

CANE RIVER NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA
Natchitoches vicinity
Natchitoches Parish
Louisiana

HABS No. LA-1361

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Addendum to
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PHOTOGRAPHS

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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

Addendum to CANE RIVER NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA

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Location: The Cane River National Heritage Area includes five National Historic Landmarks, plus a 33-block National Historic Landmark District in Natchitoches, three state historic sites at former military forts, Cane River National Historical Park, and many private plantations, houses, and churches.¹ The central corridor of the Heritage Area begins just south of Natchitoches, and extends along both sides of Cane River Lake for roughly 35 miles. Roughly defined, the borders are as follows: to the north, along the Cote Joyeuse; on the west, by the Bayou Brevelle; to the east, by the Cane River; and to the south, the Cloutierville vicinity.

Description: Creole architecture is an assemblage of architectural traditions from Europe, Africa, and Native America. These building practices and construction technologies melded into a distinctive form of colonial architecture and, in Louisiana, were shaped within the social order of plantation slavery. While there is no one Creole architecture, there are certain characteristics that appear in all of the places where it flourished. In Louisiana, the primary Creole characteristics are the high, steeply-pitched roof cantilevered over one or more outdoor porches (galleries), walls made from a mud-like material called *bousillage*, a raised primary floor on piers, posts, or columns, a plan without internal corridors, and a large amount of exterior porch space. This documentation project looks at a concentration of Creole houses within the Heritage Area (fig. 1).

Significance: Louisiana has the largest and most complex assortment of extant Creole housing in the United States, though other examples can be found along the Gulf Coast in Mississippi and Alabama, along the Mississippi River and in the Upper Mississippi Valley settlements near St. Louis and northward into what was New France. In Louisiana proper, Creole architectural forms appeared as far north and west as Natchitoches Parish, but primarily was a south-central state phenomenon.²

¹The four individual NHLs in the Heritage Area are the Kate Chopin House, Oakland, Magnolia, and Melrose. The Natchitoches Historic District is the fifth. The other two NHLs in Natchitoches are Fort Jessup and Los Adaes State Historic Site. The fort is also one of the state's properties, while the Oakland and part of Magnolia properties are part of the national park. In addition, twenty-four properties within the Heritage Area are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

²Jay Edwards, "Louisiana's French Creole Architecture," Multiple Property Documentation Form, Spring 1990, rev. 1991, National Register of Historic Places. New Orleans and Natchitoches were excluded from the Multiple Property Nomination "on the grounds that their Creole architecture has been well surveyed

It was also rural, occurring with notable frequency only in two cities, that of New Orleans and Natchitoches in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. A recent, and important, study examining the building habits and patterns of the *gens de couleur libre* (free people of color) in New Orleans suggests an urban-to-rural dichotomy in Creole architectural expression. The rural examples tended to follow a Spanish plan, while those in New Orleans exhibited strong ties to the asymmetrical two-room Norman plan.³ Both the Spanish and French plans are found in Natchitoches Parish, although the two-room module is more commonly seen in surviving examples today. Houses with the three-room core include the Lewis Jones House near Melrose, and the Benoist House in Cloutierville (fig. 2).⁴

and previously nominated.” However, three properties subsequently were listed based on the requirements set forth in the multiple nomination form: Carroll Jones House in 2000, Jerry Jones House in 2002, and [Lewis] Jones House in 2003. For Natchitoches, National Register listings prior to the multiple nomination effort include the following: Badin-Roque House, Cedar Bend, Cherokee, Maison de Marie Therese, Melrose, Oakland, Beau Fort, and Oaklawn. The National Register’s travel itinerary highlighted both the Roque House and Tausin-Wells House, indicating that these too have since been listed or were determined eligible or are part of the historic district, although they were not named in the NR database individually (March 2007). Irrespective of the MPS for the Register, many of these also have HABS documentation, including the Carroll Jones House, Lewis Jones House, Badin-Roque, Cherokee, Marie Therese House, Oakland, Beau Fort, and the Tausin-Wells House.

³Tara Dudley, “The Influence of *gens de couleur libre* on the Architecture of Antebellum Louisiana,” Society of Architectural Historians, Conference Presentation, 27 April 2006, Savannah, Georgia. Dudley’s study is based on an urban neighborhood in New Orleans that bordered the Vieux Carre, Faubourg Tremé and the Creole Faubourgs, or areas associated with *gens de couleur*. She identified forty-two extant properties connected to *gens de couleur* in the first; these were built between 1816 and the 1860s and the “majority are four-bay Creole cottages in the form of two-to-four room *maison de maitre*.” In the Creole Faubourgs, thirty-nine antebellum-era properties linked to *gens de couleur* were identified by Dudley and within that group, she found that the two-to-four bay Creole cottage was again prevalent. In her conference paper, Dudley observed, specifically, how the Norman plan was adapted to the urban, French Creole cottage. Tara Dudley to Virginia B. Price, electronic communication, 13 February 2007. As background, but with a different emphasis, see Naohito Okude, “Application of Linguistic Concepts to the Study of Vernacular Buildings: Architectural Design among New Orleans Free Persons of Color, 1820-1880,” Ph.D. diss, George Washington University, 1986.

For details on New Orleans’s free black society as it was just before the time Dudley is studying, see Kimberly S. Hanger, *Bounded Lives, Bounded Places: Free Black Society in Colonial New Orleans, 1769-1803* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997).

⁴ The two-room core melded with the Anglo-folk tradition of two rooms flanking a central hall, becoming what the Mississippi Department of Archives and History classified as a galleried cottage for those dwellings appearing on their side of the river. Houses in Natchitoches that exhibit the Anglo-preference for a central passage, but employ *bousillage* and a gallery have been called Creole; however, the Historic Standing Structure Survey generally identified these hybrids as Anglo-folk tenant houses, blending use

Natchitoches, however, is something of a rural city located in the northwestern part of the state, away from the bayous and marshland associated with the state geologically and in popular imaginations of the Cajun Country. On his (nineteenth-century) cross-country trek, Stephen Powers observed that the land between the Ouachita and Red rivers was like that of Georgia: all “red clay hills and piney woods.” Along the Mississippi River, and in the Red River valley, there are plantation lands but these too differed from the plantations of the southern part of the state in that cotton defined the agricultural economy and determined patterns of labor rather than sugar. Mostly the farmsteads were small. Culturally, this part of Louisiana reflects that of the upland American South -- Anglo-Saxon and Scotch-Irish, Protestant (with an evangelical bent), with a sizable African-American population – though this cultural turn occurred after the succession to the United States. Before then, the French and Spanish settled outposts in the territory, including the city of Natchitoches. There, the Latin influences seen in the southern part of the state took hold and the city grew from remote outpost to a “settlement in the wilderness.” By the last quarter of the nineteenth century, northwestern Louisiana had evolved from a frontier to what is the rural South.⁵ Natchitoches, the anomaly in the Protestant, pine barrens of northwestern Louisiana, makes an interesting case study for the expression of its varied cultural

with form and origin.

⁵*Louisiana Sojourns: Travelers' Tales and Literary Journeys*. Edited by Frank de Caro and Rosan Augusta Jordan (1998; 2nd edition, Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 2005), 323-69. Three traveler's tales were selected to illustrate the shift from frontier living conditions to those of the rural South: Charles Cesar Robin, *The Post of Ouachita*; Amos A. Parker, *Crossing Central Louisiana*; Samuel H. Lockett, *Manner in which the Survey Was Made*. Robin's account dates to around 1810, while Parker's to 1834. Lockett's mapping occurred between 1869 and 1872. Regarding the socially- and agriculturally- defined sugar plantation, see John B. Rehder, *Delta Sugar: Louisiana's Vanishing Plantation Landscape* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).

Daniel Usner details how this cultural distinctiveness became a linchpin to the region's economic livelihood, that is tourist dollars, yet the price for difference was a regional “otherness” written into nineteenth-century American history that obscured similarities in settlement patterns, gender and family life, African-American slavery, and Indian-colonial relations and reduced representations of Louisiana's colonial past to the margins of the meta-narrative. Usner, “Between Creoles and Yankees: the Discursive Representation of Colonial Louisiana in American History,” in *French Colonial Louisiana and the Atlantic World*, edited by Bradley G. Bond (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005), 3-21.

ties - its Creole architecture - occurred within a definable area along the Cane River.⁶

Creoles are a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural group who have lived in Louisiana since before 1803 and of the twenty-eight rural Creole communities, one of the best known is that which grew around Cane River Lake some fifteen miles below town.⁷ They are the descendants primarily of Claude Pierre Metoyer, a white Frenchman, and Marie Therese Coincoin, a slave woman (fig. 3).⁸ The heart of the Cane River Creole community is the St. Augustine Catholic Church, built by Metoyer's and Coincoin's son Augustin. Here, in Isle Brevelle, the Creoles owned and farmed some 18,000 acres, bred horses and cattle, built schools and churches, and operated businesses and entertainment venues. Prosperity withered during the Reconstruction era when the Creoles faced the same exclusionary and discriminating practices as black Americans suffered, although today about 16,000 acres remain in the Creole community's custody.

Remnants of the French arpent land tenure system are still visible along the Cane River in the pecan groves and agricultural fields and denoted through the hedges and tree *allees* that define property lines. Arpents produced long, narrow plots each fronting on the water. An arpent was about 190 linear feet (.84 - 1.28 acres) and land-holdings typically measured from two to twenty arpents wide, and forty deep. By the mid-nineteenth century, a modest plantation encompassed around five arpents (across) and extended back forty arpents. There were houses for the

⁶ The introduction to the seventh and final volume of a series of booklets published by Louisiana Tech University on architecture in northern Louisiana touches on this blend of influences: the French and Spanish in the eighteenth century and the Anglo-Saxon in the nineteenth as well as the blending of plantation life on the river that resembled the delta economy and of small farmsteads in the pine hills. The university conducted surveys in nine parishes, picking up in Natchitoches where the Historic Standing Structure Survey done by the Division of Historic Preservation left off (633 buildings were identified in the Cane River plantation district. Louisiana Tech began with No. 634). *The Architecture of the North Louisiana River Parishes*, Vol. VII: *Natchitoches Parish - West* (Lafayette: Louisiana Tech University, School of Architecture, 1996), 4, 6-9.

⁷ Louisiana Creole Heritage Center (www.nsula.edu/creole.definition.asp accessed 6 March 2007).

⁸ E. Eean McNaughton Architects, "Historic Structures Report for Yucca House Melrose Plantation," 2005, 10-13; Coincoin-Prudhomme House (Maison de Marie Therese), Historic American Buildings Survey, Library of Congress (HABS No. LA-1295). Touching on the differing experience of women under the French and English colonial systems, see Sophie White, "'A Baser Commerce': Retailing, Class, and Gender in French Colonial New Orleans," *William and Mary Quarterly* 3rd series 63, no. 3 (July 2006): 517-50.

planter and overseer, plus quarters, outbuildings, and fields (fig. 4). Plantation, while initially synonymous with colony, came to mean a hierarchical social order played out on acreage exceeding that of a family farm and worked by a sizable number of laborers who toiled under the unified direction and control of the planter (or his agent) in the production of a staple crop.⁹ The plantation system persisted after the Civil War through sharecropping and tenant farmers, changing most dramatically with the consolidation of farms and the mechanization of agriculture in the twentieth century.

Today the landscape of Isle Brevelle consists of open agricultural fields, scattered plantation houses, churches, schools, tenant houses, cotton gins, and plantation stores. It is changing rapidly as schools, juke joints, and racetracks close, stores disappear, gins rust, and trailers replace tumble-down tenant houses. Subdivisions, like that in the old pecan grove at Melrose, also dramatically alter the cultural landscape of the Creole community as well as the rhythm of life down-river.¹⁰

Historian: Jon Lamar Wilson, 2006, with Virginia B. Price, 2006-07.

PART I: HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Creole architecture is the result of a fusing of architectural, social, and political cultures that developed slowly over time in the various tropical and subtropical regions of what was known as the “New World.” More specifically, Creole architecture was a product of the mingling of building traditions and construction technologies from Europe, Africa, and from the indigenous Native Americans. These distinct and culturally specific building traditions were combined to create a template of functional architectural systems for tropical and subtropical architecture in the Americas. These elements were then assembled to perform as symbols of the complex social order in the slave-based economies of the Caribbean, in the tidewater of the Carolinas, and along the Gulf Coast of what would become the United States.¹¹

⁹ Rehder, 3-12, 55-57.

¹⁰ Lucy Lawliss, Cari Goetcheus, and David Hasty, “A Cultural Landscape Overview for the Cane River National Heritage Area, Natchitoches Parish, Louisiana,” Report, March 1998, Cultural Resource Stewardship, Southeast Support Office, National Park Service, 6-9; H.F. Gregory and Joseph Moran, “‘We Know Who We Are’: An Ethnographic Overview of the Creole Community and Traditions of Isle Brevelle and Cane River, Louisiana,” Report for Jean Lafitte National Historic Park and Preserve/St. Augustine Historical Society, December 1996, 68-113.

¹¹ Important studies include Richard S. Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves: the Rise of the Planter Class in the English West Indies, 1624-1713* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for OIEAHC, 1972); Laurent Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens: Revolution and Slave Emancipation in the French Caribbean*,

In Louisiana, the development of a divergent Creole architecture was triggered by its unique history as both a French and Spanish territory, and as an American territory. More than merely a local or environmental response to the subtropical Louisiana climate, influences on the Creole house form were international in origin, coming into the region by way of old Europe, upward from the Caribbean, and overland from the Anglo-American settlements. Today, Louisiana has the largest and most representative assortment of extant Creole housing in the United States. This study examines one specific area of Louisiana, the Cane River region of Natchitoches Parish, where there is an extraordinary population of Creole houses that date primarily to the antebellum era and to the years directly following it. While there are some later examples of houses that were highly informed by the Creole tradition, these buildings were too isolated from the social context of Creole architecture, colonialism and slavery, that they are not included in this study; and instead, should be surveyed in relation to other buildings with a similar historical context.

The initial intent of this exercise was to find patterns or variations of Creole architecture specific to Natchitoches, as represented by the structures built throughout the Heritage Area. Was there a difference in scale, roof type, and plan between those seen in town and those on the river? Variances in date and in use? Who built where? From this material evidence - the buildings - it was hoped that our understanding of the larger social, cultural, and ethnic history of the Cane River region would be both broadened and deepened. By analyzing how certain Creole architecture details were assembled and used, for example, it is possible to discern the meaning entrenched in the architectural objects. By uncovering what these buildings meant to their owners and what they were meant to convey to others, some insight into the minds of the planters on Cane River can be gleaned.

However, the scope of this exercise was further refined by changing the definition of Creole architecture from the physical attributes, its intrinsic characteristics of material, form, and plan, to include the extrinsic needs of the community with whom they are associated.¹² The Creole

1787-1804 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for OIEAHC, 2004); and Richard Follett, *The Sugar Masters: Planters and Slaves in Louisiana's Cane World, 1820-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005).

¹² Kass Bird, Janet Colson, Dayna Lee, Jon Wilson, and Virginia B. Price, initial meeting, January 2006. In this conversation, under the Creole-occupied umbrella, *bousillage* became a common denominator for potential study houses even if other architectural features, namely plan, signified an Anglo influence. One such example is the two-room wide, central hall example located up Bermuda Road from Atahoe just shy of Point Place. Other examples mentioned included the Sapp House near Melrose, the house made with cypress planks located next to where Lee's mother lives, and a rental made of *bousillage* and still without electricity. Piece-sur-piece buildings, like that next to the Roger property, and shot-gun houses were referenced, as were sheds and barns, as conversation expanded from site-specifics to the general, rural landscape of Cane River. The Balthazar House and the Blanche Sur House were also brought up. One of the houses off of Highway 484 owned by Balthazar was a mid nineteenth-century

houses collectively demonstrate a cultural continuity in the social landscape along the river, such as property ownership and use by the Cane River Creoles, even as that environment underwent historical shifts under Anglo influence and later in the Reconstruction and Jim-Crow eras. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, society down-river bristled under racial labeling and suffered discrimination as practiced against all people of color. The study, therefore, includes Creole residential buildings that were part of the Cane River plantation landscape and that are connected to the Creole families of Isle Brevelle. These dwellings were erected around the turn of the nineteenth century and well into the 1880s. They continue to provide a sense of place for the Cane River Creoles, a touchstone for even those Creoles who have moved away to return to year after year as occasion warrants. With exception of the Roque House which was moved into town in the late 1960s, the buildings studied are all located down-river, in or close to the heart of the Creole community living there today. In sum, this study examines Creole housing patterns as evidenced in roughly two dozen buildings located along the Cane River in north-central Louisiana, an area that has become a center for the study of Creole culture.¹³

Excluded are those buildings posited in town such as the eighteenth-century Tauzin-Wells House (fig. 5).¹⁴ Similarly, Cloutierville's Creole houses as identified in the 1980s Historic Standing Structure Survey are omitted, although they share certain physical characteristics and, if still occupied, continue to serve a domestic purpose.¹⁵ The Sompayrac House, a raised Creole cottage

tenant or slave house constructed of logs joined by half-dovetails and in-filled with *bousillage*. It was catalogued in the Historic Standing Structure Survey as No. 551. It exhibits a deep undercut gallery, and at the time of the survey its center-bay doorway retained its original board-and-batten door. The others in the complex were Nos. 552, 553, and 554.

In the Cultural Landscape report, an appendix lists resources tied to the Isle Brevelle Creoles. The houses referenced, but not included in this study are : the Richardson House; Carroll Balthazar House (ca. 1850s); and the Augustin Metoyer site (house destroyed 1915). Lawliss et al, 31-32.

¹³ The Louisiana Creole Heritage Center is based at Northwestern Louisiana State University. For more information, see www.nsula.edu/creole.

¹⁴ Karen Kingsley, *Buildings of Louisiana* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), s.v., "Tauzin-Wells House"; Carolyn McConnell Wells, "Domestic Architecture of Colonial Natchitoches," M.A. thesis, Northwestern State University, 1973; Buard-Wells House, (Tauzin-Wells House), Historic American Buildings Survey, Library of Congress (HABS No. LA-1258).

¹⁵ Other creole houses in town were documented by HABS. See, for example, HABS Nos. LA-2-193; LA-1332; LA-1331; LA-1335; and LA-1349. Cloutierville, which grew up around a plantation (the Kate Chopin House was the mansion-house) and incorporated in the 1820s, consists mostly of houses dating from mid-nineteenth century to around 1930, several early twentieth-century stores, and a ca. 1900 bank building. Several of the dwellings, collectively described as tenant houses from the 1880s-1930 in the ethnographic account, were identified in the Historic Structures Survey according to their architectural features as Creole. The survey accounted for seven of these (940, 950, 956, 959, 960, 961, and 967); six

with a center-hall plan, was moved from somewhere on the Red River to property adjacent to St. Charles Chapel and across from Beau Fort; because it only recently landed (and fully-formed at that) in Cane River, it too falls outside the parameters of this endeavor (fig. 6).¹⁶ Also omitted is the big house at Magnolia due to its reconstruction in the 1890s.¹⁷

History of Natchitoches Parish

The small town of Natchitoches in the central part of Louisiana is the oldest permanent settlement in Louisiana Purchase territory. Although founded in 1714 by Louis Juchereau de St. Denis to serve as a military outpost for the French, the town of Natchitoches grew largely in accordance with its relationship to plantation slavery. Most slaves in French Louisiana were shipped directly from Africa, although some were transplanted from the West Indies. Of a total of 5,951 slaves imported directly from Africa to Louisiana, only 190 came after 1731.¹⁸ With

were photographed again in 2006. Of these, only No. 950 has a hip roof. See also, *The Architecture of the North Louisiana River Parishes*, Vol. VII: *Natchitoches Parish- West*, 6-9.

Carolyn Wells tackled the problem of defining Natchitoches's Creole architecture by looking at documentary references from the period 1733 to 1804. Documentary evidence, including the Maes's maps, indicated that house walls were predominantly made of *bousillage* rather than of planks. The framing members rested either on a sill (*poteaux sur solle*) or were set in the ground (*poteaux en terre*). Woods used were generally cypress, cedar, or mulberry. Houses were one-room deep. As the century progressed, galleries became increasingly common. By the 1790s most had galleries, wood floors (rather than dirt), and were raised off the ground. One of the largest was the Tauzin-Wells or Buard Wells House (58'L x 22' D); the 1773 contract for the building's construction is extant. See HABS No. LA-1258; and Wells, "Domestic Architecture of Colonial Natchitoches." Jay Edwards also notes the occurrence of the raised Creole house as early as the 1720s, but as a predominant characteristic, the raise is most often seen in structures dating to 1796 and onward. Edwards, "What Louisiana's Architecture Owes to Hispaniola," *Louisiana Cultural Vistas* 10, no. 2 (Summer 1999): 43-46.

¹⁶ Sompayrac House, Historic American Buildings Survey, Library of Congress (HABS No. LA-1336).

¹⁷ See note 77 below.

¹⁸ Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, "Death and Revolt," in *The Louisiana Purchase Bicentennial Series in Louisiana History XI* (Lafayette: Center for Louisiana Studies, 1999), 15; James Pritchard, "Population in French America, 1670-1730: the Demographic Context of Colonial Louisiana," in *French Colonial Louisiana and the Atlantic World*, 175-203; Paul Lachance, "The Growth of the Free and Slave Populations of French Colonial Louisiana," in *French Colonial Louisiana and the Atlantic World*, 204-43, especially 219-22 on the Africanization of Louisiana's population by the 1737 census despite the cession of imported slaves in 1731; and Nathalie Dessens, "From Saint Domingue to Louisiana: West Indian Refugees in the Lower Mississippi Region," in *French Colonial Louisiana and the Atlantic World*, 244-64. See also, Allan Potofsky, "The Political Economy of the French-American Debt Debate: the Ideological Uses of Atlantic Commerce, 1787 to 1800," *William and Mary Quarterly* 3rd series 63, no. 3

this relative decline in the slave trade during the second quarter of the eighteenth century, the plantation economy developed rather slowly in Louisiana during the French-era.

At the close of the Seven Years' War, all of the Louisiana territory was ceded from Louis XV to his cousin, Charles III of Spain.¹⁹ It was during the Spanish-era that the African slave trade was reopened, and the aging Louisiana slave population was replenished with new bound laborers from West Africa, which created the necessary material conditions for the plantation system to grow. In Natchitoches, it was during that period when the plantation economy supplanted the frontier exchange economy, and a whole new set of social relations and discourses transformed the rural countryside into a thriving plantation landscape. As opposed to the French, the Spanish engendered some slaves a chance for manumission. Although not officially a law, the Spanish governor of Louisiana, Alejandro O'Reilly, introduced the *coartacion* policy in 1769, which stated that slaves with untarnished reputations could purchase their own freedom, and furthermore, if their owners allowed it, they could pay with installments.

During the Spanish era in Natchitoches, a small but influential class of former-slaves was able to secure land and form plantations south of the town in an area known as the Isle Brevelle. Although there were a half-dozen or so freed slaves in Natchitoches at the time of her manumission in the early 1780s, it was the former slave, Marie Therese Coincoin and later her children, who first made the transition from slaves to slaveholders. It seems likely that she was able to establish herself as a free person of color who also was a slaveholder because of her intimate relationship with Claude Thomas Pierre Metoyer, a French-born merchant who became a wealthy planter, which produced ten children. Metoyer helped Coincoin and their children to acquire land and, probably, his influence allowed them to remain relatively safe from the other planters' class and race prejudices. Also, because Coincoin's and Metoyer's children had a mixed heritage, other planters who fathered mixed children had a place to send their offspring instead of keeping them as slaves. Thus, the "Creoles" of Cane River perpetuated a "mixed-blood" identity, which likely was due to social necessity and negotiation rather than pride.²⁰

(July 2006): 504-08; Robin Blackburn, "Haiti, Slavery, and the Age of the Democratic Revolution," *William and Mary Quarterly* 3rd series 63, no. 4 (October 2006): 643-74.

¹⁹ From 1712 to 1747, French geographers interpreted the Louisiana territory as a place of promise, boundless and bordering on a sea to the west. Yet the realities of colonial stewardship, war, aridity of western Louisiana, and Newtonian science combined to dispel these ideals. The abandonment of Louisiana to the Spanish was more geographic disillusionment than military defeat. Paul Mapp, "French Geographic Conceptions of the Unexplored American West and the Louisiana Cession of 1762, in *French Colonial Louisiana and the Atlantic World*, 134-74.

²⁰ Creoles are further distinguished in Natchitoches by slavery, and those African-Americans held in bondage, like folk artist Clementine Hunter, a separate caste. The Cane River Creoles have a clear sense

On the eve of the handover of Louisiana to the United States in 1804, the population of Natchitoches Parish reached 1,631 residents.²¹ By 1810 the parish population had swelled to 2,870 people including 1,477 bound-slaves of African descent, 1,213 free residents of European lineage, and 180 “free people of color” who were former slaves who at some point negotiated their own freedom or were awarded manumission by their prior owner.²² The rich and varied history of the Natchitoches’s “free people of color” developed into a distinct cultural phenomena due to their predicament of being both “non-white” and free.

Although they were sometimes planters and slaveholders themselves, the free people of color were excluded from the ruling plantation oligarchy because of the race-based nature of both the colonial and later American systems of plantation slavery.²³ These “Creoles” were socially isolated from the so-called white planters and therefore perpetuated the French-Spanish colonial culture and identity into the twentieth century, while most of their white contemporaries were being Americanized. Because vernacular architecture tends to derive from its relationship to the

of identity and community, and bristle at racial labels such as “black, *gens de couleur libre*, mulatto, quadroon, octoroon, griffe, and other names or being accused of desiring to be white.” As neither white nor black, but forced since 1803 to choose, the Creoles argue that they “were forced to deny their heritage” because Creole was not recognized as a race by the American government. Despite this discriminatory practice, the Cane River Creoles - defined as “a multi-cultural race of people born in America prior to 1803” - maintained a sense of community based on kinship, Catholicism, language, food, recreation, and economy. Terrel A. Delphin, Jr., “The Creole Struggle and Resurrection,” Natchitoches, September 1995, included as an appendix to H.F. Gregory and Joseph Moran, “‘We Know Who We Are’: An Ethnographic Overview of the Creole Community and Traditions of Isle Brevelle and Cane River, Louisiana,” Report for Jean Lafitte National Historic Park and Preserve/St. Augustine Historical Society, December 1996, 4-5, 10.

²¹ On colonial-era demographics see, Richard Seale, “From French Village to American Town: The Development of Natchitoches, Louisiana, 1788-1818,” M.A. thesis, Northwestern State University, 1991; and H. Sophie Burton, “Free People of Color in Colonial Natchitoches: Manumission and Dependency on the Louisiana-Texas Frontier, 1766-1803,” *Louisiana History* 45, no. 2 (2004): 173-97.

²² Burton, 179. Also, regarding white fathers of non-white children, Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, “Epilogue,” in *French Colonial Louisiana and the Atlantic World*, 296-98.

²³ For studies on the free people of color see Burton, “Free People of Color in Colonial Natchitoches” and Hanger, *Bounded Lives, Bounded Places*, as well as Gary B. Mills, *Forgotten People: Cane River's Creoles of Color* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977); Daniel H. Usner, Jr., *Indians, Settlers, and Slaves in a Frontier Exchange Economy: The Lower Mississippi Valley before 1783* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992); Gilbert C. Din, *Spaniards, Planters, and Slaves: The Spanish Regulation of Slavery in Louisiana, 1763-1803* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1999).

larger cultural syntax, the buildings of the "Isle de Brevelle" and the Cane River resemble a closer and more intimate connection to the older ways.

Between 1804 and the mid-1830s the town of Natchitoches continued to grow in both population and economy.²⁴ The high demand for cotton coupled with Natchitoches's abundance of prime cotton-producing land created a flood of new American arrivals who filled in the unpopulated lands around the parish. In 1820, the population of the parish rose to 2,970,²⁵ and by 1830, the census recorded that the parish had more than doubled its population, reaching 7,926.²⁶ Yet, while many "Americans" moved into Natchitoches Parish after the Louisiana Purchase, power was still consolidated in the hands of those who were, at least partially, ethnically French. Indeed, most of the buildings surveyed in this study were built and owned by those with some French ancestry.

The Parish continued to be a successful agricultural center. In an agricultural output register published by *Debows Review*, entitled, "Statement of Cotton Raised in each Parish of the State of Louisiana for the Years 1855-58," Natchitoches Parish was the fifth largest producer of cotton in Louisiana. Furthermore, in each successive year the amount of cotton produced increased, reaching a total output of 22,603 bales in 1858.²⁷ Thus, in the years between the Louisiana Purchase and the demise of the plantation system at the end of the Civil War, the economy grew steadily.

Historiography of Creole Architecture

Creole architecture developed within the specific parameters of colonialism and plantation slavery. Yet, exactly how the establishment of Creole architecture was played out has been the topic of much scholarship. Although most scholars agree on the characteristics of Creole architecture, the debate over its origin has created a historiographical dispute that involves architectural historians, anthropologists, cultural geographers, and architects, who have fought out their respective opinions, on the origins of Creole architecture, in the pages of academic

²⁴ For a perspective sketch of 1820s Natchitoches, see, Marcotte Map in Cammie G. Henry Archives, Watson Memorial Library, Northwestern State University.

²⁵ Bruce L. Ardoin, comp., *Louisiana Census Records: Iberville, Natchitoches, Pointe Coupee, and Rapides Parishes-1810 & 1820*, II (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1972).

²⁶ Marleta Childs and John Ross, ed., *North Louisiana Census Reports: 1830 & 1840 Schedules of Caddo, Claiborne, and Natchitoches Parishes*, II (New Orleans: Polyanthos, 1977).

²⁷ *Debow's Review*, 28, no. 4 10/60, 470-71.

journals. The crux of the argument is centered on the point of cultural influence.²⁸

Some of the earliest studies credit the origins of the Creole architecture to Louisiana itself. Architectural historian William R. Cullison argued that the Creole house was an Americanized structure that transformed the French farmhouse into a climate-adapted vernacular form. Cullison emphasized the addition of the gallery in America as a method of temperature control for the hot Louisiana summers.²⁹ Mary Cable concurred, stating that the French in Louisiana created the Creole house to adapt to the heat. According to Cable, "the hip roof came down like an umbrella," to shade the galleries from the sun.³⁰ In his study, William Faulkner Rushton proposed that Creole architecture was developed in North America. According to Rushton, Acadians (who were known in Louisiana as Cajuns) brought with them from Canada the technique of using *bousillage* within the frame.³¹

Another possible origin of the Creole house type is that it was modeled after medieval French cottages, and transferred to the New World by French colonists. The architectural historian Jonathan Fricker has concentrated his research on the French origins of Creole dwellings.

²⁸ For discussions on the characteristics of Creole architecture see: Edwards, "Louisiana's French Creole Architecture"; Jessie Poesch, and Barbara Bacot, eds., *Louisiana Buildings* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1997); Megan Farrell, "French Vernacular Homes of Acadiana: An Overview," *Material Culture* 23, no. 3 (1991): 47-58; Jonathan Fricker, "The Origins of the Creole Raised Plantation House," *Louisiana History* 25, no. 1 (1984): 137-5; Jay Edwards, "The Origins of Creole Architecture," *Winterthur Portfolio* 29, no. 2 (1994): 155-89; Edwards, "What Louisiana's Architecture Owes to Hispaniola"; Charles E. Peterson, "The Houses of French St. Louis," in *The French in the Mississippi Valley*, edited by John Francis McDermott (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1965); Jay Edwards, "The Complex Origins of the American Domestic Piazza-Veranda-Gallery," *Material Culture* 21, no. 2 (1989): 3-58; Jay Edwards, "The Evolution of Vernacular Architecture in the Western Caribbean," in *Cultural Traditions and Caribbean Identity: The Question of Patrimony*, edited by S. Jeffrey K. Wilkerson (Gainesville: Center For Latin American Studies, University of Florida, 1980), 291-342; Jay Edwards, "Architectural Creolization: The Importance of Colonial Architecture," in *Architectural Anthropology*, edited by Marie-Jose Amerlinck (Westport: Bergin & Garvey, 1999), 83-120; and Shannon Lee Dawdy, "Understanding Cultural Change Through the Vernacular: Creolization in Louisiana," *Society for Historical Archaeology* 34, no. 3 (2000): 107-23.

²⁹ William Cullison, "Tulane's Richard Koch Collection: A Visual Survey of Historic Architecture in the Mississippi Delta," *Louisiana History* 18 (1977): 457.

³⁰ Mary Cable, *Lost New Orleans* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1980), 10.

³¹ William Rushton, *The Cajuns: From Acadia to Louisiana* (NY: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1979). See also, Virginia B. Price, Stietenroth House, Historic American Buildings Survey, Library of Congress (HABS No. MS-271), 15-20.

According to Fricker, “the old climatic determinism argument,” which linked the origin of Creole architecture to the necessity for formal climatic adaptation, was “wide off the mark.”³² Instead, the Creole house was simply a medieval, Norman farmhouse. According to Fricker, “the origins of such vital Creole architectural features as galleries, French doors, *cabinets*, exterior stairs, and raised houses,” are found in medieval France, and not in the new world.³³

The most common opinion on the origin of Creole architecture is that the model was imported from the French and Spanish colonies of the Caribbean. Architectural anthropologist Jay Edwards suggested that, “despite the distance between Saint Domingue and Louisiana, contact between them was surprisingly high,” and that, “almost every ship leaving France or New France for Louisiana stopped at the city of Cap Francois before traveling on to the West.” According to Edwards, “This period of trading and refitting that may have lasted weeks or months permitted many French Canadians and European French to become familiar with the architectural adaptations of the West Indies well before their first sight of Louisiana.”³⁴ Architect Eugene Darwin Cizek claimed that Creole architecture derived from “the adaptation of a mother country’s ideals to, and their integration with, those of Native Americans and of the Africans who came either as slaves or as free people of color from the islands, as well as those inhabiting the region under the mother country’s governance.”³⁵

The historians who believe that Creole architecture originated in the West Indies have linked the form to a process of cultural synthesis. The basic plan of the raised Creole house was French or Italo-Spanish. The French model incorporated the asymmetrical room arrangement of the medieval Norman farmhouse, while the Italo-Spanish type carried on the tradition of the Italian and Spanish Renaissance where one large reception room sat between two secondary and sometimes tertiary rooms.³⁶ The gallery and raised main floor was, according to Edwards, from

³² Fricker, 152.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Edwards, “What Louisiana’s Architecture Owes to Hispaniola.”

³⁵ Eugene Darwin Cizek, “Beginnings: Creole Architecture for the Louisiana Setting,” in *Louisiana Buildings, 1720-1940*, edited by Jessie Poesch and Barbara SoRelle Bacot (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997), 11. Similarly in her work on the Saint Domingue refugees, Dessens noted two cultural signs of Caribbean influence: Creole architectural traits such as louvers and galleries and architectural ordering seen in the placement of slave cabins in a row and Creole language. The architectural aspect had more to do with whites, the linguistics of slaves. Dessens, 256-57.

³⁶ Jay Edwards also argues that the galleries and raised accompanying Anglo dwellings in the colonial South were acquired through immigration and trade with the West Indies. See Edwards, “The Origins of Creole Architecture,” 185-89.

Africa. In coastal West Africa, the dwellings were built with an outside and inside room arrangement. The outside area was usually attached to the house, and covered. Also, Africans raised their houses off the ground to keep the base from being damaged by floods and damp soil. Historian John Vlach argued that the "African American toil and sweat should not be slighted" when historians examine southern architecture forms and that slaves "found ways to maintain their own ideals while simultaneously making a contribution to American architecture traditions."³⁷

Thus, the historiography of the Creole plantation house has dealt mostly with types, causes, and influences. Yet, while scholarship in regard to the general principles of Creole architecture has been particularly thoughtful and compelling, most scholars have ignored the regional variations of Creole buildings in favor of the general. In other words, instead of focusing on the micro-history of a specific region as a method of understanding the peculiarities of Creole architecture as they were developed within a certain cultural landscape, as this study attempted to do, scholars have only looked at the local as a piece of the collective development of Creole architecture.

Survey of Cane River Creole Houses

The methodology for this survey is to investigate the particular patterns and variations of Creole architecture specific to Natchitoches. The two dozen or so examples of extant Creole housing in the target area provide a substantial set of precedent buildings to make informed conclusions. The buildings range in size from very small to grand plantation houses, and from excellent condition to near failure. While there are many characteristics of the Creole house type that could be explored, this survey looks specifically at the floor plan, roof type, raise over grade and façade composition. By comparing and contrasting the features of Creole architecture in Natchitoches, one can determine what Creole characteristics were most commonly employed. The information used for this essay includes various measured drawings, earlier surveys, secondary sources, and field observations. Unfortunately, building access and sources for each building were not equal, and therefore information for some buildings is fairly complete, while on others in this study relies on little more than a windshield survey and oral histories.

Floor Plans

The Spanish controlled Louisiana for much of its history preceding the Louisiana Purchase, and it was the Spanish authorities who probably organized the general design guidelines for housing in early Louisiana. Unlike the Anglo-South, where, after the English Civil War, individual

³⁷ Jon Michael Vlach, *The Afro-American Tradition in Decorative Arts* (Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1978), 133, 138.

planters ruled over their own autonomous plantations, planters in the Spanish colonies were accountable to the church and state. The royal authorities in Spain were concerned with maintaining their mercantile economy, and were therefore insistent on discouraging the formation of any sort of dominant planter class in the colonies, who might place their own interests over the crown's. For the Spanish the hall-less, non-private, and non-hierarchical floor plans helped to restrain the formation of the ruler-planter at the most rudimentary level of social organization, the family. At the same time, the imperial crown built its own symbols of power, the large-scaled and classically adorned government and church buildings, which stood as reminders of the ultimate authority. Thus, in the royal colonies, where power was centered across the Atlantic in the palaces of the absolutes and then consigned to the various state officials in the settlements, Creole domestic design served more as housing than as a symbol of power.

The floor plan of the Creole house type usually followed one of two distinct traditions.³⁸ Both of these plans has its origins in the Old World, but were reformulated for use in the colonies.³⁹ The first plan was based on an asymmetrical room arrangement with two main rooms serving as the core. The larger room, known as the *salle* and whose Anglo equivalent was the hall, was almost square while the narrower room functioned as the bedchamber (fig. 7). Variations on this plan included the addition of one room added to the side of the *salle* (fig. 8), two rooms added to either side of the original two-room core, or the incorporation of a double pile plan with matching sized rooms. This was the "Norman" plan exported from France. The other common floor plan was the Italo-Spanish plan, which carried on the tradition of the Italian and Spanish Renaissance where one large reception room sat between two secondary rooms. Anthropologist Jay Edwards argues that the Italo-Spanish plan was imported to Louisiana through Saint Domingue, what is now Haiti. According to Edwards, "the legacy of the Italian and Spanish Renaissance-as translated through Saint Dominguez-on Louisiana's first century of domestic architecture is strong," and that "perhaps half of all Louisiana raised cottages were built according to Spanish established principles of layout."⁴⁰ Variations of this plan included the addition of a second room on either side of the main room, or the incorporation of a double pile plan with matching sized rooms.

In addition to the two primary Creole plantation floor plans, there is also a rarely used third plan known as the "New Orleans Creole Plan." The Creole plan also known as the "Creole Cottage" house type is really more of an urban dwelling type than a plantation plan, although it was used

³⁸ Edwards, "What Louisiana's Architecture Owes to Hispaniola," 39-40.

³⁹ Edwards, "The Origins of Creole Architecture," 155-89.

⁴⁰ Edwards, "What Louisiana's Architecture Owes to Hispaniola," 40.

in rural Louisiana. The Creole plan has a two-room module of same-sized rooms.⁴¹ None of the above floor plans has an interior circulation space used solely for moving through the house; on the contrary, if you wished to go from one room to the other, you had to go through the other rooms or go outside and come in through another entrance. Likewise, most Creole houses had no interior staircases. In order to depart from the building you had to exit the house and use the stairs located on the gallery.

The exterior area of the floor plan in Creole architecture is known as the gallery. The galleries, which were used as a form of climate control for the hot and humid Louisiana by channeling breezes in through the windows, were usually located in the front and rear under the extended roof-line, but sometimes wrapped around the entire dwelling. *Cabinet* rooms were often placed on each side of either the front or rear gallery, with the rear *cabinet* model being the more common of the two. These rooms were used as either sitting rooms or small bedrooms. In between the two rear *cabinet* rooms was a portion of the rear gallery called the *loggia*, which was an open gallery. In Natchitoches Parish, it was common for larger Creole plantation houses to have what was known as the "Stranger's Room," which was a room usually located on the side gallery where visitors could stay if invited to do so by the plantation. These rooms did not open into the main house, instead, opening onto the gallery.

Oaklawn and Cherokee are two of the grandest and most highly developed of all of the Creole plantation houses along the Cane River. These two houses are on a specific section of the Cane River known as the "Cote Joyeuse." The neighboring dwellings are organized around a Norman floor plan two rooms wide and two deep. While the process of how the floor plans were enlarged is uncertain, it is probable that both Oakland and Cherokee originally had an open gallery on all four sides. Probably the first addition to their plans was the enclosing of the rear galleries, thereby increasing the liveable, interior space. Indeed, for Cherokee it is the consensus that the rear was enclosed in order to create a kitchen, pantry, and two bedrooms. The so-called "Stranger's Room" was later created by enclosing the side gallery.⁴²

The floor plan of Beau Fort has a three or four room, single-pile Norman base module that was added onto probably in several stages (fig. 9). It is unclear whether the original plan was a three room Norman plan with the largest room being the bedroom, then the *salle* in the center, and the smaller bedroom on the other end, or whether the plan also included a stranger's room on the gallery. There also might have been one or two *cabinet* rooms on the rear gallery. Likely there was a gallery on all four sides, or at least a continuous gallery on three sides. Probably one of the

⁴¹Dudley, "The Influence of *gens de couleur libre* on the Architecture of Antebellum Louisiana"; Edwards, "What Louisiana's Architecture Owes to Hispaniola," 43-44.

⁴² Cherokee, Louisiana National Register of Historic Places; HABS No. LA-1318.

earliest changes to the floor plan was the enclosing of the rear gallery to create a bedroom and a dining room. The later addition added small rooms that served as the kitchen, breakfast room, and a laundry room.

The Coincoin-Prudhomme House is an asymmetrical, two-cell Norman plan comprised of a *salle* and a master bedroom. To the rear of the Norman base module, there is a *loggia* that is now enclosed, and two corner *cabinet* rooms. The front of the house has an open gallery that is shaded by the extended roof. On the rear of the house, there is a lean-to gallery addition, which, at one point, wrapped around the house and connected to the gallery. Because the structural system of the house seems to have been constructed in one phase, it is reasonable to conclude that the contemporary configuration is original, and only the exterior gallery was enclosed at some point after the original construction. The original plan, here a two-room, Norman plan with a front gallery and a rear *loggia* with two *cabinet* rooms, is the most common and most representative of floor plans for Creole residential architecture in Louisiana.

The principal floor of the Roubieu-Jones House was a three-cell, Norman plan with three main rooms flanked by a rear *loggia* with two corner *cabinet* rooms on each side, and a large gallery on the front of the house. It appears that the original dimensions of the main floor's arrangement was configured using fifths; thus, the large central room (the *salle*) was two-fifths of the total interior floor space, while the other two rooms shared the other three-fifths of the space. The southeast room (the master bedchamber) was approximately 4' larger than the northwest room (the bedchamber). On the ground floor, the same three-cell, Norman plan was used to create a service space for the household. The only major alteration to the original plan was the enclosing of the rear *loggia* creating several new hallways and closets. On the ground floor, the space beneath the rear *loggia* was enclosed creating several new spaces.

The three-cell Norman plan was a hybrid of the basic two-room Norman cottage. In the basic plan, the main living space was the public room, while the other room was the more private sleeping chamber. In the three-room plan, the central room was the public room, the larger flanking room was the master bedroom, and the smaller room was for a lower status resident on the plantation. Whereas the three-room Norman plan was used in the Spanish-era on some of the grander dwellings, it became a fixture on the Louisiana plantation landscape after the American purchase of the territory. It seems reasonable to conclude that because the three-room plan afforded more layers of public versus private, and more readable displays of spatial hierarchy, the three-room plan was more like its contemporary American architectural plans, and was therefore, more attuned to the articulation of the new plantation political economy.

Cedar Bend Plantation has a two-room, Norman base plan with a large open front gallery. Adjacent to the two-room module is a smaller front bedroom off the gallery followed by a larger bedroom that extends to what was the terminal end of the original footprint. Behind the two-room module, there is a large "dining room" and another bedroom. The original floor plan

probably had the two-room primary living space with a front gallery, a side gallery, a rear gallery and one rear *cabinet* room. The rear gallery was probably enclosed at some time in the antebellum era as it has a plantation-period “punkah” in the dining room.⁴³ The third row of rooms were added in the twentieth century.

Melrose has a four-cell, Norman plan with a row of secondary rooms behind the front core. The front four rooms all have different dimensions. Based on the roof structure and ground floor, it appears that the current plan is the original. The house has a large front gallery that connects to the ground floor by a staircase. In the rear, there was once a *loggia* between two *cabinet* rooms, but the *loggia* was enclosed to create a large rectangular room. Like the Roubieu-Jones House, the four room Norman plan of Melrose probably seemed appropriate as it had multiple levels of privacy and hierarchy.

There are several smaller Creole plantation houses that have either a two-room Norman plan or a “New Orleans Creole Plan.” One of these smaller buildings is the Cook’s House at Oakland Plantation. The house has a simple two-room Norman plan with lean-to galleries on three sides. The Badin-Roque House also has a two-room Norman plan with a front gallery. Originally, there was a front and rear gallery, but the rear gallery was enclosed on two sides to create two *cabinet* rooms and a *loggia*. It is probable that the Herman Christophe House, Walter Delphin House, Alfred Llorens House, Conant-Delphin House, and Jerry Jones House all have either two-room Norman modules, or have a two-room Creole Cottage plan, while the Rachal House probably has a three-room Norman plan (fig. 10).⁴⁴ The Yucca House at Melrose has a four room rectangular plan comprised of a pair of atypical, two-room Norman plans, which some researchers believe might have been original for two different families, while others believe the house was originally a prototypical two-room Norman plan with a gallery on all four sides (fig. 11).⁴⁵

⁴³ A punkah is a type of fan, originally a portable fan made from palmyra, but came to mean a large swinging fan affixed to the ceiling and operated by strings, ropes, or chords by servants who stood to the sides and pulled the mechanism back and forth to generate air movement. Often found in the dining rooms of southern, antebellum-era plantation houses, they are colloquially known as “shoo-flies” inferring the fan kept the bugs away from the food on display on the table below. The servants would be slaves. In addition to the American South, punkahs were used by the British in India for largely the same reasons and were known to be used by Arabs well before the eighteenth-century adaptation in English colonial outposts. Extant examples in Natchitoches include that seen in Oakland and Cherokee as well as Cedar Bend’s referenced in the text, plus Virginia’s Prestwould and several Natchez, Mississippi, houses.

⁴⁴ Access to these buildings was limited, so no dimension strings were taken. Measurements, where available, are taken from other HABS studies or from the Historic Standing Structure Survey.

⁴⁵ “Historic Structures Report for Yucca House Melrose Plantation,” 2.

There are only three Creole plantation houses in the study area that have the Italo-Spanish floor plan. The best example of this plan in the Cane River is the Lewis Jones House. The Jones house has a large central public room with two identically sized slightly smaller secondary rooms on each side. Behind the front core of rooms a strip of smaller rooms was carved out of what was once probably one or two rooms with a *cabinet* rooms on each side. This space might also have been a *loggia* with the two *cabinet* rooms on either side, but it appears that the construction was done at one time. The exterior spaces of the floor plan included a front gallery and two side galleries that led to the *cabinet* rooms. It appears that at least one of the *cabinet* rooms served as a "Stranger's Room."

The Overseer's House at Oakland has a three-room Italo-Spanish floor plan. The plan has a central room that is flanked on each side with two equal sized rooms that are much smaller than the central *salle*. In the rear of the house, there are three rooms with identical widths to the main core, although they are only about half the length. It appears that the original plan of the house was probably the same as described above, or the rear central room was an exterior *loggia*. The building-long front gallery serves as the only exterior space of the plan.

The Overseer's House at Magnolia plantation also has a three-room Italo-Spanish floor plan. Like the Overseer's House at Oakland, the Magnolia building has a central public room with a set of secondary rooms, one on each side. The secondary rooms are larger than at Oakland. The strip of rooms behind the primary core also seemed carved out of an earlier space, but that is not known. The original plan included either a row of rooms in the rear with two *cabinet* rooms on each side and an open *loggia*, or the back area was always a room and the only exterior space was the front gallery. There is an added Stranger's Room, on the front gallery.

Three buildings altered their original plans so thoroughly by adding a central hall, that it is imprudent to conjecture the original floor plan in this survey. Oakland, the Doctor's House at Oakland, and Atahoe all added a central hall at some time during the first few years after the Civil War (fig. 12).

The central hall, according to architectural historian Dell Upton, was transferred into the southern colonies of colonial America from English architectural pattern books. The English model that influenced southern colonial architecture was, "The detached house, developed in England in the late seventeenth-century to accommodate minor rural gentry and urban merchants."⁴⁶ Socially, the central-hall created a floor plan that gave certain rooms more privacy than others did. Upton argues that in Virginia, "The developed social structure of the mid eighteenth-century house, then, consisted first of a hall, a formal public room set off from direct access to any other room of

⁴⁶ Dell Upton, "Vernacular Domestic Architecture in Eighteenth-Century Virginia," *Winterthur Portfolio*, 17 (1982): 97.

the house. Next was a dining room, a semipublic space that mediated between outside and inside. It was directly accessible from the formal passage and from the private chamber... In this sense, the dining room was the heart of the family's house, as opposed to the hall, which was the center of the family's social landscape. The most private first-floor room was the chamber, often only accessible through the dining room. The fourth space, the central passage, or entry, controlled circulation."⁴⁷ Therefore, southern Anglo-American building patterns were centered on a hierarchically arranged floor plan that sought to create levels of privacy throughout the house. In his study of folk housing in central Virginia, Henry Glassie argues that the changes in middle Virginia's architecture occurred as a response to the changing social landscape.⁴⁸ According to Glassie, the insertion of a central hall and the obsession with creating exterior and interior symmetry, which occurred in central Virginia's housing patterns, was the method by which Virginians sought to create order in a chaotic world.

The addition of the central hall was a radical departure from the essence of Creole architecture. It can be argued that because the central hall was inserted in these two examples after the demise of the slave-based plantation its invocation inferred that the old Creole floor plan was perceived as obsolete in that it represented the social relations of an earlier epoch. Moreover, Oakland and Atahoe plantations belonged to one of the most economically successful families along the Cane River, so it might be that they were more interested in sustaining their wealth as well as their standing in the societal hierarchy despite changes brought on by the Civil War. The central hall floor plan demonstrated an understanding of the new (Anglo) ways, with the incipient class or racial definitions, in the post-bellum period. Perhaps, they, like Glassie's Virginians, wished to instill order or find balance in an agricultural community no longer defined by bondage and in an arbitrary society obsessed with skin tones.⁴⁹ Others, excluded as people of color, looked inward.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 104.

⁴⁸ Henry Glassie, *Folk Housing in Middle Virginia* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1975), 176-93.

⁴⁹ Similarly, in their study of the Marie Therese House and of Yucca House at Melrose, Kevin MacDonald, David Morgan, and Fiona Handley concluded that the "rapid disappearance of low-fired earthenwares" from Creole plantations was a manifestation of the desire of Cane River Creoles to distance themselves from "vestiges of African heritage" meaning that while pottery associated with Native American and African origins was found at the Marie Therese House site, virtually none was discovered at Yucca. Perhaps Louis Metoyer, Marie Therese's son, felt the need to be "more French than the French" after 1820 - that is after the Louisiana Purchase and influx of Anglos and their black/white societal divisions. Marie Therese lived in a more fluid era. This tightening of ethnic and racial perceptions in the nineteenth century also could explain the prominence of Louis and his brother Augustin, and the virtual anonymity of their brother Dominique who used Coincoin as his surname rather than the French Metoyer. Neither Marie Therese's nor Dominique's burial place is known. See "The Cane River African Diaspora Archaeological Project: Prospectus and Initial Results," in *African Re-*

This perpetuation of their Creole heritage can be read in the buildings they occupied as very few added interior circulation halls to those structures.

Roof Types

One of the most important and symbolic details of Creole architecture is the roof. With their steeply pitched roof and cantilevers covering the porch below, the Creole roof form signifies the tropical nature of its origin.⁵⁰ The three basic roof types of the raised Creole cottage are the hipped, side gabled, and gable-on-hip roofs. The hipped roof model comprises four adjacent flat surfaces that slope upward from all sides of the perimeter of the building (fig. 13). The side-gable roof type has a gable end with the pitch side sloping towards the front façade. Finally, the gable-on-hip roof model incorporates four flat surfaces at the roof ridge that slope upward from each side like a hipped roof, but on two ends this slope stops and turns vertically to form a small gable on each side. The gable-on-hip roof is much more rare than the former two roof types mentioned, and was not located in the survey area.

In early colonial Louisiana the roof sat above framing that was often half-timbered with a sill (*colombage* construction, later called *bousillage entre poteaux sur sole*) either on the ground or elevated and set on piers (*piliers*). In less sophisticated examples, the framing posts were actually set or buried in the ground (*poteaux en terre*). In both models, the space between the timbers was filled with a *bousillage*, a mixture of mud, Spanish moss, and animal hair, which was placed between the vertical timbers on horizontal laths, or with *briquette entre poteaux*, which were low-fired bricks laid in horizontal rows between the posts.⁵¹

The most common Creole roof type in Natchitoches is the side-gable roof. There are eleven documented Creole houses with side gabled roofs including Beau Fort, the doctor's house at Oakland, Atahoe, Jerry Jones House, Lewis Jones House, Badin Roque, Cedar Bend, Herman

Genesis: Confronting Social Issues of the African Diaspora, edited by J. Havisser and K.C. MacDonald. One World Archaeology Series. (London: Routledge, 200-). Racial lines again tightened after the Reconstruction of the South failed in the 1860s and the discriminatory Jim Crow laws took effect. The architectural expression of the Prudhomme family's response to this cultural shift was the central hall, just as the exclusive use of European or American made refined pottery signaled Louis Metoyer's identification with his French heritage.

⁵⁰ While the Creole house type usually does have some light vertical structural member at the terminal edge of the roof span, these are mostly decorative and therefore the roof spans over the gallery are technically cantilevering.

⁵¹ Poesch and Bacot, 385-86; Jay D. Edwards and Nicolas Kariouk Pecquet du Bellay de Vertron, *Creole Lexicon: Architecture, Landscape, People* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2004), 64-65.

Cristophe House, Walter Delphin House, Alfred Llorens House, and the Conant Delphin House. This group of houses includes examples from both the mixed-ancestry Creoles and from the ethnically European planters. While the side-gabled Creole houses tend not to represent the grandest of Creole design, they do have a range of forms from the very small to the relatively large building envelope.

Any claim as to the origins of Creole-design details leads to competing theories. The side-gable roof is no different. First, the logic of the side-gable roof type is rather obvious: the steep pitch is meant to move water off the roof in the fastest manner, which is important in the rainy climate of Central Louisiana. Furthermore, the cantilever enables the construction of an outdoor room protected from the environment without the need for heavy vertical supports that might obstruct views or block the slight Louisiana summer breeze. The environmental benefits of the Creole roof type were clear to travelers who visited Louisiana. When the architect Benjamin Henry Latrobe visited New Orleans in 1819, he commented on the Creole roof, which he called, "French." Latrobe stated, "The roofs are high, covered with tiles or shingles, & project five feet over the footway, which is also five feet wide...In the summer the walls are perfectly shaded from the sun & the house kept cool, ..." ⁵²

The side-gable roof was also a very typical Anglo-American roof type used in the frontier settlements. This kind of roof was part of the architectural language of the frontiersmen, inherited from their ancestors and carried with them as they migrated west. There was, moreover, a seemingly unending supply of tall trees to create single-member roof ridges that could span long distances. Another possible origin is the west coast of Sub-Saharan Africa. According to some scholars, along the coast of western Africa, "the dominance of rectangular, gabled-roof forms has been linked to the availability of long, straight timbers and bamboos for roof frames and to precipitation levels averaging over 1.5 meters per year." ⁵³ This tradition was transferred to the New World as part of the inherent architectural vocabulary of the bound African slaves.

The first example, Beau Fort, is a long rectangular building with a steeply pitched side-gable roof (fig. 14). The original core of the house is thought to have been built by Louis Barthelemy Rachal, and probably dates from the first decade of the nineteenth century. The building was framed with cedar posts that were in-filled with *bousillage*, and it has been added onto on both the side and on the rear. ⁵⁴ The roof extends unbroken for the entire length of the original core and

⁵² Benjamin Henry Latrobe, *Impressions Respecting New Orleans*, edited by Samuel Wilson, Jr. (NY: Columbia University Press, 1951), 42.

⁵³ Edwards, "Architectural Creolization: The Importance of Colonial Architecture," 106.

⁵⁴ Beau Fort has been described as having one and a half stories, but the living space is confined to one floor and the attic unlikely to have been conceived as living space. Creole buildings expand laterally for

ends with a sizeable eave on the gable end. Beau Fort, while not quite big enough to be considered a grand plantation house, is rather substantial. Interestingly, like the larger plantation houses on the Cane River, Beau Fort has one end of its roof structure cantilever to make an outdoor space on the side. This is uncommon for side-gable houses.⁵⁵ The roof framing is light and without a heavy roof ridge beam. The outer rafters are supported in their middle by post-fastened purlins.

Second, the Doctor's House at Oakland Plantation has a moderately steep pitched roof. The original core of the building was constructed in the 1820s, and like Beau Fort, is framed with cedar posts in-filled with *bousillage*. It appears that originally the house had a full-length, unbroken side-gable roof that cantilevered on both the front and rear to create covered galleries. In 1871 Doctor Joseph Levecque, who served as the plantation and regional physician, expanded the house in the rear on one side. A new set of rafters was tied into the roof ridge beam to span to the new exterior outer wall. A lean-to roof was added later.⁵⁶

Atahoe has a rectangular plan with steeply pitched side-gable roof, and is the third example of a Creole house with this roof type. Like the Doctor's House at Oakland Plantation, Atahoe was once part of the larger Oakland plantation. The house is framed with cedar posts that were in-filled with *bousillage*. It has an unbroken, continuous roof-line with very small eaves on the gable side. The roof appears to have originally had only a cantilever on the front, with the rear roof rafters ending at the rear exterior wall. The rear was added onto at some point and the roof is clearly a lean-to.

The Jerry Jones House is a one-story, Creole house with a steeply pitched side-gable roof,

living space, although many have access to attic spaces built in, such as the ladder at the Walter Delphin House and the boxed stair at Oakland. Half stories are those wherein "the front and back walls rise a short distance above the height of the ceiling joists of the ground floor but do not extend far enough to be considered a full second story. In frame buildings, the corner posts continue a few feet past the plate that supports the joists... The plates are morticed into the side of the posts. Occasionally small windows lit these short front and back walls...buildings whose garret space was lit by dormer windows and whose rafters rested on plates on or near the level of the ceiling joists of the story below were not considered to be a story and a half in height..." Carl R. Lounsbury, ed., *An Illustrated Glossary of Early Southern Architecture and Landscape* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 356. Beau Fort measures approximately 46 x 85 and faces north. The gallery runs for 84'. Historic Standing Structure Survey, No. 499.

⁵⁵ Beau Fort, Historic American Buildings Survey, Library of Congress (HABS No. LA-1291).

⁵⁶ Oakland, Historic American Buildings Survey, Library of Congress (HABS No. LA-1192). The house measures 30' x 54' and faces east. Historic Standing Structure Survey, No. 522.

probably built in 1845. The cantilevered roof makes for a full-length gallery in front. The roof-line is unbroken and terminates on the gable ends with a small eave. This is the fourth example highlighted.⁵⁷

With its *bousillage* walls and half-timbered structure, the Jerry Jones house is an important contributor to the Cane River Creole landscape. It has long been associated with families in the Cane River Creole community and was most likely part of Florentine Conant's inheritance from her mother, Marie Louise Metoyer. As Florentine Conant's separate property, it was then bequeathed to her daughter with Augustin Predones Metoyer. This child also was named Florentine, and was married to Jeremiah Jones at the time of partition in 1870.⁵⁸ Although briefly owned by Adolph and Harris Kaffie around 1900, the dwelling has housed members of the Metoyer, Conant, Chevalier, Christophe, Meziere, and Jones families over the years and most recently was acquired by Tammy E. Roque.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ The Jerry Jones House measures approximately 50' x 40' and faces northeast. It has a typical floor plan with two front rooms and an undercut rear porch flanked by *cabinet* rooms. The only alterations at the time of the Historic Standing Structure Survey consisted of enclosing this back porch. It also is almost identical to No. 532 (Herman Christophe House). Historic Standing Structure Survey, No. 531.

⁵⁸ *Creole Chronicles*, Volume I: *Cane River Community* (Natchitoches: Louisiana Creole Heritage Center, 2001), 37. Marie Louise Metoyer, according to the Creole Center's genealogical database, married Juan Francisco Conant, Sr. In the act of succession, it is revealed that they had three children: Florentine, Jean and Ayruss [sic]. Florentine Conant married Augustin Predones Metoyer and they had two children, Florentine and Marie Anne (Anna Marie). The database provided life dates for Florentine Conant Metoyer (1822-1869), and her children (Florentine 1848-74; Marie Anne or Anna Marie, born 1869). The inventory, appraisal, and act of succession confirms Florentine Conant Metoyer's death in 1869, plus reveals Marie Anne's tutor (guardian) to be her uncle, Jean Conant. Augustin Predones Metoyer was alive in 1869, as he conducted the inventory. Conveyance Book 75, folio 402-06.

Movable property included in Florentine's parcel included: 6 cows and calves, 4 young horned cattle, 1 black walnut bureau or desk, 1 black walnut table with leaves, 16 chairs, 1 black walnut arm chair, 1 book on geography with atlas, 1 mahogany bedstead cornished [furnished?], 1 maple bedstead, 1 trundle bedstead, 1 mahogany armoire, 1 iron chest, 1 clock, 1 lot kitchen utensils, 2 large iron pots, 1 platform scales, 1 marking iron, 1 old carriage, and ½ dozen silver spoons. The total value of her real and movable property reached \$5329.

⁵⁹ Conveyance Book 553, folio 740 (transfer of the house only, a building "made of cypress, moss, and dirt with a metal roof" in March of 2001); Conveyance Book 350, folio 385-85; Conveyance Book 267, folio 640-41; Conveyance Book 118, folio 27-28; Conveyance Book 110, folio 367-68; Conveyance Book 106, folio 252-53; Conveyance Book 104, folio 287, 357, 422-23; Conveyance Book 100, folio 612-13; Conveyance Book 98, folio 552; and Conveyance Book 75, folio 402-06.

Also tied to the Creole community is the Lewis Jones House (fig. 15).⁶⁰ Exhibit number five, this dwelling was constructed in 1847 and has a steeply pitched roof.⁶¹ The house is a one story building framed with cedar posts that were in-filled with *bousillage*.⁶² Presently, the Lewis Jones House has both ends of its roof structure partially cantilever to make an outdoor space on the sides. The galleries were most likely open originally and used as exterior circulation for the house. As at Beau Fort, this is very uncommon for Creole houses with side-gable roofs.⁶³

The sixth example of the side-gable roof type is the Badin Roque House. It was built between 1790 and 1827, at which time Francois Frederic sold the property to Augustin Metoyer, who then gave it to his son, Jean Baptiste Metoyer.⁶⁴ The house is a one-story building framed with cedar posts set into the ground that were in-filled with *bousillage*.⁶⁵ The unbroken steeply pitched roof is original and has never been added to. The roof cantilevers over the front of the house creating

⁶⁰ *Creole Chronicles*, 31, 47. The property belonged to Lewis Jones, Sr., son of Carroll Jones, and currently is owned by Jones family descendants.

⁶¹ The date comes from an inscription under the stair leading to the attic. *Creole Chronicles*, 47. See also, Lewis Jones House (Jones Residence), Historic American Buildings Survey, Library of Congress (HABS No. LA-1243).

⁶² Windows have been cut into the gables to illuminate and perhaps ventilate the attic space. Floor plans suggest, however, the space is not livable and remains an attic.

⁶³ The footprint of the house measures approximately 43' x 77' and the house faces north. The Historic Standing Structure Survey ranked this as one of the most significant examples, alongside Cherokee, because of its floor plan - three rooms across and southeast and southwest *cabinet* rooms. It was also noted this building originally had a hip roof. Historic Standing Structure Survey, No. 544. However, the National Register nomination states that evidence suggests the gable roof is original. Further investigation of this significant structure is warranted. To reiterate the text, one would expect to find a hip roof covering the building with its Italo-Spanish plan and galleries. The roof at the Tauzin-Wells House was changed from a hip to a gable in the early twentieth century (when the house was expanded), so there is precedent for such a dramatic change in Natchitoches. HABS No. LA-1258.

⁶⁴ Augustin Metoyer was the son of Marie Therese and Claude T.P. Metoyer and was affectionately known to the Creoles as "Grand-pere." He and his brother Louis (who developed present-day Melrose) were carpenters and were credited with building the first Catholic chapel. "The Badin-Roque House," brochure, ca. 2001, Creole Heritage Center/St. Augustine Historical Society, Natchitoches.

⁶⁵ *Poteaux en terre* construction, like that seen at the Badin Roque House, was prevalent in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century; only three other French Creole examples are known. They are located in Ste. Genevieve, Missouri.

a grade-level covered outdoor space (fig. 16).⁶⁶

Built around 1850, Cedar Bend has a rectangular plan (54' x 46') with steeply pitched side-gable roof. Like the others, this example is framed with cedar posts that were in-filled with *bousillage*. It also has an unbroken continuous roof-line with very small eaves on the gable sides. Today the roof cantilevers over the front gallery, but it is unclear whether the roof originally cantilevered over a rear *loggia*. Certainly, the rear row of small rooms with the lean-to roof were added on at some time later. Cedar Bend, like Beau Fort is a very sophisticated example of the side gabled, Creole house type.⁶⁷ Two similar buildings with a front gallery, an enclosed rear *loggia* and a long lean-to roof, are the Helvetia Dependency in Ascension Parish, and the Hebert House in West Baton Rouge Parish.⁶⁸

The eighth exemplar, the Herman Christophe House, is a one-story Creole house with a steeply pitched, side-gable roof (fig. 17).⁶⁹ It was constructed in 1845 by the Cristophe family in the heart of the Creole community. The house has a cantilevered roof with a full-length front gallery. The roof-line is unbroken and terminates on the gable ends with a small eave.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ Badin-Roque House, Historic American Buildings Survey, Library of Congress (HABS No. LA-1294); *Creole Chronicles*, 8-9, 13-14, 29, 39-40. It measures 27' x 30' and faces northeast. Historic Standing Structure Survey, No. 534.

⁶⁷ Cedar Bend, Louisiana National Register of Historic Places, (www.crt.state.la.us/nhl2/searchlistings.asp?, accessed 14 June 2005); Cedar Bend, Nomination, 1988, National Register of Historic Places; Janice M. Bolton to Nancy I.M. Morgan, electronic communication, 2 February 2006, with floor plans and photographs. Historic Standing Structure Survey, No. 489. The building faces southeast.

⁶⁸ "Helvetia Dependency," Nomination, March 1992, National Register of Historic Places; "Hebert House," Nomination, July 1993, National Register of Historic Places.

⁶⁹ The house measures about 50' x 38' and faces northeast. It is virtually identical to the Jerry Jones House in scale and plan. Historic Standing Structure Survey, No. 532.

⁷⁰ *Creole Chronicles*, 27, 38. Recollections of Armas Christophe's grand-daughter place Armas and his brother, Welch, in the Herman Christophe House as children. Herman was her mother's first cousin (Welch's son). She also stated her mother was born in 1886. The Creole Center's genealogical database recreates part of the family unit, however, the older Christophes are conspicuously absent in the corresponding census records. Joseph Armas Christophe married Antoinette Metoyer and they had eight children: Emilie (1871), Eudola (1876), Jeanne (1874), Leocadia (1886), Luke (1869), Marie (1878), Natilee (1889), and Yolanda (1891). In the 1880 census, J.A. Christophe (age 32) and A. Christophe (age 25) had three children: Jeanette age 5, Marie age 2, and Leclerc age 4 months. The 1920 census located Antoinette, then a widow, in the household of her daughter Natilee Silverin. The Creole Center's

The Walter Delphin House is a one-story Creole house with a steeply pitched, side-gable roof, and so is the ninth of this type seen in Cane River. The dwelling was built in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century.⁷¹ The house has a cantilevered roof with a full-length front gallery. The roof-line is unbroken and terminates on the gable ends with a small eave. This building is also known to be part of the Cane River Creole community.⁷²

Similar to the Delphin House in appearance and scale is the Alfred Llorens House (fig. 16).⁷³ It

database also supplied details about Leocadia's (the child born in 1886) family. She married Vigor Dominique Silvie, with whom she had four children: Christophe (1909), Franklin (1916), Leocadie (1920), and Marie Lair (1913). Public records also suggest that Herman Christophe (born 1923) lived in the house for much of the twentieth century. More research needs to be done to discover the parents of Welch and Joseph Armas Christophe and a chain of title completed from that generation back to the time of construction in the 1840s.

⁷¹ The house today measures about 40' x 45' and faces northeast. The southern-most two bays were added later. Historic Standing Structure Survey, No. 533.

⁷² *Creole Chronicles*, 28, 39. The house is owned by the family of the late Joseph Delphin today.

⁷³ Today the property is part of Alfred Llorens's estate, in care of Marie Roque in Natchez. According to the 2006 tax assessment records, the property is located in Section(s) 90 and 91, T & R 6, on the left descending bank of the Cane River and bounded above by the lands of Llorens, rear by those of Kaffie, and below by those of Henry. Marie Llorens (b. 1923) married Earl A. Roque in 1946, and her father, Alfred Llorens, Jr., married Roberta Metoyer at age 24 in 1934. His wedding was witnessed by his parents, Alfred Llorens and Louisa Jones as well as her parents, Joe and Nettie Metoyer. She was 19. His father, Alfred, married Louisa (or Louise) in December of 1908 and their wedding was witnessed by various members of the Jones family including L.E. Jones, Jerry Jones, and Mitchell Jones. Marriage Book 21, folio 284; Marriage Book 41, folio 432; and Marriage Book 51, folio 516, as well as public record index for Marie Roque. The Creole Center's genealogical database provides life-dates for Alfred Llorens, Jr., (1911-52), which correspond to that suggested by the Natchitoches Parish marriage records. It also supplies the names of his paternal grandparents, Agatha Florentine Dupree and Robert Boblin Llorens. Alfred Llorens was born in 1887.

Having confirmed who Marie Roque's father was, the man with whom the Cane River Creoles associate the house today, the property was purchased by Louise Jones Llorens, wife of Alfred Llorens, in April of 1922. She bought the house independently of her husband from the heirs of Sarah Therese Cloutier, the widow of John Carl Metoyer. The parcel included 23 arpents more or less, the upper half of lot 6 containing 43 and 13/100 arpents on the plat of partition dated March 1, 1876, recorded at the sheriff's sale. The said 23 arpents are bounded to the front by the Cane River, below by the lower half of the same tract now owned by John H. Henry, above by lands of Rosine Metoyer, wife of Robert B. Llorens, and to the rear by M.H. Jones. Of the \$1000, \$750 was paid. Sarah Metoyer's heirs were William A., Chester A., Edwina C. Metoyer Chevalier. Sarah Metoyer secured her rights to the property in the sale of the "real and personal property belonging to the succession of John Carl Metoyer..." in

too is a one-story Creole house with a steeply pitched side-gable roof built in the late nineteenth century. The Alfred Llorens House also has a cantilevered roof with a full-length gallery. The roof-line is unbroken and terminates on the gable ends with a small eave. Although unoccupied now, this building was where Zorado Jones taught the children of Isle Brevelle in the early twentieth century.⁷⁴

Built by John Joseph Conant in 1892, the Conant Delphin House is a one-story Creole house with a steeply pitched, side-gable roof. The house has a cantilevered roof with a full-length gallery. The roof-line is unbroken and terminates on the gable ends with a small eave.⁷⁵ The

August of 1908. At that time the tract of land was described as on the east bank of the Cane River descending, about 22 miles below the city. It consisted of 25 acres, bounded in front by the river, above by the lands of Rosine Llorens, rear by that of Bird, and below by that held by J.H. Henry. Metoyer also purchased a mule "Pete", mule "Dick", mare "Maud", mare "Jeanette" and her colt, 2 cows and calves, 1 old wagon, one lot of hoes and plows, 1 old hay press, rake and mower, crops growing on the place and all personal goods in the dwelling as shown on the inventory and consisting of beds, bedding, armoires, bedsteads, chairs, table, cooking stoves, pots, and other furniture and fixtures. Conveyance Book 149, folio 537-39, 565; Conveyance Book 124, folio 360-62; *Natchitoches Times* 6, no. 17 (26 June 1908).

John Carl Metoyer bought property at a tax sale in 1885 (Conveyance Book 82, folio 444-45) and again in 1891, though that parcel was subject to a five-year lease. It was 25 acres more or less located 3 miles above the 24-mile ferry and bounded by the Cane River and by the lands of Robert Llorens (above) and Jos Dupree (below). The vendors acquired it from Florentine Dupree in 1889. Conveyance Book 88, folio 712. If this is the Llorens's house parcel then it is likely Florentine Dupree had the house built. Rosine Llorens sold her property to Alfred Llorens in 1927. She inherited it from her father, Gassion Metoyer, in 1896 (Conveyance Book 67, folio 136). The tract was on the left descending bank of the Cane River, and was the south half of lot 5 on the survey map lying in Sections 90 & 91 T 7 N, R 6W. It was 20 acres more or less bounded on the north by Felix Balthazar (who held the north half of the lot), on the south by Louise Llorens, to the east by Kaffie, and west by the Cane River. This would appear to be the adjacent lot. Conveyance Book 159, folio 179-80.

⁷⁴ *Creole Chronicles*, 7, 23, 34. Oral interviews reveal someone's father (likely Marie Roque, though the speaker was not identified) buying the property from Sarah Metoyer in 1922; before then it was the school. The 1996 ethnographic study notes that the Daughters of the Cross established a school for Isle Brevelle in the nineteenth century and later a parochial school operated out of St. Augustine. By 1900 there were one or two more schools. H.F. Gregory and Joseph Moran, "'We Know Who We Are': An Ethnographic Overview of the Creole Community and Traditions of Isle Brevelle and Cane River, Louisiana," Report for Jean Lafitte National Historic Park and Preserve/St. Augustine Historical Society, December 1996, 65.

⁷⁵ *Creole Chronicles*, 23, 34. Conant's child (most probably Bernadine Conant Delphin) recalled her father built the house, and since he lacked carpentry experience, nothing in it was plumb. Conant inherited the land on which he constructed the house from his father. Conant's family is traced back to Suzanne Metoyer, twin sister of Augustin. The Creole Center's genealogical database fills in the names

dwelling Conant erected strongly resembles the Walter Delphin House and the Alfred Llorens House. The corresponding date of construction, as well as kinship networks and geographic proximity, contribute to this consistency of architectural expression in these three examples of the side-gable, Creole dwelling.

The eleventh and last representative of the side gable family is the Meziere House, a one-story Creole house with a steep pitch to its roof. The roof is cantilevered to cover a full-length gallery. The roof-line is unbroken and terminates on the gable ends with a small eave, reminiscent of the previous three. On one side of the front of the house, a new wing was added perpendicular the original core. This wing, extending outward from the front of the house, is very unusual as all other additions to the Creole buildings either enclosed space under the roof or added to the rear. The new wing has a three section rounded bay with a front gable roof, much like the so-called "Victorian Cottage" house type (fig. 17).⁷⁶

The other dominant Creole roof type seen in Natchitoches is the hipped roof. There are eight documented Creole houses with hipped roofs including Oaklawn, Cherokee, Oakland, Coincoin-Prudhomme House, Roubieu-Jones House, Melrose, Yucca House at Melrose, Rachal-Aubry House, and the Overseer's house at Magnolia.⁷⁷ This group of houses includes examples from both the mixed-ancestry Creoles and from the ethnically European planters. The hipped roof has four pitched sides that rise to central roof ridge. On both ends of the roof ridge beam a pair of

that correspond to the remembrances. Mary Bernadine Conant (b. 1911) is the daughter of John Joseph Felician Conant (1874-1960) and Marie Antoinette Metoyer. Her paternal grandparents are Jean Florentin Conant and Hermane Eualie Metoyer. The 1930 census picks up the family group, recording John (55) and Antoinette (56) and Bernadine (19) as living in ward nine. Conant was a cotton farmer at that time.

Earlier censuses are less helpful. The 1900 census, for example, note Joseph Conant's family living in Jackson Square (ward one) and John Conant and his wife Elvena living in ward nine, the west of Cane River district. They had one child, who had died, at the time of the census. They had adopted a son by the 1910 census. John's and Antoinette's names did not appear with the others of the same surname.

⁷⁶ Mezieres House, Historic American Buildings Survey, Library of Congress (HABS No. LA-1339). The house faces southwest. No measurements were taken for the Historic Standing Structure Survey because of a dog guarding the property. However, the bracketed posts and entryway with transom and side lights lend this building an aura of the Queen Anne style. Historic Standing Structure Survey, No. 598.

⁷⁷ The big house at Magnolia burned during the Civil War and was reconstructed in the 1890s making it more a remembrance of antebellum prosperity by those who built it rather than an expression of themselves at the time as the smaller Creole houses of same era were of their builders. It has rather a different story to tell and so is exempted from study here. See Tony Bremholm, Magnolia Plantation, Historic American Buildings Survey, Library of Congress (HABS No. LA-1193).

rafters connect each corner of the wall plate to the ridge beam. Secondary rafters tie into the primary rafters as well as the ridge beam. Unlike the side-gable roof type that has a technical functional purpose, the hipped roof has more of a design purpose. The hipped roof allows for up to all four sides of a house to be entirely covered by the cantilevered roof, without creating a massive roof that would have too large of a scale for the house underneath to support.

Oaklawn is one of the largest and most refined of all of Cane River's Creole plantation houses, and like the smaller dwellings seen in Isle Brevelle were, it too is framed with cedar posts that were in-filled with *bousillage*. The steeply pitched hipped roof cantilevers on the front and side of the house, but probably originally covered four sides of open gallery. The enclosed side of the front gallery was once the "stranger's room," which was a public room on the house where travelers might be invited to stay the night.

Cherokee, like Oaklawn, is an extraordinary example of the elegant and grand Creole Plantation house. The house is thought to have been constructed by Charles Emile Sompayrac in 1839. It is framed with cedar posts that were in-filled with *bousillage*. The steeply pitched hipped roof cantilevers on three sides over twelve foot galleries. Originally, Cherokee had four galleries but the rear was enclosed to make room for two new bedrooms, a kitchen, and a gallery.⁷⁸

Oakland has one of the most intact plantation landscapes on the Cane River with many outbuildings and smaller residences dating from the antebellum era. Oakland is "notable for its unbroken ownership by the regionally influential Prudhomme family since circa 1789," and that the "extant historic structures and landscapes record the evolution and adoption of a complex agricultural society."⁷⁹ The original interior of the house was constructed in 1818 by the Prudhomme family, and included a central core of rooms framed with cedar posts that were in-filled with *bousillage*. The steeply pitched hipped roof cantilevers fully on two sides and partially on the other two. Originally, Oakland had four galleries but the rear was enclosed to add new rooms and the rear of one side was lengthened and then enclosed to create a strangers room. The roof framing at Oakland has a very aesthetic solution for the addition. Unlike many of the other Creole house additions where the accretion was tied into the original framing and so created an unbalanced and asymmetrical section because the added-onto side had a longer pitch than the other slopes of the building's roof, at Oakland the roof ridge beam lengthened and the pitch on

⁷⁸ Cherokee, Louisiana National Register of Historic Places, (www.crt.state.la.us/nhl2/searchlistings.asp?, accessed 14 June 2005); Mrs. William C. Nolan, preparer, "Cherokee," Nomination, January 1973, National Register of Historic Places; Cherokee Plantation, Historic American Buildings Survey, Library of Congress (HABS No. LA-1318).

⁷⁹ "Oakland Plantation," National Park Service Cultural Landscapes Inventory, 1997, 12.

the new wing was exactly the same as the others. This was not purely a functional requirement.⁸⁰

The Overseer's House at Oakland is one of the many secondary buildings on the Oakland site. The one-story house is framed with cedar posts that were in-filled with *bousillage*. The steeply pitched hipped roof cantilevers on the front of the house, but probably originally covered both a front and rear open gallery. The rear gallery was enclosed in order to create more space. The building has a hipped roof, but interestingly appears to never have had four galleries, which is the usual reason for a hipped roof type.⁸¹

The original core of the Coincoin-Prudhomme House was constructed by John Gabriel St Anne Prudhomme (known as St. Anne Prudhomme), in 1843 with cedar posts and *bousillage* in-fill.⁸² The steeply pitched hipped roof cantilevers fully on the front and partially on the rear of the house. Originally, the roof cantilevered on both the front and rear creating galleries on two sides. During an early renovation of the house, the rear *loggia* was enclosed. During a twentieth-century renovation, lean-to shed roof additions were added on the northeast, southeast, and southwest façades. The roof framing at the Coincoin-Prudhomme House uses a king-post truss system with double rafters above both the front and rear load-bearing exterior walls. The building is atypical for two reasons: first, the truss system is much too heavy for such a small building and a product of an older European building tradition; and secondly, like the Overseer's House at Oakland, the building has a hipped roof, but appears to never have had four galleries.⁸³

Although this roof type, which was originally used by professional builders and engineers on the early colonial government and ecclesiastical buildings, was seldom used after the middle eighteenth century, there are a few extant examples of this roof type on Louisiana Creole houses

⁸⁰ HABS No. LA-1192. The building measures around 70' x 80' and faces east. Historic Standing Structure Survey, No. 504.

⁸¹ HABS No. LA-1192. It is possible that the hip roof was chosen for the overseer's house to distinguish it architecturally from the quarters of those whose labor he directed and yet without the four galleries kept it - and its occupant - in its appropriate place in the plantation hierarchy. The Historic Standing Structure Survey provides a little more detail: measuring 25 ½' x 38', facing east, dating to ca. 1845-60 stylistically, originally undercut front and side galleries, though side later enclosed as was the northwest *cabinet* room on the rear. Historic Standing Structure Survey, No. 519.

⁸² Conveyance Book 30, folio 98. The Historic Standing Structure Survey dated the building to around 1835-50 based on physical evidence. Historic Standing Structure Survey, No. 488.

⁸³ HABS No. LA-1295. Given the location (and date) of this building, and the archaeological discovery of a late eighteenth-century dwelling some 100 yards away, it is likely this was also an overseer's house, with a view to the row of piece-sur-piece cabins and the big house rather than the water.

that were built in the late eighteenth to middle nineteenth century. In St. James Parish, Graugnard Farms Plantation built in the late eighteenth century has a king-post truss system. It is comparable in size and scale to the Coincoin-Prudhomme House.⁸⁴ The only other Creole house in Natchitoches Parish with a king-post truss system is the Tauzin-Wells (or Buard-Wells) House, which is in the city of Natchitoches and was constructed in the late eighteenth century.⁸⁵

Austerlitz, an 1830s plantation house in Point Coupee Parish has a similar roof, which was designed by a free-man-of-color who was a refugee from Saint Domingue. The 1830s-built Valmont Bergeron House in Pointe Coupee also has a king-post truss. Although there is no evidence to support the prospect, it is possible that a West Indian refugee also designed the roof of the Coincoin-Prudhomme House.

The Roubieu-Jones House was built around 1818 by Francois Roubieu who probably received the land as a gift or dowry after marrying the daughter of Julien Rachal. Built on a full, six foot raise, this Creole plantation house was constructed of brick masonry on the ground floor, and framed with cedar posts that were in-filled with *bousillage* on the principal level above. The steeply pitched hipped roof cantilevers eleven feet beyond the main floor's exterior wall creating a full-length gallery, but probably originally covered both a front and rear open gallery. The rear gallery was enclosed in order to create more space. Like the Overseer's House at Oakland and the Coincoin-Prudhomme House, the building has a hipped roof, and appears to never have had four galleries.⁸⁶

Melrose is one of the grandest and most well-known of all of Cane River's Creole Plantation houses. The house was built in the 1830s by Louis Metoyer, who used traditional materials such as cedar posts and *bousillage* for his dwelling. The steeply pitched hipped roof cantilevers on the front and on part of the rear creating both a front and rear gallery. Originally, the roof extended outward on all four sides, but the two sides and part of the rear were enclosed to create more space.⁸⁷

The Yucca House is thought to be the original plantation dwelling on the Melrose plantation site.

⁸⁴ "Graugnard Farms Plantation House," Nomination, March 1992, National Register of Historic Places.

⁸⁵ HABS No. LA-1258.

⁸⁶ Roubieu-Jones House (Reform Plantation, Carroll Jones House), Historic American Buildings Survey, Library of Congress (HABS No. LA-1298). It measures about 42' x 52' and faces northeast. Historic Standing Structure Survey, No. 526.

⁸⁷ Melrose Plantation, Historic American Buildings Survey, Library of Congress (HABS No. LA-2-69).

The original owner of the house was probably Louis Metoyer who was the son of Creole Matriarch, Marie Therese CoinCoin and Frenchman Claude Thomas Pierre Metoyer. Louis Metoyer petitioned the Spanish Government for the land, which was granted to him in 1796. The one-story house is framed with cedar posts that were in-filled with *bousillage*. The building has a hipped roof with galleries in the front and rear. Some scholars believe that the house had galleries on all four sides and that the two side galleries were enclosed to create more interior space, a notion that was furthered by recent archaeological research, while others believe the current four-room configuration is the original plan.⁸⁸

The Rachal-Aubry House is a one-story structure framed with cedar posts that were in-filled with *bousillage*. The steeply pitched hipped roof cantilevers on the front and two sides of the house, but likely covered four sides of open gallery originally (fig. 18).⁸⁹ Since the mid- nineteenth century, this building has been a part of the Cane River Creole community and remained within ownership of the Rachal family descendants. In 1993, Anthony Rachal gave the house and land to his three children, Anthony, Gwendolyn, and Vincent.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ "Historic Structures Report for Yucca House Melrose Plantation."

⁸⁹ Historic Standing Structure Survey, No. 548.

⁹⁰ *Creole Chronicles*, 41-42; Conveyance Book 482, folio 811-13. As their father did, the three children lived out of town - Anthony and Gwendolyn (Aubry) in New Orleans and Vincent in Texas. Admittedly incomplete, the chain of title for the Rachal-Aubry House on Highway 484 begins with the Anthony M. Rachal, Sr., who inherited the property from his sister, Amelia, in June of 1983. It consisted of 32 acres more or less in Section 26, T 7 N, R 6 W, and bounded by the Cane River, above by the lands of Pauline Balthazar, to the rear by that of Lewis Jones, and below by that held by Sam Balthazar. Conveyance Book 387, folio 768. Amelia Rachal's will revealed she was unmarried, and her deceased. She left everything to her brother, Anthony, of New Orleans. Conveyance Book 385, folio 670. Yet forty years earlier, Anthony had transferred the property to Amelia, mostly likely to provide her with some place to live as he was married (to Genevieve) and living in New Orleans. The property consisted of 32 acres more or less, in the same township and range noted above, about two miles below the Melrose bridge on the right bank of the river descending. It was bounded by the lands of Walter G. Kelly (below), of Lewis Jones (rear), and Daniels (above). The Cane River demarcated the remaining boundary line. Conveyance Book 195, folio 67-68 (1944). This transfer occurred after the death of their mother Celina in 1939. Conveyance Book 182, folio 414. Natchitoches Parish records indicate that Celina Debrenil married Joel Rachal in May of 1879 (Book 5, folio 472). The Creole Center's genealogical database gives February 6, 1860, as Joel Rachal's date of birth. His parents were Suzette Metoyer and Joseph Mission Rachal, and his paternal grandparents Marie Perine Metoyer and Pierre Mission Rachal. The 1880 census recorded Mrs. Joel Rachal, age 19, living with her mother Mrs. Oscar Dubreuil and assorted family members. Joel Rachal was listed independently. He was 21 years old and a farmer. Both lived in Natchitoches Ward 9, "East Cane River." Earlier, for the 1870 census enumeration, Joel's parents J.M. and Suzette Rachal were aged 45 and 34 respectively and had the following children living at home: Josephine (20), Sephrime (14), Joyelle (8), Pierre (6), M [illegible] (1), Joshua (16) employed as a laborer, and Dell...[illegible]

The Overseer's House/Slave Hospital at Magnolia is one of the many secondary buildings on the Magnolia site. After the big house burned in the spring of 1864, the Hertzogs moved into the building, which they modified extensively, from a slave hospital, into a residence. They lived there until 1897 or 1898, when construction of the present house was completed. After the new "Big House" was constructed, the building became the residence of the Overseer.⁹¹ Built in the 1840s or 1850s, this structure is framed with cedar posts that were in-filled with *bousillage*. The steeply pitched hipped roof cantilevers on the front of the house and on one side. Originally the roof probably covered a rear open gallery. The rear gallery was enclosed in order to create more internal space. The building has a hipped roof, but appears to have originally had three galleries instead of the usual four.⁹²

There are only two Creole houses from the survey that do not have either a side-gable or hipped roof. The Cook's House at Oakland has a side-gable, Anglo-American roof type where the pitch of the roof ends just beyond the exterior wall and a lean-to shed gallery creates the covered outdoor space instead of a cantilevered roof.⁹³ The Gustave-Chevalier House is related to the

(11). J.M. Rachal, Jr., was married and living with his wife and two children as another household. Both men were farmers. "Joyelle" is most probably Joel. Record Group 29, Records of the Bureau of Census, Federal Population and Mortality Schedules, 1870 & 1880, National Archives and Records Administration.

If the 1835 date is correct, then Joel Rachal's grandparents built the house. More information on Joel Rachal and his forebears needs to be done to better interpret the social message of the hipped roof - unusual downriver on a parcel of its size - though perhaps what remains is a vestige of a larger estate. For example, Conveyance Book 98, folio 631, records the partition between Joel and Celina Rachal and Hippolite Caspon in 1899. Each received 20.25 acres of open land near the river and 14.75 acres of wood land behind. Fronting Cane River was 19.40 acres, with a small parcel cut out (2.91) for Dupre.

Oral tradition in the Creole community associates it with Tante Comete and Nonc Zoel Rachal. Tante Comete ran a store from the house, selling children jelly beans and the like. They had a daughter, Mae, who played the piano. *Creole Chronicles*, 41. Another reference to the house and store appeared elsewhere to illustrate how kinship networks overlaid the landscape: "Tante Comete had a store down there near Tony Rachal's mother's old place" suggesting there were two buildings. Gregory and Moran, 33, 77-78 (quote 33); Personal communication, John Oswald Colson to Virginia B. Price and Jon L. Wilson, 2006.

⁹¹ Jonathan Fricker and Donna Fricker, preparers, "Magnolia Plantation," National Historic Landmark Nomination, 1999, National Park Service, 5. Magnolia was declared a NHL on January 3, 2001.

⁹² Bremholm, HABS No. LA-1193, 2.

⁹³ HABS No. LA-1192. Historic Standing Structure Survey, No. 516.

shotgun house, with its hipped roof form and with the narrow end being the front side.⁹⁴ In this configuration, the cantilevered roof does create the covered front gallery (fig. 19).

Within the survey area, there is very little diversity in Creole roof type. Most of the houses have a variation of the side-gable roof with a very steep pitch, or an adaptation of the hipped roof. Many of the side-gable houses originally had a front gallery and rear *loggia* with a *cabinet* room on each side. These rear *loggias* were enclosed to make more interior, living space. Many of the side gabled Creole houses were enlarged, with new spaces to the rear of the house. To accommodate the expansion, the roofs of these buildings were extended by making new, longer rafters tie into the roof ridge beam, or a lean-to roof was used. On the Lewis Jones House, Beau Fort, and Cedar Bend, it appears that there was a side gallery already tucked under the side-gable roof. This is an unusual design decision for the roof tends to be too large of a scale for the volume of the house. These were probably constructed to give the luxury of the wrap-around gallery without the extra time and cost of constructing a hipped roof. The hipped roof type is more complex and produces the most visually attractive, and functional, design decision for a house with galleries on all four sides. It was probably more expensive to build than a side-gable. It is no surprise that in the survey area it appears on all the fully-raised Creole houses, which were the most sophisticated and distinguished found in the survey area.⁹⁵ The Overseer's House at Magnolia, and the Coincoin-Prudhomme House have sophisticated roofs in less prominent houses. These buildings were designed to distinguish their occupants from others, to reinforce the social hierarchy of place in Cane River and possibly signifying their owners' desire to be interpreted as belonging to an elite class of planters.

Raise over Grade

One of the most iconic characteristics of Creole architecture is the raise. Like most frontier architecture of the colonial and antebellum South, Creole houses were raised off the ground to preserve the wood frames from rotting due to wet soil and floods, and to serve as a cooling mechanism by raising the principal living space above ground in order to utilize the slight

⁹⁴ Gustave Chevalier House, Historic American Buildings Survey, Library of Congress (HABS No. LA-1356). This dwelling measures approximately 50' x 28' and faces southwest. It stands one-story in height beneath a hip roof with a full-width, undercut gallery. Erected around 1915, this is an unusual hold-over of the undercut galleried house form. Historic Standing Structure Survey, No. 596.

⁹⁵ Throughout Louisiana, most fully-raised buildings have a hipped or gable-on-hip roof. Two side-gable, fully-raised buildings are the Godchaux-Reserve Plantation House in St John the Baptist Parish, and North Bend in Pointe Coupee Parish. See, "Godchaux-Reserve Plantation House," Nomination, November 1993, National Register of Historic Places; and "North Bend," Nomination, June 1992, National Register of Historic Places.

Louisiana breeze. In most cases they were raised anywhere from one foot to a full story off the ground with either timber posts or with brick masonry piers.⁹⁶ The full-story raise was a common characteristic of eighteenth-century Creole design, and was found in all areas of the Creole diaspora. Originally, a high raise was used to channel air through the bays of the house and along the gallery to cool the building during the hot summer months, and apparently, to situate the principal living space away from mosquitoes and other insects.⁹⁷ The ground floor of a fully raised Creole home had either brick in-fill between the columns finished with painted plaster, or a series of light wood partitions to enclose the lower volume. In both cases, the ground floor was usually the utilitarian space.

Over time, the full-story raise was used to signify social position within the planter class, a higher raised house indicating wealth. In Louisiana, the height of the raise was used to symbolize the center of the power axis, in much the same way the Spanish utilized the height and grandness of the government and ecclesiastical buildings on the town square. For planters concerned with sustaining total control on the plantation, the height of the big house was used to assert a sense of hierarchical authority over all the outbuildings and slave-quarters. The full-story raised Creole plantation house, served as a symbolic representation of the seat government, church, and master's house, for all residents on the plantation, bound and free.

Within the borders of the study area, there are essentially only two types of raise found on the Creole houses: the full-story raise; or the one to three foot raise Creole house. Of the surveyed Creolehouses, there are five that are fully raised, eighteen with a one to three foot raise, and Badin Roque which is at grade. The five fully raised examples were owned by some of the region's wealthiest planters, and therefore it is no surprise that the buildings represent the highest quality of Creole architecture. Oakland, Cherokee, Oakland, and Melrose all have their primary floor raised off the ground by a full story. The ground floor space on these buildings was open or enclosed with light partitions. The ground floor was probably used as a utilitarian space where plantation everyday jobs were carried out. Both Melrose and Oaklawn have redesigned their ground floor spaces for use as secondary living spaces. Only Oakland retains its original light framing, in-fill partitions between the masonry columns.

Roubieu-Jones House is the only fully raised Creole plantation house in the study-area that had a partially enclosed ground floor. The ground floor, like the main floor, is centered on a three-cell base module design. To the rear of the main three-cell plan, there is a series of peripheral rooms,

⁹⁶ A good example of a fully-raised Creole house is Little Texas in St. James Parish. See, "Little Texas (Genre House)," Nomination, March 1992, National Register of Historic Places.

⁹⁷ Claude C. Robin, *Robin's Voyages dans l'interieur de la Louisiane*, translated and annotated by Irene Blanche Pujol, M.A. thesis, Louisiana State University, 1936[1939?], 163.

walkways and exterior openings. The rear of the ground floor plan did not include exterior walls, and was, therefore, open. This notion is supported by the fact that the rear rooms tend to follow the plan from the main floor's original plan, with one room underneath each original *cabinet* room, an open room where the *loggia* was overhead, and another small hall where the stairs from the former *loggia* ran downward. Thus, it was easier to enclose the rear of the ground floor by using the dimensions and framing that was part of the original plan. A comparable building in both scale, size, and materials, is the Les Chenes Verts House or Live Oaks House originally in St. Landry Parish but now in East Baton Rouge Parish.⁹⁸

The eighteen Creole houses that have a slight one to three foot rise all have a very similar construction method. The main floor of the house rests on the load bearing brick masonry and/or Cypress block supports. The floor framing for the buildings consists of a large sill that supports the four load bearing exterior walls of the house, which is divided into sections by girders that run the width of the house. The girders lie beneath the front and rear load bearing walls. This type of ground floor raise is repeated copiously throughout the survey area. In many cases the piers are original.

Facade Composition

Unlike most colonial and antebellum Anglo-American architecture in the plantation South with their ordered and decorated façades, the front façades of Creole design were rarely organized symmetrically and generally were devoid of classically-derived ornamentation. Floor plans lacked interior passageways, instead rooms were used as pathways. The plans, therefore, failed to create a sense of spatial privacy and hierarchy as understood by Anglos.⁹⁹ For Louisiana planters who built in Creole design, the call for architectural hierarchy and symmetry in plan and ornament was problematic, as most Creole dwellings evolved asymmetrically, with façades wherein form had followed function. Without completely dismantling their buildings and re-orienting them, some of the Louisiana planters attempted to construct an image of order on their Creole dwellings.

The Roubieu-Jones House is an excellent example of an attempt to balance and adorn an existing Creole building. The most profound change Francois Roubieu made was to incorporate a front

⁹⁸ "Les Chenes Verts (Live Oaks)," Nomination, October 1992, National Register of Historic Places.

⁹⁹ Rhys Issac, *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 39. See also, HABS No. LA-1295. On the Marie-Therese House there is a chair rail molding along the gallery, a feature that hints to classically-derived ornamentation and speaks to the role this structure would have had on the plantation in relation to the big house and quarters in the nineteenth century.

staircase in the center of his house. Originally, the staircase ran parallel with the front façade and rose from underneath the front gallery to the principal living space. The new staircase was twice as wide and ran from roughly, 16' beyond the front of the house and rose to the center of gallery on the main floor. The most telling characteristic of the staircase is that it was not aligned with the just-off-center exterior doorway on the gallery; rather, the staircase was centered in regard to the width of the house. Furthermore, the original chamfered posts, which supported the cantilevered roof, were replaced with six decorated columns that were evenly spaced to each side of the staircase. The new columns were not placed above the brick squared columns that hold up the gallery and could not, therefore, transfer the load of the roof. Thus, symmetrical form was more important than function. Finally, two dormers were added to the front roof slope, which like the staircase and new columns, was centered in regard to the width of the house.

Other than the Roubieu-Jones House, none of the largest and most highly crafted of the Cane River Creole houses show exterior modifications to create a symmetrical façade. This is uncommon for an entire region and further testifies to the cultural preservation that took place in the heart of the Cane River plantation landscape. On many of the smaller houses built in the heart of the Creole community of the Cane River, the houses are symmetrical, but it appears that this has to do more with the floor plan having two similar sized rooms that open onto the front gallery than the need to represent order. It is unclear if their plan is a two-room Norman floor plan with rooms close to being the same, or a New Orleans Creole floor plan with identically sized rooms, but it is certain that the rooms are at least very close in size. Examples of these compositional and proportioned Creole buildings are the Conant-Delphin House, Jerry Jones House, Herman-Cristophe House, and the Walter Delphin House.

Conclusion

This study examined the down-river portion of residential, Creole-styled architecture in the Cane River National Heritage Area, which begins just south of the town of Natchitoches and extends for 35 miles along both sides of Cane River Lake. What is known collectively as the Creole house developed in the Caribbean as an architectural design that combined European, African, and Native American building traditions. This fusion of architectural cultures created a predicament where not one, but several unique traditions had to negotiate their building heritages in a new spatial and cultural landscape. Creole architecture tended to incorporate European internal plans, while the exterior spaces used African and Native American climate-influenced design. By the early eighteenth-century, after nearly two hundred years of colonial development, the French and Spanish had adopted Creole style as the architecture of their colonial identities. Louisiana being both a French and Spanish colony developed a rich and complex Creole architectural culture, which morphed and adapted, but never declined, throughout the colonial and antebellum eras.

The continuity of Creole architectural culture in Natchitoches Parish is particularly strong.

Because Natchitoches was one of the oldest population centers in Louisiana, it was developed under the French and Spanish in Louisiana and therefore was inhabited under the social and cultural circumstances of Creole civilization. These Creole traditions were protected from marginalization after the Louisiana Purchase because of both the geographical isolation of the Cane River plantations and because the land was so rich and productive that the successful planters stayed on the land and taught the traditions to their offspring. Although there was much discrepancy and discrimination between those planters of European ancestry and those with a combination of European, African, and Native American roots, the planters of mixed ancestry benefitted from having Franco-American neighbors who had a longer and more tolerant philosophy about non-white planters.¹⁰⁰

The Creole architecture of the Cane River serves an open-air museum of a specific architectural type that was a product of the complex and tragic history of plantation slavery in Louisiana. The buildings within the survey area represent most of the generally recognized details and patterns of Creole architecture, including the small Creole house with two front rooms and the three-room back (once the *loggia* and *cabinet* spatial range) and the larger, raised Creole cottage that in its oldest expression had a hipped roof.¹⁰¹ There are several peculiarities, like the roof framing at the Coincoin-Prudhomme House or the floor plan of the Yucca House, but in general, the houses tend to reflect the Creole house type of southern and central Louisiana. The largest and most sophisticated Creole houses have a full-story raise, have at least two rooms deep, and have a hipped roof. The most modest examples from the survey area were the side-gable roofed cottages with a two-room floor plan.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ This is given material expression in the large number of extant Creole dwellings there are in Cane River, and the continuation of traditional building practices into the late nineteenth century that account for the two-room, side-gabled houses made with *bousillage* like the Alfred Llorens House, the Walter Delphin House, and the Conant Delphin House. That the houses are often still occupied - and recognizable - reiterates the value placed by the community on its diverse cultural background.

¹⁰¹ For these broad definitions of the house forms that are seen in Natchitoches today, see Milton B. Newton, Jr., *Louisiana House Types: A Field Guide, melanges* vol. 2 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1971), 13-14.

¹⁰² According to the MPS, the period between 1718 and 1790 saw the Creole house form take on certain defining features, like that of the gallery, in addition to the characteristics carried over from earlier building traditions and origins like the use of *bousillage*, multiple points of entry determined by internal needs rather than exterior symmetry, raised foundations, and double leaf doors. Houses such as these were found in the fort at Natchitoches, for example. Most of the large, extant plantation houses in the Heritage Area coincide with the third period, 1790-1860, defined in the MPS. During this interval, the Creole house form was adapted by other groups, like the Acadians who preferred a gable roof to the hip, used loft spaces for sleeping, but yet kept the undercut roof for gallery-like spaces in front of their houses and who continued to use *bousillage* and wood as building materials. Also in this era, the Anglo

Reading these buildings leads to obvious conclusions: the plantations with more slaves both needed the big house to represent authority, while at the same time they produced more capital to build the large houses; the smaller plantations with few slaves were less interested in having their houses represent authority, as the relationships with their slaves was more personal and therefore they articulated their power within the dynamic of that relationship. The planters of the Cane River resisted architectural change after the Americans began to populate the parish, although some made negligible changes to their houses. In sum, the Creole architecture of the Cane River National Heritage Area is significant for the authenticity of an important architectural type and for its integrity as a cultural landscape that preserved its identity under extreme pressure to conform to American plantation norms.

PART II. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Interview

John Oswald Colson generously gave his time to this project, sharing his insight and remembrances of Cane River. The author would particularly like to thank him for the driving tour down-river, during which the landscape past and present was discussed.

B. Bibliography

1. National Park Service

Sources produced by or for the National Park Service include cultural landscape inventories, historic structure reports and condition assessments, survey documentation by HABS, National Register nominations, and National Historic Landmark files among other materials. Materials specifically used are cited in the footnotes to this report. The park files, as well as resources in the regional office, are more extensive.

2. Primary and Unpublished Sources:

influence began to seep into the area, and was manifested primarily through floor plan (central hall) and symmetrical fenestration in the buildings' facades. Creole houses nonetheless maintained both gable and hip roofs, still expanded laterally through the galleries, *cabinets*, and *loggias*, still were raised off the ground with multiple points of entry. Dwellings identified with the Cane River Creoles today are split between this date-range and the next category, wherein the house form gave way to universal building trends (Queen Anne, bungalow, central-hall cottages). Around 1880 amidst the lumber boom, the Creole house type experienced a resurgence in Louisiana, though the dwellings were smaller. This holds true for Natchitoches as well, given the extant examples near Melrose dating to the late nineteenth century and those seen in Cloutierville. Edwards, "Louisiana's French Creole Architecture."

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The Louisiana Creole Heritage Center's genealogical archives as well as the photograph collection referenced by Dr. Lee would be useful to mine further, if only to help clarify who owned and lived where and perhaps date structural changes to some of the houses. The photographs would also likely capture some of the houses made of *bousillage* that are no longer extant, which would help contextualize the remaining examples. More work needs to be done in the courthouse with the conveyance records to pin down information regarding title. Sometimes in the deed records, inventories and appraisals of real and personal property are appended to a property transfer or settlement. These reveal much about comfort level and life within the house.

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

The survey of creole houses in Natchitoches, Louisiana, was sponsored by the Cane River National Heritage Area Commission, Robert B. DeBlieux and Saidee Newell, Co chairs, and Nancy I.M. Morgan, Executive Director, and the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record/Historic American Landscapes Survey division of the National Park Service, Richard O'Connor, Acting Manager, HABS/HAER/HALS, and Catherine C. Lavoie, Acting Chief, HABS. The documentation was intended to coincide with the recording of Cherokee, but this portion was delayed for logistical reasons until January 2006. Work was supported by the Creole Center of Northwestern Louisiana State University; the Creole Center provided site suggestions for the survey and facilitated the tour down-river. Jon L. Wilson was the contract historian for the project. Wilson was assisted by Virginia B. Price, HABS Historian.

PART IV. ILLUSTRATIONS

Note: Figure Nos. 1, 3, and 4 are under copyright restriction and therefore have been excluded from the Library of Congress transmittal.

Fig. 1 Maps showing the Cane River National Heritage Area and Isle Brevelle. The latter image was taken from *Creole Chronicles* and corresponds to the driving tour assembled by the Creole Center.

Fig. 2 Floor plan of the Lewis Jones House. (HABS)

Fig. 3 Lands of Marie Therese, free Negress, about eleven miles down-river from the church in Natchitoches. (Pierre Joseph Maes, Map 1794, Cammie G. Henry Archives, and State Land Office, Baton Rouge).

Fig. 4 Plat map showing Magnolia Plantation in the mid-nineteenth century.

Fig. 5 Buard-Wells House, isometric and floor plan evolution drawings. (HABS)

Fig. 6 Elevation view of the Sompayrac House. (James Rosenthal, Photographer, 2004, HABS)

Fig. 7 Drawings of the Badin-Roque House, including floor plan. (HABS)

Fig. 8 Drawings of the Roubieu-Jones House, including floor plan. (HABS)

Fig. 9 Drawings of Beau Fort, including floor plan. (HABS)

Fig. 10 Elevation view of Conant Delphin House. (James Rosenthal, Photographer, 2004, HABS)

Fig. 11 Perspective view of Yucca House at Melrose. (Jack E. Boucher, Photographer, 2004, HABS)

Fig. 12 Perspective view of the house at Atahoe Plantation. (James Rosenthal, Photographer, 2004, HABS)

Fig. 13 View of the Roque House from Front Street in downtown Natchitoches. (James Rosenthal, Photographer, 2004, HABS)

Fig. 14 Perspective view of the Lewis Jones House. (James Rosenthal, Photographer, 2004, HABS)

Fig. 15 Drawings of the Badin Roque House, including a section and details showing the roof and cantilevered overhang. (HABS)

Fig. 16 Perspective view of the Alfred Llorens House. (James Rosenthal, Photographer, 2004, HABS)

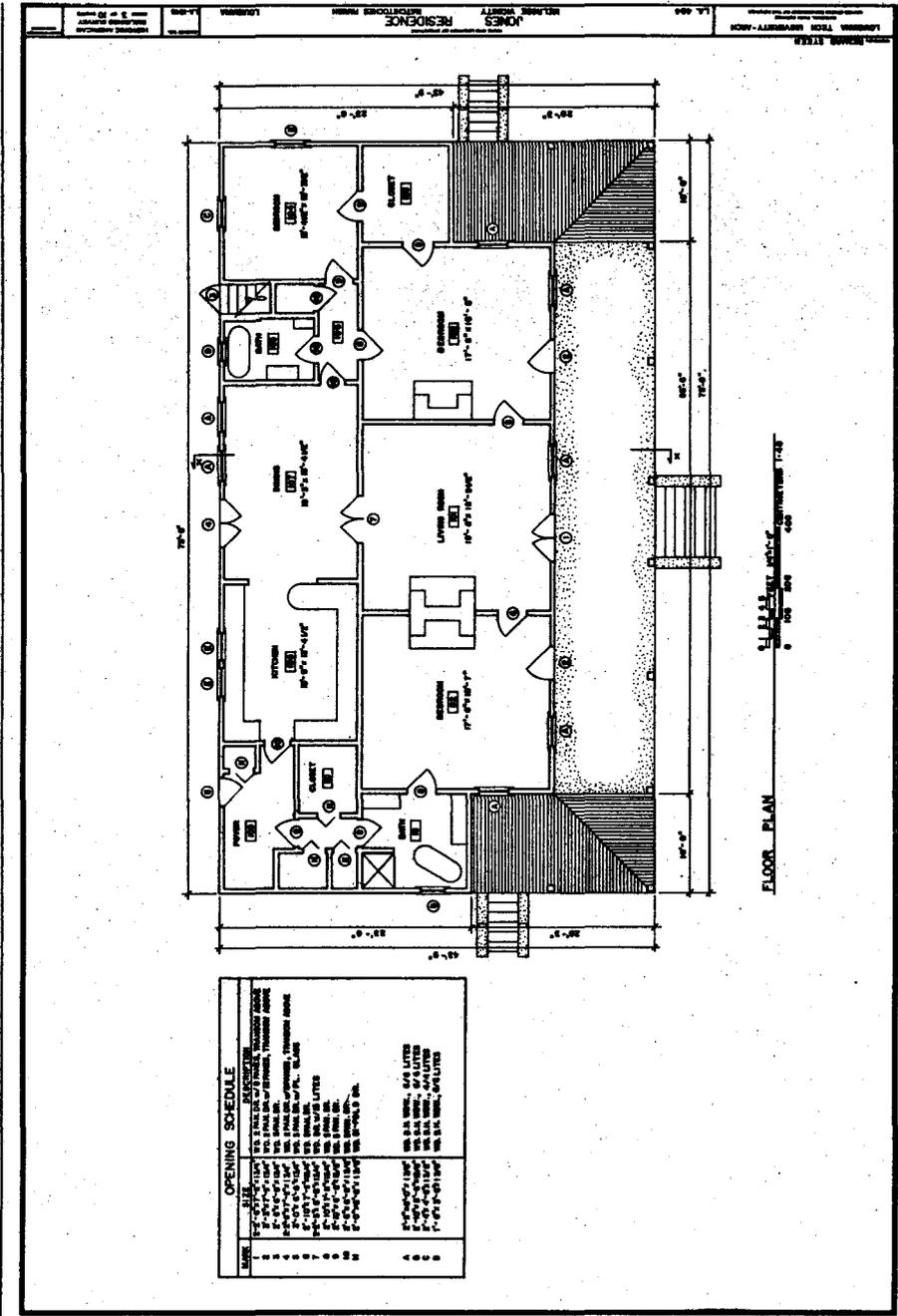
Fig. 17 Elevation view of the Meziere House. (James Rosenthal, Photographer, 2004, HABS)

Fig. 18 Elevation view of the Rachal-Aubry House. (James Rosenthal, Photographer, 2004, HABS)

Fig. 19 Elevation view of the Gustave Chevalier House. (James Rosenthal, Photographer, 2004, HABS)

Figure 1 is under copyright restrictions.

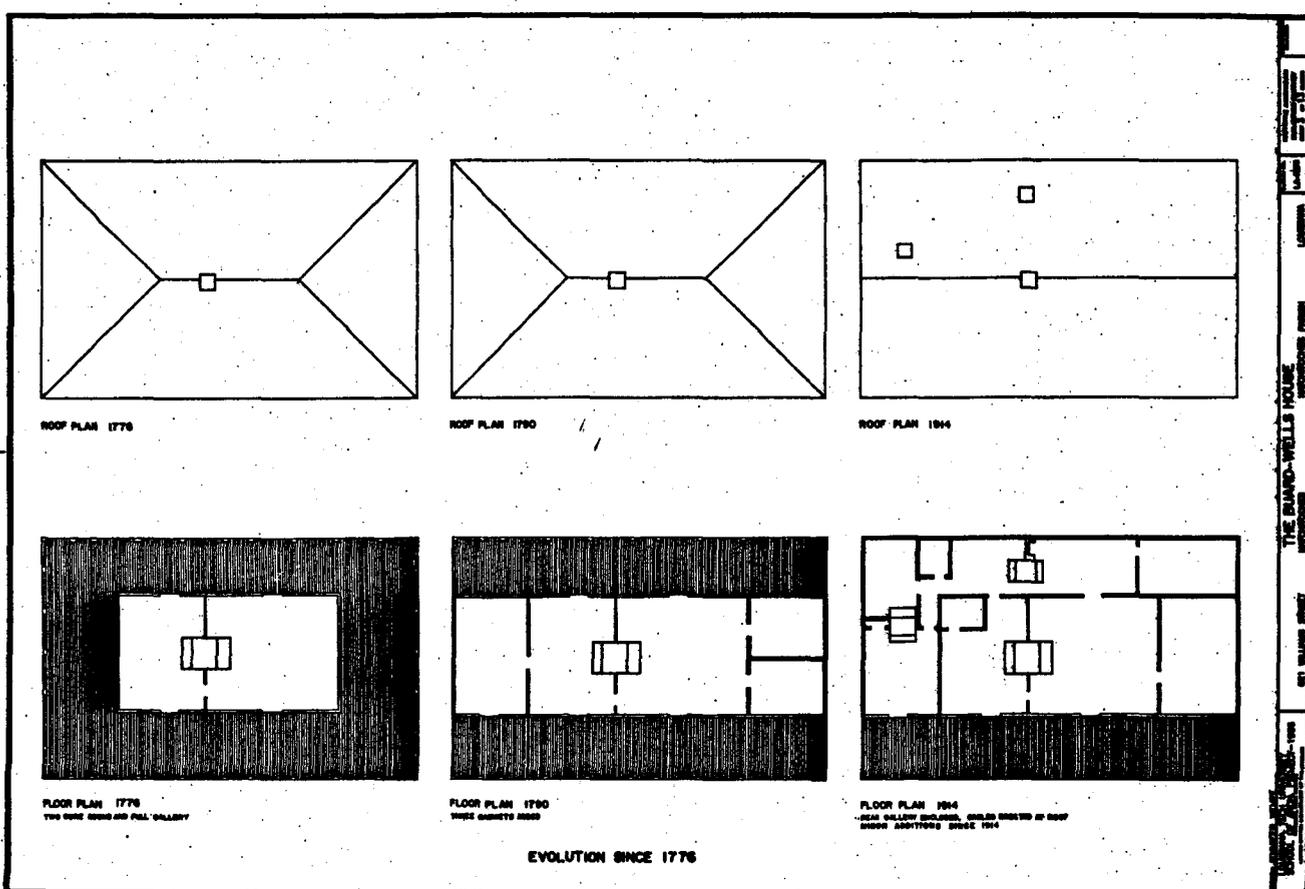
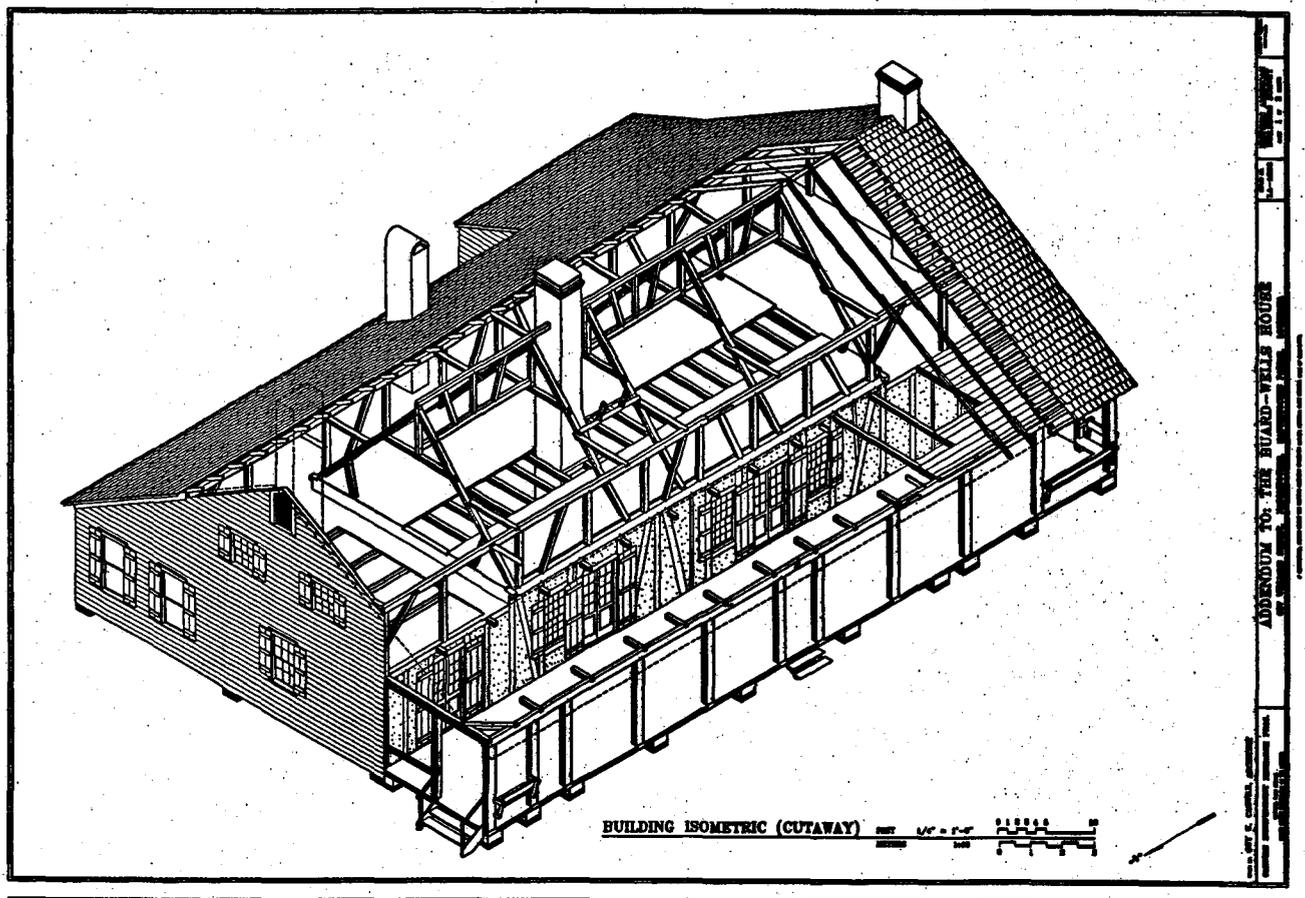
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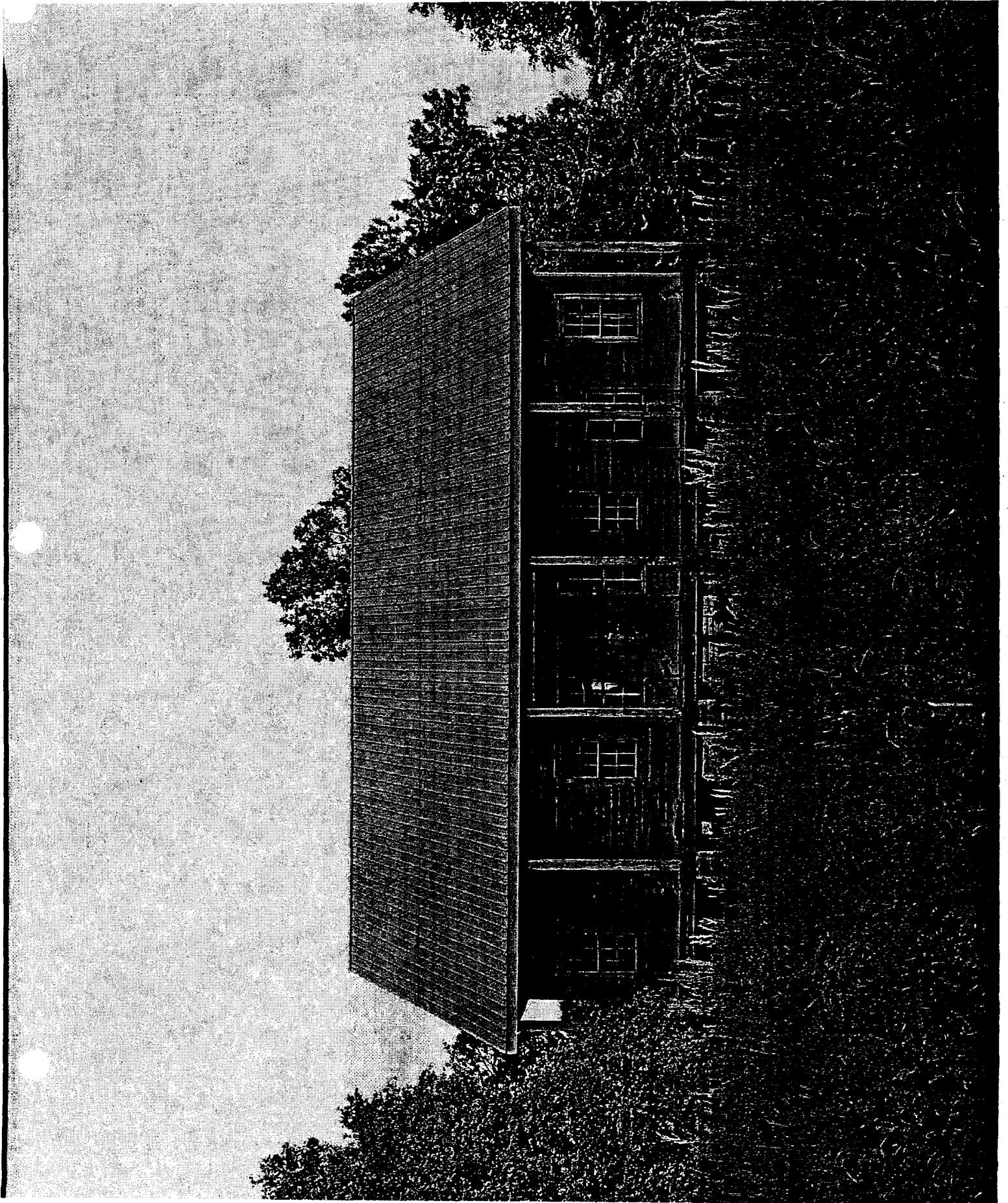


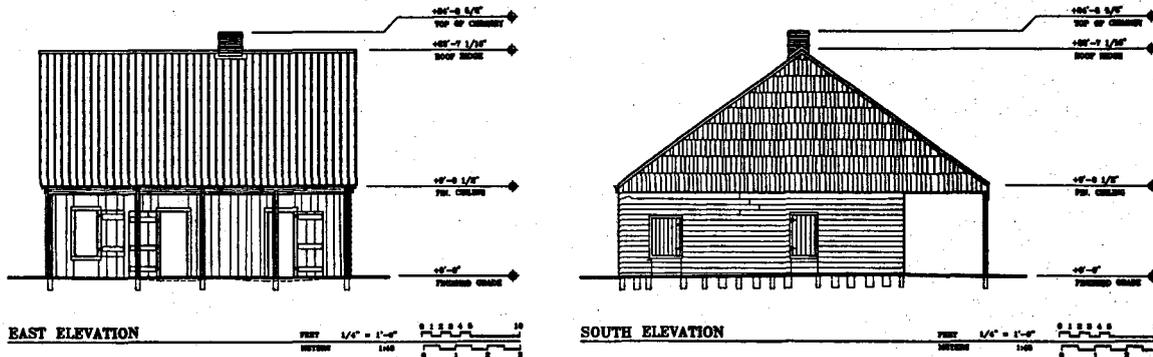
1994 CHARLES E. PETERSON PAPER, HONORABLE MENTION

Figure 3 is under copyright restrictions.

Figure 4 is under copyright restriction.







WALLS EXPOSED CYPRESS CLAPBOARDS OVER POTTAUER-IN-THEE STRUCTURE (EXTERIOR AND AT LOGGIA). THE EXTERIOR WALLS HAVE EXPOSED DOUGLASS AND POTTAUER SHIP LUG TO THE GALLERY. THE GABLED PORTION OF THE WALL IS CLAD WITH LARGE CYPRESS SHAKES.

GALLERY SQUARE WOOD POSTS, EXPOSED DOUGLASS AND POTTAUER, EXPOSED CEILING BEAMS AND BERTY FLOORING.

DOORS SINGLE LEAF DOORS AND BATTERY WOOD DOORS IN WOOD FRAMES.

OPENINGS NO BARS PRESENT IN THE PENETRATION OPENINGS. (ONE BARS WAS NOTED LATER IN THE ATTIC), PROTECTED BY SINGLE LEAF DOORS AND BATTERY SHUTTERS IN WOOD FRAMES.

ROOF GALVANIZED STEEL ROOF, BRICK MASONRY CHIMNEY (MODERN RECONSTRUCTION).

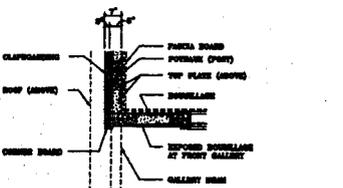
LIST OF CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS

DOOR SCHEDULE

MARK	SIZE	REMARKS
1	5'-0 3/4" x 6'-11 1/2" x 1 1/2"	
2	5'-0 3/4" x 6'-11 1/2" x 1 1/2"	
3	5'-0" x 7'-0 1/2" x 1 1/2"	
4	5'-4 1/2" x 5'-0" x 1 1/2"	
5	5'-1 1/2" x 5'-0 1/2"	CASED OPENING
6	5'-0 1/2" x 5'-0 1/2"	CASED OPENING
7	5'-0" x 5'-0 1/2"	CASED OPENING

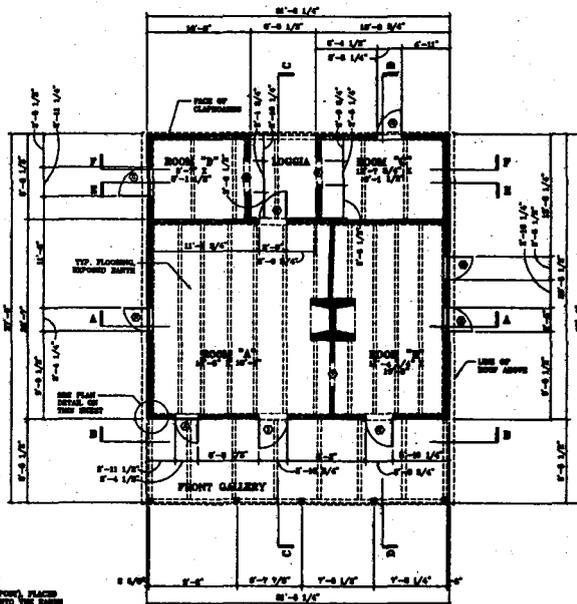
OPENING SCHEDULE

MARK	FRAME SIZE	REMARKS
A	5'-4 1/2" x 4'-0 3/4"	EXTENSIVE SHUTTER ONLY, NO BARS
B	5'-4 1/2" x 4'-0 3/4"	EXTENSIVE SHUTTER ONLY, NO BARS
C	5'-11 1/2" x 5'-0 1/2"	EXTENSIVE SHUTTER ONLY, NO BARS
D	5'-0 1/2" x 5'-0 1/2"	EXTENSIVE SHUTTER ONLY, NO BARS
E	5'-0" x 5'-0 3/4"	EXTENSIVE SHUTTER ONLY, NO BARS



PLAN DETAIL

SCALE: 1/4" = 1'-0" (VERTICAL) 1:10



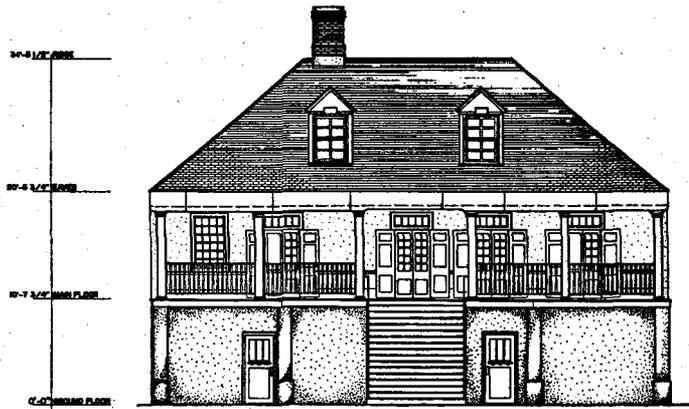
- POTTAUER POSTS PLACED EXACTLY INTO THE SIDING
- DOUGLASS OVER A BERTY (WELL BETWEEN POSTS)
- BRICK MASONRY CHIMNEY - EXACTLY RECONSTRUCTED (ORIGINAL: FIREPLACE/CHIMNEY)

PLAN LEGEND

FLOOR PLAN

SCALE: 1/4" = 1'-0" (VERTICAL) 1:10

THE RADIN-ROQUE HOUSE
 ARCHITECTURE
 1400 BROADWAY, SUITE 100
 NEW ORLEANS, LA 70119
 PHONE: (504) 581-1111
 FAX: (504) 581-1112
 WWW: WWW.RADINROQUE.COM



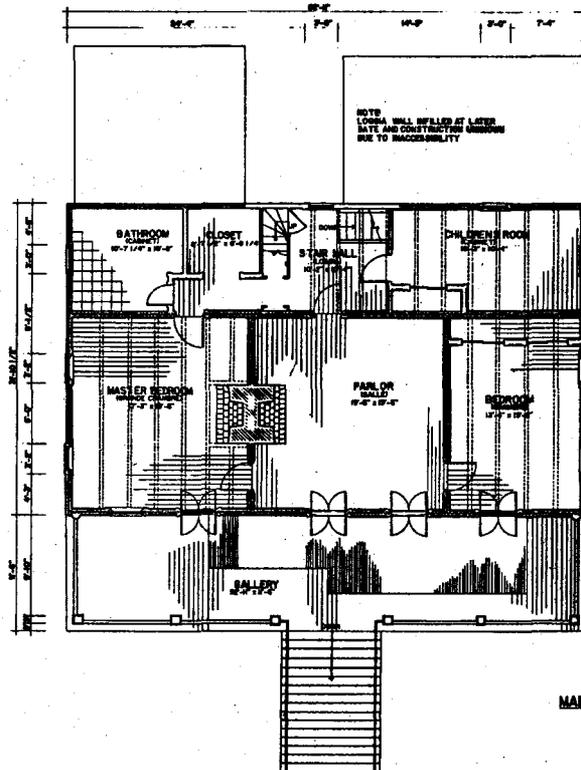
NORTHEAST ELEVATION

SCALE: FEET 1/4" = 1'-0"
METERS 1:50

ROUBEAU - JONES HOUSE

1/4" = 1'-0"

1:50



NOTE:
REAR LEAN-TO ADDED
REMOVED FOR CLARITY

NOTE:
LOOSE WALL REPAIRED AT LATER
DATE AND CONSTRUCTION ANCHORS
DUE TO INACCESSIBILITY

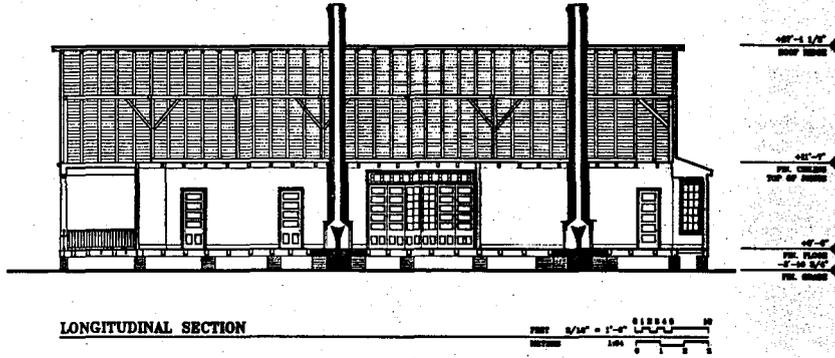
MAIN FLOOR PLAN

SCALE: FEET 1/4" = 1'-0"
METERS 1:50

ROUBEAU - JONES HOUSE

1/4" = 1'-0"

1:50



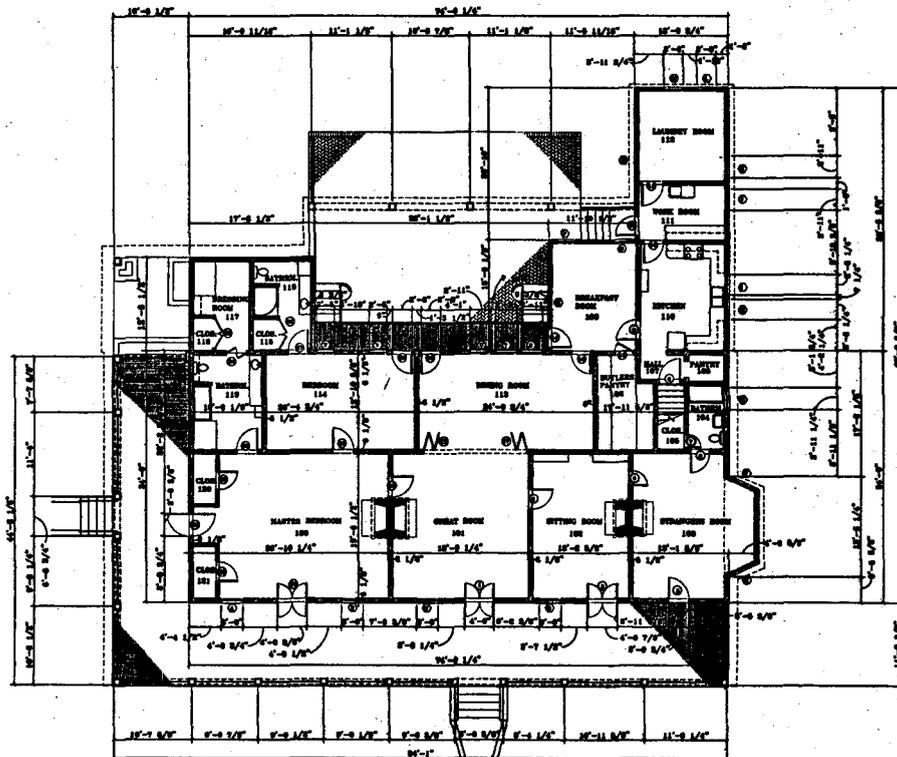
LONGITUDINAL SECTION

- FOUNDATION** BRICK MASONRY CEMENT WALL WITH ENLARGED PLASTER SUPPORTING LARGE SQUARE CYPRESS BEAMS. CYPRESS FLOOR BEAMS ARE BOLTED INTO THE WALL TYPICAL.
- C.G. STRUCT.** EXPOSED CYPRESS CEILING JOISTS AND EXPOSED WOOD PLANKING THAT SERVED THE DUAL PURPOSE OF FLOORING CEILING AND ATTIC FLOORING.
- ROOF STRUCT.** ALL JOISTS MORTISED, TYPED AND PROVED. MAJOR RAFTERS ARE BOUND IN CORNER SECTION AND PROVED AT THE RIDGE WITHOUT A RIDGE BEAM. SLOPED COLLAR BEAMS STABILISE THE STRUCTURE ALONG WITH A THROUGH BRICK WALL BONDING PARALLEL TO THE RIDGE.

LIST OF STRUCTURAL SYSTEMS

2000 CHARLES E. PETERSON PRIZE, SECOND PLACE

BEAU FORT
ARCHITECTURE
1000 N. 10TH ST., SUITE 100
DALLAS, TEXAS 75202
PHONE: 214.750.1111
FAX: 214.750.1112
WWW.BEAUFORTARCHITECTURE.COM



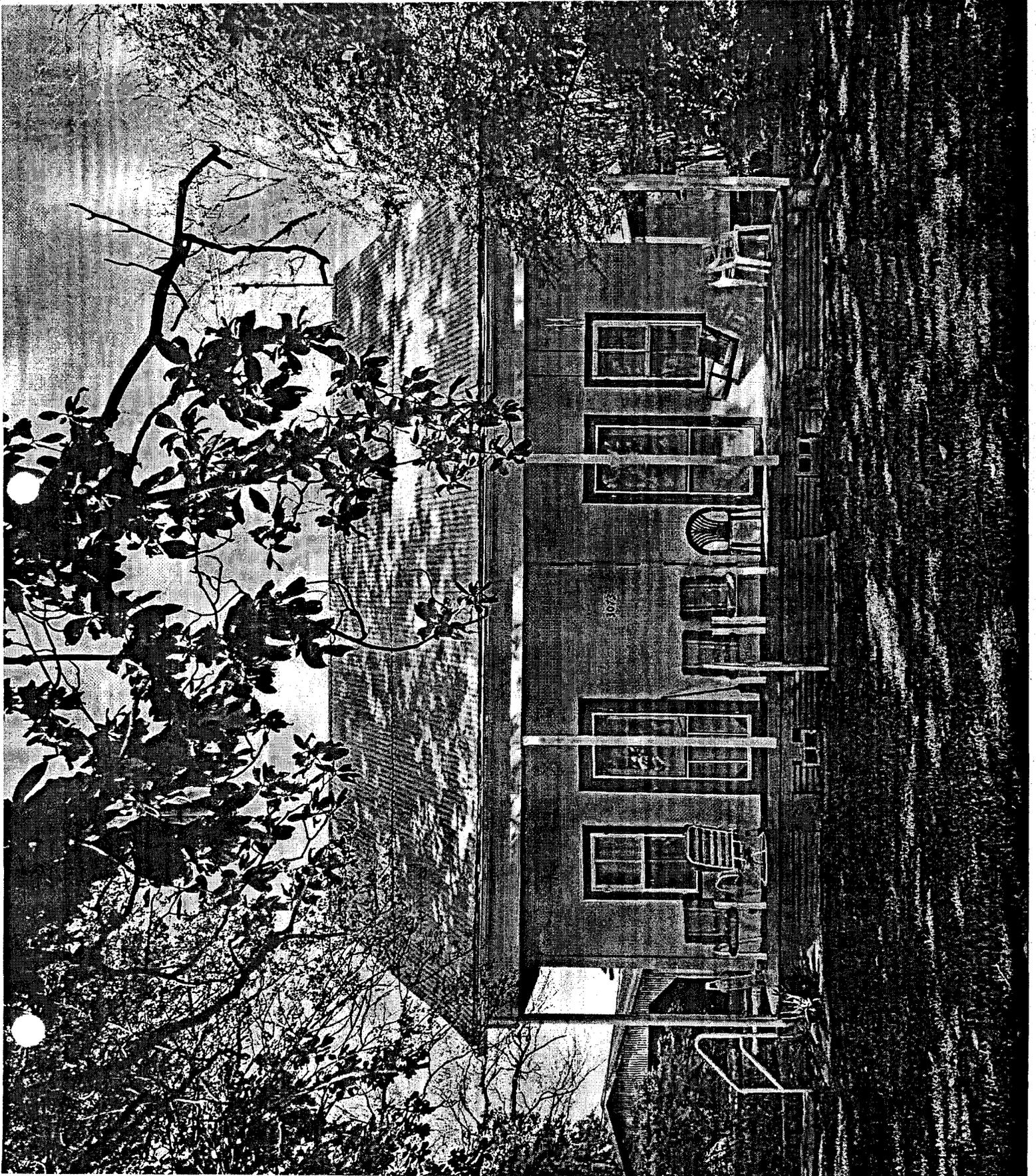
PLAN LEGEND

FLOOR PLAN

- BOURGEOIS ENTRE POTEAUX PARTITION
- BRICK MASONRY
- BOTH CENTURY WESTERN PLATFORM FRAMED PARTITION

2000 CHARLES E. PETERSON PRIZE, SECOND PLACE

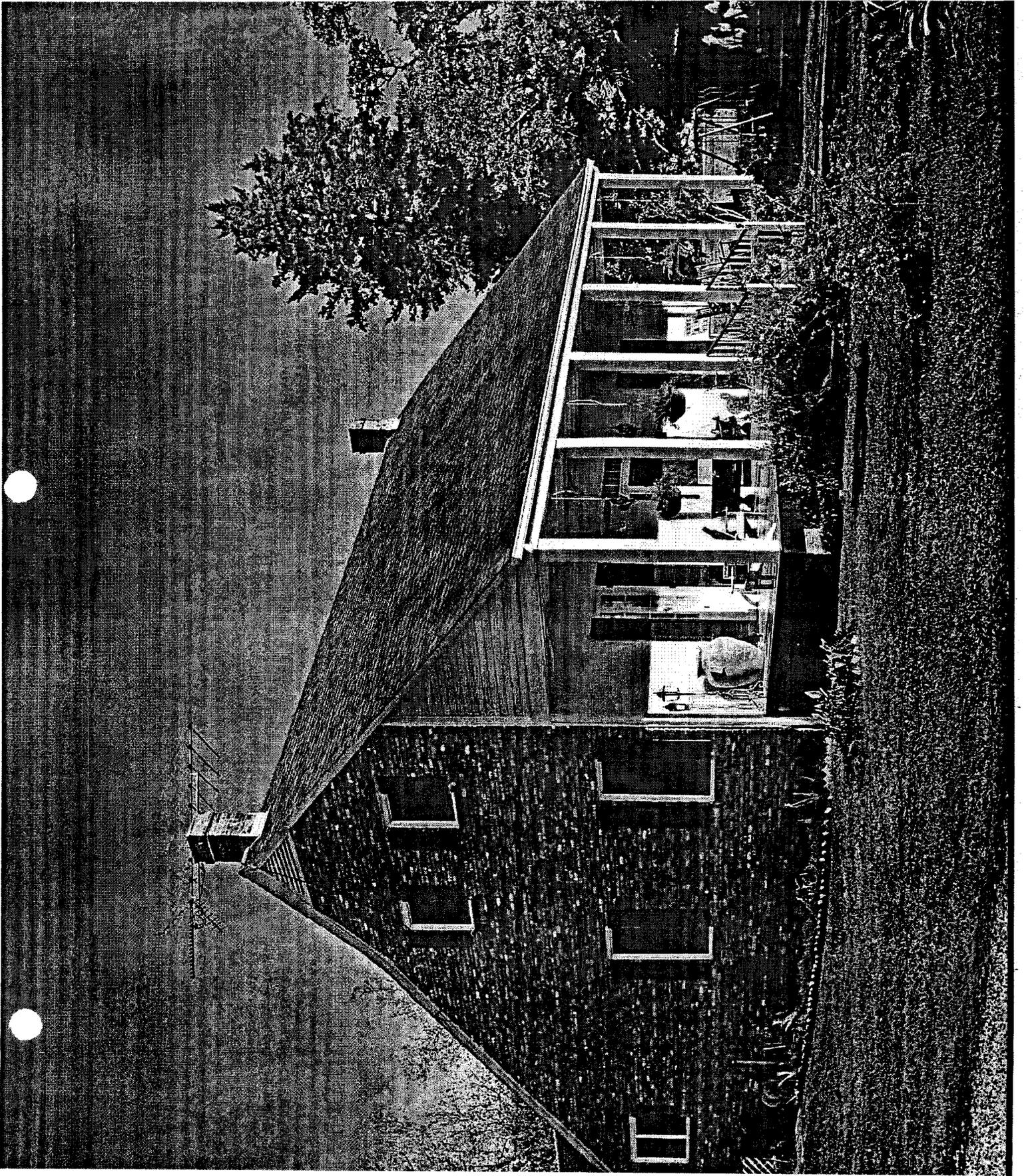
BEAU FORT
ARCHITECTURE
1000 N. 10TH ST., SUITE 100
DALLAS, TEXAS 75202
PHONE: 214.750.1111
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