

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Bank of Gueydan (1902) is a two-story Romanesque Revival style commercial building located on a corner lot within Gueydan's business district. The masonry structure retains two remarkably well preserved arcaded exterior faces. However, the building's original interior features have been lost. It is for its two public faces that the bank is being nominated to the National Register.

The bank's corner location necessitates that two of its exterior walls be styled, and the resulting design is meant to be viewed from a three-quarter angle. The public walls display a number of details which identify the building as a late example of Romanesque Revival styling. The most notable of these features are the heavy semicircular brick arcades which house the building's openings. These arcades pierce both stories of the structure on its two street faces. The lower arcade springs from tall piers decorated by horizontal raised brick bands. Each of this arcade's curving spans is articulated by a single raised semicircular band of bricks. The piers of the upper arcade are plain, but the arched windows are more highly decorated than those below. Each is articulated by a raised semicircular band of brick dentils, which in turn is outlined by a single raised brick band like that on the lower level. Other Romanesque features found on the building include a double belt course (one of which is denticulated) between the first and second floor, a third belt course between the upper arcade and the corbelled table of the parapet, and the suggestion of a tower at the corner arched entrance. The latter is created by an inward break in the facade walls on each side of the entrance and is reinforced by the fact that the walls in this area rise slightly higher than the rest of the building. The piers at the entrance also help to distinguish the area, for they are both thinner and shorter than the other piers on the first floor. Other architectural details of importance on the bank's exterior include its watertable, an original side entrance door, and a crenelated parapet which hints at the Gothic Revival style.

Unlike the building's highly decorated street fronts, the bank's rear elevation and side wall are extremely plain. The interior also lacks distinction, for the former first floor banking room has been virtually gutted. The three rooms of the second floor are equally plain, with the beaded board wall covering popular during the period of the bank's construction serving as this area's only notable feature.

### **Assessment of Integrity**

In addition to the loss of integrity described above, the Bank of Gueydan has seen the following changes:

1. the rearrangement of walls and the installation of a modern kitchen on the second floor,
2. the painting of the original exterior bricks,
3. the installation of glass blocks in several of the downstairs windows and installation of aluminum sash windows in others on the lower level,
4. the removal of an enclosed staircase at the rear of the structure which once gave access from the street to offices on the second floor. As a result of this change, the former exterior door opening into the stairway has also been glazed with glass blocks.
5. the replacement of the original tall doors of the main entrance with a set of shorter doors and a second transom to fill the remaining space above them. However, the original high transom and tall sidelights of this entrance remain in place.

Although the loss of the Bank of Gueydan's interior architectural details is regrettable, the building is being nominated to the National Register for its exterior Romanesque Revival styling. The distinctively articulated arcades, thick piers, three belt courses, corbelled table, and crenelated parapet all remain remarkably intact and make the building a landmark within the community. In addition, the fact that the building displays two decorated faces rather than the usual one also contributes to its landmark status. The changes to the facade are all minor, have very little visual impact, and can easily be reversed. Thus, the integrity of the bank's public faces remains intact, and the building is a strong candidate for National Register listing.

Significant dates            1902  
Architect/Builder            Unknown  
Criterion C

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Bank of Gueydan is locally significant in the area of architecture within the context of Gueydan because it is a landmark among the community's late nineteenth and early twentieth century buildings.

In 1987 the Division of Historic Preservation sponsored a survey of the historic structures in Vermilion Parish. This project included the community of Gueydan, where 43 buildings were identified as being at least 50 years of age or older. A few of these buildings are one or two story frame residences showing minor influences from the Queen Anne, Colonial Revival or Bungalow styles. However, most of the homes are nondescript structures which show no stylistic influence at all. For the most part, the community's small number of one and two story public and commercial structures are also extremely plain. Against this background the Romanesque Revival style Bank of Gueydan (the only building of this style in the community) stands as the town's most notable visual landmark. The bank's significant Romanesque Revival features include heavy semicircular brick arcades springing from thick piers, three belt courses, a corbelled table, denticular decorative bands, and a distinctive entrance bay with its own set of piers and arched openings. The structure's crenelated parapet also adds to its landmark appearance. In addition, the bank's two public faces make it the only building in Gueydan which is meant to be viewed from a diagonal angle.

#### Major Bibliographical References

Historic Structures Survey for Vermilion Parish, Louisiana.

Tour of Gueydan community by National Register staff member.