

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

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

For NPS use only

received OCT 7 1986
date entered NOV 6 1986

1. Name

historic Desobry Building

and/or common same

2. Location

street & number Corner of Court and Marshall Streets

~~N/A~~ not for publication

city, town Plaquemine **N/A vicinity of**

state LA **code** 22 **parish** x **county** x **liverpool** **code** 047

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name John W. Wilbert, Jr. (O) (504) 388-9545
(H) (504) 659-2510

street & number Rt. 4, Box 212

city, town Plaquemine X vicinity of _____ state LA 70764

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Iberville Parish Courthouse

street & number Railroad Avenue (no specific address) P. O. Box 423

city, town Plaquemine **state** LA 70764

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Louisiana Historic Sites Survey **has this property been determined eligible?** yes no

1983

federal state county local

depository for survey records LA State Historic Preservation Office

city, town Baton Rouge

state | A

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<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 _____ N/A
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Desobry Building (c.1850) is a single story brick Greek Revival commercial building located near downtown Plaquemine. Despite some alterations, the building retains its National Register eligibility.

The Desobry Building consists of a large commercial space in front and living quarters to the rear. Apparently the commercial space was once a single large room, but over the years it has been subdivided into three rooms. The space is largely characterless with plain board walls and simple openings. The only Greek Revival interior features are the three shoulder molded front doorways. The subdividing partitions are of vertical planks and have a temporary look despite the fact that some of them are fairly old.

Behind the commercial area is the living space, which consists of a central hall and two rooms. Each of the rooms has a fireplace with a shoulder molded mantel. The window frames and doorways are also shoulder molded. The doors consist of four flat panels with bolection moldings.

The exterior features segmentally arched openings and a symmetrical front which culminates in a pediment shaped gable parapet. Whether or not the pediment shape was actually conceived of as a reference to a pediment is not known.

In about 1875 the living area received a second story frame addition which gave the building a camelback look. The addition features two aedicule style mantels and elaborately planed baseboards. Of course, adding a second story necessitated putting a staircase in the central hall.

Assessment of Integrity

Some of the shutters and doors in the commercial portion are evidently salvaged. In addition, the present exterior cornice dates from the twentieth century. But despite these and other aforementioned changes, the building is still easily recognizable as a mid-nineteenth century commercial building. Moreover, it still retains all of its Greek Revival features. Hence in our opinion the building retains its historic integrity.

NB: There are no interior view photos for the commercial space because there is no electricity in this portion. It was much too dark for photography.

8. Significance

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

Specific dates c.1850

Builder/Architect Builder: Louis Desobry

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph) Criterion A

The Desobry Building is locally significant in the area of commerce because it is the only resource left to represent the mid-nineteenth century commercial heritage of the interior port of Plaquemine. Two 1890's Italianate commercial buildings are the closest competitors in terms of age.

Incorporated in 1838, the town of Plaquemine had developed early as an interior port and a regional commercial center due to its location on the Mississippi River at the mouth of Bayou Plaquemine. Bayou Plaquemine in turn linked up with other bayous, thereby enabling boats to penetrate well into the interior. As early as 1826 the state legislature granted permission for the Opelousas Steamboat Company "to establish, keep and maintain a steamboat and ferry from Bayou Plaquemine in the Parish of Iberville through the usual route of the Grand River, Atchafalaya and the River Opelousas or Courtaleau to the junction of the Bayous Crocodile and Boeuf." When the water was high, boats could navigate directly from the Mississippi into Bayou Plaquemine, but during low water they had to be portaged. Because Bayou Plaquemine was part of a larger network of bayous, a close economic relationship was formed between the parishes of Iberville, St. Martin, and St. Landry. For example, sawmills in the Plaquemine area tended to be the receiving point for much of the timber floated down the various bayous from the Atchafalaya Basin. By the mid-nineteenth century Plaquemine was a bustling commercial hub.

In "A Tourist's Description of Louisiana in 1860" the writer-tourist J. W. Dorr described Plaquemine as:

"a well built, thriving and bustling town, doing great business with a populous back country. There are a number of fine stores here and the principal--and a very heavy business, too--is done by Messrs. J. McWilliams & Co., Roth, DeBlieux & Co., Ross & Gallagher, Hasse & Bro., Kahn & Bros., L. Kahn, Stockley & Delavallade, and Messrs. Heelein & Jennings, who are forwarding and commission merchants. There are two hotels, the 'Iberville Hotel', kept by Philip Heelein, near the steamboat landing, a well managed, cleanly and comfortable institution, and the 'Tuttle House', a very handsome building, and elegant and luxurious house of entertainment. There are one or more establishments, also, where 'entertainment for travelers and storage for trunks' may be had."

In 1866, in an effort to alleviate severe flooding problems, a dam called the Plaquemine Dike was built separating Bayou Plaquemine from the Mississippi. The bayou was re-opened in early 1909 when the first boat entered the newly constructed Bayou Plaquemine Lock.

In addition to typical reasons such as deterioration and neglect, Plaquemine lost much of its early building stock due to numerous "cave-ins." Because the

CONTINUED

9. Major Bibliographical References

Riffel, Judy, ed. Iberville Parish History, Le Comite des Archives de la Louisiana, Baton Rouge, 1985.
Conveyance Records, Iberville Parish.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property @1/3 acre

Quadrangle name Plaquemine, LA

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A	1 5	6 6 8	9 8 0	3 3 5 1 4 2 0
	Zone	Easting		Northing
C				
E				
G				

B				
	Zone	Easting		Northing
D				
F				
H				

Verbal boundary description and justification

Please see attached property plat map. The boundaries follow the property lines of the lot on which the building stands.

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

state	N/A	code	county	code
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state		code	county	code
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title	National Register Staff Division of Historic Preservation	ASSISTED BY OWNER
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organization	State of Louisiana	date	August 1986
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street & number	P. O. Box 44247	telephone	(504) 922-0358
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city or town	Baton Rouge	state	LA 70804
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12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state 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

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date October 1, 1986

For NPS use only

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

Entered in the

National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

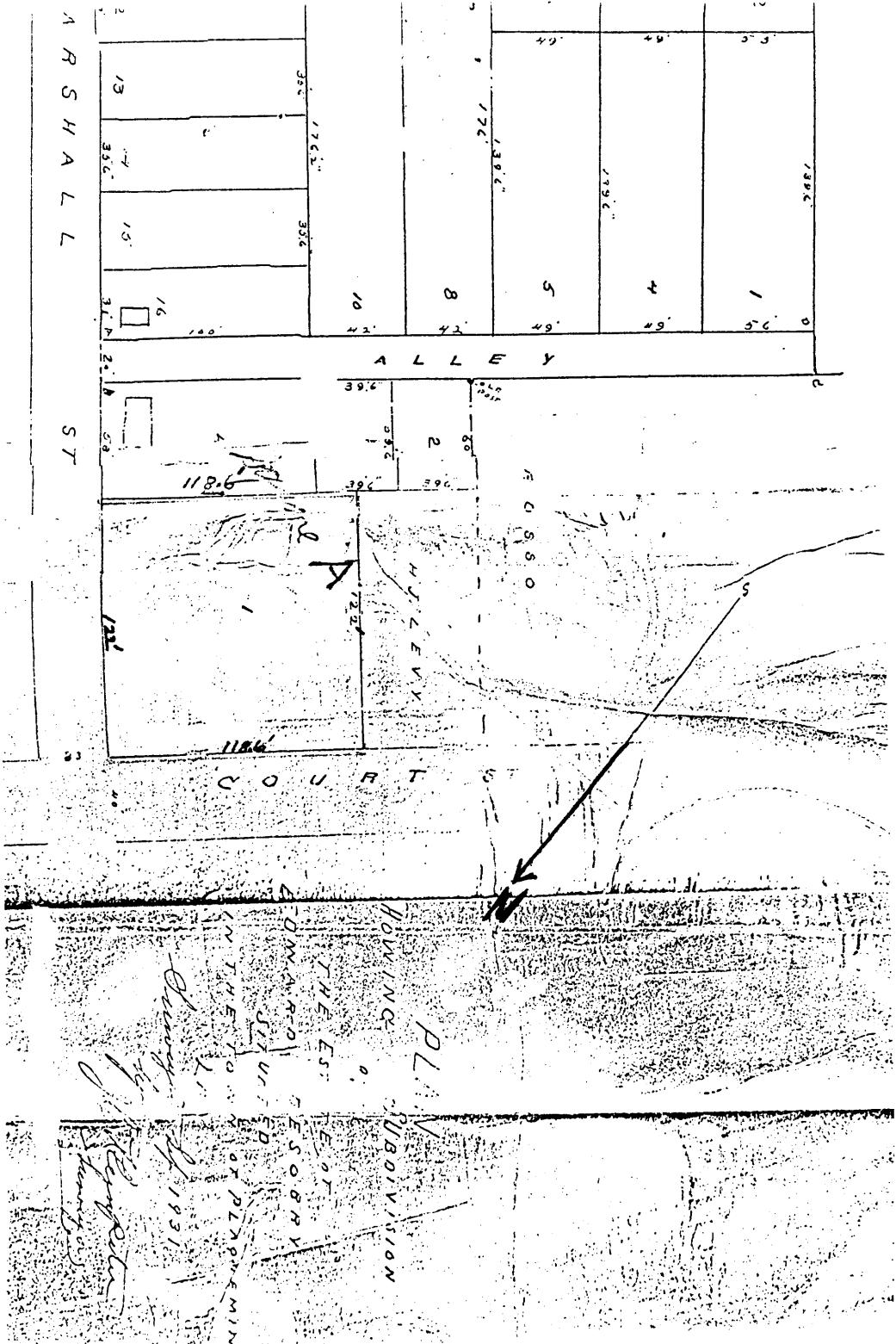
For NPS use only
received _____
date entered _____

Continuation sheet Desobry Building Item number 8 Page 1

Iberville Parish, LA

8. Significance (cont'd)

town is situated on a sharp curve of the Mississippi, the land has tended to erode away, sometimes precipitously, plunging streets, businesses, and residences into the river. A major cave-in took place in 1888, but there were many others. The result is that virtually all of the original town of Plaquemine is gone, and the Desobry Building remains its only mid-nineteenth commercial relic.



DESOBRY BUILDING

Plaqueine

Iberville Parish

Louisiana

BOUNDRy MAP

DESOBRY BLDG.
IBERVILLE PARISH, LA.

(NOT TO SCALE)
PHOTO DIRECTION MAP ONLY
(SEE ATTACHED PLAT FOR
BOUNDARIES)

