

The New Iberia High School stands a few blocks from downtown New Iberia on one of the community's busiest thoroughfares. The Neo-Classical style, masonry structure consists of a three-story core constructed in 1926 and flanking two-story wings added in 1939. The building has experienced very little change since its expansion and easily retains the integrity required for National Register listing.

Although the overall appearance of the school's 1926 core is that of a rectangular mass, the three-story facade is divided into projecting and receding planes. The majority of the structure's classical decoration is found on the central projection, which is articulated as an entrance pavilion. This ornament, much of which is made of cast concrete, includes:

- 1) engaged, colossal columns in antis surmounted by composite order capitals. The colossal pillars which form the outer members of the in antis motif are crowned by capitals featuring elongated acanthus leaves.
- 2) an entablature consisting of a smooth cast concrete architrave, a brick frieze featuring round and square plaques with teas relief leaf motifs, and a cornice with separate bands of dentils and modillions.
- 3) a shaped brick parapet with cast concrete coping surmounting the entablature. This parapet features a cast concrete open book and lozenge shaped plaques on its face.
- 4) a plaque exhibiting the words "High School" between the windows of the second and third stories.
- 5) an arched door surround ornamented with various designs. In addition to the surround itself, the areas around and within the arch are also highly ornamented. For example, a bellflower motif surmounted by a child's head is found within the arch's keystone, teas relief ribbons and wreaths which encircle escutcheons decorate the spandrels, and an ornamental fan form is located within the arch itself.

Classical features found on the rest of the 1926 building include the continuation of the entablature and parapet, both of which encircle the building and are restrained, virtually unornamented extensions of those found on the central pavilion. In addition, the building has a brick belt course and a cast concrete watertable. Other elements of interest on the original building include geometric shaped plaques at the crowns of the pilasters, bands of large windows, and prominent lintels at the first and second level. The two-story wings of 1939 replicate this restrained styling, except that their pilasters lack the geometric ornament found on the originals.

The school's floorplan is typical of the period and consists of classrooms lining each side of long central hallways on each floor. The only exception to this is an auditorium which projects well beyond the classrooms on the rear elevation at the center of the building. Its main entrance is on the second floor and its balcony is accessible from the third. The auditorium is the interior's only ornamented space. Its proscenium is distinguished by paneled pilasters supporting a paneled arch with an escutcheon suggesting the presence of a keystone. The room also has a cornice and a chair rail. The first floor room below the auditorium was the original gym.

Except for the closing of certain windows and the replacement of some fire escapes, the exterior of the school has experienced no change other than that associated with deterioration. Deterioration and the loss of some non-decorative materials due to asbestos abatement also characterize the interior. Changes not related to these causes include the raising of the gym floor when the space was converted into a study hall and the loss of the auditorium's seats.

The few above mentioned alterations are minor in nature and have no effect upon the building's National Register eligibility. As a landmark among the city's early twentieth century buildings, the New Iberia High School is a strong candidate for National Register listing.

Significant dates 1926, 1939
Architect/Builder William T. Nolan
Criterion C

The New Iberia High School is locally significant in the area of architecture because it is a landmark among the city's early twentieth century buildings. It is also the only example of the Neo-Classical style within Iberia Parish.

Although New Iberia contains a wealth of architecturally significant buildings in the nineteenth century French Creole, Greek Revival, Romanesque, Queen Anne, and Eastlake styles, its early twentieth century architectural patrimony is fairly undistinguished. With the exception of the high school, an Italian Renaissance church, a Georgian Revival post office, and an Art Deco theatre, New Iberia's remaining early twentieth century non-residential structures can be characterized as square, two-story buildings, often of party wall construction, and exhibiting little decoration. Although the community has a few noteworthy Colonial Revival homes, its collection of twentieth century residences consists mostly of holdover Queen Anne cottages and plain bungalows. Against this background, the Neo-Classical styled New Iberia High School is a notable visual landmark.

A review of the approximately 876 buildings listed in the Historic Structures Survey for Iberia Parish also indicates that the school is the parish's only example of the Neo-Classical style. Furthermore, the building's detailing is particularly fine, as can be seen in its highly ornamented entrance pavilion featuring an arched door surround decorated by teas relief sculpture, colossal columns in antis, and a full entablature crowned by a shaped parapet.

Historical Note

The building served as New Iberia's high school until 1964, when a new facility opened. It was then used as a middle school until 1990.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Historic Standing Structures Survey for Iberia Parish, LA. Site visit by National Register staff.