

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

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

OMB No. 1024-0018

Sills House, DeRidder, Beauregard Parish, LA

Page 1

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

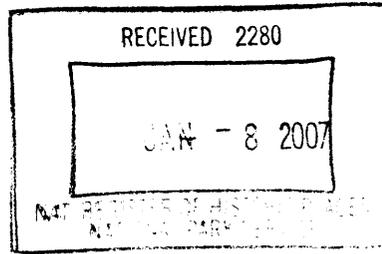
National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

67

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: Sills House

Other Name/Site Number:



2. LOCATION

Street & Number 211 West Fourth St.

Not for publication: NA

City/Town DeRidder

Vicinity: NA

State: Louisiana Code: LA County: Beauregard Code: 011

Zip Code: 70634

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 1/5/07

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

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

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

OMB No. 1024-0018

Sills House, DeRidder, Beauregard Parish, LA

Page 2

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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):

Edson H. Beall
Signature of Keeper

2.21.07
Date of Action

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
2

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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NPS Form 10-900

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

OMB No. 1024-0018

## Sills House, DeRidder, Beauregard Parish, LA

Page 3

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

### 6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic: domestic                      Sub: single dwelling

Current: domestic                      Sub: single dwelling

### 7. DESCRIPTION

Architectural Classification: Craftsman (Bungalow)

Materials:

Foundation: brick

Walls: weatherboard

Roof: asphalt

Other:

#### **Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.**

The Sills House is a large, one-story wood frame residence with bungalow details. It is situated on a double lot in an area of DeRidder that was platted for the Hudson River Lumber Company. Charles Sills, Superintendent of the Company, purchased the land in question from the Company in 1914. The first Sanborn map for the area, dated 1916, shows the house in place. For the purposes of this nomination, a date of 1915 will be used. Besides the enclosure of an L-shaped porch that extends across part of the front and down the side, the house has received few alterations since its construction.

While this is a modest version of a bungalow, there are various distinct features. A broad pent dormer protruding from the pyramidal roof dominates the wide façade. The exterior siding materials are arranged in three distinct courses that are carried around the building in its entirety. Below the soffitt, a course of recessed panels that match those found on the interior porch railing rests above quadruple columns on brick bases. The second course, on the level of the windows, is a fine-gauged board with a rounded bottom edge. The final course, which reaches from the bottoms of the windows to the tops of the brick foundation piers, is of a wider gauge drop-lap siding. An L-shaped porch wraps around the portion of the façade to the right of the entry onto the east side of the building. Its enclosure is unfortunate, but could be reserved.

Windows feature decorative glazing bars in a lozenge pattern on the upper sash, or are one-over-one windows. The windows that are under the front porch overhang have highly decorative drip moldings, further emphasizing the porch-as-another-living room feeling. The recessed entry porch, now distinct because of the enclosed side porch, showcases a large front door with wide, operable transom and side lights.

The interior is for the most part intact. The floorplan is somewhat rambling, typical of a bungalow. The front door opens onto a small entryway, which in turn opens onto a large living room. Off to the side of the living room there is a bedroom and a small hallway. The small hallway leads to a bathroom and two

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

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

OMB No. 1024-0018

## Sills House, DeRidder, Beauregard Parish, LA

Page 4

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

more bedrooms. Behind the living room, and separated from it by a divider, is the dining room. The Craftsman divider has a paneled base and splayed paneled columns above. Behind the dining room is a large kitchen and another small room that is used as an office. A small enclosed porch is located directly behind the office (at a rear corner). It appears from Sanborn Maps that the whole area that is the office and enclosed porch was most likely at one time a sleeping porch.

The most distinctive feature by far of the interior is the extensive use of curly pine. Characterized by irregular knots and intense graining, it is dramatic in appearance. All woodwork throughout the home, including doors, baseboards, crown molding, door and window surrounds, mantels, and built-in cabinetry, is curly pine. Curly pine's highly decorative nature was much sought after, and it is clear that only the upper echelon of workers at the Hudson River Lumber Company would have had access to such prized material. The mantel is particularly striking, with a wide, narrow mirror above the ledge and a recessed panel between the ledge and the firebox surround.

A garage at the rear of the property is covered with a drop-lap siding that matches that on the bottom course of the material found on the main house. As a contemporaneous dependency, it is being counted as a contributing element.

### Alterations/Assessment of Integrity:

While it is not possible to determine exactly when the L-shaped porch was enclosed, conjecturally one could use circa 1950 as the date of alteration, since the enclosure windows are fabricated of aluminum. It appears as though there was always a solid railing across the porch. Since the low-reaching entablature and the solid railing already impart something of an enclosed space, the impact imparted by the total enclosure is less than if the porch would have been completely open, with delicate columns and no railing at all. The porch enclosure work also involved filling in the spaces between the columns.

A hallway that appears to have been a pass-through from the side entrance to the dining room has been truncated.

A porte-cochere was added to the west side of the building after 1948, according to Sanborn maps. The original roofline was extended to incorporate it.

Despite the enclosure of the L-shaped porch, there is no question that this home would still be recognizable as the same building that was constructed during DeRidder's lumber boom days.

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES NOMINATION**

NPS Form 10-900

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

OMB No. 1024-0018

**Sills House, DeRidder, Beauregard Parish, LA**

**Page 5**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

**8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

Applicable National Register Criteria:      A X B\_\_ C\_\_ D\_\_

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): NA      A\_\_ B\_\_ C\_\_ D\_\_ E\_\_ F\_\_ G\_\_

Areas of Significance:      industry

Period(s) of Significance:      1915-c.1930

Significant Dates:      1915

Significant Person(s):      NA

Cultural Affiliation:      NA

Architect/Builder:      unknown

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

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

OMB No. 1024-0018

**Sills House, DeRidder, Beauregard Parish, LA**

**Page 6**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

## **State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.**

The Sills House is locally significant in the area of industry as a rare survivor to represent the important lumber boom history of DeRidder. It was built for Charles Sills, superintendent of the Hudson River Lumber Company, on land purchased from the Company, a subsidiary of Long-Bell Lumber Company and the driving economic force in DeRidder until the late 1920s. For the purposes of this nomination, circa 1930 will be used as the ending date for the lumber boom and hence the ending date for this nomination's period of significance.

DeRidder traces its founding to the arrival of the Kansas City Railroad in 1897. The southern expansion of the Kansas City Southern Railroad from Shreveport to Port Arthur, Texas in the 1890s made possible the harvesting of millions of acres of long leaf pine. Various Kansas City lumber companies were quick to follow the new railroad into southwest Louisiana. Among them were Central Coal and Coke Company, the W. R. Pickering Company, and the Long-Bell Lumber Company. Long-Bell had production facilities at DeRidder, Bon Ami, Longville and Lake Charles.

Long-Bell established the Hudson River Lumber Company in DeRidder in 1904. For two decades, it provided DeRidder's largest payroll. One distinctive feature of the DeRidder sawmill was that the hands received their pay in legal currency instead of tokens that could only be redeemed at the company store. In 1904, the Hudson River Lumber Company's sawmill had a capacity of 150,000 feet per day, with plenty of standing timber still available.

DeRidder was already a growing town of 2,500 inhabitants, despite it only being officially incorporated as a town in April of 1903. In addition to lumber, cotton and sheep became profitable ventures for the expanding town. Brick buildings were replacing wooden ones, and civic improvements were underway, including an elegant new schoolhouse, an opera house, and an ice plant. Electric lights were being used in part of the town, with the promise that they would soon be available for general use. DeRidder was soon to become a significant rail junction, when the Gulf, Colorado and Santa Fe Railroad built an east-west line from Kirbyville, Texas to Oakdale, Louisiana.

In 1904, the Hudson sawmill produced 34,000,000 feet of lumber, and by February 1905, 200 mill hands and loggers were employed there. The planing mill operated 13 machines and supplied its own electric power using steam engines and dynamos. Five standard brick dry kilns were in operation, drying 100,000 feet of lumber daily. R. A. Long, president of Long-Bell, even paid a visit to the sawmill as part of a week-long trip to four of the large yellow pine mills Long-Bell owned in southern Louisiana. It was stated at the time in *Southern Lumberman*, a trade journal, that the "biggest and best of the mills [Hudson River Lumber Company] was saved for last [on the trip]." It was considered a model pine mill at the time, and the Long-Bell executives believed that it could not be improved upon.

By 1907, the Hudson River Lumber Company had established an experimental farm on 200 acres of what used to be stumps from the logging operation. The potatoes from the farm were shipped to all of the Long-Bell commissaries in Louisiana and to other markets. Cantaloupes, watermelon, onions, strawberries, and other crops were grown. A long-range plan was established in an attempt to reuse cutover lands for agriculture and other needs.

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

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

OMB No. 1024-0018

## Sills House, DeRidder, Beauregard Parish, LA

Page 7

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Long-Bell owned a large tract of land directly across from the mill (where the candidate is located), and it was subdivided in 1908. Here were located scores of company built workers' houses and the homes of middle and upper level management. Nearby, in the early years, were at least the following company-built buildings: a two story frame company office, a one story frame store, and a hotel. As was the norm, housing for African-American mill workers was in a separate area – in this case, on the other (east) side of the mill. Contrary to the norm for the lumber industry, all available evidence indicates that some employees (perhaps only management) actually owned their own homes. Also, it appears that individuals not affiliated with Hudson River Lumber Company could purchase land and build their own homes in the neighborhood.

DeRidder and the Company prospered between 1910 and 1925. DeRidder became the seat of newly created Beauregard Parish in October of 1912. Long leaf pine forests in Beauregard and Calcasieu parishes fed the mill's growing appetite for raw material. A Wood Preserving Division was opened in DeRidder in 1916, producing creosoted poles, ties, cross arms, and highway guardrail posts. The sawmill at Bon Ami was shut down and dismantled in 1925, due to the depletion of the virgin long leaf forests, and the mill at Ludington was closed in 1926. The sawmill at Longville, another division of Long-Bell, burned down in 1920, but the planing mill there produced oak flooring until 1927. The mill was closed and the flooring machinery was transferred to DeRidder. Hudson River Lumber Company soon became a mill devoted to the exclusive production of hardwood.

By the late 1920s, the lumber industry in southwest Louisiana was on the decline. Many employees of the Hudson River Lumber Company moved on to the Northwest and to Arizona. Long-Bell was hit hard by the Depression, and was eventually bought out by the International Paper Company, which operated the creosote plant until the 1980s. The remains of the old oak flooring plant burned down in the early 1970s. Huge portions of the cutover acreage were sold to the Federal government, and the Kisatchie National Forest was created on those lands by reforestation.

### Properties Associated with DeRidder Lumber Industry:

Of course, the sawmill plant itself would best represent the lumber boom in DeRidder. Unfortunately, all traces of it are long gone. The original wood frame company store, wood frame office building, and wood frame hotel are gone. The store and office were replaced in the 1910s with a large two-story brick building known as Standard Mercantile. The department store was owned by Hudson River Lumber Company, and the company had offices there. This building is currently listed as a contributing element to the DeRidder Commercial National Register District. While it is documented that there were over 100 typical workers' cottages (for whites) at one time, only a handful exist today. The six to seven survivors, in varying states of integrity, are sprinkled here and there in the subdivision created by Long Bell in 1908 (Hudson First Addition). Today the Hudson First Addition is characterized by a notable amount of new construction. As noted previously, shotguns for African-American workers were located on the other side of the mill. Two or three of these survive today in varying degrees of integrity.

The candidate is significant on the local level due to the critical importance of the Hudson River Lumber Company in the economic development of the Town of DeRidder. Other than the just mentioned shotguns and cottages built for white workers, there are four residences in DeRidder with documented ties to the Company. They are all homes of upper echelon white-collar workers employed by the Company. One has been too altered on the exterior to meet National Register guidelines, one is the candidate, and the other two are Register candidates.

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

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

OMB No. 1024-0018

## Sills House, DeRidder, Beauregard Parish, LA

Page 8

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

### 9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Beauregard Parish Conveyance Records.

Beauregard Parish Historical Society, compiler. *History of Beauregard Parish*. Dallas, Texas: Curtis Media Corp, 1986.

Block, W. *Early Sawmill Towns of the Louisiana-Texas Borderlands*. Hemphill, Texas: Dogwood Press, 1996.

Long-Bell Lumber Company. *From Tree to Trade with the Long-Bell Lumber Company*. 1904.

Long-Bell Lumber Company. *From Tree to Trade with the Long-Bell Lumber Company*. 1920.

Sanborn Insurance Company maps, DeRidder: 1916, 1921, 1928, and 1948 or 1949.

*Southern Lumberman*, 1906, reprinted in January 2005 issue.

Warren, Joe V. *DeRidder, Louisiana: The First 100 Years 1903-2003*.

Wild, Edward O. *An Outing with the Long-Bell Lumber Company*. 1906.

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):

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES NOMINATION**

NPS Form 10-900

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

OMB No. 1024-0018

**Sills House, DeRidder, Beauregard Parish, LA**

**Page 9**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

Acreeage of Property: less than an acre

UTM References:	<b>Zone</b>	<b>Easting</b>	<b>Northing</b>
	15	472400	3412360

Verbal Boundary Description: Legal property description: All of Lots 12 and 13 in Block No. 6 in the First Subdivision of Hudson Addition to DeRidder, Louisiana.

Boundary Justification: Boundaries follow property lines of the parcel of land historically associated with the candidate.

**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

Name/Title: National Register Staff, Division of Historic Preservation

Address: P. O. Box 44247, Baton Rouge, LA 70804

Telephone: 225-342-8160

Date: October 2006

**PROPERTY OWNERS**

Relius Jeffery Jenkins  
211 4<sup>th</sup> St.  
DeRidder, LA 70634