

The Evangeline Bank and Trust Company (1913) is a two-story masonry building featuring elements of the Classical Revival style. It stands at a busy downtown intersection in the Evangeline Parish seat of Ville Platte. Despite some alteration and the addition of an unstyled side wing, the bank's Classical Revival styling remains intact.

Because of its corner location, the design of the rectangular shaped building incorporates two decorative facades. Both elevations are constructed of finer brick than that found on the building's other two, more utilitarian walls. Identical projecting central entrance pavilions distinguish the decorated elevations. Each is composed of tall, thick brick piers with molded concrete capitals. The capitals support a concrete entablature with architrave, frieze and overhanging cornice. The cornice, in turn, supports a stylized raking pediment flanked by short, block-like piers with simple caps. The building's title, flanked by roundels, is shown in bas-relief within the frieze. The space within each pavilion contains an elaborate entrance surround. Its much thinner concrete pilasters rise from molded bases to support molded capitals and a concrete entablature. Just below the capitals, the pilasters are ornamented with necking and a vertical geometric motif (see below). The entablature supports an overlarge transom containing four windows -- two large square openings in the center and smaller rectangular openings on each end. Each transom window is subdivided to resemble a starburst. The rectangular end transom openings are separated from the central square ones by wooden panels. Sidelights within molded rectangular openings flank the door; stylized bas-relief plaques are found below the sidelights.

On the Main Street elevation, the entrance pavilion appears within a large bay with tall, thick piers with molded capitals marking the building's corners. Roundels ornament these capitals. A large window pierces the wall between each of the entrance pavilion's corner piers and the piers located at the actual corners of the building. The second floor of the Main Street façade is pierced by five symmetrically placed windows, each distinguished by a keystone above its lintel. Identical piers divide the longer Court Street façade into three bays, the central of which contains this elevation's entrance pavilion. The right bay of the Court Street elevation contains a secondary entrance, this one leading to a hall and staircase accessing the building's second level. It is flanked by sidelights and surmounted by a three-light transom. The left bay contains an overlarge window, an alteration described more fully below. Each bay on this elevation contains a second story set of paired windows accompanied by keystones.

Several other Classical decorative features are found on the building. A brick watertable is visible on the two major facades and the rear elevation. A concrete entablature also graces the two major elevations. It is composed of a molded architrave and an overhanging cornice, with a plain band of brick between the two serving as the frieze. After turning the side and rear corners, the ornate entablature is replaced by a more simple brick entablature on the building's undecorated and utilitarian side and rear elevations. Above the entablature, a simply paneled brick parapet encircles the building. Its brick matches that of the structure's two undecorated walls. One suspects that the parapet was once painted white to match the entablature, with the paint later being removed. Just below the entablature on the Main Street elevation are two rectangular shaped elements resembling brackets. They are reminiscent of the vertical motifs found on the pilasters of the entrance surround but are more pronounced, with corbelling on their upper portions and guttae distinguishing their ends.

On the interior, the original floor plan is still clearly discernable. A large banking room containing a lobby and an overlarge teller's area occupies probably two-thirds of the first floor. The room's marble wainscot and counters are of unknown date but are not original. The rear third of the building holds the bank's vault, one office, and the previously mentioned hallway adjoining the secondary Court Street entrance. In addition to accessing the stair, this hall leads to a period bathroom located beneath the stair. The hall retains its original tile floor as well as a decorative chair rail. The undecorated second floor contains offices opening off a central hall.

Other features of interest on the building include the marble step leading from the sidewalk to the main door on each elevation and the tiles (set in the sidewalk in front of each main door), spelling out the building's name.

In addition to the previously mentioned changes to the wainscot and counters, other alterations to the banking room include:

1. installation of a plate glass wall forming a vestibule at the Main Street entrance,
2. subdivision of the teller area by a plate glass wall creating a hallway between the teller's space and the rear third of the building with the vault, and
3. replacement of the lobby's floor tiles.
4. installation of carpeting in the teller's area and modern countertops in the banking room.

Other interior alterations include the installation of acoustical tile ceilings throughout the building, the placement of modern floor tile in some areas, the reconfiguration of part of the second floor hall and offices, and the insertion of a second floor restroom in one corner. The latter two changes were accomplished when a radio station occupied part of the second floor.

Exterior alterations since the building's construction include:

1. replacement of the original door in each central entrance pavilion with a modern plate glass door flanked by plate glass sidelights (not the previously mentioned sidelights forming part of the entrance surround). The secondary door in the right bay of the Court Street façade is also a plate glass replacement. In addition, the original lower floor windows in the left bay of the Court Street façade have been replaced with a large three-pane plate glass window.
2. installation of canopies on most of the Court Street windows.
3. attachment of a large sign and a clock to one corner of the building.
4. construction of two additions: an early one-story rear space and an unstyled, one-story side wing (which dates to the late 1970s) facing Main Street.

Although the presence of the exterior alterations noted above is regrettable, the bank's strong Classical Revival articulation easily overwhelms them. As the best of Ville Platte's few architectural landmarks (see Part 8), the Evangeline Bank and Trust Company building is a strong candidate for National Register listing.

Significant Dates:	1913
Architect/Builder:	Unknown
Criterion:	C

The Evangeline Bank and Trust Company building is locally significant because it ranks as the town of Ville Platte's most impressive architectural landmark.

Ville Platte's founding dates to well before 1880, but very few buildings survive from before that date. Although the State Historic Preservation Office has not yet officially surveyed the community, a windshield survey of the central business district and older neighborhoods by a staff member found few landmarks. For example, only a handful of houses exhibit any Creole influence in this French community. One also sees a few moderately sized and styled galleried cottages, a smattering of low-key Queen Anne Revival, a few quite late versions of the Colonial Revival, and one notable dwelling (dating to late in the historic period) combining Colonial Revival and French decorative elements. Otherwise, the housing is a mixture of simple bungalows, small galleried cottages, slab-on-grade ranch houses, and many unstyled dwellings. Probably no more than five or six residences could be classified as landmarks, and those only because of the undistinguished nature of the town's dwellings.

The simplicity seen in the residential districts is also found downtown. Here the streetscape consists almost entirely of one-story brick or frame unstyled commercial structures. Only two CBD buildings rank as architectural landmarks – i.e., are strongly styled. These are the Classical Revival style Evangeline Bank and Trust Company building (the candidate) and the Italianate Bank of Ville Platte (National Register). Of the small number of residential and commercial landmarks identified, the candidate is certainly the most impressive. Thus, the Evangeline Bank and Trust Company is a strong candidate for National Register listing.

#### Historical Note

The Evangeline Bank and Trust Company occupied the candidate until 1977, when the business sold the property to the Ville Platte municipal government. It then served as the community's city hall (with a portion of the upper floor leased to a radio station). In Spring 2005 the city government moved out, but it still retains ownership of the property. Today, the ASI Federal Credit Union occupies the landmark

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Site visit by National Register staff.

Windshield survey by National Register staff.