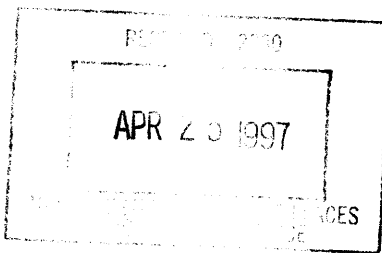


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form



465

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 J. M. Miller and Brother Store

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 7886 LA HWY 473 N/A not for publication

city or town Florien vicinity

state Louisiana code LA county Sabine code 085 zip code 71429

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.)

Jonathan Fricker 4/21/97
Signature of certifying official/Title Jonathan Fricker, Date
Deputy 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
5/23/97

J. M. Miller and Brother Store
Name of Property

Sabine Parish, LA
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

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

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

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

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	0	Total

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: department store

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

vacant/not in use

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

no style

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete

walls weatherboard

roof metal

other

Narrative Description

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

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National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

J. M. Miller and Brother Store, Sabine Parish, LA

Section number 7 Page 1

The J. M. Miller and Brother Store was constructed in 1905 and expanded only a short time thereafter. A one-story vernacular structure made of wood, it can be said to have no style for the purposes of this nomination. Except for the presence of two nearby period houses built for the store's original owners, the building's location is totally rural. It stands facing Louisiana Highway 473 within the Toro community--a small rural settlement which consists of a few buildings scattered along Highways 473 and 191 in southern Sabine Parish. Although it has experienced a very short move, the store remains well preserved, including a virtually intact interior. Thus, it is eligible for National Register listing.

The earliest portion of the Miller Store is a rectangular building with a gable roof whose ridge is oriented perpendicularly to the facade and the nearby road. A narrow gallery is inset beneath this larger roof. Its ceiling is supported by two tall narrow posts, one located at each end of the original structure. A chimney rises at the rear. The front and sides of the original building retain their historic sheathing -- approximately three inch wide flush boards laid horizontally. The facade is pierced by a double door and two windows; there is a single rear opening. Each of the front windows has its original shutters, which are composed of flush boards laid on the diagonal. The boards forming the double doors, also laid on the diagonal, are more narrow and are beaded. The rear plank door of the original block matches the shutters which cover the windows.

The additions to the building consist of long, narrow shed roof rooms fronted by gallery expansions. One room is attached to each side of the original building. Thus, the enlarged store's roof is not a continuous gable shape but instead changes angles just below the roof's approximate mid-point. One additional post (smaller than those on the main block) on each side supports the expanded gallery roof. The front walls of the additions are covered with horizontal beaded boards, while their sides and the entire rear elevation were covered in about 1984 with wood paneling produced in large sheets (hence the horizontal seams on the rear elevation). Each addition contains one side entrance covered by a plank door composed of horizontal beaded board.

The interior consists of three rooms--the original sales room and the two added storage rooms. The sales room is a large single space with wooden floors, walls and ceiling. Counters and shelves divided into bays are located along both walls. The shelves feature molded vertical separator boards between each bay. The sales room's counters have inward sloping fronts and are sheathed in narrow beaded boards. The tops are composed of smooth flush boards. Doors in the approximate center of each side wall open into the store rooms, which are extremely plain. Beaded board sheathing (identical to that on the facade of each) covers their front and side walls

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

J. M. Miller and Brother Store, Sabine Parish, LA
Section number 7 Page 2

and ceilings.

In 1984 the store was moved approximately 45 feet northwest of its original location due to work being done on the nearby highway. This move necessitated the dismantling and rebuilding of the above mentioned chimney as well as the replacement of the building's original piers. Also, as noted above, at about this time the sides of the wings and the entire rear elevation were re-sheathed. Otherwise, the store has experienced some deterioration but very little alteration. At some point a second set of doors was installed in front of the double doors mentioned above. One has now been lost but the other remains in place. The large stove which was once connected to the chimney is gone, parts of the sales room floor have been covered by plywood, two original display cases were recently removed, and the windows have been changed. A historic photograph of the original main block shows nine-over-six windows; those currently in place are four-over-four. All of the posts supporting the gallery roof are in poor condition and two have been patched at the bottom.

These changes are relatively minimal and, in fact, it is surprising how well preserved the Miller Store has remained through the years. There is no doubt that the business' founders and former customers would recognize the building were they to return to the Toro community today. As a rare example of a rural country store, the J. M. Miller and Brother Store is a most deserving candidate for listing in the National Register.

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Miller Store, Sabine Parish, LA

Section number 7 Page 3



Miller Store as it appeared before early addition of side wings.

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.)

- 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" 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

Period of Significance

1905-c. 1940

Significant Dates

N/A

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:

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

Name of repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property less than an acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 | 1 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 9 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 3 | 4 | 6 | 3 | 0 | 4 | 0
Zone Easting Northing
2 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

3 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
Zone Easting Northing
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 February 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 Marguerite Miller Castleberry

street & number 2201 23rd St. telephone 318-478-5036

city or town Lake Charles state LA zip code 70601

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.

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

J. M. Miller and Brother Store, Sabine Parish, LA
Section number 8 Page 1

The J. M. Miller and Brother Store is of local significance in the area of commerce because it is one of a limited number of surviving rural mercantile stores in Sabine Parish. General mercantile emporiums such as the Miller Store played a vital role in the economy of Louisiana's rural parishes from the post-bellum years through roughly the 1930s. The period of significance for this nomination ranges from 1905, the year the store opened in this building, through c.1940. The latter corresponds generally to the declining importance of rural stores, as noted previously. However, the Miller Store remained in operation until 1990.

In order to understand the role the Miller Store played in the economy of southern Sabine Parish, 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 rural plantation store was the norm. In many cases the store was owned by the planter himself, 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 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.

Because of Sabine Parish's pattern of economic development, the Miller Store operated as one of the independent entrepreneur, non-plantation variety of rural stores. Although there was no nearby company town, the area's economy was based primarily upon the timber industry, with the growing of crops such as cotton and sugar cane also contributing to the economic mix. These crops were grown by independent farmers who owned their own land, and a sawmill which began operation at the turn of the century was also owned by an individual rather than by a large company. Thus, it was left to the independently owned Miller Store to fill the needs of these people.

The Miller family, consisting of Artemisa Corley Miller and her two sons John Marion and Ivy Elonzo, arrived in the Toro community in southern Sabine Parish in 1896. By the end of that year they had purchased land for the store. However, their legal partnership agreement is dated

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

J. M. Miller and Brother Store, Sabine Parish, LA
Section number 8 Page 2

February 1898. Although Artemisa had remarried by this time, her name is included in this agreement. However, she apparently soon left the day-to-day operation of the business to move to the nearby town of Hornbeck with her new husband. With the opening of the above mentioned sawmill, new workers moved to the Toro area and the Miller Store prospered. In 1905 a new store was constructed near the site of the older building, and a few years later (as mentioned in Part 7), wings were added to both sides. One was used for inventory storage, the other for storage and the construction of coffins when a death occurred in the rural community.

During the early years of the store's existence, travel was difficult in Sabine Parish. Not only was it inconvenient for the brothers to obtain inventory (they had to journey fourteen miles by wagon to Hornbeck to pick up supplies), but it was also hard for some of their customers to reach the store. To solve the first problem, the brothers arranged with the sawmill owner to use a log tram which he had built into the area. Trains would haul logs out to Hornbeck and return with the Millers' supplies. In addition, they also canned an assortment of fruits and vegetables to be sold in the store and had their own labels printed to go on the cans. They also built a grist mill (now lost) to grind corn. The second problem was solved by carrying the store to their customers. One brother would ride around the countryside taking orders, then return to the store where the other would assist him in filling the orders and loading a wagon. The next morning one of the brothers would deliver the goods.

Although the sawmill closed in 1919, the store managed to remain in operation. However, it apparently could not support both brothers and their families, so John Marion moved to Texas, leaving the store in Ivy Elonzo's care. J. M. returned to Sabine Parish in 1933 when his brother died and purchased Ivy Elonzo's half of the partnership from his widow. At that time the business became known as the J. M. Miller Store. After J. M.'s death in 1942 his children assumed operation of the business; it was his daughter Marguerite who finally closed the business in 1990 when she retired at the age of 88.

J. M.'s death coincided with the general decline of rural mercantile stores which began after the 1930s. Factors contributing to this decline included the demise of the crop-lien system (a credit system in the cotton parishes), the loss of rural population in the cotton parishes due to the advent of the mechanical cotton picker, and the increasing number of automobiles in rural areas which enabled farmers to drive to town to purchase needed goods and services. Through the years the vast 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,

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

J. M. Miller and Brother Store, Sabine Parish, LA

Section number 8 Page 3

vacant, deteriorated and face an uncertain future. It is feared that losses will continue unless present trends change.

Because there is no survey of rural stores in Louisiana and Sabine Parish also has yet to be surveyed, it is impossible to know the exact number which once existed or which now survive. However, it is known that the country store was a ubiquitous element of the rural landscape, with one being found every few miles. An expert familiar with Sabine Parish estimates that only a handful survive there. Within this context, the Miller Store is particularly important because it is well preserved, with the interior being especially impressive in this regard.

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

J. M. Miller and Brother Store, Sabine Parish, LA
Section number 9 Page 1

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Deed of purchase for land upon which Miller Store stands, 11/17/1896; copy in National Register file.

Historic photograph of Miller Store; copy in National Register file.

Interview with Marguerite Miller Castleberry, 2/18/97.

“J. M. Miller & Bro. Store,” typescript; copy in National Register file.

Partnership agreement for Miller Store, 2/21/1898; copy in National Register file.

Site visit by National Register staff.

Telephone interview with Dr. Pete Gregory, Northwestern State University, expert on Sabine Parish, 2/19/97.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places

Continuation Sheet

Miller Store, Sabine Parish, LA

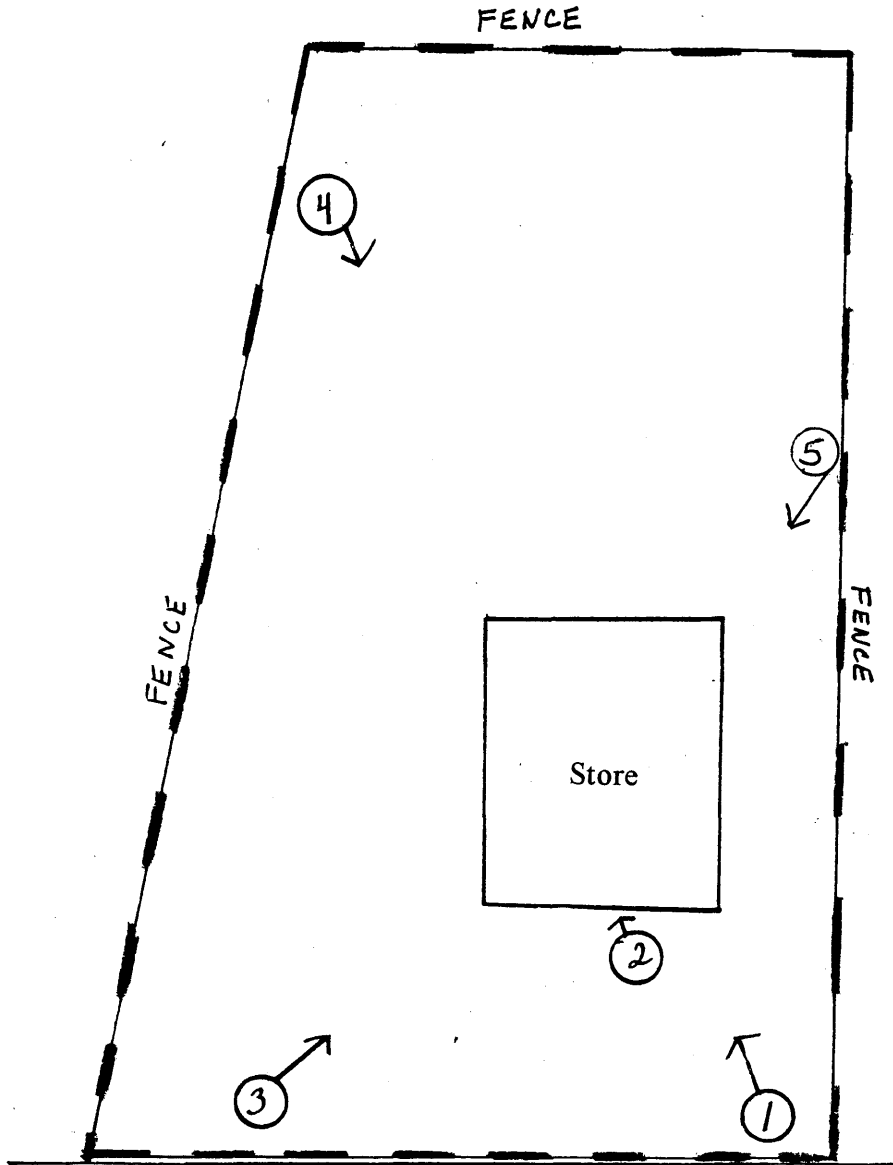
Section number 10 Page 1

Boundary Description: See enclosed sketch map.

Justification: Boundaries are drawn to encompass the store and its immediate setting and follow a fence line and road which define that setting. They do not follow the property lines because to do so would include extraneous rural acreage.

J. M. MILLER AND BROTHER STORE

Florien Vicinity, Sabine Parish, LA



LA HIGHWAY 473

SCALE: 1" = 20'

BOUNDARY: 


NORTH