

Situated within a moderately large parcel at the edge of the community's small commercial center, the Castleberry Boarding House is a one-story frame dwelling located in the Livingston Parish village of Port Vincent. The property faces a church and cemetery on one side and is bounded by an unnamed waterway connecting to the Amite River at the rear. The original portion of the building (dating to c. 1875) was expanded and remodeled in the Eastlake style c. 1900. Because the remodeling was so extensive, the latter date has been chosen for this nomination. Despite additional alteration, the home retains its c. 1900 character and its National Register eligibility.

Please refer to the attached floorplan to understand the evolution of the candidate. As originally built, the structure contained four rooms in three ranges. The first range held two small spaces, while the center and rear range contained one large room each. (The latter two rooms were approximately the same size.) A chimney (with corbelled cap) served fireplaces in the center and two front rooms. A gallery wrapped around two sides of the building. Around 1900 a new large room was added at the rear of the dwelling, the side gallery was extended, a new wing containing two rooms was attached to one rear corner of the original building at a ninety degree angle, an "L"-shaped shed roof porch was built at the rear of the new areas (see attached floorplan), and an Italianate front door was installed. Each room, in both the original and the new sections, had its own outside door. Decorative and style-defining changes made during the remodeling included the installation of Eastlake columns on the gallery and the placement of Queen Anne Revival textured shingles and a lunette window with stained glass within the front gable's peak.

The home remained in this configuration until the 1940s, when a major expansion occurred at the rear. The new spaces included a dining room, kitchen, large utility room, bath, hallway, and a porch (now enclosed) connecting the bath to the hallway (please refer to floorplan). The c. 1900 rear porch may also have been enclosed at this time. More modern changes include the removal of the wall between the two small front rooms and the wall separating the front rooms from the center space, the installation of a bath which takes up approximately half the space of one of the original front rooms, the construction of a large closet at one corner of the front gallery, the screening of a part of the gallery, and the placement of new Eastlake brackets on a few of the older Eastlake columns. (An early photograph of the boarding house shows no brackets.)

As would be expected, the interior of the boarding house is simply finished. Most rooms are sheathed in narrow gauge beaded boards. Some have been sheetrocked, and one is very rough, featuring no interior wall sheathing. Door frames are of plain boards. When the above mentioned walls were removed, the chimney was left free-standing. It has since been varnished. One suspects that it originally was finished off with wooden mantelpieces, but this is not certain.

Despite the foregoing changes, the Castleberry Boarding House retains the bulk of its boarding house era (c. 1900-1935) character, and there is no doubt that someone from the historic period would easily identify the building if he or she should return to Port Vincent today. As a rare survivor of Port Vincent's once thriving commercial area, the building deserves consideration for listing in the National Register.

Contributing Elements

Three contributing outbuildings stand to the rear of the boarding house. They are wooden structures with square nails. (Their metal roofs are, of course, later additions.) They include a carriage house, a kitchen, and a privy. All three are being counted as contributing elements because they were obviously present during the historic period for the boarding house.

Non-Contributing Element

A wooden three car garage with a second level apartment is also located at the rear. It is considered non-contributing because it was built in the 1940s, after the house had ceased to serve boarders.

SIGNIFICANT DATES: c. 1900-1935
ARCHITECT/BUILDER: Unknown
CRITERION: A

The Castleberry Boarding House is locally significant in the area of commerce because it is a rare reminder of Port Vincent's historic role as a commercial hub. The period of significance for the nomination ranges from c. 1900, when the building was remodeled (see Part 7) and became the Castleberry Boarding House, until 1935, when it became a private home.

To understand the early importance of the Port Vincent area, it is necessary to comprehend local geography. The village is located on the Amite River. During much of the historic period it served as one of this river's main crossing points and even had a ferry in operation. Equally important, the Amite was once part of a water-borne trade route which connected the Mississippi River to the Gulf of Mexico. Port Vincent's location on this route made it an important shipping point. The route remained significant until 1812, when Andrew Jackson ordered that Bayou Manchac (the route's western waterway) be closed off from the Mississippi by a dam. Despite this wartime measure, the remaining interconnected waterways continued to be important for many years.

The earliest recorded settlers in the Port Vincent vicinity were Spaniards who owned large grants of land in the area before 1800. Merchant and schooner owner Vincent Scivicque donated a 60 by 90 foot plot to serve as a community cemetery in 1824. Later, he built a small chapel on the cemetery site. For a while, the community was apparently named Subique's [sic] Ferry. The first post office opened in 1833 and the first sawmill in 1855. Between 1872 and 1881 the village served as the Livingston Parish seat. Organized efforts to obtain settlers were evident in 1873, when the local newspaper published a map of the town laid out in squares and lots. The map referred to the town as Port Vincent, and a new Port Vincent post office opened the following year. (Two other post offices, each with a different name, had superceded the 1833 facility.) The first newspaper was sold and moved to another town, but its editor soon started another. Primary and secondary resources describing Port Vincent are rare, but historic photographs document the existence of at least two stores, and a copy of a historic newspaper advertisement documents a third. In addition, one local historian records that, during its heyday, the community supported a brick and stave mill, at least one sawmill (and possibly more), a cotton gin, a warehouse, boat docks, schools, churches, boarding houses, and other businesses. Today, its primary function is as a weekend resort for persons enjoying water sports.

The Castleberry Boarding House was one of Port Vincent's historic businesses. The building had housed a store and had served briefly as the Livingston Parish Courthouse before its conversion into a residence for boarders. It became a boarding house after local resident Andrew Collins purchased the building c. 1900 as a gift for a young woman named Bessie Castleberry. It was apparently Miss Castleberry and her mother who remodeled the building, adding more sleeping rooms for paying guests. The business prospered, hosting traveling salesmen, professionals (such as dentists) who brought their skills to the town as needed, local businessmen without homes of their own, and vacationers. It also apparently served as a center of social activity for the town. The business operated until 1935, when Bessie Castleberry married Francis Henry McCulla and the couple converted the building into their private home.

Although Port Vincent is a very old community, little survives to represent its past. The area has not been surveyed, but a recent windshield survey by National Register staff discovered almost no historic buildings in the village. Instead, the settlement supports a small number of

businesses providing services for sportsmen and weekend vacationers. All of these are housed in undistinguished buildings which, although difficult to date, appear to be less than fifty years old. This leaves the Castleberry Boarding House as the only building surviving to represent the village's commercial life during the historic period.

NOTE: As noted above, the boarding house served a brief period as the Livingston Parish Courthouse. This service occurred between 1875 (when fire destroyed the previous courthouse) and 1881, when the parish seat moved to another town. The boarding house cannot be nominated to the Register for its courthouse role because it no longer looks as it did during its period of service.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Advertisement for Ed Cooper store, *Port Vincent Times*, July 22, 1873.

History Book Committee of Edward Livingston Historical Association, editor and compiler. *History of Livingston Parish, Louisiana*, n.p., 1986.

Historic photograph of Castleberry Boarding House, in History Book Committee of Edward Livingston Historical Association, editor and compiler. *History of Livingston Parish, Louisiana*, n.p., 1986.

Seven historic photographs of Port Vincent, Louisiana; copies in National Register file.

Site visit by National Register staff.

Windshield survey by National Register staff.