

*PRESENTATION TO*

*THE*

*DAUGHTERS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION*

*OPELOUSAS CHAPTER*



*THE ORIGINAL BANK BUILDING OF COLFAX, LOUISIANA*

**PREPARED BY:**  
**ROBERT AND MIMI WOLFE**  
**BUILDING OWNERS**  
**APRIL 24, 2013**

## **HISTORY**

In 1836 Four Plantations were established by U.S. Senator William Smith for his granddaughter and her husband Meredith Calhoun. The Plantations were the Smithfield, Farenzi, Mirabeau, and Meredith. These Plantations were located on the Red River about 25 miles north of Alexandria, Louisiana. In the vicinity of the Plantations was an area known as Calhoun's Landing where river access was available for supplies and trade. This area became known as Colfax formed by Act in 1878. Colfax is named after President Grant's Vice-President Schuyler Colfax. The Parish is named after President Grant and was formed by Act of March 4, 1869. William Calhoun son of Meredith Calhoun built the first store in Colfax that opened in 1867 in a building that was built as a warehouse in 1858. This store was also used for courthouse purposes. This being the time of the Colfax Riot on April 13, 1873. John H. McNeely acquired this area in the late 1800's. The Bank of Colfax was established on October 16, 1901 and is believed to be the first bank to be located in Colfax and Grant Parish. On October 29, 1901 J.H. McNeely sells the Bank of Colfax a lot 20' x 40' in the middle of the block on 2<sup>nd</sup> Street the lot is located across from the present courthouse and was to be used to build a new bank. Until construction could be completed, the building next door, a drug store, is used temporarily as a bank.

## **BANK BUILDING CONSTRUCTION**

The following information listed below was compiled from newspaper articles from the Colfax Chronicle found on microfilm in the Grant Parish Library. The Colfax Chronicle was established on July 8, 1876 by J.M. Sweeny, Owner:

1. August 31, 1901 "Charter of the Bank of Colfax was advertised"
2. September 28, 1901 "Charter of the Bank of Colfax was advertised"
3. October 12, 1901 "The Bank of Colfax has been conducting business for about a week, cashing check, receiving deposits, etc. The burglar proof safe for the bank arrived by the Valley train Thursday night. On yesterday the contract to erect a brick bank building with iron front was let to Mr. Thos. Green, of Shreveport, for \$3400. The bank will be formally opened next Monday in the Crescent drug store, its temporary place of business, with Mr. Earl Roberts, cashier, in the teller's office."
4. October 19, 1901 "The Bank of Colfax. Mr. M. Ricks, Jr., cashier of the Bank of Coushatta, came down by the Valley train last Wednesday night, and spent Thursday with Mr. Earl Roberts, cashier of the Bank of Colfax, instructing him in the intricacies of the banking business. The Bank of Colfax has a splendid management, and its formal opening on last Monday was most auspicious. With Messrs. J. H. McNeely, as president, and J.H. Williams, Vice-President, and other substantial and honorable gentlemen associated with them, the confidence of the public is at once assured in it as a safe and reliable institution. At the close of business October 17<sup>th</sup> Cashier Roberts informed us that the entire capital stock of \$15,000 had been paid in, and that the bank had received deposits to the amount of \$9,990.74. Business has been quite active, and exchange is in lively demand. The site for the new bank building has been laid off, and as soon as Contractor Thos. Green can get his brick and iron on the ground work will begin."
5. November 9, 1901 "The Bank of Colfax. Mr. E. C. Johnson, of Natchitoches, carpenter and builder, with Mr. Thos. Green, who has the contract to build the Colfax bank, has been here

all the week. One car load of brick and a large quantity of sand is already on the ground ready to commence the work. Two car loads of brick have been at the depot for the last few days, but Mr. Johnson has been having trouble to get labor to have the cars unloaded.”

6. November 23, 1901 “The foundation of the Bank of Colfax has been laid, and the brick walls of the building are now about five feet high. The iron posts and lintels for the front were received yesterday.”
7. January 4, 1902 “Statement of the Condition of the Bank of Colfax as of December 31, 1901 - Total Resources of \$66,056.63”
8. January 11, 1902 “The new brick Bank of Colfax was finished yesterday, and “she is a beauty.” Cashier Roberts will move in today, and expects to open up for business on Monday in the new building.”
9. January 18, 1902 “The directors of the Bank of Colfax met in the new bank building last Monday afternoon, after banking hours, for the purpose of formally accepting their handsome new brick building. At the same time they also elected Mr. John C. McKnight as assistant cashier. Mr. Earl Roberts finding his duties as cashier too pressing to enable him to conveniently handle the business as expeditiously as is desirable. The new two-story brick building with its iron and glass front, and handsome walnut fixtures, to say nothing of the handsome cashiers who wait upon the public, is a creditable institution for any community.”
10. January 25, 1902 “The first brick pavement in town has been put down in front of the Bank of Colfax.”

The Bank of Colfax operated in this location until it needed to expand. On June 28, 1911, the bank exchanged adjacent properties with J. H. McNeely and constructed its next facility. This facility was adjacent to the present bank building in the location where the bank started in the Crescent Drug Store. It operated at this location until the Great Depression and reopened across town into its present location. After the bank moved out, the building was used for different types of offices and later storage.

### **CHAIN OF TITLE**

In 1813, lands in the region were purchased from the Pascagoula, Biloxi, and Appalachi Indians by Edward Gilliard who later sold to Senator Judge William Smith in 1836. Later Meredith Calhoun acquired this area containing about 14,000 acres and establishing the four Plantations mentioned earlier. William S. Calhoun acquired this property from his father and mother’s succession in 1873. Later John H. McNeely acquired the property from William Calhoun. Bernice McNeely acquires the property in a family partition and transfers to Wilbur Teal McCain. W. T. McCain, Jr. acquires the interest from heirs in the succession of W. T. McCain and transfers title to James F. Slaughter September 2, 1999. The present owners Robert and Mimi Wolfe purchased the property and building on November 17, 2011 from the Estate of James Slaughter.

### **PRESENT DAY RESTORATION**

Since November 17, 2011, the present owners have been cleaning, constructing, and restoring the building in an attempt to preserve the past history and construction while updating it for use today. The building is a two story brick building with access to the second floor by an exterior stairway.

The stairway has a metal cover on an iron frame with the metal being curved on the outside ends. The front of the building has cast iron column fronts with two doors and glass windows across the height of the first floor. The original building is believed to have had a wood floor elevated above the ground but presently has a concrete floor about 2" thick on top of brick pavers. The ceiling on the first floor was lowered to 8' height with celotex with frame work and paneling placed on the walls. There was no plumbing with water or sewer in the building at all. The original heating in the building was with the use of wood burning stoves with chimney locations mostly upstairs. The lowered ceiling height was removed along with the framework and paneling. The interior brick wall needed to be replastered in many places. The upper windows were boarded up and all of this was removed. The original ceiling is revealed and has a 12' height. The rear section of the downstairs was framed to enclose a central air and heat, hot water tank, and a restroom with toilet and lavatory. The lock on the vault was removed by Ivan Bourgogne and cleaned, painted, restored, and re-installed in working condition. Mr. Bourgogne obtained the original combination and upon instructions left it the same. The vault door remains open and locked for safety and theft prevention. The window seals are cast iron all coming from Union Iron and Foundry Co., St. Louis, Missouri. The floor plates at the exterior doors on the bottom floor also are made of cast iron. Upstairs the floors are wood and were stripped of paint. It consisted of rooms and a hallway in the center. The walls are single boards about 1" thick and the ceilings are 10' high with the outside walls being double brick with plaster. The room at the rear of the building was divided to make a bathroom with a shower, central unit closet, lavatory, washer and dryer. The other side of the division wall will have cabinets, refrigerator, stove and be used as a kitchen. Central air and heat was installed. The two rooms in the front will be used as bedrooms. The downstairs will be used as a part time engineering office. There are steel rods going through the building underneath the second floor running with the 2 x 12 rough cypress floor joints and running through the brick walls and are threaded on the ends with a nut for adjustment. There is a diamond metal plate the rod runs through that supports the nut on the exterior of the building. The foundation of the building sits on a brick footing that begins widening or stepping out beginning about 2' below the surface. The bricks step out about five times and the estimated footing is about 3 foot wide. A french drain and gravel was installed adjacent to the south foundation, rear of the building and about 1/3 of the north wall. This subsurface drain immediately eliminated the moisture problem in the building that persisted for so many years. Only the windows that were cracked were replaced and about 50% of the original glass windows remain. Some of the brick above the windows needed to be repaired and several of the window units had to be reseated and pinned to keep them in position. The windows are the old style with the rope on a pulley with the window weight inside the window frame. All of the windows were restored to operating condition. There is some work to complete and the building should be ready for full use in about 1 month.

## PHOTOGRAPH INDEX

The following list below gives a brief description of what is viewed in the photographs to follow:

<u>Photo No.</u>	<u>Description</u>
1	Front View of building before work
2	Front view of building before work
3	View of adjacent building - Built in 1911
4	Map in clerk of court showing location of building between D & E Street
5	Existing roof before re-roof
6	Inside view of 1 <sup>st</sup> floor
7	Union Iron and Foundry Co; St. Louis, Missouri
8	Upstairs transom over door
9	Inside on first floor looking at vault
10	Inside on first floor looking at back office
11	Inside back office where restroom and hall is today
12	Exterior stair access that has been widened
13	Inside bedroom on second floor - north side
14	Inside bedroom on second floor - south side
15	Hall way on second floor to bedroom
16	View of rear of building - cast iron window seal - bricks falling out above window
17	View of rear of building at ground level
18	View of rear area - first floor during construction
19	Chimney location downstairs
20	Front after canopy removal with LeSage Hotel in background
21	Inside first floor after lowered ceiling and paneling removed looking out
22	Work on first floor walls started
23	Framing for restrooms etc started
24	Vault and walls patched
25	New roof, gutter, and brick patched
26	Front of building, 1911 bank building and LeSage Hotel in background (far right)
27	Upstairs work in kitchen and bathroom area
28	Ceiling patched with breaded boards obtained from this building
29	Diamond plate with nut on rod going through building
30	North face of building
31	Building front after painting and cleaning and new staircase
32	First floor
33	First floor
34	Upstairs floor in hallway - stripped floors
35	Upstairs floor in north bedroom
36	Upstairs floor in south bedroom
37	Upstairs floor in bathroom
38	Installing water and sewer
39	Installing water and sewer
40	Foundation and trench for french drain
41	Foundation and trench for french drain
42	Inside vault - notice ceiling
43	Front of building - complete



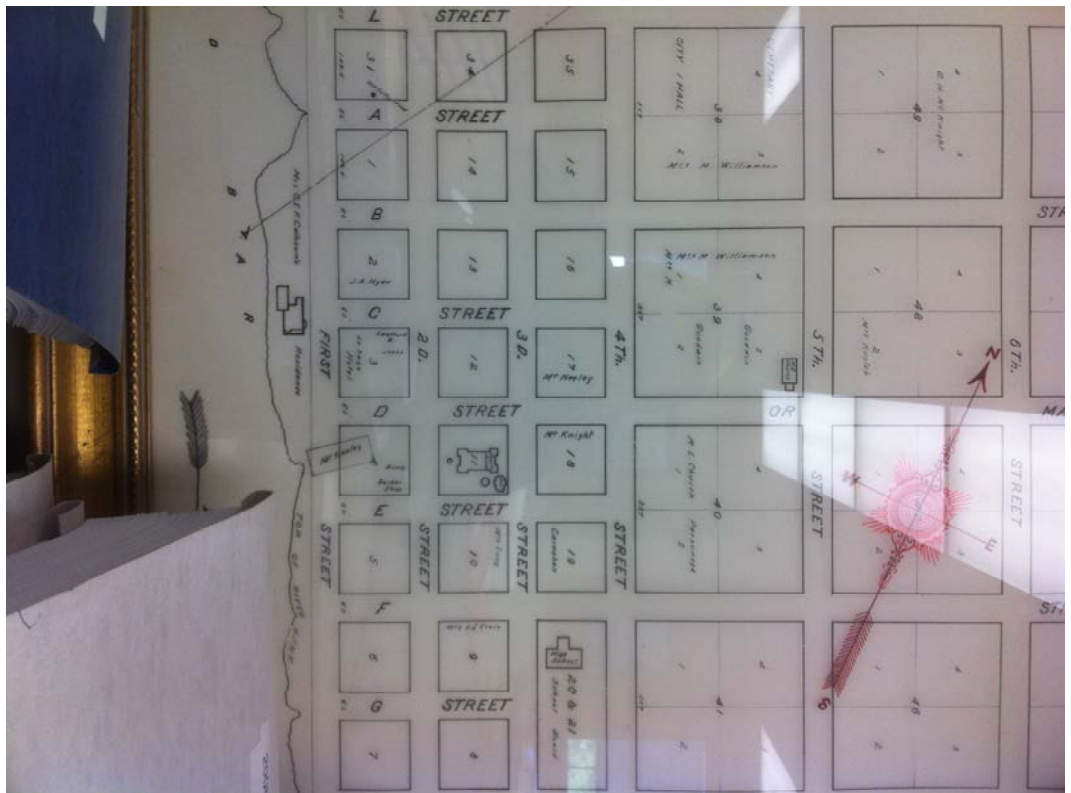
PHOTOGRAPH 1



PHOTOGRAPH 2



PHOTOGRAPH 3



PHOTOGRAPH 4



PHOTOGRAPH 5



PHOTOGRAPH 6





PHOTOGRAPH 7



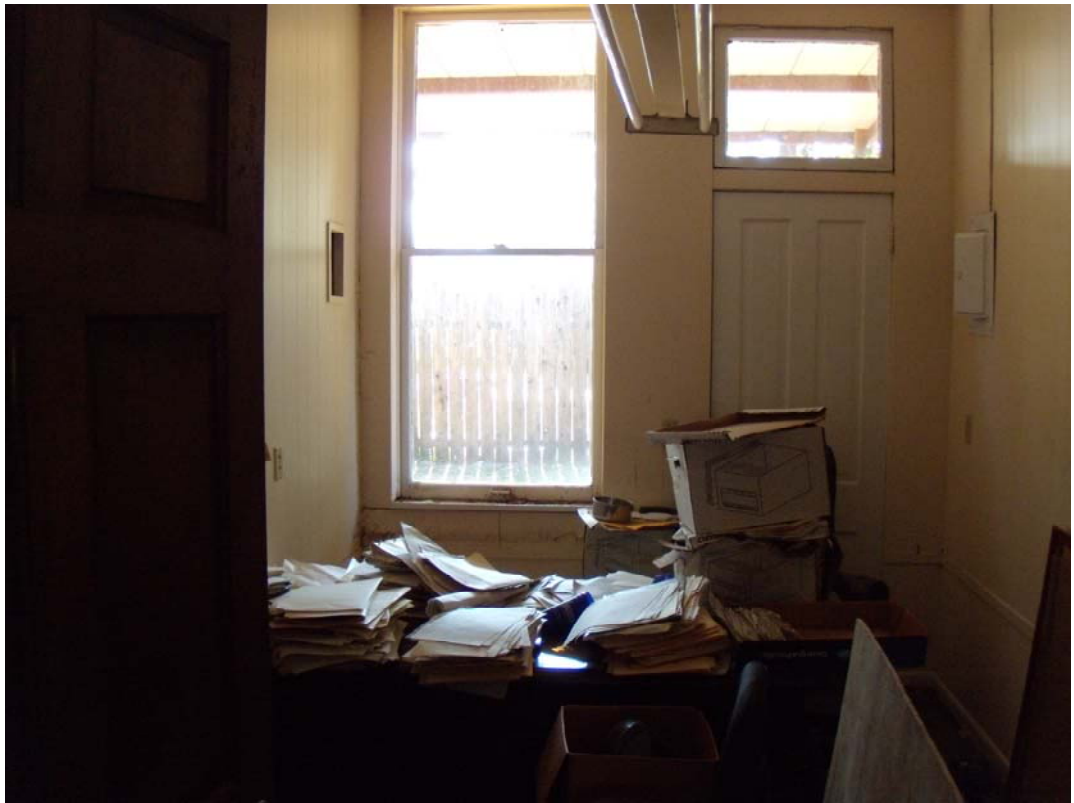
PHOTOGRAPH 8



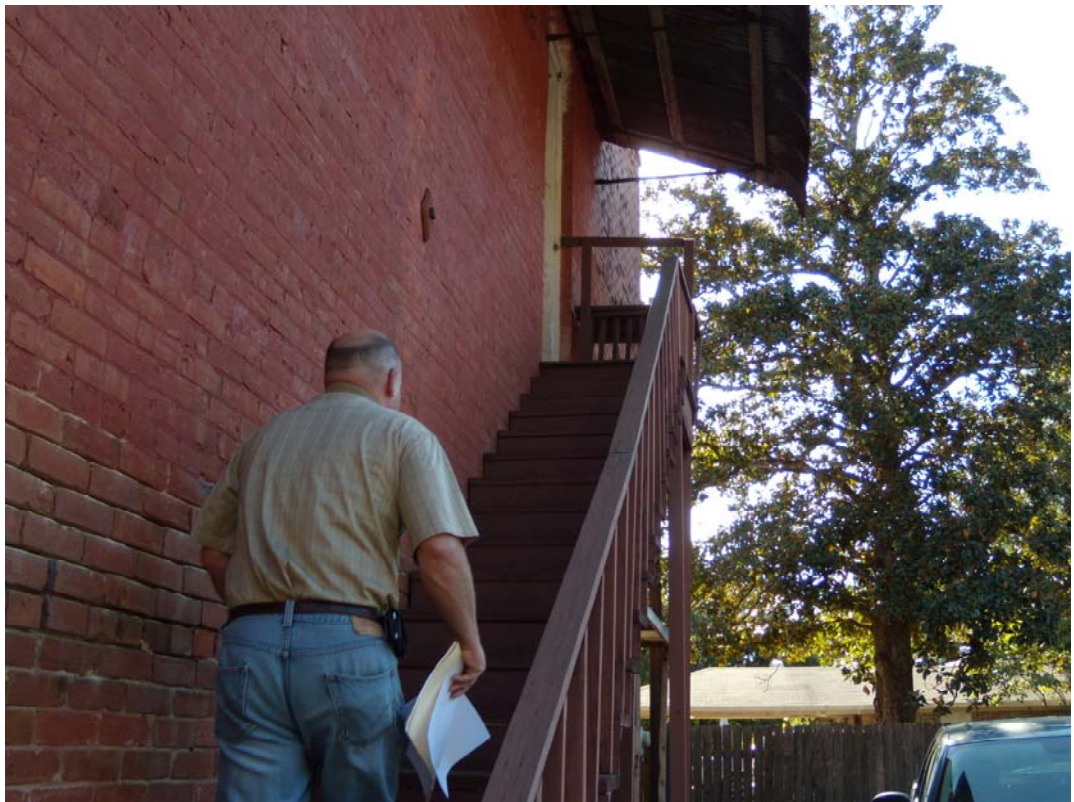
PHOTOGRAPH 9



PHOTOGRAPH 10



PHOTOGRAPH 11



PHOTOGRAPH 12



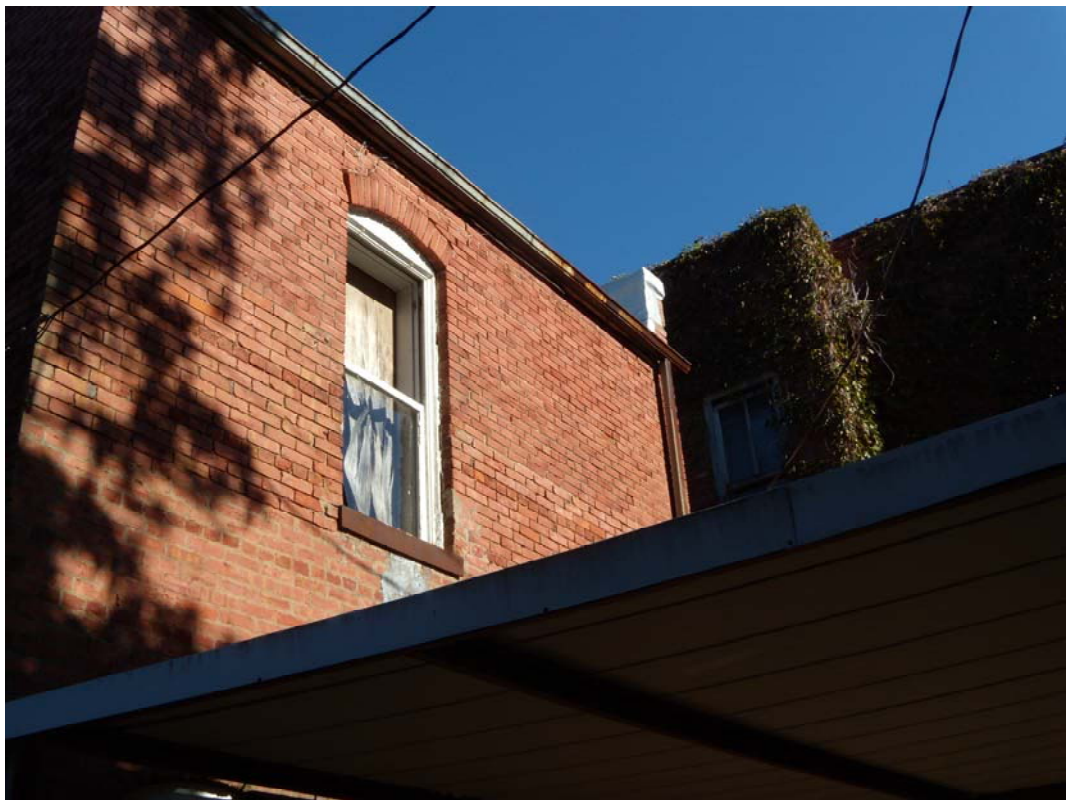
PHOTOGRAPH 13



PHOTOGRAPH 14



PHOTOGRAPH 15



PHOTOGRAPH 16



PHOTOGRAPH 17



PHOTOGRAPH 18



PHOTOGRAPH 19



PHOTOGRAPH 20



PHOTOGRAPH 21



PHOTOGRAPH 22





PHOTOGRAPH 23



PHOTOGRAPH 24



PHOTOGRAPH 25



PHOTOGRAPH 26



PHOTOGRAPH 27



PHOTOGRAPH 28



PHOTOGRAPH 29



PHOTOGRAPH 30



PHOTOGRAPH 31



PHOTOGRAPH 32



PHOTOGRAPH 33



PHOTOGRAPH 34



PHOTOGRAPH 35



PHOTOGRAPH 36



PHOTOGRAPH 37



PHOTOGRAPH 38





PHOTOGRAPH 39



PHOTOGRAPH 40



PHOTOGRAPH 41



PHOTOGRAPH 42



PHOTOGRAPH 43