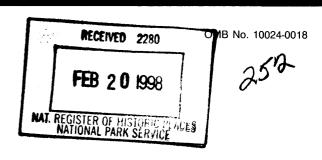
NPS Form 10-900 (Oct. 1990)

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form



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.

nistoric name <u>Downtown Amite Historic District</u>	
other names/site number	
2. Location	
portions of Central Avenue, Oak Street, a	nd Mulberry St. MAnot for publication
ity or townAmite	N/Avicinity
tate <u>Louisiana</u> code <u>LA</u> county <u>Tangipahoa</u>	code 105 zip code 70422
. State/Federal Agency Certification	
Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 30 MM meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this proposed nationally statewide locally. (see continuation sheet for additional comments statewide) locally. (see continuation sheet for additional comments statewide) locally. (see continuation sheet for additional comments statewide) locally. (see continuation sheet for additional comments statewide) locally. (see continuation sheet for additional comments statewide) locally. (see continuation sheet for additional comments statewide) locally. (see continuation sheet for additional comments statewide) locally. (see continuation sheet for additional comments statewide) locally. (see continuation sheet for additional comments statewide) locally. (see continuation sheet for additional comments statewide) locally. (see continuation sheet for additional comments statewide) locally. (see continuation sheet for additional comments statewide) locally. (see continuation sheet for additional comments statewide) locally. (see continuation sheet for additional comments statewide) locally. (see continuation sheet for additional comments see continuation sheet for ad	perty be considered significant nents.)
Signature of commenting official/Title Date	
State or Federal agency and bureau	
I. National Park Service Certification hereby certify that the property is: Ventered in the National Register.	Date of Action 2.19.9

Tangipahoa Parish, LA County and State

5. Classification	3 19.44				
Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply) (C	ategory of Property	Number of Res (Do not include pre	sources within Proper viously listed resources in t	ty he count.)	
🗓 private		Contributing	Noncontributing		
∟X public-local	LXI district	37	10	buildings	
☐ public-State☐ public-Federal	☐ site ☐ structure			sites	
	□ object				
		37	10	Total	
Name of related multiple prope (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a r	erty listing multiple property listing.)	Number of con in the National	tributing resources p Register	reviously listed	
N/A		0			
6. Function or Use					
Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)		Current Functions (Enter categories from	3		
COMMERCE/TRADE: dept. st	tore, specialty	COMMERCE/TRADE: dept. store, specialty			
store, financial institu	ution, warehouse	store, restaurant			
TRANSPORTATION: rail-rel	lated	GOVERNMENT/government office			
DOMESTIC/hotel					
7. Description					
Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)		Materials (Enter categories from	instructions)		
no style		,	k, concrete		
			k, stucco		
		roof other	r: tar and gravel		
		other			

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

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The boundaries of the Downtown Amite Historic District encompass forty-seven buildings, most of which are of party wall construction. The only contributing element dating from before c.1900 is an 1860s Greek Revival-Italianate building which served as the parish's first courthouse. At the other end of the age spectrum is a 1947 streamlined Moderne hotel. Most of the buildings are of brick construction. The district has a mixed one and two story scale, and while there are some notable styled buildings, most should be termed "no style" for the purposes of this submission. Despite ten non-contributing buildings, including a modern service station, and modifications to contributing buildings, the district retains sufficient integrity to represent its historic role as a commercial center.

As shown on the attached sketch map, the district's buildings either face the north-south railroad line or are on streets perpendicular to it. An early twentieth century depot survives to represent the pivotal role of the railroad in sustaining the town's economy. As explained in Part 8, Amite owes its very existence to the railroad. The nominated district represents three-fourths or so of what was historically the Amite central business district. Excluded from the district, due to loss of integrity, is a row of buildings on the north side of East Oak.

As noted above, most of the district's buildings are of brick construction (occasionally covered by stucco). A few, as described below in the inventory, have fairly elaborate brickwork. Of particular note are two surviving frame buildings to represent the early look of the CBD. The evolution of the downtown from frame construction to more fire-resistance brick construction can be traced in Sanborn maps. In 1898 there were only two brick buildings in the downtown. By 1904 there were about ten, and even by 1916 downtown Amite still had a mixed frame and brick character, although brick party wall buildings clearly were beginning to dominate. Also of interest are four buildings constructed of concrete blocks cast to resemble cut stone. Such buildings add visual interest to old downtowns in a state which has no stone to speak of.

INVENTORY

Note: Where possible, Sanborn maps were used to date the buildings (1886, 1898, 1904, 1908, 1916, 1928, and 1928 updated to 1949).

1. Contributing Element. Built between 1904 and 1908. Two story brick Italianate commercial building with pronounced segmental head windows, decoratively shaped parapet, decorative brick bands and quoin-like rustication defining the edges. Altered shopfront and one story frame addition to the side.

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- 2. Contributing Element. This two story brick building was built sometime between 1860-61, when Amite was established, and 1869, when it began to serve as a temporary courthouse for Tangipahoa Parish, which was created in that year. Apparently it remained at least partially in government use until 1883, when a courthouse was constructed for the parish. Located on a corner, the transitional Greek Revival/Italianate building features a pediment and four simple pilasters. Its numerous openings have segmental arches. The front entrance has been altered and one of the facade windows is covered.
- 3. Contributing Element. 1920s small one story commercial building constructed of concrete blocks cast to resemble cut stone.
- 4. Contributing Element. Built between 1904 and 1908. Two story brick commercial building with decoratively shaped parapet accented with dentil bands. Brick is laid in such a manner to produce horizontal lines in the building, yielding an overall rusticated effect. On the second floor the building's openings are capped with a pronounced segmental brick band accented with dentils.
- 5. Non-contributing Element. Modern one story brick office building with gabled parapet facing street.
- 6. Contributing Element. 1920s. One story corner commercial building constructed of concrete blocks cast to resemble cut stone. The facade is of smooth stucco. While the facade's shopfront has been altered, another shopfront, located at the rear of the building, appears to be original.
- 7. Contributing Element. 1920s. One story commercial building constructed of concrete blocks cast to resemble cut stone. The same rusticated treatment is found at the base of the shopfront; transoms have been covered.
- 8. Contributing Element. 1920s. One story commercial building constructed of concrete blocks cast to resemble cut stone. Shopfront replaced.
- 9. Contributing Element. c.1910 wide one story brick commercial building (probably containing two or three stores originally) with two bands of decorative brick corbeling at top. Despite modifications, the shopfronts retain almost all of their cast-iron pilasters and

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some of the window display kickplates.

- 10. Contributing Element. c. 1910 wide one story brick commercial building. Although otherwise plain, it does retain its original decorative cast-iron shopfront pilasters.

 Transoms covered; although not original, shopfront below transoms appears to be historic.
- 11. Non-contributing element. Seriously modified historic one story brick commercial building. Although the top of this building (about a foot or two) displays some of the most elaborate brickwork in downtown Amite, the remainder of the building has been completely modernized. Most notably, a prominent standing seam metal awning extends several feet from the above brickwork, dominating the facade of the building.
- 12. Non-contributing element. Altered two story stucco over brick commercial building.
- 13. Non-contributing element. Altered two story stucco over brick commercial building.
- 14. Non-contributing element. Altered two story stucco over brick corner commercial building.
- 15. Illinois Central Railroad Depot. Contributing Element. A frame depot was on this site as late as 1916. The present fairly plain stuccoed depot was built sometime between then and the 1928 Sanborn map (given its appearance, probably earlier in the range than later). The long one story building features a gablet at each end. A gabled projection along the side marks the location of the ticket office.
- 16. Contributing Element. c. 1900 one story frame building reminiscent of a gable end cottage, although Sanborn maps show it in commercial use. The building comes up to the front property line and has a slight bracketed overhang to provide some protection for the weatherboarded facade. The facade fenestration pattern has been altered over the years, including a garage opening.
- 17. Contributing Element. c. 1900. Shown on Sanborn maps as the Royal Hotel, this two story, hipped roof building has a double gallery in a low-key Italianate style (heavily molded capitals on second story box columns, cutwork balustrade, brackets accenting second story columns). The frame building has been asbestos sided, and the first story

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columns have been replaced with simple wooden posts.

- 18. Non-contributing Element. Modern highway/interstate type service station.
- 19. Non-contributing Element. Very small (one car) car wash for #18. Car wash shares party wall with #20.
- 20. Contributing Element. 1930s plain one story brick commercial building.
- 21. Contributing Element. E. J. Kopfler Building (1927). Wide (ten bay), two story brick commercial building with fairly elaborate stepped parapet outlined in contrasting coping. Two over two windows feature brick segmental arches with keystones. Name of building and date are located in a contrasting panel at the center with a contrasting diamond pattern to each side. Shopfront, including fixed awning, appears to be largely historic. Some transoms have been covered, although their location is very clear.
- 22. Contributing Element. Fairly plain 1930s one story brick commercial building whose only distinctive feature is a contrasting color brick band along the top and immediately above the transoms. Transoms have been covered. Although shopfront configuration appears to be historic, the window glass has most likely been replaced.
- 23. Contributing Element. One story brick commercial building with a stepped parapet and a combination of square head and segmental head openings on the facade. One suspects that this is an older building (c.1905) to which a stepped parapet was added, most likely in the 1920s. (A building with openings of this type typically would have had a more elaborate, Italianate-style parapet. Stepped parapets are typically from the 1920s or later.)
- 24-6. Contributing Elements. Three identical one story stucco over brick commercial buildings built between 1904 and 1908. Perhaps the most distinctive buildings in the downtown, the three stores are articulated as one building whose facade is dominated by a series of large round arch openings, three per unit. The arches spring from thick round columns on bases which appear in pairs except at each end of the overall composition, where there is a single column. Further visual weight is provided by pronounced bands at the top and bottom of each column and a protruding band emphasizing the shape of each arch. The round arch openings on the westernmost building have been fitted with metal inserts. While unfortunate, at least the inserts are recessed.

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- 27. Contributing Element. Fairly simple 1920s one story brick commercial building with stepped parapet and brick panel spanning the front.
- 28. Contributing Element. Built between 1904 and 1908, this two story brick commercial building is among the district's most elaborate in terms of decorative brickwork. The parapet is emphasized with brick bands, and its central portion is higher, featuring a brick panel in the middle and accented with vertical corbeled members to each side. A pair of identical but smaller corbeled members define each side of the building at the parapet level. The edges of the building at the second story level are emphasized with brick bands which give the overall effect of quoins. The piers separating the shopfront windows also feature horizontal brick bands. The second story's four windows feature a very slight curve and are capped with pronounced denticulated brick bands. Although the building on the whole is well preserved, the present camouflage paint scheme on the first story (proclaiming its current use as a sporting goods store) detracts from its historic character. Also, the second story windows have been fitted with wooden inserts painted with scenes related to hunting and fishing.
- 29. Contributing Element. Built between 1916 and 1928. Very narrow (10-15') one story brick commercial building with decoratively shaped parapet. This is one of two identical buildings flanking the much larger two story Balsano Building (#30).
- 30. Contributing Element. Built between 1916 and 1928 (Balsano Building). Wide two story brick commercial building with shaped parapet defined by short brick members which protrude slightly above. A slender brick band defines the parapet and similar bands run across the facade in two places. The second story fenestration consists of paired windows at the middle with a single window to each side. The segmental head openings are accented with decorative brick bands. The transoms have been covered and the shopfront has been modernized.
- 31. Contributing Element. Matches #29, although built later (c.1930).
- 32. Contributing Element. Cefalu Building (1928). Very wide one story brick commercial building composed of five identical sections, each featuring the same fairly intricate stepped parapet. The buildings are otherwise plain, with the central section bearing a tablet inscribed "V. Cefalu, 1928." The shopfronts appear to be all replaced, although most follow the configuration of historic shopfronts.

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- 33. Contributing Element. 1920s fairly simple one story brick commercial building with elliptical vents above the transoms. Transoms covered and shopfront replaced.
- 34. Contributing Element. This two story brick corner commercial building was built between 1908 and 1916. It turns the corner with a forty-five degree cut. Slightly protruding brick piers divide the two elevations into sections. Second story windows feature segmental heads. Those on the Railroad Avenue side are grouped in pairs, while those facing Oak Street are single windows. All are two over two. Many of the transoms windows are visible and intact, although the glass has been painted. Much of the shopfront appears to be historic. The posts giving extra support to the fixed awning are not historic.
- 35. Contributing Element. Small, plain, early twentieth century, one story brick commercial building with segmental head openings on the side elevation. Transoms covered and shopfront appears to be non-historic.
- 36. Contributing Element. 1930s plain one story brick commercial building. Features two identical sections, each with a very slightly stepped parapet and a central panel undoubtedly intended for displaying signage. Shopfront windows themselves are replaced as are doors; however, overall configuration is likely from the '30s or '40s.
- 37. Non-contributing Element. Seriously altered historic one story commercial building. Although stepped parapet shape survives, building has been covered in wood and has been given a wooden gallery.
- 38. Contributing Element. 1930s one story stucco over concrete block commercial building with stepped parapet of same shape as #37. Shopfront and side windows replaced.
- 39. Contributing Element. Presently Brumfield Ford. A car dealership appears in this location on the 1928 Sanborn map, and one presumes it is the present building. Until very recently, the building was completely modern in character. The owner removed the "slipcovering" to find the present decoratively shaped parapet, which despite some damage, was in salvageable condition. The awning is modern, as are the display windows. Other openings are probably original, but fitted with new glass.

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- 40. Contributing Element. This diminutive gas station (related to the car dealership above) is not in place by the time of the 1928 Sanborn map, but must have been built shortly thereafter. As was common for corner service stations, it is set at an angle, allowing easy access from both streets. The somewhat domestic-looking station features a hipped tile roof and a large column defining each corner. The front door has a one over one window to each side. The pumps, which were located a few feet in front of the building, are long gone.
- 41. Contributing Element. Two story brick bank with limestone details built sometime between 1916 and 1928. Because the building is located on a corner, it has two articulated elevations. Doors and windows on the first floor are surmounted with blind arches. Each arch is accented with a keystone in the form of a scroll volute. The blind arch above the main door features a bas relief eagle placed within a wreath formed of what appear to be acanthus leafs. A ribbon finishes off the composition at the bottom. Other decorative details include a prominent quoin-like treatment at each corner and an entablature with a dentil band. Multi-pane casement windows with a transom are found on the second story. The historic bank has received a modern one story addition at the rear.
- 42. Non-contributing Element. Seriously altered one story historic commercial building (completely modern facade).
- 43. Non-contributing Element. Seriously altered one story historic commercial building (completely modern facade).
- 44. Contributing Element. This deep one story brick building appears as a movie theater with commercial space in the front on the 1928 Sanborn map (one small store on each side of a theater entrance). That the building was originally a theater is evident from the accompanying three-quarter view, which shows the fly gallery at the rear. The present simple stuccoed facade may well be 50 years old, but it is not certain. As of the 1949 Sanborn map, there was a projecting marquee on the front, but it has been removed. The building is being counted as a contributing element because so much of its original theater character is evident (see photo) and the present facade may well be 50 years old.
- 45. Contributing Element. Hotel Ponder (1947). The three story brick Hotel Ponder, facing the railroad tracks, is a prominent landmark because of its streamlined Moderne styling

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and its size. Because the building is very long, it is decidedly horizontal despite its three story height. The hotel's most distinctive features are its boldly curving corners and a narrow checkerboard pattern brick band at the top which emphasizes the building's curves and horizontality. The brick band is interrupted on the facade with "Hotel Ponder, 1947" written in contrasting brick. The side elevations feature "Hotel Ponder" done in the same manner. The hotel is largely unaltered, retaining many of its original fixtures and much of its original furniture. The roof of the building was and is used for dances, hence the steel railing running along the perimeter.

- 46. Contributing Element. One story brick wholesale grocery warehouse located adjacent to the railroad tracks; built sometime between 1916 and 1928. There is a gabled parapet at each end and a rooftop monitor.
- 47. Contributing Element. Quonset hut metal wholesale grocery warehouse located immediately behind and perpendicular to #46. The building is in place by the 1949 Sanborn map. According to locals, it was built right after World War II.

Alterations to Contributing Buildings:

Each building was evaluated by the National Register staff to determine the extent of alterations. A professional judgment call was made as to whether or not alterations so dominated a building that it should be classified as non-contributing. On the whole, the contributing buildings are fairly well preserved, except for many of the shopfronts, as noted in the inventory. Of course, this is typical in old downtowns. Fortunately, most of the shopfronts, even when modified or completely new, follow the basic configuration of historic shopfronts.

Non-contributing Buildings:

Easily the most serious integrity issue is the construction within the last few years of a highway/interstate type service station in a prominent location (see map - #18) within the downtown. The best that can be said for the situation is that the historic CBD was able to absorb the service station better than one expected. Because the station is set back from the street and historic buildings are not, it is not visible in various viewsheds (although the free-standing sign is).

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Other than the service station and its adjacent small car wash, all of the non-contributing buildings are altered historic buildings which maintain the overall scale and configuration of their contributing counterparts.

Assessment of Integrity:

Firstly, it should be noted that a 21% non-contributing rate is fairly low for a National Register commercial district in Louisiana outside New Orleans. Of course, what is more important is the nature and character of the non-contributing elements. And even with the modern service station noted above and other non-contributing elements, downtown Amite still has a strong historic character, as is evident from the representative photos accompanying this submission. In summation, the district still conveys its identity as a historic trading center for the surrounding area and hence its Register eligibility.

Tangipahoa	Parish,	LA	
County and State			

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.)	Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions) COMMETCE
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.	Period of Significance c.1865-1947
☐ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.	
Criteria Considerations N/A (Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)	Significant Dates N/A
Property is:	
☐ A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.	
☐ B removed from its original location.	Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above) N/A
☐ C a birthplace or grave.	
\square D a cemetery.	Cultural Affiliation N/A
\square 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.	Architect/Builder N/A
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 o	ne or more continuation sheets.)
Previous documentation on file (NPS): N/A	Primary location of additional data:
 □ 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 	 ⚠ State Historic Preservation Office □ Other State agency □ Federal agency □ Local government □ University □ Other
□ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # □ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #	Name of repository:

Tangipahoa Parish, LA County and State

10. Geographical Data	
Acreage of Propertyapprox. 19 acres	
UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)	
1 1 5 7 3 8 4 0 0 3 4 0 1 9 6 0 Zone Easting Northing 2 1 5 7 3 8 6 8 0 3 4 0 1 9 6 0	3 1 5 7 3 8 6 6 0 3 4 0 1 5 4 0 Zone Easting Northing 4 1 5 7 3 8 4 0 0 1 5 4 0 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 November 1997
street & number P. 0. Box 44247	telephone504-342-8160
city or townBaton Rouge	stateLA zip code70804
Additional Documentation	
Submit the following items with the completed form:	
Continuation Sheets	
Maps	
A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the p	roperty's location.
A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having	ng large acreage or numerous resources.
Photographs	
Representative black and white photographs of the pro-	roperty.
Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)	
Property Owner (Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)	
MIII TIDI F	
street & number	telephone
city or town	state zip code

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.

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The Downtown Amite Historic District is of local commercial significance because it represents the community's role as a commercial center for the surrounding agricultural area. Downtown Amite continued to be a major provider of goods and services into the modern era when downtowns were supplanted by strip development and malls. The period of significance spans from c.1865, the earliest building date, to 1947, the present fifty year cutoff.

Like many towns throughout Louisiana, Amite owes its existence to the railroad. It and other towns in Tangipahoa Parish came into being as a result of the New Orleans, Jackson and Great Northern Railroad being built through the area in the mid-1850s. Amite's earliest settlers appear to have arrived in the 1830s; however, there was no town there at that time. As the survey for the rail line was being done, enterprising individuals in the area bought a large tract of land where a stop was planned. A town was laid out in 1860, and in 1861 it was incorporated as Amite City. In 1869 the new community became the seat of Tangipahoa Parish, created in that year. The town of 910 persons in 1870 grew steadily through the years, reaching a population of 1,677 in 1910 and 2,499 by 1940.

The railroad town of Amite City quite naturally emerged as a center for goods and services for its own citizens as well as the surrounding area, where cotton and strawberries were the main crops for most of the historic period. By mid-century, dairy farming had become a major activity. The town's principal industry was the Gullet Gin Company, which manufactured cotton gins at a large plant about a mile south of the downtown. During the historic period Amite had the largest CBD between Hammond to the south and the Mississippi state line to the north, a distance of about forty miles. Also, although not the largest town in the parish, Amite was the seat of government, which undoubtedly enhanced commercial activity in the downtown.

One can imagine Amite as a bustling trade center with cotton bales and strawberries at the depot ready for transport (as shown in historic photos) and farmers in town to do business at the bank and obtain needed goods and services. People in town on parish business may have had occasion to spend the night at a local hotel or eat in a restaurant. Fortunately, the buildings within the district represent a wide range of uses during the historic period, as can be documented in Sanborn maps and other sources. A bank survives as do buildings which housed general mercantile stores, a drugstore, two hotels, at least one restaurant, a car dealership and a service station, a dry cleaners, a print shop and various specialty retail shops. Very importantly, the depot and two wholesale grocery warehouses survive to represent the critical role of the railroad to the local economy.

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BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION: Please refer to enclosed sketch map.

JUSTIFICATION:

Boundaries were chosen to encompass that portion of historic downtown Amite which retains sufficient integrity. As noted in Part 7, the nominated district represents three-fourths or so of what historically was the Amite central business district. The principal excluded area, due to loss of integrity, is a row of buildings on the north side of East Oak (just east of building #14 -- see sketch map).

