

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

MAR 6 1995

INTERAGENCY RESOURCES DIVISION
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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.

1. Name of Property

historic name Wier House

other names/site number Joseph R. Wier Memorial Building; Hebrard House

2. Location

street & number 310 East Bellevue St. N/A not for publication

city or town Opelousas N/A vicinity

state Louisiana code LA county St. Landry code 097 zip code 70570

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.)
Gerrit Hobdy 3/1/95
Signature of certifying official/Title Gerrit 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:)

for
Signature of the Keeper Edson H. Beall Entered in the National Register Date of Action 4.7.95

Wier House
Name of Property

St. Landry Parish, LA
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal
- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		_____ buildings
		_____ sites
		_____ structures
		_____ objects
1	0	_____ Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

VACANT/not in use

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Federal

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation brick

walls brick

roof tin

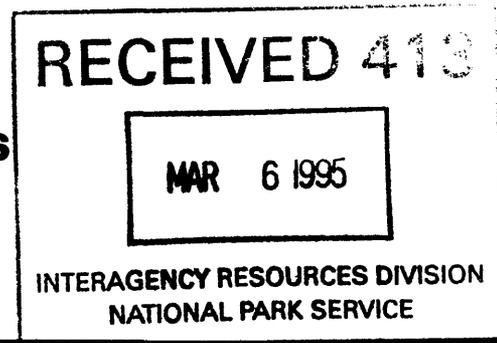
other _____

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**

Wier House, Opelousas, St. Landry Parish, LA

Section number 7 Page 1

The Wier House (c.1820) is a two story brick residence with Federal style details located on a prominent corner in downtown Opelousas. Despite various alterations over the years, the house easily retains its National Register eligibility.

The Wier House is in the so-called "I" house tradition, a house type popular for farm dwellings in the eastern states during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In these states the "I" house generally indicates a rural occupant of medium to affluent means. Specifically, the type denotes a dwelling two stories high, two or more rooms wide and one room deep. Each story of the Wier House consists of two rooms of unequal width (roughly three foot difference) with an off-center hall between. There is also a cellar, a very unusual feature in Louisiana. A chimney set at each end of the house provides heat, both upstairs and down. The house is laid in common bond brick and culminates in a low pitched roof.

Despite the Wier House's somewhat asymmetrical plan, its facade is rigidly symmetrical, culminating in a central, single bay, pedimented portico. The portico is fairly intricate, with a modillion cornice and a simplified Greek key completely encompassing the tympanum. This, together with the portico's overall lightness and delicacy, strongly indicate the high Federal taste.

Other Federal features include:

- 1) the central front doorway with its round arch and intricately glazed fanlight;
- 2) the delicate chair rail and complementary baseboards which survive intact in the upper west room and largely intact in the upper east room;
- 3) the use of cornerblocks with roundels on the doorways in all four rooms, the upstairs hall and the front doorway;
- 4) the house's four mantels.

All the mantels follow the basic Adam style. Two are fairly conventional with decoratively molded pilasters, five-part paneled entablatures, and a multi-layer shelf. The mantel in the lower west room is the most elaborate, featuring engaged fluted Roman Doric columns, fluted panels and a central sunburst. The mantel in the upper east room is the most unusual. It incorporates an elliptical arch, which is uncommon but not unknown. More unusual is the fact that its entablature features curved ends, giving it an almost oriental appearance.

CONTINUED

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Wier House, Opelousas, St. Landry Parish, LA

Section number 7 Page 2

Alterations

Over the years the house has passed through many hands, and, for much of the twentieth century, it has been used as an office building. Most of the numerous alterations the house has received are clear; however, there are still unanswered questions. Indeed, it is not possible at this point to determine the house's original appearance in all respects.

The Staircase

The present staircase, which is "shoe-horned" in at the back of the hall, appears to have been built of salvaged parts. It did not exist in 1960 per a photograph of that date. The question as to where the original staircase was is difficult to answer. The hall is not a good candidate because it is bisected with doorways into the rooms on each side. In addition, it originally had a rear door as well as the present front door. In short, the arrangement of openings in the hall seems to make it an impossible candidate.

A bricked over opening showing the location of an upper hall rear door suggests that perhaps the stair was located on a one-time rear gallery. But if this were the case, one would expect to see slots in the rear brickwork indicating where the gallery floor joists had once been inserted. No such slots exist and there is no evidence of repairs that could have obscured them. (The present mark in the brickwork across the back below the second floor fenestration is where a shed roofed addition was attached, per a 1930s photograph.)

The Portico

At present the portico rests upon a pair of two story posts which seem to have been installed within the past fifty years. The above mentioned 1930s photograph shows the house with a two stage portico with round columns on each story and a balustraded balcony. In addition, the front of the upper hall has a transomed doorway, with original doors (complete with their strap hinges), that was clearly intended to provide access to a balcony. Yet, here again, the facade brickwork shows no evidence of joists that would have supported such a balcony. It is also not possible to know whether the round columns shown in the picture were original or Colonial Revival replacements (although they look appropriate).

Wooden Members Incorporated into the Brickwork

In the lower east room the plaster has been removed, leaving the brickwork exposed. There are wooden blocks indicating where a chair rail may have been attached. More

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Wier House, Opelousas, St. Landry Parish, LA

Section number 7 Page 3

curious are small pieces of wood (perhaps 1 inch by 1 inch) set in numerous places throughout the brickwork. At present their purpose remains a mystery.

Other alterations include:

- 1) The baseboards have been replaced on the first floor and the upstairs hall, a simple chair rail has been installed in the west front room, and simple cornices have been added in most spaces.
- 2) All doors are twentieth century except for the previously mentioned upper front door. The modern glass doors on the first floor rear elevation may have replaced windows, but it is uncertain.
- 3) The installation of waist-high cabinets to each side of the mantel in the upper east room.
- 4) Much of the flooring has been replaced.
- 5) Decorative molding which once accented the fascia of the front eaves has been lost.
- 6) The walls in the halls have been covered with paneling and a celotex tile ceiling has been added in the lower floor hall.
- 7) The ceiling has been removed in the first floor east room, revealing the wooden beams, and the chimney breast has been sheathed in wood. (This is also the room where the brick walls have been exposed.)
- 8) Most of the six over six windows have been replaced with three over ones.

The admittedly large number of alterations the Wier House has undergone has not obscured its distinctive architectural identity. Most importantly, the house retains the bulk of its handsome, high style Federal detailing, including the delicately detailed tympanum of the portico; the front door with its elegant fanlight; some of its chair rails; and all of its mantels, one of which is particularly elaborate.

The Date of the Wier House

The date of construction for the Wier House has not been documented, but there are parameters. An 1811 sheriff's sale document indicates that, as of that year, the lot on which the house stands was still unimproved. Given this and the style of the house, an appropriate date range would be 1811-1830. Thus c.1820 has been chosen as the official date of construction for the purpose of this submission.

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 N/A
(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

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.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

architecture

Period of Significance

c.1820

Significant Dates

c.1820

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

unknown

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 # _____

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository:

Wier House
Name of Property

St. Landry Parish, LA
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property less than an acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1

1	5
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5	8	8	1	5	0
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3	3	7	8	1	5	0
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Zone Easting Northing

3

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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 January 1995

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

city or town Baton Rouge state LA 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 Nan S. Wier

street & number 412 E. 84th St. telephone 212-744-6157

city or town New York state NY zip code 10028

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

Wier House, Opelousas, St. Landry Parish, LA

Section number 8 Page 1

The Wier House is locally significant in the area of architecture as one of St. Landry Parish's very earliest buildings and a rare example, within the parish, of the Federal style.

During the eighteenth century the settlement of Opelousas was a trading center and military post. In 1803, most of present-day Louisiana (including the area where Opelousas is located) passed to the United States as part of the Louisiana Purchase. In 1805 the County of Opelousas was formed within the Territory of Louisiana. This would eventually become St. Landry Parish. On October 14, 1805 the County of Opelousas purchased land from Stephen Lamorandier which became the parish seat of Opelousas; land was divided and lots were sold. In 1809 the lot on which the Wier House would later be built was sold to one Thomas Bledsoe for \$87.

Despite its considerable age, St. Landry Parish retains very little of its earliest architectural heritage. Indeed, the parish is thought to contain only about a half dozen major buildings that pre-date the Greek Revival taste. The Wier House is one of these. In addition, the Wier House is one of only two structures in the parish to feature Federal styling. The elegant Federal style dominated domestic architecture in the eastern states during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. But as architectural historian Marcus Whiffen has noted, the style had little time to establish itself west of the Appalachians "before the Greek Revival swept all before it." Of the two examples in St. Landry Parish, the Wier House is arguably the more significant one because it is more like the type of classic Federal house one would have found in the East. It is a two story symmetrical brick building with an attenuated portico (albeit compromised), a central round arch entrance with a fanlight, and four highly styled and intricate Federal mantels. The other example, though very important, is an asymmetrical Creole house with Federal details.

Historical Note:

As noted previously, the construction date of the Wier House is not documented. Thomas Bledsoe, who purchased the lot in 1809, was from Kentucky and Virginia. On January 29, 1811, he married Susanne Duffin in Opelousas and died in September of that year at the age of 23. At the sheriff's sale of Bledsoe's estate, held in late 1811, the lot in question, listed as unimproved, was sold to the deceased's father-in-law, Hugh Duffin, who had migrated to Opelousas from Kentucky. On the tax rolls of St. Landry Parish for 1817 the property is listed as belonging to Bledsoe's widow, Susanne Duffin Bledsoe. When the property was sold on January 8, 1826, the seller was Margaret Duffin, a resident of New Orleans and the widow of Hugh Duffin. The purchaser was Ludger Lastrapes, an Opelousas

CONTINUED

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Wier House, Opelousas, St. Landry Parish, LA

Section number 8/9 Page 2/1 and

merchant. Given the possible date range for the house (1811-c.1830), it is just possible that Lastrapes had it built. However, it is more probable that it was built for Bledsoe's widow or her family. From an architectural standpoint, the house is probably earlier rather than later in the date range. Also, because it is an unusual house for Louisiana, immigrants from Kentucky with Anglo names seem more probable as builders than a French Creole (Ludger Lastrapes). Lastrapes owned the house until his death some time prior to 1837. (His estate was settled in December 1837.)

The names most closely associated with the house are Hebrard and Wier. They are the only families to own the house for a long period of time, and their names are attached to it by locals today. The current owner, Nan Wier, is in the beginning stages of restoring the house as a memorial to her late husband, Joseph R. Wier. To be known as the Joseph R. Wier Memorial Building, it will most likely be available for some public use.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Andrepoint, Carola Ann. "Opelousas, Louisiana's Historic Treasure: The Joseph R. Wier Building." Typescript research report based on extensive research in primary sources, copy in Register file, Louisiana Division of Historic Preservation.

1930s photographs, Tebbs Collection, Louisiana State Museum. Copies in Register file, Louisiana Division of Historic Preservation.

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Wier House, Opelousas, St. Landry Parish, LA

Section number 10 Page 1

Boundary Description: Lot 4, Square 4, Town of Opelousas

Justification: Boundaries follow property lines, corresponding to the lot historically associated with the house.

Note: When the accompanying photos were taken, the area immediately behind the house was being used as a car lot. This is no longer the case.