

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

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

OMB No. 1024-0018

Booker-Lewis House, Vernon Parish, LA

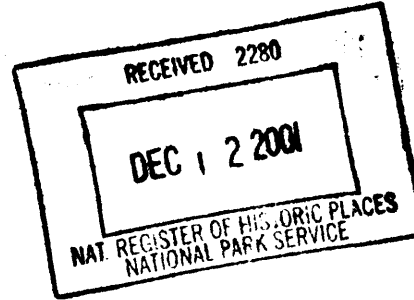
United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: Booker-Lewis House

Other Name/Site Number:



1489

2. LOCATION

Street & Number 102 East North St.

Not for publication: NA

City/Town Leesville

Vicinity: NA

State: Louisiana Code: LA County: Vernon Code: 115 Zip Code: 71446

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 Laurel Wyckoff, LA SHPO, Dept. of Culture, Recreation and Tourism

December 10, 2001 Date

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):

Signature of Keeper: [Handwritten Signature]

Date of Action: 1-24-02

5. CLASSIFICATION

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

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

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing
1

Non contributing
0 buildings
0 sites
0 structures
0 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: domestic	Sub: single dwelling
Current: domestic	Sub: single dwelling
commerce	other: special events

7. DESCRIPTION

Architectural Classification: Queen Anne Revival; Colonial Revival

Materials:

Foundation:	brick
Walls:	weatherboard
Roof:	asphalt
Other:	

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Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

The Booker-Lewis House is a wood frame, two story house located about a block northwest of Leesville's central business district. The transitional Queen Anne-Colonial Revival house has received few alterations since it was constructed c.1905 for H. T. Booker, a bookkeeper at Nona Mills Lumber Company.

The lingering Queen Anne influence can be seen in the hipped roof with cross gables, a polygonal bay on each side elevation and a squared-off bay on the façade which projects forward from the main wall plane. A symmetrical Colonial Revival gallery with Tuscan columns spans the façade and wraps around each side to join the polygonal bay. Slender brackets ornament the generous overhang of the main roof. Windows are one over one for the most part.

An early photo shows a one story section at the rear with a rooftop balustrade. In this location now is a two story wing under its own roof. Part of the wing is enclosed with bands of windows to create a sunporch at ground level. Part of the upper story is a porch. The date of this rear reconfiguration is unknown, although it is within the historic period.

Including the two story rear wing, the ground story floorplan is two rooms wide and three deep. The front door opens into a living hall containing a fairly straightforward staircase for the period. It employs two flights and a quarter turn to ascend one story rather than the complex geometry sometimes seen in houses of this vintage. The varnished millwork throughout is original. Openings feature heavily fluted surrounds with bull's eye cornerblocks. There are three sets of pocket doors. Pocket doors have a series of horizontal panels, while other doors are of the raised four panel type with operable transoms. There are two corner fireplaces downstairs and one with its own chimney. The three mantels with overmantels feature a variety of motifs, including columns and applied fleur-de-lis. The walls originally featured wallpaper over cheesecloth. At present the rough walls are exposed awaiting restoration.

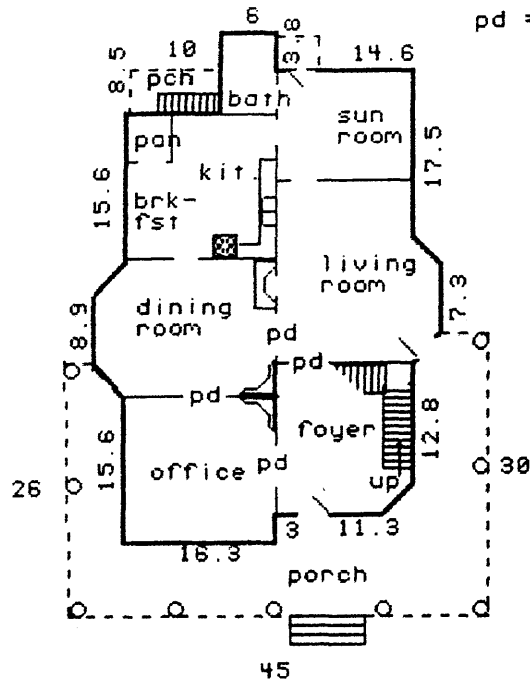
The house is detailed much the same upstairs, although there are no mantelpieces. Stoves originally heated this level. Bedrooms are grouped off a fairly narrow hall. The hall is irregularly shaped (see attached) to provide access past a stair to the attic and access from the hall to each bedroom.

Other than the reconfiguration at the rear, the only alterations worth mentioning are the loss of a balustrade at the second level of the façade (see historic photo) and ornamental cresting along the gable ridges. The balustrade with its simple squared off balusters, matched that of the main porch, which survives. A deck was added at the rear within the last year by the present owners, who are in the final stages of restoring the house.

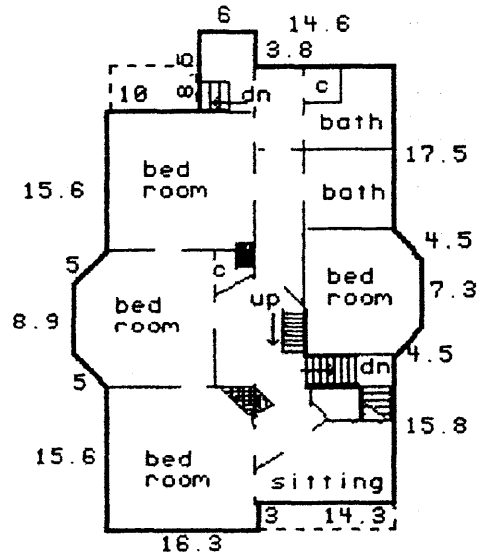
Booker-Lewis House
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pd = pocket door

first floor



second floor



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8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Applicable National

Register Criteria: A_X B_ C_ D_

Criteria Considerations NA

(Exceptions): A_ B_ C_ D_ E_ F_ G_

Areas of Significance: industry

Period(s) of Significance: c.1905-1922

Significant Dates: NA

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 Booker-Lewis House is of local historical significance in the area of industry as a rare survivor to represent the immensely important early twentieth century lumber boom prosperity of Leesville. The period of significance spans from c.1905, when Nona Mills bookkeeper H. T. Booker had the house built, until 1922, the year Nona Mills closed.

Vernon Parish, of which Leesville is the seat, was created in 1871. Located in western Louisiana, bordering Texas, it is the state's third largest parish. Vernon's history is that of yeoman farmers, the coming of the Kansas City Southern Railroad in the 1890s, an ensuing major lumber boom (longleaf pine) that lasted until the late 1920s, and a second boom caused by the establishment of Camp Polk (now Fort Polk) in 1941. Leesville was and is the only town of any size, and its population was only between roughly one and three thousand in the lumber boom years (1900-1930).

Leesville, like the rest of the parish, depended upon the area's seemingly inexhaustible supply of timber for its prosperity. There were two large sawmill plants: Nona Mills, located within the town, just north of the CBD, and Gulf Lumber, two miles south of Leesville with its own company town. Of course, even the vast virgin timber stands of Vernon Parish could not feed industrial lumber giants forever, and by the late 1920s, the boom was over. The destruction of forests was so great that the parish, with an area of over 800,000 acres, was listed as 70 percent cutover land in 1938.

The early twentieth century history of Leesville and Nona Mills are in some respects inseparable – the company was that much of a presence and had that much of an economic impact in the town. Although founded in 1871 as the seat of newly formed Vernon Parish, Leesville remained a small hamlet until the railroad arrived in 1897 and opened up the forests for industrial lumbering. Nona Mills, based in Beaumont, Texas, opened a mill there in 1899. It had a daily cutting capacity of 100,000 feet and employed more than 300 men. Lumber boom prosperity was the critical factor in rapid population growth in the town. A population of 1,148 in 1900 increased almost twofold in one decade (1910 – 2,043).

While nearby Gulf Lumber (with its own company town) presumably had some impact on the Leesville economy, there is no question that the in-town Nona Mills was the most important of the two. Sawmill historian W. T. Block, based on research chiefly in primary sources, identified it as “the greatest single contributor to Leesville's new lumber-based economy.” An archivist familiar with the Nona Mills records (housed at Lamar University in Beaumont) referred to the company as “the economic lifeline” of Leesville. A May, 1907 article appearing in the *Beaumont Enterprise* described Nona Mills as “the leading industry of Leesville.” According to a 1905 article in the same paper, the firm shipped 22,000,000 feet of lumber in 1904 and still had a 5,000,000 foot reserve drying in the yard. In that year Nona Mills paid \$15,000 in wages to its 370 loggers and mill hands. (As a point of reference, the town had a population of only 1,148 in 1900.)

Nona Mills divested itself of the Leesville plant in September 1922. It continued to operate, albeit at a reduced capacity, as the Weber King Manufacturing Company. Today there are no traces of the sawmill plant – modern buildings occupy the site. Also gone are the nearby Gulf Lumber facility and its company town and other Nona Mills buildings mentioned in the *Beaumont Enterprise* between 1905 and 1908, including a mill office, physician's office, barbershop, large general mercantile, and ice house.

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The foregoing losses leave Leesville with what might be termed secondary resources to “to tell the story” of what is arguably the greatest era in the town’s history. Clearly the most important of these is the home of G. R. Ferguson, Sr., vice-president of the Nona Mills parent company and head of the Leesville plant. Listed on the National Register earlier this year, the G. R. Ferguson house was built by Nona Mills within sight of its plant.

Other resources to represent Nona Mills-generated prosperity would have been the large homes of managers and better paid white collar workers. A list of plant personnel for 1907 shows, in addition to G.R. Ferguson, Sr., a superintendent, assistant superintendent, four foremen, two engineers, a commissary manager and various other white collar workers such as a timekeeper and two bookkeepers (H. T. Booker and Roy Booker). Today only H. T. Booker’s home, the candidate, survives from this category of resource. Booker had the house built shortly after acquiring the land in 1904. He lived there until his death in 1935, whereupon the house was occupied by his daughter and her husband, Ollie Booker Lewis and Frank Taylor Lewis.

Of course, in Nona Mills’ heyday there would have been other large two-story houses in town that represented in a general way the prosperity generated by the company throughout the local economy. Their presence is documented in Sanborn maps, old photos, and in the recollections of citizens. Many have been lost within the last two or three decades. Today there are only a handful (5 or 6) to show someone there was an economic boom in Leesville in the early twentieth century. (All but the home of Senator Wingate are comparable to the candidate. The c.1905 Wingate house, with its bulbous turret, is listed on the Register as the finest surviving period house in the parish.) Another resource which reflects Nona Mills prosperity in a general way is the old CBD. (A twenty-one building district was listed on the Register recently for its role as a center of commerce.)

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9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Smith, Steven D. A Good Home for a Poor Man: Fort Polk and Vernon Parish, 1800-1940. National Park Service, 1999.

Circa 1910 photo of Booker-Lewis House, copy in National Register file, Louisiana Division of Historic Preservation.

Block, W. T. Early Sawmill Towns of the Louisiana-Texas Borderlands. Hemphill, Texas: Dogwood Press, 1996. The quotes from the Beaumont Enterprise found in the nomination text are from this volume.

Berly, Charlsie E. "Records of the Nona Mills Company, Inc. (1884-1968)." The Texas Gulf Historical and Biographical Record, November, 1984, Volume XX. Mr. Berly was the curator of the archives at Lamar University in Beaumont where the Nona Mills records are housed. This invaluable article summarized the collection and the history of the company.

Vernon Parish Conveyance Records.

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:

- X State Historic Preservation Office
___ Other State Agency
___ Federal Agency
___ Local Government
___ University
___ Other (Specify Repository):

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10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: less than an acre

UTM References: **Zone Easting Northing**
 15 474940 3445520

Verbal Boundary Description: Lots 4 and 5, Block 20, City of Leesville, Vernon Parish, LA

Boundary Justification:

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

11. FORM PREPARED BY

Name/Title: National Register staff

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

Telephone: (225) 342-8160

Date: October 2001

PROPERTY OWNERS

Robert & Darlene Rose
102 East North St.
Leesville, LA 71446



Booker-Lewis House
Vernon Parish, Louisiana