

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

USD/NPS NRHP Registration Form (Rev. 8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

ANTONIA, WEST BATON ROUGE PARISH, LA

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United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: Antonia

Other Name/Site Number:

2. LOCATION

Street & Number 4626 South River Road

Not for publication: NA

City/Town Port Allen

Vicinity: X

State: Louisiana Code: LA County: West Baton Rouge Code: 121 Zip Code: 70767



3. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this x nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property x meets does not meet the National Register Criteria.

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

Nationally: Statewide: Locally: x

Signature of Certifying Official/Title Phil Boggan

Deputy SHPO, Dept. of Culture, Recreation and Tourism

6-18-08

Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

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

Signature of Commenting or Other Official/Title

Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

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4. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is:

- Entered in the National Register
- Determined eligible for the National Register
- Determined not eligible for the National Register
- Removed from the National Register
- Other (explain): _____

for Edson H. Beall
Signature of Keeper

8.1.08
Date of Action

5. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property
 Private: x
 Public-Local:
 Public-State:
 Public-Federal:

Category of Property
 Building(s): x
 District:
 Site:
 Structure:
 Object:

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing
<u> 1 </u>
<u> </u>
<u> </u>
<u> </u>
<u> 1 </u>

Non contributing

<u> 2 </u> buildings
<u> </u> sites
<u> </u> structures
<u> </u> objects
<u> 2 </u> Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 0

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing: Louisiana's French Creole Architecture

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6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic: Domestic Sub: Single Dwelling
Current: Domestic Sub: Single Dwelling

7. DESCRIPTION

Architectural Classification: Other: French Creole

Materials:

Foundation: Brick
Walls: Clapboard
Roof: Metal
Other:

Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

Antonia (c. 1811 – see below) is a large, one-story, frame cottage in the French Creole style. It faces the Mississippi on the river's west bank between Port Allen and Brusly in rural West Baton Rouge Parish. Despite some alteration, the dwelling retains its National Register eligibility.

No proven date has been established for Antonia. However, descendants of the LeBert/Blanchard family, who owned the property on which the house stands for almost 200 years, believe the construction date to be c. 1811. Circumstantial evidence also points to an early nineteenth century date for the house. Acadian immigrant Pierre LeBert, who temporarily lived in France before migrating to Louisiana, settled the land in 1793. Legal documents prove that the Spanish government confirmed his claim in 1803, and the American government reconfirmed it in 1812. LeBert may have waited to build a substantial home until his plantation proved to be prosperous and he was relatively sure the land would remain his. Additionally, in his three-volume history of the architecture of Louisiana, architectural historian Fred Daspit compares Antonia to a similar house built in New Orleans by Bartholomy Lafon in 1805. Lafon, an architect, engineer, city planner and surveyor, is best remembered for his work in New Orleans. However, in 1806 he developed a plan for Donaldsonville, a town also on the west bank of the Mississippi River approximately 27 miles from Antonia. Although there is no claim that Lafon built Antonia, it is possible that LaBert knew of and was influenced by his work. Finally, architectural evidence, in the form of the building's pier and beam foundation, also points to an early construction date. Although obviously composed of recycled materials, the beams are joined by mortise, tenon and peg construction.

Antonia's French Creole features include a Class III gabled umbrella roof (see attachment), a full-length front gallery, French doors, interior exposed ceiling beams, four wraparound mantels, and a *premier etage* (primary living space) characterized by a hall-less Creole floor plan and raised approximately eight feet above the ground on brick piers. Surprisingly, Antonia has no enclosed, above ground basement, which one expects to find in Creole plantation houses whose *premier etages* are so highly raised. This situation suggests that the house might have been raised to its current height at some point after its construction. However, the New Orleans house to which Daspit compares Antonia was raised in a similar fashion (i.e., despite its height, it had no enclosed, above-ground basement). Furthermore, the bricks of which Antonia's original piers are composed are obviously very old.

Other interesting original features found at Antonia include paneled interior and exterior doors; solid wooden shutters protecting the exterior French doors; two-light transoms above the latter; wrought iron door hardware; and obviously old, wavy glass.

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Antonia's original floor plan is similar to that of Magnolia Mound (National Register), located just across the Mississippi River in East Baton Rouge Parish. The house has two ranges of rooms. The front range holds a large, deep *salle* (parlor) flanked by smaller *chambres* (bedrooms). The rear space contains a *cabinet/loggia* range plus an additional corner room (see floor plan attached). The previously mentioned full-length front gallery parallels the façade and originally also wrapped around the dwelling's downriver side to provide entrance to rear corner room. The *salle* and upriver *chambre* have back-to-back fireplaces that share a single chimney. Early in the home's history the side gallery was enclosed to create an additional *chamber* (the gallery's slanted floor survives), and back-to-back fireplaces with wraparound mantels were installed to heat the two downriver rooms.

Antonia again experienced alteration in the early twentieth century; these changes appear in three c. 1929 historic photographs. However, whether this work was done in stages or as part of one large project is unknown. Most of the changes occurred on the rear elevation. First, the family enclosed the rear *loggia* and installed windows in the newly constructed rear wall. They also moved the French doors formerly connecting the *loggia* and *salle* to the new wall and installed a salvaged three-light transom above those doors. In place of the moved French doors, they created a large arch to connect the two spaces. Next, they built a very shallow rear gallery with slanted floor that stretched across much but not all of the rear elevation. Then they moved and attached the home's former detached kitchen to the upriver, rear corner of the house. Next, they expanded part of the rear gallery outward to create a bathroom. Later, they enclosed the remaining open section of the rear gallery. They also added a staircase to one *cabinet* and sheathed the attic's walls and ceiling.

In the mid-1970s, a family member purchased the house from the other heirs and made additional changes. On the exterior, he leveled the building and installed additional piers to help carry the structural load; coated the most deteriorated original brick piers with concrete; placed awnings over many of the windows; installed a new, heavy-looking metal roof that somewhat resembles tiles; placed a linoleum-like covering around the home's two extremely deteriorated chimneys; and built a brick front gallery stair to replace the old wooden staircase. On the interior, he placed thin strips of decorative molding at the point where each exposed ceiling beam meets the ceiling, replaced the flooring throughout the house, and subdivided the upriver *cabinet* in order to install a second bathroom. However, he died before completing the latter.

Antonia's current owners (the first outside the founding family) have begun restoring the dwelling. So far, they have removed an inappropriate front gallery enclosure also added by the LeBert/Blanchard family. As a result of the latter, the home's gallery posts are new. No information on the appearance of the original columns is available.

Although the above list of alterations seems long, most are not as serious as they first appear. For example, the rear additions do not interfere with the appearance of the façade; and the brick gallery stair can be removed or screened. While the presence of the tile-like metal roof and the covering of the chimneys are regrettable (work on the latter is scheduled), the massing of the home's Creole Class III gabled, umbrella roof remains visible. Furthermore, the home's other identifying Creole features – the French doors, wraparound mantels, exposed ceiling beams, and raised *premier étage* with intact core Creole floor plan – all remain intact. Thus, Antonia retains its National Register eligibility and ranks as an important example of the French Creole style in a parish that has lost much of its Creole building tradition.

Non-Contributing Elements:

Two modern buildings – a large frame barn and a smaller frame storage building – also stand on the property. They appear to have been built during the ownership of the last family member between the mid-1970s and 2007. Thus, the buildings are clearly non-contributing elements to this nomination.

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8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Applicable National Register Criteria:

A___ B__ C_x D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions):

A__ B__ C__ D__ E__ F__ G__ NA

Areas of Significance: Architecture

Period(s) of Significance: c. 1811

Significant Dates: c. 1811

Significant Person(s): NA

Cultural Affiliation: NA

Architect/Builder: Unknown

State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.

A rare and important example of the French Creole style within West Baton Rouge Parish, Antonia is locally significant under Criterion C: Architecture.

French Creoles and Acadians originally settled West Baton Rouge Parish during Louisiana's colonial period. Both of these groups built houses in the Creole tradition. That tradition contains four types of buildings:

- 1) the Creole cottage, a galleried one-story house of small to moderate size. There are three types of Creole cottages:
 - a) those with small, hall-less floor plans only two or three rooms wide. A front gallery and a rear *cabinet/loggia* range usually parallel this group of rooms.
 - b) larger cottages with hall-less floor plans more than three rooms wide. These also feature front galleries and rear *cabinet/loggia* ranges. Such houses were sometimes created by enclosing one or more side galleries to create additional rooms, as happened at Antonia.
 - c) those with central halls flanked by front and rear rooms on each side. Front galleries are present, but sometimes the *cabinet/loggia* ranges are missing. This type reflects the impact of Anglo-American architecture upon the Creole building tradition after Louisiana was transferred to the United States in 1803.
- 2) the larger raised Creole plantation house, a two-story dwelling (of which the lower story is an above-ground

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basement) that represents the apex of Louisiana's Creole architecture.

- 3) the Creole townhouse, built in more populated areas like Natchitoches and New Orleans.
- 4) the *pigeonnier*, a small tower-like outbuilding with upper-floor nesting boxes for birds.

Antonia is a large, hall-less Creole cottage.

Because of West Baton Rouge's settlement patterns, hundreds of Creole houses must have once dominated the parish. However, because the area's survey is incomplete, it is impossible to accurately estimate the number of these homes that remain. The data available so far shows a preliminary total of 73 houses (from over 211, 50+ year old buildings surveyed to date) reflecting some Creole influence. However, the overwhelming majority of these buildings are quarter's houses, which are "Creole" only in that they exhibit the general massing (umbrella roof and full facade gallery) of a Creole structure. Only about a dozen of the 73 Creole-influenced buildings are more substantial, and of these, only a few survive with enough stylistic features to merit their identification as genuine Creole homes. The survey forms also indicate that some of these survivors have been altered or have deteriorated to the extent that their integrity is compromised. The data can be taken as indicative of the entire parish's surviving Creole patrimony because the completed area, examined by an authority familiar with West Baton Rouge's history and settlement patterns, includes all of the parish's high probability sites for Creole and Acadian settlement (i.e., the River Road). A review of the parish's only published history reinforces these findings. Thus, it is appropriate and accurate to characterize examples of the Creole building tradition in this parish as rare.

Several examples serve to illustrate the types of alterations to which some of West Baton Rouge's surviving Creole houses have been subjected. For example, one unnamed Creole dwelling has had its front gallery lowered to ground level. The Creole house at Catherine Plantation has been Victorianized by the addition of an inappropriate balustrade and a set of pointed Gothic-like arches spanning the five bays of its gallery. An unnamed Anglo-Creole house has received a Queen Anne-influenced polygonal bay in addition to being resheathed in a brick veneer. The Anglo-Creole house at Benoit has received a Victorian (in this case Eastlake) gallery treatment. Gladonia, another Anglo-Creole dwelling, has had its columns changed and its balustrade removed. In addition, Italianate brackets have been added to its entablature. Homestead, once a fully raised Creole plantation house, is in fact only the upper floor of the original residence, lowered to ground level when its above-ground basement was demolished.

Only five West Baton Rouge Creole houses survive with their integrity intact. These include the Alliet House (National Register), the Hebert House in Brusly (National Register), another (unnamed) Brusly cottage, the St. Delphine Overseer's House, and Antonia. Each is a Creole cottage, yet Antonia is different from the others. The Alliet House and the unnamed Brusly example are small Creole cottages. The Hebert House is an Anglo-Creole cottage, as is the St. Delphine Overseer's House. The latter even has a Greek Revival entablature and columns grafted to its Creole form.

Antonia, on the other hand, is West Baton Rouge's only intact example of the large Creole cottage. It contains only one, hall-less story of living space but, with a width of four rooms, is larger than any of the other intact houses. Although size alone generally does not equate with National Register eligibility, in the French Creole building tradition size is a characteristic that distinguishes one type of dwelling from another. Furthermore, Antonia stands apart from many of the parish's surviving Creole examples because its French Creole features are still intact and dominant. This can be seen in the massing of its Class III gabled, umbrella roof; French doors; raised *premier etage* with core Creole floor plan; wraparound mantels; and exposed ceiling beams. In summary, Antonia is a rare and important example of the French Creole tradition within West Baton Rouge Parish because it illustrates a specific sub-class of the style. As such, it merits National Register listing.

Historical Note

As explained in Part 7, Acadian immigrant Pierre LeBert founded Antonia Plantation in 1793. LeBert's daughter Lize (also known as Lize Levert) married Zephirin Blanchard, and their descendants continued to own the property until 2007. Antonia proved to be a very prosperous undertaking for Zephirin Blanchard. Upon his death in 1852, he left "a

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plantation home, 68 slaves, 24 mules, 11 horse carts, 3,000 gallons of molasses, 141 bbls. of sugar, furniture, and equipment, all worth \$92,887."

Note About the Property's Name

The name shown on the USGS Topographical map (Antonio) and that assigned to the road paralleling the property's north boundary on the plat map (Antonio Road) are the result of a cartographer's error. The correct, historical name of the property is Antonia.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Daspit, Fred. *Louisiana Architecture: 1714-1820*. Lafayette, LA: Center for Louisiana Studies, University of Louisiana at Lafayette, 2004.

Division of Historic Preservation, Historic Standing Structures Survey of West Baton Rouge Parish.

Historic photographs of Antonia; copies in National Register file.

Kellough, Elizabeth and Mayeux, Leona. *Chronicles of West Baton Rouge*. Baton Rouge, LA: Kennedy Print Shop, c. 1979.

Richey, Thomas H. *Tirailleurs: A History of The 4th Louisiana and The Acadians of Company H*. New York: Writers Advantage, 2003.

Summary of completed research in legal documents concerning Antonia Plantation, typescript; copy in National Register file.

Previous documentation on file (NPS): NA

Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.

Previously Listed in the National Register. (partially)

Previously Determined Eligible by the National Register.

Designated a National Historic Landmark.

Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: #

Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: #

Primary Location of Additional Data:

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State Agency

Federal Agency

Local Government

University

Other (Specify Repository):

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~~10. GEOGRAPHIC DATA~~

Acreage of Property: Three acres

UTM References: **Zone Easting Northing**
 15 671000 3364850

Verbal Boundary Description: See attached plat map.

Boundary Justification:

Boundaries are drawn to follow property lines associated with the resource and preserve its immediate setting, including its relationship to the River Road and the Mississippi River.

11. FORM PREPARED BY

Name/Title: National Register Staff, Division of Historic Preservation

Address: P. O. Box 44247, Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70804

Telephone: 225.342.8160 or 225.219.4595

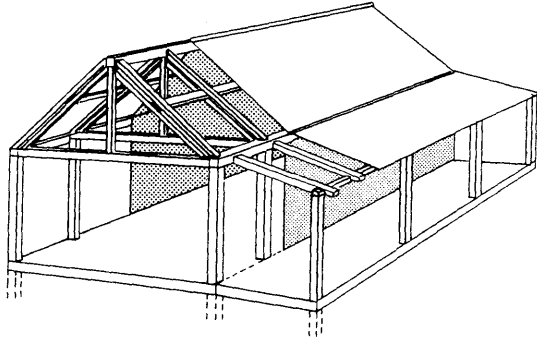
Date: Spring 2008

PROPERTY OWNERS

Mike and Jan Becnel
4626 South River Road
Port Allen, Louisiana 70767
225.963.6932

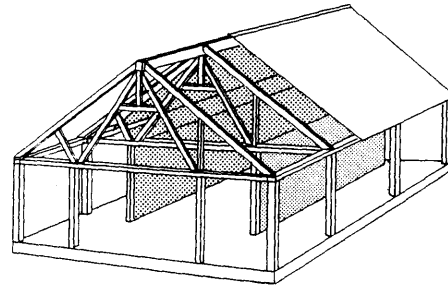
FIGURE 5

SOME CLASSES OF CREOLE VERNACULAR HOUSES



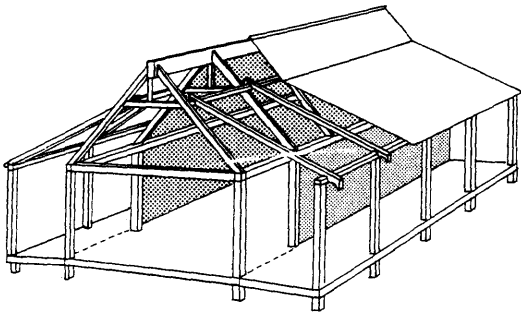
CLASS I

Single-pitch roof. Truss system includes the use of a king post and a double rafter system. Rafters set on wall plate. Inner rafters (truss blades) set on tie beam. Gallery optional. If present, gallery rafters tied into wall plate or front wall, and supported by an outer gallery plate, which is itself supported by light weight colonnettes.



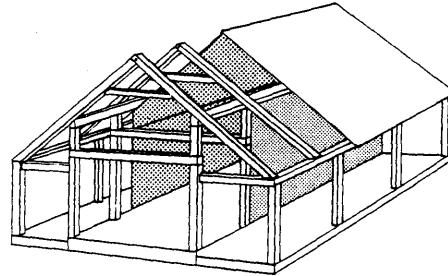
CLASS IIIa

Full (single-pitch) umbrella roof. Truss blades (principal rafters) mounted on wall plates. Long outer rafters mounted on outer gallery wall plates and let into or notched over the roof ridge. These rafters supported in their middles by posts (right side) or braces (left side), or by purlins supported by these.



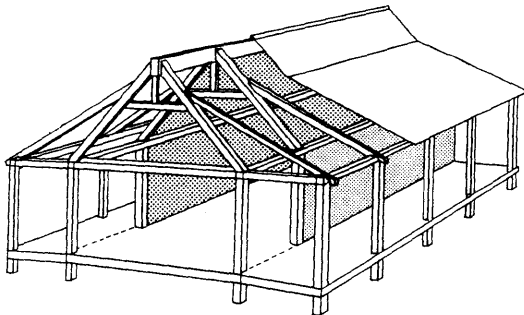
CLASS IIa

Mississippi Valley French Colonial broken-pitch roof (early form). Gallery always present. Gallery rafters notched over principal purlin and supported on outer gallery plate.



CLASS IIIb

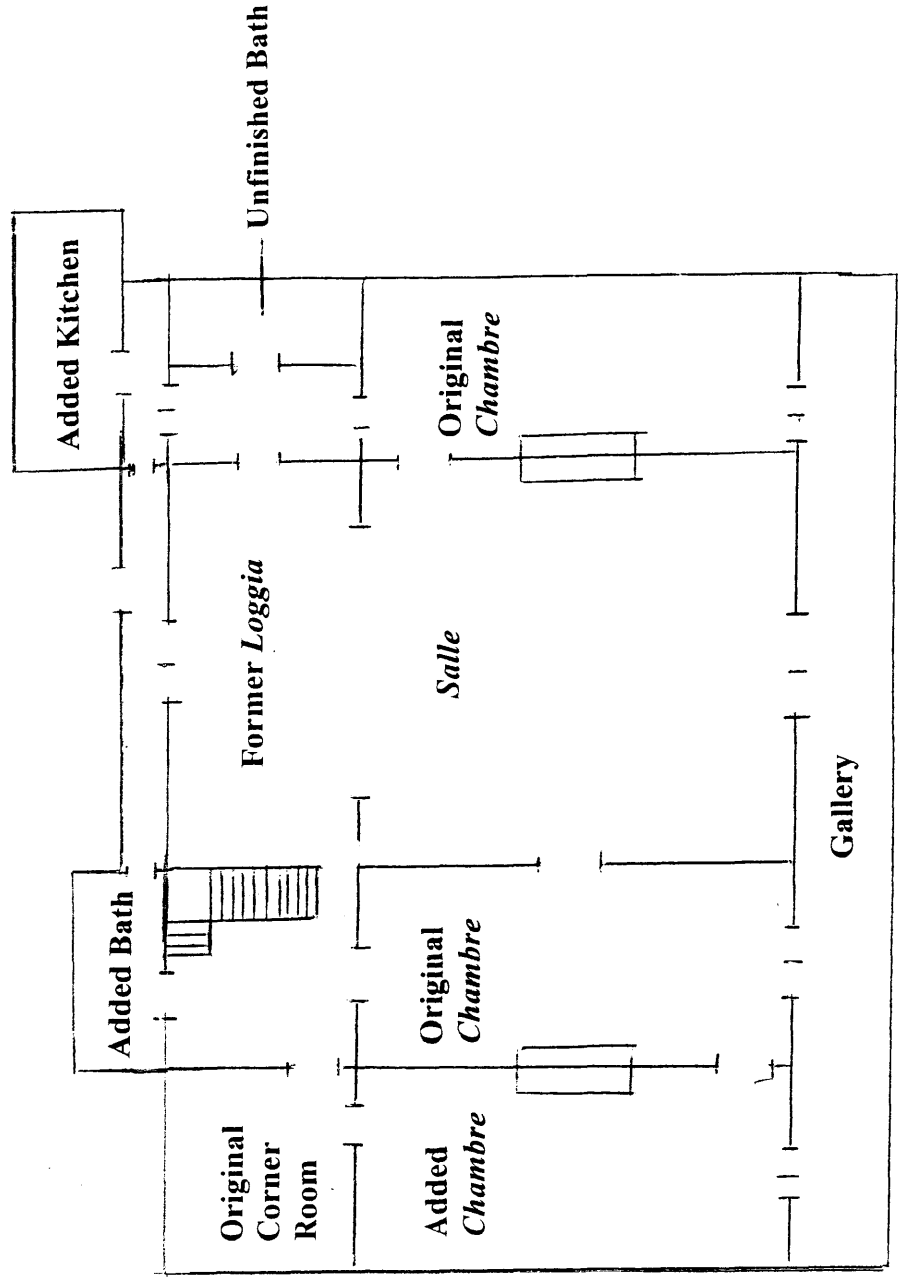
Full (single-pitch) umbrella roof (later form). Truss blades now absent. Outer rafters supported in their middles by posts or by post-supported purlins. Roof ridge generally not present



CLASS IIb

Mississippi Valley French Colonial broken-pitch roof (later form). Principal rafters (single or doubled) set on wall plate. Gallery rafters let into backs of principal rafters and supported on outer gallery plates.

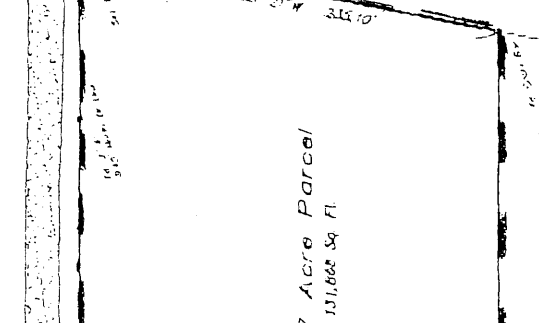
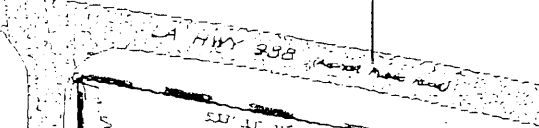
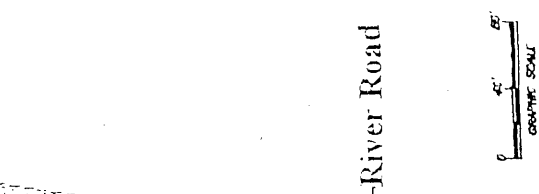
Antonia Floor Plan



TRICHE LAND SURVEYING, INC.
 205 EAST BRUSHY CREEK LANSAY LA 70779 (504) 740-2721

DATE	11/13/2006
BY	WOODY R. TRICHE
FOR	EDWARD A. BLANCHARD

Boundary



River Road

ANTONIO ROAD (Armed Public Road)

3.027 Acre Parcel
 131,668 sq ft

0.24 Acre Parcel
 10,438 sq ft
 Reserved For Road

WOOD FRAME RES. ON PIERS

BRICK SHEDS

WOOD FRAME RES. ON PIERS

BRICK SHEDS

REFERENCE DETAIL
 NOT TO SCALE

DAVID L. SOUTHWELL
 4012 S. RIVER RD.
 PORT ALLEN, LA 70767

NOTES:
 TRACT 1-B may be transferred to adjacent property
 Owners only see reference Map X.

TRACT 1-B
 1.402 ACRES
 64,701 SQ. FT.
 (FRI. MAP X)

Lot 83
 ANTONIA PLANTATION ESTATES
 FOURTH FILING

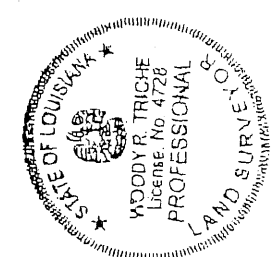
Lot 84

Existing 10' Utility & Communication Service

Existing 10' Utility Service

Antonia

Port Allen Vicinity
 West Baton Rouge Parish, LA



MAP SHOWING BOUNDARY SURVEY OF
 THREE EXISTING PARCELS OF LAND
 BELONGING TO EDWARD A. BLANCHARD

LOCATED IN
 SECTION 3, T-8-S, R-12-E, SOUTHEASTERN LAND DISTRICT
 WEST OF THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER
 WEST BATON ROUGE PARISH, LOUISIANA
 FOR
 ESTATE OF EDWARD A. BLANCHARD

WILDLIFE SETBACKS:
 BUFFER ZONE: 30'
 SIDE YARD: 10'

EDGE: 10'
 SET 1/2" I.P.
 FT. IRON PIPE (AS SHOWN)
 POWER POLE
 CONCRETE ELECTRIC

CERTIFICATION:
 I hereby certify that I made a survey on the ground of the property shown on this map, and that the drawings accurately reflect the findings of said survey, and that I am a duly Licensed Professional Land Surveyor for the State of Louisiana. My Commission Expires on 12/31/2006.

WOODY R. TRICHE, P.L.S.
 License No. 4728
 DATE: 11/13/2006