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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

MAY 02 1989

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

NATIONAL
REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Opelousas Historic District

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 3 blocks in downtown Opelousas centered around court- N/A not for publication

city, town Opelousas

house square N/A vicinity

state Louisiana

code LA

county St. Landry

code 097

zip code 70570

3. Classification

Ownership of Property

private

public-local

public-State

public-Federal

Category of Property

building(s)

district

site

structure

object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

18

Noncontributing

3 buildings

_____ sites

_____ structures

_____ objects

18

3 Total

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 2

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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. See continuation sheet.

April 28, 1989

Signature of certifying official

Leslie P. Tassin, LA State Historic Preservation Officer

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

Dept. of Culture, Recreation and Tourism

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.

See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:) _____

Entered in the
National Register

for Mark L. Baker

June 2, 1989

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/multiple subcategories

GOVERNMENT/courthouse, city hall,
post office

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/multiple subcategories

GOVERNMENT/courthouse

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

multiple

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation brick

walls brick

roof tar

other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Opelousas Historic District boundaries encompass the courthouse square, buildings on two sides of the square, and an adjacent row of party wall buildings immediately to the east. Most of the contributing elements are historic commercial buildings and the two oldest are known to have been used as law offices. The eighteen contributing elements range in date from c.1840 to 1939 and embrace styles running the gamut from Greek Revival to Art Deco. There are only three intrusions, or 14% of the total number of buildings, which is a relatively low rate for Register districts in Louisiana.

Opelousas is located in St. Landry Parish, one of the state's original nineteen parishes created in 1807, and has been the parish seat from the beginning. Needless to say, nothing survives in the downtown from this early period. Surprisingly, two of the district's buildings (#s 19 and 20) date from the pre-Civil War period. Both are labeled as law offices on an 1885 Sanborn map.

The district's anchor is the courthouse square with its huge live oak trees and 1939 Art Deco courthouse. On the northwest corner is the neo-classical Old Opelousas City Hall (N.R.). There is also a large live oak between the district's two oldest buildings, the law offices previously mentioned. Although most of the buildings have party walls, some are free-standing. Only six of the eighteen contributing elements are two stories, but because of their size and strong visual character, the district has a grander scale than one would think. Also, two of the one story buildings have a particularly strong presence (a Greek Revival temple style law office and the impressive neo-classical Union Bank and Trust, #s 19 and 3).

The nominated district is only a small portion of what is regarded as historic downtown Opelousas. The other two sides of the courthouse square have too many intrusions and/or badly altered historic buildings, as does the remainder of the central business district.

The Opelousas district is distinguished by the range of styles represented and the landmark quality of some of the examples. Styles represented include Greek Revival, Romanesque Revival, Italianate, neo-classical, and Art Deco. The district also has several landmark buildings, two of which are already on the

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Opelousas Historic District, St. Landry Parish, LA

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Register (#s 1 and 7) and four of which are individually eligible (#s 2, 3, 19 and 20).

Inventory

The buildings were mainly dated on the basis of the architectural evidence; however, in some cases Sanborn Insurance Company maps were useful.

1. Old Opelousas City Hall (National Register). Contributing element. Originally an 1888 Victorian marketplace, but completely remodeled in 1932 in the neo-classical style. Single story, five bay, stucco over brick building located in the northwestern corner of the courthouse square. Noteworthy features include an aedicule style entranceway with a parapet and free-standing Ionic columns of artificial granite, large lunette windows, and pilasters marking the bays. The building is deteriorated, with much of the stucco lost.
2. St. Landry Parish Courthouse (1939). Contributing element. Three story limestone faced Art Deco courthouse with an above-ground basement. Features a dramatic central projecting pavilion with sets of broad superimposed shafts culminating in a central parapet. Rising above the roofline, the pavilion is a strikingly vertical element in an otherwise horizontal building. Other noteworthy features include proletarian relief ornamentation, the original Art Deco lamp standards flanking the steps, and a sleek brushed aluminum spiral staircase on the interior.
3. Union Bank and Trust (c.1910 - on 1912 Sanborn map but not on 1907 map). Contributing element. Grand one story stucco and terra cotta neo-classical corner bank fully articulated on two elevations. The slightly projecting entrance pavilion on each elevation features engaged fluted Ionic columns flanked by wide pilasters and a pediment outlined with heavy dentils and accented with a bas relief pelican at the center. Other noteworthy elements include a bold entablature, decorative strips with triglyphs and geometric shapes, and huge arched openings with keystones. Above the entablature is a parapet and above that a curvilinear Baroque style roof. The only exterior alteration has been the construction of an elevated walkway on the side elevation. Although the walkway abuts the pavilion, it has not damaged it and does not obscure the all important three-quarter view of the building.
4. 122 Court Street. c.1930. Contributing element. Plain one story "commercial vernacular" building with fixed awning, a brick cornice and thin bands of contrasting decorative tile framing the shopfront. Transoms covered, but still clearly visible. Shopfront glass and kickplates replaced.

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5. Court Street. c.1905 (on 1907 Sanborn map but not 1899). Contributing element. Two story brick building with fairly elaborate brickwork. The three bays are marked by pilasters formed of battered brick quoins, with the same battered brick used to form the jack arches on the second story windows. Transoms survive as do some elements of the original shopfront. Twelve over one windows on second story.
6. Court Street. c.1950. Non-contributing element. Two story nondescript commercial building. (Although it is two stories, it is the same height as the contributing one story buildings.)
7. Old Federal Building (National Register). Built c.1890; enlarged/remodeled in 1932. Contributing element. Large two and three story brick Romanesque Revival corner building constructed as a combination U. S. Courthouse/Post Office. Additions to the east and north done in 1932 copying the building's original Romanesque Revival styling and brickwork. Significant features from the c.1890 portion included the finely crafted broad entrance arch with its elaborately ornamented terra cotta spandrel panels, the string courses, and the upper story round arch windows with brick hood molds. The only significant exterior change since the 1932 expansion/remodeling project has been the insertion of concrete modular units in the courtroom windows (west elevation). (no longer a federal building--privately owned)
8. 133/137 E. Landry Street. c.1905. Contributing element. One story brick building with rusticated concrete block front and elaborate parapet with central raised portion and pilasters with block capitals projecting above the roofline. Also features decorative bands of cast fleur-de-lis. Transoms have been covered and shopfront reworked (although it retains a similar shape to the original).
9. 129 E. Landry Street. c.1905. Contributing element. One story brick building with ornamental pressed metal cornice topped by two short decorative projections. The three bays are delineated by pilasters and each bay features a brickwork diamond pattern. Fixed awning; transom covered; shopfront reworked.
10. 123 E. Landry Street. c.1930. Contributing element. Fairly plain one story brick building featuring decorative parapet with pediment shaped central portion. Transoms covered; shopfront reworked.
11. 115 E. Landry Street. c.1920. Contributing element. One story brick building with relatively elaborate detailing, including a pilaster on each end with a rounded top projecting above the building, a multi-layer cornice at the top, and three rectangular panels. Retains historic fixed awning; shopfront reworked.

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12. 113 E. Landry Street. c.1920. Contributing element. Twin to #11. Awning gone and shopfront reworked.
13. Shute's. Corner of Landry and Court. 1924. Contributing element. Two story brick building with cast cement trim accenting the windows, shaped parapet, corners and shopfront. Windows on the facade feature a jack arch, while openings on the side elevation use segmental arches. The shopfront, which turns the corner, has been reworked, but it does retain its transom windows. The cast cement trim on these windows features triglyphs.
14. 101 W. Landry Street. Contributing element. c.1920. Corner two story tapestry brick building with cast cement details, including a bas relief eagle, two linear panels with stylized fretwork, diamond patterns over two of the windows, and string courses. Alterations include a modern shopfront that wraps around the corner and the insertion of a large plate glass window on the facade.
- Although these are serious alterations, roughly seventy-five percent of the prominent side elevation survives as does the top one-third of the facade with its bas relief eagle and stylized fretwork panels. Because so much of the original building survives and because the surviving detailing is superior within the context of Opelousas, the building is listed as a contributing element.
15. 127/131 W. Landry Street. c.1905. Contributing element. Large two story Italianate stucco over brick building. Segmentally arched windows on the side and upper story of the facade. Bays are marked by pilasters which project well above the roofline. Other noteworthy features include a multi-layer decorative band with corbeling below. Shopfront completely reworked and balconies added to the facade. Evidently the fourth bay (west side) had an earlier gallery which was replaced by the present balcony with pent roof.
16. 139/141 W. Landry Street. c.1930. Contributing element. One story brick "commercial vernacular" building with decoratively shaped parapet, corner pilasters with round tops projecting above the roofline, and brick panels above the transom level. Shopfront level completely reworked.
17. 145 W. Landry Street. c.1930. Contributing element. One story brick "commercial vernacular" building with shaped parapet and inset rectangular brick panels. Retains transom windows; fixed awning gone; shopfront reworked.
18. W. Landry Street. Non-contributing element. One story, low scale modern brick commercial building.

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19. 153 W. Landry Street. c.1845. Contributing element. One story frame Greek Revival law office with a well proportioned temple front.
20. 163 W. Landry Street. c.1840. Contributing element. One story brick law office sparingly articulated with gable parapets, six over six windows, and sunburst tiebar ends.
21. Palace Cafe. Non-contributing element. 1950s one story brick cafe.

Contributing Elements

The district is significant as an outstanding historic commercial/governmental sector, with contributing elements ranging from c.1840 to 1939. While some of the buildings obviously make a greater contribution to the significance than others, any 50+ year old building that has not been badly altered should be considered a contributing element.

Intrusions

There are only three intrusions in the district, or 14% of the building stock, which is relatively low for a Register district in Louisiana. More importantly, the intrusions are low in scale and are dominated by the visually stronger historic buildings.

Integrity of Contributing Buildings

All in all, the district's contributing elements have not been too badly altered. The major modification has been the loss of most of the original shopfronts on the conventional commercial buildings, although this is very common in Louisiana. Even so, many of the transom windows survive and most of the replaced shopfronts are not glaringly inappropriate. The most seriously altered building is No. 14, and its integrity has already been discussed.

8. Statement of Significance

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

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G N/A

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)
architecture

Period of Significance
c.1840-1939

Significant Dates
c.1840-1939

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Significant Person
N/A

Architect/Builder
N/A

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Opelousas Historic District is locally significant in the area of architecture because it is easily the finest historic central business district in St. Landry Parish. It achieves this distinction chiefly because of the range of styles represented and the quality of certain buildings.

St. Landry Parish is justly well-known for its historic residential and religious architecture, but its commercial patrimony is largely indistinguished, with the notable exception of Opelousas. Most of the twelve incorporated towns in the parish do not even have a historic central business district, but instead maybe two or three older buildings combined with modern, often strip-like development. The Grand Coteau District (N. R.) has only two or three commercial buildings, and Washington (N. R.) has about a half dozen. Eunice, the next largest town to Opelousas, has a party wall central business district, but it is characterized by more modern buildings, badly altered historic buildings, and very typical "commercial vernacular" structures.

Against this background, the local architectural significance of the Opelousas district is obvious. While other towns in the parish have simple "no style" buildings from the 1920s or '30s or, in the case of Washington, some Italianate influence, the Opelousas district has several strongly styled buildings covering a broad spectrum from Greek Revival, to Romanesque Revival, to Italianate, to neo-classical, to Art Deco. Fully a third of the contributing elements are of sufficient quality to either be already listed individually on the Register or deserving of such a designation. These include two pre-Civil War buildings; a grand neo-classical, almost Beaux Arts bank; a large, richly articulated Romanesque Revival government building; a handsome neo-classical former city hall; and the district's anchor, a monumental Art Deco courthouse. Aside from these landmarks, there are buildings of secondary importance in the Opelousas district that would be first-rate elsewhere in the parish because of their more elaborate brickwork and detailing (#s 5, 8, 9, 13 & 15).

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

Sanborn Insurance Company Maps, Opelousas, 1885, 1892, 1896, 1899, 1907, 1912, 1921, 1927.
Historic Structures Survey, St. Landry Parish, LA State Historic Preservation Office. Survey supplemented by windshield surveys and National Register files for Grand Coteau and Washington.

Previous documentation on file (NPS): N/A
 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 # _____

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:
 State historic preservation office
 Other State agency
 Federal agency
 Local government
 University
 Other
Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property @ 2 acres
(as per enclosed sketch map)

NB: Acreage taken from sketch map, not USGS. USGS shows blocks as much larger than they actually are. Sketch map is correct.

UTM References
A

1	5	5	8	17	9	4	10	3	3	7	8	0	8	0
Zone	Easting				Northing									

C

Zone	Easting				Northing									

B

Zone	Easting				Northing									

D

Zone	Easting				Northing									

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Please refer to enclosed sketch map.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification Boundaries were drawn to encompass the concentration of significant commercial/governmental buildings in downtown Opelousas, as defined in Item 8. As noted in Item 7, the nominated district is only a portion of what is considered old downtown Opelousas. The other two sides of the courthouse square as well as the remainder of the CBD have too many intrusions and/or badly altered historic buildings. The boundaries cut closely to the east of Building #8 in order to exclude an adjacent free-standing modern building.

See continuation sheet

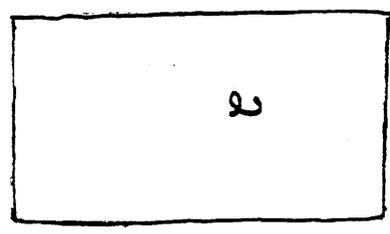
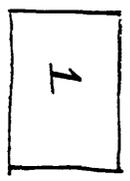
11. Form Prepared By

ASSISTED BY CAROLA ANN ANDREPONT, CHAIRMAN, OPELOUSA

name/title National Register Staff TOURISM & ACTIVITIES COMMITTEE
organization Division of Historic Preservation date February 1989
street & number P. O. Box 44247 telephone (504) 342-8160
city or town Baton Rouge state Louisiana zip code 70804

MARKET ST.

6



2

4

LAUNDRY ST.

21

20

19

18

17

16

15

14

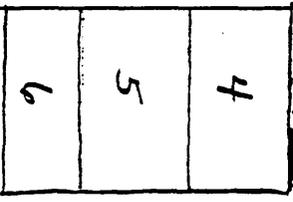
14

COURT ST.

Bellevue

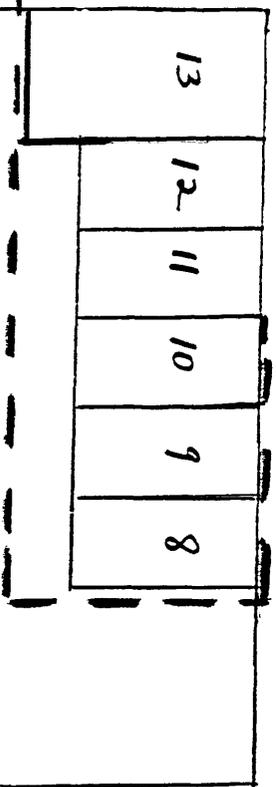
3

party wall



7

3



13

12

11

10

9

8



General Views Only Keyed to Map

Opelousas Historic District

St. Landry Parish, LA

BOUNDARY

1" = 50'