Local landmark gets new location

Historic Abbeville train depot sold, moved for restoration.

ABBEVILLE — An Abbeville landmark was moved to a new location this past week as the first step in a restoration project that will call attention to the days when the railroad was king.

The old train depot, which sat next to the tracks on South Main Street for decades, was moved to the corner of Lafayette and Jefferson streets about six blocks away.

New owners Charles and Mary Ellen Sonnier bought the structure from Riviana Rice Mill, which needed the property for expansion of its packing plant operations.

Charles Sonnier, an attorney, said he and his wife plan to restore the building and turn it into a museum and gift shop. He said a caboose purchased earlier will be set up next to the building to reflect its past.

“This building has been part of Abbeville since the turn of the century, and it would have been a shame not to try to save it and restore it to its original condition for future generations,” he said Friday.

The Sonniers had the old depot placed next to their office and special events complex across the street from historic Magdalen Square in the heart of the downtown business district.

Mary Ellen Sonnier said the building is on the National Historic Register. She said she would like to restore the building authentically so it may retain its register listing. Research will be done to paint the building in its original shade of yellow popular for train depots a century ago.

“I would like it to be a focal point the community can take pride in,” she said.

The 30-by-75-foot building was moved in one piece by Adless Trahan House Moving of Maurice after the moving crew dismantled loading ramps and a rear addition. The ramps will be reattached, the owners said.