

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

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SEP - 6 1994

INTERAGENCY RESOURCES DIVISION

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. ~~NATIONAL PARK SERVICE~~ 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 Fenton, Silas J. House

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 409 Second Street N/A not for publication

city or town Fenton N/A vicinity

state Louisiana code LA county Jefferson Davis code 053 zip code 70640

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.)

Gerri Hobdy September 2, 1994
Signature of certifying official/Title Gerri 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 certifying 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 Entered in the National Register 10.7.94 Date of Action

Fenton, Silas J. House
Name of Property

Jefferson Davis 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
	1	structures
		objects
1	1	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)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

WORK IN PROGRESS

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

No style

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete

walls vinyl

roof tin

other

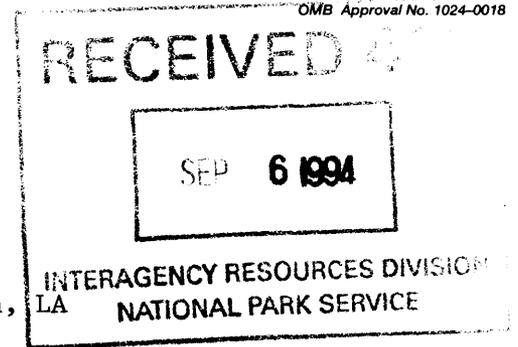
Narrative Description

(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

Fenton, Silas J. House, Fenton, Jefferson Davis Parish,
Section number 7 Page 1



The Silas J. Fenton House (1892) is a two-story frame farm house in the northwestern Jefferson Davis Parish community of Fenton. The vernacular dwelling stands on a shaded parcel and faces Fenton's Second Street and nearby U.S. Hwy 165. Because it has no stylistic associations, the house is being categorized as having "no style" for the purposes of this nomination. Despite some alteration, the home retains its National Register eligibility.

The house consists of a rectangular shaped main block attached to a rear wing which is almost as large as the front portion of the residence. The main block's first floor contains a center hall with one large room on each side. The second floor is similar except that one of the large spaces flanking the hall is divided into two rooms. The wing's bottom floor consists of a large dining room, two smaller spaces, and a porch on the south side. The upper floor of the wing contains a side hall and bedrooms.

The straightforward building's distinguishing exterior features are a double gallery with a shed roof, a two-story bay on one side, and a front door flanked by sidelights. Narrow gauge heart pine boards (installed horizontally in some rooms and vertically in others) form the interior walls. Other interior features include the home's four panel doors and the stair's understated newel post. Its surface is reeded, its corners are chamfered, and the post is surmounted by a decorative element in the shape of a pyramid.

At some time in the home's history, the wing's upper floor bedroom space was reconfigured from three rooms into two and a wall was removed between two of the wing's small rooms on the lower level. More recently, a previous owner installed aluminum windows and vinyl siding on the Fenton Home. At that time, steps leading to a door on the wing's west side were removed, and a door connecting the main block's north lower floor room to the gallery was covered. Although the house is currently being rehabilitated, most of these alterations will remain in place. Changes resulting from the current work are as follows:

- 1) the house has been raised 27 inches on new, cone-shaped concrete piers.
- 2) new steps and a new balustrade featuring vertical balusters have been installed on the front gallery. Although this new balustrade matches the damaged one it replaced, a historic photograph (copy attached) clearly shows that, as built, the lower gallery had no balustrade. The upper gallery's original railing consisted of horizontal members resembling two-by-fours. New brick steps have also been installed on the side porch.

CONTINUED

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Fenton, Silas J. House, Fenton, Jefferson Davis Parish, LA

Section number 7 Page 2

- 3) stud walls subdividing the above mentioned northern room of the main block have been erected, and
- 4) a service appendage once attached to the wing's north side, and an exterior stair leading from the appendage to the wing's second floor hall, have been removed. The single door connecting the dining room to the appendage has been replaced by a glazed double door, and parts of the damaged dining room floor and sill beneath it have been replaced.

Although the addition of vinyl siding to the home is regrettable, the gauge of the material closely resembles that of the home's original clapboard sheathing. And, while the alteration of the gallery's balustrade does slightly change the facade's appearance, neither this nor the other changes outlined above are so serious that they would prevent Silas Fenton and his family from recognizing his residence. As the home of the Fenton community's founder, the Silas J. Fenton House is a viable candidate for National Register listing.

Non-Contributing Element

A large, circular brick cistern stands only a few feet from the north side of the dwelling. Although it appears to be contemporary with the house, its exterior has been covered by a thin coat of concrete. Because of this alteration, the cistern is being counted as a non-contributing element.

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.)

N/A

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.

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 # _____

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Exploration/Settlement

Period of Significance

1892-1913

Significant Dates

1892-1913

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Silas J. Fenton

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

unknown

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository:

Fenton, Silas J. House
Name of Property

Jefferson Davis 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	5	0	7	7	6	0	3	3	5	8	8	6	0
Zone			Easting					Northing						

3

Zone			Easting					Northing						

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 July 1994

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

city or town Baton Rouge state Louisiana 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 Mr. and Mrs. Douglas Alan Elter

street & number P. O. Box 120 telephone (318) 494-1799

city or town Fenton state Louisiana zip code 70640

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**

Fenton, Silas J. House, Fenton, Jefferson Davis Parish, LA

Section number 8 Page 1

The Silas J. Fenton House is locally significant under Criterion B, property associated with the life of a significant person, because it is the home and building most closely associated with the founder of the Jefferson Davis Parish community of Fenton. The period of significance for this nomination ranges from 1892, the date of the home's construction, until 1913, the date of Fenton's death.

A native of New York state, Silas J. Fenton moved to Southwestern Louisiana in 1888 because of poor health. He was accompanied by his wife, children, and mother. By 1892 he had purchased a tract of land in what is now northwest Jefferson Davis Parish and had erected a two-story frame house on the site. Almost immediately he allowed the north lower floor room of the home to serve as a post office for the surrounding area. At the same time that his father opened the post office, son Charles opened a small grocery store in the room. In 1893 the Kansas City, Watkins, and Gulf Railroad (later purchased by the Missouri Pacific) came through the area and the elder Fenton donated 240 acres for the purpose of establishing a town. Soon thereafter the railroad had the townsite surveyed and built a depot. Fenton's son William served as the town's first station agent. Also, in 1893 Fenton donated land for the community's first school and built a new two story post office and store across the street from his house. It was destroyed by fire in 1895, but Fenton quickly rebuilt on a nearby site. Assisted by his daughter Harriet, Fenton served as postmaster for a total of thirteen years. At the same time, he and his sons expanded the store into a general merchandise business, known as S. J. Fenton & Sons, Ltd. The family owned this business until 1905. Also involved in the growing of rice (a staple of the area), Fenton established the community's first irrigation well slightly south of town in 1899.

Of the several buildings once associated with Silas J. Fenton and his family, only three survive. The first is the Fenton depot. However, it was built by the railroad rather than by Silas Fenton and was the workplace of son William rather than of the elder Fenton himself. In addition, it no longer stands on its original site. The other two survivors are dwellings which stand side-by-side on their original sites facing what is now Second Street in Fenton. The house on the north was built by the family for son William and was never lived in by the town founder. The house on the south was built by Silas J. Fenton as his personal home, and he lived there until his death in 1913. Thus, it is the only building retaining the integrity and close association necessary to justify National Register listing.

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Fenton, Silas J. House, Fenton, Jefferson Davis Parish, LA

Section number 9 Page 1

BIBLIOGRAPHY

"Founder of the Town Has Sold Out His Business Interests," unidentified newspaper, December 13, 1905. Copy in National Register file.

Monger, Ruth. "History of the Fenton Community", typescript, November 1, 1937. Copy in National Register file.

Obituaries of S. J. Fenton from unidentified newspapers. Copies in National Register file.

Shuman, Malcolm K., Wiedenfeld, Melissa and Jones, Dennis C. "Cultural Resources Survey of the Expansion Corridor of U.S. Highway 165, I-10 to Kinder, Louisiana (Jefferson Davis and Allen Parishes)." Baton Rouge: Gulf Engineers & Consultants, Inc., August 10, 1992. Copy of pertinent pages in National Register file.

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Fenton, Silas J. House, Jefferson Davis Parish, LA

Section number 10 Page 1

Boundary Description

Lots 11 and 12, Block 3, Village of Fenton, Parish of Jefferson Davis, State of Louisiana, said lots together measuring a total of 180 feet by 112 feet.

Boundary Justification

Boundaries follow the property lines of the parcel of land historically associated with the nominated resource.