

Describe the present and original (if known, physical appearance

The Townsend House is a modest Queen Anne Revival frame clapboard residence located on a suburban street in the town of Ruston. There are only minor integrity problems.

According to the records of the church which acquired the building in 1890, the Townsend House was built in Vienna and moved to Ruston shortly thereafter. Given the architectural evidence as well as the historical data, the house must have been built and moved sometime in the period between c. 1885 and 1890.

The house has a central hall plan with two rooms either side. There is also a large bedroom beyond the two rooms on the north side of the hall. Irregularity is introduced into the massing of the house as follows: The north front parlor and the rear dining room protrude from the mass of the house. Each is set under its own shingled gable, An "L" shaped Eastlake gallery connects the two protruding rooms, giving this basically symmetrical house a sharply asymmetrical outward appearance.

Only one of the original chimneys remains and its mantel appears to have been constructed from parts salvaged from older mantels. Windows are four over four with movable louver shutters. About 30 years ago the rear gallery was enclosed for a bathroom, sunroom, and kitchen. Also, the original front door has been replaced and much of the wall canvas is gone.

Despite the aforementioned changes, all of which are minor, the house retains its appearance as a late-nineteenth century cottage and hence still conveys its historical associations.

Specific dates           c.1885  
Builder/Architect       Unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)  
Criteria A and B

The Townsend House is locally significant in the area of exploration/settlement because it is one of two houses which are most closely associated with the growth and early development of the now regionally important city of Ruston. Secondly, it is of local significance in the area of education as the home of H. E Townsend, a well-known Ruston educator. The context for evaluation in both areas of significance is Ruston.

According to the Lincoln Parish Museum and Historical Society, the Townsend House is the second oldest structure presently standing in Ruston. It is also one of only two remaining structures which were moved into Ruston from Vienna after Ruston became the parish seat. (The church records previously mentioned are the source for this last statement.) When Lincoln Parish was created in 1873 Vienna was designated as the parish seat. However, with the coming of the Vicksburg, Shreveport and Pacific Railroad in 1883, the nearby village of Ruston gained in importance and became the parish seat. The act authorizing this change in the location of the parish seat was ratified by the electorate in November 1884; however, it was not until January 25, 1886 that the Ruston town council appropriated funds for the transportation of the original courthouse from Vienna to the new seat of justice. Apparently in the years which followed a number of other structures in Vienna were moved into Ruston. The original courthouse which had been relocated in Ruston is now gone as are all but two of the other buildings. Ruston has since grown in importance to become the third largest population center in northern Louisiana. The Townsend House is one of

only two structures which represent the beginnings of Ruston's growth from an insignificant village to a regionally important town center.

In addition, the house is significant on the local level in the area of education as the home of H. E. Townsend, who played a prominent role in Ruston's early educational growth. Townsend was responsible for the creation of the first high school in Ruston and served as its first principal from 1918 until his retirement in 1952.

#### Historical Sketch:

As stated elsewhere, the Townsend House was built in Vienna and moved shortly thereafter to Ruston. It was acquired in 1890 by the Baptist Church of Christ of Ruston and served as a parsonage from then until 1908, when it was purchased by T. B. Meadows. In August 1920 the Townsends moved in and remained there until Mr. Townsend's death in 1978. Mr. Townsend's contributions to Ruston's educational growth have been discussed already. His wife, who was active in community affairs, is remembered as the first woman in Lincoln Parish who registered to vote. The present owner purchased the property in August 1980.

Relationship of Integrity to Significance: See Item 7

#### Bibliography

Historical Sketch Supplied by Applicant. Copy located in National Register file, Louisiana State Historic Preservation Office.

Obituary. Lillie Belle Townsend. The Times (Shreveport-Bossier), March 21, 1982.

Phone interviews with Roland Gill, Curator of the Lincoln Parish Museum. Mr. Gill supplied the information concerning the house's history vis a vis the move from Vienna.

Brasseaux, Carl A, Conrad, Glenn R., and Robison, R. Warren. The Courthouses of Louisiana. U. S. L. Architecture Series No. 1, Center for Louisiana Studies, University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1977.