

The Bank of Lockport is located within the central business district of the Lafourche Parish community of Lockport. A low-key, vernacular example of the Romanesque Revival style, the masonry building was constructed as a one-story structure in 1901 and expanded by the addition of a second story in the same style by 1910. It has experienced minor changes on the exterior and a rehabilitation with more notable changes on the interior. However, the bank remains eligible for National Register listing.

The bank was originally constructed to house two businesses under one roof, with thick brick walls separating its two sections. Although of poor quality, two early photographs indicate that this two-tenant building was a one-story structure capped by a molded cornice, high parapet with molded coping and shaped central pediment, and decorative metal roof vent. The northeast portion of the structure, which was occupied by the bank, was deeper than its neighbor--a footprint which survived after the addition of the second story. This was accomplished by copying the placement of facade openings from below and then crowning the whole by replicas of the original cornice and pediment. The decorative vent appears to have been reused. The second story provided additional offices which opened off an "L"-shaped hallway.

The influence of the Romanesque Revival style is seen in prominent round arched openings on the facade's first and second stories. On the lower level, these openings consist of three windows and two paneled French doors surmounted by semi-circular transoms. Each door and window is emphasized by a prominent threshold or sill, as well as by molded pilasters and capitals from which molded arches spring. The openings within the upper portion of the facade consist entirely of windows. Their ornament is comprised of prominent sills and molded, semi-circular surrounds connected to each other by a broken belt course. Keystones at the uppermost point of each arch connect to a continuous belt course located just below the cornice. Although this upper belt course ends immediately after turning the corners of the building, the broken belt course encircles the building. Other architectural features found on the building include the facade's undulating surface, which features slightly projecting and receding planes; the plastering and scoring of the facade to resemble stone; quoins on all but one corner of the structure; an additional belt course separating the first and second stories; the above mentioned molded cornice with shaped pediment; square head windows on the sides and rear; and, on the interior, the first floor's molded window surrounds with bull's eye corner blocks. In addition, the bank's vault survives.

A canopy was installed on the facade some time after 1922 and the words "Gouaux Building" were placed in tile on the right front threshold some time after the Gouaux family purchased the building in 1943. Otherwise, the Bank of Lockport's facade appears to have remained unchanged until the above mentioned 1976 rehabilitation. At that time, doors were cut through the thick wall separating the two portions of the building; the interior was subdivided for use as attorneys' offices and carpet, paneling, and wallpaper were installed; storm windows were placed on all windows except those on the lower facade; lanterns were placed on the facade; the front canopy was replaced with one of similar appearance; and a small canopy was installed over a side door. Although the storm windows detract slightly from the building's appearance, the architectural features which make the structure significant clearly dominate. Furthermore, these windows could easily be removed. The canopy does not cover architectural elements. As an architectural landmark within the community of Lockport, the Bank of Lockport building is a viable candidate for National Register listing.

Significant dates            1901-1910

Architect/Builder        unknown  
Criterion C

The Bank of Lockport is locally significant in the area of architecture because it is a landmark building within the community of Lockport.

Lockport was founded in 1833 when William Fields donated a tract of land to the Barataria and Lafourche Canal Company. Fields had owned all the land on both sides of Bayou Lafourche for several miles up and down the waterway from the future town's location. As part of the donation agreement, the company promised to construct a canal completing the water route between New Orleans and Bayou Terrebonne. The canal itself was completed in 1847, but the locks accompanying it were not finished until c. 1850. After that date, the west side of Bayou Lafourche at Lockport was used as a port for boats awaiting transfer through the locks. Prosperity came with the completed canal. By 1849 the community had a public school; by 1850, a Catholic church; and by 1875, a post office. It incorporated during the latter years of the nineteenth century.

Despite its long history, Lockport has few historic structures left to illustrate its early years. Much of the business district was destroyed by a tornado in 1893, and a catastrophic 1916 fire devastated several downtown blocks. Virtually the entire central business district of the small town contains undistinguished one-story structures dating to the early years of the twentieth century or later. While older residential areas survive, these appear to date only between 1885 and 1930. The houses here consist mainly of undistinguished Creole cottages, shotguns, and bungalows. Only a handful of houses with Eastlake, Queen Anne or Colonial Revival details may be found, and these details are extremely low-key. Against this background, the Bank of Lockport stands as an architectural landmark. It is one of only four two-story commercial buildings in the CBD, and it is one of only two which make any attempt at architectural styling. In addition, although a vernacular interpretation, it is the only example of the Romanesque Revival style within the community. For these reasons, the bank building is a legitimate candidate for National Register listing.

#### Historical Note

The Bank of Lockport opened in November 1901 with a capital stock of \$15,000. By 1910 its profits were over \$30,000. Although the building stood outside the area consumed by the downtown fire of 1916, the bank institution itself failed at some point after 1910. Known as the Farmer's Bank and Trust Company, a second bank occupied the northeast side of the building until it also failed in the 1930s. The Lockport post office occupied the southwest side of the structure until 1943, when the entire building was purchased by the Gouaux family. Eugene Gouaux used the southwest side as his law office until the building's tenants moved out of the second floor offices and first floor former bank space. Then he took over the entire building and rehabilitated it to serve as the office for his family's law practice.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Historic photo of Baratavia Street, Lockport, Louisiana, showing Bank of Lockport building, no date available. Copy in National Register file.

"Eugene Gouaux Office Building," typescript, n.d. Copy in National Register file.

Lockport Eagle, December 21, 1901. Copy of newspaper article and photograph in National Register file.

Site visit by National Register staff.