NPS Form 10-900

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

177

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NAT. REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

OMB No. 1024-0018

1. Name of Property

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

2. Location

Street & number: Roughly bounded by Kerr Street, Tilden Street, Market Street and Carrizo Street
City or town: Cotulla State: Texas County: La Salle
Not for publication: ☐ Vicinity: ☐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 ☑ 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 ☑ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria.

I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following levels of significance:
☐ national ☐ statewide ☑ local

Applicable National Register Criteria: ☑ A ☐ B ☑ C ☐ D

Mark Wolfe — State Historic Preservation Officer — 2/7/13
Signature of certifying official / Title **Date**

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: _____

for Edson K. Beall — 4.16.13
Signature of the Keeper **Date of Action**

5. Classification

Ownership of Property: Public-local; Private

Category of Property: District

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
19	12	buildings
1	0	sites
1	0	structures
0	0	objects
21	**12**	**total**

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 1 (*La Salle County Courthouse*)

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions:

Commercial: business, financial institution
Government: courthouse
Industrial: warehouse, water works, train tracks
Religion: church
Landscape: park
Social: lodge
Domestic: single dwelling

Current Functions:

Commercial: business, vacant
Government: courthouse, city hall
Industrial: warehouse, water works, train tracks
Religion: church
Landscape: park

7. Description

Architectural Classification:

Late Victorian: Romanesque, Gothic
Late 19th and 20th Century Revivals: Spanish Colonial Revival
Modern Movement: Art Deco
Other: 1-Part Commercial Block, 2-Part Commercial Block
NO STYLE

Principal Exterior Materials: Brick, Wood Stone, Stucco

Narrative Description (see continuation sheets 7-7 through 7-20)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

X	A	Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
	B	Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
X	C	Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
	D	Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations: NA

Areas of Significance: Architecture, Community Planning and Development

Period of Significance: 1882-1952

Significant Dates: 1882

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

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

Architect/Builder: unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance (see continuation sheets 8-21 through 8-27)

9. Major Bibliographic References

Bibliography (see continuation sheet 9- 28)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):
- _ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- _ 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:
- x 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

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: approximately 17 acres

Coordinates (see Map, page XX)

	Latitude:	Longitude:
1:	28.436501°	-99.237267°
2:	28.437118°	-99.232963°
3:	28.435988°	-99.232717°
4:	28.434582°	-99.234170°
5:	28.434531°	-99.234663°
6:	28.434716°	-99.236387°
7:	28.434636°	-99.236930°

Verbal Boundary Description: (see continuation sheet 29)

Boundary Justification: (see continuation sheet 29)

11. Form Prepared By

Name/title: Terri Myers (with assistance from Gregory Smith, National Register Coordinator)
Organization: Preservation Central, Inc.
Street & number: 823 Harris Avenue
City or Town: Austin State: Texas Zip Code: 78705
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Date: May 1, 2012

Additional Documentation

Maps (see continuation sheet Map-30 through Map-33)

Additional items (see continuation sheets Figure-34 through Figure-37)

Photographs (see continuation sheet Photo-5 through Photo-6)

Photographs

Cotulla Downtown Historic District
Cotulla, La Salle County, Texas
Photographed by Terri Myers
October 4, 2011

Photo 1 of 14
Water Tower, Plaza, and La Salle County Courthouse
Public amenities; Resources 26, 27, and 28
Camera facing west

Photo 2 of 14
La Salle County Courthouse
Primary façade (E) of the La Salle County Courthouse. Resource 27
Camera facing west

Photo 3 of 14
Cotulla Water Tower
East side of Water Tower. Resource 26
Camera facing west

Photo 4 of 14
Methodist Church
East and south facades of Methodist Church, 1906. Resource 29
Camera facing north/northwest

Photo 5 of 14
Plaza Portals
Rustic stone portals to town plaza (with courthouse in distance). Resource 28
Camera facing west

Photo 6 of 14
Cotulla Motor Company
Spanish Colonial Revival stucco and tile garage. Resource 25
Camera facing southeast

Photo 7 of 14
101, 103, and 105 S. Front Street
Oblique photo of two-story brick commercial building with round arched windows on upper level. Resources 10, 9, 8
Camera facing northwest

Photo 8 of 14
Streetscape 100 block N. Front Street
South and east facades of one- and two-story brick commercial buildings on Cotulla's historic business block.
Resources 7-1 (S to N)
Camera facing northwest

Photo 9 of 14
Typical Streetscape along N. Front Street
Row of one- and two-story brick commercial buildings fronting the railroad tracks.
Resources 7, 6, 5, 4, and 3
Camera facing northwest

Photo 10 of 14
105 N. Front Street
One-story front-gabled commercial building with "false front" parapet
Resource 5
Camera facing north/northwest

Photo 11 of 14
Streetscape, 100 block of N. front Street
One- and two-story brick commercial buildings
Camera facing north/northwest

Photo 12 of 14
Charles Neal Building
Two-story brick office building of Charles Neal, 1925. Resource 1
Camera facing west

Photo 13 of 14
T. R. Keck Lumber and Hardware Store
One-story brick commercial building. Intact storefront. Resource 12
Camera facing southeast

Photo 14 of 14
Amberson Building, 101 N. Main Street
Resource 33
Camera facing northeast

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.

Description

The Cotulla Downtown Historic District includes 33 total resources in central Cotulla, Texas. Within the district are railroad tracks, brick 1-part and 2-part commercial buildings facing the railroad tracks on Front Street, the Art Deco La Salle County Courthouse, the town plaza, and several additional historic commercial buildings with high level of integrity. The district is approximately 17 acres in area and lies roughly between Kerr and Market Streets, and Tilden and Carrizo Streets. Its boundary is slightly irregular in order to include the highest concentration of historic resources. Of the 33 total resources, 21 are considered contributing. Of the eleven noncontributing resources, seven date to the historic period of 1881 to 1952 but have poor integrity; the remaining three postdate the period of significance.

Cotulla is the county seat of La Salle County in southern Texas. The city is located at the intersection of Interstate 35 and State Highway 97 in the northwestern portion of the county. The Nueces River flows in a southeasterly direction along the city's southern border. Cotulla is a small city with a total land area of 2.0 square miles. Land around the city is flat and primarily dedicated to ranching; native vegetation includes mesquite, scrub brush, cacti, grasses, and small live oak and post oak trees.

Cotulla was founded in 1881 as a railroad town, when the International-Great Northern Railroad came through La Salle County. Because of this, the location of the railroad tracks dictated the city's organization and street layout. The railroad enters southern Cotulla at a northeasterly angle, bends north-northwest as it passes through town, and then resumes its northeasterly course. West of the railroad, Cotulla's streets mirror the railroad's north-northwest angle, so that the street grid is slightly skewed off true north. The tracks and their adjacent commercial buildings constitute the eastern edge of the street grid, and later development spread westward and today terminates at Interstate 35. The courthouse sits at Center Street, three blocks west of the railroad tracks. North of Center Street, street names have a "North" directional designation, and south of Center Street, streets are designated "South." Front Street runs parallel to and immediately west of the tracks. East of the tracks, the street grid differs—the southwest-northeast angled streets here were platted as the town of La Salle, an 1881 town that was eventually absorbed into Cotulla.

Cotulla Downtown Historic District

The Cotulla Downtown Historic District is located in the commercial and civic center of Cotulla, and stretches from the railroad tracks on the east to the county courthouse on the west. Its boundaries encompass portions of several blocks containing commercial, industrial, civic, recreational, religious, and residential resources.

The district consists largely of buildings representing common commercial forms, and few notable landmarks such as an Art Deco courthouse, a Mission Style auto showroom, and a simplified Gothic Revival Style church. The majority of buildings in the district date to the first half of the 20th century, and are associated with development spurred by the arrival of the railroad in 1881. Based on terminology devised by architectural historian Richard Longstreth in *The Buildings of Main Street* (1987), the majority of buildings represent *2-part Commercial Block* and *1-part Commercial Block* façade compositions. As commercial buildings often do not always exhibit the characteristics of high styles, Longstreth's typology is based on facade organization, and architectural detailing may be either prominent or totally lacking.

The district's contributing resources were built between the 1880s and the early 1950s, a time period that reflects Cotulla's growth. The district's flat streets retain their historic configurations. Streets are asphalt or a mix of concrete and asphalt, and have traditional squared concrete curbs. Most of the district's streets are narrow, with enough room for two cars to pass but no painted lanes. Main Street, which also functions as the

Interstate 35 Business Loop, is an improved road with four lanes. Blocks have curved corners. Sidewalks are not uniform throughout the district. Several blocks lack sidewalks, but short concrete sidewalks are found in front of most commercial buildings and at the courthouse. The first United Methodist Church has a sidewalk near its buildings, and a narrow historic sidewalk encircles the town plaza block. Along Front Street, the historic commercial buildings share an elevated sidewalk accessed by two or three concrete steps. District vegetation is primarily limited to sparse deciduous trees found on the courthouse lawn, in Cotulla City Park, near the railroad tracks, and in a few places near Main Street businesses.

Properties designated as "contributing" to the historic district are at least 50 years old and retain sufficient historic-period architectural fabric to be recognizable to the period of significance. Most of the resources within the boundaries of the historic district meet the recommended age criteria. Of these, a majority retain their original architectural features such that they convey a strong sense of the historic period. Such features include original building form, roof pitch and form, exterior materials, design elements, and other architectural details. Most buildings in the Downtown Cotulla Historic District, whether contributing or noncontributing, have experienced changes to their fenestration. Those that retain their historic-period openings are generally considered "contributing" if they have few other alterations. Noncontributing resources are either nonhistoric, do not date to the period of significance ending in 1952, or have been altered so severely that they no longer convey an adequate sense of history. Examples of noncontributing properties include Resource 3 (Ben's Western Wear) which has had its upper story windows enclosed and its exterior brick stuccoed. Another example is Resource 9, now used as a church, which has enlarged its window openings to cover much of the primary façade.

INDIVIDUAL RESOURCE DESCRIPTIONS

Chas. E. Neal Building (Resource 1)

1925

Contributing Building

The Chas. E. Neal Building at 119 N. Front Street is a two-part commercial building at the southwest corner of Front Street and Tilden Street. The building is clad in bricks of a dark buff color. The front façade, which faces east toward Front Street, has a symmetrical three-bay arrangement with storefronts on the ground floor and offices or apartments above. On the first floor, the central bay contains a double entry door with transom. The two flanking bays each contain one large storefront window, each with transom. The entry doors and storefront windows are nonhistoric replacements, and the transoms over the entry and storefronts have been blocked in. A nonhistoric wood and metal awning spans the façade just over the storefronts. On the second floor, each bay contains one set of paired double-hung windows. The wood windows sash and trim are original and are in good condition. At the façade corners and between each of the bays is a shallow brick pilaster. The pilasters continue vertically to the parapet level and are incorporated into the parapet's symmetrical design, which features brick parapet walls and a central plaque reading "CHAS. E. NEAL 1925." The building's north façade faces Tilden Street. The lower level has been stuccoed and a door opening bricked-in. A secondary storefront located at the rear of the façade has its door and window openings blocked in with plywood. The north façade's second floor is in good condition, with its brick cladding and regularly-spaced double-hung windows intact.

Keck Building (Resource 2)

1924

Contributing Building

Adjacent to the Chas E. Neal Building at 113-117 N. North Front Street is the Keck Building, a long, low one-story brick commercial building with three storefronts. The building is clad in dark-colored buff brick and features contrasting red brick decorative trim. Its front, or east, elevation is symmetrically arranged, with three

wide bays of equal size. Wide brick pilasters separate the bays, and narrower pilasters separate the storefront doors and windows found in each of the bays. The central bay appears to contain two mirror-image storefronts, each with a single entry door and one storefront window. The two outside bays each contain a single wide storefront with a central double door flanked by two storefront windows. Transoms top all door and window openings. All storefronts have been altered with nonhistoric doors and windows, and the partial or complete blocking-in of transoms and door and window openings. A nonhistoric wood and metal awning runs the entire length of the façade, placed just underneath the transom windows. A low parapet wall spans the façade. At cornice level, red bricks create a decorative frieze of three-dimensional dentils. A small corbelled projecting element is found at the corners and between each of the bays. In the center of the building, the parapet wall curves upward to create a semi-circular space for a plaque identifying the building. Its contents have been altered from what was originally found there. Just underneath the cornice are rectangular panels outlined in red brick.

109 N. Front Street (Resource 3)
Circa 1900
Noncontributing Building
109 N. Front Street is a two-story commercial building built in circa 1900. On all elevations, its brick has been painted or stuccoed. The building's lower level contains two central entry doors, each with a transom, and two large storefront windows. The storefront doors and windows are nonhistoric aluminum but the fenestration pattern is intact. The north end of the façade has been altered by the addition of nonhistoric siding material and a small square window. This presumably replaced a secondary entry door that once led to the upper level. A nonhistoric awning spans the façade. The front elevation's upper floor has been altered. All window openings have been enclosed and stuccoed over, creating a smooth surface upon which is painted the logo for Ben's Western Wear. At parapet level is a decorative cornice with dentils and an inset panel; this has been painted over. Fenestration patterns have also been altered on the building's north elevation, which is visible over the adjacent one-story building. The second floor of the south elevation, however, retains its five regularly-spaced window openings, although the windows have been blocked in. Each of these upper-floor windows is tall and narrow with a shallow arched header. The building, which is now Ben's Western Wear, was once Gaddis Pharmacy.

107 N. Front Street (Resource 4)
Circa 1920
Noncontributing Structure
The structure at 107 N. Front Street is a small one-story commercial building whose façade has been covered in T-111 siding. Its walls have been demolished, leaving only a facade. A nonhistoric awning spans the façade. Above the awning, the building's brick parapet is visible. A simple brick coping runs along the top, and three recessed rectangular panels are located below. The brick has been painted.

105 N. Front Street (Resource 5)
Circa 1900
Contributing Building
This building is a historic front-gabled frame commercial building with an original "false front." Its tall stair-stepped false parapet hides the wide roof gable and when viewed from the street, gives the impression that the building has a flat roof. The lower level contains a central single entry door and two storefront windows. Surrounding the storefront, the lower level has been stuccoed. Window sizes have been altered. Above the storefront is a nonhistoric awning. Just above the awning are two small rectangular window openings, likely once transom windows, that are currently hidden behind protective shed-roofed awnings. The upper level is not

a second floor but is comprised of the false front and tall "Wild West"-style parapet. Here the façade is clad in long horizontal strips of thin painted metal.

103 N. Front Street (Resource 6)
Circa 1900
Contributing Building
103 N. Front Street is a two-story commercial building with storefronts on the first floor and apartments or offices above. The building is clad in buff-colored brick and has very few decorative elements. At storefront level, an off-center double entry door is flanked by storefront windows of unequal size. The entry doors are original. Each has a tall window on top and a single panel underneath. The storefront windows are wood fixed divided-light and are not original to the building but date to the historic period—likely installed after a circa 1925 fire that damaged the building. Above the storefront are four rectangular transoms, now blocked in with plywood. Atop these spans a long header made of painted metal or wood. On the second floor are four small double-hung windows. The window openings are devoid of trim save narrow sills made from header bricks. The building's parapet has a shallow triangular-shaped pitch and a wide concrete coping. The north elevation's second floor is clad in stucco and is visible over the adjacent one-story building.

Cotulla State Bank (Resource 7)
Circa 1920
Contributing Building
The Cotulla State Bank at 101 N. Front Street is a two-story bank building located at the northwest corner of Front Street and Center Street. The building has a variety of architectural details and its fenestration patterns and historic windows are remarkably intact. The building features a unique corner entry that is not chamfered or inset, but has a matching single entry door near the corner of each façade. Both the east and south elevations have been stuccoed, but the architectural features were left intact. A highly decorative cornice is located at parapet level of both elevations. It features a stepped two-layer coping along the top, with a wide decorative frieze below that features brick dentils and geometric shapes. At the building corners, and between the bays of the front façade, corbelled vertical elements punctuate the textured frieze.

The building's front elevation, which faces Front Street, has three bays. The lower level has three tall arched openings, each with a decorative hood mold. The southernmost opening is the aforementioned arched entrance door, which is accessed by a short concrete stoop. The other two arched openings are windows. The three openings are of equal height and width. Above each of these openings is a semi-circular transom; the central one has its historic sunburst-style window intact, whereas the others have been replaced by vents. The corner door opening and central window have been blocked in, and the northernmost window opening has been converted to a door, but the sills, headers, and decorative hood molds are intact. On the second floor, the front elevation contains three arched window openings with hood molds—smaller versions of the openings below. The windows contain 2/2 double hung sashes.

The south elevation has a long streetside façade with irregular bays and slightly less ornamentation than is found on the front. At the east end of the first floor is the aforementioned corner entry, accessed by a short concrete stoop. Its sunburst-style arched transom window is intact, but it has a nonhistoric door. Near the center of the south façade are two unadorned double-hung windows. At the southern end, near the rear of the building, are two small storefronts, each with historic wood double entry doors and single double hung window. These were likely offices or shops. Adjacent to them is a single door that once led to the upstairs units. The rectangular transoms found above these door and window openings are intact. On the second floor are five rectangular window openings, each topped by a small arched molding. Two of the windows contain their original 2/2 double hung windows, but the others have been blocked in.

101 S. Front Street (Resource 8)
1904
Contributing Building
101 S. Front Street is a one-story commercial building at the southwest corner of Front Street and Center Street. The building has been stuccoed, and its storefront has been altered, but overall it retains its historic massing and character. The front elevation, which faces Front Street, has two rectangular storefront windows that have been blocked in with plywood. The transoms located above these have also been blocked in. The building has a chamfered corner that once contained the entrance; this was later converted to another window that is now blocked in. The parapet has crenellations at the corners and a central projecting panel that likely contained the building name. Below the parapet is a row of brick dentils, a narrow row of bricks in a repeating square pattern, and a thin stringcourse. These decorative details continue around the façade to the chamfered corner and a portion of the north façade. Above the storefront, just below the transoms, is evidence of an awning that was once tied in to the brickwork there. Buff-colored bricks are visible behind the nonhistoric stucco finish. The north elevation faces Center Street. It has a small secondary storefront, also altered, and a rear addition that was added during the historic period. Historically the building was a bank.

103 S. Front Street (Resource 9)
Circa 1900
Noncontributing Building
103 S. Front Street is a circa 1900 one-story commercial building with an inset storefront. The building was extensively altered in circa 1950. Its aluminum double doors are set back, each with a blocked-in transom above. Between them is a painted sign panel that was originally either a storefront window or a wall. At the building corners to either side of the recessed entry are chamfered glass storefront windows, each with three angled panes of glass divided by aluminum mullions. Between the doors and windows, the building is clad in colored metal panels. Above the storefront is a broad expanse of wall that was likely clad in similar panels but has since been stuccoed. The parapet wall is unadorned save a simple coping.

105 S. Front Street (Resource 10)
Circa 1890
Contributing Building
The bank building at 105 S. Front Street is a circa 1890 Romanesque Revival building with an altered storefront and an intact second floor. Its storefront has been completely removed and replaced by nonhistoric siding material, doors, and windows. A nonhistoric wood and metal awning spans the façade just above the storefront. Above the awning, the building's transom windows have been blocked in. On the second floor, the building's original buff-colored brick is visible and the architectural features are intact. Four round-arched windows share a common long sill. The window hoods have pronounced brick arches made of three rows of header bricks, two thin rows of projecting trim, and stone keystones. At the building corners are shallow brick pilasters. The building features a highly decorative parapet with wide bands of decorative brickwork. Along the top edge of the parapet is a thin coping atop two rows of corbelled brick supported by corbelled brick "brackets." Below this is a frieze with brick stringcourses at the top, dentils and recessed rectangles in the center, and several rows of corbelled bricks at the bottom. Punctuating the entire entablature are three vertical pilaster-like elements that project slightly from the building façade and have corbelled brick capitals. The south elevation is a common-brick party wall devoid of windows. The building that was once attached is now gone.

Railroad Tracks (Resource 11)
Circa 1881
Not evaluated for contributing status due to short length within district
The railroad tracks in Cotulla were originally part of the International-Great Northern Railroad. The tracks enter Cotulla from the southwest, turn north as they pass through town, and proceed out of town to the northeast. In the center of town, the tracks run parallel to, and immediately east of, Front Street. The tracks are only one track wide, and have a short spur in the vicinity of Center Street. A railroad gate is located where Tilden Street crosses the tracks. Surrounding the tracks is gravel and grass.

T.R. Keck & Sons Lumber & Hardware; Commercial Block (Resource 12)
Circa 1920
Contributing Building
T.R. Keck & Sons is located at 101 Pecos Street, along the east side of the railroad tracks, opposite the row of commercial buildings along Front Street. Keck & Sons is a historic lumber and hardware business that occupies the two blocks south of Tilden Street between Market Street and the railroad tracks. The block between Tilden and Pecos contains a brick commercial building and attached lumber warehouse; this is counted as one resource. A large lumber warehouse also associated with Keck & Sons is located across Pecos Street to the south (discussed as a separate resource). Along the west side of the Keck & Sons blocks, a narrow street runs alongside the railroad tracks, built for the purpose of loading and unloading materials (designated on the Sanborn maps as Keck Street). The Keck & Sons business dates to 1893 and all of the associated buildings are from the historic period and have remarkable integrity.

The lumber and hardware store block is located alongside the tracks between Tilden and Pecos Streets. The block is anchored by a one-story brick commercial building at its southwest corner. The brick building faces Pecos Street (and is addressed 101 Pecos). The building has a symmetrical red brick façade that is in excellent condition and is dominated by its historic storefront windows. The façade has three bays separated by brick pilasters. Matching brick pilasters are found at the building corners. A historic awning spans the façade. It is supported on metal poles and anchored to the brick pilasters with iron rings and tension wires. In the façade's central bay is a double entry door. Both doors have large single lights. The two outside bays each contain two wood double hung windows with short upper sash and tall lower sash. Above all doors and windows are two sets of transoms—one directly atop the window and door openings, and another above the awning. Door and window trim is wood. Along the top of the parapet are two rows of corbelled brick and a header brick coping. Header bricks also create a trim over the uppermost row of transoms. The building's windowless west elevation faces the tracks and is emblazoned with a large mural reading "T.R. KECK & SONS LUMBER & HARWARE; SINCE 1893."

Connected to the east and north sides of the brick building are attached warehouse volumes. A front-gabled volume is connected to the brick building's east elevation. It is a frame structure clad in painted corrugated metal siding. A large wood-framed opening with a roll-up warehouse door is in its center. To the left of the large door was once an office door or storefront window; this was bricked in circa 1950 and contains twelve small hopper windows arranged in three vertical columns. The gabled volume spans the length of the block and has a matching large warehouse door facing Tilden Street to the north.

At the easternmost end of the block, attached to the long front-gabled volume is a smaller frame shed-roofed volume, also clad in painted corrugated metal. Its front elevation includes a tall "false front"-style parapet, a wood paneled door and two small warehouse doors, all trimmed in wood. The historic wood warehouse doors slide open on tracks located inside the building. Its east elevation, which faces Market Street, is windowless. Its rear elevation has a central warehouse door that opens onto a fenced-in lumber yard. The warehouse door

contains two historic wood sliding doors, each with six lights. Behind the brick commercial building is another connected warehouse volume. It has two historic warehouse doors with sliding six-light doors—one on the north elevation and one on the west.

T.R. Keck & Sons Lumber & Hardware; Warehouse Block (Resource 13)
Circa 1920
Contributing Structure
Immediately south of Pecos Street is the large Keck & Sons lumber warehouse. It is a frame building clad in painted corrugated metal. It is comprised of two connected front-gabled volumes whose gable ends face the railroad tracks to the west. Each volume has a single large warehouse door framed in wood with a stout wood header. Transom openings above the massive doors no longer contain windows. In lieu of doors, the openings each have a large swinging metal gate attached that can be closed after business hours. A mural facing the railroad tracks reads "T.R. KECK & SONS LUMBER & HARDWARE." The rest of the building is utilitarian, with corrugated metal siding and no window openings. A fenced-in lumber yard is located on the south side of the building. The unnamed dirt and gravel street that runs along the south side of the block was historically known as Earnest Street.

100 block Tilden Street (Resource 14)
Circa 1950
Noncontributing Building
This utilitarian brick warehouse or garage building was built in circa 1950. It is a one-story flat-roofed building with several warehouse doors on its front façade. At the western end of the front elevation is a single entry door opening that has been blocked in. The rest of the long front façade has five warehouse doors, which contain nonhistoric roll-up or swinging overhead doors. The central opening has been partially enclosed and converted to a pedestrian entry. The east elevation, which faces an alley, has two entry doors. The west elevation is windowless. On all elevations, the brick has been painted.

Filling Station, 100 block N. Main Street (Resource 15)
Circa 1935
Contributing Building
This historic gas station was constructed in circa 1935 in an Art Deco/Mission Revival style. The building has had several reversible alterations but its overall form is intact. The building itself is a small rectangular volume set back from the street, with two square porte cocheres extending to the west and south. The entire building is clad in smooth painted stucco. The building and its porte cocheres have similar architectural details. At all the building corners, Art Deco columns punctuate the parapet, and clay tile roofing material trims the cornice. In the flat wall expanse below the cornice, green inset tiles provide decoration. The southern porte cochere has a wider band of roofing tile that creates a shallow shed-roofed appearance when viewed from Main Street. The western porte cochere, which is closest to Main Street, has a decorative cornice with an angled center portion reminiscent of Mission Revival styles. The openings of this porte cochere are chamfered at the corners. Both porte cocheres have been enclosed with nonhistoric siding and window materials. The rectangular building has historic door and window openings that likely originally led to the filling station store and office. Nonhistoric doors and windows have been installed, and window openings have been partially blocked in.

100 block N. Main Street (Resource 16)
Circa 1940
Noncontributing Building
This building, labeled on the 1948 Sanborn map as a restaurant, is an altered one-story stucco-over-tile commercial building with poor integrity. Its roof has been raised and converted to a rear-sloping shed roof, and

a large nonhistoric addition is located on the building's north elevation. The storefront was removed and replaced by nonhistoric windows and doors, and a nonhistoric awning spans the façade.

116 Center Street (Resource 17)
Circa 1920
Contributing Building
116 Center Street is a large one-story commercial building at the northeast corner of Main and Center Streets. Its front façade, which faces Center Street to the south, has a six-bay arrangement, wherein six storefront window or door openings corresponded to six paneled sections of the decorative parapet above. Today, the parapet level is intact but the storefronts have been altered. The westernmost three storefront bays have been replaced with nonhistoric storefront windows and doors, and the eastern three bays have been blocked in. A wood and metal awning spans the façade. Above it, the transoms or brickwork that may have originally been present is obscured by nonhistoric metal siding. The building's decorative parapet has blocky crenellations that divide it into six bays. Between each is a row of dentils at cornice level and raised rectangular panels below. The brickwork has been stuccoed. The building's west elevation, which faces Main Street, is stuccoed, and an arched window opening near the rear of the building has been enclosed. Its parapet has an unusual design, with no ornamentation save a subtle stair-stepping that begins at the front of the building and steps down gradually toward the rear, mimicking the pitch of the street in this location. A one-story brick addition is attached to the rear of the building.

114 Center Street (Resource 18)
Circa 1920
Noncontributing Building
Adjacent to 116 Center Street is a small one-story commercial building built in approximately 1920. The building is short and has virtually no parapet. A cantilevered awning extends over the front façade. The storefront has been altered with nonhistoric windows and a nonhistoric door. To the east of the building is a large covered and fenced enclosure.

100 block Center Street (Resource 19)
Circa 1910
Noncontributing Structure
This small building near the alley was a flat-roofed commercial building with a short front parapet. Today all that exists is its front façade; the rest of the building is gone. The facade appears to have its original storefront opening, with a slightly recessed double entry door flanked by two wood-framed storefront and transom window openings. The parapet is unadorned save for a blocky projecting element at each end and a simple coping. The façade has been stuccoed

100 block Center Street (Resource 20)
Circa 1910
Noncontributing Structure
This narrow building was sandwiched between a small commercial building and the rear of the large bank building on Front Street. Today all that exists is its front façade; the rest of the building is gone. Labeled on the Sanborn map as an office, the small one-story building was tall and extremely narrow. The parapet is square, with projecting rectangular trim and wide stringcourses. On the right hand side of the façade is a tall, narrow door opening with arched transom window. Both door and window are gone. To the left of the door, the building's original window had been enclosed and replaced by a small nonhistoric window.

105 Center Street (Resource 21)
Circa 1960
Noncontributing Building
This small commercial building on the south side of Center Street is a one-story, flat-roofed, Modern style building. On the east end of the front façade, the original aluminum storefront is intact. A single aluminum and glass entry door is inset into the surrounding aluminum-framed storefront window. The larger, rectangular storefront window on the right, however, has been enclosed. Its original aluminum and glass door remains. The flat roof extends over the front façade to become a cantilevered awning. Two small windows on the east façade have been enclosed. The west façade is windowless.

100 block S. Main Street (Resource 22)
Circa 1970
Noncontributing Building
In the 100 block of South Main Street is a circa 1970 gas station. It is a stucco building with a Mansard roof, metal and glass service bay roll-up doors, and a large flat porte cochere supported by metal poles.

104 S. Main Street (Resource 23)
Circa 1920
Noncontributing Building
104 S. Main Street is a one-story, painted brick commercial building with an altered storefront. The front façade has a centrally-located single entry door with an enclosed transom. The door is nonhistoric. To either side of the door, the original storefront windows have been enclosed. The window sills are still visible. A shed-roofed awning spans the façade. The building has a simple flat parapet with dentil-like details just below cornice level. North elevation windows have been enclosed. A large metal shed-roofed addition is located on the south side elevation.

Filling Station, 100 block S. Main Street (Resource 24)
Circa 1925
Contributing Building
At the northeast corner of Main and Carrizo Streets is a tiny Mission Revival style filling station. It was likely built in conjunction with a similarly-styled auto showroom across Carrizo to the south. The stucco building has a roughly square footprint and is placed on its lot diagonally, facing the intersection instead of facing either of the nearby streets. Its stucco parapet is stepped, with greater height at the building corners. The cornice is trimmed in clay tile. The building's fenestration patterns are intact, although windows themselves have been replaced or blocked in with corrugated metal. All windows are trimmed in wood, with angled, oversize headers. Window sills are clad in multicolored tile mosaic. Above each window is an inset, diamond-shaped tile. The front façade has a historic wood central entry door flanked by two windows. The door is set into an arched door opening trimmed in same random, colorful mosaic found on the window sills. Its semicircular transom window is missing. Each of the gas station's side elevations contain two window openings and one single rear door opening. A large nonhistoric metal and wood awning extends from the front elevation.

Cotulla Motor Co., 200 block S. Main Street (Resource 25)
Circa 1925
Contributing Building
At the southeast corner of Main and Carrizo Streets is a large auto showroom in the Mission Revival style. It is currently in poor condition but its integrity is high. The one-story building has a large rectangular footprint with a chamfered corner entry facing the intersection of Main and Carrizo. The building has stucco facades and clay

tile trim along the top of its parapets. In several locations, pilasters pierce the cornice. Diamond-shaped inset tiles are located on each of these pilasters.

The building's highly decorative corner entry is the focal point of the design. The chamfered corner acts as a gateway, with a tall arched opening flanked by rectangular openings. Supporting the archway, and acting as pilasters on either side of the rectangular openings, are tall, thin twisted columns. At the top of the arch is a semicircular grille with delicate iron scrolls. Above this arched gateway, the parapet rises to a triangular shape and is punctuated by an arched opening filled with iron openwork. Behind this chamfered corner gateway, the building is deeply recessed under the roof, creating an inset porte cochere. The recessed façade has a concave curve, which corresponds to a semicircular driveway that passes behind the arched gateway, under the building corner. Along this concave wall is a historic storefront comprised of multi-light windows and wood paneled doors with transoms. Below the large storefront windows are decorative wood panels.

South of the inset corner entry is the rest of the Main Street façade, which contains a large storefront at its southern end. The wood double doors, storefront windows, and transoms are in poor condition or are missing. To the left of this storefront is a single wood entry door and small window, likely corresponding to an office space inside. The building's north elevation contains a large garage door opening with a ramp up to the showroom floor. Two window openings are also found on this elevation, one of which has its original multi-light window. The rear elevation has more multi-light windows.

Cotulla Water Works (Resource 26)
1915
Contributing Structure
The Cotulla Water Works is located at the southeast corner of South (Center) Street and Kerr Street. The Water Works is a flat grassy lot that contains several historic resources relating to the city's water pumping and storage. At the northwest corner of the lot is a circa 1915 metal water tower with a bullet- or cone-shaped tank. Its four tall legs are metal trusses braced by tension wires. Just south of the tower is the reservoir, also built in circa 1915. Its convex concrete cap is above ground. Near these two resources is the third associated historic resource, the pump house. This small building is built of red brick and has a flat roof with a low parapet wall. A wide doorway on the west elevation opens toward the reservoir and water tower. The door has been removed. Two window openings flank the doorway, one of which is a 2/2 double hung window in poor condition, the other of which has been removed and blocked in with plywood. Doors and windows on the other elevations have also been removed. The building has decorative brickwork that includes brick pilasters at the building corners and a corbelled frieze above the windows and doors that is comprised of both header and soldier courses. A concrete panel at parapet level of the front elevation once read "COTULLA WATER WORKS," but is now faded. In c.1960, an above-ground concrete water tank was added to the site.

La Salle County Courthouse (Resource 27)
1931
Contributing Building
The La Salle County Courthouse is a 1931 civic building in the Art Deco style, designed by architect Henry T. Phelps. It is located in the center of a courthouse square that occupies the entire city block between North and South Center Streets, and Kerr and Stewart Streets. The building faces east, toward the historic commercial district and railroad tracks. The block immediately east of the courthouse square is the Cotulla Town Plaza, which frames the courthouse building and acts as a gateway. Center Street, which runs on an east-west axis through the center of town, splits into two as it passes by the plaza and the courthouse square. The courthouse square is a flat, slightly elevated grassy expanse dotted with deciduous trees and surrounded by a concrete sidewalk. A short concrete and stone staircase at Stewart Street leads to the building's main entrance walkway.

The building is built of buff-colored brick and has cream-colored stone architectural details. The building has a rectangular footprint and is comprised of a central three-story volume and two three-story flanking wings whose building plane is behind that of the central volume. A fourth story, which contains a jail, is a stuccoed volume that is set back from the edge of the building, such that only the top of it is visible from ground level. The courthouse's front, or east, façade is symmetrical and has 11 bays. Wide brick pilasters divide the bays. The entrance is located in the central bay, accessed by another broad concrete and stone stairway. The single entry door is flanked by glass sidelights and topped by a wide transom. Above the door is a tall casement window. These are both surrounded by telescoped Art Deco archivolts and topped with a frieze featuring stylized vegetal and scroll forms and an eagle with its wings spread wide. At the top of this central bay is a geometric detail of a circle within an octagon within a square. The two flanking bays of the central entry volume each contain two tall casement windows.

Each of the two flanking wings contain four bays, with casement windows of diminishing height—tall windows on the ground floor, shorter windows on the second floor, and still shorter windows on the third floor. This diminishing-size window pattern continues on the north and south five-bay elevations. On the first and second floor of both side elevations' central bays is the same stylized Art Deco door- and window-surrounds found on the front façade. The rear elevation is virtually a mirror-image of the front.

The building's Art Deco details repeat around the entire building. A wide frieze that surrounds the building features a chevron design with terra cotta stylized vegetal motifs within the triangles. The facades' brick pilasters extend to parapet level, interrupting the frieze. Atop each brick pilaster is a stair-stepped stone cap. Below this is an inset panel with the same vegetal motifs found in the frieze. Above every first floor windows is a rectangular stone spandrel featuring a geometric shape, more terra cotta floral motifs and a shield reading "LS" for La Salle County.

Plaza (Resource 28)
Circa 1883
Contributing Site
The Plaza (also known as Cotulla City Park) is located in front of the county courthouse in the center of town. The plaza is an entire city block in size, between North and South Center Street, and Stewart and Main Streets. It is a flat, grassy block sparsely dotted with deciduous trees. The grassy expanse is quartered by two narrow intersecting pathways. Where they intersect in the center, the pathways describe a diamond shape around a tall flagpole. On each edge of the plaza, where the walkways enter, is an identical stone gateway built in a rustic style typical of 1930s construction. The gateways are reminiscent of bookends, with two multicolored stone piers each flanked by a curved stone wing. In several locations are small benches created from the same stone. Nonhistoric picnic tables are also found in the plaza.

First United Methodist Church (Resource 29)
1906
Contributing Building
The First United Methodist Church is a one-story brick church building at 302 North (Center) Street. The building has a cross-shaped plan with shallow transepts and a cross-gabled roof with a broad front gable and steeply pitched side gable. At the southeast corner of the building is a blocky brick tower base topped with a wood-frame bell tower. Originally the building entrance was located within two arched openings in this corner tower; today they have been infilled and the entrance is in a different location. The wood tower has a flared, skirt-like section where it connects to the brick base. Above this is a square wood shaft topped by a pediment-like gabled projection on each side. Finally, the tower is crowned with a tall, octagonal, wood-shingled

pinnacle. The building's front façade faces Center Street, and contains two round-arched windows with brick window trim. The church's brick has been painted, so it is unknown if contrasting brickwork existed. On the east, Stewart Street elevation, are three round-arched windows topped by hood molds. The gable ends are clad in patterned wood shingles, and the roof has a shallow cornice overhang.

In 1928 an education building was added to the north side of the church, and its roof was tied in with that of the main structure. The education wing is a front-gabled volume that faces Stewart Street. Its front façade has three bays—a central single entry door flanked by single double hung windows on the first floor, and three single double hung windows above. The gable end is shingled. The north elevation of this wing faces Tilden Street and contains five double hung windows on each floor. A second church addition was built in circa 1955. This addition is a one-story, L-shaped volume that is joined to the education wing at the rear. Together, the church building, education wing and later L-shaped addition create a cloister-like U-shaped central courtyard. An open, arcaded walkway connects the church and the 1955 addition and further reinforces the cloister-like design.

200 block North (Center) Street (Resource 30)
Circa 1940
Contributing Building
This small building is located at the northeast corner of North (Center) and Stewart Streets. The building has a stripped-down Tudor Revival style, with a steeply pitched gabled roof and red brick walls, but otherwise has little in the way of ornamentation. The front elevation is part of a side-gabled building volume with a steeply pitched roof. An off-center entrance contains a wide single entry door and a tall front-gabled dormer. The front façade has three windows, one of which is blocked in. Farther back, the main house volume has an intersecting cross-gabled roof with a lower pitch. This volume extends west past the front house volume, which creates a stepped façade when viewed from the south or west. Regularly spaced windows are found around the house. West side windows are 3/1 double hung sash, while east side windows are blocked in. Brick headers create the window sills, and all window and door openings have headers created by soldier bricks. The roof has very little cornice overhang.

214 North (Center) Street (Resource 31)
Circa 1920
Contributing Building
214 Center Street is a one-story commercial building clad in small stones laid in a random rubble pattern. The building has good integrity. Its front elevation has four bays in a symmetrical arrangement, with flat, stone-clad pilasters separating the bays. The two narrow outer bays each contain a single entry door with two-light transom. The center two bays are slightly wider, and each contains a broad double hung window. A shed-roofed awning spans the façade above the storefront. Atop this, at parapet level, rectangular concrete panels are located between each pilaster. The panels contain a decorative diamond motif. Smaller diamond shapes are located on each pilaster. The building originally had a low parapet wall, but today it is partially obscured by a nonhistoric low-pitched gable roof. On the west elevation are multi-light double-hung windows.

212 North (Center) Street (Resource 32)
Circa 1955
Noncontributing Building
This small brick building is one story in height and has a rectangular footprint and overhanging hipped roof. Despite its residential form, it was likely built as an office. It has one off-centered door and two wide windows on the front elevation. The broad overhanging roof is not original.

Joe Amberson Building, 101 North Main Street (Resource 33)
1952
Contributing Building
The Joe Amberson Building is an innovative Modern style building built in 1952. It was designed as a mixed-use commercial building, incorporating office, retail, and restaurant space. It is a two-story building with a rectangular footprint and elevations facing Tilden, Main, and Center Streets. Each elevation features storefronts along the lower floor and offices above. Modern design features include a wide, overhanging flat roof, metal tubular second-story railings, and large window expanses including corner windows. The building has minor alterations such as door and window replacements, but its form is intact and its design is evident.

The main elevation faces Main Street to the east. On the first floor, a broad storefront window runs the entire length of the façade, interrupted by glass double doors at the northern end and a pair of single doors at the southern end. Below the storefront windows is a short wall of cast stone. A section of storefront glass has been enclosed with plywood. The upper floor features six bays of offices, each with a large window and single door. Three of these have been framed in and currently contain smaller windows and air conditioner units. On the Tilden Street elevation, the first and second floors have a similar configuration, but with seven second-story bays. Half of the first floor storefronts and all of the second floor office windows have been enclosed with wood or plywood. The Center Street elevation also has seven second story bays. The three easternmost bays have their large windows intact; the others have been blocked in. On the first floor of the Center Street elevation is a long window comprised of ten vertical rectangles atop a short wall of cast stone. This window, located at the east end of the elevation, turns the corner and becomes part of the long storefront of the main façade. The remainder of the Center Street elevation contains four smaller storefronts of varying sizes, each with a single entry door. Two of these storefronts have their windows enclosed.

Inventory of Resources

	Name	Address	Date	Description	Status
1	Chas. E. Neal Building	119 N. Front St.	1925	2-part commercial	C
2	Keck Building	113-117 N. Front St.	1924	1-part commercial	C
3		109 N. Front St.	circa 1900	2-part commercial	NC
4		107 N. Front St.	circa 1920	Façade only	NC
5		105 N. Front St.	circa 1900	false front commercial	C
6		103 N. Front St.	circa 1900	2-part commercial	C
7	Cotulla State Bank	101 N. Front St.	circa 1920	2-part commercial	C
8		101 S. Front St.	1904	1-part commercial	C
9		103 S. Front St.	circa 1900	1-part commercial	NC
10		105 S. Front St.	circa 1890	2-part commercial	C
11	Railroad Tracks	East of Front St.	1881	1 track & 1 short spur	Not counted
12	T.R. Keck & Sons Lumber & Hardware	101 Pecos St.	circa 1920	1-part commercial w/ attached warehouse	C
13	T.R. Keck & Sons Lumber & Hardware	South of Pecos (historic Ernest St.)	circa 1920	Warehouse	C
14		100 block Tilden St.	circa 1950	Warehouse/ Garage	NC
15	Filling Station	100 block N. Main	circa 1935	Gas Station	C
16		100 block N. Main	circa 1940	1-part commercial	NC
17		116 Center St.	circa 1920	1-part commercial	C
18		114 Center St.	circa 1920	1-part commercial	NC
19		100 block Center St.	circa 1910	Façade only	NC
20		100 block Center St.	circa 1910	Façade only	NC
21		105 Center St.	circa 1960	1-part commercial	NC
22		100 block S. Main	circa 1970	Gas station	NC
23		104 S. Main	circa 1920	1-part commercial	NC
24	Filling Station	100 block S. Main	circa 1925	Gas station	C
25	Cotulla Motor Co.	200 block S. Main	circa 1925	Auto Showroom	C
26	Cotulla Water Works	300 block North (Center) Street	circa 1915	Water tower, pump, and tank	C
27	La Salle County Courthouse	100 N. Stewart Street	1931	Art Deco Courthouse	C
28	Plaza	100 block N. Stewart	circa 1883	Grassy public plaza	C
29	First United Methodist Church	302 North (Center) Street	1906	Cross-gabled Church	C
30		200 block North (Center) Street	circa 1940	Cross-gabled House	C
31		214 North (Center) Street	circa 1920	1-part commercial	C
32		221 North (Center) Street	circa 1955	Hipped roof office	NC
33	Joe Amberson Building	101 North Main Street	1952	Modern 2-story mixed use commercial	C

Statement of Significance

The Cotulla Downtown Historic District, in Cotulla, La Salle County, Texas, is the historic heart of the South Texas city. The district is bisected by Interstate Business Route 35 (Main Street, formerly U.S. Highway 81) and comprised of two functional parts: one to the west centered on the county courthouse and plaza, and the other to the east, with a row of commercial buildings aligned along Front Street and the former International and Great Northern Railroad tracks. While the west section represents the civic life of city with its courthouse, historic Methodist Church, water tower, and open plaza, the east section reflects the influence of the railroad on frontier growth and development. The buildings along Main Street, including two historic filling stations and an auto dealership, reflect the development of US 81 as an important automobile corridor between San Antonio and the border town of Laredo. The Cotulla Downtown Historic District is nominated at the local level under Criterion A in the area of Community Planning and Development for its role as the commercial, financial, and civic center of the city, and under Criterion C in the area of Architecture for its collection of late 19th and 20th century buildings, some of which reflect the influence of Mexican commercial design common along the Rio Grande at the turn of the 20th century, while others reflect national and regional trends in architecture. The period of significance extends from 1883, when the plaza was established under the city plan, to 1952, when the last significant building of the historic period, the Joe Amberson building, was built.

Cotulla, the seat of La Salle County, Texas, is between San Antonio (90 miles to the north), and Laredo (67 miles to the south, on the U.S.-Mexico border along the Rio Grande). From the first Spanish exploration and settlement attempts in the 18th century, the area was considered to be desolate and dangerous, occupied by roving bands of Comanche and Apache warriors. After Texas gained independence in 1836, the area gained notoriety as a refuge for renegades due to the border dispute between the Republic of Texas and Mexico. Even after Texas joined the United States in 1845, the region attracted outlaws and fringe dwellers, and few permanent settlers occupied the land that would become La Salle County until the last quarter of the 19th century.

By the end of the Civil War, stock raisers and shepherds made inroads into the vast brush land. Among them was young Joe Cotulla, part of the wave of Silesians who came to Texas from the small corner of the Prussian Empire now known as Poland. He made the ocean journey at the age of twelve, accompanied by his widowed mother and aunt, and arrived at the port of Galveston in January 1857. Cotulla enlisted in the Union Army, serving as a private in Company C, 1st Regiment of Texas Cavalry Volunteers, which was stationed in southern Louisiana about 1864. Upon his release from the army, Cotulla moved to the unsettled brush land and between 1865 and 1867, he built a small stone house on land belonging to Sam Maverick. Cotulla fashioned the two-room room sandstone block ranch house in the tradition of the stone houses of the Spanish Colonial and Mexican settlers on the Rio Grande. Between 1875 and 1877, Cotulla purchased a 20,000 acre spread from Maverick, and concerned himself largely with his livestock business. Like Cotulla, most of the settlers in the area were stock raisers or goat herders, and their employees. By 1880, however, rumors of a railroad between San Antonio and Laredo reached South Texas and Cotulla immediately recognized the development potential for landowners in its path. He offered the railroad company 120 acres to develop into a townsite as an incentive to build through his property. The railroad accepted Cotulla's offer and by January 1882, the City of Cotulla was laid out in 36 commercial and residential blocks and a courthouse square and public plaza (LaSalle County Deed Record A-262).

Establishment of the City of Cotulla

Cotulla was laid out on a grid, with the International & Great Northern railroad forming the eastern boundary and blocks of unequal size stretching across the landscape to the west. Long, narrow lots faced Front Street, along the railroad tracks, and Main Street, to the west. These were intended for commercial use and were more valuable than the residential lots further away and thus had narrow frontage for more buildings and greater profit to the landowners. Center Street divided Front Street into two halves and terminated at the Public Square (Block No. 37). The Courthouse square was set immediately west of the plaza, bounded by Stewart Street on the east and Kerr Street on the west. North Street bounded the two squares on the north and South Street defined the squares on the south. Four narrow blocks, also intended for commercial development, fronted the squares on the north and south. As the town developed, Front Street became its principal commercial street while the lots intended for commercial use near the Court House were instead developed for residential and civic uses such as churches. Town lots were immediately advertised for sale, and developers sang the city's praises, declaring that the town stood on a high rolling prairie with good soil, abundant water, all-weather lakes, and a nearly completed railroad line between San Antonio and Laredo. The developers scheduled an auction for town lots on January 10, 1882, providing transportation from San Antonio via an excursion train.

The nearly-barren townsite had no real streets, few, if any, businesses, no churches or schools, and only a handful of makeshift houses. Its most attractive feature for entrepreneurs was the designation of a courthouse square for the newly organized La Salle County, but the courthouse square on the map was a little premature since Cotulla was not yet the county seat. In fact, once La Salle County formed in 1880, the County Commissioners met at Cuellar's Ranch until October 1881, after which they convened at Stewart's Rancho (Ft. Ewell). In March 1882, the commissioners rented two rooms in the newly-formed town of LaSalle, across the railroad tracks from Twohig's Station and the townsite of Cotulla. LaSalle served as the de facto county seat until February 1884, when a special election granted that honor to Cotulla. It was said that LaSalle had the post office but Cotulla had the train depot.[1] The depot lay on the east side of Front Street, at the foot of Center Street and its location guaranteed the success of those two streets as they were the first encountered by visitors to the fledgling town. Front Street, in particular, became the "main" street of Cotulla and eventually featured hotels, restaurants, saloons, banks, and dry goods stores.

As anticipated by its planners, the location of the county seat and its position on the I.G. & N. railroad fostered the Cotulla's growth in the late 19th century. The earliest businesses operated out of tents or simple frame buildings with wood false fronts. Many newcomers to the area pitched tents or parked wagons on the town plaza. By the end of 1883, Cotulla featured a general store, a hotel, and a jail. Soon, however, Cotulla grew to be the center of a sprawling ranching district between San Antonio and Laredo, and ranchers came into town from miles around to conduct business, buy staples, and have a drink. Their families attended church and school in the railroad town.

The introduction of barbed wire in the 1880s encouraged others to pursue ranching in the county and by 1890, the census found 98 farms and ranches averaging 7,221 acres in size. That year, the census counted nearly 73,000 head of cattle in the county. Sheep ranching also gained considerably in that period, with an increase from about 5,000 sheep in 1870 to 36,714 in 1880 (just before the railroad arrived), to 50,560 in 1890. Sheep ranching dwindled significantly by the turn of the century due to a combination of economic and environmental reverses, but cattle ranching, on the other hand, remained the mainstay of the county's economy.[2]

[1] *Stirpes [sic]*, Vol. 32, No. 4, December 1992
[2] John Leffler "La Salle County," *Handbook of Texas Online.*

Cotulla gained a reputation for lawlessness and random violence. According to legend, three sheriffs and at least nineteen residents died in gunfights on Cotulla's streets. Reportedly, the town was so notorious that railroad conductors alerted passengers to arm themselves before leaving the train at Cotulla. Justice was equally harsh, and Bill Cotulla, great-grandson of the town's founder, recalled that

> an outlaw named California Jack Millet headed down from San Antonio and was caught by the sheriff and his men. In a single day, they caught him, hung him, and then buried him under the railroad tracks. No judge. No jury.[3]

Despite its rough reputation, Cotulla also attracted settlers that were intent on building good lives in LaSalle County. In the mid-1880s, about twenty families lived in two- or three-room frame dwellings in Cotulla. One of the town's first industries was a brick kiln on Mustang Creek, which supplied brick for many of the town's early commercial buildings, some of which are still standing on Front and Center streets. Pfeuffer and Sloan's Cotulla Lumber Company supplied board for other buildings. By 1885, only four years after the town was platted, 135 students were enrolled in school. At the same time, a debating society formed to ponder such themes as equality in women's education.[4]

By 1890, Cotulla boasted a population of approximately 1,000, with three general stores, two weekly newspapers, two churches, a saloon, a bank, a corn mill, and a cotton gin. The following year, T. R. Keck purchased the Cotulla Lumber Company which continues in operation to the present (properties 12 and 13, east of the railroad tracks). In 1892, the town had a hotel, four general stores, three saloons, a meat market and two grocery stores. In addition to its railroad access, the town featured daily stagecoach service.[5]

Cotulla at the Turn of the Century

By the turn of the 20th century, Cotulla's citizens witnessed the impact of the railroad on commercial development as merchants replaced makeshift ramadas and frame shanties with substantial brick and stone business buildings. The railroad was largely responsible for drawing farmers and stock raisers to what had been a vast landscape. The advent of the railroad provided reliable shipping of crops and livestock to market, and also delivered equipment, clothing, and food staples. In turn, cattlemen and farmers spent what money they had at local venues, thus supporting the Front Street businesses. In the 20 years since Joseph Cotulla's 1880 plat, Cotulla was entirely invested in itself as the seat of county government. The first of several county courthouses stood on an elevated site above the rest of the town; subsequent courthouses replaced it. Two prominent churches soon flanked the courthouse square on the north and south, possibly with the intent of influencing statesmen to make moral decisions. In spite of the looming courthouse, law and order remained elusive in the early years and by the turn of the 20th century, a sheriff, a constable, and several state rangers called Cotulla home. Although segregated, the population erected schools for its black, white, and Mexican students, thus affording all children an opportunity to get an education.

At the turn of the 20th century, virtually all of the able bodied men in Cotulla – and many women – worked for a living. There were a few professional jobs such as bankers and doctors, but most work derived from agricultural, either on farms or raising and driving cattle. Some worked in building trades such as carpentry, masonry, or well boring, and these journeymen relied on the lumber and hardware salesmen. A good number of

[3] Mary O. Parker, tpwmagazine.com/archive/2010/dec/legend, accessed 4/27/2012
[4] Ludeman 1975: 33
[5] John Leffler, La Salle County" in *Handbook of Texas Online* http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hgc16, accessed November 13, 201.

men and women worked in other types of sales such as dry goods stores, grocery stores, and general merchandise venues. While many older children worked, often with their parents, most children between the ages of eight and seventeen attended school. A few worked in the town's meager hospitality industry; they tended bar, cooked, ran restaurants, operated hotels, and made music for a living.

Cotulla had numerous merchants at the turn of the century, including several groceries, butcher shops, bakeries, and general merchandise or dry goods stores. Among the oldest surviving business in Cotulla is the Keck lumber and hardware store, run by Thomas R. and Edgar Keck at the turn of the century. Cotulla residents in the service industry included restaurant owners, bar tenders, hotel proprietors, and musicians. Mexican and Black residents lived apart from whites but owned a few stores, restaurants, and saloons in their own communities. While most minority adults worked at what might be considered menial jobs such as farm laborer or stock drover, laundress or cook, a significant number were able to buy their own homes or farms. As a whole, Cotulla in 1900 could be characterized as a multi-cultural town of hard-working people who relied on agriculture – in one way or another – for their livelihood. Though many worked at lower-paying, labor-intensive jobs, the percentage of home ownership among working people was surprisingly high.

Early 20th Century

Despite the town's advances, Cotulla at the turn of the century lacked many amenities available to other Texans at that time; it had no electricity, running water, or telephones. Most residents bought water from "barrilenos" who hauled it from the Nueces River and delivered it throughout town on barrel-laden carts. Likewise, Cotulla's housewives purchased fruits and vegetables from a peddler who rarely offered fresh produce but had plenty of pinto beans . Electricity finally came to Cotulla in 1914. The following year, the city drilled its first water well, tapping into a deep source of pure artesian water.

In the early years of the 20th century, ranching continued to dominate La Salle County's economic and cultural life. Indeed, its 107 farms and ranches spread across more than one million acres of land, the vast majority of which was "unimproved" range land. Lack of water was the principal obstacle to farming in the county. Early in the century, however, technological advances in drilling and dam construction gave farmers access to artesian wells to water their fields. Developers immediately launched national advertising campaigns that touted the agricultural potential of the county. Most hoped to attract Midwestern farmers to their newly subdivided "garden tract" farms in La Salle County, and dubbed the South Texas area "The Winter Garden Region" to lend the dry brushland a little cachet. In the first decade of the 20th century alone, 23 new towns were platted in anticipation of new immigrants to the area; among them were Artesia Wells, Gardendale, and Farmington. By 1920, some farmers had become orchardists, growing peaches, pears, plums, and figs. That year, more than 17,000 acres were planted in cotton which yielded 4,263 bales.

Between 1900 and 1910, La Salle County's population more than doubled, due in large part to the influx of newly-arrived farmers. Though numerous small towns had emerged to serve the farmers, Cotulla, as the county seat and railroad station, benefitted greatly from the boom. By 1914, Cotulla recorded a population of 1,800 residents, three hotels, two banks, two restaurants, an ice plant, an electric power plant, and a movie theater.[6] Farmers and ranchers still gravitated to Cotulla to conduct business, ship livestock and crops, shop for staples, and have a beer. Entrepreneurs moved to the town to take advantage of the county's growth in the 1910s and 1920, and as a result, Cotulla's population doubled in the 1920s. New elementary and high school buildings,

[6] John Leffler, "Cotulla, TX," *Handbook of Texas Online.*

including the brick Mexican School where future president Lyndon Johnson taught school, were completed in the mid-1920s. By 1931, Cotulla's population had grown to about 3,175 and boasted seventy-five businesses.[7]

Snapshot of Cotulla in 1930

A little over 3,000 people lived in Cotulla at the close of the 1920s, and the 1930 census offers a glimpse of what had changed and what had stayed the same since 1900. Blacksmiths had given way to automobile dealers and garage mechanics. Schools had more teachers, clerks, and administrators, including principals and a superintendent. County business had increased and the town boasted a number of lawyers and their assistants. Various governmental agencies employed local citizens. Federal immigration laws that had recently taken effect likely brought U.S. Immigration officers to Cotulla. Bankers, doctors, and ministers remained in high esteem in Cotulla, and health care improved with the addition of several doctors, a dentist, and an optician.

The Keck family presided over the lumber and hardware business in Cotulla, just as it had in 1900. Thomas R. Keck was the president of the company and Frank R. Keck oversaw the lumber yard and retail sales. Contractors of all sorts attended to the town's construction needs, whether it be a new house, remodeling, repair, or demolition. Men who worked in the field included plumbers, carpenters and general contractors.

Merchants and service-oriented businesses abounded on Front and Main streets. As in 1900, Louis Gaddis was the proprietor of Gaddis Drug Store (109 N. Front Street, Resource 3). Holman Orzan owned a furniture store. David Neely and Robert L. Meeks owned grocery stores and Meeks' wife worked as a clerk in his business. Simon Cotulla was a salesman in a specialty meat market and E. Aaronson owned a large dry goods store on Front Street. Howard C. Grissom managed a general store in town. In addition to dry goods and groceries, Cotulla residents had several dining and entertainment venues.

While the railroad retained its importance for shipping livestock and produce to market, widespread use of automobiles had transformed both personal and commercial modes of transportation. In 1930, there were several automobile dealers. Charles Neal had started the Ford agency in the 1920s but Charles Reagan was the Ford dealer in the Cotulla of the 1930s. A new industry in the area was oil exploration which attracted a unique breed of workers. It appeared that Cotulla was on the brink of expanding its economic base but it would not be until World War II that the oil and gas industry in La Salle County would come into its own.

The Great Depression and Beyond

The onset of the Great Depression had a numbing effect on growth and prosperity in La Salle County and Cotulla. The market for vegetables declined significantly and cotton prices fell so precipitously that by 1939, farm acreage had dropped by 90 percent. Of the 627 farms recorded in the 1930 census, only 453 survived by 1940. In the years following World War II, former family farms were acquired for agribusiness; by 1950, the county recorded only 282 farms. Small towns serving the garden communities were abandoned as well. People left the county in droves and in 1950, the census recorded only 5,972 inhabitants, a dramatic decline from the 1940 high of 8,003.

During World War II, oil and gas exploration and production began to overshadow agriculture in the county's economy. Tentative exploration efforts began in the mid-1920s but it wasn't until 1940 that the first successful well came in. By 1942, the well produced 607 barrels but that number sky-rocketed to 265,000 barrels in 1944. After a lull in the early 1950s, production rose to 332,000 barrels in 1956. The rate fluctuated slightly over the

[7] Ibid.

next few decades. After a high of 515,000 barrels in 1978, production declined in the 1980s. Still, gas and oil remained pillars of the county's economy. In 1990, 1,983,446 barrels of crude oil were produced in the county.

In 1990, the U.S. Census listed La Salle County's population at 5,254 inhabitants. Declines in family farms, and the rise of big business in agriculture, account for much of the loss. Most of the small towns that emerged during the "garden farm" boom in the early 20th century dwindled and disappeared during the Great Depression. Nevertheless, Cotulla as the county seat, railroad hub, and center of commerce for the surrounding area, has survived to the present.

Historic District

The Cotulla Downtown Historic District contains the largest concentration of historic resources in the city of Cotulla. Components include two blocks of Front Street, part of the town's historic main street, the Court House Square, the Town Plaza, and adjacent historic buildings. Connecting Front Street to the Court House area resources is a one-block length of Center Street. The oldest commercial buildings are late 19th and early 20th century one- and two-story commercial buildings facing the railroad tracks on Front Street. Across the tracks, the ca. 1920 brick Keck Hardware and Lumber Store and related warehouses attest to the tenacity of the Keck family business in Cotulla. An automobile showroom and gas station dating to the late 1920s occupy opposite lots on Main Street and a second gas station lies at the corner of Tilden and Main streets. Historic resources around the Court House Square include the Court House itself, the Plaza, the Methodist Church, and the city water tower and water works. A few small resources front onto North Street, the northern boundary of the Court House Square and Plaza. Finally, the 1952 Amberson Building, a 29,000 square foot multi-use office building at the northwest corner of North and Main streets, marks the end of the historic period for the Cotulla Historic District. Built during a resurgence in development following World War II, it reflects the influence of oil and gas discoveries in the county.

The most intact and compact component of the district is the row of late 19th and early 20th century brick commercial buildings that line a two-block stretch of Front Street. Front Street, in turn, faces the I. & G. N. Railroad line connecting San Antonio and Laredo. It was the construction of this railroad that is credited with establishing the town of Cotulla in 1882. The bank of historic commercial buildings along Front Street contains no modern intrusions and few major alterations. Thus, it appears as an exceptionally intact streetscape of historic commercial buildings. Furthermore, the closely-packed collection of buildings, with their unilateral setback, vertically-oriented front facades, brick materials and similar fenestration, clearly reads as a uniform whole. Across the tracks and within clear view of the commercial blocks, is the T. R. Keck Hardware and Lumber Store and related warehouses. The store is remarkably intact, in good condition, and conveys a strong sense of its historic role in Cotulla's growth and development. It is similar to the Front Street buildings in design, materials, massing, and fenestration. Its physical similarity and close proximity tie it to the Front Street grouping.

Conclusion

The city of Cotulla, seat of government in La Salle County, contains a significant concentration of late 19th and early 20th century commercial and civic buildings that reflect the history of the town and its origins on the I.G. & N. Railroad through South Texas. Its earliest buildings are clustered along the railroad frontage on Front Street, and extend across Main Street to include important public resources such as the Art Deco courthouse, the 19th century Methodist Church, the early 20th century water tower, and the public plaza, defined by CCC era entrances. Across from the plaza lies the most recent historic property, the vast Amberson office building, which represents major oil and gas exploration and industry in the county. Dating to the earliest period of

Cotulla's history, the largely commercial buildings reflect the city's origins as a railroad town with one- and two-story brick storefronts crowding the two block railroad frontage. They are strongly evocative of the town's frontier heritage. Overall, the Front Street commercial row, adjacent Center Street connecting to the Courthouse Square and associated properties is an outstanding representation of a South Texas frontier town. It is nominated at the local level under Criterion A, Community Planning and Development, as a superb example of a railroad town, and at the same time, resembles county seats across the state with its prominent courthouse and adjoining plaza. The district is also significant at the local level, under Criterion C for its architecture; it features outstanding examples of late 19th and early 20th century commercial masonry buildings, some reflecting designs prevalent in communities like Laredo and Rio Grande City, on the Lower Rio Grande. It also possesses good examples of Spanish Colonial Revival design in a 1920s auto dealership and garage and adjacent service station. The recently-restored 1931 Art Deco courthouse is an understated masterpiece with geometric tile relief in different shades of colored stone. Finally, the postwar Modern Amberson building represented a new style for a new direction in Cotulla's economy. Within a few short blocks, these varied resources convey the complete history of Cotulla from the coming of the railroad, through the heady days of cowboys and saloons, to the modern oil and gas industry. For these reasons, the Cotulla Downtown Historic District is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places.

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Interviews

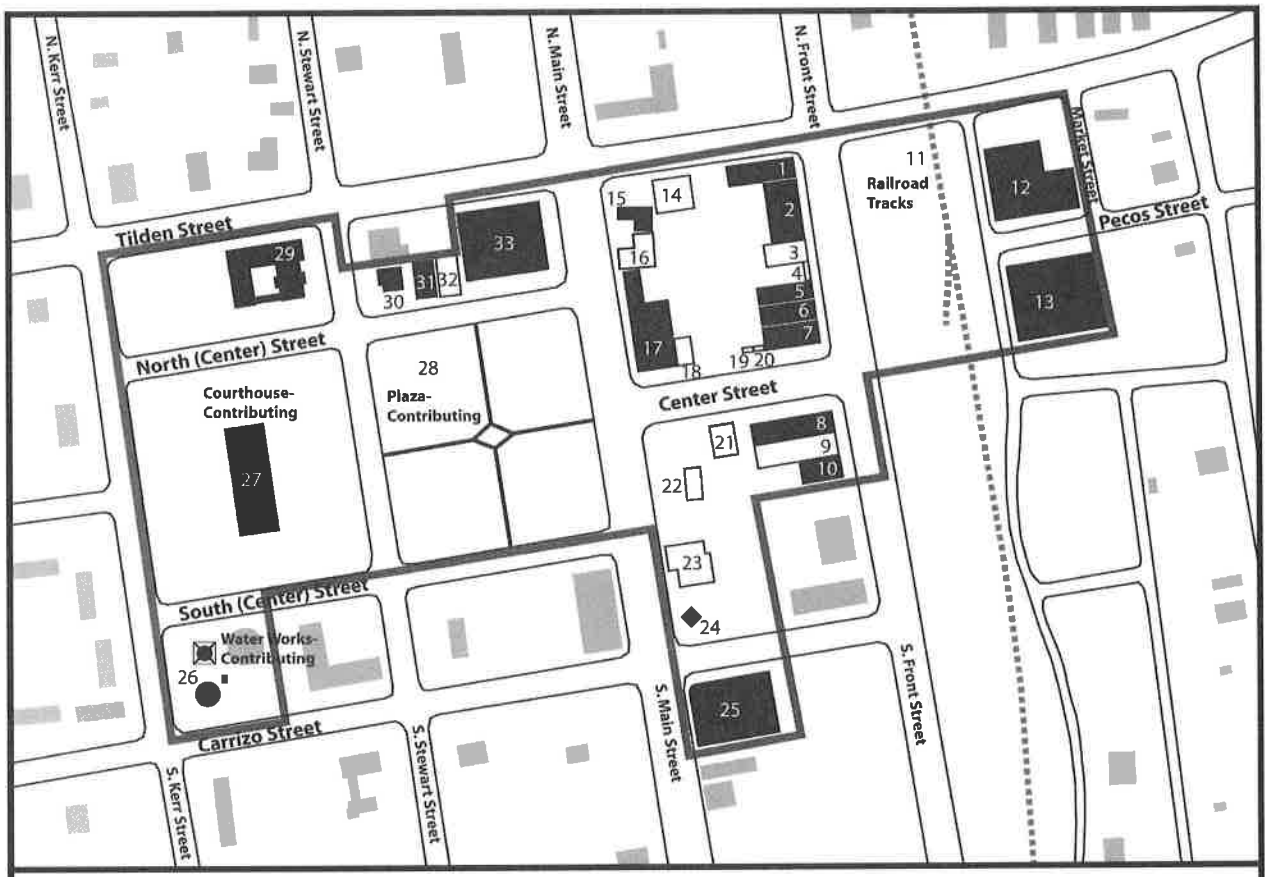
Barbour, Jim, interview with Terri Myers. Cotulla, La Salle County, Texas. February 16, 2012.
Barbour, Jim interview with Terri Myers. Cotulla, La Salle County, Texas. October 5, 2011.
Cotulla, Bill interview with Terri Myers. Cotulla, La Salle County, Texas. October 6, 2011.
Keck, John interview with Terri Myers. Cotulla, La Salle County, Texas. February 16, 2012.
Tyler, Nora Mae, with Terri Myers. Cotulla, La Salle County, Texas. October 6, 2012.

Verbal Boundary Description

Beginning at the southwest corner of Market Street at Tilden Street, proceed west, crossing N. Front Street, to the southeast corner of N. Main and Tilden streets. Turn south along N. Main Street. At the intersection of North and Main streets. Proceed west along North Street to the southeast corner of lot 7, block 9 of the Town of Cotulla plat. Turn north along the eastern boundary of lot 7 until reaching Broadway Avenue. Turn west along the rear property lines of lots 7, 8, and 9, crossing Stewwart Street. Continue to the rear property line of the Methodist Church complex, the westernmost point of block 16, at N. Kerr Street. At that point, turn south along the Methodist property line, crossing North Street to the Court House Square. Proceed south along N. Kerr Street, encompassing all of the Court House Square, crossing South Street to Carrizo Street and the southwest corner of lot 9, block 15, encompassing the water tower and water works. Turn east along Carrizo Street for two blocks to S. Main Street. Turn south to encompass the lots containing the Aztec Garage. At the southern lot line, turn east along the property line to the rear (east) point, then turn north along the rear property line, crossing Carrizo Street and following the alley to the southwest corner of lot 7, block 3. Turn east along the southern boundary of lot 7 to Front Street. At Front Street, turn north to Center Street. At Center Street, turn east and proceed across the street and railroad tracks to Market Street. Follow Market Street north to the point of beginning, encompassing the Keck Hardware and Lumber Store and associated warehouses.

Boundary Justification

The district includes the I.G. & N Railroad tracks, all of the significant historic buildings along Front Street and the associated Keck Hardware and Lumber resources, and several early 20th century commercial buildings on Main and Center Streets. These resources reflect commercial development in Cotulla from the late 19th century to the 1930s, the district's Period of Significance. In addition, the district includes the recently restored Courthouse, original Public Square, the historic water tower, and the historic Methodist Church. The boundaries are drawn to include the adjacent commercial and civic areas, the historic center of Cotulla and scene of the town's public life.



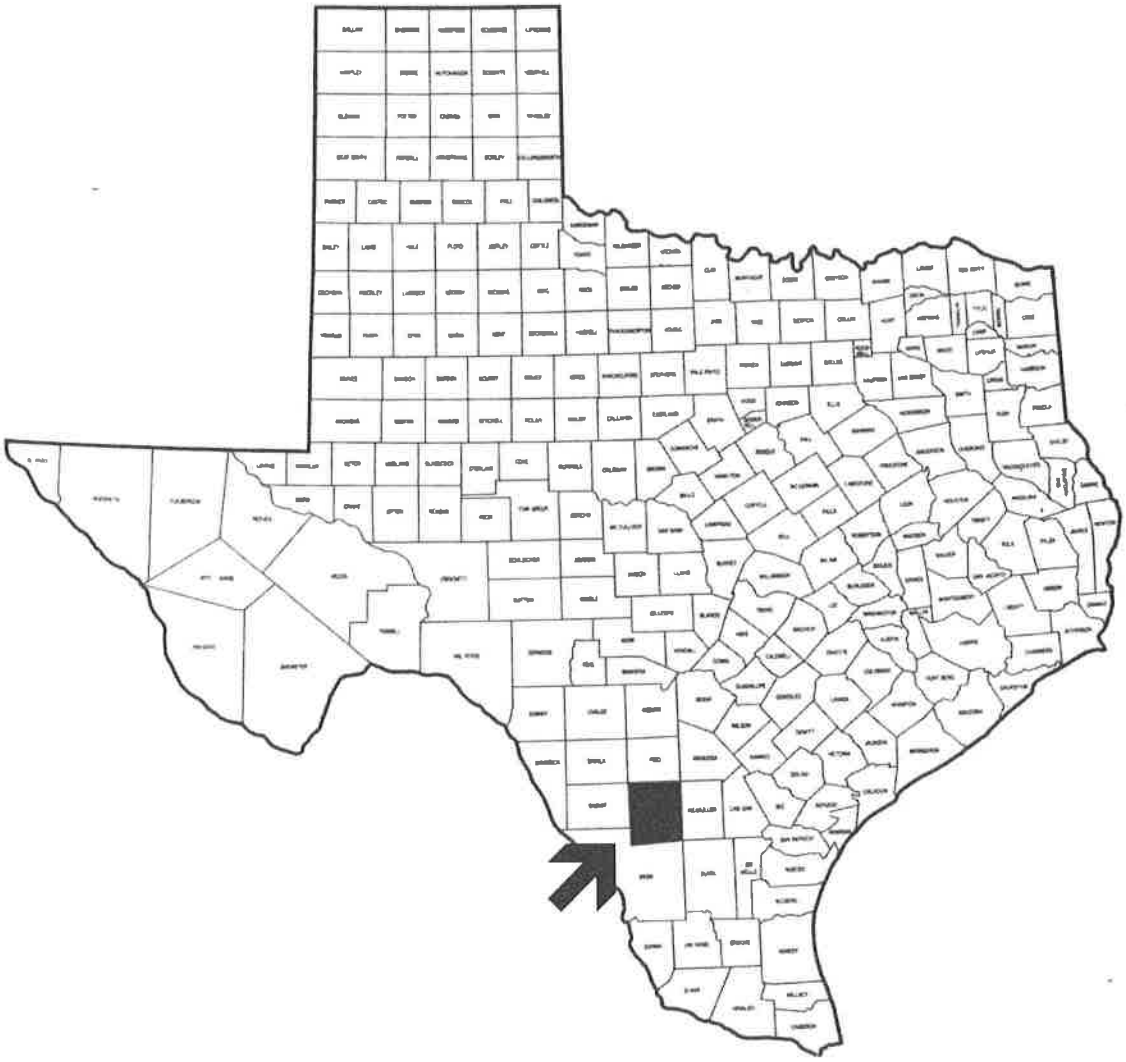
Cotulla Historic District
= District Boundary
= Contributing Resource
= Noncontributing Resource

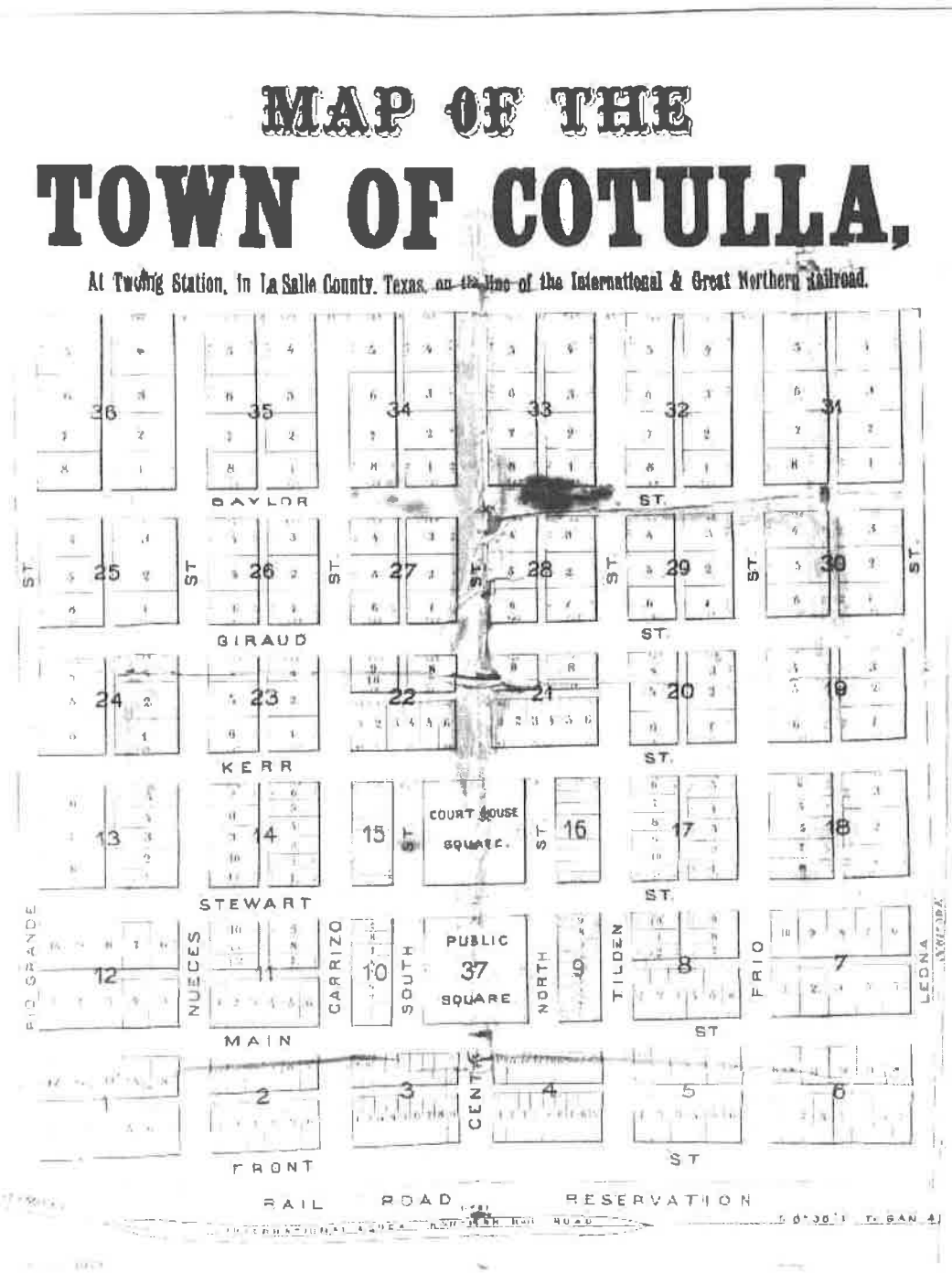
1. Chas E. Neal Building
2. Keck Building
3. 109 N. Front St.
4. 107 N. Front St.
5. 105 N. Front St.
6. 103 N. Front St.
7. Cotulla State Bank
8. 101 S. Front St.
9. 103 S. Front St.
10. 105 S. Front St.
11. Railroad Tracks
12. T.R. Keck & Sons Lumber & Hardware, Commercial Block
13. T.R. Keck & Sons Lumber & Hardware, Warehouse Block
14. 100 block Tilden St.
15. Filling Station, 100 block N. Main St.
16. 100 block N. Main St.
17. 116 Center St.
18. 114 Center St.
19. 100 block Center St.
20. 100 block Center St.
21. 105 Center St.
22. 100 S. MainSt.
23. 104 S. Main St.
24. Filling Station, 100 block S. Main St.
25. Cotulla Motor Co.
26. Cotulla Water Works
27. La Salle County Courthouse
28. Plaza
29. First United Methodist Church
30. 200 block North (Center) Street
31. 214 North (Center) Street
32. 212 North (Center) Street
33. 101 North Main Street

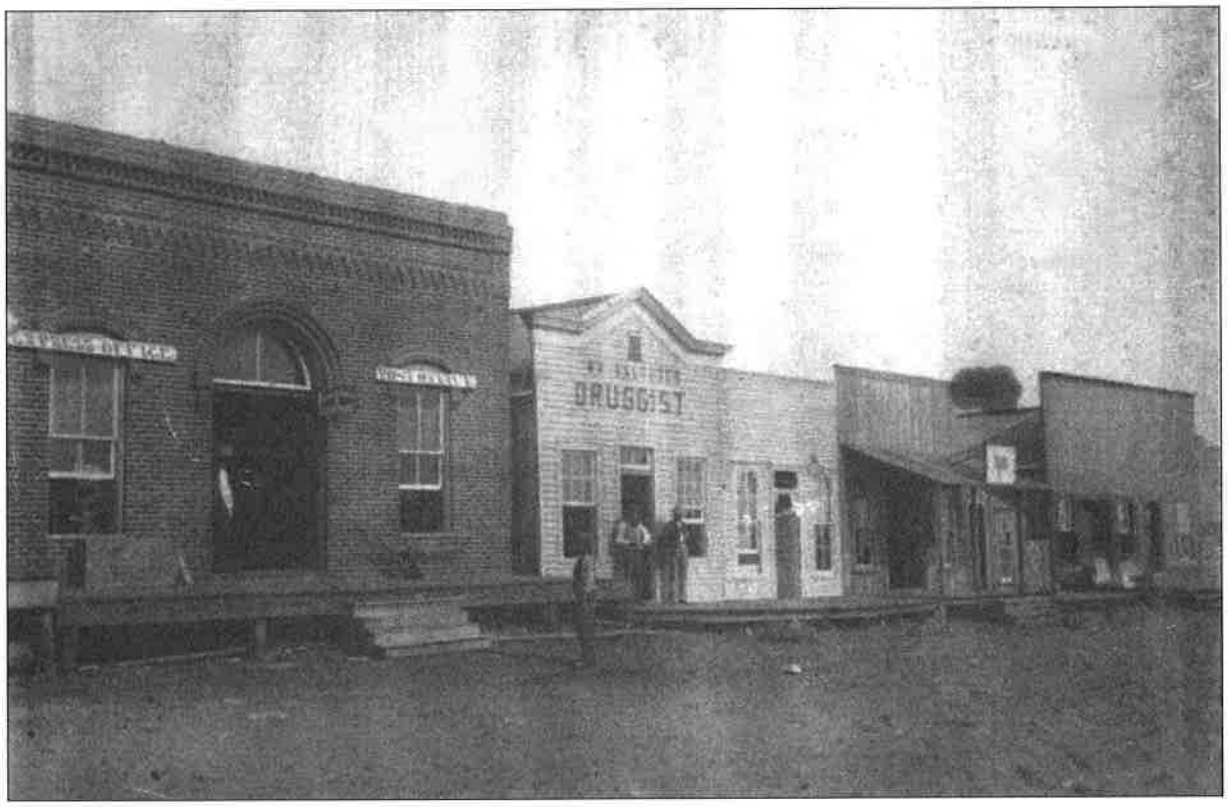
	Latitude:	Longitude:
1:	28.436501°	-99.237267°
2:	28.437118°	-99.232963°
3:	28.435988°	-99.232717°
4:	28.434582°	-99.234170°
5:	28.434531°	-99.234663°
6:	28.434716°	-99.236387°
7:	28.434636°	-99.236930°

Scale Map with lat/lon coordinates
Source: Google Earth

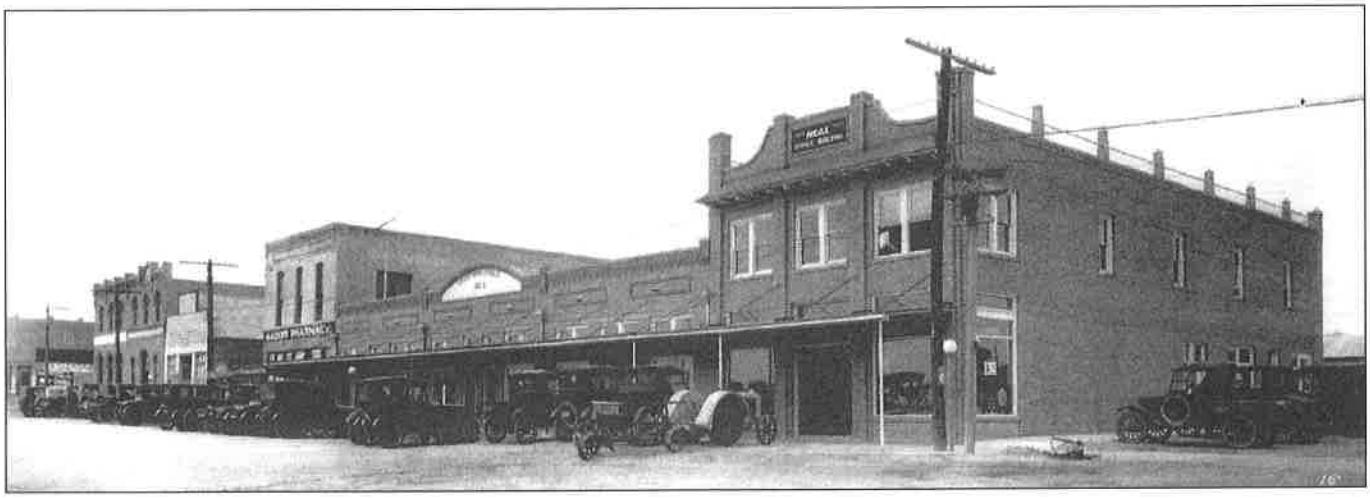
Location of La Salle County, Texas



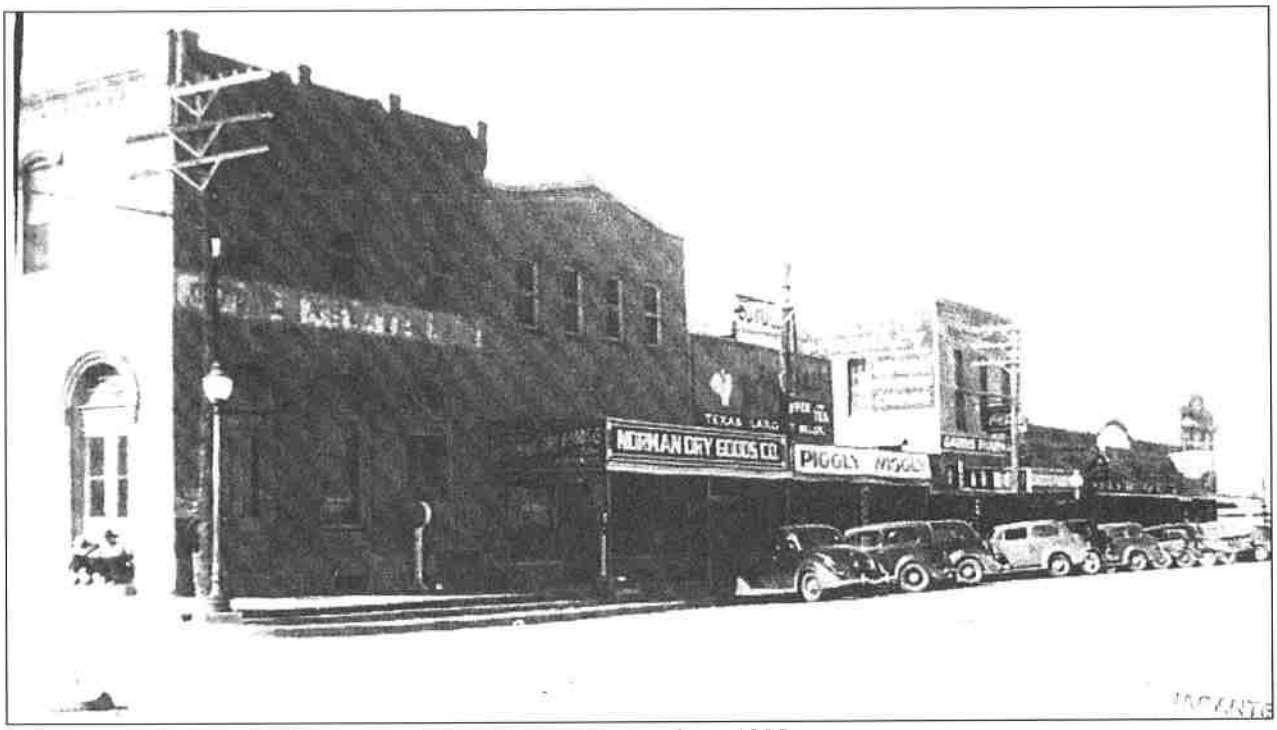

MAP OF THE
TOWN OF COTULLA,
At Twohig Station, in La Salle County, Texas, on the line of the International & Great Northern Railroad.
BAYLOR
GIRAUD
KERR
STEWART
MAIN
FRONT
COURT HOUSE SQUARE
PUBLIC 37 SQUARE
NUECES
CARRIZO
SOUTH
NORTH
TILDEN
FRIO
LEONA
RIO GRANDE
RAIL ROAD RESERVATION



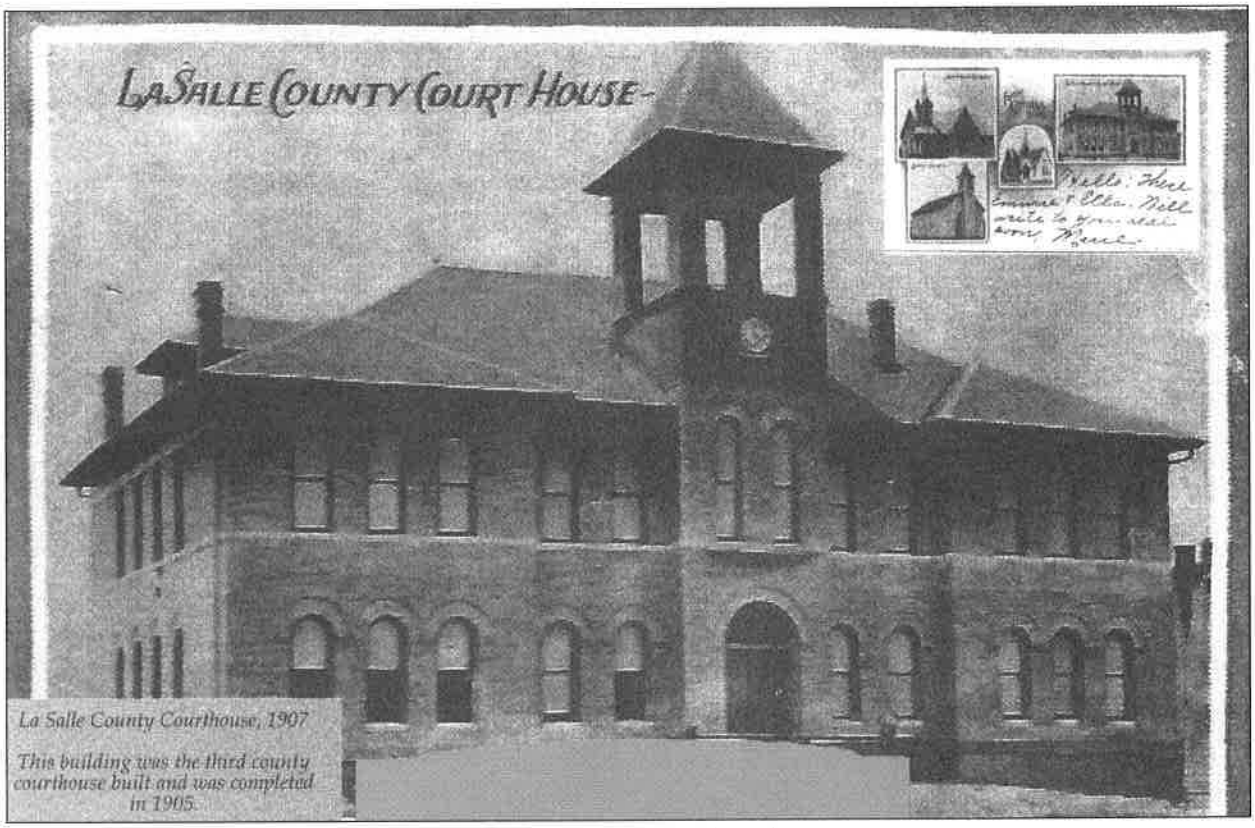
Front Street, circa 1886



Front Street, circa 1925



Front Street, circa 1938



1905 La Salle County Courthouse

First United Methodist Church, circa 1906

First United Methodist Church, circa 1910

Joe Amberson Building, 1952

-fin-

COTULLA

COTULLA

FIRST
METHODIST CHURCH
SUNDAY SCHOOL
9:45 AM
WORSHIP 11:00 AM
REV CJ TILLINGHAST
EVERYONE IS

DOLLAR

BOSCH

Liberty
Christian
Ministry

AUTO PARTS

COTULLA
NAPA
Cotulla
AUTO PARTS
Cotulla MAIN STREET
aka North Front Street

Cotulla MAIN STREET
105 North Front Street

CHAS. E. NEAL
1925
WINTER GARDEN INSURANCE
C & E INSURANCE
H&R BLOCK
WINTER GARDEN INSURANCE

CHAS. E. NEAL
1925
WINTER GARDEN INSURANCE
CITY HALL
FREE
GRATIS
WINTER GA
INSUR
C&E INSUR
H&R BL

KECK
T.R.KECK 1892
NO SMOKING