



Investigation Summary Report

Elizabeth Town Hall Elizabeth, LA



HISTORY

The Elizabeth Hospital Building (1924) is a two story frame structure located in a semi-rural setting in the small community of Elizabeth. It has received only minor alterations since construction and hence can easily convey its historical associations.

Some controversy exists concerning the date of construction of the hospital building. A stone on the front steps bears the date 1924, but a building which looks very much like the present one appears in a March 1923 publication. Some older town residents recall that an earlier hospital was damaged or destroyed by fire and restored or rebuilt shortly thereafter (accounts differ). We are using 1924 as the official construction date.

The somewhat diluted Colonial Revival style structure is two rooms with a central corridor running from end to end. The five part facade is eleven bays wide with a central aedicule motif arched entrance under a pediment. The exterior features three different types of clapboarding, which lends a subtle textured effect. The nine over one windows are set singly and in pairs, frames are unadorned. The building is surmounted by a system of low hip roofs with exposed rafter ends. The interior is relatively plain with bungalow style panel doors and simple cornices. All of the floors are hardwood except for the operating room which has a tile floor.

The Elizabeth Hospital Building is currently being renovated and the bagasse board walls are being replaced with sheet rock, This has caused only a minimal difference in appearance. The window surrounds, cornices and other historic woodwork features are being retained. In addition, a fire egress door has been cut at each end of the building (side elevations). In our opinion, these changes should be regarded as minor since they make little visual difference

The Elizabeth Hospital Building is locally significant in the area of industry because it best represents the community's origins and early history as a lumber company town.

The sawmill town of Elizabeth was founded, owned, and operated by the Industrial Lumber Company. The company already owned two mills in nearby Oakdale and one in Vinton when in 1907 it located a new mill site at Elizabeth and platted the town. The mill site and adjacent town site were in the heart of a 70,000 acre parcel of long leaf yellow pine acquired by Industrial in 1905.

The huge Elizabeth mill began operation in 1909 and had a daily capacity of 160,000 feet of lumber when operating single shift. The company's two mills in Oakdale each had a daily capacity of 75,000, The three were linked by company built railroads, with Elizabeth serving as an Industrial headquarters. Elizabeth was also the home of three smaller allied industries: Producers' Turpentine Company; Southern Wood Products Corporation (turpentine, pine oil, pine tar and charcoal); and Calcasieu Manufacturing Company (turpentine, resin, and paper from otherwise unusable stumps). These companies, which were part of the Industrial "family," enabled the parent company to boast that "the entire original crop produced by the land has been utilized without waste"

Industrial was also quite proud of its motto "Builders, not spoilers." According to a 1923 company publication, Industrial devoted considerable attention to developing suitable cut over land for agricultural use. Specific activities in Elizabeth included a colonization plan, a sweet potato curing plant, a canning plant, and experimental farms.

This 1923 company publication, although obviously biased, is an invaluable pictorial and written record of Elizabeth's "golden age." It even has an aerial view showing a town much larger than the present one. In addition to the large mill and allied operations, there was a company office, a large mercantile company, a hospital, a civic auditorium, several schools, hotels, six churches (three white and three black), and a movie theatre, not to mention housing for the workers, management, etc. Also, as was often the custom in company towns of the period, Industrial provided outdoor recreational facilities such as a golf course, two hashing clubs, and a park complete with an open air pavilion. Elizabeth's permanent residents numbered about 3,000 in 1923.

According to an individual who has lived in the community since 1911, Industrial shut down operations in 1940, whereupon Elizabeth became a paper mill town. (Apparently Industrial's interests were purchased by a paper mill.) As indicated previously, today's Elizabeth (at least the historic portion) is a considerably reduced and depleted version of the 1923 boom town. The mill is gone, and the only non-residential buildings remaining are the hospital, the company built Methodist church, and a small Catholic church which may or may not have been built by Industrial. There are also 50-75 workers cottages as well as several larger fairly plain houses which were presumably for managers and other upper echelon employees.

The State Historic Preservation Office feels that, of these extant resources the hospital building best represents Elizabeth's history as a lumber company town. The staff at first thought there

might be an eligible district in Elizabeth, but careful investigation revealed that the workers cottages have been altered too much (original porch columns replaced with iron columns, modern windows and doors, and side carport extensions). The handful of "big houses" and the two churches have not been seriously altered on the exterior, but they were used only by certain groups and not by the entire town the way the hospital was. In Elizabeth's heyday there were numerous public buildings and facilities used by the community as a whole, but today the hospital is the only one remaining. Also, of the extant buildings, it best represents the paternalism evident in lumber towns such as Elizabeth. In short, it illustrates that Industrial "took care of its own" in a manner no other extant resource can.

EXPERIENCES

There have been numerous reports over the years of strange occurrences taking place. Most commonly reported, the sounds of footsteps and voices on the second floor when no one is around can be heard. In one specific incident, the mayor was alone in the building and was fixing a pot of coffee downstairs when he heard what sounded like someone walking upstairs. The mayor went upstairs to check out the source of the sound, only to find no one was there. As he returned downstairs, he found the coffee pot, which was securely placed on the counter, thrown in the middle of the room, smashing into pieces!

INVESTIGATION

The group arrived in their normal fashion and were promptly greeted by Adria and Brenna, who were to stay the night with us. After treating us to some very good gumbo, the group did a walk through to determine camera placement. The main spots we focused on were the surgical area and the room known to house the deceased bodies. After a quick setup, the team went "lights out", taking photos, and doing EMF and EVP work.

At one point of the night, it was Elissa and Raymond alone upstairs. As they were sitting there, they began to hear the sound of footsteps coming up the stairs. The investigators then felt what they could only explain as an extreme emotional change take over them in the form of intense sadness. As they rose to see who had made their way upstairs, they were surprised to see no one was there! After this, several strange and unexplainable sounds were heard throughout the night, however there were no recorded evidence of any form. It is always good to have a strange experience for one's own gratification but in this business, unfortunately personal experiences alone are not good enough.

In closing, we would like to thank the Mayor of Elizabeth, Adria, and Brenna once again for allowing us into such an amazing place. We look forward to working with you all again and making a return visit to such a historic and beautiful town.