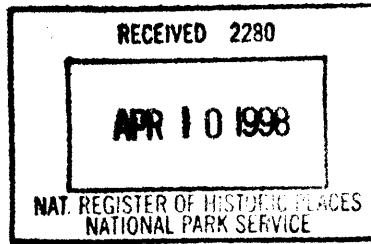


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service



439

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.

1. Name of Property

historic name Central Bank & Trust Co.  
other names/site number Old Post Office

2. Location

street & number 2472 Main Street N/A  not for publication  
city or town Hessmer N/A  vicinity  
state Louisiana code LA county Avoyelles code 009 zip code 71341

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.)  
Gerry Hobdy 3/31/98  
Signature of certifying official/Title Gerry Hobdy, Date  
LA SHPO, Dept of Culture, Recreation and Tourism  
State of 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 commenting 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.) \_\_\_\_\_

Edson H. Beall Signature of the Keeper Date of Action 5-8-98

Central Bank & Trust Co.

Name of Property

Avoyelles Parish, LA

County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property (Check only one box)

- private, public-local, public-State, public-Federal

- building(s), district, site, structure, object

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

Table with columns: Contributing, Noncontributing, buildings, sites, structures, objects, Total. Values: 1, 0, 1, 0, 1, 0, 1.

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 - Financial institution

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Work in progress

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Beaux Arts

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete

walls brick

roof metal

other concrete

Narrative Description

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

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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Central Bank & Trust Co., Avoyelles Parish, LA

Section number 7 Page 1

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A restrained example of the Beaux Arts style, the Central Bank & Trust Company was constructed c. 1910. The small, one-story masonry structure is located on Louisiana Highway 115 (known as Main Street locally) within the Avoyelles Parish community of Hessmer. The building is also known as Hessmer's "Old Post Office" because it served in that capacity for many years after the Great Depression forced the bank to close. Although the building has received some alterations since its construction and is currently experiencing a rehabilitation, it remains eligible for the National Register.

The square shaped building is constructed of brick walls approximately fourteen inches thick (eighteen inches thick around the bank's two iron vaults). This thickness is especially noticeable on the facade, which is pierced by two small recessed windows. As was often the case with early twentieth century commercial buildings, the facade was faced with better materials than the sides and rear. In this instance, the facade was originally composed of beige brick, with the building's Beaux Arts decorative motifs articulated in contrasting concrete. Although the facade has been painted to cover discoloration of the brick, the original orange colored bricks composing the building's side and rear elevations remain unaltered. As constructed, the floorplan consisted of three rooms: a shallow rectangular lobby paralleling the facade wall, a small anteroom located on the building's front left corner, and a rear banking room of moderate size. The anteroom served as the connector between the lobby and banking room, where the previously mentioned vaults were located. Changes to this floorplan will be discussed below.

Beaux Arts elements distinguishing the facade include:

- 1) an elevation composed of slightly receding and projecting planes,
- 2) the manner in which the entrance (located within the facade's receding plane) is articulated. A heavily molded and subdivided Roman lunette positioned above double doors is surmounted by a keystone featuring a bas relief urn. The keystone, in turn, is flanked by volutes and floral motif ornaments. Finally, the entire composition is flanked by tall Tuscan columns.
- 3) a stepped parapet surmounting an entablature. The latter has the words "Central Bank & Trust Co." carved into its frieze. The parapet features the following decorative motifs:
  - a) a plaque with the words "Hessmer Office" appearing in bas relief,

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**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Central Bank & Trust Co., Avoyelles Parish, LA

Section number 7 Page 2

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- b) two additional plaques displaying bas relief cartouches and elements which resemble elongated bells, and
- c) volute ornaments flanking the parapet's upper section.

Other interesting elements are found on the building's side and rear walls, as well as in the interior. These include:

- 1) a slightly projecting band of bricks which continues the line of the entablature to encircle the building,
- 2) a brick water table,
- 3) brick lintels above the windows. The latter's sills are composed of concrete.
- 4) original iron security bars covering all the building's windows and protecting the openings forming the tellers' windows.
- 5) the lobby's original marble wainscot (which features a marble baseboard in a contrasting color), marble surrounds highlighting the tellers' windows, and a marble entablature-like band spanning the wall above the tellers' windows.
- 6) a pressed metal ceiling,
- 7) the above-mentioned iron vaults, and
- 8) the original built-in counter which served the banking room.

Some changes were made to the building's exterior and interior when it was converted to serve as a post office c. 1940. Some of these have been reversed as part of the current rehabilitation project. Those alterations which remain include the addition of a flat-roofed canopy, intended to protect patrons from the elements, above the entrance, and the addition of a similar canopy above the building's rear door. Both were originally suspended by chains attached to their respective walls. Although this method of connection survives on the rear elevation, the facade's canopy is now supported by a new set of Tuscan columns similar (but not identical) to those flanking the entrance. The lobby experienced the loss of all but one iron bar panel separating it from the small anteroom and rear banking area. Banks of post office boxes were

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**United States Department of the Interior  
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**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Central Bank & Trust Company, Avoyelles Parish, LA

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installed in these spaces; plywood panels now fill the expanses created when these boxes were removed. At some point a restroom was added to a rear corner of the building. To facilitate the building's new role as a lawyer's office, a private office of moderate size has recently been created by partitioning off part of the rear banking room.

Although the painting of the former bank's brick facade is regrettable, it should be noted that all of the Beaux Arts style decorative elements upon which the building's architectural significance rests remain intact and are clearly discernible. Thus, any former patron of the bank or the post office would easily recognize the structure if he or she were to return to Hessmer today. As the only architectural landmark within the village, and as the only commercial building surviving from the community's historic period, the Central Bank & Trust Company is a legitimate candidate for National Register listing.

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.)

- XX 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.
XX 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.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Commerce

Architecture

Period of Significance

c. 1910 - 1947 (commerce)

c. 1910 (architecture)

Significant Dates

c. 1910

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

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 #

Primary location of additional data:

- XX State Historic Preservation Office
Other State agency
Federal agency
Local government
University
Other

Name of repository:

Central Bank & Trust Co.  
Name of Property

Avoyelles 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
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5	8	3	7	9	0
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3	4	3	6	2	5	0
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Zone Easting Northing

3 

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Zone Easting Northing

2 

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4 

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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 November 1997

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

city or town Baton Rouge state LA 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 Mark and Shannon Jeansonne

street & number 2540 Main Street, P. O. Box 301 telephone 318-563-4275

city or town Hessmer state LA zip code 71341

**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 Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Central Bank & Trust Co., Avoyelles Parish, LA  
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The Central Bank & Trust Company is locally significant in the area of commerce because it is the only surviving building left to represent the Village of Hessmer's historic commercial area. It is also locally significant in the area of architecture because it is the community's only architectural landmark.

### Commerce

Although a small water feature known as Lake Pearl drew settlers to the Avoyelles Parish area known as the Hessmer prairie before 1900, the Village of Hessmer was not established until 1903. In that year Francois Villemarette, who apparently owned all the land in the area, sold the right-of-way for a railroad track to the Louisiana Railway and Navigation Company. The railroad, in turn, built a depot and subdivided land along the right-of-way into lots which it sold to newly arriving settlers. The community was named for Hessmer Edenborn, sister of William Edenborn, the railroad's founder. Somewhat surprisingly, the village did not develop along the railroad track. Instead, it followed what is now the route of Louisiana Highway 115 (also known locally as Hessmer's Main Street), which crosses the railroad north of the village's center point.

The Central Bank & Trust Company appears to have been one of the community's early businesses. Although the bank's exact date of construction is unknown, documents in the possession of the current owner indicate that banking activities were taking place by 1910. However, the business survived for only about twenty years, closing with the onset of the Great Depression. In 1940 a new owner leased the building to the United States Postal Service. By 1943 (the year a history of the village was published), the settlement supported that post office, approximately fifteen stores, a small number of gas stations, two beauty shops, and a two-story brick school. With the exception of the bank, today these historic businesses and buildings are gone. By far, the majority of buildings in the community today are residences. The school has disappeared, and only five or six businesses are in operation. All of these are housed in buildings which appear to be less than fifty years old. This leaves the Central Bank & Trust Company as the only building surviving to represent the village's commercial life during the historic period.

### Architecture

As stated above, Hessmer was founded around 1900, and a recent windshield survey of the area has found that all but a handful of the community's buildings are non-historic. For the most part, the village's current commercial structures are either unstyled or make vague pretensions to contemporary styling. The residences mentioned above are in the form of unstyled

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Central Bank & Trust Co., Avoyelles Parish, LA

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cottages from the 1930s-1950s and slab-on-grade ranch houses constructed after c. 1960. The Avoyelles Parish Standing Structures Survey of the village verifies the results of the windshield survey by recording only 18 buildings which qualify as historic because they are 50 years of age or older. With the exception of the candidate, all of these historic structures are houses; and only two of these dwellings make any pretense to architectural style. One is an extremely restrained example of the Queen Anne Revival; the other an equally restrained residence illustrating the transition from the Queen Anne to the Colonial Revival. Both houses are similar to hundreds of other examples found throughout the state. Against this undistinguished background of commercial and residential structures, the Central Bank & Trust Company, with its carefully articulated Beaux Arts facade, ranks as the community's only building of architectural significance.

Note:

The former bank building continued to serve as Hessmer's post office until at least the end of the 1980s. After that it was used by a new owner as the headquarters of his insurance agency. In 1997 Hessmer resident Mark Jeansonne purchased the building. He is currently rehabilitating the structure for use as his law office.

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Continuation Sheet**

Central Bank & Trust Company, Avoyelles Parish, LA

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**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Division of Historic Preservation, Avoyelles Parish Standing Structures Survey.

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

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

Site visit by National Register staff.

Windshield survey of Hessmer, Louisiana by National Register staff.

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National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Central Bank & Trust Co., Avoyelles Parish, LA

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Legal Property Description:

A lot or parcel of land situated in the Village of Hessmer, Avoyelles Parish, located on the west side of the Bunkie-Marksville Highway (LA HWY 115). Said lot has a frontage of at least 50 feet on its eastern boundary (LA HWY 115), and runs west at least 130 feet by parallel lines (north and south boundaries) which are at least 50 feet apart at all parallel points. Said property is bounded now or formerly, on the north by Pierre Roy, and on the south and west by heirs of H. Ducote;

This being the same property acquired by Buvens Roy from Minnie Fontane in deed dated December 1, 1966, and recorded in COB A-222, page 291 of the official records of Avoyelles Parish;

The municipal address to the parcel is 2472 Main, Hessmer, Avoyelles Parish.

Justification: Boundaries follow property lines of parcel of land upon which the bank is located.