

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Coushatta Bank (c.1890) is a two-story, brick, false front commercial building located in the oldest (the river town) portion of Coushatta. Despite a few alterations, the bank retains its National Register eligibility.

The building features wide mortar joints on the sides and narrow red colored mortar joints on the false front. Most of the windows have segmentally arched tops, and the facade windows on the second story are set in deep recessed panels. The lower story of the facade features three ornamental cast-iron pillars with fluted bases, sinuous relief sculpture, and stylized leaf capitals. At one time there was also a plate glass shopfront with a transomed door on each end. However, since that time the front has been partially bricked in and only the doors and the pillars remain. The facade is surmounted by a brick paneled frieze consisting of bricks set with the corners pointing outward. This in turn is surmounted by a full entablature of pressed metal with a garland frieze and a heavy modillion cornice.

The interior features a single side staircase, plaster walls, beaded board wainscoting, beaded board ceilings, and chimneys set within the brick walls. The chimneys were for stoves; there were never any fireplaces. In the rear of the lower story is a brick vault.

Alterations:

In addition to the bricking in of the lower facade, the following changes have occurred in the bank:

- (1) An end portion of the pressed metal entablature has been lost.
- (2) Two of the side windows have been replaced and partially bricked in.
- (3) Metal awnings have been installed in the upper story.
- (4) In about 1930 a rear frame addition was built.

Assessment of Integrity:

Despite these losses and changes, the bank is still the commercial landmark of Coushatta. It still retains all the features, mentioned in Item 8, which contribute to its significance. In addition, the rear addition does not affect one's view of the commercial false front. Moreover, the awnings and the bricking in are changes which are easily reversible.

Specific dates	c.1890
Builder/Architect	unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)
Criterion C .

The Coushatta Bank is locally significant in the area of architecture as the commercial landmark of the town of Coushatta.

The parish seat of Coushatta has experienced three periods of growth. The town first developed as a port on the Red River in the second half of the nineteenth century. Most of the old river town area has been lost due to the caving in of the Red River bank and fires in 1874, 1880, and 1918. Only the bank and three residential type structures remain today from this initial period of development. In the early-twentieth century a second town center developed, at some distance from the first, around the railroad. In the mid-twentieth century a third town center developed, at some distance from the first two, around Louisiana Highway 71.

All this has yielded a commercial building stock of about forty older structures, most of which date from the 1920's, '30's, and '40's. With one exception, these buildings are invariably plain with no shopfront ornamentation and little decorative brickwork. Relatively few have even a brick

cornice. The single exception is the Coughatta Bank, which is the only commercial building featuring a pressed metal entablature, segmentally arched windows, decorative cast-iron pillars, and an ornamental brick frieze. All in all, it is Coughatta's only commercial structure which could be described as "Victorian" in character.

NB: The attached Determination of Eligibility form was based upon information provided by a consultant. The present nomination form was prepared by the National Register staff of the Division of Historic Preservation after it conducted a comprehensive survey of the cultural resources of Coughatta in July of 1983. Should any discrepancy be noted between the two documents, the nomination form should be regarded as the authoritative source. You will note that the Determination of Eligibility form mentions the bank as a rare survivor of the river town development. We are not claiming significance on the basis of this argument in the nomination because the bank was built near the end of the river town era and hence its role in the nineteenth century commercial development of Coughatta is difficult to assess. By contrast, the architectural argument was obvious and easily documented by the survey.

Major Bibliographical References

Old photo showing Coughatta Bank in its original appearance.

Windshield survey of Coughatta conducted by Division of Historic Preservation staff on July 9, 1983.

Red River Bridge and Approaches, Coughatta, Louisiana. Report #2, February 1979, U. S. Dept. of Transportation and La. Dept. of Transportation and Development.