

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**National Register of Historic Places Registration Form**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of PropertyHistoric name: Houma Water Tower

Other names/site number: _____

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. LocationStreet & number: 600 Wood StreetCity or town: Houma State: LA County: TerrebonneNot For Publication: ☐ Vicinity: ☐**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

 national statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

 X A B C D

Signature of certifying official/Title: Carrie Broussard, State Historic Preservation Officer **Date**
Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official:

Date

Title :

**State or Federal agency/bureau
or Tribal Government**

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- ___ entered in the National Register
___ determined eligible for the National Register
___ determined not eligible for the National Register
___ removed from the National Register
___ other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

Private:

☐

Public – Local

☒

Public – State

☐

Public – Federal

☐

Vacant/Not in use

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Other _____

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: brick

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The Houma Water Tower was constructed in 1902 as part of the first public water works system for the town of Houma. It has a brick base 68' tall and 11' in diameter, which supported a steel tank that was 48' tall and had a capacity of 40,000 gallons. The tank was removed ca. 1950. It is located at the southeast corner of Wood and Roussel Streets adjacent to the Houma Fire Station, which was constructed in 1930. The tower has Gothic Revival inspired details including a tall Gothic arched doorway on the ground floor and staggered Gothic arched windows at various levels off of the interior stairwell.

Narrative Description

Setting

The 68' tower sits at the southeast corner of Wood and Roussel Streets on property that been city property as far back as 1902, when the tower was constructed. At that time, the tower was the only structure on the property. By 1924, there was a small storage shed to the east. In 1930, the existing fire station replaced the storage shed and is extant today. The area surrounding the tower is mostly residential with the commercial district located one block to the north.

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Exterior

The Houma Water Tower is round set on a slightly tapered brick base. The narrow Gothic arched entry door is located on the north elevation facing Wood Street and has a five-panel wooden door with single light arched transom above. To the right of the entry is a concrete plaque with the following inscription:

GEO. CADOGAN MORGAN
HYDRAULIC ENGINEER
1902~CHICAGO

The tower walls are three bricks with and the exterior course is laid in a header pattern. At the tops of the entry and windows, the arched shape of the window is also laid in a brick header course. There is a single window opening on the northern elevation and two window openings on the southern, eastern, and western elevations. Originally, these openings had single light wooden framed windows. As the tower is round and the interior stair wraps around, the windows are staggered as they sit off the stair. At the top of the tower, the steel base that formerly supported the steel tank remains. The tank was constructed of riveted steel plates that were painted white.

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Figure 1. The Houma Water Tower in the 1940s. This photo shows the original tank that is no longer extant. Source: Houma Fire Department

Interior

The interior is simply detailed and is unpainted brick with ladders that access platforms leading all the way to the top of the tower. The bottom of the steel tank base has thick steel beams and the former hold that piping would have connected to is covered with a metal plate.

Alterations and Integrity

The only alteration to the tower since it was constructed in 1902 is the removal of the former steel tank on top took place ca. 1950. While this does impact the integrity of the tower slightly, the tank was only a small portion of this building. The brick tower with Gothic Revival details has been a landmark in Houma for over 120 years and is significant as a remnant of Houma's early waterworks.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☐ A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- ☐ A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- ☐ B. Removed from its original location
- ☐ C. A birthplace or grave
- ☐ D. A cemetery
- ☐ E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- ☐ F. A commemorative property
- ☐ G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Community Planning and Development

Period of Significance

1902-1939

Significant Dates

1902

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

George Cadogan Morgan, Engineer

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Houma Water Tower is a lovingly preserved example of Houma's earliest public water works. Prior to its construction in 1902, Houma got its water from Bayou Terrebonne and private cisterns and wells. Constructed on a tapered brick base, the 68' tower has Gothic Revival details on its entry and small window openings. The tower served the city of Houma through 1939 when WPA era improvements began to update and further develop the water system in the city. While it is no longer serving as the water source for the city of Houma, it has been an architectural and engineering landmark in the city since its construction 123 years ago. Because of this, the Houma Water Tower is eligible for listing on the National Register under Criterion C in the area of engineering with a period of significance of 1902, the year it was constructed.

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Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Houma Historical Background

The following context for the history of Houma is from the 2015 update to the Houma Historic District National Register Historic District nomination.

Houma is the seat of government for Terrebonne Parish, one of Louisiana's southernmost parishes fronting onto the Gulf of Mexico. Roughly 40% of the parish's 2,080 square miles is water. During the historic period for this nomination, Houma was the only incorporated community in Terrebonne – the only town of any size. For perspective, the entire population of Terrebonne in 1940 was 35,880, with 9,052 of those people residing in Houma.

Terrebonne ("good earth" in French) was established as a parish in 1822. The town of Houma (named for the Houma Indians) was established to be the parish seat in 1834. In that year, Richard H. Grinage and Hubert M. Belanger donated one arpent of frontage on Bayou Terrebonne for the new governmental seat. In the nineteenth and early twentieth century, agriculture (sugarcane) and the seafood industry dominated the local economy.

A seismic shift in the economy occurred in 1929, when oil was first discovered in the parish. The Texas Company (Texaco) brought in wells at Lake Pelto and Lake Barre in that year. The major field of Caillou Island started producing in 1930. Subsequent fields were Four Isle Bay (1934), Gibson (1937), Bourg (1952), Mosquito Island (1955), and East Caillou Island (1956). By 1965, there were some three dozen oil and gas fields in the parish (inshore) as well as 17 offshore wells in production. There were numerous major oil companies operating in Terrebonne (Texaco was the largest), as well as various smaller concerns. (Oil prosperity continued unabated until a slump in the 1980s.)

With all of this activity, the City of Houma emerged as the parish's oil service center – the epicenter of oil related services. Like Shreveport in northwest Louisiana, Houma was able to ride out the worst of the Depression so-to-speak because of booming oil prosperity. Various indices illustrate growth in the city in the 1930s. Population surged from 6,531 (1930 census) to 9,052 (1940), an increase of 38.6%. Post office receipts were up 72%; telephone installations, 137%; and bank deposits, 180%.¹

¹ National Register of Historic Places, Houma Historic District Additional Documentation, Houma, Terrebonne Parish, Louisiana; National Register #15000699.

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History of Houma's Water Tower

As early as 1892, Houma's citizens recognized that there was a need for a public water system for a variety of reasons. Fires were an ever present danger at the time and according to a May 1892 editorial, a fire had occurred just a few weeks earlier destroying two blocks of commercial businesses.² Having public water works would be a simple way to help fight any future fires. This would also help to lower insurance rates as the risk of fire damage would be reduced.

Five years later, the city leaders pushed for the town's limits to be extended beyond the roughly four block area between Bayou Terrebonne and Wood Street to the south. At that time, Houma had a population of 1,200 people and it was believed that by incorporating the surrounding areas of New Town, Duthu's Addition, and other settlements adjacent to the town, could more than double the population. This in turn would double the revenue brought in by taxes and could support the construction of a public water works system, electric lights, paved streets, better drainage, and improved sanitation.³

Criterion A: Community Planning and Development – Houma's Water Tower

Houma's first municipal water system was developed in response to a series of devastating fires in the late 1800s. Prior to the construction of this water tower, fire suppression relied on bucket brigades with volunteers passing water from Bayou Terrebonne to fire locations. This was a slow and largely ineffective method, particularly because the majority of Houma's early buildings were constructed of wood.

In 1901, bonds were sold to pay for the construction of water works powered by the town's first pressurized water system.⁴ The center piece of this system was to be a 116' tower capable of holding 40,000 gallons of water designed by hydraulic engineer George Cadogan Morgan of Chicago. Water was pumped from wells or other natural sources, such as Bayou Terrebonne using a steam engine into a reservoir tank and then distributed the water through cast iron pipes to hydrants scattered throughout downtown. The higher a water tower meant the higher the pressure was needed to force water from the tank into piping beneath city streets to residences and businesses.

² Editorial. *The Houma Courier*. May 7, 1892. Accessed via www.newspapers.com.

³ "Extend the Town Limits." *The Houma Courier*, February 20, 1897. Accessed via www.newspapers.com.

⁴ "Bonds Sold: Town Contracts for Sale of the Water Works Bonds." *The Houma Courier*, April 13, 1901. Accessed via www.newspapers.com.

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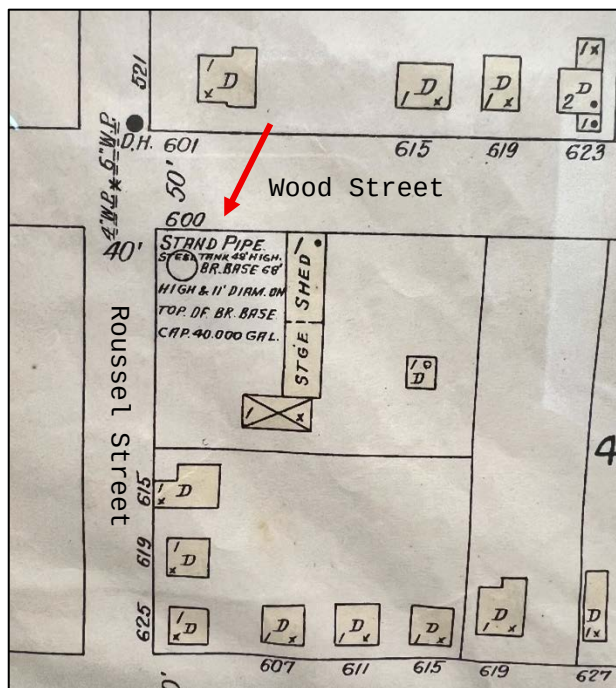


Figure 2. The Houma Water Tower on the 1924 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map. Source: Houma Fire Department.

George Cadogan Morgan had been working as a hydraulic engineer since the latter 1860s. His family had a long history related to railroads, engineering, and surveying. He served as a master mechanic for the Fort Wayne-Chicago Railroad where his job was to construct water towers along the route of the railroad. By the late 1860s, he had settled in Chicago where he worked on the city's first iron bridge on 18th Street. He set up an office in town and began developing municipal water works in small towns throughout the Midwest. There are 34 documented Morgan-designed water towers in Illinois, Michigan, Iowa, New York, Indiana, Missouri, Tennessee, and Kentucky between 1888 and 1907. It is believed that Houma's Water Tower is the only Morgan-designed water tower in the state of Louisiana.⁵

Morgan's first water towers (often called stand pipes elsewhere, but all records of it in Houma refer to it as a water tower) were built in 1888 in Washington and Hoopeston, Illinois. These first towers were designed with the same design as the Houma Water Tower. Morgan found that this design could be easily adapted to a variety of environments and locations. The first towers had 36' tall water tanks, but his later designs, including in Houma, had 48' tanks. It would become Morgan's signature design. George C. Morgan unofficially retired due to illness in 1900 but clearly continued working as he designed Houma's Water Tower in 1902, as well as others in the Midwest. It is unknown how Morgan was hired to work in Houma when all his other water towers were constructed primarily in the Midwest, but it is believed that because Houma had prominent residents who came to the area from the Midwest, they may have been familiar with his work.

⁵ National Register of Historic Places, Bremen Water Tower, Marshall County, Indiana, National Register #12001152.

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Other water towers of Morgan's design that are extant include:

- Bremen Water Tower, Marshall County, Indiana, 1892 (listed on the National Register in 2013)
- Caruthersville Water Tower, Caruthersville, MO, 1902 (listed on National Register in 1982)
- Watertown Water Tower, Watertown, WI, 1895
- City Park Water Tower, Fell Park, IL, 1898

The Houma Water Tower was purpose-built to be located on city-owned land from the beginning. This is a key part of the tower's significance to community planning and development with Houma. As seen on the 1924 Sanborn map, there were associated city storage buildings located next to the water tower. Houma's fire services began with the formation of the Houma Volunteer Fire Company No. 1 on July 6, 1872, composed of 36 prominent local men. Their first station, known as the "Rooster Fire Station," featured a white rooster weather vane and was originally built along the bayou side. It was later moved to Church Street and repurposed as a school.⁶

In 1888, the Houma Hook and Ladder Company No. 1 was incorporated and constructed a hall at Church and Verrett Streets. The hall served multiple civic functions including hosting court sessions and public school classes. It also housed Houma's first fire bell, which is now housed in the fire station next to the water tower. At this time, the city of Houma had acquired a hand-pumper named the Lula Ruthy Wright, which required manual operation by firefighters. Wells were dug every few blocks to provide water access. The introduction of the steam engine allowed for more efficient pumping from these wells, making a significant technological advancement.⁷ By 1902, when the Houma Water Tower was completed, the fire department now had another technological advancement on their hands with a pressurized water system. Within 15 years, the Houma Fire Department had its first motorized fire truck, the Effie Hellier, which was housed in the market building at Goode and Main Streets. The Central Fire Station, adjacent to the water tower, was constructed in 1930 and remains an important fire-fighting facility today.

Houma's Morgan-designed Water Tower was consistently used as the main source of water for twenty years until a second reservoir was needed due to the town's growth. By 1912, Houma had indeed grown (as had been anticipated a decade earlier) to a population of 4,600. Water for the town was provided from the bayou via pumps and the sole 1902 water tower.⁸ Within a decade, the afore-mentioned second reservoir was added as the town continued to grow. A new pumping station was also built in 1923 in conjunction with the reservoir.⁹ In 1938, the tower itself was renovated with new steel plates replacing the old plates. It was also noted that the tower would be painted; however, it is believed that this did not take place as there is no evidence of the brick exterior of the tower ever having been painted.¹⁰ One year later, proposals were being accepted

⁶ "The History of Firefighting Technology in Houma." [Houma Fire Department](#). Accessed August 31, 2025.

⁷ "The History of Firefighting Technology in Houma." [Houma Fire Department](#). Accessed August 31, 2025.

⁸ Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, Houma, Terrebonne Parish, LA: 1912, Sheet 1.

⁹ Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, Houma, Terrebonne Parish, LA: 1924, Sheet 1.

¹⁰ "Water Tower Being Renovated." *The Houma Times*. February 12, 1938. Accessed via [www.newspapers.com](#).

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to remodel the existing water filtration plant, extending water mains, and building a new 150,000 gallon steel water tower.¹¹ When the 1940 Sanborn map was published, it noted the addition of a new 150,000 gallon elevated water tank on a steel frame, 14 miles of water mains, and 167 hydrants.¹²

Water towers in Houma, Louisiana, reflect the city's evolution from a small bayou settlement into a modern municipality with growing infrastructure needs. The earliest known waterworks in Houma were established in the early 20th century, with a coal-powered pump system that drew water from Bayou Terrebonne to fill the tank atop the Houma Water Tower at Roussel and Wood Streets. This early infrastructure was critical to Houma's development, especially as the city expanded its commercial and residential footprint. The water tower served as a symbol of municipal progress and public safety, ensuring fire protection and supporting industrial growth. Over time, the waterworks facility also became a dual-purpose utility, generating electricity for the city before more modern systems were adopted.

There is one other water tower in Houma, the North Terrebonne Water Tower, located near the Southland Mall in Houma. While not historic, it represents the continuity of municipal water infrastructure in the region. The tower is a prominent landmark and part of the broader network of water distribution systems that support Houma's population and industries.

Water towers in Houma are part of a larger narrative of adaptation to the region's unique geography. With its low elevation and proximity to coastal wetlands, Houma has always relied on elevated water storage to maintain pressure and reliability in its water systems. These towers are not only functional but also emblematic of the city's resilience and commitment to public service. The Houma Water Tower is one of Houma's most recognizable landmarks and was essential for fire suppression and for domestic and commercial water supply. Residents and businesses throughout Houma could connect to the system fed by the water tower. It remains a symbol of Houma's early modernization and civic investment.

¹¹ "Sealed Proposal for Waterworks and Extension and Improvements for City of Houma, LA." *The Houma Times*. November 4, 1939. Accessed via www.newspapers.com.

¹² Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, Houma, Terrebonne Parish, LA: 1931-47, Sheet 1.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

“Beautifying of Public Grounds Under Way in Houma.” *The Houma Times*. March 7, 1931. Accessed via www.newspapers.com.

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“Extend the Town Limits.” *The Houma Courier*, February 20, 1897. Accessed via www.newspapers.com.

“Houma’s New Fire Station.” *The Houma Times*. September 27, 1930. Accessed via www.newspapers.com.

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National Register of Historic Places, Houma Historic District Additional Documentation, Houma, Terrebonne Parish, Louisiana; National Register #15000699.

“North Terrebonne Water Tower Stands as a Landmark.” *Houma Today*, August 15, 2023. <https://www.houmatoday.com/news/north-terrebonne-water-tower-history>.

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"The Issue of the Hour." *The Houma Courier*, February 10, 1900. Accessed via www.newspapers.com.

United States Environmental Protection Agency. Water Infrastructure in Coastal Louisiana. Washington, D.C.: EPA Office of Water, 2010.

"Valve Installed at Water Tower in Houma." *The Houma Times*. June 6, 1931. Accessed via www.newspapers.com.

"Water Tower Being Renovated." *The Houma Times*. February 12, 1938. Accessed via www.newspapers.com.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- ☐ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other
- Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): 55-00071

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than 1 acre

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 29.594273,

Longitude: -90.721191

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Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundaries encompass 10' on each side of the water tower so that only the tower itself is included.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundaries selected encompass 10' on each side of the water tower so that only the tower itself is included. This includes only the historic resource and not the fire station it sits adjacent to.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Jessica Richardson
organization: Richardson Preservation Consulting, LLC
street & number: 251 Linda Ave
city or town: Baton Rouge state: LA zip code: 70806
e-mail: richpresconsulting@gmail.com
telephone: 225-937-6022
date: June 1, 2025

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

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Photo Log

Name of Property: Houma Water Tower
City or Vicinity: Houma
County: Terrebonne State: LA
Photographer: Jessica Richardson
Date Photographed: May 14, 2025

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 10: Houma Water Tower as viewed from Wood Street; view
- 2 of 10: Houma Water Tower façade; view
- 3 of 10: Houma Water Tower as viewed from Roussel Street; view
- 4 of 10: Houma Water Tower as viewed from Roussel Street; view
- 5 of 10: Houma Water Tower entrance door; view
- 6 of 10: Houma Water Tower inscription; view
- 7 of 10: Houma Water Tower interior ladder.
- 8 of 10: Houma Water Tower interior platform.
- 9 of 10: Houma Water Tower interior of window opening.
- 10 of 10: Houma Water Tower, view of bottom of steel base at top.

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for nominations to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

- Tier 1 – 60-100 hours
- Tier 2 – 120 hours
- Tier 3 – 230 hours
- Tier 4 – 280 hours

The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.

Houma Water Tower

Terrebonne Parish, LA
Photo Key

Note: Photos 7-10 are interior and are not keyed to this plan.





1



2







GEO. CADOGAN MERRILL
HYDRAULIC ENGINEER
1902 - 1908

GEO. CADOGAN MORGAN.
HYDRAULIC ENGINEER.
1902 ~ CHICAGO.







