

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

FEB 3 1983

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic N/A

and/or common Marksville Historic District

2. Location

street & number see map

N/A not for publication

city, town Marksville

N/A vicinity of

state LA

code 22

county Avoyelles Parish

code 009

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	Multiple Uses
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial (mainly)	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	N/A in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	N/A being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name MULTIPLE OWNERSHIP

street & number

city, town

vicinity of

state

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Avoyelles Parish Courthouse

street & number Main Street (no specific street or mailing address)

city, town Marksville

state LA 71351

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title LA Historic Sites Survey

has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1981

federal state county local

depository for survey records LA State Historic Preservation Office

city, town Baton Rouge

state LA

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date <u>N/A</u>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Marksville Historic District encompasses some eleven blocks in the center of downtown Marksville. It contains fifty-seven buildings, most of which are low scale commercial structures dating from the early twentieth century (c.1900-c.1930). The district contains nine intrusions, none of which are significantly detrimental to the overall historic character.

Much of the district has a one story scale. The only major exception is in the area immediately around the courthouse square, where most of the buildings are two stories (Photos 1, 2, & 3). The streetscapes are generally well-defined with false fronted buildings set either closely together or with common walls. There are few gaps along the major streets (Photo 5). The only significant planting in the district is on the courthouse square, where large trees occupy each corner (Photo 1).

The district is dominated by the 1927 Neo-Classical brick courthouse, which presents a formal facade on all four sides (Photo 4). It dominates partly because of its size and height. The two main stories are set in a fourteen bay colossal order piano nobile which rests on a fully raised basement. There is an additional story above the parapet which gives the building an overall height of four stories. It is easily the tallest and broadest structure in the central business district. The courthouse also dominates because of its monumental articulation. It has, for example, a free-standing colossal Corinthian loggia both front and rear.

Marksville's most pretentious grouping of commercial buildings is set along Main Street opposite the main entrance to the courthouse (Photo 2). These include the Beaux Arts bank, two side additions to the bank, and the Laborde Buildings with their elaborate limestone-detailed parapets.

The district retains several small frame commercial buildings which resemble plantation stores of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Photos 6 & 15). However, the majority of the commercial buildings are of brick with simple ornamentation. In most cases there is a shaped parapet, several strips of brick molding, brick pilaster strips, and cement trim (Photos 13 & 17). In most cases the original shopfront has been replaced, usually by one of an innocuous modern design (Photo 3).

On the whole the nine intrusions in the Marksville Historic District fall into two categories. Most are commercial buildings which are nearly fifty years of age. These buildings have a similar, if somewhat plainer, character to the district's contributing elements (Photo 14). The rest are small modern commercial buildings of little visual impact (Photo 13, Building #13).

BREAKDOWN BY PERIODS:

pre-1900	9 buildings	16%
1900-1920	12 buildings	21%
1921-1933	27 buildings	47%
non-contributing elements (intrusions)	9 buildings	16%
	<hr/>	
	57 buildings	

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7. Description (continued)

Contributing and Non-contributing Elements:

Contributing elements include those buildings constructed before 1933 which have not been altered beyond recognition. Non-contributing elements are those buildings which were constructed after 1933 or earlier ones which have been altered beyond recognition. Non-contributing elements are labeled on the inventory as intrusions.

Almost all of the contributing elements are commercial buildings. The remainder--for example, the courthouse, the old theatre, the masonic hall, and the two law offices--characterize the type of development found in the old downtown area of a parish seat such as Marksville. In addition, there is one residence (#27) which has never experienced commercial use. It is considered a contributing element because it demonstrates the fact that old downtown areas were frequently characterized by a mix of commercial and residential structures.

Assessment of Integrity:

The district's 16% intrusion rate is well within the normally acceptable limits of intrusion rates for historic districts in the state. In no instance in the district are the intrusions so numerous that they dominate the scene.

It should also be noted that the district's historic value has not been significantly diminished by the numerous shopfront modifications which have occurred. These historic commercial buildings are still easily recognizable as such and hence their power to convey the early twentieth century commercial history of Marksville has not been appreciably lessened. In addition, it should be noted that most of the extant old commercial buildings in the parish, and indeed the state, have had their shopfront windows replaced at least once. Hence, the overall lack of historic shopfront windows has not significantly affected downtown Marksville's standing as a historic central business district.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates c.1890-c.1930 **Builder/Architect** N/A

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph) Criteria A and C

The Marksville Historic District is locally significant in the area of architecture as Avoyelles Parish's finest example of a historic central business district. It is also locally significant in the area of commerce because it became a commercial hub of Avoyelles Parish during the early twentieth century.

ARCHITECTURE:

There are numerous communities in the large rural area which makes up Avoyelles Parish, nine of which are large enough to be considered towns. Each of these has a central business district, but in most cases it consists of a few scattered nondescript commercial buildings. Only Marksville and Bunkie have what would be regarded as reasonably large collections of historic commercial buildings in a concentrated area. Of these two rural commercial centers, Marksville is by far the finer in terms of the overall architectural fabric.

Commercial zones of the type represented in Marksville are typical of small towns throughout the state. Indeed, most of Louisiana's extant historic central business districts date from the late nineteenth and/or early twentieth centuries. They are typically composed of one and two story false fronted brick buildings with plate glass shopfronts. Some have a few older frame commercial buildings mixed in. In most cases the original shopfronts have long since been replaced.

These commercial zones are customarily evaluated according to the following factors:

- (1) the size and cohesiveness of the district;
- (2) the extent to which original shopfronts survive;
- (3) the scale and pretention of the district's landmark buildings; and
- (4) the degree to which the average buildings have received decorative treatment.

The buildings of Marksville and Bunkie are roughly comparable in terms of ornamentation and the originality of the facades. However, on the issues of size, cohesiveness, and landmarks, Marksville is superior to Bunkie. Whereas Bunkie's central business district consists principally of an intermittent line of brick commercial buildings along one side of a street, Marksville is a relatively well packed commercial area surrounding a courthouse square and extending down both sides of a major commercial thoroughfare. If the Bunkie central business district were investigated for possible nomination to the Register, its intrusion rate would be much higher than Marksville's. Bunkie has two landmark buildings in the downtown area--a bank and a theatre. Neither has free-standing columns or the kind of well defined classical details that are found on the courthouse (Photos 1, 3-4) and the Beaux Arts bank (Photo 2) in Marksville.

CONTINUED

9. Major Bibliographical References

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property @ 20 acres

Quadrangle name Marksville, LA

Quadrangle scale 1=62500

UTM References

A 1 5 | 5 8 9 1 0 0 | 3 4 4 4 1 5 0
Zone Easting Northing

B 1 5 | 5 8 9 3 5 0 | 3 4 4 3 9 7 5
Zone Easting Northing

C 1 5 | 5 8 9 1 7 5 | 3 4 4 3 6 2 5

D 1 5 | 5 8 8 8 0 0 | 3 4 4 3 9 0 0

E | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

F | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

G | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

H | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Verbal boundary description and justification

See sketch map for description. Boundaries were drawn to encompass the present historic Marksville central business district, which is the focus of the nomination. The historic central business district is defined as the concentration of 50+ year old commercial buildings. Buildings beyond the present boundaries are either less than 50 years old or not commercial.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title National Register Staff
Division of Historic Preservation
organization State of Louisiana
street & number P. O. Box 44247
city or town Baton Rouge
ASSISTED BY: Randy DeCuir
POB 523
Marksville, LA 71351
date Summer 1981 318-253-5413 or 253-9522
telephone 504-342-6682
state LA 70804

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

___ national ___ state X local

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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *Robert B. DeBlieux*
Robert B. DeBlieux

title State Historic Preservation Officer date January 31, 1983

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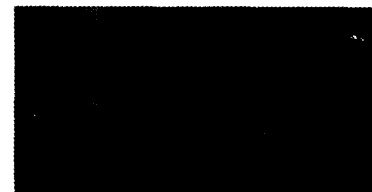
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Linda McClelland date 3/16/83
Keeper of the National Register

Attest: *Patrick W. Andrews* date 3/15/83
for Chief of Registration

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8. Significance (continued)

COMMERCE:

Marksville has been a commercial hub of Avoyelles Parish since its founding. In 1809 a traveling peddler named Marc Eliche came to the area and founded a store on what is now Main Street, across from the present courthouse. Eliche donated land for the courthouse square in 1820 and shortly thereafter merchants began purchasing town lots near the square. By 1860 there were over fifty businesses in the downtown area.

Commercial activity, which had declined somewhat during the Reconstruction Era, began to flourish again in the 1890's when several Jewish haberdashers came to Marksville and established the town as a local fashion center. Ultimately Marksville's garment purveyors attracted patrons from as far as Natchitoches, some seventy miles away. In 1896, the Marksville central business district became the parish's first commercial area to receive railroad service. In 1897, the Avoyelles Bank of Marksville was founded as the parish's first locally owned bank.

As the twentieth century dawned Marksville began to experience a boom period which lasted until the Great Depression. For example, by the early twentieth century there were four electric cotton gins operating in Marksville which processed most of the area's cotton crop. By 1910 the local economy was large enough to support a second bank, and the Union Bank opened on Main Street in the lower end of the present historic district. Marksville remained the parish's only two bank town until the depression.

During this period (c.1900-c.1930), Marksville was truly a commercial focal point for the parish. As one local historian notes:

You could get anything around the square. . . you could buy a sack of flour or a barrel of lard, a plow to hitch to the back of your mule, a horse carriage, a 10¢ ice cream soda or some legal advice. In later years you could buy a car and always the latest fashions.

After the 1930's development in Avoyelles Parish shifted to the west and Bunkie became the most important commercial area.

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9. Bibliography

Avoyelles Parish Historic Structures Survey. Deposited at LA State Historic Preservation Office.

Sanborn Insurance Maps, Marksville.

Saucier, Corinne L. History of Avoyelles Parish, Louisiana. New Orleans: Pelican Publishing Company, 1943.

DeCuir, Randy. Marc's Town: A Pictorial History of 170 Years of Marksville, Louisiana History. Published by The Greater Avoyelles Journal, Marksville, 1979.

MARKSVILLE HISTORIC DISTRICT INVENTORY

1. Avoyelles Parish Courthouse. 1927. Four-story Neo-Classical brick courthouse.
2. Dollar General Store. Circa 1925. Two-story brick commercial building with brick pilasters and molded brick cornice.
3. Old Bailey Theatre. Circa 1915. Two-story brick with shallow arch fenestration.
4. Reyam Mayer Shop. Circa 1925. One-story brick commercial building with raised central parapet and molded brick cornice.
5. Intrusion. A. J. Roy Building. Circa 1955. One-story brick commercial.
6. Laborde Barber Shop-Old Masonic Hall. Circa 1890. One-story brick, gable fronted, gable end returns, modified shopfront.
7. Wade Couvillion Law Office. Circa 1920. One-story frame, gable fronted, galleried law office.
8. Old Voinche Building. Circa 1850. Two-story brick commercial building. Remodeled circa 1890. Received Art Deco front circa 1940. Court held on second floor while present courthouse under construction. 1850 brick cornice still visible on side.
9. Old Piazza Store. Circa 1930. One-story brick commercial building with raised parapeted front.
10. Old Wilson Building. Circa 1925. One-story brick commercial building with raised parapeted front.
11. W.W. Voinche Building. Circa 1925. One-story brick commercial with shaped gable parapet.
12. Deshautelle Building. Circa 1925. Two-story brick commercial building with paneled brickwork in parapet.
13. Intrusion. Circa 1960. One story commercial.
14. 1918. Two-story brick Beaux Arts bank building with free-standing colossal columns and lunette entrance.
15. Circa 1925. Presently bank extension. Formerly post office. One-story stuccoed brick.
16. Bank Extension. Originally commercial. One-story stuccoed brick. Circa 1905.
17. C. E. Laborde Building. Circa 1930. Duplicate of #18.
18. E. M. Laborde Building, 1926. Two-story brick commercial building with shaped parapet and cement trim.

- 19-23 Group of 5 one-story brick false-front commercial buildings dating from c. 1930. #s 22 & 23 have stepped and gabled parapets.
24. Intrusion. One-story concrete block commercial building. Front facade stuccoed.
25. Jules Coco Building. Circa 1930. Two-story frame galleried commercial building. Double windows--bungalow style. Pressed tin siding which resembles stone. Screened-in upper porch.
26. Circa 1895. One-story, three-bay, brick commercial building with molded entablature, cornice, and parapet.
27. Old Elster House. Circa 1930. One-story brick bungalow with arched brick windows.
28. Intrusion. Circa 1960. One-story modern shop.
29. Intrusion. One-story commercial. Circa 1930. Resurfaced post-WWII.
- 30-34 Joffrion Complex. Two-story brick commercial buildings with brick pilasters and molded brick cornices. Shutters recent additions. 30, 31, & 34 are pre- 1920. 32 & 33 are post-1920.
35. L. P. Roy Store. Circa 1895. Two-story brick with shallow arched fenestration. Gallery replaced.
36. Circa 1905. One-story frame commercial building.
37. Gulfco Building. Circa 1925. One-story stuccoed brick commercial building with molded cornice.
38. Riddle Building. Circa 1930. Two-story brick commercial building with brick pilasters and molded brick cornice.
39. Intrusion. Circa 1940. One-story brick.
40. Intrusion. One-story brick commercial building. 1940.
41. Weekly News Office. Circa 1930. One-story brick commercial building with stepped parapet.
42. Masonic Hall. Circa 1930. Two-story frame built along bungalow lines.
43. Intrusion. One-story supermarket. Circa 1960.
44. Old Union Bank. 1910. One-story brick. Original shopfront windows. Triple arched brick front with Queen Anne front brick gable.
45. Circa 1890. One-story frame warehouse.
46. Circa 1920. One-story frame nondescript building.

47. Jules Coco Building. Circa 1918. One-story brick commercial building. Brick parapet with inset brick panels.
48. Gas station. Circa 1930. One-story, stucco, Mission style.
49. Circa 1925. One-story frame storage shed.
50. Circa 1925. One-story frame garage.
51. Optometrist Shop. Circa 1895. One-story frame with small Eastlake porch. Dormer added later.
52. 1899. Two-story painted brick commercial with residential quarters upstairs. Stepped parapet. Eastlake gallery on second floor. Shallow arched windows.
53. One-story 1910 extension to #52.
54. Circa 1895. One-story frame commercial building. Original plate glass shopfront windows. Simple gabled facade.
55. Circa 1925. One-story frame garage.
56. Intrusion. Modern service station.
57. Lawyer's Office. Circa 1890. One-story brick, gable fronted, elliptical arch fenestration, columns replaced.