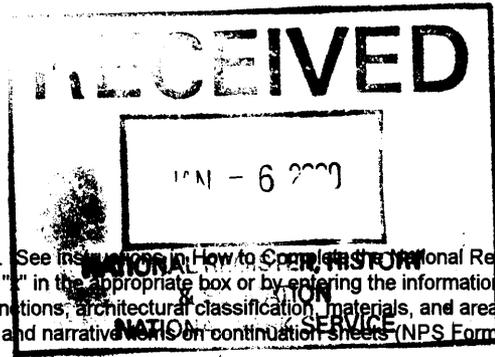


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

38



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 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. Place additional entries and narrative descriptions on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Star Hill Post Office and Store

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

2. Location

street & number 4630 U.S. Highway 61 NA not for publication

city or town St. Francisville X vicinity

state Louisiana code LA county West Feliciana code 125 zip code 70775

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant     nationally     statewide X locally. (    See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Jonathan Fricker 12/29/99  
Signature of certifying official/Title Jonathan Fricker, Date  
Deputy SHPO, Dept of Culture, Recreation and Tourism

State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

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

Signature of certifying official/Title \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this 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 Keeper

Date of Action

Edson H. Beall 2/4/00

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- X private
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.)

Table with columns: Contributing, Noncontributing, buildings, sites, structures, objects, Total. Values: 2, 1, 2, 1.

Name of related multiple property listing

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

NA

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Cat. Commerce/Trade
Government

Sub. Department Store
Post Office

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Cat. Vacant

Sub. Not In Use

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

No Style

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation wood, concrete
walls weatherboard
roof metal
other

Narrative Description

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

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section   7   Page   1  

---

Part of a rural community of the same name, the Star Hill Post Office and Store stands a few yards from the highway on the north side of U.S. 61 in southern West Feliciana Parish. Although the unstyled, one-story frame store is located within a cleared area, the surrounding terrain is generally wooded. The 1898 building has been moved a very short distance (on the same parcel of land). It was expanded during the historic period and has received some additional alterations through the years. However, it retains its National Register eligibility.

The store stood on its original site from 1898 until the early 1920s, when improvements in the nearby road (now U.S. 61) forced it to be moved back 105 feet to its current location. The building has the same orientation to the highway as it did before the move.

The two-room, rectangular shaped store stands perpendicular to the road and is raised slightly on piers. Its exterior is characterized by a three-bay porch, a front-facing gable supported by posts, clapboard siding, six-over-six windows covered by plank shutters, entrances secured by plank doors, and a metal roof. Evidence of the store's two historic expansions toward the rear is visible on two sides of the building. Both additions are identified by a line where the older and newer clapboards join. The first expansion extended the size of the original sales room, which was the only room in the building at that time. This change also can be pinpointed on the interior by a line crossing the floor where the planks of the old and newer parts meet. A filled area in one exterior wall suggests that a side door was closed when the sales room was expanded. Although the date of these alterations is not known, it is likely that they took place before the previously mentioned early 1920s highway modification. The second expansion, a rear storeroom separated from the sales area by a plank door, may have been built at the time of the move but could also date to the 1930s.

Inside the sales room, the counters, walls and ceiling are covered by horizontal beaded boards. This space is organized around a long central aisle with "L"-shaped counters on each side. The bottom legs of the two "L"s meet to provide separation between the customers' and clerk's spaces. However, one leg has a flip-top mechanism which allows passage to the rear of the room. Behind the two long counters, shelves rise almost to the ceiling. Located behind one of the counters, a cabinet with open cubicles was used to sort and hold mail. The rear storeroom, which lacks a ceiling, is rough and unfinished.

CONTINUED

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service****NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**Section   7   Page   2  

---

In addition to the expansions and the move, the store has experienced one other change which might be considered notable. At some point during the 1920s, the store began providing gasoline for its customers' automobiles. To accommodate this service, a small island containing gas pumps was installed in front of the store and a front gable overhang was built to cover it. This historic alteration remained in place until at least 1953 but was removed shortly thereafter. Like the 1920s move, this change was caused by road work on nearby U.S. Highway 61.

Despite the changes outlined above, the Star Hill Post Office and Store retains the integrity required of a Register candidate. Customers who shopped there after the installation of the gas pumps and overhang would still be able to identify the building if they should return to the area today, and patrons who used the store before these alterations would have no difficulty recognizing the facility. As a rare example of a plantation/country store (see Part 8), Star Hill is a suitable addition to the National Register.

Contributing Element

Also on the property is a one-and-one-half-story galleried cottage. It is of frame construction, stands on brick piers and has a metal roof. It is being counted as a contributing element because it was constructed at almost the same time as the store and served as the home of its owner/operator (see Part 8).

Non-Contributing Element

A modern frame carport with a metal roof stands on the property near the cottage.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" next to the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

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

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "X" next to all that apply.)

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
X B removed from its original location.
C a birthplace or a 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

Period of Significance

1898-c. 1940

Significant Dates

NA

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

NA

Cultural Affiliation

NA

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

NA

- 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:

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

Name of repository:

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service****NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**Section   8   Page   1  

The Star Hill Post Office and Store is locally significant in the area of commerce within West Feliciana Parish because it is a rare surviving example of a plantation/rural store. (The store served in both capacities during its long period of operation.) General mercantile emporiums such as Star Hill played a vital role in the economy of Louisiana's rural parishes and the system of plantation agriculture from the post-bellum years until well into the twentieth century. This store's period of significance ranges from 1898 through c. 1940. Although rural stores generally declined in importance after that date, Star Hill continued to serve as a rural store until 1955.

In order to understand the role which Star Hill played in the economy of southern West Feliciana Parish and the system of plantation agriculture, it is helpful to understand the circumstances under which rural stores operated and the types of goods they provided. Several types of rural stores, differentiated by type of ownership, operated in Louisiana after the Civil War.

In areas where plantation agriculture dominated the economy, the plantation store was the norm. With the end of the Civil War and the loss of slave labor, planters were forced to find other means to get their crops planted and harvested. In Louisiana's cotton growing parishes, the plantation system shifted to a practice known as share-cropping in which a landless farmer worked a portion of the planter's land for a share of the crop, generally one-third. However, this system was not suited to sugar growing parishes. There, planters hired gangs of laborers who were given housing on the plantation and a small weekly or monthly wage. The amount of this wage depended upon whether or not the planter also provided food for the worker. Although wages were occasionally paid in cash, script and credit vouchers redeemable at the plantation store were often used. Because the planters feared that their laborers might leave before the crop was in, they often withheld part of these wages until the end of the year. Like share-cropping and paid gang labor, plantation stores were a phenomenon of the post-bellum period. In many cases the stores were owned by the planters themselves, but sometimes an ambitious entrepreneur would set up business in an area surrounded by several plantations. The timber industry, which came to Louisiana in the 1880s, brought a different kind of rural store to the state. This was the company-owned and controlled commissary, located within a company-built town. Many times its customers were a captive audience, for workers were often paid in script which could be redeemed only at the company store. The final type of rural store was that run by independent entrepreneurs in non-plantation rural communities. These businesses served whatever population happened to live nearby. Despite the type of

CONTINUED

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section   8   Page   2  

---

ownership involved, all of these stores provided a wide variety of goods, ranging from manufactured clothes to foodstuffs to tools to patent medicines – in short, everything the rural householder could want.

Very little is known of the operational history of the Star Hill Post Office and Store. Because it was built by a local cotton farmer to serve the workers on his place, it fits the plantation store classification. However, the store also operated as a rural mercantile establishment serving a wider clientele and continued in this endeavor after the share-cropping system ended.

Star Hill was founded by Thomas DeWitt Bickham, a native of Washington Parish, Louisiana. The Bickham family's association with southern West Feliciana Parish began when Thomas' father, Charles Monroe Bickham, purchased land near another plantation known as Star Hill (only one building of that holding survives). Charles Bickham never lived on the site, instead sending his son Thomas to settle there. The younger Bickham arrived in 1889 and rented the place from his father for several years. He was able to purchase the farm for \$1,100.00 around 1900 and gradually increased his holdings to 2,000 or 3,000 acres. At first Bickham grew cotton, but he diversified after an infestation of the boll weevil occurred in 1905. Thereafter he also grew corn, potatoes, and other vegetables and also raised cattle on the land.

Thomas Bickham constructed the store in 1898. (At about the same time, friends and relatives helped him build the house classed as a contributing element in Part 7.) Two of Bickham's grandchildren remember that dry goods and groceries were sold at the store. Their special memories included hoop cheese, pepper sausage, Royal Crown Cola, and a homemade cane syrup which usually sold out as soon as it reached store shelves. Tobacco was also sold, as was gasoline beginning in the 1920s. As mentioned in Part 7, a canopy or overhang and gas pumps were installed to serve the automobile clientele. Sadly, no business records seem to have survived. However, one grandchild recalls that the store received "a profitable trade from the countryside," and the fact that the Bickhams enlarged the store twice affirms this assessment.

In 1903 the local post office, until then located on nearby Star Hill Plantation, was moved to the store. One of Thomas Bickham's sons became postmaster, serving a group of about 45 people. As described in Part 7, the post office was located behind a store counter, and mail was sorted and held in an open cabinet with square cubicles

CONTINUED

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section   8   Page   3  

---

until the addressee came by to collect it.

Although most plantation and rural stores declined after the 1930s, the Bickham family continued to operate the Star Hill Post Office and Store until 1955. After Thomas retired, son Leslie assumed the daily responsibilities. The property remained in family hands until the late 1990s, when it was sold to Maxine and Kenneth Baird.

In assessing the significance of stores such as Star Hill, it should be noted that both plantation stores and rural stores serving a wider population are now extremely rare. The end of the sharecropping system and the increasing popularity of the automobile (which allowed its owner to acquire goods in nearby towns) brought about their decline. Through the years, the majority of rural stores have either been demolished, allowed to deteriorate and fall down, or in some cases removed from the property. Those which survive are usually closed, vacant, deteriorated and face an uncertain future. There is no way to determine how many rural stores once existed, but it is possible to estimate the number of plantation stores which formerly occupied the landscape. Almost every plantation of any size either had one or was served by one such as Star Hill. If an average of 50 to 100 large plantations per parish is accepted, it can be seen that such stores were once numerous within the countryside. The West Feliciana Parish Standing Structures Survey indicates that only one or two plantation stores and three rural stores survived when that survey was made in the summer of 1987, and one of the these has been lost within the last four years. Two others appear to date to the 1930s, making them much later than Star Hill. As a rare example of a plantation/rural store, the Star Hill Post Office and Store is a worthy addition to the National Register.

Star Hill Post Office and Store  
Name of property

West Feliciana Parish, LA  
County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** 4.34 acres

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing

1 15 662080 3404260

2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_

4 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.

**Verbal Boundary Description**

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

**Boundary Justification**

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

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title National Register Staff

organization Division of Historic Preservation date May 1999

street & number P.O. Box 44247 telephone (225) 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 the SHPO or FPO.)

name Kenneth and Maxine Baird

street & number 4630 U.S. Highway 61 telephone (225) 635-4300

city or town St. Francisville state LA zip code 70775

**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 the 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 Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 9 Page 1  
10 1

---

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Brief histories provided by descendants of Thomas DeWitt Bickham; copies in National Register file.

Division of Historic Preservation. West Feliciana Parish Standing Structures Survey, 1987.

Kelley, David B., Principal Investigator. *Highway 61 Visited: Cultural Resources Survey and Testing of the LA--US 61 Four Lane Project Corridor Between Bains and Thompson Creek, West Feliciana Parish, Louisiana*. Baton Rouge, LA.: Coastal Environments, Inc., August 1997.

Site visit by National Register staff.

---

**BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION:**

See attached plat map.

**BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION:**

Boundaries follow current property lines. These include the land directly associated with the store since its early 1920s move and the land which served as the "home place" for the store's owner/operator since the house's construction c. 1898.

