

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

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NATIONAL
REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Laura Plantation

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 2247 LA Hwy 18 N/A not for publication

city or town Vacherie vicinity

state Louisiana code LA county St. James code 93 zip code 70090

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Gerri Hobdy

December 22, 1992

Signature of certifying official/Title Gerri Hobdy, Date
LA SHPO, Dept of Culture, Recreation and Tourism
State of Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title _____ Date _____
State or Federal agency and bureau _____

4. National Park Service Certification

- I hereby certify that the property is:
- entered in the National Register. See continuation sheet.
 - determined eligible for the National Register See continuation sheet.
 - determined not eligible for the National Register.
 - removed from the National Register.
 - other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

~~Entered in the~~
National Register

Date of Action

Helena Byers

2/3/93

Laura Plantation
Name of Property

St. James Parish, LA
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>16</u>	<u>1</u>	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
<u>16</u>	<u>1</u>	Total

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

Louisiana's French Creole Architecture

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling/secondary structure
AGRICULTURE/subsistence - agricultural
outbuilding

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

VACANT/not in use

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

other: French Creole
Federal
Eastlake

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation brick
walls weatherboard
brick
roof tin
other _____

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Laura Plantation, St. James Parish, LA

Section number 7 Page 1

Situated within what is believed to be the Mississippi River's longest remaining agrarian stretch between Baton Rouge and New Orleans, the Laura plantation complex is located in St. James Parish just upriver from the west bank community of Vacherie. The complex consists of a large raised Creole "big house" and sixteen dependencies. These outbuildings include houses and sheds, two garages, a barn, a two-story dependency, and a set of six quarters cabins. Sixteen of the seventeen buildings at Laura are contributing elements, ranging in date from c. 1820 to the early twentieth century. The one non-contributing building is a historic dependency so deteriorated that it has lost its integrity.

The Creole "big house" stands back from the River Road within a large, partially fenced yard. Seven of the dependencies also stand within the yard well to the rear of the mansion. A grove of trees largely obscures the house, and three of the outbuildings are also extremely overgrown by vegetation. The other dependencies are located outside the yard. Three stand downriver from the fenced area along a dirt road which parallels the river. Finally, the cabins stand in a row which lines one side of a second dirt road. This road runs perpendicular to the river and leads to the fields (see attached map). Laura's fields have been planted in sugar cane continuously from the historic period to the present.

Contributing Elements

Main House (Building # 1)

Constructed c. 1820, the main house at Laura is a raised French Creole plantation house with a brick basement story and a briquette-entre-poteaux (brick between posts) upper floor. The home contains Federal interior decorative elements but received Eastlake gallery ornamentation during the latter part of the nineteenth century. Otherwise its Creole identity remains intact.

St. James Parish historians contend that Laura was built c. 1810 and remodeled in 1821 on the occasion of the marriage of Elizabeth Giles Dupare to George Raymond Locoul. However, no architectural evidence of an earlier home is evident within the surviving structure. Instead, the floor framing and woodwork indicate that the house was built all of a piece.

In addition to the basement story and French construction techniques mentioned above, Creole characteristics found in the Laura main house include the following:

- 1) a Class III umbrella roof with supporting Norman truss,

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Laura Plantation, Vacherie vicinity, St. James Parish, LA

Section number 7 Page 2

- 2) a hall-less Creole floorplan which is five rooms wide and two rooms deep. These rooms are flanked by front and rear galleries and lack interior stairs (see plan).
- 3) exposed beaded ceiling beams in all upper floor rooms and on the galleries,
- 4) chamfered gallery columns and corner pilasters with vernacular lamb's tongue stops,
- 5) numerous French doors, and
- 6) four wraparound mantels.

Laura's Federal details include door and window surrounds, paneled interior doors, and the decorative treatment of the wraparound mantels. The home's most elaborate mantel features molding, paneling and a layered mantel shelf. The other three are more restrained versions of this mantel. Other interesting features in the home include a brick herringbone floor and brick piers on the lower gallery and eight over twelve sash windows piercing the side walls of the end rooms. Only the bottom sashes of these windows move, a feature indicating their early date.

Although the Creole features of Laura are intact, the building has undergone some alteration over the years. The important changes are as follows:

- 1) As mentioned above, the facade received a remodeling some time during the late nineteenth century. Eastlake brackets with ball drop ornaments were attached to the chamfered columns and jigsaw sawtooth trim was installed along the gallery roof. An Eastlake balustrade with turned balusters and a projecting gabled entrance porch with a sunburst motif and double stairs were also added. The home's central entrance was enlarged and a transom and sidelights were installed. Beaded drop siding was apparently also installed on the facade, and louvered shutters on all exterior doors, at this time.
- 2) A rear dining/kitchen addition was also added during the latter part of the nineteenth century. It is raised to the level of the main house on thick brick piers and constructed of salvaged parts. Evidence suggests that a small two room house was moved up close to the main building. Then the space between the two houses was filled by an additional room

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Laura Plantation, Vacherie vicinity, St. James Parish, LA

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and part of a gallery which adjoins the former small house on two sides (see plan). Finally, the part of the main house's rear gallery which connects to the addition was screened to form a breezeway.

- 3) Two sets of the home's original ten-light French doors were replaced with twelve-light French doors on the rear elevation. The replacements match the salvaged French doors used throughout the addition. Other doors within the main house and on its exterior appear to have been moved from one location to another or added after the original construction date.
- 4) At some point the two end rooms on each side of the upper floor began to sink, probably because of excessive moisture in the soil. To remedy this problem, two brick walls standing perpendicular to the basement wall were constructed on each side of the building. The slight space left between the top bricks of each wall and the floor of the premier etage was filled by shim shingles.
- 5) During the early twentieth century projecting bathrooms were added on each side of the main floor, and an additional bath was installed by enclosing space in one corner beneath the rear gallery.

Other changes include the loss of one wraparound mantel, the removal of a fireplace from the downriver upper floor room, the cutting off of the chimneys and the addition of dormers on the roof, and the covering of the original interior walls with sheetrock.

House (Building # 2)

This one-story frame linear cottage appears to date to the late nineteenth century. It has a rear ell wing, clapboard siding, tin roof, Italianate front door, and Eastlake gallery trim with unusual brackets.

Shed (Building # 3)

This board and batten shed dates to the early twentieth century. A lean-to is attached at one side.

Shed (Building # 4)

This small rectangular shed is covered by vertical boards. It has a tin roof and a lean-to attached at one side. It also dates to the early twentieth century.

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Continuation Sheet**

Laura Plantation, St. James Parish, LA

Section number 7 Page 4

Small Barn (Building # 5)

This small frame barn with a tin roof has lean-to sheds attached to each side. It dates to the early twentieth century.

Garage (Building # 6)

This early twentieth century garage is also covered by vertical boards and a tin roof.

Two-Story Dependency (Building # 8)

Although its precise use is not known, this dependency resembles the type of two story antebellum servants quarters and garconnières found in urban areas in other Southern states. Dating to the mid-nineteenth century, it is two stories tall, five rooms wide, and one room deep. One end room on each floor serves as a stair hall. The structure is of brick with a wood covered facade. Its dormered roof is covered by tin. Original features include vernacular French Creole wraparound mantels and exposed beaded ceiling beams, both on the second floor. This story also has wide floor boards and early windows with immovable upper sashes. In the late nineteenth century the lower story was renovated, complete with new mantels, and the entire second story gallery was replaced with an Eastlake gallery. The gallery is now quite dilapidated; however, Eastlake corner boards and some Eastlake trim survive as does a portion of a curving Eastlake staircase.

House (Building # 9)

This late nineteenth century frame building has narrow gauge clapboard siding and a tin roof. It shows Creole influence in its three sets of French doors and exposed gallery ceiling beams. Its central door is surmounted by a transom. A board and batten addition is located at the rear.

Garage (Building # 10)

This frame board and batten garage dates to the early twentieth century.

House (Building # 11)

This frame cottage with a screened front porch dates to the turn of the twentieth century.

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Laura Plantation, St. James Parish, LA
Section number 7 Page 5

Quarters Cabins (Buildings # 12 - 17)

The six small cabins surviving on the property appear to be original slave quarters which received major repairs in the late nineteenth century after being moved from their original location behind the main house. This work was so extensive that these buildings should be considered late nineteenth century quarters houses for all practical purposes. Surviving early elements include pegged French joinery, square nail holes in the facades' flush board siding, and boxed flues indicating that wraparound mantels were once present. The interior walls are covered by beaded board and several of the structures have had rear wings or lean-tos added. In addition, all have had their clapboard siding pieced together or replaced by tin, and all but one have lost their chimneys.

Non-Contributing Element

One non-contributing element is located on the Laura property. It is a small one story frame building which stands next to the two-story dependency. It appears to date to the late nineteenth century. Known as Building # 7 for the purposes of this nomination, its original use is unknown. It is being counted as a non-contributing element because of its advanced state of deterioration and consequent loss of integrity.

Assessment of Integrity

While some of the dependencies within the Laura plantation complex are in a deteriorated state, only the above mentioned non-contributing element is so deteriorated that its historic character is destroyed. The other buildings still easily convey their identity and hence retain their National Register eligibility. Very importantly, the two-story dependency and six quarters cabins survive. These are the complex's most important surviving outbuildings. While the lower story has been altered and is in a deteriorated state, the upper floor of the two-story dependency is largely intact and retains its antebellum and Creole character. There is no question that any person who once lived in this structure would recognize it today. Furthermore, this type of building is so rare in Louisiana that it merits Register listing despite its lower floor changes and deterioration.

The cabins retain sufficient integrity from the late nineteenth century and represent an archetype rare in its own right (see Part 8). There is no question that someone from the historic period would recognize Laura's other historic dependencies, and the quarters row remains an evocative image of plantation life.

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Laura Plantation, St. James Parish, LA

Section number 7 Page 6

Laura's Creole main house has experienced several changes, but most of these are insignificant. For example, the rear kitchen/dining wing is hidden when viewing the house from the front and is attached in such a way as to have virtually no impact on the main building's floorplan. Although two of the twentieth century bathrooms project from the sides of the house, they stand well back from the prominent facade and do not detract from it. While the main entrance has been changed, it still features French doors. The main issue of concern is the Eastlake treatment and accompanying double stair added to the gallery during the late nineteenth century. Although these alterations are noticeable, the house is still clearly recognizable as a raised Creole plantation house. Very importantly, all of its important Creole features are intact. These include the home's hall-less floorplan, brick-between-post upper floor construction, brick basement story, Norman roof truss, French doors, exposed beaded ceiling beams, and wraparound mantels. In addition, the gallery's Creole chamfered columns survive, for the remodelers attached the Eastlake features to them instead of building a new set of columns. Furthermore, the home's rare Federal woodwork is also intact. In summary, what remains within the Laura "big house" is so important and rare that the building merits nomination to the Register despite the change to the gallery and stair. Furthermore, these alterations could easily be removed.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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

Criteria Considerations N/A
(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

architecture

agriculture

Period of Significance

c.1820 (architecture)

c.1820-1942 (agriculture)

Significant Dates

c.1820

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # LA-1213-A LA 1213-B
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Laura Plantation
Name of Property

St. James Parish, LA
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property @ 37 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 | 1 | 5 | | 7 | 1 | 9 | 2 | 6 | 0 | | 3 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 7 | 0 | 0 |
Zone Easting Northing
2 | 1 | 5 | | 7 | 1 | 9 | 5 | 8 | 0 | | 3 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 8 | 4 | 0 |

3 | 1 | 5 | | 7 | 1 | 9 | 8 | 4 | 0 | | 3 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 8 | 0 |
Zone Easting Northing
4 | 1 | 5 | | 7 | 1 | 9 | 4 | 9 | 0 | | 3 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 6 | 0 |

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Please refer to enclosed sketch map.

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title National Register Staff

organization Division of Historic Preservation date October 1992

street & number P. O. Box 44247 telephone (504) 342-8160

city or town Baton Rouge state LA zip code 70804

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name St. James Sugar Cooperative, Inc.

street & number P. O. Box 67 telephone (504) 265-4056

city or town St. James state LA zip code 70086

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Laura Plantation, Vacherie vicinity, St. James Parish, LA

Section number 8 Page 1

The Laura Plantation complex is significant because of the rarity of its resources. The complex's plantation house is significant at the state level in the area of architecture because it is a rare example of a raised Creole plantation house. Its Federal woodwork is also rare. In addition, Laura is significant at the state level in the area of agriculture as an important surviving historic plantation complex. The period of significance under agriculture extends from c. 1820, the date of the main house, to 1942, the fifty year cutoff. The plantation has remained in virtually constant agricultural production from its settlement up to and past the fifty year cutoff.

ARCHITECTURE - STATE SIGNIFICANCE

The Laura Plantation House is significant in the area of architecture at the state level because it is a rare example of a raised Creole plantation house -- the ultimate expression of French architecture in Louisiana. In addition, the house exhibits rare Federal woodwork and a rare Creole construction technique.

Although Creole dwellings once dominated the rural landscape of central and southern Louisiana, today perhaps only 300 - 400 examples of these buildings remain standing outside New Orleans. Of these, the majority are small or moderately sized one story houses, while only approximately thirty (30) are members of the distinct group of substantial raised plantation houses regarded as the apex of the Creole style. Laura is one of these.

In addition, the house is special because its woodwork is in the Federal style. In Louisiana, far more Creole houses with Greek Revival woodwork have survived than have those showing Federal influence. Furthermore, the house is significant because it contains a Norman roof truss. Few examples of this Creole construction technique survive, and they are usually found only in very early houses.

AGRICULTURE - STATE SIGNIFICANCE

The Laura plantation complex is of state significance in the area of agriculture as one of Louisiana's rare surviving historic plantation complexes. Its distinction arises from the overall rarity of plantation complexes in general, the rarity of the two-story house-like dependency and quarters row standing on the site, and the fact that the complex illustrates the development of a plantation from the antebellum period well into the twentieth century.

Louisiana retains many plantation houses, but on the whole little attention has been given to preserving the coterie of dependencies that were the "workhorses" of cotton and sugar production. These support structures have lost

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Continuation Sheet**

Laura Plantation, St. James Parish, LA

Section number 8 Page 2

their original utilitarian value and have either been left to fall down or been the victims of progress. Historically the landscape was dotted with hundreds of plantation complexes such as Laura, but today they are rare survivors. More often than not, an old plantation in the state retains only the "big house" and sometimes one or two support structures. Although not as important nor as large as Whitney or Evergreen (both National Register), Laura is nevertheless one of only fifteen surviving plantation complexes in the state. Thus, it is a very important visual reminder of the large agricultural enterprise common in antebellum and post-war Louisiana. In addition, because the plantation was worked continuously throughout the historic period and dependencies were added as needs changed, the complex at Laura also illustrates the pattern of change in plantation life and agriculture from the mid-nineteenth century to the required fifty year cutoff for significance (1942).

Laura's two-story house-like dependency is especially important. Although two-story garconnières and servants quarters which stood separate but near the main house were common in many Southern cities and towns during the antebellum period, this was not the case in Louisiana. Servants in New Orleans were often housed in two-story dependencies, but these were attached to the main house in the form of an "ell" such as at Gallier House (National Register). In rural areas residential dependencies were usually one-story structures. The Division of Historic Preservation is aware of only two grander two-story dependencies which survive in rural Louisiana. One is at Southdown (National Register) and the other at Laura.

Laura is also distinguished by its row of six cabins. While thousands of these buildings once existed across the state, they are today exceedingly rare. Laura is one of less than a dozen complexes in which groups of slave or tenant cabins remain standing.

Historical Note

The land on which Laura stands was originally owned by Andre Neau, who obtained it in a French royal land grant in 1755. The plantation became the property of the Dupare family in the late 1700s. As mentioned previously, the main house appears to have been built around 1820. The plantation was divided between two family members in 1876. The house continued in the hands of Dupare heirs until 1891. In that year Dupare descendant Laura Locoul sold the property to A. Florian Waguespack. However, a condition of the sale was that the plantation and house should continue to be called "Laura". The house was passed down through the succeeding generations of the Waguespack family until 1980, when the final Waguespack residents moved out. The house is now vacant.

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Continuation Sheet

Laura Plantation, Vacherie vicinity, St. James Parish, LA

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

Site visit by National Register Staff

Historic American Buildings Survey, Laura Plantation, LA 1213-A, LA 1213-B, Fall,
1989.

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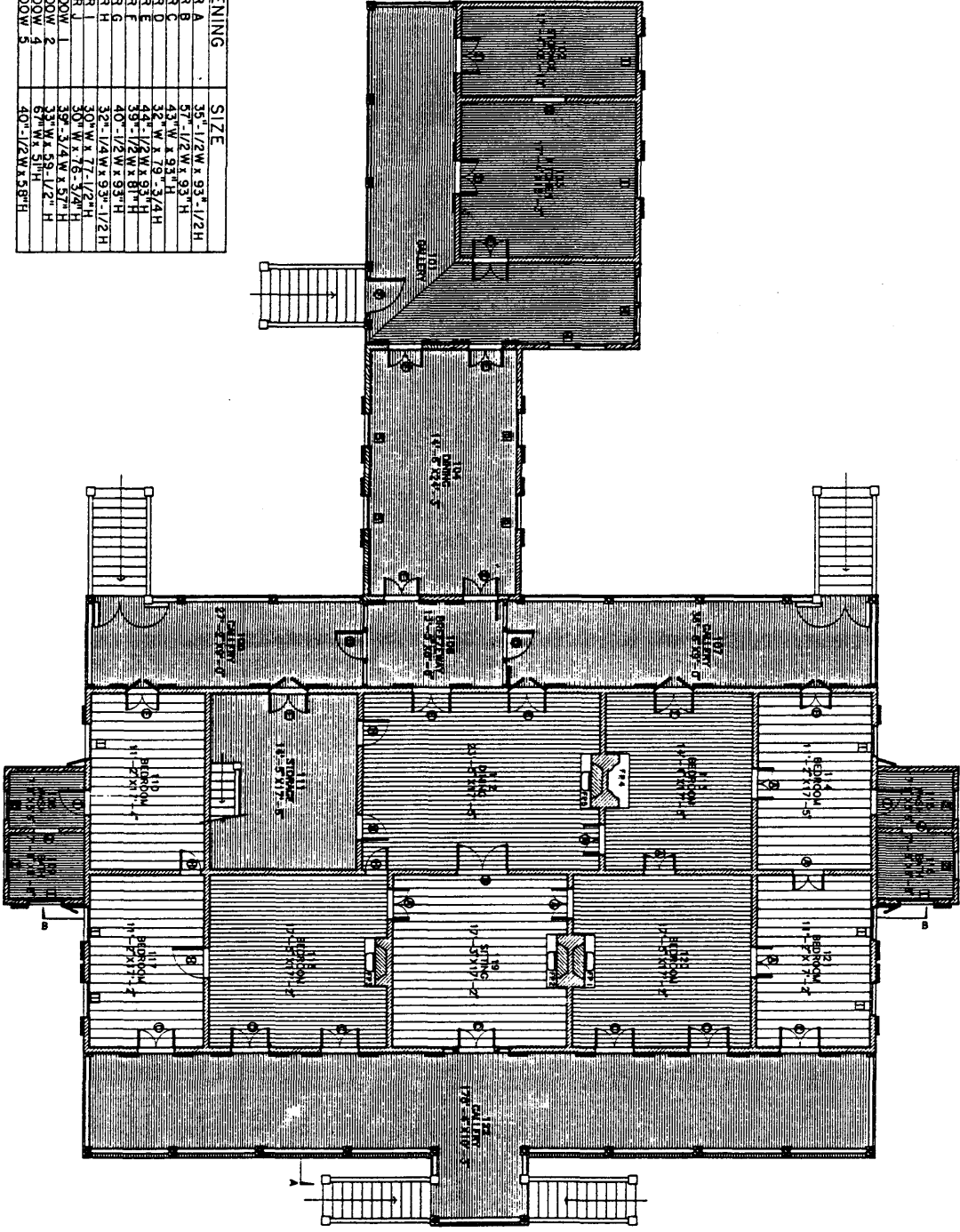
Laura Plantation, St. James Parish, LA

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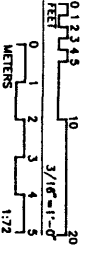
Boundary Justification

Boundaries were chosen to encompass the extent of historic buildings at Laura Plantation. Some agricultural acreage is also included, as noted on the map.

OPENING	SIZE
DOOR A	35'-1/2"W x 93"-1/2"H
DOOR B	57'-1/2"W x 93"-1/2"H
DOOR C	43'-1/2"W x 93"-1/2"H
DOOR D	32'-1/2"W x 93"-1/2"H
DOOR E	44'-1/2"W x 93"-1/2"H
DOOR F	39'-1/2"W x 81"-1/2"H
DOOR G	40'-1/2"W x 93"-1/2"H
DOOR H	32'-1/4"W x 93"-1/2"H
DOOR I	30'-1/4"W x 77'-1/2"H
DOOR J	30'-1/4"W x 75'-3/4"H
DOOR K	39'-3/4"W x 57"-1/2"H
WINDOW 1	33'-1/2"W x 59'-1/2"H
WINDOW 2	67'-1/2"W x 51"-1/2"H
WINDOW 3	40'-1/2"W x 58"-1/2"H



PLAN
MAIN HOUSE



DIRECTOR: E. D. CIZEK, P.H.D.
CONSULTANT
DELINEATED BY: TRIP BOWWELL

DATE: FALL 1989
HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDING SURVEY
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

VACHERIE, LOUISIANA

LAURA PLANTATION

ST. JAMES PARISH

SHEET
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HISTORIC AMERICAN
BUILDING SURVEY

IF REPRODUCED, PLEASE CREDIT: HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDING SURVEY, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, NAME OF DELINEATOR, DATE OF THE DRAWING
PREPARED WITH HISTORIC PRESERVATION FUNDS FROM THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, OF THE STATE OF LOUISIANA
AND THE ILLINOIS INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTURE