become popular in Texas starting in 1901, and remained so until the 1940s, providing a means for the public to travel between urban centers via electric rail. The Jefferson County Traction Company and Beaumont Traction Company built the Port Arthur-Beaumont Interurban Railway Station (Resource 13; photos 14 and 35) at 320 Austin Avenue in 1917. The one-story masonry edifice with Art Deco detailing served as both a terminal station and maintenance facility for the railway company. Interurban service between Port Arthur and Beaumont ceased in 1932, likely due to competition from automobiles and buses. However, the East Texas Electric Company continued to use the site for other services requiring electrical power after the rail service halted.

By 1914, Port Arthur had earned the status as the nation's second-largest refining point. Port Arthur's downtown development reflected its position as a major petrochemical and shipping center, as the town's building boom continued. This period saw further business development along Austin Avenue, as new buildings like the two-part commercial block building at 526 Austin Avenue (Resource 4; photos 1 and 26) and the John R. Adams Department Store at 501 Austin Avenue (Resource 5; photos 4, 6, 10-11, 13 and 27) opened within the nominated district. This period also witnessed the construction of the previously mentioned Port Arthur-Beaumont Interurban Railway building at 320 Austin Avenue (Resource 14). The city's growth experienced a setback on the night of August 16, 1915, when it was hit by a powerful hurricane with 75-mile-per-hour winds. Much of the city, including downtown, flooded. The US Post Office and Federal Building (Resource 6) sheltered over 100 residents who fled there to escape the strong winds and floodwaters.²²

Another indication of growing wealth in Port Arthur during the 1910s was the emergence of high-style commercial buildings in the central business district, signaling the city's status as a major shipping center and oil boomtown. With the exception of the United States Post Office and Federal Building, up to this point only hotels, railroad depots, residences, and churches featured substantial architectural detailing. Ship Chandler John Robert Adams changed that in 1915 when he had the John R. Adams Department Store (Resource 5; photos 4, 6, 10-11, 13 and 27)

¹⁹ H. H. Houseman, Jr., and John C. Ferguson, "United States Post Office and Federal Building, Jefferson County, Texas," National Register of Historic Places Nomination, Texas Historic Commission, Austin, March 28, 1986.

²⁰ Houseman and Ferguson, "United States Post Office and Federal Building."

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

erected at 501 Austin Avenue, at the west corner of the intersection of Austin Avenue and Fifth Street. Born in Jasper, Texas, to Mr. and Mrs. W. J. Adams in October 1869, John Robert Adams worked five years with a Beaumont lumber company before relocating to Sabine Pass, where he started a ship chandler business in 1898. Upon moving to Port Arthur in 1902, Adams kept his ship chandler business along the outlet to the Gulf, but also opened a grocery store in the 600 block of Procter Street. When the grocery store burned in a fire, he immediately reestablished the business in a new building at the intersection of Fifth Street and Austin Avenue. There, he sold groceries as well as supplies and equipment for ships. In addition to the ship chandler and grocery businesses, Adams ran an undertaking operation, Adams Undertaking Company, which he sold in 1919. John Robert Adams's accomplishments went beyond business; he also became involved in politics as a British vice consul between 1901 and 1916 and as a vice consul for Norway between 1913 and 1938. In 1923, Adams was decorated with the Knight of the Order of St. Olaf by King Haakon of Norway.²³ As an important early Port Arthur pioneer, businessman, landowner, and government official, John Roberts Adams left an indelible mark on the development of Port Arthur, especially during the 1910s and 1920s, when his commercial success soared. The John R. Adams Department Store consists of a two-part, load-bearing brick commercial block building designed in the Prairie Style, characterized by paired groupings of windows, a roof parapet articulated by a stone belt course, projecting pilasters, and an inset cast stone sign.

The profits Adams earned operating his businesses out of the John R. Adams Department Store enabled him to commission the John R. Adams Building (Resource 8; photos 1-5, 15, and 30), later named the World Trade Building, at 448 Austin Avenue in 1926 to house various commercial enterprises and professional offices. Designed by H. C. Mauer and built by Jefferson Construction Company, Inc., the seven-story, three-part commercial block building encompassed one-quarter of a city block, making it one of the largest commercial buildings in the Port Arthur central business district. Costing \$555,000 to build, the Adams Building exhibits several characteristics of a Renaissance Revival-style building such as quoins, rusticated lower stories, belt courses, elaborate entry porches, and the use of the Classical orders and motifs.²⁴ Providing office space for doctors, lawyers, and other professionals, as well as housing Adams's own businesses, the Adams Building proved important to the 1920s development of Port Arthur's downtown core. Across the street from the United States Post Office and Federal Building (Resource 6) and Merchant's National Bank (Resource 7; photos 3, 5-6, 11-13, and 29), the Adams Building occupied a prominent location within the central business district. The Adams Building architect, H. C. Mauer, worked out of Beaumont, where he designed primarily high-style residential and commercial buildings.²⁵ A 1924 article in the *Port Arthur News* announcing plans for the construction of the Adams Building described the edifice as follows:

Planned to be of reinforced construction throughout, the Adams Building will be fire proof and combine a number of features of the most up to date metropolitan skyscrapers, including express elevators, running ice water on all floors and offices arranged in suites. Marble colonnades will be used at the Fifth Street and Austin Avenue entrances. The John R. Adams Company [is] to occupy the Fifth Street side and the Hodges Department Store the Austin Avenue side. Over 150 offices are planned in the upper floors of the building.²⁶

The buildings erected by John Robert Adams (Resources 5 and 8), as well as the United States Post Office and Federal Building transformed the 400 and 500 blocks of Austin Avenue into an impressive scene composed of high-style multi-story buildings, each with distinct finely crafted architectural detailing. The node of buildings projected the success and power Port Arthur had achieved through its status as a major shipping and petrochemical center.

²³ "Two Pioneers Are Claimed by Death," *Port Arthur News*, Sept. 16, 1940, www.newspapers.com.

²⁴ "New 6-Story Adams Building Sets Pace for Downtown Area," *Port Arthur News*, Oct. 24, 1924, www.newspapers.com.; HHM & Associates, Inc., "Photographic Historic Research Survey of Commercial Buildings within the City of Port Arthur," Prepared for the Texas Department of Transportation, Austin, Texas. June 2012, 22.

²⁵ HHM & Associates, "Photographic Historic Research Survey of Commercial Buildings within the City of Port Arthur," 23.

²⁶ "New 6-Story Adams Building Sets Pace for Downtown Area," *Port Arthur News*.

Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

Continued Prosperity Leads to a 1920s Building Boom

The 1920 city directory noted that Port Arthur had a population of 26,340, with many of the inhabitants employed in the oil industry. The downtown continued to flourish, and despite a fire in January 1923, much of the central business district was almost completely occupied, as indicated in the 1923 Sanborn Fire Insurance Company map. Downtown construction continued throughout the 1920s and culminated in three of the city's landmark buildings: the previously discussed Adams Building at 448 Austin Avenue in 1926, the 10-story Goodhue Hotel (no longer extant) at 519 Waco Avenue in 1929, and the 10-story Vaughn Hotel (Resource 11; photos 7-8, 17-18, and 33), at 600 Procter Street also in 1929. The costs, scale, and design of all three of these buildings reflect the prosperity of Port Arthur during this period as well as the confidence investors had in the future of the city.

In August 1928, J. Forrest Goodhue, a builder and civic leader from Beaumont, erected the Goodhue Hotel, situated at the east corner of Waco Avenue and Fifth Street (directly northeast and adjacent to the United States Post Office and Federal Building (Resource 6). The 10-story, 200-room hotel cost \$450,000 to build.²⁷ Reaching 163 feet above the street, the Goodhue Hotel was the tallest building in downtown Port Arthur until it was demolished in 1990.

In competition with J. Forrest Goodhue, Dr. Ed W. Vaughn, a local ear, nose, and throat specialist, declared that he, too, would build a 10-story hotel named after himself. In May 1928, Vaughn announced his plans to erect a 140-room hotel at the east corner of Procter Street and Waco Avenue at a cost of a little over \$500,000. He provided the capital to fund most of the building but asked Port Arthurans to cover \$60,000: "Tell Port Arthur people this is a bona fide proposition. I have arranged for the necessary finances except \$60,000 which I feel sure Port Arthur people will take out in stock."²⁸ A group of Port Arthur businessmen believed in the future of the city and aligned themselves with Dr. Vaughn's vision, helping make the hotel a reality. Together they formed the Vaughn Hotel Building Company and broke ground in August 1928. Joseph Finger, an Austrian American architect who immigrated to Houston in 1908, designed the hotel to withstand the most severe coastal storms. Made out of fireproof construction, the building was erected over 60-foot cypress pilings for structural stability. The Renaissance Revival-style hotel featured stone cladding at the first and second floors, rusticated treatments, curved archways, and Classical Revival sculptural motifs (photo 18). Luxury apartments composed the top two floors of the building. The Vaughn Hotel opened in July 1929, just one month before its rival, the Goodhue Hotel. The name of the hotel changed to Hotel Sabine in the 1930s.²⁹ It closed in the mid-1980s but remains standing as the only surviving hotel from the early twentieth century in Port Arthur.

Port Arthur Skirts Financial Hardship During the 1930s and 1940s

In 1930, the population of Port Arthur was 50,902.³⁰ The city's continued status as a major port and commercial hub was reflected in more roadway improvements connecting Port Arthur to other cities. The Gulf Highway (present-day SH 87), connecting Port Arthur and Galveston, was completed in 1930. The thoroughfare aided in bringing goods and travelers to Port Arthur's thriving commercial center. According to the 1930 Sanborn map, Port Arthur's central business district was almost completely occupied. New construction in the nominated district included the Favrot and Livaudais-designed Port Arthur Savings Bank at 501 Procter Street (Resource 9; photos 2, 5, 14, and 31; NRHP 2015). The First National Bank of Port Arthur had been founded in the earliest years of the city's existence, paralleling the history of Port Arthur. First National Bank had occupied its current prominent Procter Street-Austin Avenue (east corner) location since 1900, a year when bank deposits amounted to \$145,000. The first bank consisted of a one-story, wood-frame building. Yet the First National Bank of Port Arthur had an earlier start; its parent bank, First Bank of Port Arthur, officially opened for business in a brick building at the corner of Fourth Street and Austin

²⁷ "Hotel Goodhue Has 200 Rooms," *Port Arthur News*, Aug. 21, 1929, www.newspaperarchive.com.

²⁸ "Dr. Vaughn Announces 10-Story Hotel Here." *Port Arthur News*. May 27, 1928.

²⁹ Edith Huber-Logsdon, "Entertainment and Recreation: The History of Port Arthur's Tourism," in *Port Arthur Centennial History, 1898-1998, Volume I*, ed. Michael Cate (Port Arthur, TX: Looking Glass Media, 1997), 135.

³⁰ John W. Storey, "Port Arthur, TX," *Handbook of Texas Online*, June 15, 2010 and modified May 6, 2019, accessed Jan. 22, 2020, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hdp05>.

Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

Avenue in 1897. Three years later, with capital of \$50,000, the bank reorganized as First National Bank of Port Arthur and erected a new building at Procter Street and Austin Avenue. Around 1910, a two-story Mission Revival-style building that also housed other businesses replaced the bank building formerly in its place. When this building was razed in 1929, the bank operated out of the ground floor of the Adams Building. The present-day Classical Revival-style building was constructed one year later; by 1930, the bank's annual deposits had reached \$5,236,000.³¹ On the same day First National Bank opened in its new building, neighboring Merchant's National Bank also opened after a significant renovation, demonstrating the local competition at the time in the prosperous community.³² The First National Bank of Port Arthur's three-story monumental edifice has a vault form, popular in contemporaneous bank buildings; full-height Ionic columns; and a projecting belt course. These characteristics, evoking permanence and financial stability, were intended to give the people of Port Arthur a sense of security and confidence in the banking institution. Since just before the first gusher blew at Spindletop, the bank has played a central role in the development of the city. Serving as an economic anchor for Port Arthur during the Depression and World War II—a period when Port Arthur's petrochemical industry proved vital to the country's war efforts—the First National Bank of Port Arthur remained at the 501 Procter Street location for 36 years. In 1966, it moved to a new location in the 700 block of Procter Street.

The city's oil- and shipping-based economy allowed it to escape the severity of the financial depression experienced by much of the country in the 1930s, a decade during which Port Arthur ranked fourth among the nation's ports, in terms of tons of cargo.³³ A series of municipal projects in the early 1930s, including the \$1,750,000 seawall and the completion of levees, water and sewer extensions, sidewalks and curbs, and the second Pleasure Pier Bridge, also kept citizens employed.³⁴ The expansion of the intra-coastal canal also helped keep the city prosperous. Port Arthur's continued economic prosperity during this period is reflected in the ensuing building boom, which saw over \$4 million spent on the construction of new buildings in the city. In 1935, plans were made for a significant addition to the United States Post Office and Federal Building (Resource 6) to accommodate increased government services for Port Arthur's growing population; the project was completed two years later. Growth of the petrochemical industry and the fact that Port Arthur's population was almost 50,000—the same as the county seat of Beaumont—created a need for expanding county government services.³⁵ A new facility to serve the southern portion of Jefferson County was completed in 1936 (Resource 16; photos 19-20 and 38) at the site where the Plaza Hotel once stood. The building was funded by the Works Progress Administration and designed by co-architects Fred C. Stone and Llewellyn W. Pitts of the Beaumont firm Stone and Pitts, and Port Arthur architect Charles L. Wignall. The three-story Art Deco building—with fluted pilasters, gold-colored paneling, and stylized geometric motifs and detailing—housed offices of county commissioners and other officials on the first floor, court facilities on the second floor, and a jail on the third floor.³⁶ Today, the Jefferson County Office Building still houses county offices.

By 1940, Port Arthur's population had decreased slightly to 46,140, but the physical character and success of the city's central business district remained stable.³⁷ The 1940s and 1950s witnessed the expansion of gas processing and lube processing facilities at Port Arthur's refineries.³⁸ Part of this was due to the creation of a massive petrochemical industry along the Gulf Coast from the Beaumont-Port Arthur area southward to Corpus Christi, to refine fuel for the American war machine. An extensive shipyard at Port Arthur also contributed to the state's

³¹ "History of First National Bank Closely Parallels That of City," *Port Arthur News*, October 23, 1966.

³² Vincent P. Hauser, "First National Bank of Port Arthur, Jefferson County, Texas. Austin, TX," National Register of Historic Places Nomination, Texas Historic Commission, Austin, Oct. 9, 2015.

³³ Dub Brown, "Time Line of Significant Events in the Port Arthur Area," in *Port Arthur Centennial History, 1898–1998, Volume II*, ed. Michael Cate (Port Arthur, TX: Looking Glass Media, 1998), 560.

³⁴ Works Progress Administration Writers' Program, *Port Arthur*, 98.

³⁵ McDonald, *Water, Rails & Oil*, 32.

³⁶ "JeffCo Subcourthouse One of a Kind in Texas," *Port Arthur News*, Dec. 21, 2012, www.panews.com.

³⁷ U.S. Department of Commerce, *Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940, Population, Volume I, Number of Inhabitants* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1942), 1061.

³⁸ Motive Enterprises LLC, "The History of the Port Arthur Refinery Set the Stage for the Modern-Day Motiva," accessed Feb. 17, 2020, <https://www.motiva.com/About/What-We-Do/Refining>.

Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

booming wartime industries.³⁹ By 1950, the city possessed five refineries.⁴⁰ Growth in the central business district, according to the 1951 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, included the building at 631 Austin Avenue, the Railway Express Agency, Inc. office and warehouse (Resource 2; photos 10, 16, and 24), which according to the Jefferson County Appraisal District, was constructed in 1948.

The Modern Era: Development in Downtown Port Arthur Tapers

In the modern era, the City of Port Arthur continued to thrive, albeit at a slower pace than during previous decades, and the beginnings of the city's eventual decline started to unfold. Procter Street and Austin Avenue remained major thoroughfares, but slowly businesses began to shutter, moving out of the downtown area to locations along the highway. This pattern reflects a statewide trend that occurred during the 1950s and 1960s, when increasing numbers of motorists chose to avoid congested city centers and utilize the many transportation corridors being built at the time around cities to bypass traffic in downtown areas. In Port Arthur, much of the commercial activity moved north of downtown to the junction of US 69 and FM 365 in Nederland, closer to Beaumont and Port Neches. Despite the decentralization of the downtown commercial district, some new construction occurred in the downtown area during this period. Within the nominated district, a new modern bank building to house Merchant's Bank emerged at 445 Austin Avenue (Resource 7); the previous bank building was demolished in 1964.⁴¹ The new building, reminiscent of popular bank design during and immediately following the mid-century period, possessed New Formalism architectural stylistic influences: streamlined, angular classical features; stone tile veneer; and full-length vertical windows. The building stands in marked contrast to the First National Bank Building across the street, which represents a former era of bank design. The City Health Department currently occupies the old Merchant's Bank building.

During this period, the *Port Arthur News* constructed a new Modern facility in the 500 block of Fourth Street (Resource 14; photos 14 and 36). The *Port Arthur News*, serving as the only newspaper to publish continuously since around the time of the city's founding, had its first home at 222 Procter Street when the paper was called the *Port Arthur Weekly Herald*. As Port Arthur and the newspaper business grew, chief operator of the publication David L. Stump moved the then-called-*Weekly News* to a series of increasingly larger buildings between 1898 and 1921. After combining with its rival newspaper, *Port Arthur Herald*, the newly formed company, News Publishing Company, renamed the paper *Port Arthur News* and moved the operation to new quarters at 426 Fifth Street. In 1926, during the city's peak building boom, the newspaper built a \$48,000 two-story, brick, Spanish Colonial Revival-style building designed by architect Port Arthur Charles L. Wignall at Waco Avenue and Fourth Street. Two expansions to the building took place in 1948 and in the early 1950s as the business grew and the newspaper acquired more printing equipment and hired more personnel.⁴² At that time, the company had the capacity to print 40,000 newspapers per hour. By the 1960s, the newspaper employed approximately 140 full-time workers and maintained a payroll of \$1 million.⁴³ Thus, it had outgrown the Fifth Street location and moved into a modern sprawling complex in the 500 block of Fourth Street in March 1967. The building now appears to be abandoned.

Around this time, building owners in downtown also undertook renovations in an effort to modernize their buildings. Such was the case for the Adams Building (Resource 8), which was renamed the World Trade Building in the late 1960s. As part of this change, the building owners added Modern masonry panels around the ground level. The city also undertook efforts during this period to combat the decline in downtown. Beginning in the 1960s, urban

³⁹ H. Procter, "World War II," *Handbook of Texas Online*, June 15, 2010 and modified July 27, 2016, accessed Feb. 14, 2020, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/flu04>.

⁴⁰ Storey, "Port Arthur, TX."

⁴¹ Tim Knight, "The Bootlegger and the Madam," in *Port Arthur Centennial History, 1898–1998, Volume I*, ed. Michael Cate (Port Arthur, TX: Looking Glass Media, 1997), 432.

⁴² "News Published Continuously Since March 17, 1897," *Port Arthur News*, March 5, 1967.

⁴³ "The News Offers Many Benefits to Employees," *Port Arthur News*, March 5, 1967, www.newspaperarchive.com.

Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

renewal efforts resulted in major changes in Port Arthur. A 1970 *Port Arthur News* article addressed declining conditions of the city in its justification for urban renewal:

Port Arthur was a seaport without a public port, the central business district was surrounded by a blighted, substandard commercial-residential area, the City Hall building was a converted hospital which had been constructed at the turn of the century, the tax base of the central business district was shaky, and the growth pattern of the community was practically at a standstill despite the potential for growth existent in the community.⁴⁴

In addition to establishing a Port District, the urban renewal project in Port Arthur entailed the creation of a Government District encompassing the area between Fourth Street, Waco Avenue, Lakeshore Drive, and Dallas Avenue. With the goal of consolidating federal, county, and city offices into one geographic area, the Government District also included the existing Jefferson County Office Building (Resource 16). As part of the urban renewal effort, the Mary Gates Hospital building, which had served as City Hall from 1930 to 1970, was demolished. A new Brutalist building (Resource 15; photos 11-12, 20-21 and 37) was built within the newly established Government District. The six-story City Hall building cost \$6.5 million to construct.⁴⁵ By April 1970, City of Port Arthur employees occupied the new building. Despite the City's efforts to tackle various other urban renewal projects, vacancies in downtown Port Arthur continued to increase throughout the 1970s as a result of the economic recession and the continued decentralization of businesses away from downtown.

Port Arthur's Decline in the Twenty-First Century

By the 1990s, many buildings in downtown Port Arthur were long abandoned as an increasing number of property owners moved their operations to suburban areas. The large amount of derelict buildings contributed to an overall sense of blight in the historic downtown, further discouraging visitation to and investment in the area. The decline of downtown Port Arthur has been compounded in the twenty-first century by a series of natural disasters that damaged many businesses and homes. In 2005, Hurricane Rita made landfall and caused significant property damage when it directly hit the Procter Street Seawall, causing wind and flood damage to many downtown homes and businesses. Three years later, in 2008, buildings that were already unstable and/or structurally damaged received the brunt of wind and water damage from Hurricanes Dolly and Ike. Afterward, major commercial enterprises still located downtown moved or closed. The city again suffered major flooding in 2018 when Hurricane Harvey brought massive rainfall to the area, exacerbating an already dire commercial situation downtown. As a result of these hurricanes, entire blocks or groups of lots have been demolished, leaving even more of the downtown vacant and boarded up. As such, the extant buildings that make up the historic district stand as some of the few remaining buildings downtown. With no other cohesive grouping of buildings left in downtown Port Arthur, the buildings within the nominated district not only reflect the prosperous past of Port Arthur, but also serve to show the impact that blight and natural disasters such as hurricanes have on port and coastal cities.

In response to the severe economic downturn in the central business district of Port Arthur over the last 40 years, revitalization efforts are underway. In 2018, the City of Port Arthur unveiled an extensive revitalization plan. Additionally, the City has committed to making improvements to infrastructure in the downtown, such as drainage and sidewalk repairs, to encourage investment in the area. Furthermore, several key buildings in the nominated district have captured the interest of Houston-based oil company Motiva Enterprises, which operates a refinery in Port Arthur, currently the largest in the United States. In 2019, Motiva announced their purchase of three buildings in the nominated historic district: the United States Post Office and Federal Building (Resource 6), the John R. Adams Building (Resource 8), and the John R. Adams Department Store (Resource 5). The company has also expressed interest in acquiring the Vaughn Hotel (Resource 11). Motiva intends to use the buildings as office space

⁴⁴ "Urban Renewal Project Developed Through Cooperation and Understanding," *Port Arthur News*, Oct. 18, 1970, www.newspaperarchive.com.

⁴⁵ "City's New Headquarters," *Port Arthur News*, April 12, 1970, www.newspaperarchive.com.

Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

for their 500 local employees and hopes to move into the buildings by late 2021.⁴⁶ Rehabilitation work on the Federal Building and the Adams Building are currently underway. With Motiva's investment and presence in downtown Port Arthur, along with the Port of Port Arthur's current status as one of the leading seaports in Texas, an economic comeback for the historic central business district appears possible.

Criterion C: Architecture

Though the district's buildings reflect significant trends in their display of architectural forms and styles representative of their period of construction, the district derives much of its architectural significance from its noteworthy number of landmark buildings and buildings associated with regionally, statewide, and nationally acclaimed architects and architectural firms. While the forms of the buildings are typical of historic downtown districts across Texas, many of the buildings in the district are also excellent examples of several architectural styles. Furthermore, because of the economic prosperity in Port Arthur during the period of significance, the landmark buildings in the district reflect a degree of architectural sophistication and ornamentation unusual for similarly-sized Texas cities that developed during the same period.

Association with Significant Architectural Styles and Forms

The historic built environment of the district exhibits examples of local, state, and national trends in building forms and architectural expressions. The inauguration of rail service—the KCP&G Railway in 1897 and the T&NO line in 1908—to the Sabine Lake area served not only as the impetus for the founding and growth of Port Arthur; it also provided a means through which new people, materials, technologies, and ways of thinking were introduced to the Gulf Coast community. Similarly, as a major shipping center, the port established connections to other parts of the country and world, facilitating a greater flow and exchange of ideas, including those concerning architecture. The styles and forms of the buildings in downtown Port Arthur constructed during the early and mid-twentieth century reflect popular trends prevalent in other prosperous towns across the state and country. As the population and economy of Port Arthur soared during the 1910s and 1920s, styles and forms of the banks, hotels, office buildings, and stores that emerged in the downtown increasingly embodied mainstream tastes seen elsewhere, thereby reflecting the cross-pollination of architectural ideas. In addition, Port Arthur's status as a major shipping and petrochemical center attracted architects, designers, and investors with advanced formal academic training and expertise. These professionals elevated the sophistication of architectural designs in Port Arthur during the early and mid-twentieth century in terms of technological innovation and focus on detailed ornamentation.

As described in Section 7, the historic district includes a broad array of architectural forms and styles, but three-part vertical-block forms featuring Renaissance Revival stylistic influences are among the most prevalent within the district. The John R. Adams Building (Resource 8) and the Vaughn Hotel (Resource 11) embody this form and style; the former's quoins, rusticated lower stories, belt courses, and elaborate entry porches, and the use of the Classical orders and motifs, and the latter's stone cladding at the first and second floors, rusticated treatments, curved archways, and Classical Revival sculptural forms, collectively represent the types of building configurations and ornamental application evident in similar types of contemporaneous commercial buildings erected in other thriving cities. The other architectural stylistic influences expressed in the buildings constructed in the district include Art Deco and Modern, which became popular locally and nationally during the 1930s and postwar period, respectively. The collection of various architectural styles within Port Arthur's central business district reflects many Texas city centers of similar size and age, but the fact that the nominated district contains the only remaining cohesive collection of architecturally impressive buildings with a fair level of integrity makes the grouping particularly significant.

⁴⁶ "Image Adjustment: Will Downtown Project Uplift All of Port Arthur?" *Port Arthur News*, May 5, 2019, www.panews.com.

Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

Landmarks

The high proportion of landmark buildings within the district also sets it apart from most Texas communities of similar size and age. In addition to the properties listed in the National Register—the United States Post Office and Federal Building (Resource 6, listed in 1985) and the First National Bank of Port Arthur (Resource 9, listed in 2015)—a handful of other significant properties reflect the prosperity of Port Arthur and its status as an important railroad town, deepwater port, and petrochemical center. Among these, the Renaissance Revival John R. Adams Building's (Resource 8) monumentality and ornamental detailing reflects the thriving economy in Port Arthur during the 1920s. Similarly, the ten-story Vaughn Hotel (Resource 11), with its fire-proof construction, impressive scale, and Renaissance Revival stylistic detailing, illustrates the popularity and wealth of Port Arthur as a tourist destination during its heyday. One of the governmental buildings within the district, the Jefferson County Office Building (Resource 16), featuring a central block with wings building form and Art Deco stylistic influences, serves as an important landmark within the city and county. Its fluted pilasters capped by stylized eagle sculptures, gold paneling, vegetal motifs in the belt course, and allegorical medallions typify the style.

In addition to these monumental edifices, the district also contains several smaller architecturally significant landmark buildings. The T&NO Railroad Company Passenger Depot exhibits many features commonly displayed in early twentieth century passenger depots constructed across Texas. The building takes on a standard rectangular depot form and has wide overhanging eaves, large brackets, and a low-pitched hipped roof reflective of depot design of the period. The John R. Adams & Co. Department Store (Resource 5) is another landmark building in the district. The two-part commercial block building displays decorative brick lentils and belt courses, pilasters with masonry Classical caps, a stone cornice with brackets, and a stepped parapet.

Architects

Over a third of the buildings within the district were designed by architects or architectural firms, a testament to the wealth and confidence in Port Arthur during its economic peak. At least five architects and architectural firms—discussed below in chronological order—are known to have designed buildings within the district. These designers range from relatively unknown local architects to significant nationally known firms, but each contributed significantly to the development of the built environment and architectural aesthetic of Port Arthur's central business district.

James Knox Taylor (1857–1929)

Between 1897 and 1912, as Supervising Architect of the United States Department of the Treasury, James Knox Taylor designed and supervised the design of many federal buildings across the country. A graduate of Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Taylor worked in New York City as a draftsman before forming partnerships with Cass Gilbert in Minneapolis in 1882 and Amos J. Boyden in Philadelphia in 1893.⁴⁷ As Supervising Architect of the Treasury, Taylor was responsible for the designs of post offices, federal courthouses, customs buildings, as well as the Ellis Island Immigrant Hospital. In Texas, Taylor oversaw the building of dozens of post offices. Taylor's post offices featured Classical stylistic influences, mainly Roman or Renaissance Revival. Port Arthur's United States Post Office and Federal Building (Resource 6), completed in 1912, exemplifies the many governmental buildings he designed.

After resigning from the Treasury, Taylor served as director of the Department of Architecture at MIT before reentering into private practice in Yonkers, New York.⁴⁸ A number Taylor's buildings, including the Endicott

⁴⁷ Antoinette J. Lee, *Architects to the Nation: The Rise and Decline of the Supervising Architect's Office* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 197.

⁴⁸ Lee, *Architects to the Nation*, 216.

Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

Building (1890, Minneapolis as Gilbert and Taylor), the US Customhouse in Houston (1907–1911), and the Greenville, Texas Post Office (1910), are listed in the National Register.

H.C. Mauer (1873–1939)

Henry Conrad Mauer, designer of the John R. Adams Building (Resource 8), was born in La Grange, Texas and established a firm in Beaumont in the early twentieth century, becoming Beaumont's only trained architect of the period. His education at the Pratt Institute in New York City emphasized Beau-Arts ideals, as many American architecture schools did at the time.⁴⁹ After graduating in June 1898, Mauer attempted to set up a practice in his birthplace. This proved unsuccessful as did his efforts to start a practice in two other small Texas towns. When the oil boom around Spindletop ensued, Mauer moved to Beaumont where he set up an independent practice. H. C. Mauer became a well-known architect in the community among prominent businessmen and investors in Beaumont, designing many Classically influences residences, including: the J.C. Stedman House (1905), the McFaddin-Ward House (1905-1906, listed in the NRHP in 1971), the C.T. Heisig House (1908), the J.E. Broussard House (1908), the Valentine Wiess House (1908), and the M.J. Bass House (1908).⁵⁰ Designing homes for Beaumont's wealthiest oilmen helped build Mauer's reputation as one of the most recognized architects in Southeast Texas. In Port Arthur, H.C. Mauer also designed the White House Dry Goods Company building and several school buildings.⁵¹

Joseph Finger (1887–1953)

Designer of the 1929 Vaughn Hotel (Resource 11), Joseph Finger, was born in 1887 in Bielitz, Austria-Hungary. He completed his primary, secondary, and technical education in Bielitz before emigrating to the United States in 1903, first landing in New Orleans and then moving to Houston in 1908.⁵² Finger's architecture career began when he started working in the branch office of the Dallas architect C.D. Hill and Company. In 1912, he became the junior partner in the firm Lewis Sterling Green, but only two years later he established his own practice with fellow architect James Ruskin Bailey.⁵³ From 1920 to 1923, Finger had a partnership with Lamar Q. Cato. Starting in 1923, Joseph Finger formed an independent practice which he maintained until 1944. From that point until the year of his death, 1953, Finger practiced in partnership with architect, George W. Rustay.⁵⁴ As Houston's most renowned Jewish architect, Finger won commissions for many Jewish institutional buildings in the city from the 1910s through the 1940s.

From the commencement of his first partnership, Joseph Finger became well-known for his designs of commercial buildings such as offices, hotels, and retail shops, as well as for industrial buildings.⁵⁵ Other hotel projects he completed include: the DeGeorge Hotel (1914) in Houston; Plaza Hotel and Texas State hotels also in Houston, which opened the same year as the Vaughn Hotel (Resource 11); the Charlton Hotel in Lake Charles, Louisiana (also in 1929); and the McCartney Hotel (1930) in Texarkana. As he did with the Vaughn Hotel, Finger employed the use of fire-proof construction, three-part vertical block building forms, and Classically-inspired features in the ornamentation applied to his other hotels.

⁴⁹ Timothy M. Matthewson, "The Architecture of Oil: The Colonial Revival in Beaumont, Texas, 1902–1914," *East Texas Historical Journal* 27, 1 (1989): 8.

⁵⁰ Matthewson, "The Architecture of Oil," 8-10.

⁵¹ Judith Linsley, "Our Town Research," *Our Town: Preserving the Past*, accessed February 28, 2020, <http://preserveourtown.blogspot.com/p/our-town-research.html>.

⁵² Stephen Fox, "Finger, Joseph," *Handbook of Texas Online*, June 12, 2010 and modified April 13, 2018, accessed Feb. 28, 2020, <https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/ffi37>.

⁵³ Fox, "Finger, Joseph."

⁵⁴ Fox, "Finger, Joseph."

⁵⁵ Stephen Fox, "Finger, Joseph."

Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

Favrot and Livaudais (1895–1932)

Charles Favrot and Louis A. Livaudais, designers of the First National Bank of Port Arthur (Resource 9) established the prolific firm of Favrot and Livaudais in New Orleans, Louisiana in 1895. Charles Favrot started his career working as a draftsman for distinguished architect James Freret, who often designed in the Beaux Arts style.⁵⁶ Born in Baton Rouge in 1866, Favrot completed a course in mechanical engineering at Louisiana State University in 1884 and later in his career took a postgraduate course at Cornell University.⁵⁷ While working for Freret, Favrot met Louis A. Livaudais, and together they would later establish their own practice. Throughout his career working in New Orleans, Favrot became known as the “father of zoning,” having served as the city’s first chairman of the planning and zoning commission.⁵⁸ Charles Favrot also served three terms as vice president for the American Institute of Architects (AIA) and was a member of the board of directors for nine years. Less information about Louis A. Livaudais is available than is about his business partner. However, it is known that Livaudais worked for Freret for some time before he and Favrot decided to start their own architecture firm together. Once they established their partnership, they quickly garnered attention for their designs in New Orleans and across Louisiana. One year after Livaudais’s death in 1932, the firm continued working as Favrot and Reed. Successor firms include Favrot, Reed, and Mathes, and later, Mathes and Bierres. The firm of Favrot and Livaudais enjoyed a long, successful tenure, producing dozens of designs for impressive buildings, many of which are now listed in the NRHP.

Included among the firm’s significant body of work are: the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Lake Charles (1913), Bolton High School in Alexandria (1915), New Orleans Cotton Exchange Building (1921), Hibernia Bank Building in New Orleans (1921), Calcasieu Marine Bank (1928), and numerous parish courthouses and residences, all located in Louisiana; the oeuvre represents a wide variety of building types and scales.⁵⁹ However, each of their designs embody architectural stylistic influences derived from Classical forms and traditions. The Calcasieu Marine Bank, in particular, shares similar features embodied by the First National Bank building in Port Arthur: a three-story configuration, a monumental vault form, and a projecting colonnaded portico with three-dimensional detailing.

Stone and Pitts (1934–1957)

Llewellyn William “Skeet” Pitts, born in Uniontown, Alabama in 1906, received a bachelor of science in architecture from the Georgia School of Technology in 1927.⁶⁰ Two years after graduating, he joined Fred C. Stone’s architecture firm in Beaumont as a draftsman, contributing to the designs for prominent government buildings in Jefferson County, including Beaumont’s United States Post Office and Court House and the Jefferson County Courthouse (listed in the NRHP in 1982). In 1934, Pitts became partner and the firm reorganized as Stone and Pitts, which quickly became one of the most prominent architecture firms in southeast Texas.⁶¹ The buildings designed by Stone and Pitts throughout the 1930s reflect the firm’s mastery of modernistic design; the Art Deco-inspired Jefferson County Office Building (Resource 16) erected in Port Arthur in 1936 serves as an excellent example. During this period, Stone and Pitts also designed the City National Bank building and the Greyhound Bus Terminal, both in Beaumont, and movie theaters in Beaumont, Kilgore, and Longview.⁶² After World War II, during which time Pitts served as a Lt. Commander C.E.C. in the United States Naval Reserve, the firm of Stone and Pitts

⁵⁶ Jessie Poesch and Barbara SoRelle Bacot, eds. *Louisiana Buildings 1720-1940: The Historic American Buildings Survey* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997), 311.

⁵⁷ Poesch and Bacot, eds. *Louisiana Buildings 1720-1940*, 312.

⁵⁸ “C.F. Favrot, 72, Architect, Dies,” *The Town Talk*, March 10, 1939, www.newspaperarchive.com.

⁵⁹ Poesch and Bacot, ed. *Louisiana Buildings 1720-1940*, 311-313.

⁶⁰ Anna Mod, Gregory Smith, and Penny Louisa Clark, “Beaumont Commercial District (Boundary and Period of Significance Increase,” National Register of Historic Places Nomination, Texas Historic Commission, Austin, Feb. 13, 2008.

⁶¹ Mod, Smith, and Clark, “Beaumont Commercial District (Boundary and Period of Significance Increase.”

⁶² Richard Michael Gachot, “Lamar State College of Technology Administrative Building,” National Register of Historic Places Nomination, Texas Historic Commission, Austin, Oct. 9, 2015.

Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

took on larger commercial, industrial, and governmental projects which earned them several design awards. These projects included: the White House Department Store and Rosenthal's Department Store in Beaumont, 19 Coca-Cola bottling plants across the central United States, and laboratories and office buildings for multiple petrochemical companies throughout southeast Texas.⁶³ The firm also completed two college master plans, numerous university buildings, and many public school projects in the region. When Fred C. Stone retired in 1957, the firm changed its name to Pitts, Mebane and Phelps. The following accomplishments of Llewellyn William "Skeet" Pitts demonstrate the respect and admiration he earned as an architect: elected to the College of Fellows of the AIA in 1958, appointed as president of the Texas State Society of Architects in 1961, appointed as director of the AIA's Texas Region from 1963 to 1966, and chosen as the governor-appointed chairman of the Architectural Advisory Committee to the Texas State Building Commission from 1959 to 1962.⁶⁴

Conclusion

The Port Arthur Downtown Historic District contains the remaining buildings with integrity in Port Arthur's downtown dating from the early- to mid-twentieth century that reflect the city's periods of commercial prosperity and developmental growth resulting from its status as an important industrial port and petrochemical center. The buildings composing the historic district embody popular forms and architectural styles reflective of regional, state, and national trends, many of them having been designed by locally- and nationally-significant architects. The resources within the historic district also survived both the city's late-twentieth-century economic downturn and a series of destructive hurricanes in the twenty-first century. As such, the collection of buildings offers the only tangible link to the periods when the Port Arthur economy thrived due to the oil boom and its designation as an official United States port of entry. The 14 contributing buildings in the district stand as surviving examples of numerous other contemporaneous buildings that are no longer extant, underscoring Port Arthur's economic decline and devastating environmental past. The Port Arthur Downtown Historic District is nominated under Criterion A in the area of Community Planning and Development and under Criterion C in the area of Architecture at the local level.

⁶³ Richard Michael Gachot, "Lamar State College of Technology Administrative Building."

⁶⁴ Mod, Smith, and Clark, "Beaumont Commercial District (Boundary and Period of Significance Increase.)"

Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

Bibliography

- Brintle, Sidney A. "John Warne Gates." *Handbook of Texas Online*. June 15, 2010, modified Nov. 12, 2019. Accessed February 20, 2020). <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fga41>.
- Bryant, Keith, Jr. *Arthur E. Stilwell: Promoter with a Hunch*. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 1971.
- Cate, Michael, ed. *Port Arthur Centennial History, 1898–1998*, Volume I. Port Arthur, TX: Looking Glass Media, 1997.
- _____. *Port Arthur Centennial History, 1898–1998*, Volume II. Port Arthur, TX: Looking Glass Media, 1998.
- "C.F. Favrot, 72, Architect, Dies," *The Town Talk*, March 10, 1939, from www.newspaperarchive.com.
- "City's New Headquarters," *Port Arthur News*, April 12, 1970, from www.newspaperarchive.com.
- "Completion of Building Ends Long Felt Need," *Port Arthur News*, Aug. 21, 1929, from www.newspaperarchive.com.
- "Double Rooms Hotel Feature," *Port Arthur News*, July 14, 1929, from www.newspaperarchive.com.
- "Dreams of Spain Become Reality in Goodhue Hotel," *Port Arthur News*, Aug. 21, 1929, from www.newspaperarchive.com.
- "Dr. Vaughn Announces 10-Story Hotel Here," *Port Arthur News*, May 27, 1928, from www.newspaperarchive.com.
- Fox, Stephen. "Finger, Joseph," *Handbook of Texas Online*. June 12, 2010. Accessed Feb. 28, 2020, <https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/ffi37>.
- Gachot, Richard Michael. "Lamar State College of Technology Administrative Building," National Register of Historic Places Nomination, Texas Historic Commission, Austin, October 9, 2015.
- Gillette, Halbert Powers. *Handbook of Construction Cost*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1922.
- Hauser, Vincent P. "First National Bank of Port Arthur, Jefferson County, Texas. Austin, TX." National Register of Historic Places Nomination, Texas Historical Commission, Austin. October 9, 2015.
- H. H. Houseman, Jr., and John C. Ferguson. "United States Post Office and Federal Building, Jefferson County, Texas," National Register of Historic Places Nomination, Texas Historical Commission, Austin, March 28, 1986.
- HHM & Associates, Inc. "Photographic Historic Research Survey of Commercial Buildings within the City of Port Arthur." For the Texas Department of Transportation, Austin, TX. June 2012.
- "History of First National Bank Closely Parallels That of City," *Port Arthur News*, Oct. 23, 1966, from www.newspaperarchive.com.
- "Hotel Goodhue Has 200 Rooms," *Port Arthur News*, Aug. 21, 1929, from www.newspaperarchive.com.
- "Image Adjustment: Will Downtown Project Uplift All of Port Arthur?" *Port Arthur News*, May 5, 2019, from www.panews.com.

Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

- Isaac, Paul E. "Beaumont, TX." *Handbook of Texas Online*. June 12, 2010 and modified Nov. 7, 2018. Accessed January 22, 2020. <https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hdb02>.
- "JeffCo Subcourthouse One of a Kind in Texas," *Port Arthur News*, Dec. 21, 2012, from www.panews.com.
- Kleiner, Diana J. "Jefferson County." *Handbook of Texas Online*. June 15, 2010 and modified May 3, 2019. Accessed February 1, 2020. <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hcj05>.
- Lamar University "Spindletop History." *Spindletop Gladys City Boomtown*. Accessed February 2, 2020. <https://www.lamar.edu/spindletop-gladys-city/spindletop-history.html>.
- Lee, Antoinette J. *Architects to the Nation: The Rise and Decline of the Supervising Architect's Office*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Linsley, Judith. "Our Town Research," *Our Town: Preserving the Past*, Accessed February 28, 2020, <http://preserveourtown.blogspot.com/p/our-town-research.html>.
- Matthewson, Timothy M. "The Architecture of Oil: The Colonial Revival in Beaumont, Texas, 1902-1914." *East Texas Historical Journal* 27, no. 1 (Jan. 1989): 3-15.
- McDonald, Archie. *Water, Rails & Oil: Historic Mid & South Jefferson County*. San Antonio, TX: Historical Publishing Network, 2008.
- Mod, Anna, Gregory Smith, and Penny Louisa Clark. "Beaumont Commercial District (Boundary and Period of Significance Increase), Jefferson County, Texas." National Register of Historic Places Nomination, Texas Historical Commission, February 13, 2008.
- "Modern Driftwood Fills Need of the City," *Port Arthur News*, Dec.20, 1963, from www.newspaperarchive.com.
- Motiva Enterprises LLC, "The History of the Port Arthur Refinery Set the Stage for the Modern-Day Motiva," Accessed Feb. 17, 2020. <https://www.motiva.com/About/What-We-Do/Refining>.
- "New 6-Story Adams Building Sets Pace for Downtown Area," *Port Arthur News*, Oct. 24, 1924, from www.newspapers.com.
- "News Published Continuously Since March 17, 1897," *Port Arthur News*, March 5, 1967, from www.newspaperarchive.com.
- Poesch, Jessie, SoRelle Bacot, Barbara, ed. *Louisiana Buildings 1720-1940: The Historic American Buildings Survey*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997.
- "Port Arthur Once Played at Pleasure Pier," *Beaumont Enterprise*, March 19, 2018, from www.beaumontenterprise.com.
- Procter, H. "World War II," *Handbook of Texas Online*. June 15, 2010 and modified July 27, 2016. Accessed Feb. 14, 2020. <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/flu04>.
- Rochelle, John R. "The Founding of a Port City: Port, Arthur, Texas." *East Texas Historical Journal* 13, no. 2 (Oct. 1975): 25-35.
- "Sabine-Neches Canal," *Galveston Daily News*, March 20, 1904, from www.newspapers.com.
- Sanborn Map Company. 1900, 1904, 1910, 1915, 1923, 1930, 1951. Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps. Port Arthur, TX.
- "South County Office Building." Recorded Texas Historic Landmark marker text.

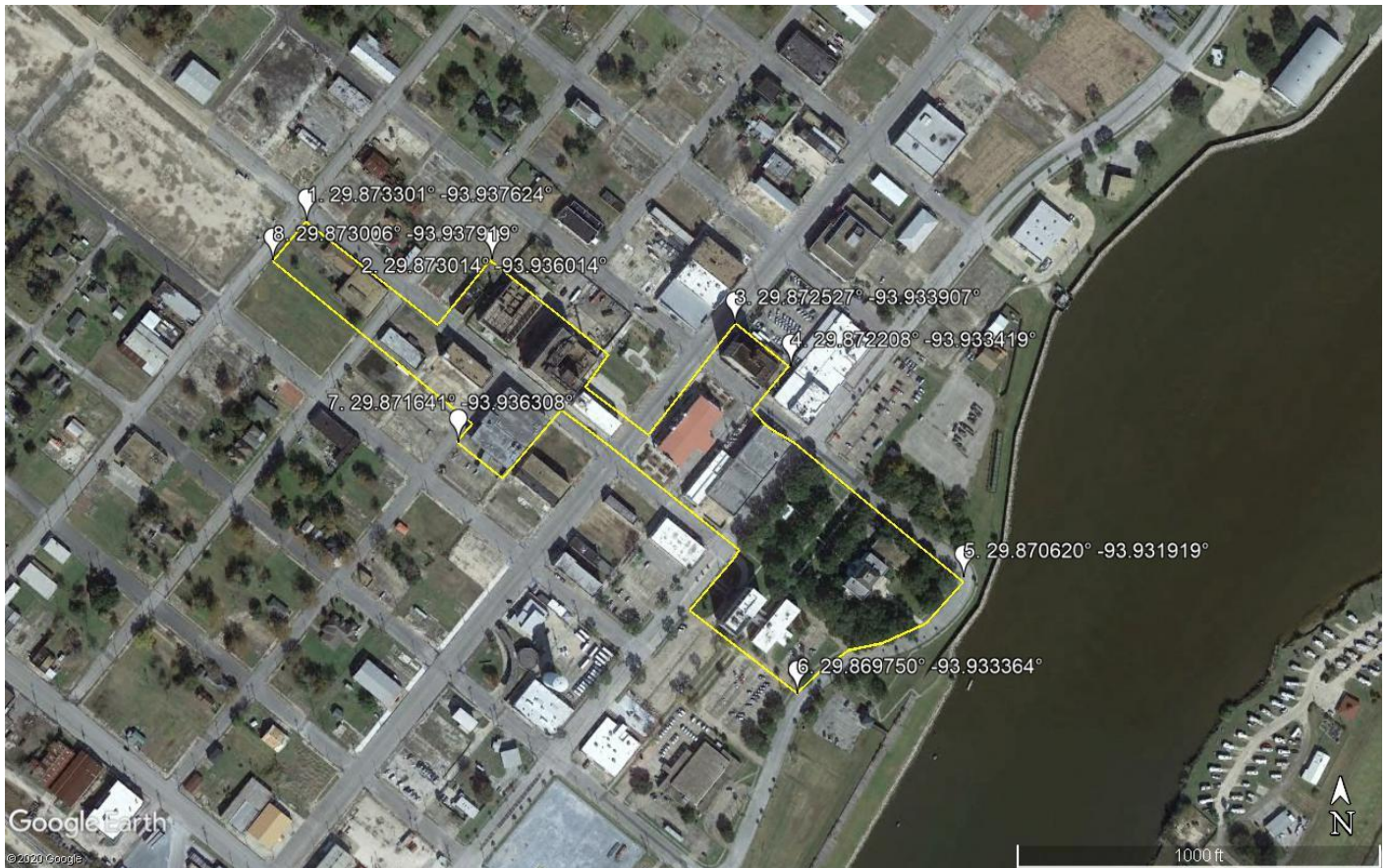
Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

- Stewart, William Ford. *Collision of Giants: The Port Arthur Story*. San Antonio, TX: The Naylor Company, 1966.
- Storey, John W. "Port Arthur, TX." *Handbook of Texas Online*. June 15, 2010 and modified May 6, 2019. Accessed February 1, 2020. <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hdp05>.
- "The News Offers Many Benefits to Employees," *Port Arthur News*, March 5, 1967, from www.newspaperarchive.com.
- "Two Pioneers Are Claimed by Death," *Port Arthur News*, Sept. 16, 1940, from www.newspapers.com.
- University of North Texas Libraries, *Portal to Texas History*. <http://texashistory.unt.edu/>.
- "Urban Renewal Project Developed Through Cooperation and Understanding," *Port Arthur News*, Oct. 18, 1970, from www.newspaperarchive.com.
- U.S. Department of Commerce. *Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940, Population, Volume 1, Number of Inhabitants*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1942.
- "Vision of Need for Hotel by Goodhue," *Port Arthur News*, Aug. 21, 1929, from www.newspaperarchive.com.
- Wooster, Robert. "Lucas, Anthony, Francis." *Handbook of Texas Online*. June 15, 2010 and modified July 27, 2016. Accessed February 13, 2020. <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/flu04>.
- _____. "Sabine-Neches Waterway and Sabine Pass Ship Channel." *Handbook of Texas Online*. June 15, 2010. Accessed Feb. 13, 2020. <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/rrs02>.
- Works Progress Administration Writers' Program. *Port Arthur*. Houston, TX: The Anson Jones Press, 1940.

Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

Section 10: Geographical Documentation

Acreeage of Property: 20.9 acres



1. 29.873301° -93.937624°
2. 29.873014° -93.936014°
3. 29.872527° -93.933907°
4. 29.872208° -93.933419°
5. 29.870620° -93.931919°
6. 29.870620° -93.931919°
7. 29.871641° -93.936308°
8. 29.873006° -93.937919°

Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

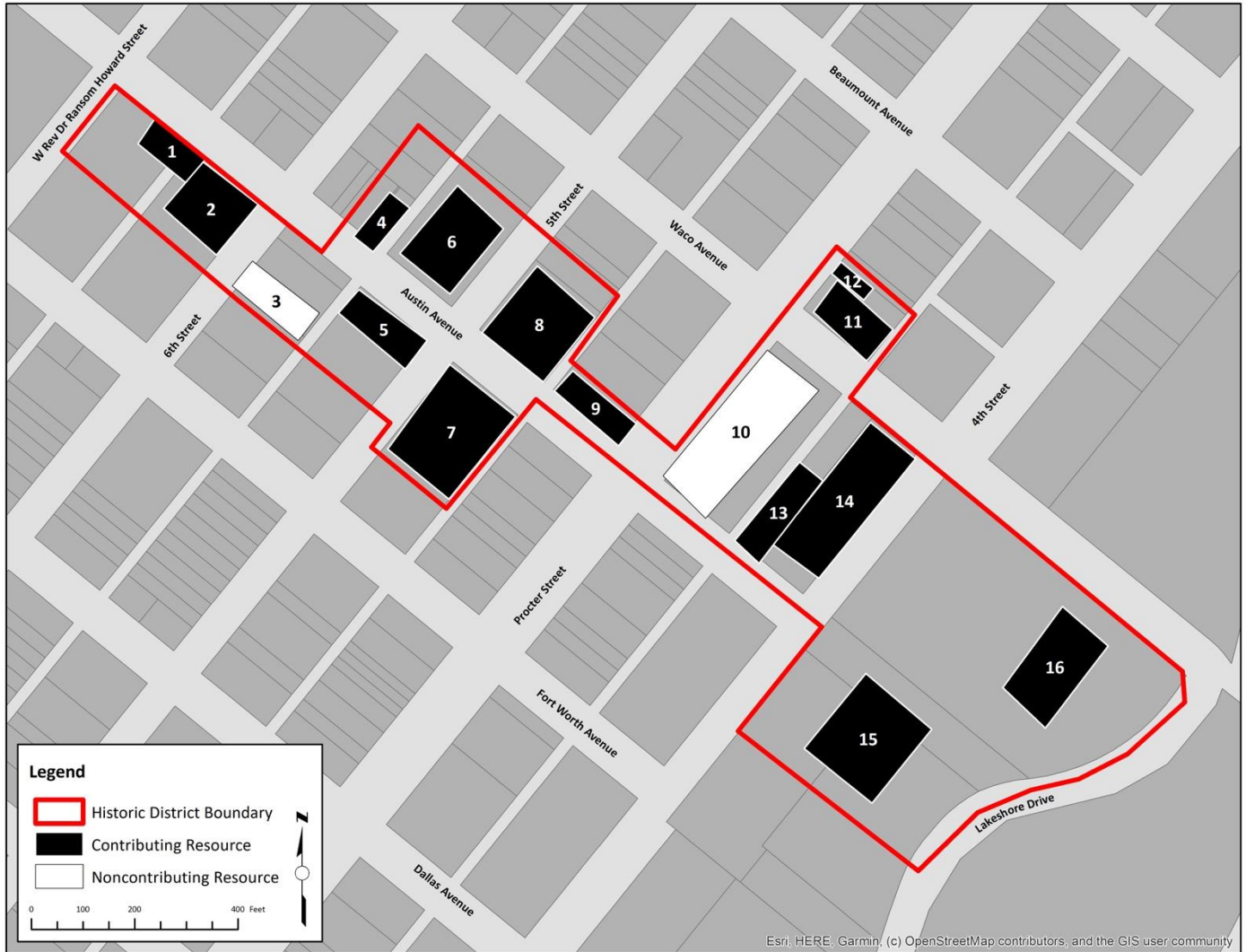
Verbal Boundary Description: The district includes approximately 21 acres, roughly set within West Reverend Doctor Ransom Howard Street to the northwest, Beaumont Avenue to the northeast, Lakeshore Drive to the southeast, and Fort Worth Avenue to the southwest. The boundary is delineated on the included maps.

Beginning at the intersection of West Reverend Doctor Ransom Howard Street and Austin Avenue, the boundary runs southeast along Austin Avenue to the northwestern parcel boundary of 526 Austin Avenue. The boundary then extends to the northeast a half block and turns to the southeast following the rear property lines of the buildings at 526, 500, and 448 Austin Avenue. Next, the boundary turns to the southwest following the southeast parcel boundary of the building at 448 Austin Avenue until it reaches the northeast property line of the resource situated at 501 Procter Street. It then stretches southeast to Procter Street and turns to the northeast stretching along Procter Street until it meets the northeast property line of 608 Procter Street. At this point, the boundary runs to the southeast to the alley bisecting the 600 block of Procter Street, and then to the southwest along the alley until it reaches Waco Avenue. The boundary then extends to the southeast along Waco Avenue to Lakeshore Drive. It continues southwest along Lakeshore Drive to the southwest edge of the City Hall complex and then turns to the northwest until it meets Fourth Street. The boundary then runs northeast along Fourth Street for a half block and then turns to the northwest, following Austin Avenue to the middle of the 400 block of that thoroughfare. The boundary then stretches to the southwest along the southeast and then southwest property lines of 445 Austin Avenue. The boundary then continues in the northwesterly direction through the middle of the 500 and 600 blocks of the southwest side of Austin Avenue until it reaches West Reverend Doctor Ransom Howard Street. Finally, the boundary turns to the northeast until it meets with the original starting point at the intersection with Austin Avenue.

Boundary Justification: The boundaries of the contain the largest collection of intact surviving historic resources associated with the founding, growth, and development of Port Arthur as a significant railroad town, tourist destination, shipping and petrochemical center, and a vibrant local community. Significant resources include landmark commercial, transportation, and governmental buildings dating to early- to-mid-twentieth century. The boundaries of the historic district contain the only remaining cohesive collection of buildings in downtown Port Arthur with sufficient integrity to reflect significant trends in the development of the city. Areas outside the district boundaries are primarily vacant or severely damaged commercial buildings that lack integrity.

Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

Map showing contributing and noncontributing resources in the Port Arthur Downtown Historic District. Boundaries in red, contributing resources in black, and noncontributing resources in white. Source: HHM & Associates, Inc., 2020.



Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

Map showing the buildings in the Port Arthur Downtown Historic District color-coded according to dates of construction.
Source: HHM & Associates, Inc., 2020.



Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

Map showing the buildings in the Port Arthur Downtown Historic District color-coded according to architectural styles. Source: HHM & Associates, Inc., 2020.



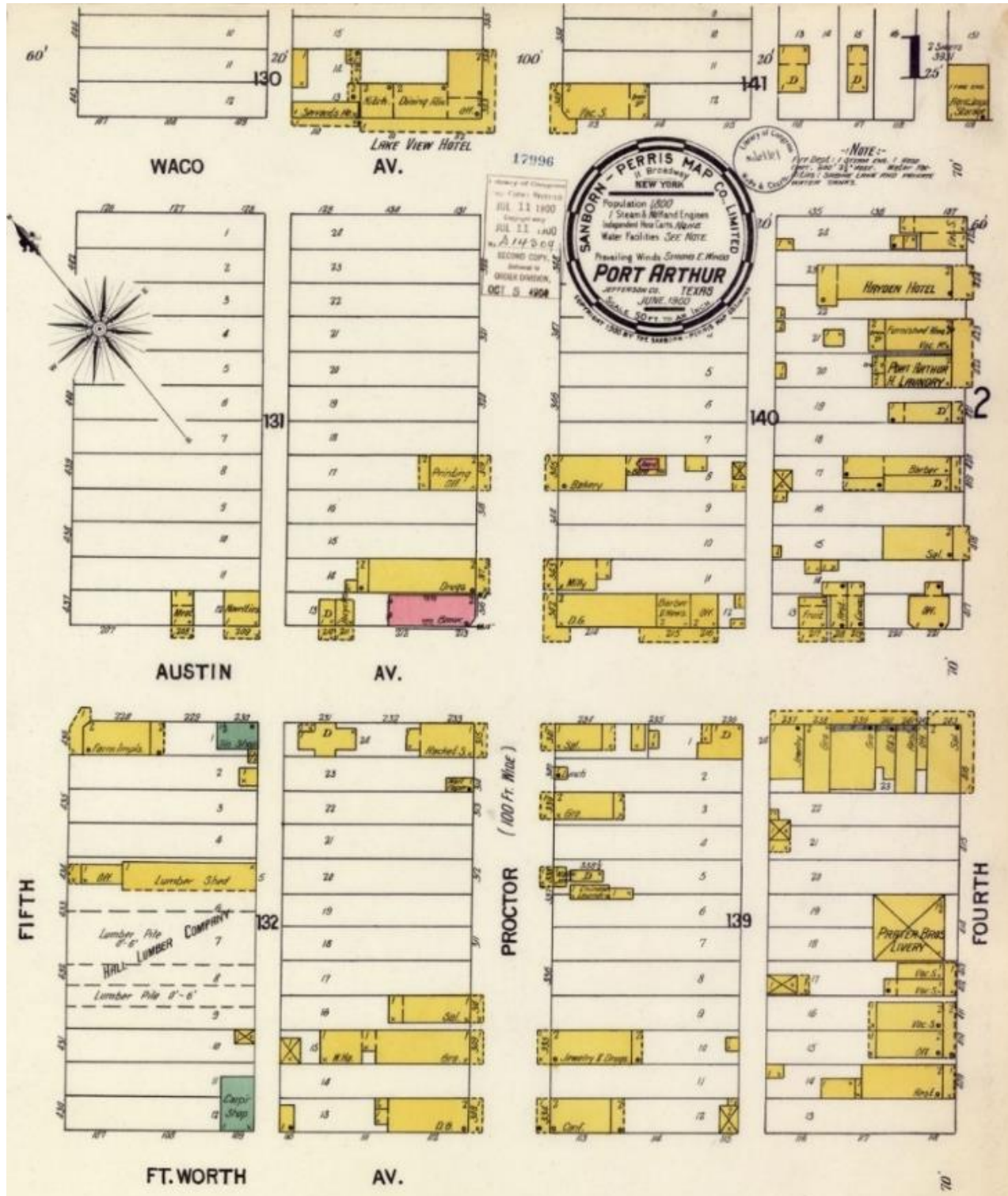
Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

Map showing the buildings in the Port Arthur Downtown Historic District color-coded according to property types. Source: HHM & Associates, Inc., 2020.



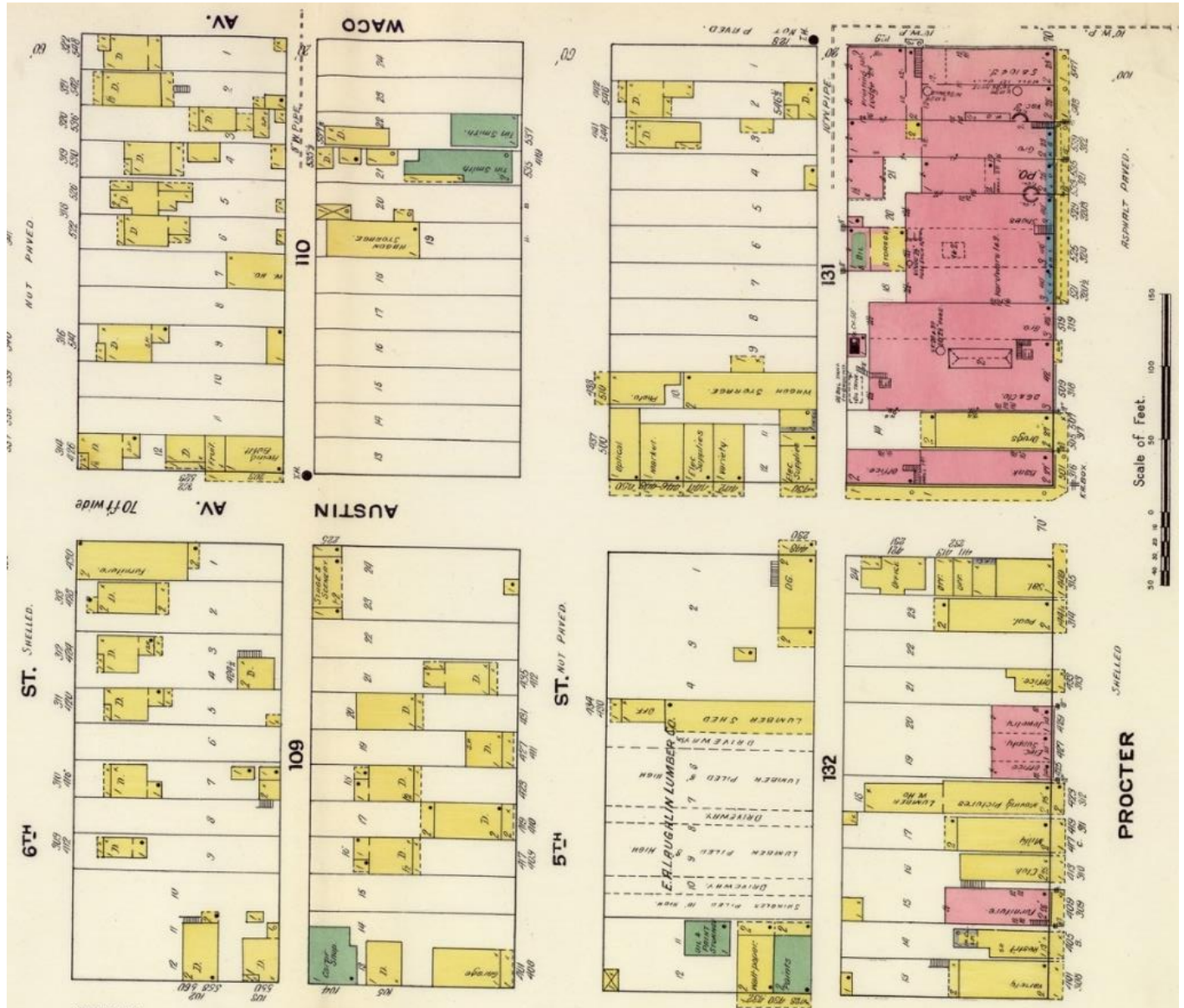
Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

The 1900 Sanborn Fire Insurance Company map shows early businesses and dwellings that emerged along Austin Avenue. Residences and lodging facilities lined Fourth Street. Source: University of Texas at Austin, Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection.



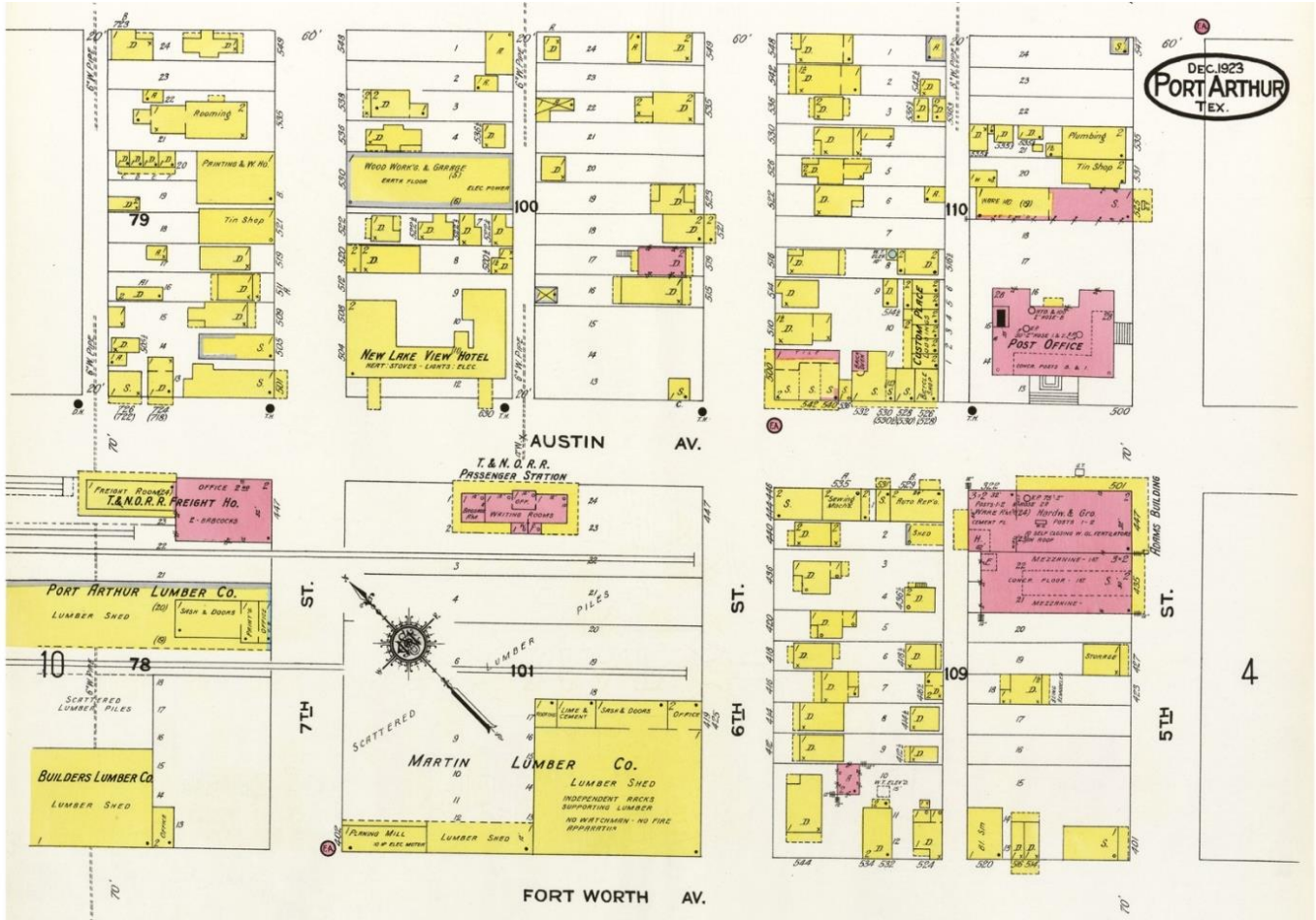
Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

1910 Sanborn Fire Insurance Company map of Port Arthur. Source: University of Texas at Austin, Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection.



Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

1923 Sanborn Fire Insurance Company map of Port Arthur, Sheet 11. Source: University of Texas at Austin, Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection.



Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

1930 Sanborn Fire Insurance Company map of Port Arthur, Sheet 2. Source: University of Texas at Austin, Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection. Source: The Portal to Texas History.



Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

Figure 1. This clipping from a 1897 *Kansas Democrat* newspaper is an example of the many advertisements the Port Arthur Townsite and Land Company published extensively throughout the country in newspapers and pamphlets in the late 1890s. Source: www.newspaperarchive.com.

PORT ARTHUR
LAND CO.
 And showing the Extensive System of Rice Canals.

EXPLANATION.

Large subdivisions contain 320 acres.
 Small subdivisions contain 80 acres.
 Each quarter section is designated by ranges lettered from "A to T," and sections from "1 to 36."
 Quarter sections are divided in 36 acre tracts numbered from "1 to 36."
 Tracts are designated by their size as quarter sections from, each 36 acre tracts having a number on a tract.

LAND MARKED IN RED IS SOLD.

RICE
 IS
KING
 and Jefferson County, Texas,
 Lands
ARE THE BEST.

RICE
 THE FARMER'S IDEAL GRAIN.

Unlike other farm products, there is no uncertainty about crops, the rice farmer leaving neither drought nor deluge, his crop being independent of one and improved by the other, for its rice culture an abundant supply of water is required, and the Port Arthur Rice and Irrigating Company have built a canal to furnish water in abundance.

Any farmer who understands growing wheat, can grow rice. Our rice lands are among the best in the country. One company this year, on our rice lands, received \$30.00 an acre from one variety and \$20.00 an acre from another variety of rice. We have lands adjoining the farm for sale. Often one crop of rice pays returns in investment, including cost of land.

We can furnish from ten acres up, on long time, and easy payments. Better buy now while prices are low. Rice is the new money maker for the farmer.

DISTANCES.
 Length of K. C. P. & G. R. R. 786 miles.
 Beaumont to Port Arthur, 78 miles.
 Port Arthur to end of Government Jetty, 14 1/2 miles.
 Houston to Port Arthur, 80 miles.
 Galveston to Port Arthur, about 70 miles.
 Width of Sabine Lake, 12 miles.
 Length of Sabine Lake, 29 miles.
 Depth of Sabine Pass, 25 to 40 feet per last Government Report.

THIS magnificent body of land, comprising some 42,000 acres in all, besides 4,000 acres for Townsite and Terminal location, is most favorably situated and bounded for right development into profitable farms and beautiful homes.

It is bounded on three sides by flowing water—the Neches River, Lake Sabine and Taylor's Bayou, giving some thirty miles of valuable water frontage, being ten miles on the Neches, twelve miles on the Lake and eight miles on Taylor's Bayou, all navigable for craft of considerable size for conveying produce to Port Arthur's growing market, and rice, cotton, grain, sugar cane, coal, etc., to its mills, compresses, elevators and ships.

These facilities, besides the two trunk lines of railroad, the Kansas City, Pittsburg & Gulf, and the Sabine & East Texas (Southern Pacific System), crossing through the entire length of the property, afford unequalled advantages for reaching the increasing local markets, and by special fast freight trains on the K. C. P. & G. Street to Kansas City, and other Northern market centers.

While the whole area of these lands is to the eye practically level, as is characteristic of the entire Texas coast region, there is upon these lands some of the **HIGHEST GRADE** in the coast country, and all has sufficient undulations of surface to afford a variety of conditions for

SABINE LAKE

RESERVED FOR FACTORY SITES

PORT ARTHUR

TEXAS

DOWNTOWN PORT ARTHUR

Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

Figure 3. View of the Hotel Sabine, constructed by the Kansas City, Pittsburg & Gulf Railroad in 1896 to attract businessmen and settlers to Port Arthur. The spacious three-story hotel featured 70 rooms and surrounding tropical gardens. The hotel occupied the lakeshore where the present-day Jefferson County Office now stands. Source: The Portal to Texas History.

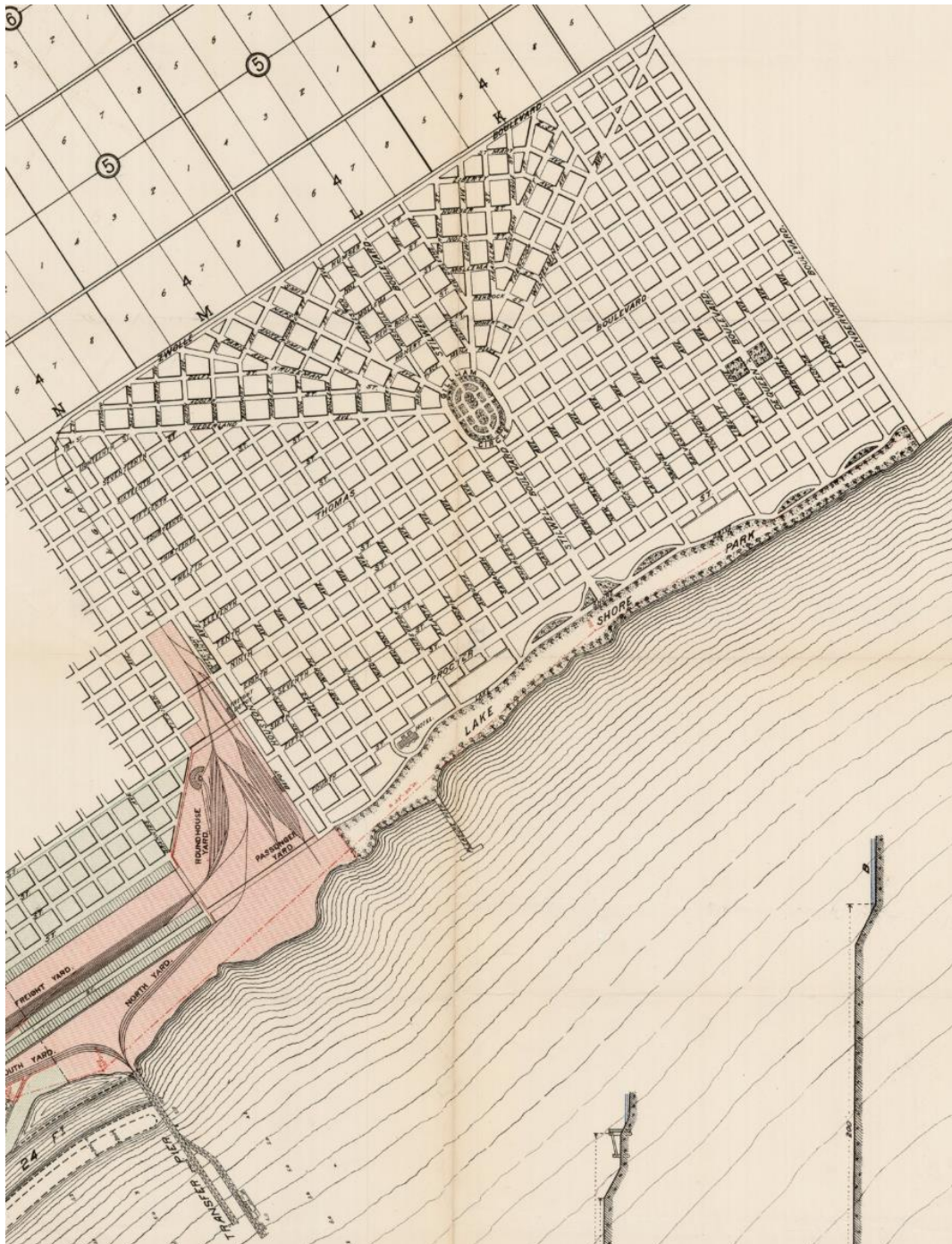


Figure 4. A postcard from 1907 showing Pleasure Pier, a 2,000-foot-long pier built over Sabine Lake in 1896. It featured an open-air seafood restaurant as well as a natatorium fed by artesian wells. It was located near the southern terminus of Austin and Waco Avenues. Pleasure Pier, along with nearby Hotel Sabine, functioned as the center of social and recreational life in early Port Arthur. Source: The Portal to Texas History.



Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

Figure 5. Detail of the 1897 *Canal Harbor & Terminal Improvements at Port Arthur Texas*, completed by Robert Gillham, chief engineer and general manager of the Kansas City, Pittsburg & Gulf Railroad. The map shows the original town plan of Port Arthur, with the grid of streets oriented in a northwest-southeast orientation, orthogonal to the western bank of Sabine Lake. The map also illustrates the locations of shipyard slips, a lumber wharf, freight yards, railroad lines, roundhouse yards, and piers in early Port Arthur. Source: Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps, Inc.



Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

Figure 6. View of entire 1897 *Canal Harbor & Terminal Improvements at Port Arthur Texas*, completed by Robert Gillham, chief engineer and general manager of the Kansas City, Pittsburg & Gulf Railroad. Source: Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps, Inc.

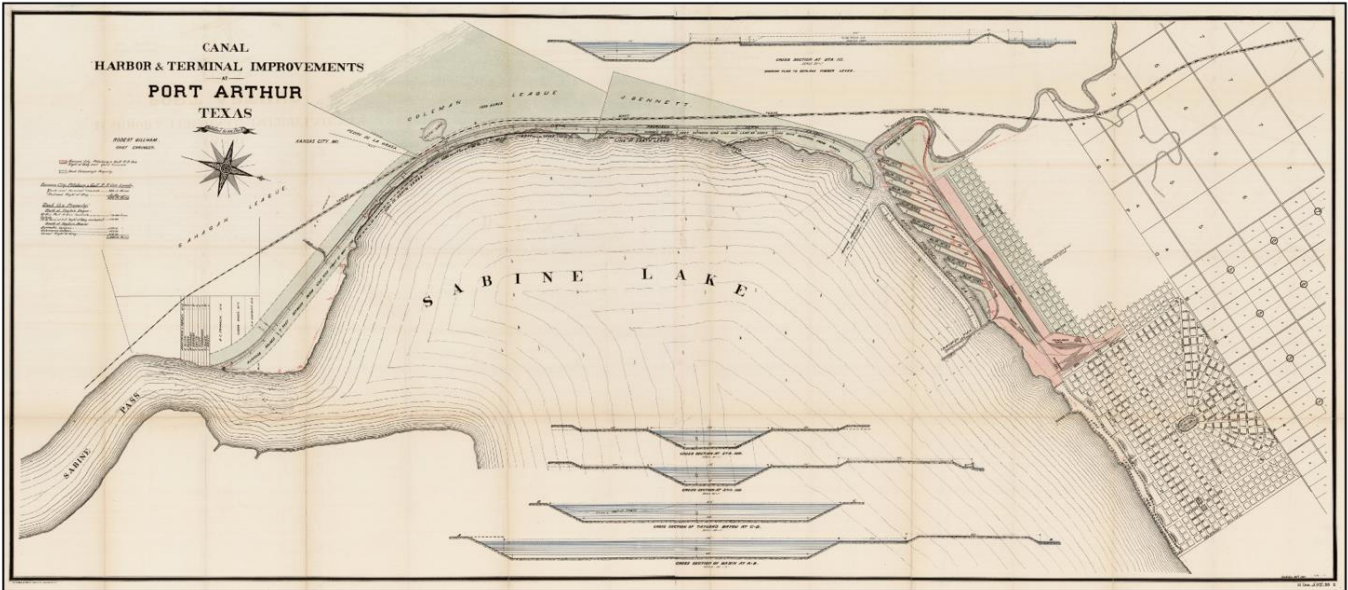


Figure 7. A photograph taken of Procter Street in 1897. Note the early thoroughfare consisted of a dirt road flanked by wood-frame buildings and board sidewalks. Source: Museum of the Gulf Coast.



Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

Figure 8. Photograph showing an early bird's-eye view of the Texas & New Orleans Railroad depot (Resource 1) on Austin Avenue. Date unknown. Source: The Portal to Texas History.



Figure 9. 1910 postcard showing a view of Procter Street at the intersection with Austin Avenue. Source: www.hippocard.com.



Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

Figure 10. A 1915 photograph of a group of people standing in high flood waters outside the United States Post Office and Federal Building (Resource 6) after a hurricane hit the Gulf Coast. Source: The Portal to Texas History.



Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

Figure 11. Photograph of the Port Arthur interurban train in the middle of the downtown commercial district. Note the variety of businesses lining Procter Street. Date unknown. Source: The Portal to Texas History.



Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

Figure 12. 1914 photograph of the John R. Adams & Co. Department Store (Resource 5) at 501 Austin Avenue, at the west corner of the intersection of Austin Avenue and Fifth Street. Source: The Portal to Texas History.



Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

Figure 13. A 1960s photograph of the John R. Adams Building, later named the World Trade Building (Resource 8), at 448 Austin Avenue. Designed by H. C. Mauer and built by Jefferson Construction Company, Inc., in 1926, the building was constructed to house various commercial enterprises and professional offices. The concrete panels along the lower stories were added to the building during the mid-century period. Source: The Portal to Texas History.



Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

Figure 14. Early view of Vaughn Hotel (Resource 11), a 10-story Renaissance Revival-style hotel built by local doctor Ed W. Vaughn in 1929. It features stone cladding at the first and second floors, rusticated treatments, curved archways, and Classical Revival sculptural motifs. Situated at 600 Procter Street, the building is currently the tallest building in Port Arthur. Date unknown. Source: The Portal to Texas History.



Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

Figure 45. 1978 photo of the City Hall building (Resource 15). The Mary Gates Hospital building served housed city government offices from the 1930s until 1970, when the new City Hall building was constructed. Source: The Portal to Texas History.



Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

Photographs

Photo 1. Contextual view of the 400 and 500 blocks of the northeast side of Austin Avenue, facing southeast.



Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

Photo 2. Contextual view of the 500 block of the northwest side of Procter Street and the 400 and 500 blocks of the northeast side of Austin Avenue taken from Procter Street, facing northwest.



Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

Photo 3. Contextual view of the 400 and 500 blocks of the northwest side of Fifth Street, facing north-northeast.



Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

Photo 4. Contextual view of the 300, 400, and 500 blocks of Austin Avenue toward the southeastern terminus of the historic district, facing southeast.



Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

Photo 5. Contextual view of the 400 block of the northeast side of Austin Avenue and the northeast side of the 500 block of Procter Street, facing east-southeast.



Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

Photo 6. Contextual view of the 400, 500, and 600 blocks of the southwest side of Austin Avenue. The Motiva refinery can be seen in the background in the far right of the photo, facing northwest.



Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

Photo 7. Contextual view of the 500 and 600 blocks of the southeast side of Procter Street, facing southwest.



Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

Photo 8. Contextual view of the 500 and 600 blocks of the southeast side of Procter Street, facing northeast.



Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

Photo 9. Contextual view of 400 block of Fifth Street, facing northeast.



Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

Photo 10. Contextual view of the 500, and 600 blocks of the southwest side of Austin Avenue. Motiva's refinery can be seen in the background in the far right of the photograph, facing northwest.



Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

Photo 11. Contextual view of the 300, 400 and 500 blocks of the southwest side of Austin Avenue, facing southwest.



Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

Photo 12. Contextual view of the 300 and 400 blocks of the southwest side of Austin Avenue. City Hall can be seen in the background, facing southeast.



Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

Photo 13. Contextual view of the 400 block of Fifth Street, facing southwest, facing southeast.



Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

Photo 14. Contextual view of the 300 and 400 blocks of the northeast side of Austin Avenue, facing northwest.



Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

Photo 15. Contextual view of the rear of the buildings fronting the northeast side of Austin Avenue within the 400 and 500 blocks, facing south.



Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

Photo 16. Contextual view of the 600 block of the southwest side of Austin Avenue, facing northwest.



Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

Photo 17. Contextual view of the 300 block of Waco Avenue, facing northwest.



Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

Photo 18. Detail view of the sculptural forms on the top floor of the Vaughn Hotel, facing southeast.



Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

Photo 19. Oblique view of the South Jefferson County Office Building, facing north.



Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

Photo 20. Contextual view of the government district and Lakeshore Drive, facing northwest.



Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

Photo 21. View of the landscaping surrounding the government district at the southeast end of the historic district, facing southwest.



Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

Photo 22. View of ship channel, taken from Lakeshore Drive immediately southeast of the South Jefferson County Office Building. Pleasure Island can be seen in the far right of the photograph, facing northeast.



Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

Photo 23. Façade of the Port Arthur Southern Pacific Passenger Depot (Resource 1), facing southwest.



Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

Photo 24. Oblique view of the Railway Express Agency, Inc. Office and Warehouse building (Resource 2), facing west.



Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

Photo 25. Façade view of one of the two noncontributing buildings in the Port Arthur Downtown Historic District (Resource 3), facing southeast.



Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

Photo 26. Oblique view of the Fred Miller Bicycle & Gun Repair/ Paint Shop building (Resource 4), facing north.



Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

Photo 27. Façade of the John R. Adams & Co. Building (Resource 5), facing northwest.



Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

Photo 28. Façade of the U.S. Post Office and Federal Building (Resource 6), facing north.



Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

Photo 29. Oblique view of the Merchants National Bank building, which now houses the City of Port Arthur Health Department (Resource 7), facing south-southeast.



Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

Photo 30. Oblique view of the John R. Adams Building (Resource 8), facing east-southeast.



Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

Photo 31. Oblique view of the First National Bank of Port Arthur Building (Resource 9), facing north-northwest.



Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

Photo 32. Oblique view of the Port Arthur Downtown Pavilion (Resource 10), one of the two noncontributing buildings in the historic district. Vaughn Hotel (Resource 11) can be seen behind the pavilion, facing north-northeast.



Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

Photo 33. Oblique view of Vaughn Hotel and the one-part commercial block building adjoining it to the northeast (Resources 11-12), facing south.



Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

Photo 34. Façade of the one-part commercial block building located at 608 Procter Street (Resource 12), facing southeast.



Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

Photo 35. Façade of the Port Arthur-Beaumont Interurban Railway building (Resource 13), facing northeast.



Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

Photo 36. Oblique view of the *Port Arthur News* building (Resource 14), facing north-northeast.



Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

Photo 37. Oblique view of City Hall (Resource 15), facing east.



Port Arthur Downtown Historic District, Jefferson County, Texas

Photo 38. Façade of the South Jefferson County Office Building (Resource 16), facing northwest.



- end -