

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received APR 24 1987

date entered MAY 21 1987

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic

and/or common Abbeville Commercial Historic District

2. Location

street & number bounded roughly by Lafayette, State, Concord  
and Jefferson Streets N/A not for publication

city, town Abbeville N/A vicinity of

state LA code 22 parish Vermilion code 113

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

street & number

city, town \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. N/A

street & number

city, town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title LA Historic Structures Survey has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1984  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records LA State Historic Preservation Office

city, town Baton Rouge state LA

# 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date <u>          N/A          </u>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

**Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance**

The Abbeville Commercial Historic District boundaries encompass eighteen masonry commercial buildings located along two principal streets in the downtown. Contributing elements date from the 1890's through the 1920's. Despite a 28% intrusion rate and some alteration of contributing elements, the district easily retains its National Register eligibility.

The original settlement of Abbeville was founded in the 1840's by Father Antoine Desire Megret. The town was incorporated in 1850 and was designated Vermilion Parish seat in 1854. During its early years, Abbeville developed as a local trading center along the Vermilion River. In the later nineteenth century the local economy shifted to rice production, and Abbeville became a processing center. The town's development of course, was spurred by the coming of the railroad in the 1890's. The 1907 Sanborn Insurance Map gives a good picture of Abbeville's economy. It shows three rice mills, three rice warehouses, a brick yard, and a cotton oil mill.

Much of the old wooden downtown burned in 1903. An 1890's building (#14) survived the fire, and it is not known whether #3, dated 1903, was built just before or after. Thanks to the local prosperity, there was money to rebuild almost immediately. To a large extent the present district represents this period of rebuilding.

The district is very cohesive with most of the buildings linked by party walls. The Concord Street elevation has a two story scale which almost gives it an urban character. The State Street side has an almost continuous single story scale which gives it more the character of a small town. The district is anchored by the Bank of Abbeville (#2), a Romanesque Revival building with an impressive arched corner entrance flanked by towers. Aside from the bank, most of the district's historic commercial buildings are in the Italianate style, with features such as brick cornices, paneled parapets, round and segmentally arched openings, commemorative tablets, and decorative cast-iron pilasters.

Where possible the district's buildings were dated using Sanborn Insurance Maps. Also, three of the buildings have their dates indicated, and the Bank of Abbeville's history has been compiled. The following is a breakdown by period:

Pre - 1900	1	5%		13 contributing elements
1901-1910	9	50%		
1911-1937	3	17%		
Intrusions	5	28%		
Total	18	100%		5 non-contributing elements

**INVENTORY**

1. Frank's Theatre, Jefferson Street (c.1925). Two story stuccoed brick building with mounted bas relief panels and a parapet designed to suggest a Mission style roof. (The building's present appearance is probably the result of a c.1925 alteration of an earlier building.) Small single story side wing that appears to be over fifty years old.

CONTINUED

# 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

**Specific dates** 1890's - 1920's **Builder/Architect** N/A

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)** Criterion C

The Abbeville Commercial Historic District is locally significant in the area of architecture because it is by far the finest grouping of historic commercial buildings in Vermilion Parish.

Firstly, the district contains an unusually large number of Italianate commercial buildings. Generally speaking, Italianate is the earliest period of architecture one finds in older central business districts across the state. In most towns there are typically one or two isolated examples set amongst a host of plain or later buildings. This generalization certainly holds true for Vermilion Parish. For example, in the town of Erath, there is only one Italianate commercial building (much altered). The Abbeville district is Vermilion Parish's only concentration of commercial Italianate buildings. In fact, it contains nine examples, which accounts for 70% of the contributing elements.

Secondly, other central business districts in Vermilion Parish (Kaplan, Gueydan, Erath, etc.) are characterized almost exclusively by false front commercial buildings with little or no stylistic detailing. In contrast, most of the buildings in the Abbeville district are well detailed. All but one feature a recognized architectural style.

Finally, the district has as its "centerpiece" the Bank of Abbeville, which is easily the most impressive commercial structure in all of Vermilion Parish. It is certainly the only commercial building with towers and is thought to be the parish's only non-ecclesiastical example of the Romanesque Revival style. Indeed, the bank is so impressive that in many ways it resembles a courthouse rather than a mere commercial building.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

Sanborn Insurance Company Maps. 1895, 1899, 1907.  
Louisiana Historic Structures Survey, Vermilion Parish.  
Vermilion Historical Society. History of Vermilion Parish, Louisiana. Dallas, Texas:  
Taylor Publishing Company, 1983.

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property @ 2 acres

Quadrangle name Abbeville West, LA

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

### UTM References

A 1 5 | 5 8 3 3 6 0 | 3 3 1 6 0 1 0 1 0  
Zone Easting Northing

B | | | | | | | | | |  
Zone Easting Northing

C | | | | | | | | | |

D | | | | | | | | | |

E | | | | | | | | | |

F | | | | | | | | | |

G | | | | | | | | | |

H | | | | | | | | | |

### Verbal boundary description and justification

See continuation sheet and to-scale district map.

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code county code

state code county code

# 11. Form Prepared By

ASSISTED BY CITY OF ABBEVILLE

name/title National Register Staff  
Division of Historic Preservation

organization State of Louisiana

date March 1987

street & number P. O. Box 44247

telephone (504) 922-0358

city or town Baton Rouge

state LA 70804

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

\_\_\_ national \_\_\_ state X local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

*Robert B. DeBlieux*  
Robert B. DeBlieux

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date April 21, 1987

### For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Entered in the  
National Register

date 5-21-87

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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Abbeville Commercial Historic District  
Vermilion Parish, LA

Continuation sheet

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4. Owner of Property

Mr. Joseph E. Schexnaider  
Mr. Donald Landry  
100 S. State St.  
Abbeville, LA 70510  
(318) 893-8397

Joe Russo Estate  
Francis Russo  
109 N. Guegnon St.  
Abbeville, LA 70510  
(318) 893-0539

Ann E. Boynton et al.  
337 North State St.  
Abbeville, LA 70510  
(318) 893-0323

Dexter Duhon  
Sam Riche  
114 S. State St.  
Abbeville, LA 70510  
(318) 893-2702

Richard Putnam  
Darrell Hartman  
120 S. State St.  
Abbeville, LA 70510  
(318) 893-0076

Lovelace Leblanc  
122 S. State St.  
Abbeville, LA 70510  
(318) 893-5840

Charles Thompson  
John Vidos  
112 S. Louisiana Ave.  
Abbeville, LA 70510  
(318) 893-3107

Milton Mouton  
107 Concord  
Abbeville, LA 70510  
(318) 893-5355

Bernard F. Duhon  
111 Concord St.  
Abbeville, LA 70510  
(318) 893-5066

First Street Limited  
Albert Boudreau, Jr.  
117 Concord St.  
Abbeville, LA 70510  
(318) 893-3476

Bank of Abbeville  
Mickey Broussard  
123 Concord  
Abbeville, LA 70510  
(318) 893-0257

Frank Degraauw  
Robert Degraauw  
103 S. Jefferson  
Abbeville, LA 70510  
(318) 893-4541

Abbey Players  
Ike Funderburk, Board of Directors  
101 S. St. Charles  
Abbeville, LA 70510  
(318) 893-8140

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## 7. Description (cont'd)

2. Bank of Abbeville (1904). Two story brick Romanesque Revival building with an arched corner entrance flanked by towers. Each tower terminates in a conical metal top with a finial. The building also features rock-faced cast cement "stonework" and a blind arcade. Two relatively modern shopfronts have been added. These account for about half of the length of the ground story elevation.
3. 119 Concord St. (1903). Two story brick Italianate commercial building with a bracketed cornice, decorative keystones, and an ornamental date tablet. The shopfront has been modernized.
4. 115-117 Concord St. (c.1905, first appears on 1907 Sanborn maps). Two story brick Italianate commercial building with multiple brick cornices, brick panels, and segmentally arched windows. The shopfront has been modernized.
5. 111-113 Concord St. (c.1925). Two story Classical and Baroque style commercial building with four Tuscan pilasters supporting a full entablature. The building is surmounted by a shaped gable parapet. The shopfront has been completely modernized, which involved the removal of the bottom portion of the two central pilasters.
6. 107 Concord St. Intrusion. Older single story brick commercial building, stuccoed, completely modernized c.1960.
7. 100 South State St. (1904). Single story Italianate commercial building with corner entrance, brick pilasters, panels, and a date-name tablet.
8. 102 South State St. (c.1910). Small single story Italianate commercial building with brick cornice and decorative paneled parapet.
9. 104-106 South State St. (1914). Single story brick commercial building with step gabled front. The shopfront has been completely modernized.
10. 108 South State St. Intrusion. Older single story commercial building stuccoed and completely modernized c.1960.
11. 110 South State St. Intrusion. Small two story Italianate commercial building stuccoed and completely modernized c.1960.
12. 112 South State St. Intrusion. Older single story brick commercial building stuccoed and completely modernized c.1960.
13. 114-116 South State St. Intrusion. Older single story brick commercial building stuccoed and completely modernized c.1960.
14. 118 South State St. (built between 1895 and 1899). Single story brick Italianate commercial building with multiple brick cornices and a decorative parapet culminating in a central pedimented tablet. The shopfront has been modernized. (This is the

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7. Description (cont'd)

only building in the district known to have survived the 1903 fire.)

15. 120 South State St. (c.1905; first appears on 1907 Sanborn map). Single story brick Italianate commercial building with decorative brick panels and original cast-iron shopfront details. Windows have been covered with shutters and the central doorway has been replaced.
16. 122 South State Street (c.1905; first appears on 1907 Sanborn map). Single story brick Italianate commercial building with decorative brick panels. Much of the original shopfront remains, including the cast-iron columns. However, certain areas of glass have been covered or removed.
17. 124 South State St. (c.1905; first appears on 1907 Sanborn map). Single story brick Italianate commercial building with decorative brick panels, round arch openings, and a corner entrance. The shopfront is largely original.
18. 200-202 South State St. (c.1910). Single story brick Italianate commercial building with three-tier decorative parapet, multiple brick cornices, numerous brick panels, segmentally arched openings, and a corner entrance. The shopfront is largely original.

Intrusions

The district has five intrusions, which accounts for 28% of the overall building stock. Although this is a somewhat high percentage, it is by no means out of line for a Louisiana National Register district. (Intrusion rates range as high as 36%.) In addition, all of the intrusions are altered older buildings and hence conform to the party wall massing of the district. Moreover, the intrusions are all blank and characterless and hence do not compete for visual supremacy with the district's contributing elements.

Contributing Elements:

The Abbeville Commercial Historic District is significant as a superior example of a late nineteenth-early twentieth century townscape (1890's-1920's). There are certain elements (see Item 8) which give it this superior status, but the district should also be viewed as a tout ensemble of its period. Other 50+ year old elements which do not directly contribute to the district's superiority are important in their own right because they establish Abbeville's identity and credentials as a period townscape. Hence any 50+ year old structure which has not been altered beyond recognition is considered a contributing element for purposes of this nomination.

Assessment of Integrity:

Seven, or just over half, of the district's contributing elements have sustained major shopfront alterations. It should be noted in this regard that most historic

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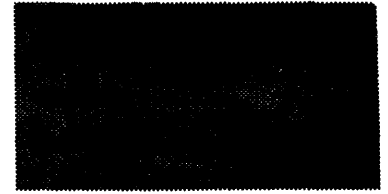
7. Description (cont'd)

commercial buildings in the state have suffered a similar fate. This is certainly the case for the parish context in which Abbeville is being evaluated. Indeed, the fact that close to half of the district's historic buildings have largely their original shopfronts is unusual.



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Historic District  
Vermilion Parish, LA

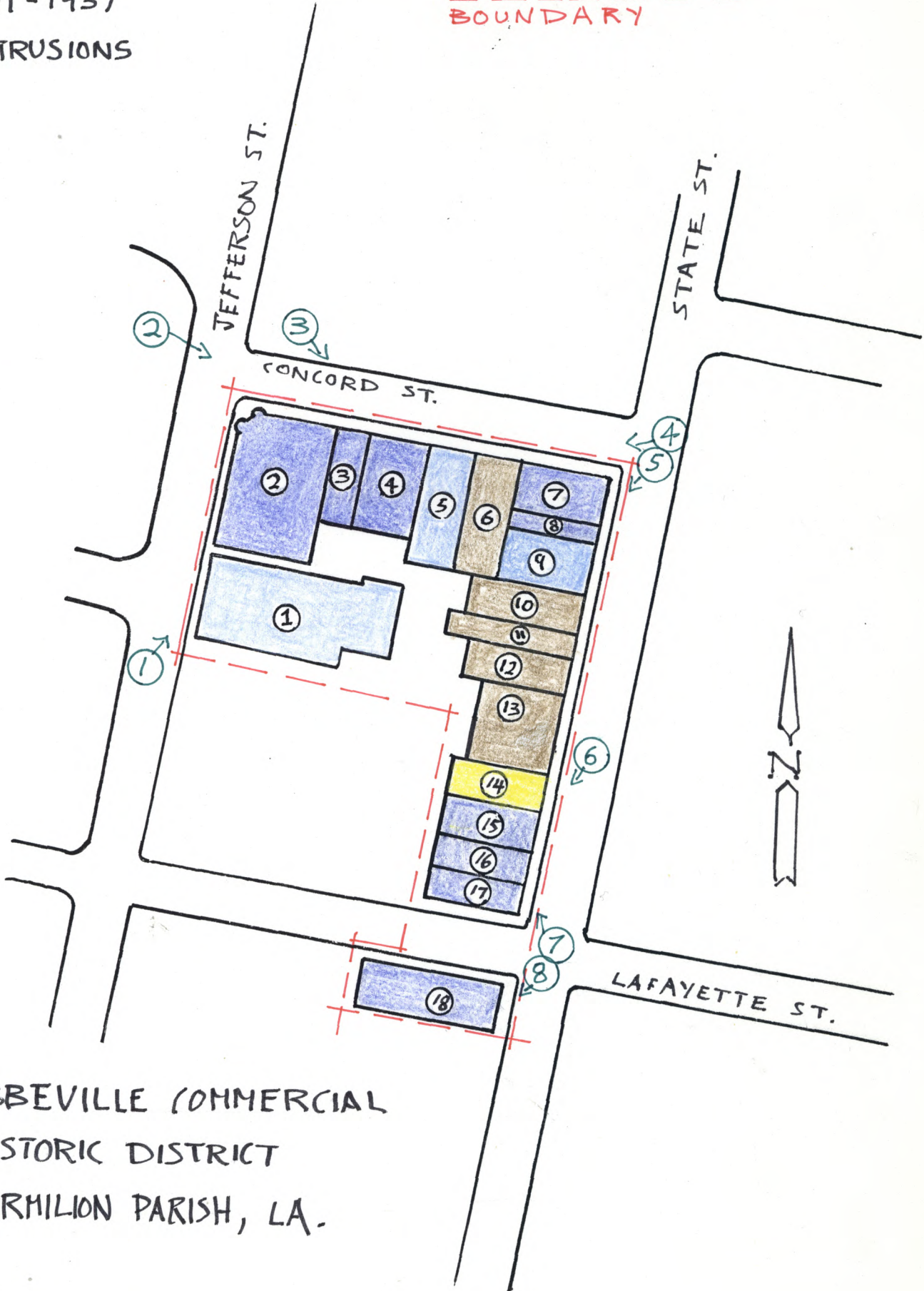
Boundary Description/Justification:

Please refer to enclosed to-scale map. Boundaries were drawn to encompass the concentration of architecturally significant historic commercial buildings in downtown Abbeville. The district is surrounded by concentrations of modern construction and/or very badly altered older commercial buildings. There are a handful of other fairly intact historic commercial buildings, a couple of which are architecturally significant, but they are in areas dominated by intrusions. "Reaching" for these buildings would have given the district a totally unacceptable intrusion rate. For example, "reaching" for one of the architecturally significant buildings would have meant taking in four additional intrusions.

- PRE-1900
- 1901-1910
- 1911-1937
- INTRUSIONS

SCALE 1" = 100'

BOUNDARY



ABBEVILLE COMMERCIAL  
 HISTORIC DISTRICT  
 VERMILION PARISH, LA.