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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

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

OMB No. 1024-0018

CENTRAL BANK AND TRUST COMPANY, MANSURA, AVOYELLES PARISH, LA Page 1

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: Central Bank and Trust Company, Mansura

Other Name/Site Number:

JUL 22 2005

2. LOCATION

Street & Number 2057 L'Eglise Street Not for publication: NA

City/Town Mansura Vicinity: NA

State: Louisiana Code: LA County: Avoyelles Code: 009 Zip Code: 71350

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 Date July 20, 2005

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:

- 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):

per Edouard M. Beall
Signature of Keeper

9/1/05
Date of Action

5. CLASSIFICATION

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

Category of Property
 Building(s): 1
 District:
 Site:
 Structure:
 Object:

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing
1

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: Commerce/Trade

Sub: Financial Institution

Current: Vacant

Sub: Not in Use

7. DESCRIPTION

Architectural Classification: Italianate

Materials:

Foundation: Concrete

Walls: Brick

Roof: Metal

Other:

Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

The Central Bank and Trust Company is a single story Italianate building with a gable roof located on the main street of the small Avoyelles Parish community of Mansura. It is constructed of brick, laid in a common bond on a concrete foundation, and has a metal roof. The building measures approximately 25'6" in width and 75' in length. At the rear of the building is a small wooden addition. Although the windows have been covered or in-filled, the bank easily retains enough integrity to convey its local architectural and commercial significance. All of the other decorative and stylistic elements remain intact on the exterior, and they have a strong visual character (most notably the intensively worked façade).

Exterior

Façade (Western Elevation)

The façade of the Central Bank and Trust Company faces L'Eglise Street, which serves as the town's main drive. This elevation is in the gable's end. The gable is covered with pressed tin in a scalloped pattern; the rest of the facade is exposed brick. The cornice line is decorated with a dentil molding, below which is anchored a corrugated metal awning. Decoratively scrolled metal brackets are anchored to the brick façade of the building and extend to the edge of the awning, providing the primary source of support. A secondary support system is composed of four metal poles currently set into concrete pedestals. The metal poles have plasterwork capitals.

The bank is accessed via centrally located double doors recessed within a flattened arch alcove. A rounded arch, one-over-one pane window is located to either side of the doors, within the alcove. There is a transom over the doors and decorative roundels placed above both the transom and the side windows. To each side of the recessed entry is a round arch one-over-one window. The lower sections of the façade windows and doors are boarded over.

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The decorative brickwork on the facade is produced by extending the header line of the common bond pattern of the brick past the wall surface and adding brickwork capitals to the piers flanking the doorway alcove and defining the corners. Beneath the chipped concrete of the front entryway a section of marble is visible.

Southern Elevation

The dentil molding and decorative brickwork piers of the façade continue on this side. There are four rounded arch windows with keystone lintels. The lower portion of the windows has been filled in with brick, two of the arches are boarded with plywood. The first three windows are spaced evenly with approximately 6' between them. The fourth window breaks pattern with a 9' space. The decorative brickwork piers are spaced evenly between the windows and on the corners. The wall surface was used as a signboard, and although no intact sign remains, the paint marks do. In the places where the signage paint was not placed it is possible to see that the mortar is of a reddish color; possibly brick dust was mixed into the mortar to obtain this color.

Eastern (Rear) Elevation

The eastern (rear) elevation of the Central Bank and Trust Company is mostly covered by a small wooden addition. The exposed part of the original building shows the brick dentil work at the cornice line and the gable end covered with the same scalloped patterned pressed tin as the facade. The addition has a metal shed roof and board and batten siding over tarpaper. The shed roof attaches to the building just below the dentil molding.

Northern Elevation

The northern elevation continues the pattern of decorative brickwork with its dentil molding and decorative piers. The fenestration pattern is very different from that of the other side elevation. Two side-by-side rounded arch windows with keystone lintels are located about 12' back from the facade. (The windows are boarded over, from the interior, with plywood.) Originally another set of windows was located toward the rear. They have been completely obliterated with brick infill. There is some damage near the cornice line on this elevation.

Interior

The interior of the Central Bank and Trust Company was modified to accommodate a restaurant-style business. The original partitions and fixtures have been removed. The restaurant counter and drop ceiling are still in place but are severely deteriorated. The original wooden flooring is still in place as is the bead board wall and ceiling covers. The only evidence for the original room partitions exists in the ceiling. There are demarcations in the pattern of bead board that indicate there were three main partitions.

The door surround from the main entrance is completely intact. On the rear of the brick portion of the building one of the original rear windows can be seen. It was a rounded arch, one-over-one window. (The sash is completely gone.) It was not possible to see if there was a second window on the right hand side of this wall as the floorboards were too rotten in places to walk on and stored items were blocking sight of the wall. The rear addition has wooden floorboards set onto

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wooden beams. There is a wooden sill beneath the addition and no concrete pad.

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Applicable National Register Criteria: A_X B_ C_X D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): NA A_ B_ C_ D_ E_ F_ G

Areas of Significance: Commerce; Architecture

Period(s) of Significance: 1904

Significant Dates: 1904

Significant Person(s): NA

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 Central Bank and Trust Company is locally significant in the area of commerce because its 1904 opening marked the arrival of banking services in the Avoyelles Parish town of Mansura. The bank is also locally significant because it ranks as one of Mansura's few architectural landmarks.

Background

Although one home in town dates to 1790 and two now vanished nearby settlements were also older, local citizens consider the founding of Mansura to date to shortly after 1815. At that time a group of French immigrants arrived in the area. These exiles were former soldiers of Napoleon who left Europe after the general's defeat at the Battle of Waterloo. Growth was apparently slow. The town vied with Marksville for designation as parish seat in 1850, losing by 99 votes. Incorporation and the first mayoral election came in 1860. In May 1864 Union forces defeated Confederates at a nearby battle (part of the Red River Campaign) now named for the town. Postal service, originally established in 1839 but disrupted by the war, was reestablished in 1866.

Boom times did not come to Mansura until the arrival of the Texas and Pacific Railroad in December 1900. Two years later the Shreveport and Red River Valley Railroad (later renamed the Louisiana Railway and Navigation Company) reached town. The availability of the relatively inexpensive freight connection to outside markets stimulated the area's agricultural economy (mostly cotton during the historic period) and contributed to the founding of the town's first bank (the candidate) in 1904. In addition, as depicted by a 1919 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, the presence of the railroad encouraged the establishment of several industries in the town. These included the Mansura Gin Company, the Michel Gin Company, the G. L. Drouin Retail Lumber Yard, the Farmers Gin Company, the Mansura Compress and Warehouse Company, and the Naples Lumber Company. Later a cannery opened in town and, for a while, this business boasted of the largest output in the parish. The increased prosperity also brought a rise in population from 408 in 1900 (the first figure available) to 695 (1910), 829 (1920), and 1,067 (1930). Although most of the industry is gone, the population continued to rise through 1990, when it reached 1,601. Today, Mansura (population 1,572 in 2000) is a quiet little town with only a few businesses, a school, and a Catholic church.

Local Significance under Commerce

Until the 1890s, Louisiana's rural parishes and smaller towns had almost no banks. Financial activities centered in New Orleans, where the first bank was chartered by the territorial legislature in 1804. The creation of this facility was a political as well as an economic move by new territorial Governor William Claiborne. He hoped to mollify Louisiana's French and Spanish residents, who resented the 1803 transfer of the territory to the United States without their consent. Compounding their resentment was the concern that no provision had yet been made to redeem or retire the colonial money then in circulation. Since banks at this time were allowed to print and distribute their own currency, Claiborne hoped that the opening of the Louisiana Bank in January 1805 would solve this problem and win the support of locals for the new American administration. The bank survived until 1819, when it was forced to liquidate.

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Once a precedent for "official" banking had been set, other institutions (including branches of the First and Second Banks of the United States) gradually opened in the city. In general, two types of banks emerged. The first was the state bank, in which the state actually subscribed to part of the stock, guaranteed interest payments, and controlled several seats on the bank's board of directors. Eventually, the state became part owner of seven different banks, in which it invested approximately \$24 million. Although headquartered in New Orleans, these banks were allowed to open branches in communities such as Alexandria, Baton Rouge, Donaldsonville, Harrisonburg, Napoleonville, Port Hudson, Springfield, St. Francisville and St. Martinville. However, some of the branches remained open only a short time. The second type was the "improvement" bank, created to finance the building of improvements such as canals, railroads, gas lighting facilities, and hotels. Both classes of banks had to be individually chartered by the legislature. By 1837 sixteen banks were in operation in Louisiana, with a combined capitalization of almost \$40 million.

The Panic of 1837, caused in part by over-speculation and a sharp decline in cotton prices, caused the New Orleans financial system to collapse. Many of the banks had made long-term loans on real estate and stock mortgages which could not be quickly converted to specie (silver or gold coin). Thus, when their depositors and note holders demanded payment in coin, the banks soon exhausted their specie supply and were forced to close. In addition, the state defaulted on the bank bonds it had guaranteed.

Louisiana basically lacked banking services until 1842. The stimulus for revitalizing the industry was an act passed by the state legislature in that year. The law contained three important provisions. First, it authorized the state to take over the banks it had previously guaranteed and promised to repay the \$17 million in defaulted bonds. (It would take nearly forty years to achieve this goal.) Second, the law required all banks operating in the state to adequately back the notes or currency they issued. More specifically, the law demanded that specie equal to one-third the amount of its notes in circulation be deposited in each bank. The other two-thirds could be backed by paper money redeemable for specie in ninety days' time. Although this law was good for the New Orleans banking community, its insistence upon the use of specie and paper money to ensure a bank's solvency virtually prohibited the establishment of banks in rural areas, small towns and villages where actual hard money and acceptable currency were often scarce. The law's third significant component protected bank depositors by requiring that they share equally with note holders in any reimbursement of liquidated bank funds - a first for the banking community. The 1842 law was considered most progressive for its time and was copied by other states.

However, Louisiana taxpayers resented the portion of the law directing the state to assume control of the banks. As a result, an 1845 constitutional amendment prohibited the legislature from issuing new bank charters or renewing/extending old ones. As time passed, this created a banking monopoly as facilities whose charters ran out were forced to close. By 1850 only five commercial banks were operating in the entire state, and these could not meet the needs of the business community because they were not allowed to increase their capitalization.

In 1853 the state adopted a new constitution with provisions designed to create a more workable banking system. Soon thereafter the legislature passed the "Free Banking Law," which theoretically made it easier for individuals to form banks because it granted permission for "any one or more persons . . . 'to transact the business of banking in the State' and to establish offices of

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discount, deposit, and circulation." It also allowed any group of five or more persons to legally incorporate a bank provided they had \$100,000 to capitalize their endeavor. In practice, however, additional components of the law made bank formation outside New Orleans very difficult. First, it required every person and/or company outside that city conducting business under its provisions to maintain an office or agent in New Orleans. This task was practically impossible for the small businessman hoping to assist his community by providing banking services. In addition, the required capitalization sum for bank corporations was next to impossible for rural businessmen to raise.

The creation of the national banking system by Congress in 1863 only reinforced this situation. Its capitalization requirement of \$50,000 (later reduced to \$25,000) for banks in towns with populations under 6,000 was also beyond the ability of potential rural financiers to meet. In addition, the law required that each institution have on hand United States bonds (paying no less than five percent interest) equal in value to one-third of its capital as security for any notes or currency it might issue. By c. 1880 there were only eight national banks and ten state banks in the entire state. As late as 1886 ". . . the great majority of [Louisiana] parishes had no banking facilities whatsoever."

With no local banks to circulate currency and make loans, rural Louisiana residents were forced to turn to other sources for financial help. Unfortunately, the average rural resident found it difficult to do business with the New Orleans institutions. Perhaps because they had been stung by defaulting rural borrowers during previous financial panics, most New Orleans bankers refused to accept mortgages on rural land. However, they would make loans on crops, which had the potential to turn a profit on an annual basis. This policy contributed to the establishment of the crop lien system, in which planters mortgaged their crops to the New Orleans banks, then set up plantation stores which acted as banks by providing sharecroppers the credit they needed to make purchases. When the system worked properly, laborers settled their debts annually after receiving their share of the profits from the sale of the crop. The planters in turn, would repay their bank loans from their profits. Small town storekeepers provided similar credit services to their customers after obtaining credit with which to purchase merchandise from distant banks and/or wholesale houses. However, both solutions were far from perfect. Shoppers frequently charged more than they earned, with the result that they remained in debt after the yearly settlement of accounts. For example, one source estimates that by the late 1880s, 70 percent or more of the hill farmers of North Louisiana were in debt to local merchants. Of course, this made it more difficult for the planters and storekeepers to meet their own debt obligations.

Although the changes were slow to make a difference, the legislature in 1882 finally took action to relieve the problems endured by residents of rural Louisiana parishes and towns outside New Orleans due to the lack of banking services. The goal of this act was to make it easier for small towns to obtain banks of their own by significantly lowering the capitalization requirement for state banks. The new figures were as follows:

Towns with Populations of:	Capitalization Requirements
2,000 or less	\$10,000
2,000 - 4,000	\$15,000

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4,000 - 6,000	\$20,000
6,000 - 10,000	\$25,000
10,000 - 15,000	\$30,000
15,000 - 25,000	\$50,000
25,000 or more	\$100,000

The reasons why rural towns and businessmen initially failed to take advantage of this opportunity are somewhat unclear. One source suggests a combination of factors, including an 1882 Mississippi River flood; an 1884 financial panic; an unsettled, "insufficient and inelastic currency" which failed to meet the needs of the economy; and the general slowness to adapt to any significant change. At any rate, no new banks were organized in Louisiana until 1887. However, by 1899 fifty-six new state banks were in operation.

According to Corinne L. Saucier, whose 1943 *History of Avoyelles Parish, Louisiana* has a chapter on banking, the Avoyelles region had a bank between 1840 and 1848. After its closure, no banks operated locally until 1897. During this long period without banking services and currency, merchants served as middlemen for small farmers, granting them credit and accepting their crops as payment. Like local planters who used New Orleans factors as their financial agents, the merchants then sent these crops to New Orleans via water transport. Barter also played an important role in day-to-day economic life and, as occurred in other rural areas, people often resorted to burying or otherwise hiding any savings they had accumulated.

This approach to financial management began to change for the residents of Mansura with the opening of a bank in Marksville in 1897. However, the latter community was five miles distant – still a long and difficult trip by horseback or jarring wagon ride over rough, unpaved roads at the turn of the twentieth century. Thus, the founding of a local bank by Dr. Emile Regard in 1904 ranked as a major milestone in the community's development. Due to the growth detailed in the background section above, Mansura was finally large enough, prosperous enough, and important enough to have its own bank. In addition, the bank provided credit for business ventures and the purchase of land and homes, facilitated a new ease in transacting day-to-day business through its ability to circulate currency and coin, and offered a safe place for citizens to store their savings.

Mansura's bank changed its name to Central Bank and Trust Company (the name by which it is generally known) in 1911. (Today, no one seems to remember the bank's original official name. There is no cornerstone. Even Saucier, writing in 1943, could only refer to the institution as "Mansura's Bank.") The company opened branches in Hessmer (National Register) and Bordelonville in 1917. A second bank opened in town in 1924, and two years later (1926) this institution absorbed the candidate. Later, the building was used by several different businesses. The long vacant bank was recently donated to the municipal government, whose leaders hope National Register listing will assist in its restoration. As the first bank to open in the community of Mansura, Central Bank and Trust is a legitimate candidate for National Register listing in the area of commerce.

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Local Significance under Architecture

Despite Mansura's long history, very few buildings survive from before the arrival of the railroad in 1900. And for the most part, the town's early twentieth century prosperity is not reflected in its collection of historic buildings. The State Historic Preservation Office has not yet officially surveyed the community; however, a recent windshield survey of Mansura's main street and residential neighborhoods by two staff members found few landmarks. Only twenty-six houses can even be considered styled. Although five or six of these homes (including the French Creole, National Register-listed Des Fosse House) are standouts, most are low-key examples of the Queen Anne Revival, Colonial Revival, and bungalow styles. The majority of the town's dwellings are simple galleried cottages, unstyled vernacular cottages, modern slab-on-grade ranch houses, or trailers. This simplicity is repeated on the main thoroughfare, where only four structures (a c. 1950 Catholic church and three older commercial buildings) display any hint of style. Of this small number, the candidate is by far the best and most distinguished of the commercial examples and is a serious rival to the church. The small building is intensively and strongly articulated, including decorative brickwork, an abundance of boldly formed windows and piers, and a particularly elaborate entrance. As one of only a handful of architectural landmarks in Mansura, and as the town's finest commercial building, the Central Bank and Trust Company is a serious candidate for National Register listing under architecture.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Caldwell, Stephen A. *A Banking History of Louisiana*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1935.

Eakin, Sue L. *Avoyelles Parish — Crossroads of Louisiana Where All Cultures Meet*. Baton Rouge: Moran Publishing Company, 1981.

Funderburk, M. L. "History of Banking in Louisiana," in *Golden Jubilee: A Publication Commemorating the Louisiana Bankers Association Golden Anniversary, 1900-1950*. Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana Bankers Association, April 20, 1950.

Hair, William Ivy. *Bourbonism and Agrarian Protest: Louisiana Politics 1877-1900*. Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1969.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Map for Mansura, Louisiana, 1919.

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

Windshield survey by National Register staff.

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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):

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: less than an acre

UTM References:	Zone	Easting	Northing
	15	590740	3436220

Verbal Boundary Description:

Legal property description:

A certain lot or parcel of land, together with all buildings and improvements thereon lying, being and situated within the corporate limits of the Town of Mansura, being bounded now or formerly on the north by Wade Glascock, on the east by Laurie S. Coco, on the south by Ronald Durand and on the west by Leglise Street, known as the Old Central Bank Building.

Being that property acquired by Leon Durand from Herbert L. Laborde being that property acquired by Ronald Durand from Zeline Durand Prevot, et al in COB Book A-388, page 681, records of Avoyelles Parish, LA.

Boundary Justification:

Boundaries follow property lines of the parcel of land historically associated with the bank.

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11. FORM PREPARED BY

Name/Title: National Register Staff

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

Telephone: 225 342-8160

Date: Spring 2005

PROPERTY OWNERS

The Honorable Harold Quebedeaux

Mayor, Town of Mansura

P. O. Box 157

Mansura, LA 71350