

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

RECEIVED

OMB No. 10024-0018

1994

INTERAGENCY RESOURCES DIVISION  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

1. Name of Property

historic name Fruge Store

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location

street & number 907 Main Street N/A not for publication

city or town Elton N/A vicinity

state Louisiana code LA county Jefferson Davis code 053 zip code 70532

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant  
☒ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Gerri Hobdy August 30, 1994  
Signature of certifying official/Title Gerri Hobdy, Date  
LA SHPO, Dept of Culture, Recreation and Tourism  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the 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:) \_\_\_\_\_

for  
Edson H. Beall  
Signature of the Keeper

Entered in the  
National Register

Date of Action  
9/30/94

Fruge Store  
Name of Property

Jefferson Davis Parish, LA  
County and State

## 5. Classification

### Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- ☒ private  
☐ public-local  
☐ public-State  
☐ public-Federal

### Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- ☒ building(s)  
☐ district  
☐ site  
☐ structure  
☐ object

### Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing

Noncontributing

1

buildings

sites

structures

objects

1

0

Total

### Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

### Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

## 6. Function or Use

### Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE/department store

### Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

No style

### Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation brick

walls metal

roof metal

other

### Narrative Description

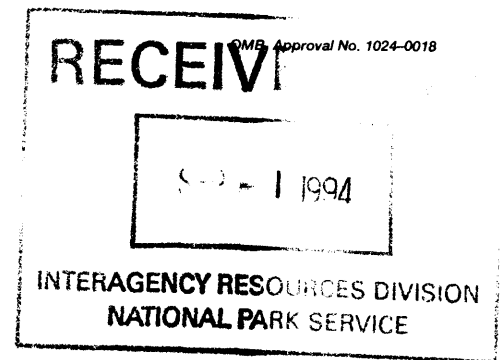
(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Fruge Store, Elton, Jefferson Davis Parish, LA

Section number 7 Page 1



The Fruge Store (c.1900) is a two story building sheathed in decorative pressed metal. Originally housing a general mercantile business, it is located on Main Street (now busy U. S. Hwy. 190) in the small community of Elton. Modifications to the store have been minimal.

As was typical of the period, the Fruge Store is a false fronted building. The parapet features a wooden cornice with small, simple brackets. The entire building is sheathed in sheets of pressed metal with a rusticated design in the manner of cut stone. A hipped canopy hangs from wires attached to the facade. Remarkably, the store retains its original wooden shopfront with cast-iron columns. The design features a display window with a recessed door on each side. The rectangular building's roof is ornamented with decorative ventilators.

The largely unaltered interior consists of a single large space with a balcony at the rear. At the extreme rear of the store on the ground level are three small rooms -- one used for storage, one for an office, and one used historically by customers to try on shoes. Built-in shelving along the sides features a heavy cornice and shelves supported by diminutive turned members in the Eastlake manner. (The same shelving can be found in the previously mentioned storage room.) The shelves stand atop counters which retain some of what appear to be historic storage bins below. Of great interest is a historic "rolling" ladder on the west side of the building. Attached to a track on the ceiling and with wheels at the bottom, it provided access to the higher shelves and allowed one to move easily from one end of the shelving to the other. The balcony, which provided additional retail space, is reached via a prominent flight of stairs at the center. The stairs and the balcony balustrade are original, featuring simple newel posts and turned balusters. The interior is sheathed in narrow gauge beaded board, and the wooden floors have not been covered, although they may have been patched and/or replaced over the years. Other interior features worthy of note are simple wooden interior support posts and one Grand Rapids showcase. The office features an opening with a ledge in the manner of a bank or depot ticket window.

**Alterations since construction:**

(1) Makeshift partitions have been placed in one front corner to create a smaller retail space. (The historic shelving in this area remains unharmed.)

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Fruge Store, Elton, Jefferson Davis Parish, LA

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(2) Historically the Fruge Store shared its awning with an adjacent building. (Although joined at the front, the two buildings were about three feet apart.) When the adjacent building was demolished in the 1970s, the Fruge Store awning was finished off at the corner in an appropriate manner.

(3) There is a small shed roof addition on the east side of the store toward the rear.

(4) Small horizontal windows on the western elevation have been covered with sheets of metal.

**Assessment of Integrity:**

The Fruge Store is a remarkably well preserved general mercantile store from the turn-of-the-century, complete with its original shopfront, shelving, "rolling" ladder, etc. While the partitions are unsightly, at least they have done no harm, and they could be quite easily removed.

Fruge Store  
Name of Property

Jefferson Davis Parish, LA  
County and State

## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☒ **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☐ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations N/A

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- ☐ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ **B** removed from its original location.
- ☐ **C** a birthplace or grave.
- ☐ **D** a cemetery.
- ☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ **F** a commemorative property.
- ☐ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

### Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

### Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

#### 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 # \_\_\_\_\_

### Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Commerce

### Period of Significance

c.1900-1944

### Significant Dates

N/A

### Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

### Cultural Affiliation

N/A

### Architect/Builder

unknown

#### Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Name of repository:

Fruge Store  
Name of Property

Jefferson Davis Parish, LA  
County and State

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than an acre

### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1	5	5	2	9	4	0	0	3	3	7	1	9	2	0
Zone	Easting				Northing										
2															

3															
Zone	Easting				Northing										
4															

☐ See continuation sheet

### Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

### Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title National Register Staff

organization Division of Historic Preservation date July 1994

street & number P. O. Box 44247 telephone (504) 342-8160

city or town Baton Rouge state Louisiana zip code 70804

### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

### Continuation Sheets

### Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

### Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

### Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

### Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Leo H. Fruge

street & number P. O. Box 218 telephone (318) 584-2627

city or town Elton state Louisiana zip code 70532

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Fruge Store, Jefferson Davis Parish, LA

Section number 8 Page 1

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The Fruge Store is locally significant in the area of commerce because it is one of very few buildings left to represent the commercial history of Elton. The current condition of downtown Elton belies the fact that during the historic period it was the commercial hub for northern Jeff Davis Parish. (The fifty year cutoff is being used to end the period of significance because Elton remained a commercial hub into the post-WWII era, and the store remained in business as a general mercantile establishment.)

Settlement of what would become Elton began in earnest in the late nineteenth century, paralleling the history of the parish as a whole. Like other towns in southwestern Louisiana such as nearby Jennings, most of the newcomers in the 1880s and '90s were from the Midwest. The economy was based largely on rice growing and milling. The small village received a great boost in 1906 with the coming of the railroad. In 1911, Elton was incorporated as a village. In 1921, its status was changed to that of a town, meaning that the community now had a population in excess of 1,000.

During the historic period, Elton was a commercial center for not only its residents but the surrounding agricultural area. The nearest other trade centers were Jennings (17 miles away), Kinder (12), and Oberlin (15). The only available Sanborn map, for 1920, shows a four block downtown with some 20-25 commercial establishments along Main Street, now U. S. Highway 190. Early twentieth century photographs depict a bustling small town downtown whose Main Street was lined by one and two story frame false-front buildings. There were several general stores, a bakery, drugstore, hotel, bank, etc.

Sadly, there is not much of old downtown Elton remaining. Some of the buildings shown in old photos were lost long ago to fire while others were undoubtedly torn down within more recent times. Today's downtown is on the decline, with the majority of buildings being vacant. There are only four or five historic commercial buildings remaining, most of which, if not all, are vacant. As one of these survivors, the Fruge Store is of great importance to represent the commercial history of the town. In addition to being a general mercantile store, it served as the small town's bank during the Depression and into the post-war years. Elton's bank closed in 1933, and a bank did not reopen in the community until the early 1950s. During this period Ix Fruge, the proprietor, cashed paychecks from the previously mentioned office window.

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Continuation Sheet**

Fruge Store, Elton, Jefferson Davis Parish, LA

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                    9                    1

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Historical Note:

The exact date of construction for the store is not documented. The earliest record is a 1912 photo of downtown Elton showing the building. The store was purchased in 1926 by Osborn Ix Fruge, who formed a partnership with his father-in-law, Henry Savoie, and operated a general mercantile store under the name of Savoie and Fruge. In 1945, the present owner, Leo H. Fruge, the only son of Ix Fruge, joined the business and named it Fruge and Son. Ix Fruge died in 1976, and his son operated the store until his retirement in April 1994. Today the building is vacant.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Interview with Leo H. Fruge, who began working in his father's store in the early 1930s.

1920 Sanborn Map, Elton.

Putnam, Joanne Foley. A Town Named Elton. Elton, Louisiana. Shelby Putnam, Inc., 1977. Contains old photos of downtown Elton.



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**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Fruge Store, Jefferson Davis Parish, LA

Section number 10 Page 1

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**Boundary Description**

Lot 6, Block B, Aylesworth Addition, Town of Elton, said lot measuring fifty feet along Main St. by a depth of 150 feet.

**Boundary Justification**

Boundaries follow the property lines of the lot historically associated with the store.