Form No. 10-300 (Rev. 10-74)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

THEME: Architecture

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED
DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC: Vieux Carre Historic District

AND/OR COMMON: Vieux Carre Historic District

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER: __NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN: New Orleans __ VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: 2nd

STATE: Louisiana CODE: 22 COUNTY: Orleans CODE: 071

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
X DISTRICT	__PUBLIC	XX OCCUPIED	__AGRICULTURE	X MUSEUM
__BUILDING(S)	__PRIVATE	XX UNOCCUPIED	X COMMERCIAL	X PARK
__STRUCTURE	X BOTH	XX WORK IN PROGRESS	X EDUCATIONAL	X PRIVATE RESIDENCE
__SITE	**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**	**ACCESSIBLE**	X ENTERTAINMENT	X RELIGIOUS
__OBJECT	__IN PROCESS	XX YES: RESTRICTED	__GOVERNMENT	__SCIENTIFIC
	__BEING CONSIDERED	__YES: UNRESTRICTED	__INDUSTRIAL	__TRANSPORTATION
		__NO	__MILITARY	__OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME: Multiple public and private, administered by Vieux Carre Commission

STREET & NUMBER: 630 Chartres Street

CITY, TOWN: New Orleans __ VICINITY OF STATE: Louisiana

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.: Orleans Parish Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER: 421 Loyola Avenue

CITY, TOWN: New Orleans STATE: Louisiana

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE: Historic American Buildings Survey--check individual properties

DATE: various dates X FEDERAL __STATE __COUNTY __LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: Library of Congress/Annex Division of Prints and Photographs

CITY, TOWN: Washington STATE: D.C.

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
__EXCELLENT	__DETERIORATED	__UNALTERED	XX ORIGINAL SITE
X GOOD	__RUINS	X ALTERED	__MOVED DATE_____
__FAIR	__UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Most of the buildings in the Veux Carre date from after 1794, when the second of two disastrous fires swept the riverport, and before 1850, when New Orleans began its decline as the most influential city in the Mississippi Valley. A few buildings, notably the Ursuline Convent, 1734, Lafitte's Blacksmith Shop, 1772, Madam John's Legacy, 1788, Maspero's Exchange, 1788, the Basillica of St. Louis, 1789, Le Petitt Theatre, 1789, and the Mericult House, 1792, survived the fire in part or whole. The Ursuline Convent is probably the oldest building in Louisiana and the only one remaining from the period of French domination of New Orleans.

Although only occasional remnants of the eighteenth century have been left in the Vieux Carre, a faint memory of the colonial city is preserved in the basic concept of streets and town center, in the prevailing scale of many portions and in certain traditions in building such as galleries, balconies, courtyards, service buildings, roof shapes, and ironwork.

The nineteenth century brought a style change. The new tendency was toward an apparent thinness and lightness and a sparse geometric character of architectural forms. Broad, featureless surfaces of plastered brick walls, reduction of cornice moldings and other details, shallow reveals or recessed enframements around openings, the semicircular dormer, oculus windows, the dome, the simple sphere (as in finials on stairs, balconies or roof parapets), circular or oval spaces; elegant curves in stairways, segmental arches or vaults, might constitute a vocabulary of standard devices. Most of these had been employed by Benjamin H. Latrobe in official or public buildings of Washington, Philadelphia and Baltimore, and finally in the Waterworks, Customs House and Cathedral of New Orleans (all destroyed) and in his Louisiana State Bank (401 Royal Street).

In Latrobe's version of the "plain style" (as the English sometimes called it), the infiltration of Anglo-American culture in New Orleans can be seen in its earliest stages. In New Orleans the Ledoux-Regency-Latrobe line of influence was reinforced by more direct alliances with French taste--notably via the local work of Arsene Lacarriere Latour, Hyacinthe Laclotte and Jacques Tanesse.

The buildings of this period still standing in the Vieux Carre probably outnumber the eighteenth century examples. They include several that have acquired the familiarity of landmarks: the French Market (much transformed), Orleans Ball Room, Lemonnier House, St. Peter and Royal Streets, Thierry House, 721 Governor Nicholls Street, Paul Morphy House, Brennan's, 417 Royal Street, the Girod or "Napoleon" House, 500 Chartres Street, and the Absinthe House, 238 Bourbon Street, are among the better known.

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By this time the street elevations of the Vieux Carre had approached something like their present aspect of almost continuous closure. Only in the outlying squares were open spaces between buildings to be found. The courtyard rather than the walled garden was now standard. The service structure, usually in the form of an ell, was increasingly a customary scheme, as was the practice of using ground floor spaces for business purposes, with domestic quarters above.

As the population doubled several times, the city expanded into its American sector, upstream. The Vieux Carre held itself apart, administered as a separate municipality (1836-1853), a Creole stronghold. Its French inhabitants resented the newcomers and resisted the intrusion of new energies, public works and taxes. They were drawn into the flood of prosperous expansion almost in spite of themselves. The Vieux Carre had its own building boom, at its maximum in the 1830s but continuing until the Civil War.

The new buildings retained local traditions in the general disposition of spaces, yet took on an unmistakable American look. There was hardly any departure from a standard type--severely regular facades of brick (sometimes plastered) with wood trim, dormered, shuttered, balconied, the gabled outline of side walls interrupted by a pair of chimneys. In the smaller examples, the doorway or carriageway entrance introduced the only break with strick symmetry. A carved decoration on a wooden frieze or some similar restrained refinement in the detailing of a door or a dormer might add distinction to one of the finer residences. A marked preference for Greek Revival detail gradually increased.

The French Quarter is still liberally supplied with buildings of this type. Many are multiplied into row housing, products of the entrepreneur. Gurlie and Guillot, architects and builders, were busy operators during the 1830s. They are represented by single houses or rows at Royal and Orleans, at 711 Bourbon Street and 1101-1141 Decatur Street. Fifteen houses at 1101-1141 Royal Street were erected by a particularly active real estate corporation that called itself the "Architects' Company of New Orleans." Frequently narrow balconies were replaced with cast iron.

As early as 1850 the advantages of cast iron were recognized, notably in the Baroness Pontalba buildings. The deep galleries provided shade and sitting space like those of the eighteenth century. Supported on slender pipe columns, they also sheltered the passing pedestrian below, and thereby justified the permission to extend over the public sidewalk. A carnival of fanciful patterns appeared down the length of the more opulent streets and

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fanned gracefully around the corners. They were chosen from the printed pages of standardized catalogs which pictured also such items as colonettes, fences, fountains, iron furniture and decorative lawn sculpture. By sheer quantity, cast iron overshadowed the carefully hand wrought ironwork of earlier date.

Cast iron galleries in the Vieux Carre are predominantly modifications of pre-existing buildings, chiefly those of the antebellum phase. Other construction of the period, besides an occasional store or commercial structure, would be the familiar scattering of narrow wooden cottages called "shotguns," which are decorated with wooden laceworks common in Victorian architecture. These appear scattered throughout the Vieux Carre but are found in great numbers in the streets surrounding the historic district.

Shortly before the turn of the century the first indication of encroachments of modern times and money, was a hotel, named the Cosmopolitian, built about 1893. It extended between Bourbon and Royal Streets in the first block below Canal Street. With the next hotel, the Monteleone built by Toledano and Wogan in 1908-1909, the business world penetrated one block deeper along Royal Street. Otherwise the pressure did remain concentrated near the upper boundary, as Canal Street merchants expanded their business deeper into the first square, and now recently into the second.

Public projects also intruded upon the character of the quarter. An entire square was razed for the Civil Courts Building in 1903, including several fine or historically interesting houses. It introduced a magnified scale and clashed with its surroundings, even with the bulk of the old St. Louis Hotel across the street. Damaged by a storm in 1915, the Hotel itself was in turn demolished the following year.

Early in this century, the area began a rapid decline, until the mid-1930's when historic interests gained more general acceptance. This led to the establishment of the Vieux Carre Commission in 1936.

The increasing tourist interest in the Vieux Carre led to a demand for accommodations within the historic area. In the 1940s the first establishments with space for perhaps a dozen visitors, like the Maison de Ville, demonstrated the feasibility of such a business. When the first motel, the Prince Conti (with fifty rooms and parking facility for each) was opened in March, 1959, construction had already begun on the Royal Orleans, a hotel of 395 rooms with garage space for 280 cars. Its design incorporated a remaining fragment of the old hotel that once stood on the same site, and externally was based on that large and well-remembered landmark.

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Few inroads have been made into the core of the French Quarter although all but the northeast border along Esplanade, is greatly intruded upon, as are the three lower southwestern streets. These intrusions include car lots, large modern department stores, warehouses, and factories, out of scale with the historic city, and gasoline stations. Fortunately these have been checked from further erosin of the district by the Vieux Carre Commission which has extensive control over alterations or plans for new construction.

The river area is still an active port, although levees and modern warehouses obscure the view from street level. Parts of the original French Market buildings remain. These are being supplemented by new buildings to accommodate the merchants ~~which~~ who still gather daily in the market place.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
__PREHISTORIC	__ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	__COMMUNITY PLANNING	__LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	__RELIGION
__1400-1499	__ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	__CONSERVATION	__LAW	__SCIENCE
__1500-1599	__AGRICULTURE	__ECONOMICS	__LITERATURE	__SCULPTURE
__1600-1699	X ARCHITECTURE	__EDUCATION	__MILITARY	__SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
X 1700-1799	__ART	__ENGINEERING	__MUSIC	__THEATER
X 1800-1899	__COMMERCE	X EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	__PHILOSOPHY	__TRANSPORTATION
__1900-	__COMMUNICATIONS	__INDUSTRY	__POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	__OTHER (SPECIFY)
		__INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1718, BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Vieux Carre represents a unique fusion of architectural styles which illustrate the growth and development of New Orleans in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. The many historic buildings reflect the blending of cultures which created a truely cosmopolitan metropolis. Covering eighty-five blocks, the Vieux Carre was the scene of many important historic events from the first settlement through French, Spanish, and American rule. In many respects the significance of the Vieux Carre is inseparably entwined, not only with the city of New Orleans, but with the country as a whole, for the role it played in the War of 1812, the Civil War and the era of steamboat transportation. The nucleus of the original town, it remained the controlling center of the Crescent City during its period of greatest power and influence. Today, the Vieux Carre is a living part of the historical heritage of the Nation as well as New Orleans.

HISTORY

Jean Baptiste Le Moyne, Sieur de Bienville, founded New Orleans one hundred miles above the mouth of the Mississippi River in 1718. Named in honor of the Duc d'Orleans, Regent of France, the strategic settlement succeeded Biloxi as the capital of colonial Louisiana in 1722. Controlling the Mississippi and inhibiting the expansion desires of England and Spain, the outpost prospered as a center of river trade.

The city was plotted in 1721 under the direction of French military engineers Le Blond de la Tour and Adrien de Pauger, to become one of the earliest planned cities in America. The original town, which is the present day Vieux Carre followed the familiar gridiron plan and covered eighty rectilinear blocks.

During the administration of the Marquis de Vaudreuil (1743-53), New Orleans gained a lasting reputation for glamour and extravagant living. Dominated by a socially exclusive Creole clique, the colonial capital soon became the cultural center of Louisiana and imitated the elegant manners of Versailles.

When France divided its American colony between England and Spain in 1763, New Orleans became the capitol of Spanish Louisiana. Angered by the transfer and the rule of Antoine de Ulloa, the first Spanish commissioner, four hundred Acadians, German coast settlers and other colonists seized the

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city on October 28, 1768, and for ten months, New Orleans became the first American city independent of a European power. On August 17, 1769, Count Alexander O'Reilly, with twenty-four ships and two thousand men recaptured the city without any resistance.

New Orleans was twice nearly destroyed by fire, in 1788 and 1794. Following the last disaster, substantial buildings replaced former wooden structures, so that by 1803 it resembled a small European city. In that same year, on November 30, Louisiana passed from Spain back to France and twenty days later the United States purchased the territory. Ceremonies of the transfer of the largest land accession in the history of the United States took place on the second floor of the Cabildo, so long the seat of Spanish government in Louisiana.

When the first steamboats to navigate the Mississippi docked at New Orleans in 1812, a new era in development of the city began. By 1840, traffic rivaled that of New York City. Experiencing spectacular growth commercially, the population of the city climbed from about 8,000 in 1800 to 160,000 in 1860. The rapid influx of American settlers and traders, Latin American political refugees, and European immigrants made ante-bellum New Orleans the most cosmopolitan and international city in the country. At mid-century,, New Orleans had become the commercial and financial center of the entire Mississippi Valley, the fourth largest city in the United States, and the second greatest port in America.

The shifting of the state capitol to Baton Rouge in 1849 marked the beginning of the end for the golden era of New Orleans. After 1850, when railroad connections were completed between Chicago and the Atlantic Coast, the trade of the Valley began to move from the waterway. The final blow in the descent was the capture of the Confederate city on April 25, 1862, by Admiral David Farragut.

Occupied by Union troops, New Orleans suffered under the stern rule of General Benjamin Butler. Passing through a period of violence, corruption and crop failures, the city was slow to recover its financial stability and commercial advantages. Although today an important and thriving city, New Orleans has never been able to regain its national prominence.

As a reminder of the former brilliance of the city, the Vieux Carre carries many associations of the past. It was from the Vieux Carre that French and Spanish rulers governed colonial Louisiana and that the official transfer of the Louisiana territory to the United States occurred. The first steamboat to navigate the Mississippi River found a harbor here and ~~later~~ Earlier troops

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drilled before the Battle of New Orleans. It was here that merchants and financiers made large fortunes from the river trade and Creoles, Baratarian pirates and Cajuns lived with a flourish that fascinated Anglo-Americans and sparked the creative imaginations of many prominent writers. Continuing this colorful past into the present, the Vieux Carre is both an important part of American heritage and a rich contributor to the present.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

(See Continuation Sheet)

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 360 ±

UTM REFERENCES

	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
A	15	783720	3318430	B	15	784150	3317870
C	15	783520	3316520	D	15	782480	3317250

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

(See Continuation Sheet)

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE original report prepared by John McDermott, 1965.
Patricia Heintzelman, Architectural Historian, Landmark Review Project

ORGANIZATION: Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service
DATE: February 1975

STREET & NUMBER: 1100 L Street NW.
TELEPHONE: 202-523-5464

CITY OR TOWN: Washington,
STATE: D.C. 20240

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL ___ STATE ___ LOCAL ___

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

[(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

[(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST: DATE 3/3/77

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Fitch, James M., American Building: The Forces That Shape It, Boston, 1948.

Lehmann, Bernard, The Vieux Carre--A General Statement, New Orleans, 1966.

McDermott, John Dishon, "Special Report on the Vieux Carre," Historic Sites Survey property file, 1965.

Morrison, Hugh, Early American Architecture, New York, 1952.

"Plan and Program for the Preservation of the Vieux Carre," Bureau of Government Research, New Orleans, 1968.

Wilson, Samuel Jr., A Guide to Architecture of New Orleans, New York, 1959.

The boundary of the Vieux Carre was established to coincide with the historical boundaries of the original city. The boundary streets are wide avenues, divided in the center by landscaped islands. Because Canal and Rampart Streets are badly eroded, the boundary line runs down the center of the street. Esplanade has retained most of its original character so here the line runs along the rear property lines of property on the north side. The boundary begins at the northeast corner running along the near river bank to the Canal Street ferry dock, then west in a line along the center of Canal Street on the south side of the dividing islands to Rampart Street, then north along the west side of the center islands of Rampart Street to Esplanade, then east along the rear property lines on the north side of Esplanade Street to the point of beginning.