

Describe the present and original (it known) physical appearance

The Homer Historic District encompasses fifty-six mainly commercial buildings set around a courthouse square and an adjacent railroad corridor. Except for the 1860 courthouse, contributing elements date from c,1890 to 1936. The district easily retains its historic character, despite a 32% intrusion rate and some alteration of contributing elements.

Homer was founded as the Claiborne Parish seat in 1843 with a plan which provided for a central courthouse square. The present 1860 courthouse resembles a two story Greek Revival peripteral style plantation house. Its ogee molded cupola towers over much of the townscape, Nothing else of the original downtown survives, due in part to fires occurring in 1876 and 1889. In 1876 the north and west sides of the square burned, and in 1889 the south side burned. As a result, the district's frame structures were largely, although not entirely, replaced by brick.

Another factor in changing the townscape was continuing economic activity in the district during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Homer was a center for cotton related industries and lumber production in the area. Of course, the arrival of the railroad in the late nineteenth century was crucial to this prosperity. Then in 1918 the Homer Oil Field was discovered and an oil boom ensued. One can see this in the district's building stock; over half of the contributing elements date from the 1920's-early '30's boom period. In addition 7 at least three of the district's buildings relate to the automobile age, two being service stations and the third a dealership #20, #21, 148).

The area around the courthouse square has a tightly packed character with a single story scale punctuated by buildings of two and occasionally three stories. The railroad corridor has the more open character of an industrial workyard.

Where possible, the district's buildings were dated using Sanborn Insurance Company maps. The following is a breakdown by period:

pre-Civil War	1 building	2%
1890-1905	6 buildings	11%
1906-1920	8 buildings	14%
1921-1936	23 buildings	41%
intrusions	18 buildings	32%

Except for the courthouse and the richly ornamented Claiborne Hotel, most of the buildings are more or less conventional examples of their periods and styles. They are the type which could have been found in any moderate size town in Louisiana during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Certain aspects of this building stock deserve special mention:

Buildings 9 and 10 are especially important to the district, being simple frame galleried commercial structures. They are all that remain of the once wooden Homer central business district.

Of the six buildings in the 1890-1905 category, three are two story Italianate structures with towering decorative parapets and rich ornamentation (#s 28, 32, & 51). These lend an urban presence to what might otherwise be a country town Easily the most impressive is the Claiborne Hotel (#32), which would be a landmark in even most cities in Louisiana. Italianate styling can also be seen in the decorative cast-iron columns of Building #45, built sometime between 1909 and 1914. Its late date illustrates the persistence of the commercial Italianate style right through the first decade of the twentieth century. After its demise buildings in the district were more low-key, but retained the same basic parapeted shape. The exceptions are the opulently styled Beaux Arts Homer National Bank (#40) and the Homer City Hall with its semi-Ruskinian character (#11),

Contributing Elements:

The Homer Historic District is significant as a superior example of a late nineteenth-early twentieth century townscape (i.e., up to 1936). There are certain elements (see Item 8) which give it this superior status, but the district should also be viewed as a tout ensemble of its period. Other 50+ year old elements which do not directly contribute to the district's superiority are important in their own right because they help establish Homer is identity and credentials as a period townscape, Hence any 50+ year old structure which has not been altered beyond recognition is considered a

contributing element for purposes of this application.

Assessment of Integrity

The district's institutional buildings retain their essential historic appearance. The most altered buildings are in the commercial category. But even so, 64% of the district's contributing commercial buildings have their original shopfronts more or less intact. This is an unusually high figure for older communities in Louisiana. Ten, or about a third of the district's contributing commercial buildings, have modern fixed awnings. But in many cases these duplicate the general appearance of earlier fixed awnings of simple character. As one can see from old Sanborn maps, commercial buildings of the type found in Homer usually made some provision for covering the sidewalk. Hence the present collection of modern fixed awnings does not represent a major change in character for the district.

The only other integrity consideration is the recent aluminum siding of the railroad depot and the railroad office/warehouse (#s 17 & 18). Although this is regrettable, it has not obscured the architectural identity of the buildings. They still convey their function and historic role in the district. Moreover, the aluminum siding does not represent a major loss of character because the buildings were always very plain.

Intrusions:

Although the district's 32% intrusion rate is relatively high, it is certainly not without precedent in Louisiana Register districts. (There are four Register districts in the state with an intrusion rate of over 30%, with the highest being 36%). In any event, percentage figures alone should not be the determining factor, but rather the size and character of the intrusions and how well the area is able to absorb them and retain its historic character. Seventy-two percent of Homer's intrusions are only one story and over half are remodeled older buildings; hence they do not significantly disturb the streetscape. Homer's intrusions are largely dominated by the visually stronger and impressive historic buildings. The general view photographs accompanying this submission are more telling than percentage figures in demonstrating that the Homer district retains its historic character.

HOMER HISTORIC DISTRICT INVENTORY

1. Contributing element. c.1925 IOOF Lodge Building. Two story brick building with decorative cornice and parapet with inset IOOF central tablet.
2. Non-contributing element. One story badly altered older commercial building.
3. Non-contributing element. One story badly altered older commercial building.
4. Non-contributing element. One story badly altered older commercial building.
5. Contributing element. c.1925 one story brick commercial building with decorative brick panel and cornice.
6. Non-contributing element. One story badly altered older commercial building.
7. Non-contributing element. One story badly altered older commercial building.
8. Non-contributing element. One story badly altered older commercial building.
9. Contributing element. c.1900 one story plain frame commercial building with wooden gallery and original plate glass shopfront.
10. Contributing element. c.1900 one story plain frame commercial building with wooden gallery and original plate glass shopfront; gable fitted with asbestos siding.
11. Homer City Hall. Contributing element. c.1930 Italian villa style two story building with double arch windows, a campanile, and copious blind arcading.

12. Non-contributing element. Homer Police & Fire Station. One story modern brick building.
13. Contributing element. c.1925 School Board Annex. Two story brick building with decorative panels and original one story brick gallery.
14. Non-contributing element. Small one story stucco over brick commercial building.
15. Contributing element. c.1925 metal over frame warehouse.
16. Contributing element. c.1920 large frame railroad shop with detached shed.
17. Contributing element. c.1920 plain two story frame railroad office-warehouse; recently aluminum sided.
18. Contributing element. c.1910 one story plain frame railroad depot; recently aluminum sided.
19. Contributing element. c.1925 one story brick commercial building with decorative panels; original shop windows.
20. Contributing element. c.1925 stucco gas station with brick dado, tile roof, and porte-cochere.
21. Contributing element. c.1930 brick automobile dealership with stepped gable parapet.
22. Contributing element. c.1925 one story brick commercial building with decorative panels and original shop windows.
23. Contributing element. First Baptist Church. c.1925 brick building with vaguely neo-classical styling, most notably free-standing Tuscan columns; large modern rear wing.
24. Contributing element. c.1920 two story frame residence.
25. Non-contributing element. Two story brick building.
26. Non-contributing element. Small one story stucco building.
27. Contributing element. c.1925 one story brick commercial building with decorative brick panel; fixed awning added c.1970.
28. Contributing element. c.1890 two story brick Italianate commercial building with segmentally arched fenestration, decorative hood molds, and decorative brickwork in parapet. Modern fixed awning.
29. Contributing element. c.1935 one story brick commercial building, altered shopfront.
30. Contributing element. c.1930 one story brick and stucco commercial building; interior of decorative panel sprayed with gunnite.
31. Contributing element. c.1925 one story brick commercial building with shaped parapet and brick panel.
32. Contributing element. Hotel Claiborne (Maritsky Building). 1890 two story brick Italianate commercial building with original cast-iron gallery downstairs and very elaborate decorative pressed metal front upstairs.
33. Non-contributing element. Small one story stucco commercial building.
34. Contributing element. c.1925 one story brick commercial building with decorative panel.
35. Contributing element. c.1925 one story brick commercial building with decorative panel.

36. Contributing element. c.1925 one story brick commercial building with decorative panel; modern fixed awning.

37. Contributing element. c.1925 one story brick commercial building with decorative panel; modern fixed awning.

38. Non-contributing element. Two story stucco commercial building.

39. Contributing element. c.1920 one story brick commercial building with corbelled cornice and decorative brick vent panels; shopfront replaced.

40. Contributing element. Built sometime between 1909 & 1914. One story Beaux Arts bank building with massive arched entrance, free-standing papyrus columns, full entablature and balustrade; bas relief eagles and brincade; anthemions above the cornice; flanked by smaller one story modern but sympathetically designed side wings; modern clock attached in entranceway (easily removable with no damage to architectural fabric).

41. Non-contributing element. One story brick commercial building.

42. Non-contributing element. Two story 1890's commercial building with formstone front.

43. Contributing element. c.1900 two story stucco commercial building with shaped gable parapet and round arch windows.

44. Contributing element. 1935 United States Post Office. One story brick building with neo-classical articulation.

45. Contributing element. c.1910 one story brick commercial building with all of its original Italianate cast-iron columns.

46. Non-contributing element. One story badly altered older commercial building.

47. Non-contributing element. One story brick commercial building.

48. Contributing element. c.1925 brick very intact gas station; pressed metal ceiling in porte-cochere.

49. Contributing element. c.1925 brick commercial building; altered shopfront.

50. Contributing element. c.1925 brick commercial building; altered shopfront.

51. Contributing element. Homer Drugs. c.1890 two story brick Italianate commercial building with segmentally arched fenestration, hood molds, and decorative paneled parapet with corbel table. Shopfront replaced.

52. Non-contributing element. One story brick commercial building.

53. Contributing element. 1922 Masonic Hall. Three story stucco vaguely Arts and Crafts style building with tile roof; first story modern.

54. Non-contributing element. One story brick commercial building.

55. Contributing element. c.1920 two story brick commercial building with decorative panels and largely original shopfront.

56. Contributing element. Claiborne Parish Courthouse (1860-National Register). Two story Greek Revival peripteral style building with ogee molded cupola.

Specific dates 1860-1936
Builder/Architect N/A

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)
Criterion C

The Homer Historic District is locally significant in the area of architecture as a superior example of a historic central business district within the context of northwestern Louisiana. (This includes the parishes of Caddo, Claiborne, Bienville, Webster, and Bossier.) Overall, Homer is the second most impressive example within this region, being surpassed only by the Shreveport Central Business District (National Register) however, it must be pointed out that Shreveport is a major city and hardly comparable to Homer or any of the other smaller towns in the region.

Of the 145 communities in the five-parish area, fourteen have older commercial centers. Excluding Shreveport, Homer is clearly at the apex of the group. To begin with, Homer is the only central business district to feature a Greek Revival building of any kind, let alone a Greek Revival landmark set as the focal point of the district. Secondly, most central business districts in the region are characterized chiefly by relatively plain twentieth century "commercial vernacular" structures. The Homer central business district is conspicuous because, for its size, it contains more architectural landmarks than can be found in any other comparable old downtown in the region. Homer features six major landmarks (#s 11, 23, 32, 40, 51, 56), while the next best example features only three. Finally: Italianate commercial buildings are normally considered distinctly superior to twentieth century "commercial vernacular" buildings, yet they are fairly rare in northwestern Louisiana. Homer has four examples which is a larger number than in any other comparable town in the region. Moreover, examples in other comparable central business districts are relatively plain, featuring simple arched windows and plain brick cornices. They lack the more elaborate articulation found on the Claiborne Hotel (#32), Claiborne Abstract (#28), and Homer Drugs (#51).

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