

Magnolia Mound
2161 Nicholson Drive
Baton Rouge
East Baton Rouge Parish
Louisiana

HABS No. LA-1130

HABS,
LA,
17-BATRO,
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PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20243

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY HABS No. LA-1130

MAGNOLIA MOUND

Location: 2161 Nicholson Drive, Baton Rouge, East
Baton Rouge Parish, Louisiana.
USGS Baton Rouge West Quadrangle,
Universal Transverse Mercator
Coordinates 15.674130.3367210.

Present Owners: Recreation and Park Commission for the
Parish of East Baton Rouge
P.O. Box 15887, Baton Rouge, La. 70895

Present Occupant: Foundation for Historical Louisiana,
Inc., which leases Magnolia Mound from
the City. (Lease agreement dated
October 30, 1968, for twenty-five
years).

Present Use: Historic House Museum.

Significance: Magnolia Mound is one of the few extant
examples of a late eighteenth century
settler's house and one of the earliest
surviving structures in the Baton Rouge
vicinity. Built in the late 1790s on a
ridge overlooking the Mississippi
River, the original four-room
plantation house is significant for its
early cypress and bousillage
construction. Circa 1815-1820,
Magnolia Mound was enlarged and
embellished in the Classical style.
The plantation house possesses notable
interior decoration including one of
the first cove ceilings in the
Mississippi Valley. Saved from the
wrecker's ball in 1967, it has been
restored as a historic house museum by
the Foundation for Historical
Louisiana, Inc. With the successive
owners providing an illuminating social
and economic history, this well
documented and architecturally
important plantation house was listed
in the National Register of Historic
Places in 1972.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: Documentation indicates that the plantation house was built in the late 1790s and enlarged between 1815 and 1820.
2. Architect: Unknown.
3. Original and subsequent owners: The legal description is "one certain tract or parcel of ground together with all the improvements thereon, situated in the Parish of East Baton Rouge in Section 75, Township 7 South, Range 1 West, Greensburg Land District of Louisiana, Tract B-1" (5.364 acres).

December 12, 1786 James Hillins (or Hillen) files a patent with the Spanish government for 1,054 arpents of land (claim No. 96, pp. 321-323, Patent letters, State land Office of La.).

December 23, 1791 James (Santiago) Hillins sells to John Joyce (Juan Joise) "My habitation of 20 arpents front by 50 in depth having a superficial area of 1054 square arpents about half league from the fort of this District", 1,200 pesos (Spanish language, Records 1790-1794, folio 580).

March 4, 1804 "Constance Rochon, widow of John Joyce (wife of Armand Duplantier by second marriage) is put into possession of a plantation near Baton Rouge (Stewart Papers, Folder 1, Louisiana State Archives and Translation Spanish West Florida records in East

Baton Rouge Courthouse, Volume
IV, p. 342).

- December 4, 1843 Descendants of C.
Duplantier appoint F. Duplantier
as executor of the property and
estate, including 52 slaves and
\$30,000 worth of stock in Union
Bank (P.A., JQ:550).
- January 20, 1846 Alberic Duplantier;
Alfred Duplantier; A.A. and M.
Peniston acting for the widow of
F. Duplantier (Josephine Joyce);
and William Joyce sell to Alvarez
Fisk and David Chambers, the
plantation 25 arpents front by 40
arpents deep, 52 slaves, and
\$30,000 worth of stock in Union
Bank for \$56,000 (S&M, JS:168).
- March, 1849 Fisk and Chambers sell to
George Hall the above plantation
for \$75,710 (S&M, B:354).
- October 18, 1869 George Hall sells to
Helen Walworth McCullen, Magnolia
Mound Plantation, 25 arpents
front by 40 arpents deep, 1 mile
below Baton Rouge, for \$37,800
(S&M, X:569).
- February 5, 1874 Helen Walworth McCullen
sells to Carl Kohn, Magnolia
Mound Plantation, 25 arpents
front by 40 arpents deep, 1 mile
below Baton Rouge, machinery in
the mill, sugar house apparatus,
livestock and implements, for
\$66,000 (Ren S&M, 2:352).
- December 26, 1876 Carl Kohn sells to
James McCullen, Charles Wieck,
Christine Redwitz (one-third to
each), the above property, for
\$25,000 (S&M, MZ:388).

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December 21, 1876 In a partition, James McCullen agrees to manage and carry out the cultivation; Charles Wieck to keep account books of all plantation business; Mrs. Redwitz to make advances of money and supplies for cultivation.

February 5, 1880 In another partition, James McCullen and Charles Wieck become joint and equal owners of Magnolia Mound Plantation with Wieck as managing partner. The expiration of the partnership to be January 1, 1887, but McCullen died before this.

January 16, 1885 Charles Wieck and Ellere F. McCullen sell to Carl F. Redwitz, Magnolia Mound Plantation, 25 arpents front, 40 arpents deep, 1 mile below Baton Rouge, lot nos. 12-20 in East Baton Rouge Parish, machinery and mills, sugar house apparatus, livestock and implements, for \$26,441 (Sher, 8:282).

January 17, 1885 Carl F. Redwitz sells to L. Barillier, A. Strenzke, E. Witting, H. Shorten (one-fourth to each), Magnolia Mound Plantation, 25 arpents front by 40 arpents deep, lot nos. 12-20 in East Baton Rouge Parish, for \$14,000 (S&M, 8:285).

February 27, 1888 H. Shorten sells his one-fourth interest to the other three for \$4,000 (S&M, 10:169).

December 12, 1889 A. Strenzke and E. Witting sell their interest to L. Barillier for \$12,000 (S&M, 12:142).

November 29, 1904 Bena Barillier and L. Barillier sell to R.A. Hart one-ninth interest in Magnolia Mound Plantation, 800 acres, one-half mile below Baton Rouge, including all buildings, improvements and the sugar house for \$5,000 (S&M, 32:528).

December 1, 1904 Julius R. Barillier sells to R.A. Hart eight-ninths interest in the above plantation for \$37,777.77 (S&M, 32:543).

March 11, 1929 R.A. Hart sells to Marie Blanche Duncan, Magnolia Mound Plantation, 75 acres for \$15,000 (S&M, 223:240).

February 12, 1958 The estate of Marie Blanche Duncan passes to Anna Belle Hart Anderson (Judg., 1389:322).

February 3, 1965 Anna Belle Hart Anderson sells to Al German tract B-1, 5.364 acres (in Sec. 75:T7S,RIW GLD) and Tract C, lots C-2, C-3, C-4 (in Sec. 75, T7S, RIW, GLD) for \$126,500 (S&M,1870:372).

4. Original plan and construction: The original plantation house consisted of three rooms across with one room subdivided into two rooms, making four. The wooden house with a gallery was raised on cypress piers and had a hipped roof.

This fits the description based on an inventory of the partnership of John Joyce and John Turnbull (both deceased) of May 5, 1800:

The principal house, raised about three feet high, mud walls between stakes, about forty-seven feet long by twenty feet wide,

roofed with shingles, with a gallery ten and one-half feet long, the said house having a double brick chimney and divided into four rooms, two of them in good condition, together with its doors and windows." (Translation - Spanish West Florida Records, East Baton Rouge Courthouse, Volume III, pgs. 511-518; also in Stewart Papers, Folder I, Louisiana State University Archives; also copies Magnolia Mound).

These measurements approximate the original dimensions of the house.

6. Alterations and additions: Based on historical and architectural research, Magnolia Mound was enlarged and embellished between 1815 and 1820, when Armand Duplantier and Constance Joyce Duplantier resided here. A dining room was added across the back of the existing house, flanked by two rooms and a stair hall. Another gallery was added beyond the dining room. The existing gallery was extended across the front and on the northern side. The roof was extended to incorporate the addition and the cove ceiling in the parlor. Moldings, mantels and overmantels were added in the Adam style.

Through the years the house was altered many times. Although Magnolia Mound was renovated to some degree in 1951, the house was in a neglected state when the Parish of East Baton Rouge expropriated the property in December 1966.

- B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

Magnolia Mound is rich with archival material pertaining to its history.

The Spanish Land Grants state that on December 17, 1786, James Hillins received a patent for 1,054 arpents about one-and-one-half miles from the Fort at Baton Rouge. Little is known of Hillins except that an inventory taken at the time of his wife's death on December 17, 1789, indicates that indigo was the main crop of the plantation.

Hillins sold the plantation to John Joyce in 1791. A native of Ireland, Joyce immigrated to this country and became very successful as a contractor and developer. He and John Turnbull were "co-partners in trade, plantation, etc", having large land holdings in Mobile, New Orleans, and Baton Rouge. Turnbull resided in Baton Rouge and Joyce in Mobile. During this time the original plantation house in Baton Rouge was built and the cultivation of cotton begun. On May 9, 1798, Joyce drowned at sea en route from Mobile to New Orleans. His partner, Turnbull, died in September of the same year. The size of their joint holdings is indicated by the following:

The longest litigation involving the largest (dual) estate that has appeared in the West Florida Records, apparently is the partition sale of the Widows of John Turnbull and John Joyce.

(Translation, Spanish West Florida Records, East Baton Rouge Courthouse, Volume III, pgs. 407-409 and Stewart Papers, Folder 1, Louisiana State University Archives.... Note: The litigation covers pages 737-1139 in Volume III and pages 952-1035 in Volume IV.)

During the settlement of Joyce's estate, the name "Magnolia Mound" appeared for the first time in a documented record. At this time Constance Joyce moved to Baton Rouge

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and married Duplantier. The exact date of their marriage is not known, as seen in the following:

In New Orleans on November 19, 1802, Armand Duplantier said under oath that he was married to the widow Joyce by Father Francisco Lennan and that it was also true that he was ginning the two crops of cotton but that he did not know how the widow would dispose of them.

(Stewart Papers, Folder 1, L.S.U. Archives, translated from Spanish West Florida Records, East Baton Rouge Courthouse, Volume III, pgs. 368-370.)

Duplantier, a native of France, served as an aide to the Marquis de Lafayette during the Revolutionary War. Later, he was influential in the development of Louisiana. When Lafayette was granted land rights in Louisiana by Congress, Duplantier was Lafayette's representative in these land transactions. Lafayette returned to this country for a triumphal tour in 1824 and 1825. After visiting New Orleans, Lafayette and his entourage took a boat to Baton Rouge.

When we departed from Baton Rouge we were grieved to leave for a second time, some of the persons who had accompanied us from New Orleans, notably, Mr. Joseph Armand Duplantier, and his son, whose tender friendship had been so helpful to the general.

(Louisiana Historical Quarterly, Volume 14, 1931, pp. 178. Translated from the French of "Lafayette in America," by Lafayette's Secretary, A.

Levasseur, Librairie
Budoïn, Paris 1829 by
R.W. Colomb, Secretary,
Louisiana Historical
Society.)

Duplantier died in 1827 and his wife in 1841,
"leaving property to a large amount."
(Reference: Probate 736, Old Series #2 Parish
Courthouse, East Baton Rouge Parish,
Succession of Constance R. Duplantier
dated April 8, 1841).

Some of the Magnolia Mound property had been
sold during the Duplantier ownership to family
members and others, but in 1846 Magnolia Mound
passed out of family possession. Since that
time, there have been many different owners.

George Hall owned Magnolia Mound from 1849 to
1869. In 1860, Magnolia Mound was a
flourishing enterprise. In the publication
The Large Slaveholders of Louisiana, there are
thirty-two owners listed for the Parish of
East Baton Rouge. Based on the value of the
real and personal properties, only ten were
wealthier than Hall. Among the listings given
in this survey for George Hall are:

Number of children	8
Number of Household	10
Number of Slaves	79
Number of Slave Dwellings	21
Value of Real Property	\$55,000
Value of Personal Property	100,000
Acres of Land, Improved	600
Acres of Land, Unimproved	350
Cash Value of Farm	\$55,000.

(Menn, Joseph K. The Large Slaveholders
of Louisiana-1860. New Orleans: Pelican
Publishing Co., 1860. pp.139-140.)

From these prosperous times Magnolia Mound was to
face hard times during the Civil War, when the
Federal troops occupied it. A collection of
letters at Magnolia Mound from George Hall and his
foreman tell about the ravages of the Civil War

and the problems of reconstruction. Magnolia Mound was stripped of its crops, cattle and household belongings.

After a succession of owners, Robert Hart, a land developer and Mayor of Baton Rouge, bought Magnolia with 800 acres in 1904. Through Hart and his descendants selling off or subdividing the property, only 5.364 acres remain today.

In 1965, a Hart descendant sold Magnolia Mound to Al German, from Texas, who planned to raze the structure and build a high-rise apartment building. Local citizens rallied to save the house, and the Parish of East Baton Rouge expropriated the property in December 1966. The Foundation for Historical Louisiana, Inc., leased the property for twenty-five years in 1968 and restored the plantation house to the 1815-1820 period from 1971 to 1975.

B. Sources of Information:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Conveyance Records, Probates and Translations Spanish West Florida Records in City of Baton Rouge, Parish of East Baton Rouge, Government Building, Centroplex, 222 St. Louis Street, Baton Rouge.

Ashton Stewart Papers, Louisiana State University Archives (Ashton Stewart was the lawyer representing the Parish of East Baton Rouge at the expropriation proceedings for Magnolia Mound 1966).

Interviews:

Mrs. Lois Bannon, Researcher and Board Member, Foundation for Historical Louisiana, June, 1978.

Robert Heck, Professor of Architecture, Louisiana State University and former President, Foundation for Historical Louisiana, June, 1978.

George Leake, Restoration Architect, June,
1978.

Mrs. Joan Samuel, Former President,
Foundation for Historical Louisiana,
June, 1978.

Note: Magnolia Mound has an abundance of
research material including copies of all
the relevant records from the Parish and
the Stewart papers, newspaper and
periodical articles.

2. Secondary and published sources:

Louisiana - A Guide to the State. New
York: Hastings House, 1941.

Menn, Joseph K. The Large Slaveholders of
Louisiana - 1860. New Orleans: The
Pelican Publishing Co., 1860.

3. Likely sources not investigated: The
Magnolia Mound Board of Trustees has
received additional letters from the
descendants of George Hall. At
present, these letters are being
translated from French to English.
Additional material is also being
sought from the Halls.

Prepared by Sibyl McCormac Groff
Project Supervisor
Historic American
Buildings Survey
Summer, 1978

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: Magnolia Mound
is significant as a surviving example of a
1790s frame plantation house which was
enlarged and embellished between 1815 and
1820.

The house exhibits early cypress framing with notched and pegged members and an infill of mud and Spanish moss, plastered over, called bousillage. The interior moldings, cove ceiling, fireplace mantels and overmantels are elaborate examples of the Federal style in the Mississippi Valley.

2. Condition of fabric: Good. Restored 1971-1975.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The one-and-a-half-story structure measures 72'0" by 56'-1" including the front and back galleries, or 72'-0" x 35'-7" not including the galleries. The house has a seven-bay front including the north gallery.
2. Foundations: four feet high brick and cypress piers. Originally the foundations were all cypress posts but the outer piers were replaced with brick in the 1815-1820 period. The brick piers have been renewed several times. Lattice work surrounds the inner piers.
3. Wall construction, finish and color: Cypress sills and members which are notched and pegged with an infill of bousillage. The clapboard is painted white and the shutters a blue-green, based on paint samples. The front (west) facade is plastered and painted white.
4. Structural system: cypress framing, notched and pegged.
5. Porches, stoops, bulkheads: The front (west) entrance facing the Mississippi River has ten risers leading to the raised gallery with a beaded handrail and base, plain square balusters and newel posts with chamfered sides and topped with knobs.

The gallery has the same balustrade construction, with eight chamfered box columns on the main facade and a plank ceiling with raised panels at the roof line. Where the gallery joins the house, on the north and south, there are two Doric pilasters. Projecting from the rear (east) is a similar gallery with the same balustrade and box column treatment. Added in the 1815-1820 period, this gallery is only five bays wide. The present gallery is a reconstruction.

6. Chimneys: An inner brick chimney on the southwest slope of the hipped roof has a corbelled top. An additional brick chimney on the northeast side was added in the early nineteenth century and is not visible from the front.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The front (west) facade has center double doors with eight lights above recessed panels. There are similar doors on the front facade, one to the north and two to the south of the main entrance. Another door facing onto the front gallery leads to the northeast room. The rear (east) facade has center double doors with ten lights, and two double doors with eight lights. All the doors have shutters, some of which have elongated slats at the top for ventilation. There is a plain cornice and trim surrounding the openings.
 - b. Windows and shutters: All of the windows have nine-over-six-light double hung sashes. The windows have shutters and plain cornices and trims.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: The hipped roof covered with cypress shakes has flared eaves with an overhang, supported by curved brackets. The roof of the east gallery is hipped and covered with turned metal.
- b. Dormers: There are two gable dormers with triangular pediments on the front facade.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: The original three rooms are now two bedrooms flanking the higher style parlor. Extending across the rear is the dining room with the museum's shop to the north and the offices on the south.
2. Stairway: There is one stairway in the southwest part of the house leading to the unfinished loft. The staircase has a plain newel post with a mushroom top, a simple hand rail and diamond balusters set on the diagonal.
3. Flooring - The cypress boards are about nine inches wide.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: The walls are plastered except for the plank walls north of the dining room and in the stairwell. All walls are painted white. The ceilings are of wood, painted white. There are five white exposed ceiling beams in the south bedroom. The north bedroom has four exposed beams and the beam where the room was divided.
5. Doorways and doors: All doorways have architrave trim painted white. The white doors have four panels with two smaller panels above.

6. Decorative features and trim: The parlor features a cove ceiling (ca. 1815-1820), one of the first in the Mississippi Valley. The wooden cove ceiling, which is tongue and grooved, has a center medallion encompassing a rosette of painted carved wood. Beneath the cove ceiling are dentil and garland moldings. After taking paint samples, the ceiling and ornamentation have been returned to their original colors - a royal blue on the ceiling, with mustard yellow and gray green moldings and the recesses gray green. The Adam-inspired fireplace mantel and overmantel in the parlor has lunettes, ovals, circles and pilasters. Only about 15% of the decorative trim had to be replaced during the restoration.

The house has chair rails and baseboards. The fireplace mantel and overmantel in the south bedroom has a dentil molding and a circle chain pattern. It was necessary to replace the frontispiece during restoration.

The dining room has a carved wooden cornice with a diamond and circle pattern in wood. About 70% of this had to be replaced. The Federal-style fireplace mantel is of the period but is a replacement, as is the fireplace mantel behind it in the northeast room.

7. Notable hardware: About 80% of the scroll hinges and drop latches are original. Missing pieces were cast.

D. Site and Surroundings:

1. General setting: The plantation house is situated on a mound graced with magnolia and oak trees draped with Spanish moss. There is a white picket fence running along Nicholson Drive. The plantation house once overlooked the Mississippi River, but with the changing of the river's course, the building of the

levee system, and the growth of Baton Rouge, Magnolia Mound now faces a busy street and is surrounded by houses and subdivisions.

2. Outbuildings: An 1880 overseer's house, which was located on the former 800 acre plantation, was recently identified, bought and moved to Magnolia Mound. Restoration is about to begin. There is also a vintage privy on the property. In 1977 there was an archaeological dig to ascertain the location of the 1830s kitchen. Over 7,000 ceramic sherds and 5,000 glass fragments were found. The dig also unearthed the remains of the former kitchen. Plans call for reconstructing the kitchen, when funds are available.

Prepared by Sibyl McCormac Groff
Project Supervisor
Historic American
Buildings Survey
Summer, 1978

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was jointly sponsored by the Historic American Buildings Survey and the City of Baton Rouge, Parish of East Baton Rouge, Department of Public Works, Division of Community Development. Under the auspices of John Poppeliers, Chief of HABS, and Kenneth Anderson, Principal Architect, the project was completed in the summer of 1978 at the HABS field office, Department of Architecture, Louisiana State University. The team was comprised of Sibyl McCormac Groff (Columbia University), project supervisor/historian; Timothy Allanbrook (Rhode Island School of Design), project foreman; architect Kate Johns (Arizona State University); and student architects William J. Graham (University of Maryland), Robert D. Louton (University of Arkansas), and George W. Steinrock, Jr. (University of Detroit).

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REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

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