

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received OCT 13 1987  
date entered NOV 16 1987

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

1. Name

historic Meeker Sugar Refinery

and or common

2. Location

street & number U. S. Hwy 71 n/a not for publication

city, town Meeker n/a vicinity of

state LA code 22 parish Rapides code 079  
~~county~~

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name Meeker Sugar Cooperative, Inc.

street & number Rt. 1, Box 306

city, town Lecompte  vicinity of state LA 71346

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Rapides Parish Courthouse

street & number 701 Murray Street P. O. Box 952

city, town Alexandria state LA 71301

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title LA Historic Standing Structures Survey has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1984  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records LA State Historic Preservation Office

city, town Baton Rouge state LA

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			n/a

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Meeker Sugar Refinery (1912) is a rural industrial complex consisting of a sugar mill, a syrup canning building, a chemist office, a large warehouse, an administrative office building, and a privy. Most of these buildings are of brick. At one time the property also included two boarding houses and some cottages. Despite the loss of these buildings and the loss of virtually all of the refinery's period machinery, the complex still easily conveys its historic industrial role.

In its day the Meeker Sugar Refinery was part of a new generation of sugar processing plants which operated as central collectors for large areas. This was in contrast to earlier generations of mills which tended to be oriented towards single plantations. As indicated by the name, Meeker Sugar Refinery was not just a mill. It could process sugarcane all the way through to the stage of refined white sugar. Mills could only process cane to the stage of raw brown sugar.

The buildings in the complex form an isolated group in an open flat rural setting. The layout is shown on the attached sketch map. All are obviously contributing elements (total of six contributing elements).

#### The Mill

The mill is a common bond brick structure whose exterior is divided into bays by double brick strips. It has a low hip roof supported by metal trusses. Most of the openings on the lower level are surmounted by large round arches. Most of the openings on the upper levels take the form of oculi. There is a taller central portion of the mill which is surmounted by a monitor roof. This housed the vacuum pans from which massecuite (molasses and sugar crystal mixture) was gravity fed to crystallizers below. The two concrete stacks were used to vent the boilers. Appended to the mill is a contemporaneous wing under a separate monitor roof where molasses was processed. In front of the mill is a relatively modern system of girders used for lifting and transporting heavy loads.

#### Contemporaneous Ancillary Buildings

(1) The syrup canning building is a plain common bond brick building with openings set under segmental relieving arches. The hip roof culminates in decorative vents. The interior is presently vacant.

(2) The warehouse is a large plain common bond brick building with a hip roof and decorative roof vents.

(3) The chemist's office is a frame vaguely bungalow style building with six over six windows, a bracketed shed awning, and a shallow pitched roof with a clerestory.

(4) The administration office is a squat rambling frame building which resembles a large galleried cottage.

(5) The privy is a small pitch roof structure with walls a single brick thick.

Despite some deterioration, the exterior appearance of each of the buildings in the complex survives very well intact. Thus there is no question that the Meeker Refinery conveys its architectural identity as an early twentieth century industrial facility.

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Rapides Parish, LA

Description (continued)

Non-Contributing Elements:

In addition to the previously mentioned contributing elements, the complex also includes two small modern grade-level water storage tanks, which, of course, are non-contributing elements. The previously mentioned steel crane structure, because it is relatively modern, is listed as a non-contributing element. Used for loading, it is located adjacent to the northeast end of the mill. These non-contributing elements are of little visual impact compared to the contributing buildings.

TOTAL CONTRIBUTING: 6 (mill, chemist office, syrup canning building, office, privy, & warehouse)

TOTAL NON-CONTRIBUTING: 3 (two storage tanks and crane structure)

## 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input 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 type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input 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** 1912-1937 **Builder/Architect** Builder: Meeker Sugar Refinery Co., Inc.

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)** Criterion A

The Meeker Sugar Refinery is locally significant in the area of agriculture because of the extremely important service it provided the sugarcane farmers of the state's two northernmost sugar producing parishes, Rapides and Avoyelles. During the historic period (1912-1937), it was the principal destination for the sugar produced by the area's small-scale growers. Moreover, it and the antebellum Rosalie Mill (N. R.) are the only remaining resources with such direct associations with the sugar industry.

Construction on the Meeker complex began in the latter part of 1911, with the bulk of the work being done in 1912 in time for the facility to grind its first cane that year. The construction is chronicled in two surviving ledger books for the 1911-16 period. One particularly interesting entry records payment to L. A. Toussaint for laying 285,847 bricks for the main building. The refinery was built by a group of Chicago investors who formed Meeker Sugar Refinery Company, Inc., with headquarters in Chicago. The facility's first manager was J. G. McDowell, also from Chicago.

The complete story of how Chicago businessmen became involved in central Louisiana sugar production is not documented at present. Another piece of the puzzle is an undated promotional tract entitled "The New Colony Meeker, Rapides County, Louisiana," put out by the Illinois and Louisiana Land Company, again headquartered in Chicago. It includes an interior and exterior view of the refinery, noting that it "is ready to loan you money for necessary expenses at a moderate interest on your growing crops of sugar cane." The colonization company also announced that it ran excursion trains to Meeker twice every month. Although the booklet is not dated, it seems fairly evident from the content that it dates from the very early years of the refinery.

Regardless of the origins of the refinery and the colony of Meeker, there is no question that the erection of such a large facility was a godsend to area sugarcane farmers. It is important to note that the Meeker Sugar Refinery was the area's only "central factory," a term used to differentiate between a mill set up for the express purpose of buying and processing sugarcane from any and all growers and plantation mills that existed principally for that one plantation or sometimes a group of plantations owned by one individual. Since mills were an extremely expensive operation, only the largest producers had their own. Oftentimes plantation mills would handle crops of smaller growers, but the plantation crop obviously took precedence.

The importance of the Meeker Refinery to Rapides and Avoyelles growers was emphasized in the December 9, 1911 issue of The Louisiana Planter and Sugar Manufacturer, as follows: "The territory from which this factory will draw its cane is one of the richest in Louisiana and the lack of adequate factory facilities has doubtless deterred many farmers in that locality from going into cane who will now do so, . . ." The article also noted that cane growers were now forced to ship their product to "factories in the more southerly portions of the sugar district."

CONTINUED

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property @ 21 acres

Quadrangle name Lecompte, LA

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

### UTM References

A	1,5	5,5,9,3,2,0	3,4,3,6,2,8,0
	Zone	Easting	Northing

B	1,5	5,5,9,5,4,0	3,4,3,5,9,8,0
	Zone	Easting	Northing

C	1,5	5,5,9,2,2,0	3,4,3,5,8,6,0
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D	1,5	5,5,9,0,8,0	3,4,3,6,0,8,0
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E			
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F			
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G			
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H			
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### Verbal boundary description and justification

Please refer to enclosed sketch map and continuation sheet.

### 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

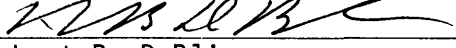
name/title	National Register Staff Division of Historic Preservation	ASSISTED BY A. W. BERGERON AND EVELYN CARNAL
organization	State of Louisiana	date June 1987
street & number	P. O. Box 44247	telephone (504) 922-0358
city or town	Baton Rouge	state LA 70804

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

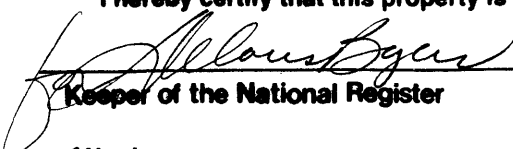
As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature   
 Robert B. DeBlieux  
 title State Historic Preservation Officer date October 9, 1987

### For NPS use only

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

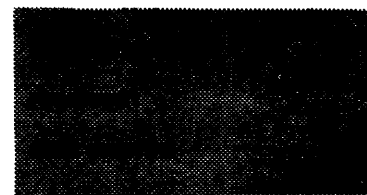
entered in the National Register date 11-16-87

  
 Keeper of the National Register

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_  
 Chief of Registration

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Meeker Sugar Refinery  
Rapides Parish

Continuation sheet

Item number 8

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Significance (con't)

Statistics for the earlier period have not been uncovered, but the 1938 Louisiana Sugar Manual records that the Meeker refinery was "the main crop-disposal reliance of more than 275 farmers in parishes constituting the northerly tier of the Louisiana sugar belt." During the 1938 grinding season it employed 175 people. The same issue of the Sugar Manual recorded but one other mill in Avoyelles-Rapides, that being Augusta, located about twenty miles from Meeker near Bunkie. Augusta was owned by Haas Investment Company, with half of its 1933 crop from Haas-owned properties and the remaining purchased from about 130 small growers. Augusta existed when the Meeker refinery was built, but little is known about it except for this 1938 reference. It does not survive, nor do any other plantation mills that once existed in the two parishes. Meeker and the antebellum Rosalie (N.R.) are all that survive to represent the area's sugar history.

The Meeker Sugar Refinery continued to be owned by the Meeker Sugar Refinery, Inc. of Chicago until 1948 when it was purchased by sugarcane farmers in Avoyelles, Rapides and St. Landry Parishes. At that time it became the Meeker Sugar Cooperative. The refinery processed its last sugarcane during the 1981 season, and like other closed sugar mills/refineries in Louisiana, its future is uncertain.

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                                 Rapides Parish      Item number      9      Page      1

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9. Bibliography

Meeker Sugar Refinery Records, 1911-1916. Archives and Manuscripts Division, Hill Memorial Library, LSU, Baton Rouge.

Illinois & Louisiana Land Company. "The New Colony Meeker, Rapides County, Louisiana." No date. Copy in Louisiana Collection at Hill Memorial Library, LSU, Baton Rouge.

Interview with A. W. Bergeron, Secretary-Treasurer & Manager, Meeker Sugar Cooperative, Inc. Mr. Bergeron has worked at the mill since 1939.

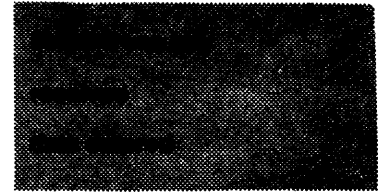
Gilmore's Louisiana Sugar Manual, 1938.

Louisiana Planter and Sugar Manufacturer, December 9, 1911.

Sitterson, J. Carlyle. Sugar Country: The Cane Industry in the South, 1753-1950. Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1953.

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Continuation sheet Meeker Sugar Refinery

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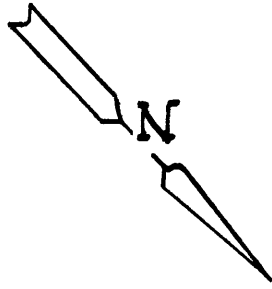
Rapides Parish, LA

Boundary Justification:

Boundaries were chosen to recognize the collection of surviving historic buildings. For the record, the boundaries encompass the following historic buildings: the mill, chemist office, syrup canning building, office, privy, and warehouse. The western boundary line cuts very closely to the historic brick warehouse in order to exclude an adjacent modern warehouse. But this was not the only reason for discrete boundaries. The total amount of land owned by the Meeker Sugar Cooperative is over 70 acres, much of which has reverted to open forest land.



SCALE 1" = 200'



MEEKER  
SUGAR  
REFINERY

RAPIDES  
PARISH,  
LA

-----  
BOUNDARY

①

PRIVY

⑥

WAREHOUSE

GRAVEL RD.

OFFICE

②

SYRUP  
CANNING  
BLDG.

③

MOL-  
ASSES  
WING

⑤

④

CHEMIST  
OFFICE

MILL

MEEKER RD.

LA. RT. 71 RIGHT-OF-WAY

