

The Kansas City Southern Depot in Vivian is a one story brownish red brick building influenced by the Craftsman style. Built in 1921, the well-preserved passenger-freight station occupies a prominent site in the downtown.

The long, low depot consists of a styled main block and a more utilitarian looking freight section. The main block has separate white and black waiting rooms with a ticket office between. Beyond the smaller waiting room is a baggage room and then the freight section. The main block features a tile pitched roof with a jerkinhead gable and accompanying skirting roof at each end. Attached to the northern end is the long flat roofed freight section. At roughly the mid-point of the main block, on each side, is a gabled projection. The one on the track side marks the ticket office, while the one on the downtown side contains four small bathrooms (2 for each race). The bathrooms are accessed via a narrow corridor running alongside the office between the two waiting rooms.

The depot has an overall Craftsman character due to its overhanging eaves accented with prominent, decoratively cut brackets. The brackets are both numerous and large. Small brackets are found on the two jerkinhead gables and the freight section. The corners of the main block, its gabled projections and the corners of the freight section are accented with piers which protrude above the roofline in decorative tops. Although they are actually squared off at the top, a shaped design is created by contrasting white stucco. A decorative shape in white stucco is also found in the peaks of the two projecting gables. The freight section features a white stucco band above the fenestration, a white stucco water table, all of its original freight doors, and a wooden freight platform.

The interior of the depot retains the bulk of its original character. The two waiting rooms and the hallway feature a high brick wainscot. There is a ticket window with a ledge opening into each waiting room. A door and tall six over nine windows are located on the ticket office wall adjacent to the previously mentioned corridor. The freight section retains its original utilitarian character -- i.e., rough brick walls and exposed beams.

The KCS Depot in Vivian has experienced the following alterations since construction:

(1) Although the ceilings in the main block retain their original height, they have been covered with acoustical tiles.

(2) The ticket office and one of the waiting rooms have been sheathed in paneling. However, because it is painted, it is not immediately noticeable.

(3) The baggage room has been partly sheathed in plywood paneling and a small portion has been partitioned off with plywood paneling.

(4) Barriers made of two by fours and wire mesh have been installed in the freight section to protect museum exhibits. (The depot houses a local history museum.)

(5) A latticework balustrade has been added to the freight platform.

#### Assessment of Integrity

All in all, the above alterations are relatively minor in nature and have had a minimal impact upon the building's overall historic appearance. The depot is virtually unaltered on the exterior and retains the bulk of its original interior character, including a floor plan characteristic of the era. The depot looks much as it did during the historic period when the railroad was the lifeblood of the local economy.

Significant dates: N/A  
Architect/Builder N/A

#### Criterion A

The Kansas City Southern Railroad Depot is locally significant in the area of transportation because it represents a very important force in the history of the town of Vivian. Although the present depot is not the original one and hence is not associated with the founding of Vivian by the railroad, it does represent railroading as a crucial force in the town's economy from its construction in 1921 through 1944, the fifty year cutoff. (The railroad continued to be the principal method of

transporting goods into the post-World War II era.)

The town of Vivian literally came into being because of the railroad. The Kansas City, Pittsburg and Gulf Railroad (soon to become Kansas City Southern) was built through what would become Vivian in 1895. The townsite was laid out adjacent to the tracks by the Arkansas Townsite Company on land purchased from S. B. Posey. Tradition has it that the town was named for a railroad official's daughter. In 1898 Vivian received its charter as a village. In 1912, it was incorporated as a town, based on a 1910 census figure of 1,274. By 1920, the population had grown to about 2,000, and by 1938 to about 4,000.

Undoubtedly the most important factor in the growth of Vivian during this period was the famous Caddo Field oil boom. The first well was completed in 1906, and over the next forty or so years, the field played a major role in enabling Louisiana to rank among the nation's top oil producers. During this period, Louisiana ranked no lower than eighth in production and several times was third. Communities such as Oil City, Mooringsport and Vivian emerged as bustling oil boom towns filled with oil men and oil-related businesses.

The KCS railroad was of critical importance to the oil industry as a transportation artery for receiving and shipping. The relationship between the two is vividly portrayed in historic photos showing oil field supplies being unloaded from railroad cars and oil being shipped via railroad tank cars. In addition, the railroad was of obvious importance to the sustaining of any other economic activity in the town. For example, agriculture remained an important element in the economy, and the railroad brought the cotton crop to market. Some indication of the importance of the railroad to the economy can be seen in the 1938 Sanborn Fire Insurance Company map for Vivian, which shows a small warehouse district adjacent to the tracks just south of the depot. Businesses represented were a wholesale grocery warehouse (the Atlanta Wholesale Grocery Company), two oil and grease warehouses (the Magnolia Petroleum Company and the Vivian Oil and Gasoline Company), an auto warehouse and a hay and feed warehouse. Also located adjacent to the tracks was the Vivian Gin Company.

Because the railroad was critical to Vivian's economy, as described above, the depot is obviously of considerable significance in the town's history. It is the very symbol of the railroad and what it made possible. For the record, there are no other resources in Vivian directly associated with the railroad.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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