

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form (Rev. 8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

1903 CLINTON HIGH SCHOOL, EAST FELICIANA PARISH, LA

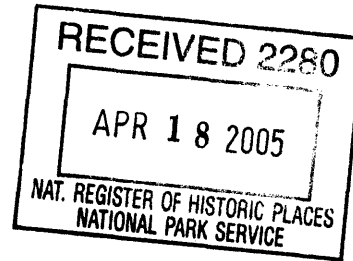
United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: 1903 Clinton High School

Other Name/Site Number:



505

2. LOCATION

Street & Number 11050 Bank Street

Not for publication: NA

City/Town Clinton

Vicinity: NA

State: Louisiana Code: LA County: East Feliciana Code: 037 Zip Code: 70722

3. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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.

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

Nationally: Statewide: Locally: X

Jonathan Fricker Deputy SHPO, Dept of Culture, Recreation and Tourism

April 15, 2005 Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of Commenting or Other Official/Title

Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

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4. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is:

- Entered in the National Register
Determined eligible for the National Register
Determined not eligible for the National Register
Removed from the National Register
Other (explain):

Signature of Keeper: [Handwritten Signature]

Date of Action: 6/2/05

5. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property
Private:
Public-Local: X
Public-State:
Public-Federal:

Category of Property
Building(s): X
District:
Site:
Structure:
Object:

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing
1

Non contributing
0 buildings
0 sites
0 structures
0 objects
0 Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 0

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing: NA

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### 6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic: Education                      Sub: School  
Current: Vacant                              Sub: Not In Use

### 7. DESCRIPTION

Architectural Classification: Classical Revival

Materials:

Foundation: Concrete  
Walls: Weatherboard  
Roof: Metal  
Other:

#### **Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.**

A large, two-story, frame building, the 1903 Clinton High School stands near the center of a large block in what is now a mixed-use section of Clinton, the East Feliciana Parish seat. Stylistically it is a restrained version of the Classical Revival taste. Although it has experienced some alteration over the years, the building clearly retains enough integrity to satisfy National Register eligibility guidelines.

A historic photo of the school appearing in a booklet commemorating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the graduating class of 1937 shows the building's original Classical features. It portrays a rectangular, clapboarded structure with an overhanging hipped roof. (A central rear projection housing the staircase is not visible in this image.) At the center of the roof an octagonal cupola with arched louvered openings and a finial stands atop a square base with a balustrade. A square, single-story portico featuring pairs of columns at its two front corners is centered on the facade. A balustrade with prominent newel posts surmounts the portico, forming a balcony. Behind the balcony, a second floor, double door entrance with transom and sidelights is encased within an arched surround. (The first floor entrance is not visible in the drawing.) Two-story pilasters which support an entablature with a molded architrave, smooth frieze and denticulated cornice flank the surround. The frieze and cornice extend to encircle the building. The entablature supports a pediment with a raking cornice and modillions. A lunette window pierces this pediment.

The photo shows the school's walls to be pierced on all sides by two-over-two windows. The upper windows on the building's southern end are shorter than those on the rest of that level. These openings feature molded panels below their lower sashes. Although one cannot say with certainty, these areas may be original features of the building installed to accommodate the floor level of the stage that is known to have existed in the second floor auditorium (see below). All of the second floor windows are surmounted by transoms, which the first floor windows lack. The sills and lintels of the upper windows, as well as the sills of those on the first floor, extend to each side of the openings and connect to form belt courses encircling the structure. The school's original floorplan (as described by former students) consisted of a first floor central hall with two large classrooms on each side. As previously mentioned, an auditorium occupied the building's second story.

Today the cupola and its base are gone. Charred areas in the attic hint that it may have been lost to a fire. Also missing are the school's front portico (replaced by a metal canopy), its original lower-level front doors and the original

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rear door. Twelve-over-twelve windows have replaced the two-over-two windows on the first floor. Some of the panes within the second floor windows have been painted, and the sidelights flanking the second floor façade doors are covered. One second floor window (on a side elevation) has been converted into a door which opens to a large metal fire escape. On the interior, both floors have been extensively subdivided into hallways and offices, and a partial third floor (made possible by the building's extremely high ceilings) has been added. Dark wooden paneling, acoustic tile ceilings, and tiled floors characterize the warren of small spaces. However, original beaded board wainscoting and ceilings, as well as some six panel doors and surrounds with decorative plinths, are visible. This suggests that much original material still exists behind the paneling and ceiling tiles. And, the condition of the building is surprisingly sound.

There is no doubt that the loss of the building's cupola and portico is regrettable. Nevertheless, former students (some of whom were interviewed for this nomination) can still easily recognize the public high school which opened in Clinton in 1903. Thus, the structure passes the litmus test for historical nominations. Because its opening ranked as a milestone in the educational development of the East Feliciana Parish town (see Part 8), the 1903 Clinton High School is a strong candidate for National Register listing.

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8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Applicable National Register Criteria: A X B\_\_ C\_\_ D\_\_

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): NA A\_\_ B\_\_ C\_\_ D\_\_ E\_\_ F\_\_ G\_\_

Areas of Significance: Education

Period(s) of Significance: 1903

Significant Dates: 1903

Significant Person(s): NA

Cultural Affiliation: NA

Architect/Builder: W. P. Miller, Baton Rouge, architect and builder

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### State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.

The 1903 Clinton High School is locally significant in the area of education because its opening was a milestone in the history of public education in the East Feliciana Parish town of Clinton. The building remained the focus of public education in the community until a larger brick building replaced it in 1938.

Although Clinton traces its establishment to 1824, settlement in the region occurred as early as the 1790s when the area which would become East and West Feliciana parishes was ruled by Spain. During that decade, Lewis Yarbrough and a group of Anglo-Americans from Virginia, the Carolinas and Georgia cleared land and built homes along Pretty Creek, a tributary of the Comite River.

Clinton's founding can be traced to the division of Feliciana Parish into East and West Feliciana by act of the Louisiana legislature in 1824. Commissioners appointed to select a location for East Feliciana's parish seat chose a site on high land owned by Lewis Yarbrough slightly east of Pretty Creek. Citizens Susan Bostwick and James Holmes purchased land from Yarbrough, then commissioned a surveyor to lay out the town of Clinton. The entrepreneurs also donated a square to be the site of the courthouse and jail.

Early milestones in the community's history included the destruction of the first courthouse by fire in 1839; the construction of the still used, majestic Greek Revival courthouse with a domed cupola in 1840; the arrival of banking in the 1840s; and the completion of the Clinton and Port Hudson Railroad (also in 1840).

Like many Louisiana towns, Clinton's early economy centered upon the products grown on surrounding plantations. The railroad carried cotton, East Feliciana's main product, to the Mississippi River where it was loaded on steamboats bound for New Orleans. In 1858 the total shipped ranged between twenty and twenty-five thousand bales. By the end of the antebellum period, Clinton was a town to be reckoned with. According to *DeBow's Southern and Western Review* of September 1851, it did more business than any other Southern town of equal size. By 1858 the community supported two weekly newspapers, two buggy and carriage manufacturers, a livery stable, several private schools (see below), a large hotel, and the governmental and judicial functions of the parish.

This prosperity ended with the war of 1861-1865. During the battle for Port Hudson, the Marston House and Silliman Institute (see below) in Clinton served as Confederate hospitals. Once Baton Rouge was occupied in 1862, Clinton suffered foraging raids by Union soldiers. By the end of the war fire had destroyed the town's depot and the majority of its business district. After the war prosperity returned slowly to Clinton, but not as slowly as in some places in the South. By 1870 newspapers were again available and private schools (see below) had reopened. Using hired freedmen as laborers, East Feliciana planters revived the cotton growing industry. By the 1890s the town had several large mercantiles, as well as a brick and tile company, a cotton thread mill, and a large cotton seed oil mill. During the early years of the twentieth century coffee roasting and soft drink bottling plants contributed to the economy. The 1940s saw the arrival of the lumber industry, which stimulated the opening of several new businesses. However, Clinton followed the pattern seen in many small towns in the 1950s and 1960s as the commercial focus shifted to highway shopping strips and the local economy suffered.

Clinton's residents recognized the importance of education early. However, the prevailing opinion throughout Louisiana in the nineteenth century was that education should be the responsibility of the family rather than of state or local government. During this era parents who could afford the expense sent their children to private schools because "public" school was often equated with "pauper" education. A private girls' school opened in Clinton in 1832; by 1858 the community hosted three private schools for girls and two for boys. Several more opened and closed between the end of the Civil War and the turn of the twentieth century. Best known of the girls' schools was Silliman Female Collegiate Institute, a private school which operated from 1852 until 1931.

Finances ranked as another factor hindering the development of public schools in Clinton and East Feliciana. The state's 1845 constitution had mandated the creation of public school systems in each parish, but the public-private partnerships which developed thereafter seldom worked properly. Though locals met their obligations by providing

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churches, lodge halls and other types of buildings for educational use, cost-conscious post-Reconstruction legislators often failed to honor the state's part of the bargain. For example, in 1871 the state owed Bossier Parish approximately \$40,000 in support funds for the so-called "public" schools that parish had established.

Thus, for the most part, the responsibility for educating their children remained in the hands of concerned parents who hired private tutors, sent their children to private schools, or banded together to open small schools in whatever building might be available. Usually consisting of only one room, the latter were crude, stark, often unpainted and improperly heated. They sometimes lacked ceilings, and their furniture was generally homemade by parents of the attendees. Blackboards were usually placed between windows, forcing the students to look directly into a bright glare. Frequently, the schools could afford only one teacher, who was forced to work with children of all ages and grades. The curriculum was limited to basic subjects such as math and reading. Generally, no courses were available beyond the elementary level. East Feliciana founded its parish-wide school system some time before 1875. By 1900, it operated 33 of these small one, two, or three room schools.

Whether Clinton had a free public elementary school or was served exclusively by its private schools before the opening of the candidate is uncertain. School board minutes do not survive for the period of the candidate's construction, nor are newspapers available. Hence it is not possible to gain a precise understanding of the local forces which led to the school's establishment. It is known that school boards in Louisiana finally began taking full responsibility for providing education for white children at the turn of the twentieth century. This development coincided with a growing "... public consciousness of high schools and of better schools. ..." throughout the state. A master's thesis done in 1942 identifies 1900 to 1920 as the "period in the history of East Feliciana schools when the popular private schools ... were giving way to the public schools." It was also a time when "... the many small public schools [in the parish] were consolidated to form centrally located high schools. ..." Obviously, the school in Clinton was one of these.

W. P. Miller, an architect and builder from Baton Rouge, broke ground for the new school on April 18, 1903, having won the construction contract with a bid of \$6,375. He completed the project by the end of August. According to former students, the frame school provided four large, well-lighted classrooms on its first floor and a large auditorium with a stage on the second level. Although called a "high school," the institution actually offered elementary as well as secondary education. As was the custom at the time, multiple grades occupied each classroom. The school term lasted either 160 or 180 days.

Former students who attended elementary classes at the school during the early 1930s testify to the high quality of their teachers and their coursework. This quality must have characterized the secondary curriculum as well. By 1906-1907, the academic year in which the high school division earned accreditation, the institution offered eleven grades. Secondary level courses included algebra, geometry, physical geography, literature, English, Latin, botany, zoology, chemistry, history, physiology, and English history (an elective).

Gradually the dislike of public education ended in Clinton and East Feliciana Parish. By the 1930s the candidate was far too small for its student body. Its auditorium had been subdivided as classroom space, additional classes had expanded into several small nearby structures, and all of the buildings were bursting with students. As mentioned previously, a new school for all grades opened in 1938. After that the candidate provided offices for the parish government. Today it stands vacant.

Given the dislike of free education and the availability of private schools, it is a surprising accomplishment that a large public high school (for its time and place) opened in Clinton as early as 1903. There can be no doubt that the 1903 school provided better facilities and a better, more well rounded education than students had previously received. It also made secondary education available to some students who had lacked this opportunity previously. Thus, its opening was a major milestone in the educational development of Clinton, and the 1903 Clinton High School is a strong candidate for National Register listing.

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9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Photo of 1903 Clinton High School, in Graduation Memories, a booklet produced in 1987 for the 50th class reunion of the Clinton High School class of 1937; copy of photo in National Register file.

Interview with Betty Lou Cain, age 83, long-time resident of Clinton and graduate of the 1903 Clinton High School, October 28, 2004; notes in National Register file.

Interview with H. Toler Hatcher, age 73, long-time resident of Clinton and graduate of 1938 Clinton High School, October 28, 2004; notes in National Register file.

Interview with Hubert L. Polk, Jr., age 73, long-time resident of Clinton and graduate of 1938 Clinton High School, March 2004; notes in National Register file.

Interview with Louis C. "Skeet" McKnight, age 79, long-time resident of Clinton and graduate of 1938 Clinton High School, March 2004 and October 28, 2004, notes in National Register file.

Interview with Mary Ann Garner, long-time resident of Clinton and graduate of 1938 Clinton High School, October 28, 2004, notes in National Register file.

Interview with Sarah Phares Chaney, age 74, long-time resident of Clinton; notes in National Register file.

Roddy, K. P. "Significant Changes in the Schools of East Feliciana Parish." M.A. thesis, Louisiana State University, 1942.

Site visit by National Register staff.

Previous documentation on file (NPS): NA

- \_\_\_ Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
\_\_\_ Previously Listed in the National Register. (partially)
\_\_\_ 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 (Specify Repository):



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### **10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

Acreeage of Property: less than one acre

UTM References:     **Zone   Easting   Northing**  
                          15    689420   3415840

Verbal Boundary Description: See attached sketch map.

Boundary Justification: Boundaries were chosen to encompass the significant resource while excluding non-contributing buildings and a paved parking lot on the property.

### **11. FORM PREPARED BY**

Name/Title: National Register Staff

Address: Division of Historic Preservation, P. O. Box 44247, Baton Rouge, LA 70804

Telephone: (225) 342-8160

Date: Spring 2005

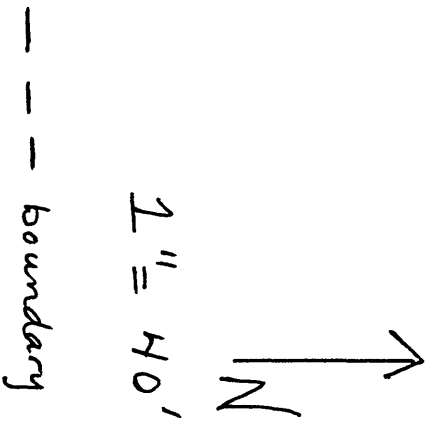
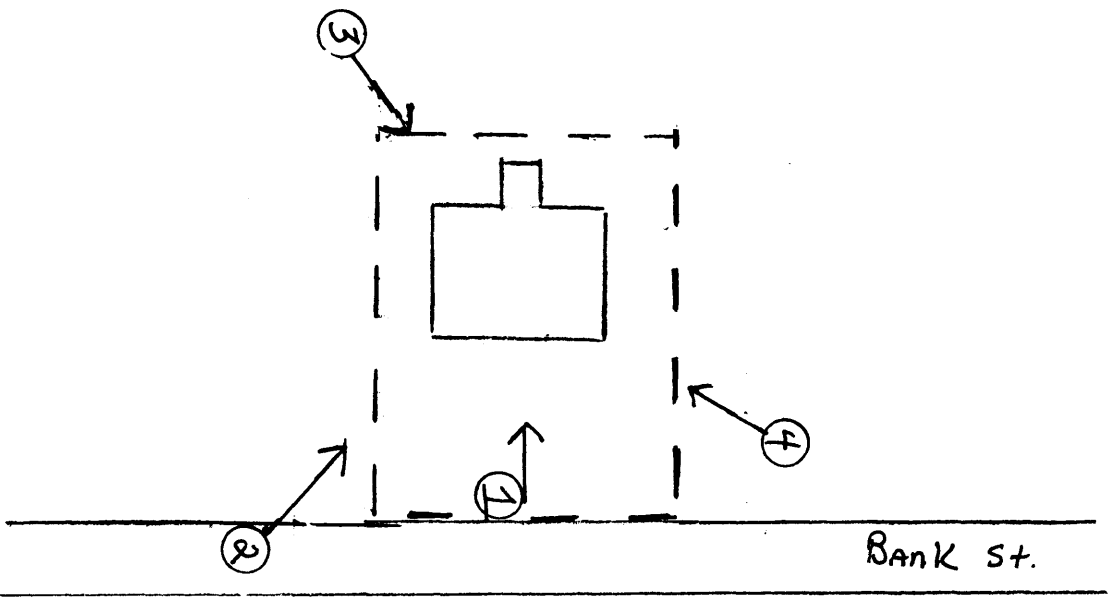
### **PROPERTY OWNERS**

Police Jury, Parish of East Feliciana

P. O. Box 427

Clinton, Louisiana 70722

Clinton High  
School (1903)  
East Feliciana Parish  
Louisiana





1903 Clinton High School  
East Feliciana Parish, Louisiana  
photo showing original appearance