

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 National Register Bulletin, How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form. If any 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.

## 1. Name of Property

Historic Name: Houma Elementary School  
Other Names/Site Number: N/A  
Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

## 2. Location

Street & Number: 711 Grinage Street  
City or town: Houma State: LA County: Terrebonne  
Not for Publication:  Vicinity:

## 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, 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 at the following level(s) of significance:  
 national  state  local

Applicable National Register Criteria:  A  B  C  D

*Pam Breaux* 4-22-15  
Signature of certifying official/Title: Pam Breaux, State Historic Preservation Officer Date  
Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism  
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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

Signature of commenting official: Date

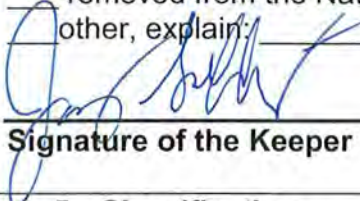
Title: State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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**4. National Park Certification**

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



6-15-2015

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

**5. Classification**

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply.)

|   |                  |
|---|------------------|
|   | Private          |
| x | Public – Local   |
|   | Public – State   |
|   | Public – Federal |

Category of Property (Check only one box.)

|   |             |
|---|-------------|
| x | Building(s) |
|   | District    |
|   | Site        |
|   | Structure   |
|   | object      |

Number of Resources within Property (Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

| Contributing | Non-contributing |            |
|--------------|------------------|------------|
| 1            | 1                | Buildings  |
|              |                  | Sites      |
|              |                  | Structures |
|              |                  | Objects    |
| 1            | 1                | Total      |

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions.): Education: school

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions.): Vacant/Not in Use

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## 7. Description

**Architectural Classification** (Enter categories from instructions.): Modern Movement: Art Deco

**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: Concrete

walls: Brick

roof: Built-up; tile

other: Cast concrete; limestone

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

### Summary Paragraph

The Houma Elementary School (1931) is a quite large two story educational facility in the Art Deco style. It is constructed of structural brick laid some three to four bricks deep and finished in brick veneer. The school is located in a mainly residential (working class) early twentieth century neighborhood. The property consists of an irregularly shaped city block bounded by Grinage, Point, Goode and Academy streets. The strongly linear building has an impressive 240 foot façade set back from Grinage Street. Behind the school is a parking lot. In 1950-51, an addition, considered contributing, was made to the north end of the rear, forming an L. The addition was sensitively designed and does not impact the original school's historic integrity. The imposing building retains an overall high degree of architectural integrity on the exterior, the source of its local architectural significance.

### Narrative Description

The property consists of an irregularly shaped city block bounded by Grinage, Point, Goode and Academy streets. In front of the school is a grassy lawn. Immediately behind is a parking lot. Modest circa 1920 bungalows are found in the block-faces to the west, east and south of the school. To the north is a cemetery and beyond that an early twentieth century Catholic church/school complex.

### Overall Architectural Character:

The school has a low pitch roof with a flat top behind parapet walls. The façade's symmetrical design features a Baroque five-part articulation typical of school buildings of the period. (It was in the Baroque period that architects achieved a formula for articulating exceptionally wide classical buildings.) The use of a central entrance pavilion, and hyphen wings connecting with flanking end pavilions, divided the facades of such buildings in a compelling manner. This was an antidote to the monotony associated with extremely broad classical facades featuring one modular bay after another – all just the same. In the case of Houma Elementary, the end pavilions each extend nine feet beyond the hyphen wings. The central pavilion extends beyond the hyphen wings a foot or so.

In addition to numerous Art Deco features, the building's architectural character rests significantly on its abundance of decorative brickwork and its vigorous polychromatic effects, the latter created by contrasting colors of various materials -- brick, cast stone, and limestone. The body of the building is a warm orange hue brick (in three different tones, dark and light). The brick has a smooth surface with an iron spot finish. The iron spot is a grayish/deep

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purple color, giving the brickwork a purplish cast in diffused light. Contrasting with this brickwork is an abundance of golden cream colored brickwork accents. Add to this numerous stone details, various contrasting bands of decoratively laid bricks, and decorative bands in deep blue and red. The elaborate color scheme and use of various materials combine to provide energy and emphasis to accentuate the building's numerous architectural effects.

Art Deco Elements:

The central pavilion and end pavilions of the main (Grinage) elevation display a profusion of architectural elements and devices in the Art Deco style.

Art Deco elements on the Grinage façade include:

- a. The overall massing, in which the entrance and end pavilions thrust above the general lines of the building. Each of the pavilions is finished as a dynamic cutaway mass in three stages. This is in contrast to typical Classical Revival five-part schools where the heights of the various portions of the façade do not vary much.
- b. Massive pairs of piers defining and setting off the pavilions, forming part of the cutaway mass composition. The piers culminate in distinctly beveled tops that support the cutaway effect and add an element of greater geometrical complexity. The piers on the end pavilions turn the corner to set off the side elevations.
- c. Vertical shafts dividing the central entrance pavilion into three bays. These culminate in buttress-like sculpted tops that curve inward, echoing the cutaway style of the pavilion's massing.
- d. Boldly formed, emphatic keystones crowning the central and end pavilions at the center. These consist of multiple superimposed keystone shapes, providing a strong, visually energetic, repeating geometrical effect.
- e. Bas relief panels on the entrance pavilion featuring stylized scroll volutes (a popular Art Deco design), repeating chevrons, and other geometrical forms.
- f. Numerous bands featuring emphatic, repeating geometric forms (triangles, lozenges and chevrons).
- g. Brushed aluminum decorative screens accenting narrow windows, one in each of the entrance pavilion's massive piers. The screens feature vertical and horizontal members, repeating circles set within squares, and at the center, a large circle with a volute to each side. Within the circles is a design that appears to be a stylized H.
- h. The massive and vigorously worked limestone entrance portal, which extends a full story. Strongly formed pylon-like piers define its edges. At the center of each pier is a recessed panel ornamented with stylized patera-like elements. The patera-like elements, each set within a square, are studies in contrasting geometries. Within each square are repeating circles, crescents, and sunray designs. At the top of the door is a boldly formed band of fluting, and above that, a series of short superimposed piers with a stylized strongly angular bas relief eagle with outspread wings. The eagle is sculpted to register the advancing and receding planes of the piers. Above the eagle is another band of fluting that extends the entire width of the entrance portal, and above that, a series of advancing and receding short members that graduate in height toward the center. The light fixtures (one each side of the door) are generally Art Deco in feel.

On the rear elevation, the above described Art Deco elements are found on the two end pavilions (identical to those of the façade). Also Art Deco are the two doorway tops, of contrasting cream cast concrete. They feature a bas relief Star of David set within a circle. To each side are bas relief diamond patterns.

Overall Description: Grinage Street Façade (see Photos 1-10):



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As noted above, the façade is fully 240 feet wide, which gives it a commanding street presence. The central entrance pavilion is approached via a broad flight of steps flanked by golden cream colored brick low platforms. The great piers that set off the pavilion (described above) are given additional emphasis by bands of over-scaled quoins (created in contrasting golden cream brick) running up and down each edge. The strongly contrasting quoin treatment gives the piers an enhanced presence. Near the top, below the beveled cap, each pier features a band of lozenges in deep blue and red. Between the piers, the entrance pavilion consists of a wide central bay with a narrow bay to each side. At the center of the wide bay, first floor, is the strongly Art Deco entrance described above. To each side of the doorway (in the flanking narrow bays) is a single nine-over-two wood sash window with a limestone lintel and sill. At the second story the central bay of the entrance pavilion features tripled nine-over-two wood sash windows corresponding to the width of the doorway below. This window composition is flanked by single nine-over-two wood sash windows. In each of the narrow side bays, there is a section of bricks laid up in headers (creating a contrasting texture from ordinary brickwork) between the first and second story windows.

A profusion of contrasting decorative elements in brick and cast stone appear above the second story windows of the central pavilion (see Photo 3). Above the windows is a basket-weave design created by contrasting colors of brick and contrasting headers and stretchers. At the center of the central bay is a large cast concrete tablet reading "Erected A. D. 1931." The wording is set off by decorative sawtooth bands and the tablet set off by a contrasting band of brick headers. To each side of the date tablet is a cast stone panel with bas relief stylized scroll volutes and chevrons, per the Art Deco section above. These panels are also set off by decorative brick headers. Running above the cast stone panels of the central entrance pavilion is a band of bas relief cast stone panels featuring a pattern of red and deep blue triangles and lozenges interspersed with cast stone simplified patera. Above this decorative band, the buttresses/shafts reach their terminus, and the composition gives way to the entrance pavilion's climactic cutaway upper section.

The smaller (but still large) end pavilions echo much of the styling of the central pavilion. The great piers that define and set off the pavilions also have a contrasting quoin treatment and an upper blue and red band of lozenges below the beveled cap. (The piers turn the corner to form the edges of the side elevations.)

The end pavilions feature one large bay with tripled nine-over-two wood sash windows on each story. The recessed section containing the windows is set off by a band of alternating iron spot orange and golden cream colored bricks running along the top and the sides. Between the upper and lower windows are panels of decoratively laid brickwork. Above the second story window composition is a prominent cast stone panel outlined in header bricks. At the panel's center is a stone grey roundel. Extending from each side of the circle is a striking pattern of alternating gold and deep red chevrons. A limestone modillion cornice surmounts this composition. Above the cornice is the cutaway massing and the superimposed keystone design described in the Art Deco section above.

The hyphen wings uniting the pavilions feature eight bays. Paired nine-over-two wood sash windows are found in the central six bays, with a thick wooden member between the windows. Flanking narrower bays feature a single nine-over-two wood sash window. Below the first floor windows is a continuous limestone sill. Individual limestone sills appear below the second floor windows.

A contrasting golden cream colored band of bricks runs above the windows, along the entire width of each hyphen wing. The hyphen wings are capped with a cream colored prominent brick cornice, which includes a layer of bricks laid with the corners facing outward. Above the cornice is a red tile skirting roof.

At the base of the hyphen wings is a tall band of golden cream colored bricks (in the manner of a water table). It is enlivened by a continuous band of brick stretchers laid vertically. A similar base is found on the end pavilions.

Overall Description/Rear elevation (see Photos 13-16):

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The rear elevation looks much like the main façade, with the notable exception of no central entrance pavilion. The end pavilions (with their various Art Deco motifs, previously described) are identical to those of the main façade, and they too extend nine feet from the main wall plane. The long expanse between the end pavilions mainly echoes the detailing of the hyphen wings on the main façade. It is given over to numerous six-over-nine wood sash windows appearing in groups of four and two and singly (the units of four are in the center totaling four, flanked by single units, and then double units towards the ends). The windows have a limestone sill, and where they appear in groups, a particularly thick wooden vertical member between the window units. Two entrances are set symmetrically in the expanse between the end pavilions. Their decorative tops are described in the Art Deco section above. The entrances are accessed via modest runs of steps set between low brick platforms.

Other rear elevation details include a high band of golden cream colored bricks at the base (like that found on the main façade), a golden cream colored band of brickwork extending above the second floor windows, and the entablature and red tile skirting roof described on the main façade.

As noted previously, a two story addition was made in 1950-51. It is attached via a one story section to the northernmost end pavilion. It will be described below.

Southern (side) elevation (see Photo 12):

Massive piers that wrap around the corners from the end pavilions of the façade and rear define this elevation. The piers feature the contrasting brick quoin treatment described on the front and rear elevations. Other façade and rear features repeated here are the golden cream colored band of bricks at the base, the golden cream colored brick band above the second floor windows, and the golden cream colored entablature with red tile skirting roof described above. The same windows found elsewhere on the building appear here in groups of two and three. Steps lead to a centrally placed entrance (doors replaced). Above the entrance, at the second floor, is a window/door combination, with the door accessing a fire escape. This fenestration configuration is shown on the 1931 plans. The fire escape is quite deteriorated.

Northern (side) elevation (see Photo 20):

This elevation is identical to its counterpart on the south side except for that to the rear of this elevation is a hyphen attaching it to the 1950-51 addition.

1950-51 addition (see Photos 17-19):

When built, the addition contained a cafeteria on the ground floor and classrooms on the second. It is linked to the northern rear corner of the 1931 building via a small one story section. The addition is two stories and features contrasting iron spot orange and cream brick (in homage to the original building). On the southern elevation, windows of three over three horizontal panes are grouped mainly in threes. They are set off within sections of cream colored brick. Also on this elevation is a centrally placed entrance set within a tall section of cream colored brick. At the top of the cream colored brick shaft are paired windows with horizontal panes. Some of the panes of glass on this elevation are frosted golden color glass. Presumably this is an alteration, for it is not typical of period schools and is done in a very random manner.

The northern elevation of the wing (facing onto Point Street) includes an off-center one story section (originally the cafeteria kitchen). The two story section on this elevation features bands of horizontal pane windows (with clear glass) set off in contrasting cream colored brick. The entrance is skewed to the far end, with a tall triple hung horizontal pane window above marking the staircase's location.

Interiors 1931 School (see Photos 21-23, 26-31):

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Houma Elementary is typical of period school layout. A hallway bisects the building, running the entire 240 foot width. Large classrooms with accompanying cloakrooms are on either side. The second story is entirely original, including the wooden floors and light fixtures. The hallway features a wainscot and a repeating rhythm of horizontal panel doors (with transoms) and interior transom windows (the latter to provide ventilation to classrooms), all of dark stained wood. Walls and ceilings are plaster over lathe. Classrooms feature the above mentioned interior transoms and original blackboards.

The first floor has been modified over the years. A couple of walls (each with an opening) have been inserted into the long hallway; ceilings have been lowered to the top of the transoms with acoustic tile; the dark stained wood details have been painted a light color; and some of the classrooms have been subdivided. That said, some of the classrooms retain some of their original character, including interior transoms and blackboards.

The first floor never had a lobby. The front entrance opens to a short hallway with an office on each side.

Two functional original wooden staircases access the upper floors. They are of two flights with an intermediate landing.

Interiors 1951 Addition (see Photos 25, 32, and 33):

The ground story features a hallway along the southern long elevation with windows that once looked into a large cafeteria. While the hallway retains its original character, the cafeteria has been completely remodeled into various rooms. The only alteration of note to the hallway is the use of a lowered acoustic tile ceiling and perhaps new tile flooring. The upper story also features a hallway along the long southern elevation with doors accessing former classrooms.

Alterations Summary:

Other than the 1950-51 addition, the exterior of Houma Elementary has received very few alterations. The latter include door replacements, canopies on the rear elevation entrances, and the insertion of AC units (accompanied by plywood) in a few windows. On the interior, the second floor is completely intact. Alterations to the first floor are described above.

Assessment of Integrity:

Overall, Houma Elementary retains a high degree of integrity on its exterior (and the second story of the interior). Even though the first floor has been altered to a degree, it still also retains several of its original features including doors, transoms, wide hallway, floorplan and blackboards. The rear addition does not impact or obscure any of the pavilion's Art Deco details (all located at the top). In summary, the school retains all of its original (and abundant) Art Deco styling.

Non-contributing Resource:

Located near the rear of the 1950-51 wing is a free-standing metal temporary classroom building one story in height. It is considered non-contributing as it was added after the period of significance, within the last 20 years. (It is scheduled for removal in a proposed rehabilitation project.) There are no other non-contributing resources on the property.

**8. Statement of Significance**

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

|          |          |  |
|----------|----------|--|
|          | <b>A</b> | Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.   |
|          | <b>B</b> | Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.  |
| <b>x</b> | <b>C</b> | 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. |
|          | <b>D</b> | Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history  |

**Criteria Considerations:**

|  |          |   |
|--|----------|---|
|  | <b>A</b> | Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes           |
|  | <b>B</b> | Removed from its original location  |
|  | <b>C</b> | A birthplace or grave   |
|  | <b>D</b> | A cemetery  |
|  | <b>E</b> | A reconstructed building, object, or structure                            |
|  | <b>F</b> | A commemorative property  |
|  | <b>G</b> | Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years |

**Areas of Significance** (Enter categories from instructions.): Architecture

**Period of Significance:** 1931, 1950-51

**Significant Dates:** 1931; 1950-51

**Significant Person** (Complete only if Criterion B is marked above): N/A

**Cultural Affiliation** (only if criterion D is marked above): N/A

**Architect/Builder (last name, first name):** Nolan, William T. (1931 school); Nolan, Norman, Nolan (1950-51 addition)

**Period of Significance (justification):** The period of significance is the year of the school's construction, 1931, and 1950-51, the year the addition was constructed.

**Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary):** N/A

**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

Houma Elementary School is locally significant under Criterion C in the area of architecture as a superlative example of the Art Deco style within the City of Houma. It is one of the two most convincingly and intensively styled Art Deco



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buildings in the city, and of these, it is easily the largest. The period of significance for the school is 1931, its year of construction.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Houma Historical Background:

Houma is the seat of government for Terrebonne Parish, one of Louisiana's southernmost parishes fronting onto the Gulf of Mexico. Much of the parish is swampy and sparsely populated. Houma is the only incorporated community. Terrebonne ("good earth" in French) was established as a parish in 1822. The town of Houma (named for the Houma Indians) was established to be the parish seat in 1834. In that year, Richard H. Grinage and Hubert M. Belanger donated one arpent of frontage on Bayou Terrebonne for the new governmental seat. In the nineteenth and early twentieth century, agriculture (sugarcane) and the seafood industry dominated the local economy.

A seismic shift in the economy occurred in 1929, when oil was first discovered in the parish. The Texas Company (Texaco) brought in wells at Lake Pelto and Lake Barre in that year. The major field of Caillou Island started producing in 1930. Subsequent fields were Four Isle Bay (1934), Gibson (1937), Bourg (1952), Mosquito Island (1955), and East Caillou Island (1956). By 1965, there were some three dozen oil and gas fields in the parish (inshore) as well as 17 offshore wells in production. Texaco was the largest oil company in the parish.

With all of this activity, the City of Houma emerged as the parish's oil service center – the epicenter of oil related services. Like Shreveport in northwest Louisiana, Houma was able to ride out the worst of the Depression so-to-speak because of booming oil prosperity. Population in the 1930s surged from 6,531 (1930 census) to 9,052 (1940), an increase of 38.6%.

Public Schools in Houma:

The history of public education from 1898 to 1938 in Terrebonne Parish is chronicled, in fairly broad strokes, in a master's thesis by Henry L. Bourgeois written in 1938 (Department of Education, LSU). According to Mr. Bourgeois, there were two public school buildings in Houma in 1898: (1) the so-called "old corporation schoolhouse," built of hand hewn timbers; and (2) the old firemen's hall, which had been donated to the school board in 1896.

In 1905, the superintendent appeared before the school board, noting that the school attendance of 444 "was entirely too large for the accommodations." The public responded, writes Bourgeois, by voting a tax in 1906 "that started a decidedly progressive movement in the public schools." Built in 1908, the facility was called Terrebonne High School. It was at the back of the block where the Houma Elementary is located. Presumably it was typical of the period in educating all grades under the name high school. Bourgeois accords this school the most significance in his comments on the physical plant's development. Of brick construction with a tile roof, "it consisted of a basement and two stories, and boasted ten modern and well-equipped classrooms."

Increasing enrollment necessitated a new building, which was authorized in 1917 and erected in 1918. Per a Sanborn map of 1924, this larger three story building was located a block away from the 1908 school. Per an old postcard, the newer building was in the Classical Revival style. Both of the schools are labeled "Terrebonne High School" on the 1924 map. The same two schools (1908 and 1918) are shown on an early 1931 Sanborn map.

Bourgeois notes that "these accommodations sufficed for the city of Houma until 1931, when another brick structure [Houma Elementary], containing twenty classrooms, was erected." It was built at the front of the block where the old 1908 school was located. Per the 1947 Sanborn map, Houma Elementary is labeled elementary school; the 1908 building (no longer extant) is labeled "primary school;" the 1918 building (no longer extant) is labeled Terrebonne Jr. High; and a building constructed in 1940 housed Terrebonne High.

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### The Art Deco Style:

In the pre-WWII years, before European modernism swept all before it away, Art Deco represented the most advanced styling seen in most American cities and towns. It was the only architectural genre much in evidence that was not wholly a historical derivative. In an age that sought all things “up-to-date,” Americans generally felt that Art Deco was the best way to be modern.

The style takes its name from its first major showing – the *Exposition des Arts Decoratifs* held in Paris in 1925. Art Deco became a universal style, embracing everything from cigarette lighters, to cocktail shakers, to furniture, to skyscrapers.

Art Deco was inspired by various cultural sources. In many ways the style has its origins in the Cubist paintings of Pablo Picasso and his circle, and more specifically, in Futurism, which emerged in Italy in the early twentieth century. Called a “style in motion,” Futurism embraced the philosophy that art must respond to the force and dynamism of modern life. Futurist works broke down human figures and other forms into repeating abstract geometric shapes suggesting force and movement. This repeating geometry is a fundamental ingredient in the Art Deco style.

Another source of inspiration was Mexico. In the 1920s and ‘30s intellectuals became fascinated with the primitive cultures of the Aztecs and other native people of the Americas. Numerous books appeared showing geometric designs of the Zunis and Mayans, as well as the stepped pyramids of the Aztecs. Scholars have pointed to lesser influences such as Egyptian art, with its stylized human figures, popularized by the 1922 discovery of King Tutankhamen’s tomb.

Art Deco in architecture was first and foremost about rich and dazzling ornamentation. As New York Art Deco specialist Alastair Duncan writes, Art Deco was “the last splendidly self-indulgent decorative style.” Buildings in the late 1920s and the 1930s were plied with all manner of repeating geometrical and stylized forms, typically in a symmetrical fashion. Popular motifs included chevrons and zigzags, stylized scroll volutes, frozen fountains, stylized leaping impalas, and the like. A second facet to Art Deco was dramatic cutaway massing (in the manner of a New York skyscraper).

### Houma Architectural Context:

Almost all of the historic commercial, governmental, and institutional buildings in Houma date from the early to mid-twentieth century. They are approximately 50 to 75 in number. The vast majority are plain – in no recognizable architectural style. A very few (3) would be classified as late commercial Italianate. A small number (5) are well executed Classical Revival buildings. Other strongly styled commercial and institutional buildings in the city include an Italian Renaissance commercial building, an early twentieth century neo-Gothic Catholic Church with an accompanying neo-Gothic school, and a Streamlined Moderne gas station.

It is against this background that the importance of the city’s Art Deco buildings emerges. Convincingly styled examples (see below) represent the most advanced and progressive design of their day. Art Deco had a fundamentally different aesthetic effect and intent from the staid classicism and ancient-looking historic revival styles so popular in the early twentieth century.

Houma’s Art Deco buildings embodied a break with the past. And they have a fundamentally different look from the building stock summarized above. Their geometrical forms and massing convey movement and energy. They were in their day compelling expressions of modern times.

Houma has a handful of buildings (commercial and institutional) that might be best described as vaguely Art Deco – or featuring hesitant touches of the style. Here Art Deco influence is limited to a few repeating lines in panels

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and perhaps short pilaster tops with cutaway designs; one otherwise plain building with a brushed aluminum canopy topped by lettering that might be loosely termed Deco; and the old parish library, with Deco style light fixtures.

While the monumental Terrebonne Parish Courthouse (1937) features noteworthy Art Deco elements, it is predominantly Classical Revival in character. A colossal Greek Doric order colonnade dominates the façade. Art Deco features include its doorway (far less intensively worked than that at Houma Elementary), two panels of stylized scroll volutes, zigzag bands over the upper windows, and large lamp standards at the steps.

Fully Art Deco buildings in Houma (other than the nominated property) are as follows. All retain a high degree of architectural integrity on the exterior.

People's Drugs, 7869 W. Main (National Register district). Located on a corner, this building could be labeled Streamlined Moderne or Art Deco. Its main feature is a curving second story "tower" that juts above the main roofline. Near its top is a stylized bas relief panel depicting a woman. The side elevation features four small bas relief panels depicting a stylized woman, eagles, and floral motifs.

Former Bank of Terrebonne, 7868 W. Main (National Register district). This corner building has two 50 foot long limestone faced Art Deco elevations styled in the same manner. Pilaster strips with reeded panels at the top divide the two elevations into bays. Details include bands of a sawtooth design superimposed over circles; large repeating scallops over the second story windows of the two entrance pavilions; panels with superimposed diamonds; and various bands of reeding.

Terrebonne High School, 7318 West Main Street (1940; Wogan and Bernard, Architects). This is a rather severe example of the Art Deco style, with minimal applied decoration. (This is typical of the Art Deco in its later years – the late 1930s.) The school's Art Deco character is confined almost entirely to an off-center entrance tower that is some two stories higher than the main building block. At the top of the tower (on each of its elevations) are two horizontal limestone panels featuring repeating zigzag motifs and two vertical limestone panels with bas relief stylized tree branch designs. The entrance surround at the tower's base features stylized scroll volutes to either side of Terrebonne High School lettering. Over the triple doors are decorative brushed aluminum screens in the Art Deco style. Other than the tower, the only exterior Art Deco styling is found on the entrance to the auditorium, which features vertical reeding defining the sides.

#### Houma Elementary's Art Deco Style:

In many ways the Art Deco style in architecture was an essay in excess and exuberance in applied decoration. Per the above, it was "the last splendidly self-indulgent decorative style." No period building in Houma exhibits this on such a scale and with such intensity as Houma Elementary. The abundance of Art Deco decorative elements on the school's massive entrance pavilion, and to a lesser but still important extent on the end pavilions (front and back), is described fully in Part 7. To recap briefly, the entrance pavilion's Art Deco highlights are its full story entrance surround (the most intensively worked Art Deco portal in the city, complete with a particularly three-dimensional stylized eagle superimposed on advancing and receding members); stylized scroll volute panels; polychromatic bands of repeating lozenges; brushed aluminum window screens with various repeating geometric motifs; pilasters with capitals of superimposed members; and a crowning stylized keystone-like element. Also, the entrance pavilion exhibits the cutaway massing popular in the Art Deco style. The four facades of the end pavilions (front and rear elevations) feature a quite distinctive and prominent panel of chevrons in alternating colors with a circle at the center; a band of red and deep blue lozenges at the top of each pier; the stylized keystone-design found on the entrance pavilion; and cutaway massing.

All in all, the building is a tour-de-force in the Art Deco style. It and the Bank of Terrebonne (see above) are the most intensively styled Art Deco buildings in Houma. Of these, Houma Elementary is far and away the larger, measuring

Houma Elementary School

Name of Property

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240 feet by 70 feet and more intricately detailed. Finally, it is the only example in Houma of polychromatic Art Deco decoration. (Polychromatic Art Deco decoration is seen mainly in Art Deco meccas such as New York and Los Angeles.)

This polychromatic treatment is important in distinguishing the building. The great majority of Art Deco buildings are limestone-finished or monotone in color. They rely upon bas relief and surface elements casting a good shadow to achieve the desired dynamic architectural effect. The property's extensive polychromatic treatment makes its Art Deco elements vastly more vivid, emphatic and vigorous.

The Architect:

William T. Nolan (1887-1969) was a Canadian born architect who practiced in New Orleans under his own name from 1921 to 1946. Later he practiced in partnership with his son (Ulisse Nolan) and other architects. The cafeteria/classroom addition was designed by Nolan, Norman and Nolan (plans dated 6/1/1950).

Available evidence suggests that Nolan specialized in schools. Seven of his schools in Louisiana (all from the 1920s) are listed individually on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C (Baton Rouge High School, Dufrocq School, and Nicholson School, all in Baton Rouge; New Iberia High School; Lafayette Elementary; Kenner High School; and Moreauville High School). Two are in the Gothic Revival style. The remainder are Classical Revival. Houma Elementary is Nolan's only known school in the Art Deco style.

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**Developmental History/Additional historic context information**

See above.

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**9. Major Bibliographical Resources**

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**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Bourgeois, Henry L. "Four Decades of Public Education in Terrebonne Parish." M. A. thesis, Department of Education, LSU, 1938.

Fricker, Jonathan. "The Art Deco Style." Fricker, Jonathan; Fricker, Donna & Duncan, Patricia L. *Louisiana Architecture: A Handbook on Styles*. Lafayette, LA: The Center for Louisiana Studies, University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1998.

Houma Elementary Architectural Plans. William T. Nolan, Architect. Dated 7/6/1931.

Houma Elementary Cafeteria and Classroom Building Architectural Plans. Nolan, Norman, & Nolan, Architects. Dated 6/1/1950.

Houma-Terrebonne Chamber of Commerce. "General Facts and Statistical Review on City of Houma and Parish of Terrebonne, Louisiana. 1940.

Sanborn Maps, Houma, LA. 1912, 1924, 1931, 1947.

Sell, James L. and McGuire, Tom. *History of the Offshore Oil and Gas Industry in South Louisiana, Volume IV: Terrebonne Parish*. U. S. Department of the Interior, Minerals Management Service, Gulf of Mexico OCS Region, New Orleans, LA, 2008.



Houma Elementary School  
Name of Property

Terrebonne Parish  
County and State

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- 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 # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other
- Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):**     N/A    

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property:** 3.1 acres

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_  
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 29.593051 Longitude: -90.723888
2. Latitude: 29.592863 Longitude: -90.722542
3. Latitude: 29.592204 Longitude: -90.722653
4. Latitude: 29.592042 Longitude: -90.724081

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Boundaries follow the curblines of the city block upon which the resource is located, said block bounded by Grinage, Point, Goode and Academy streets.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The above city block is the parcel of property historically associated with the resource.

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title: Donna and Jonathan Fricker  
organization: Fricker Historic Preservation Services, LLC  
street & number: 998 Stanford Ave, #203

Houma Elementary School

Name of Property

Terrebonne Parish

County and State

city or town: Baton Rouge

state: LA

zip code: 70808

e-mail: [frickerdonna@gmail.com](mailto:frickerdonna@gmail.com)

telephone: 225-246-7901

date: January 2015

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### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

### Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 3000x2000 at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

### Photo Log

Name of Property: Houma Elementary School

City or Vicinity: Houma

County: Terrebonne Parish

State: LA

Name of Photographer: Donna Fricker

Date of Photographs: January 26, 2015

Photo 1 of 33: Front façade; Camera facing east

Photo 2 of 33: Façade entrance pavilion; Camera facing northeast

Photo 3 of 33: Façade entrance pavilion; Camera facing east

Photo 4 of 33: Entrance pavilion detail; Camera facing east

Photo 5 of 33: Entrance portal; Camera facing northeast

Photo 6 of 33: Entrance detail; Camera facing east

Photo 7 of 33: Entrance detail; Camera facing east

Photo 8 of 33: Entrance pavilion detail; Camera facing east

Photo 9 of 33: Entrance pavilion detail; Camera facing east

Houma Elementary School

Name of Property

Terrebonne Parish

County and State

Photo 10 of 33: Façade end pavilion; Camera facing east

Photo 11 of 33: Façade end pavilion detail; Camera facing east

Photo 12 of 33: Southern side elevation; Camera facing north/northwest

Photo 13 of 33: Rear elevation; Camera facing northwest

Photo 14 of 33: End pavilion, rear elevation; Camera facing west

Photo 15 of 33: Detail, end pavilion, rear elevation; Camera facing west

Photo 16 of 33: Rear elevation entrance; Camera facing west

Photo 17 of 33: 1950-51 addition, southern elevation; Camera facing north/northeast

Photo 18 of 33: 1950-51 addition, northern elevation; Camera facing south/southwest

Photo 19 of 33: Link between 1931 school and addition; Camera facing south/southwest

Photo 20 of 33: Northern side elevation; Camera facing south/southeast

Photo 21 of 33: First floor interior; camera facing east.

Photo 22 of 33: First floor interior; camera facing northeast.

Photo 23 of 33: First floor interior; camera facing east.

Photo 24 of 33: First floor interior; camera facing north.

Photo 25 of 33: First floor interior; camera facing southeast.

Photo 26 of 33: Staircase; camera facing west.

Photo 27 of 33: Second floor interior; camera facing northeast.

Photo 28 of 33: Second floor interior; camera facing east.

Photo 29 of 33: Second floor interior; camera facing south.

Photo 30 of 33: Second floor interior; camera facing east.

Photo 31 of 33: Second floor interior; camera facing east.

Photo 32 of 33: 1950-51 addition – first floor; camera facing east.

Photo 33 of 33: 1950-51 addition – second floor; camera facing east.

**List of Figures:**

Figure 1 (above). Site where Houma Elementary was constructed in 1931 (1931 Sanborn map). Image courtesy of State Library of Louisiana Digital Sanborn Maps Collection.

Houma Elementary School

Name of Property

Terrebonne Parish

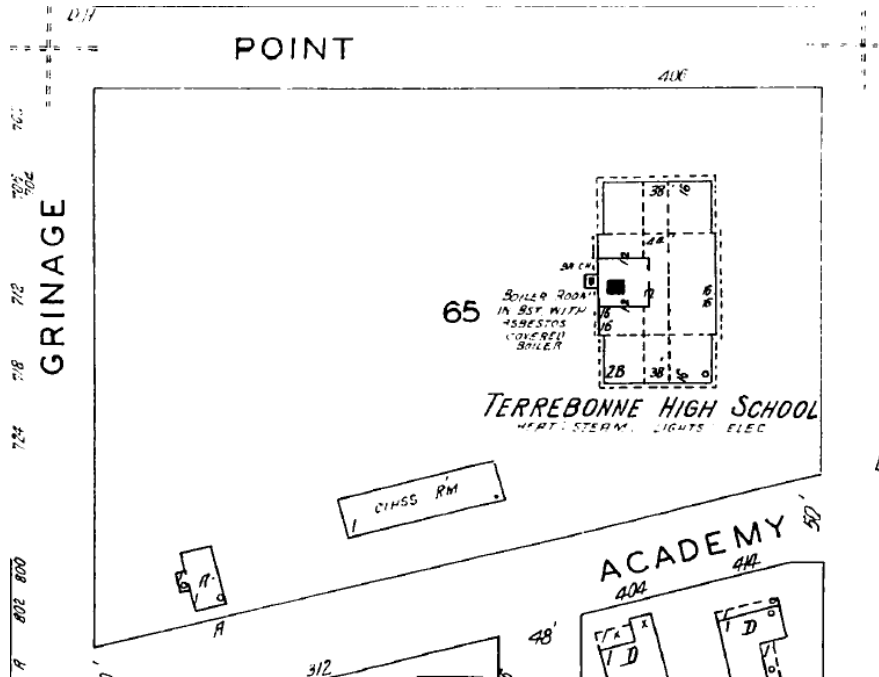
County and State

Figure 2 (below). 1931-1947 Sanborn map showing the completed Houma Elementary School. The High School/Primary School is no longer standing. There is now a 1950-51 ell addition to the elementary school in the location of the word "Terrebonne." Image courtesy of State Library of Louisiana Digital Sanborn Maps Collection.



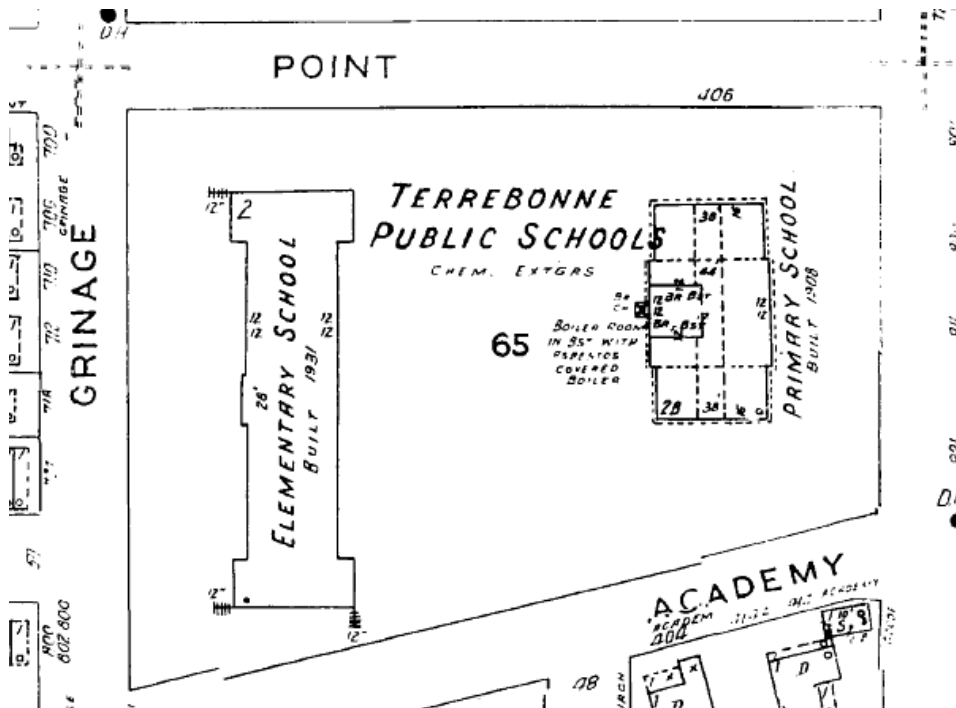
Houma Elementary School  
Name of Property

Terrebonne Parish  
County and State



**Figure 1 (above).** Site where Houma Elementary was constructed in 1931 (1931 Sanborn map). Image courtesy of State Library of Louisiana Digital Sanborn Maps Collection.

**Figure 2 (below).** 1931-1947 Sanborn map showing the completed Houma Elementary School. The High School/Primary School is no longer standing. There is now a 1950-51 ell addition to the elementary school in the location of the word "Terrebonne." Image courtesy of State Library of Louisiana Digital Sanborn Maps Collection.



**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.460 et seq.).

Houma Elementary School

Name of Property

Terrebonne Parish

County and State

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Houma Elementary School, Terrebonne Parish, LA



Latitude: 29.592557

Longitude: -90.723660

## Houma Elementary School, Terrebonne Parish, LA



1. Latitude: 29.593051 Longitude: -90.723888
2. Latitude: 29.592863 Longitude: -90.722542
3. Latitude: 29.592204 Longitude: -90.722653
4. Latitude: 29.592042 Longitude: -90.724081

— Boundary

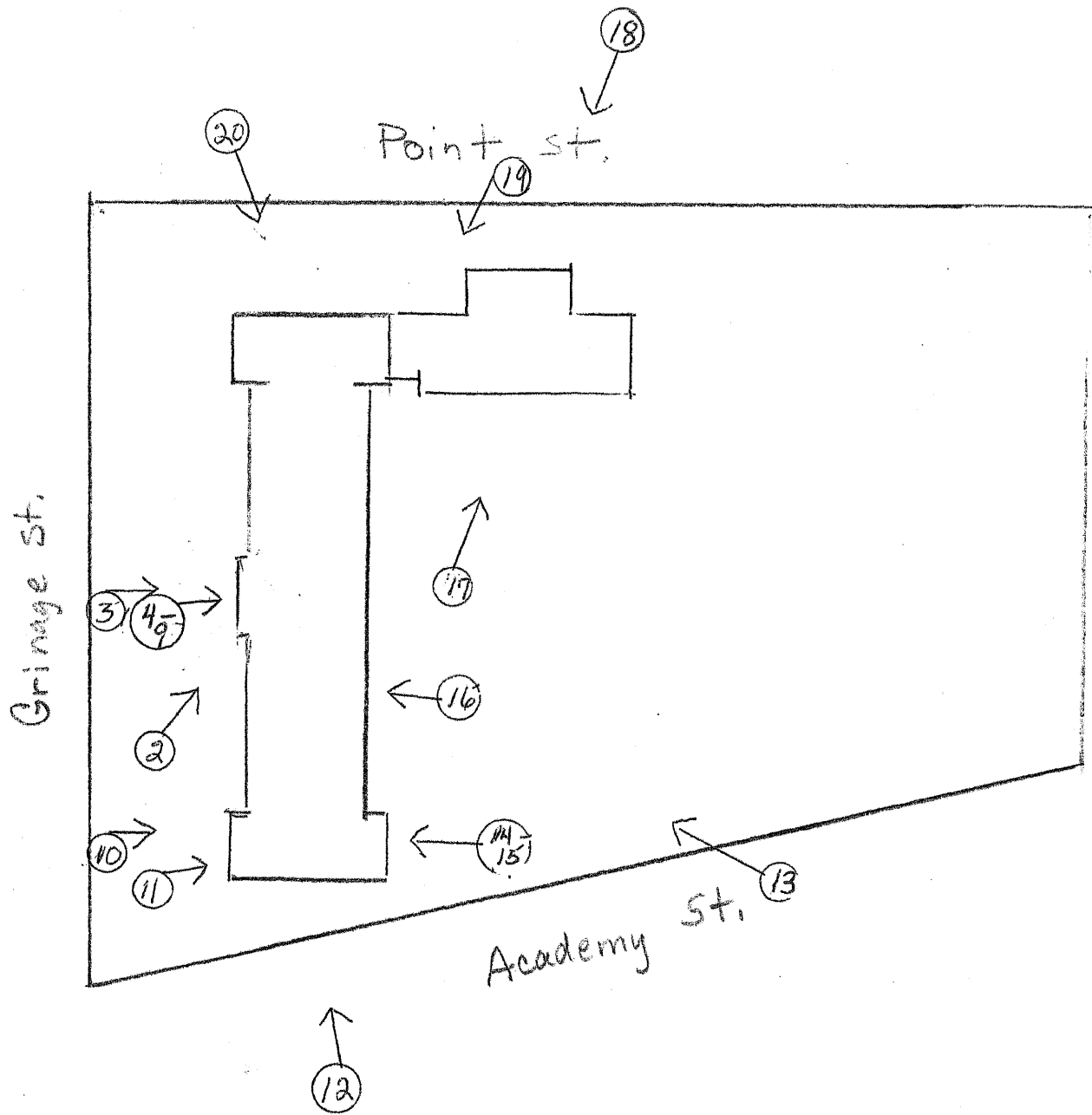
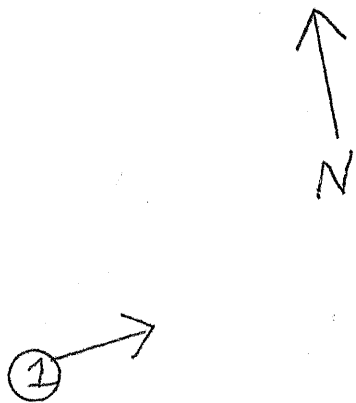
■ Non-contributing Building

□ Contributing Building



Houma Elementary  
School

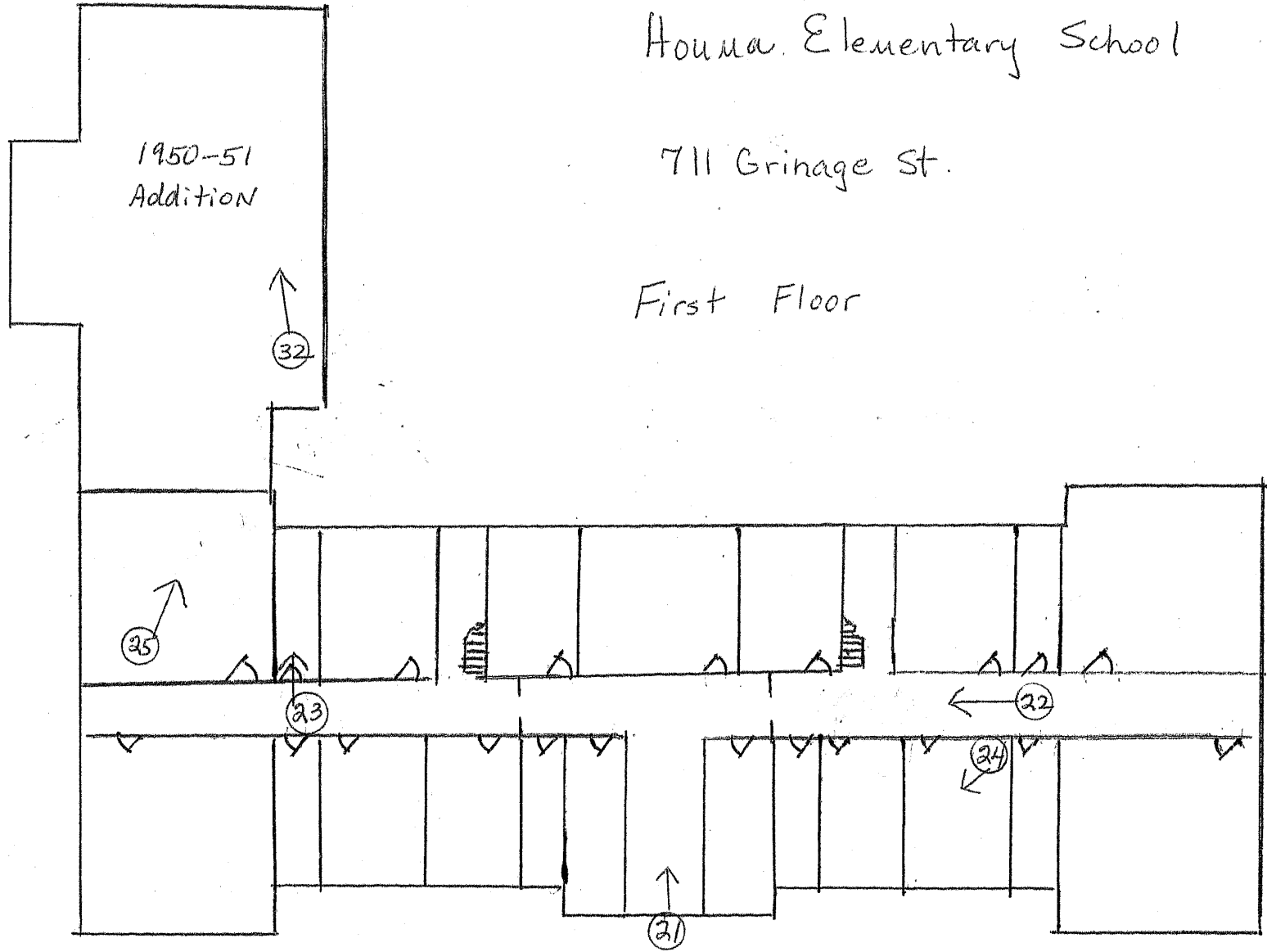
711 Grinage St.  
Houma  
Terrebonne Parish, LA



# Houma Elementary School

711 Grinage St.

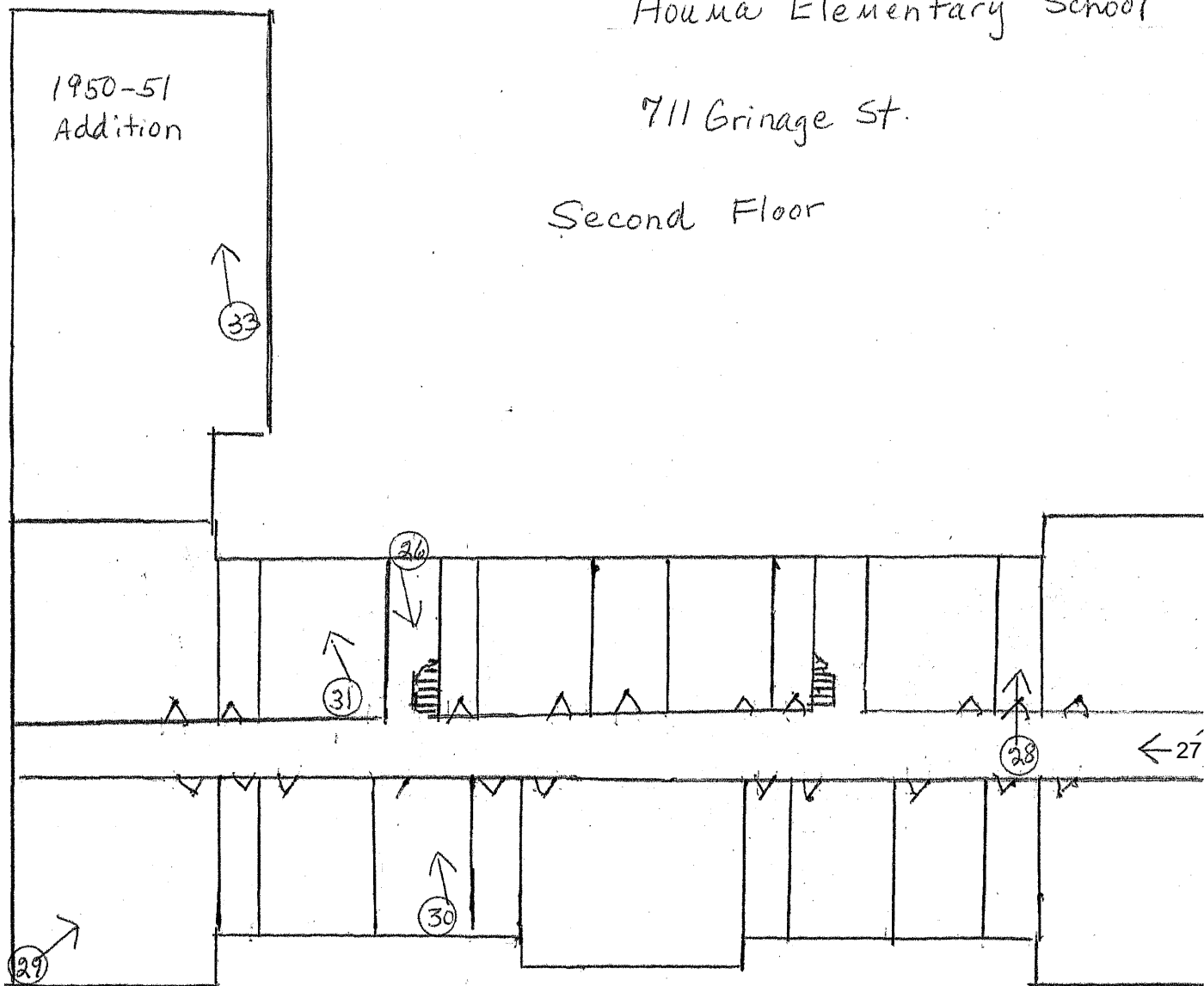
First Floor



Houma Elementary School

711 Grinage St.

Second Floor















ERECTED A.D. 1931





ERECTED A.D. 1931





PLATE  
REPRODUCTION

DRUGS ARE  
FREE ZONE









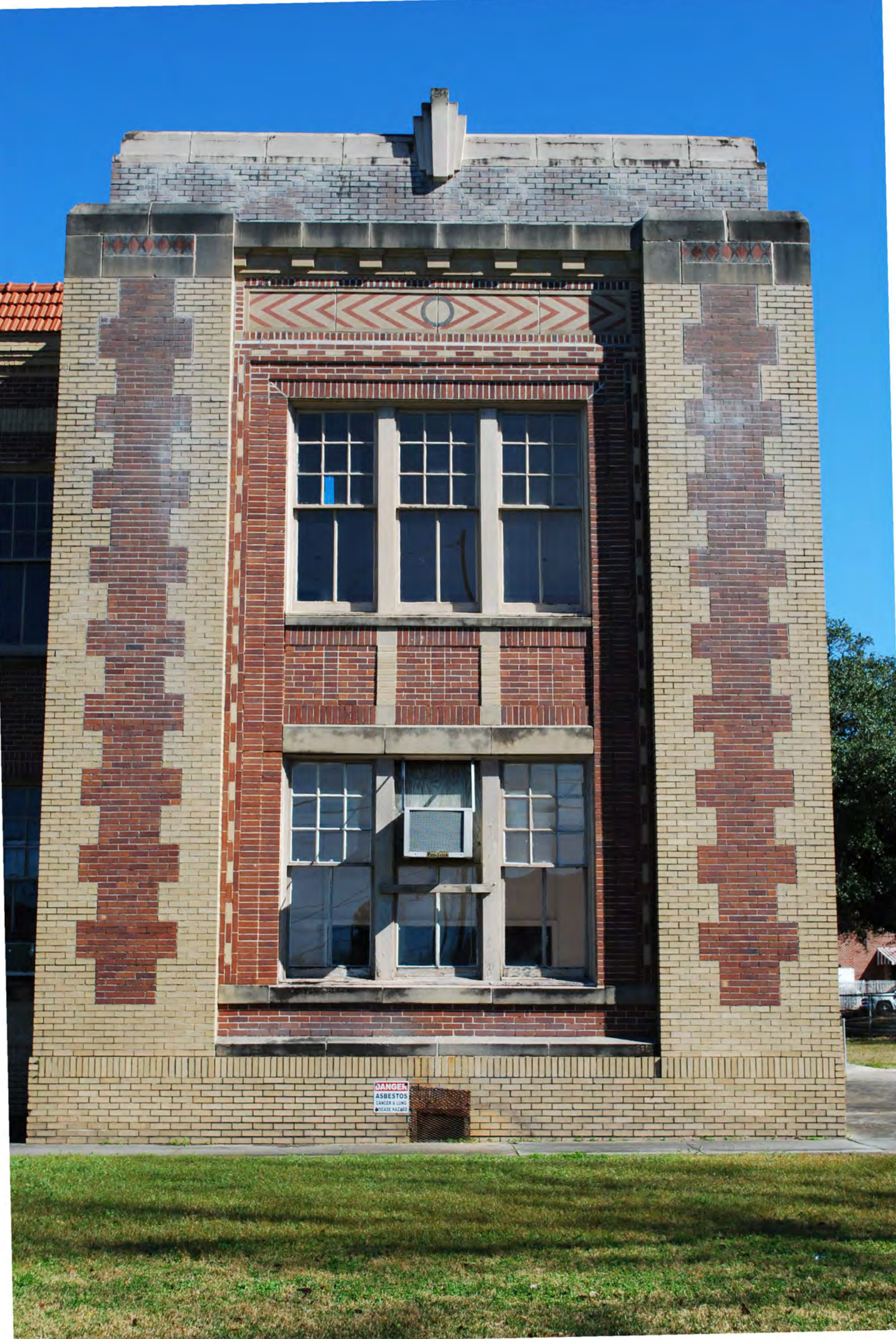












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CANCER & LUNG  
DISEASE HAZARD

















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ASBESTOS  
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MEDIA  
&  
RESOURCE  
CENTER

T.P.S.B.

















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EXIT

1011



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Houma Elementary School

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: LOUISIANA, Terrebonne

DATE RECEIVED: 5/01/15      DATE OF PENDING LIST: 5/29/15  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 6/15/15      DATE OF 45TH DAY: 6/16/15  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 15000347

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N    DATA PROBLEM: N    LANDSCAPE: N    LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N  
OTHER: N    PDIL: Y    PERIOD: N    PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N  
REQUEST: Y    SAMPLE: N    SLR DRAFT: N    NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT     RETURN     REJECT    6-15-2015 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

*Remarkable integrity of 1931 Bldg*

RECOM./CRITERIA Accept C

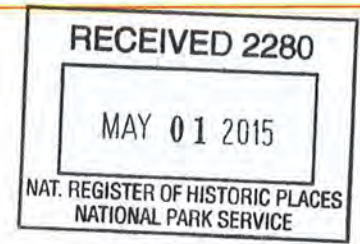
REVIEWER J. Gabbert      DISCIPLINE \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_      DATE \_\_\_\_\_

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/~~N~~ see attached SLR Y/~~N~~

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.





JAY DARDENNE  
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

**State of Louisiana**  
OFFICE OF THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR  
DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE, RECREATION & TOURISM  
OFFICE OF CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT  
DIVISION OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION

PAM BREAU  
ASSISTANT SECRETARY

April 27, 2015

TO: Mr. James Gabbert  
National Park Service 2280, 8<sup>th</sup> Floor; National Register of Historic Places  
1201 "I" Street, NW; Washington, DC 20005

FROM: Jessica Richardson, National Register Coordinator  
Louisiana Division of Historic Preservation

RE: Houma Elementary School, Terrebonne Parish, LA

Jim,

The enclosed disk contains the true and correct copy of the nomination for Houma Elementary School to the National Register of Historic Places. The second disk contains the photographs of the property in TIF format. Should you have any questions, please contact me at 225-219-4595 or [jrichardson@crt.la.gov](mailto:jrichardson@crt.la.gov).

Thanks,

Jessica 

Enclosures:

- CD with PDF of the National Register of Historic Places nomination form
- CD with electronic images (tif format)
- Physical Transmission Letter
- Physical Signature Page, with original signature
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Comments:

- Please ensure that this nomination receives substantive review
- This property has been certified under 36 CFR 67
- \_\_\_\_\_ The enclosed owner(s) objection(s) do \_\_\_\_\_ do not \_\_\_\_\_ constitute a majority of property owners.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_