

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form (Rev. 8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

Smart, Edmond Ellison, House, Leesville, Vernon Parish, LA

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United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

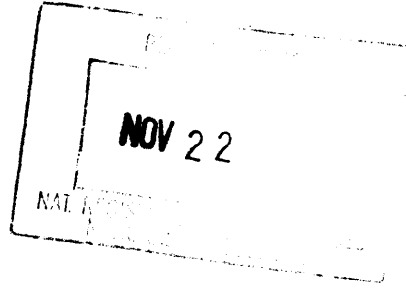
National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1636

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: Smart, Edmond Ellison House

Other Name/Site Number:



2. LOCATION

Street & Number 301 South 1st St.

Not for publication: NA

City/Town Leesville

Vicinity: NA

State: Louisiana Code: LA County: Vernon Code: 115

Zip Code: 71446

3. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria.

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

Nationally: ___ Statewide: ___ Locally: X

Signature of Certifying Official/Title Jonathan Fricker, Deputy SHPO, Dept. of Culture, Recreation and Tourism

November 13, 2002 Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of Commenting or Other Official/Title

Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

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4. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is:

Edson H. Beall 12/31/02

- Entered in the National Register
Determined eligible for the National Register
Determined not eligible for the National Register
Removed from the National Register
Other (explain):

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

5. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property
Private: X
Public-Local:
Public-State:
Public-Federal:

Category of Property
Building(s): X
District:
Site:
Structure:
Object:

Number of Resources within Property
Contributing
1

Non contributing
buildings
sites
structures
objects
0 Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 0

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing: NA

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6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic: domestic Sub: single dwelling
Current: vacant Sub: vacant

7. DESCRIPTION

Architectural Classification: late Greek Revival/Italianate
Materials:

Foundation: brick
Walls: wood
Roof: asphalt
Other:

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Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

The one story, wood frame Edmond Smart House (c.1870) faces the old Leesville central business district, a block away. The house is not easy to pigeonhole stylistically, but on the whole should be viewed within the overall late Greek Revival/Italianate taste as it appeared typically in rural Louisiana. With the exception of a rear gallery enclosure and the loss of chimneys, the exterior looks much as it did when constructed. The interior has received some cosmetic alterations and losses, as explained below.

While family tradition has the house being built in the late 1850s, the architectural evidence suggests the late 1860s or the 1870s – roughly contemporaneous with the founding of Leesville in 1871. (For the purposes of this nomination a date of c.1870 will be used.) As explained in Part 8, Smart is considered the town's founder. The house looks like a plantation house, and indeed, the setting would have been rural in the very early years. (Leesville remained a small rural hamlet until the 1890s.) Dr. Smart's considerable acreage extended back to Castor Creek. Today the house sits on less than an acre.

The house's exterior character is defined by a broad, spreading hip roof with a low pitch and a quite distinctive gallery. Originally the gallery encircled the house. Today the rear portion is enclosed. The "one of a kind" columns should be viewed within the Italianate taste. They can be interpreted as a country builder's take on a richly paneled Italianate column. From a distance they look pierced – i.e., a single piece of wood with a cutout design – but closer inspection reveals that the pattern is formed by multiple pieces of wood. A popular Italianate convention was the richly paneled column (perhaps with a roundel) set atop a high base. This overall configuration is seen at the Smart House, but instead of a paneled column and base, the builder chose a pierced look (column and base) formed of straight-sided and rounded pieces of wood (see detail). Rounded pieces of wood are also found where the balustrade attaches to the columns. The balustrade features straight balusters. The columns' simple boxed "capitals" are echoed at the corners in pilasters. The bold articulation of each column part (at the expense of the whole) should also be viewed within the Italianate taste.

The house rests on brick piers about a foot above grade. Because all of the exterior walls were protected by galleries, they are sheathed in flush boards. Windows are six over six with the upper sash fixed in place. Shutters (original) have a fixed lower panel and a movable upper panel. The symmetrically placed entrance features a four-panel door with side lights and a transom. The heavy molding seen in the surround, the side light panels, and the door is very typical of the 1870s. There is also an original door opening on the southern (side) elevation. It provides independent access to a front room. (The door itself has been altered.)

While the interior has received some cosmetic alterations, it retains its original floor plan (central hall with two rooms to each side) and some of its details. The four rooms and hall have been covered with modern paneling and have celotex ceilings. (Some ceilings are lowered; some are not.) Two mantels of the the original four are missing; the corners of two rooms have been furred out for closet space; and multi-pane French doors (early twentieth century) fill an opening between rooms. Original interior details include almost all of the doors (four panel), molded door frames and baseboards, and two mantels, one quite different from the other. One of the mantels is quite "chunky" in proportion. The boards forming its entablature and pilasters feature quite heavy, almost oversized bands of molding. The shelf is a simple board. The other mantel, far lighter in character, has fairly narrow boards for pilasters and a grooved, or reeded, entablature. Here too the mantel shelf is a simple board. Also surviving is the original rear entrance at the end of the central hall which matches that at the front.

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To summarize, exterior alterations include: the enclosure of the gallery across the rear, screening a small portion of a side gallery (where it abuts the rear enclosure), loss of the two chimneys, and pairing two original windows (toward the rear of a side elevation, probably done when the rear gallery was enclosed).

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8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Applicable National

Register Criteria: A__ B X C X D__

Criteria Considerations NA

(Exceptions): A__ B__ C__ D__ E__ F__ G__

Areas of Significance: architecture, exploration/settlement

Period(s) of Significance: c.1870 (architecture); c.1870-1908 (exploration and settlement)

Significant Dates: c.1870

Significant Person(s): Smart, Edmond Ellison

Cultural Affiliation: NA

Architect/Builder: unknown

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State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.

The Smart House is locally significant in the area of exploration/settlement as the longtime home of the town's founder, Dr. Edmond Ellison Smart. Here the period of significance spans from c.1870, the date of construction, until Dr. Smart's death in 1908. The house is of local architectural significance because it is all that is left to represent the town's early architectural heritage.

Exploration/Settlement:

The Smarts were clearly the family of early Leesville and Vernon Parish. John R. Smart, Edmond Ellison's father, is regarded as the "Father of Vernon Parish" because he introduced the bill in the Louisiana Senate in 1871 that created the parish. The village of Leesville was established in the legislation as the seat of government. (There were existing communities in what became Vernon Parish, but a new one was established, all due seemingly to the influence of the Smarts.) Dr. Edmond Ellison Smart, a physician and merchant, donated the parish courthouse site in 1871 as well as land for the townsite. According to tradition, it was he who chose to honor Robert E. Lee in the town's name. The contract for the first courthouse was awarded to John F. Smart – surely a relation.

The town that Smart founded remained a tiny rural hamlet until the Kansas City Southern Railroad arrived in the 1890s, making possible a lumber boom which lasted until the 1920s. By 1900, the population was 1,148, and 2,043 by 1910. A second period of growth came with the establishment of Camp Polk (now Fort Polk) in 1941. By 1950, the population was 4,670.

In addition to being regarded as the "Father of Leesville," Dr. Smart served as Vernon Parish's first treasurer and as state senator. He lived in the house with his wife Harriet Neal Smart until his death in 1908. Mrs. Smart, known as Hattie, is described in a 1909 biographical directory as "a well preserved woman, strong and vigorous." At that time only two of the Smarts' seven children were living, Nannie and Maggie. The house remained in the Smart family until the 1950s. Today it is vacant.

Architecture:

Despite the considerable prosperity of the lumber boom era (and attendant rapid population growth), the vast majority of the historic buildings seen today in Leesville are modest and lacking in architectural distinction. Only about 8 to 10 make a strong enough architectural statement to be termed architectural landmarks (among 150-200 buildings which are 50 years old or older). Sadly, almost all of the upmarket lumber boom houses are gone. A three-block historic central business district survives, but most of its buildings are of a fairly standard commercial vernacular variety.

Very importantly, with the notable exception of the Smart House, all of Leesville's historic buildings are 1890s or later (mainly later). Given the demolition of lumber boom era landmarks that occurred in the mid-twentieth century, the survival of the Smart House is rather remarkable. As the sole building to represent the look of early Leesville – to represent the city's early architectural heritage – its local architectural value is considerable.

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9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Fortier, Alcee. *Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Louisiana*, 1909.

Early photo (late 19th century) of the Smart House. Copy in National Register file, Louisiana Division of Historic Preservation.

Smith, Steven D. *A Good Home for a Poor Man: Fort Polk and Vernon Parish, 1800-1940*. National Park Service, 1999.

Previous documentation on file (NPS): NA

Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.

Previously Listed in the National Register. (partially)

Previously Determined Eligible by the National Register.

Designated a National Historic Landmark.

Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: #

Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: #

Primary Location of Additional Data:

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State Agency

Federal Agency

Local Government

University

Other (Specify Repository):

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10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: less than an acre

UTM References: **Zone Easting Northing**
 15 475300 3445160

Verbal Boundary Description:

Legal property description: Begin at the northwest corner of Lot 2, Block 21, Old Survey, City of Leesville, thence run south along First St. a distance of 92 feet to iron pipe; thence east a distance of 160 feet to pipe; thence north 92 feet to pipe in north line of Lot 1; west along north line of Lots 1 & 2, Block 21, a distance of 160 feet to point of beginning, being all of Lot 2 and parts of Lots 1, 3, 4, Block 21.

Boundary Justification: The large acreage historically associated with the house has been subdivided over the years as the town of Leesville developed. The nominated acreage (current property lines) recognizes what remains with the house.

11. FORM PREPARED BY

Name/Title: National Register staff

Address: Division of Historic Preservation, P. O. Box 44247, Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70804

Telephone: (225) 342-8160

Date: September 2002

PROPERTY OWNERS

George and Wilma Funderburk
P. O. Box 1248
Leesville, LA 71496