

The twenty-three buildings which comprise the Ferriday Commercial Historic District represent the historic portion of the only surviving commercial center within the large rural parish of Concordia. The district consists of one and two story masonry commercial buildings located within a roughly two block area west of the town's railroad corridor. Contributing elements range in date between c.1905 and c.1940. Boundaries were drawn to include all structures within the central business district which retain sufficient historic character while excluding other buildings which have lost their integrity or date to after the historic period. The district has a low non-contributing rate of only nine percent.

All of the district's buildings stand flush to adjacent sidewalks, and approximately three-fourths are connected by party walls. As a result, most mass closely together along the streets, with only a few gaps between structures. The majority of the buildings in the district are uniformly simple, flat-roofed structures with restrained decorative detailing, mostly in the form of molded brick architraves across parapets. Transom windows and canopies are also prominent features. Finally, Italianate segmentally arched windows are found above the shopfronts on all but one of the district's seven, two-story structures.

Contributing Elements

All 50+ year old buildings which retain sufficient integrity are considered contributing elements for the purpose of this submission.

Non-Contributing Elements

There are only two non-contributing elements in the district. These include one modern building and one historic building whose post-fire remodeling may not be fifty years old.

Breakdown of Buildings by Date:

Where possible, buildings were dated using Sanborn Fire Insurance Company Maps (1923, 1926, 1938). Otherwise, a circa date was given based upon the architectural evidence.

Breakdown by Date

c.1905-1923	6
Between 1923 and 1926	8
Between 1926 and c.1940	7
Non-contributing	2

Assessment of Integrity

Part of Ferriday's central business district is excluded from this National Register submission due to loss of integrity. However, the Division of Historic Preservation estimates that over half of what was historically the CBD is included within the boundaries of the historic district. Although many of the included structures have experienced alteration in the form of changes to their shopfronts and canopies, the buildings still easily convey their architectural status as builder-vernacular commercial buildings and the historic role of the CBD as a commercial center for the almost completely rural Concordia Parish (see part 8).

FERRIDAY COMMERCIAL HISTORIC DISTRICT INVENTORY

1. Contributing Element. United States Post Office (1939). One-story brick French Neo-Classical style building with false chimneys and arched windows set within arched panels. WPA murals.
2. Non-Contributing Element. (Original construction between 1923 and 1926.) Two-story brick and metal movie theater with stepped parapet. According to local sources, the building was partially destroyed by fire and rebuilt during or just after World War II. Because the present facade may not be fifty years old, the building is being classified a non-contributing element.
3. Contributing Element. (Between 1923 and 1926) One-story brick, party wall commercial building with restrained decorative brick cornice and altered shopfront and canopy. Although buildings no. 3, 4, and 5 all have identical cornice treatments, they are separate party wall buildings.

- 4) Contributing Element. (Between 1923 and 1926) Two-story brick Italianate party wall commercial building with segmentally arched windows and restrained decorative brick cornice. Shopfront and canopy replaced; second floor windows boarded over.
- 5) Contributing Element. (Between 1923 and 1926) One-story brick, party wall commercial building with restrained decorative brick cornice. Shopfront and canopy replaced.
6. Contributing Element. Vogt's Ferriday Drug Store (before 1923). Two story, low-key Italianate party wall commercial building with segmentally arched openings and second floor doors opening to lost balcony. Balcony replaced by canopy, possibly before 1938.
7. Contributing element. (Between 1926 and 1938) One-story brick party wall commercial building featuring brick pilasters and cornice. Canopy added before 1938.
8. Non-Contributing Element. Small modern one-story brick office building.
9. Contributing Element. (Between 1926 and 1938) Wilson's Printing. One-story brick commercial building featuring pilasters, a corbelled cornice and a parapet. Doors replaced.
10. Contributing Element. (Between 1923 and 1926) One-story brick party wall commercial building. Shopfront altered; canopy lost. Although from the exterior buildings No. 10 and 11 appear to be one structure, Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps clearly show that No.11 did not exist in 1926.
11. Contributing Element. (Between 1926 and 1938) One story brick party wall commercial building originally identical in appearance to No. 10. Shopfront altered; canopy lost.
12. Contributing Element. (Between 1923 and 1926) Small one-story brick party wall commercial building with replaced canopy.
13. Contributing Element. (Before 1923) One-story brick party wall commercial building with three bays, corbelled cornice, and stepped parapet. Shopfronts altered.
14. Contributing Element. (Before 1923) One-story brick party wall commercial building with three bays, corbelled cornice, and stepped parapet; originally identical to building # 13. Shopfronts replaced and modern canopy added.
15. Contributing Element. Concordia Drugs (before 1923). Two story Italianate party wall commercial building with segmentally arched windows, corbelled cornice and shaped parapet. Second floor doors opening to lost front balcony. Shopfront replaced; windows boarded over on front.
16. Contributing Element. (Between 1923 ~d 1926) One-story brick party wall commercial building with shopfronts replaced.
17. Contributing Element. (Between 1926 and 1938) One-story brick party wall commercial building with restrained decorative cornice and altered shopfront. Although at first glance buildings No. 16 and 17 appear to be one structure, the Sanborn Maps indicate that No. 17 did not exist in 1926.
18. Contributing Element. Ferriday Dental Clinic (before 1923). Large two story brick Italianate corner commercial building with segmentally arched windows, corbelled cornice and semi-circular windows within frieze below parapet; lower story altered.
19. Contributing Element. (Between 1923 and 1926) One-story brick party wall commercial building with tile facade and shaped parapet. Shopfront altered.
20. Contributing Element. (Between 1926 and 1938) One-story brick party-wall commercial building with altered shopfront.
21. Contributing Element. (c.1940) One-story brick party wall commercial building with corbelled cornice and altered shopfront.

22. Contributing Element. (Between 1923 and 1926) Large two-story brick Italianate commercial building with segmentally arched windows; altered shopfront and canopy; second story windows boarded over.

23. Contributing Element. Myer Discount House (before 1923). Two-story brick commercial building with Italianate segmentally arched windows and triangular decorative motifs within the frieze. Shopfront and canopy altered.

Period of Significance	c.1905-c.1940 (architecture) c.1905-1944 (commerce)
Architect/Builder	Unknown
Criterion A & C	

The Ferriday Commercial Historic District is locally significant in the areas of architecture and commerce. It is important architecturally because it is the only concentration of historic commercial buildings in Concordia Parish. The period of significance for this section of the nomination ranges from c.1905, the date of the earliest buildings, to c.1940, the construction date of the latest contributing element. The district is significant in the area of commerce because it was historically the commercial center of a large active agricultural area. Downtown Ferriday continued to serve in this capacity until well after the 50 year cutoff date. Therefore, the period of significance for this portion of the nomination ranges from c.1905 to 1944.

Architecture

Ferriday stands on land which was once a part of a cotton plantation called Helena. A far-sighted individual who recognized the importance of the railroad, J. C. Ferriday, Helena's owner, encouraged railroad development in Concordia Parish by granting generous rights-of-way across his land. The Texas and Pacific and the Iron Mountain appear to have been two of the railroads which built across Ferriday's land. After his death in 1895, one of the railroads served his widow with a quick claim deed and assumed control of part of the plantation. By 1903, this control had passed to the Ferriday Realty Company, which platted Ferriday as a railroad town in that year. Three years later the town had grown enough to warrant incorporation.

The commercial zone which developed in Ferriday represents a characteristic type of commercial development found throughout Louisiana during the period from the 1890s through the 1930s. The type consists of small, brick, false fronted, commercial buildings of one or two stories. Single story buildings typically have broad and open shopfronts (containing plate glass windows and transoms) surmounted by modestly ornamental brick parapets, some of which have shaped tops. Two story buildings have this treatment plus a second story facade with large windows and additional ornamental brickwork. In Ferriday, all but one of the two story buildings feature segmentally arched windows. As a rule, buildings are set right up against the sidewalk and are separated from each other by party walls. This makes for a distinctive streetscape.

Architecturally these structures are usually seen as rural, builder-vernacular descendants of pretentious Victorian commercial buildings. In most Louisiana rural communities brick commercial buildings of this type began to replace older frame commercial buildings in about 1895. They were fashionable because they were more like urban commercial buildings, and, more importantly, they were fireproof. Often entire central business districts were rebuilt during this period, and available Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps indicate that such building replacement did take place in Ferriday.

Commercial areas of the type found in Ferriday occur so often that today they are rightly regarded as a distinct phase of Louisiana commercial architecture. However, the Historic Standing Structures Survey for Concordia Parish clearly documents that Ferriday's is the only surviving historic commercial district in the parish. The town's only rival, the parish seat of Vidalia, lost virtually its entire CBD to Mississippi River bridge construction and a levee widening project during the late 1930s.

Commerce

The Ferriday Commercial Historic District is locally significant in the area of commerce because it represents the important role which Ferriday played as a trading center to the surrounding agricultural community.

The story of Ferriday's founding has been related above. In addition to the passenger terminal, freight depot, and roundhouse built in Ferriday by the railroads (all demolished), a number of other industries and businesses developed in the town. Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps indicate the pattern of this development. For example, in 1923 (the first year for which these maps are available) Ferriday supported two hotels, three restaurants, three drugstores, two cobblers, four grocers, four barbers, a pool hall, three boarding houses, and one store somehow related to the automobile industry. The 1926 map records a movie theater, one hotel, two restaurants, three drugstores, one cobbler, six grocers, one newspaper, two barbers, one jewelry store, one pool hall, two rooming houses, and eight vacant stores. By 1938 (the date of the last available map) the town was showing the effects of economic decline, but it still supported the movie house, a telegraph office, one hotel, six restaurants, two dry cleaners, one drug store, one cobbler, one grocer and 23 businesses identified only as "stores." All of these businesses were located within two blocks of the town's railroad corridor. Other early twentieth century industries and businesses mentioned in a history of the town published in 1991 include hoop and cooperage companies, a lumber company, a cotton compressing plant, a gas distribution plant, hardware, feed, and dry goods stores, a millinery shop, a post office, an undertaker, and a florist. With these conveniences Ferriday was able to provide the goods and services needed by the cotton farmers in the surrounding area.

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Sanborn Insurance Company maps, 1923, 1926, 1938.