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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form. If any 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.

1. Name of Property

Historic Name: Briarwood

Other Names/Site Number: Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve, Briarwood Nature Preserve

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

2. Location

Street & Number: 216 Caroline Dormon Road

City or town: Saline

State: LA

County: Natchitoches

Not for Publication:

Vicinity:

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, 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 at the following level(s) of significance:

national state local

Applicable National Register Criteria: A B C D

8-10-16

Signature of certifying official/Title: Phil Boggan, State Historic Preservation Officer

Date

Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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

Signature of commenting official:

Date

Title:

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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4. National Park Certification

I hereby certify that the 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: _____

[Handwritten Signature]
Signature of the Keeper

11-8-2016

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply.)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Private
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public – Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public – State
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public – Federal

Category of Property (Check only **one** box.)

<input type="checkbox"/>	Building(s)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	District
<input type="checkbox"/>	Site
<input type="checkbox"/>	Structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

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

Contributing	Non-contributing	
1	4	Buildings
7	7	Sites
		Structures
		Objects
8	11	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions.):
 DOMESTIC/single dwelling/village site or multi-dwelling
 AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE/agricultural field/horticultural facility/irrigation facility
 LANDSCAPE/garden/conservation area

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FUNERARY/cemetery

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions.):

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

EDUCATION/education-related

RECREATION AND CULTURE/outdoor recreation

AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE/agricultural field/horticultural facility/irrigation facility

LANDSCAPE/garden/conservation area

7. Description

Summary Paragraph

Briarwood is a two-hundred-acre nature conservatory located in the northern sand hills of Natchitoches Parish developed by noted naturalist, botanist, and author Caroline Dormon. Dormon was among the first women in the United States actively involved in forestry. Her forestry conservation work led to the establishment of Kisatchie National Forest and the conservation of native flora, particularly the Louisiana Wild Iris. Briarwood was both home and laboratory for Dormon who spent much of her career involved in horticultural activities at the site. At Briarwood she developed new hybrids of native flora, collected rare species, and cultivated plants used for medical and scientific research at institutions throughout the nation. Her work at Briarwood gained her state, national, and international recognition along with numerous awards throughout her career. In addition to being an integral part of Dormon's work, Briarwood is tied to Dormon's family and local history. The area that comprises the Briarwood Nature Preserve was once part of a small plantation community co-founded by Dormon's grandfather Dr. B. S. Sweat in 1859. Briarwood is currently owned and managed by the Foundation for the Preservation of Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve. The site functions as a nature conservatory and offers tours and programs on forestry education. The site has conserved the landscape, gardens, and Dormon's private residence (now operated as a house museum) true to its historic character and in-keeping with Dormon's methodology towards gardening. The overall site contains a wooded preserve with designed naturalistic gardens, ponds, paths and also contains several buildings, one of which is historic.

Narrative Description

Briarwood Nature Preserve is located at 216 Caroline Dormon Road in the small community of Readhimer near the northern edge of Natchitoches Parish. The preserve is approximately two and a half miles south of the town of Saline, LA located in neighboring Bienville Parish. The northern edge of the preserve is aligned to the plat grid east to west with part of Kisatchie National Forest lying adjacent to this end. The site is bounded by Highway 9 to the east which is the location of the main entrance. The site is accessed by visitor's from Highway 9 west through the entryway and onto Nature Preserve Road which joins with Caroline Dormon Road, the site's main artery.

The topography consists of a series of small hills with higher elevations in the northwestern section and a series of small creeks that run southward. The landscape is mixed old growth forest with stands of virgin timber and other old trees that date back in age two to three hundred years. The forest is a natural blend of hardwoods and mixed pines, mainly Loblolly and Shortleaf with a few Longleaf Pines along with a stand of Slash Pines, which Caroline Dormon planted on the property. The soil throughout the preserve is a sandy/sandy loam soil overlaying a red clay substrate. Dormon herself described the site as a natural woodland. Indeed, most of the preserve remains heavily wooded minus a few gardens and buildings used in the site's management. The site's main functions are the conservation of plants and wildlife and education, a task carried out in accordance with Caroline Dormon's vision and approach to cultivation. Between 1920 and 1970 Caroline Dormon developed the property as a *natural garden*, cultivating plants in areas most similar to their natural habitats and suited to their growth.

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Though privately owned, Briarwood lies adjacent to the boundaries of the Winn Ranger District of the Kisatchie National Forest and consists of soils, topography, fauna, and flora communities consistent with the surveyed areas of the national forest. Surface features in the area are associated with the alluvial valley of the Red River.¹ Topographically the area “consists of rounded hills and small valleys with bench-like terraces” that date to the Quaternary period (2.6 to 0mya) and flank the Red River Valley.² The soils of the project area are generally light in color which have developed under the forest floor.³

Saline Bayou and tributaries of the Dugdemonia River are the main drainage channels for the area. Elevations range from 125 feet to 400 feet above mean sea level though rarely exceed 100 feet. At higher elevations the soils are composed of silty clays and silts from the Cane River formation that date to the Eocene age Claiborne Group (48.6 to 37.2mya)⁴. Lower slopes consist of clay, sandy clay, silt, and gravel.⁵

Soil surveys indicate the soils are typed as Betis loamy fine sand with one to five percent slopes. Betis soils are gently sloping with excessively drained features that are located on the upper slopes and ridge tops of area. Betis soils are considered to account for over fifty percent of the project area (50.7 percent) (Soil Survey Staff 2016). Other soils present at Briarwood include Betis loamy fine sand with five to twelve percent slopes (32.2 percent), Briley loamy fine sands with one to five percent slopes (0.2 percent), Ruston fine sandy loam with one to five percent slopes (0.7 percent), Smithdale fine sandy loam with eight to twenty percent slopes (15.4 percent), with the remaining project area made of water resources.⁶ These soils are all well drained, acidic, brownish in color, and well suited to woodlands.⁷

Prior to European settlement, Briarwood was covered with forest primarily consisting of Longleaf pine (*Pinus palustris*), Red oak (*Quercus falcate*), post oak (*Quercus stellate*), and dogwood (*Cornus florida*), grasses, sedges, and legumes. Today the area is predominately occupied by loblolly (*Pinus taeda*) and shortleaf pine (*Pinus echinata*) though the area displays “considerable ecological variability” with considerable variation in forest species depending on elevation (mixed pine and hardwoods exist in the bottom lands), soil characteristics, and extent of forest clearing in the twentieth century.⁸

Non-avian species include deer, squirrels, rabbits, bears, opossums, beavers, raccoons, coyotes, foxes, otters, and various reptile and amphibian species. Avian species include a variety of ducks, geese, cranes, thrushes, turkeys, doves, and raptorial species. Rare animals include the Louisiana pine snake, the red-cockaded woodpecker, the Louisiana black bear and the Louisiana pearlshell mussel.⁹

There are a total of nineteen resources at Briarwood and eight resources are contributing resources that illustrate each era of the site’s history and directly relate to the site’s historical significance, integrity, and past

¹ Hiram (Pete) Gregory and Kim Curry. *Natchitoches Parish Cultural and Historical Resources: Prehistory*. Natchitoches Parish Planning Commission, 1978. Report Submitted to the Natchitoches Police Jury.

² Ibid; Soil Survey Staff. United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Services, 2016. Website <http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov>. Accessed August 30th 2016.

³ Gregory and Curry.

⁴ Soil Survey Staff.

⁵ United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service. Kisatchie National Forest, United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service. Website http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/kisatchie/learning/?cid=fsbdev3_024696. Accessed August 30th 2016.

⁶ Soil Survey Staff.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service. Kisatchie National Forest, United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service. Website http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/kisatchie/learning/?cid=fsbdev3_024696. Accessed August 30th 2016.

⁹ Ibid.

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and current functions. These include Dormon's private residence, the garden sites for much of her award-winning work in horticulture, and two historic sites. There are non-contributing archaeological sites including resources from the agricultural and pre-history era. Further archaeological studies at these sites could render them contributing in the future. The remainder of the resources are mostly non-contributing elements related to the site's current function as a nature preserve. These buildings were either reconstructed or built after Dormon's death in 1971.

Contributing Resources

Building (n=1 total building)

Log House (Caroline Dormon Museum)

The log house was built in 1950 as a permanent residence for Caroline Dormon and her sister Virginia Dormon Miller. This was her final permanent residence and where she accomplished a significant amount of her published writings and painting in the latter stage of her career. The home is a one-story, single-family dwelling with a shingled gable roof and full, covered front porch (stone floor) and full back porch (cement floor). There are two bedrooms, a kitchen, living area, bathroom and closets. The house was designed by Dormon who cut trees from Briarwood to sell to finance the building and use in its construction. Dormon got local craftsman John Holmes of Goldonna to head up the building process and local men to cut and peel the logs used for construction.¹⁰ Nearly all of the elements of the house are original with exception of the roof which was reconstructed in the late 1970s using metal to protect the structure from the threat of fire. The Log House has a grassy lawn around it, which provides a visual break from the canopy of trees surrounding it.

The log house now functions as a house museum complete with original furnishings conserved and displayed as they would have been throughout Caroline and Virginia Miller's residence in the dwelling. The museum also contains exhibits of pre-historic and horticultural artifacts collected by Dormon from her childhood into her adult career, and part of her personal library. The artifacts include Native American arrowheads, hunting tools, and material objects Dormon excavated at Briarwood. In addition to the artifacts are Dormon's personal family photos, and artwork. The screened in back porch area houses a material culture exhibit of items that would commonly be used in everyday rural life during the time period coinciding with the agricultural and garden eras of the site.

Sites (n=7 total contributing sites)

Bay Garden and Ponds

The **Bay Garden** was developed by Caroline Dormon as an area to plant her seedlings and record outcomes of her cross-pollination and cultivation experiments. The Louisiana Wild Iris was the focus of much of her activity in this area. By 1932 Dormon was regarded as an authority on the plant and her published observations and writings helped popularize the wild iris as a common garden variety. In 1948 she was the first to receive the Mary Swords De Baillon Medal, the highest award for iris cultivation, from the Society for Louisiana Irises. For three consecutive years 1953, 1954, and 1955 she received the both the De Baillon medal and medals from the American Iris Society for hybrids – *Violet Ray*, *Saucy Minx*, and *The Kahn*. In 1958 she was awarded both honors again for the hybrid *Wheelhorse*.

Bay Garden was also an area where Dormon cultivated rare species including those useful for research and species previously unidentified in botany. She often sent plants to colleagues or institutions that requested, or whom she thought would be interested these included Thomas Edison and the United States Department of

¹⁰ Rebecca Howell, *Briarwood Nature Preserve: Historic American Landscape Survey* (National Park Service, U.S. Department of Interior: 2003) HALS No. LA-1, 49.

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Agriculture. During the height of her career Dormon identified several unknown species of plants that she successfully cultivated at Briarwood including a rare iris species Pinewoods Lily (*Eustylis Purpurea*).

During Dormon's latter years she was unable to give plantings in the bay garden the attention they needed to thrive. As result the plants had to be replaced prior to Briarwood's opening as a nature preserve. In the immediate years following Dormon's death, Richard and Jessie Johnson, curators for the newly formed Foundation for the Preservation of the Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve, set about the task of restoring the Bay Garden area. Fifty varieties of irises, including those developed at Briarwood like The Kahn, Saucy Minx, and the Wheelhorse and other native species were donated for the restored garden. Today Bay Garden contains over a hundred species of plants including those that were discovered or cultivated by Dormon. Species included in the garden include Goldenrod, St. John's Wort, Skullcap, Milkweed, Buttonbush, Poppy Mallow, Smooth Phlox, Spider Lily, Fly Poison, Winterberry, Witch Alder, Star Grass, Water Hemlock, and Leatherwood.

There are several other areas cultivated by Dormon that are still maintained and included in the interpretative overview presented to visitors they include the Wildflower Meadow, the area behind the current visitor's center, Wing's Rest Pond and Frog Pond.

The **Wildflower Meadow** is a one-acre field with masses of flowers growing three to four feet in height that bloom in succession. Plants here include Black-Eyed Susan, Flax, Blazing Star, and Prairie Onion. Wildflowers were particularly important to Dormon and were most often the subjects of her paintings and sketches. Dormon bemoaned the loss of wild flowers she'd observed on her hikes and trips as a child. She placed advocacy for the conservation of Louisiana's vanishing wild flowers equal with protecting virgin forest land.

The area behind the Visitor's center is the second most diverse area at Briarwood after Bay Garden with over fifty various species.¹¹ This area was the site of the Dormon's sister first residence at Briarwood.

Wing's Rest and **Frog Pond** are two of the four man-made water sources at Briarwood. In 1925 Dormon had Wing's Rest made by damming Dormon Branch.¹² The pond was so named by Dormon because it became a haven for wood ducks. The pond serves as the water source for irrigation for the preserve. Frog Pond is more marsh-like and is located in the lower southern section of the preserve. It is filled with cypress, iris and several other species such as Bogtorch and Jack-in-pulpit.

Old Briarwood Plantation Cemetery

The Old Briarwood Plantation Cemetery lies at the northeastern corner of the preserve off the right of the entrance on Caroline Dormon Road. It is believed that the cemetery was started by the Sweat family upon their arrival to Briarwood from South Carolina in 1859, as one of the slaves had died en route.¹³ The slaves were given this small plot of land to use as a cemetery. After emancipation the descendants of the former slaves continued to use the cemetery well into the mid-20th century.¹⁴ The current cemetery consists of approximately twenty identifiable burials and is about an acre in size. This section of the preserve was previously owned by Willamette Industries Inc. Because of the cemetery's significance to Briarwood the company was willing to give the land to the preserve.¹⁵ Surnames prominently featured on headstones in the cemetery include Patterson, Nolley, and Tobin. Descendants of these families still reside in the Briarwood and neighboring Shady Grove (Winn Parish) communities.¹⁶ The curators at Briarwood hope to work with families in these communities to

¹¹ Howell, 44.

¹² Dormon Branch is the creek that runs south from Wing's Rest Pond.

¹³ Howell, 47.

¹⁴ Arthur Jackson, discussion with the author, April 7, 2016.

¹⁵ Howell, 47.

¹⁶ Jackson.

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preserve the cemetery. The cemetery relates to the Criterion A: Exploration/Settlement area of significance. Further studies need to be done to analyze the archaeological significance of this site.

Old Sparta Road (Old Sparta Trace, Old Sparta Trail)

Old Sparta Road was part of an ancient buffalo trail and migratory route for Native Americans and later European Americans. Old Sparta Road runs southwest through the property; the road is sunken as it crosses higher elevation. During the late 19th century the road became notorious for a band of highwaymen that terrorized the route.¹⁷ The road was used through World War II, but became abandoned once the automobile became the dominant form of transportation in the area.¹⁸ The Old Sparta Road relates to the Criterion A: Exploration/Settlement area of significance. Further studies need to be done to analyze the archaeological significance of this site.

Non-contributing Resources

Buildings (n=4 total buildings)

Management Buildings:

The **Headquarters Building** was built in 1975-76 as a residence for curators Richard and Jessie Johnson. The building is a single-family dwelling with three bedrooms, a kitchen, large living area/meeting room, office and attached garage. It has a wood shake hipped roof with a central rock chimney. The building was designed by Natchitoches architect E. P. Dobson, Jr.¹⁹ Materials for the dwellings construction were donated by various lumber companies and builders in Natchitoches, Shreveport, and Ruston.

The **Visitor's Center** was constructed in 1983 at the site of the Dormon sister's first home at Briarwood in 1916. The center retains the two-room footprint of the Dormon house and reuses the central brick chimney from the original structure. The center's two rooms contain a screened-in porch, and bathrooms for visitors.

The **Environmental Education Center** was built in 1999. The construction was funded through a grant from the COYPU Foundation.²⁰ Richard Johnson Sr. designed the building in consultation with educators. The center has a large kitchen, meeting area, and bathrooms. It is used for school groups, seminars and plant sales.

In 1987, the preserve received a grant from the Gannet Foundation and a donation from Dorothy Milling to rebuild Caroline Dormon's writing cabin – **Three Pines Cabin**.²¹ The cabin is a replica of the original cabin Dormon erected in 1928.²² Richard Johnson took measurements from the ruins of the original structure and reconstructed the cabin using termite-treated wood. The structure is a one-room log cabin on a log foundation. The original stone chimney was reused. In 1994 an adjacent necessities building was built to provide a bathroom and kitchenette for guest writers staying at the cabin.

Sites (n=7 total sites, including 3 non-contributing archaeological sites)

Mayapple Knoll, located in the southeastern section of the preserve was the site of the Dormon sister's rental property. The site is evidenced by a clearing.

There are several additional non-contributing areas of the preserve noted by the Foundation's interpretation program they include the *Nora Garden*, *The Dark Place*, and *Beech Swamp* areas.

¹⁷ Howell, 35.

¹⁸ Ibid, 35-36.

¹⁹ Ibid, 49.

²⁰ Ibid, 50.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Richard Johnson (Curator, Briarwood Nature Preserve), interview by the author, April 12, 2016.

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The Nora Garden was a terraced garden cultivated by and for the personal use of Dormon's neighbor and assistant Nora Patterson. The site is located along Nora Garden Trail in the northeastern section of the preserve. None of the original plantings are existent; the site is evidenced by a clearing.

The Dark Place is an area north of the Visitor's Center along Nora Garden Trail in the northeastern section of the Briarwood. This area was called the "Dark Place" because of the thick canopy created by surrounding trees coupled with an old barn once extant at the site that cast a foreboding aesthetic to the area.

Beech Garden Swamp was once a natural bog and the upper part of a nearby pond (Johnson Pond).

Non-Contributing Archaeological Sites as of 2016

Evidence of Briarwood's pre-history and agricultural eras are mainly archaeological. These surviving cultural landscape resources include the Sweat plantation, Old Briarwood Cemetery (see above), Readhimer Plantation, Old Sparta Road (see above), Dormon Family Home, and old railway beds, all of which have produced artifacts over the years. The resources highlight the site's significance to cultural and industrial history of the area. Currently, only 2 of these sites, the cemetery and Old Sparta Road, are considered contributing as they relate to Criterion A: Exploration/Settlement. The other three below ground archaeological sites are not contributing at this time, but further archaeological studies could reveal important information and render them contributing at a later date.

Old Briarwood Plantation Site (The Sweat Plantation)

The site of the Sweat plantation is located to the northeastern section of the property on a hill. The original tract of land was five hundred and sixty acres purchased in 1859 by Caroline's maternal grandfather, Dr. Benjamin Sweat from Mr. Joshua Prothro in what is now Briarwood and Saline (Bienville Parish). Sweat had moved his family including his wife Harriett Trotti Sweat, their daughter Caroline Trotti, along with a number of slaves from Harriett's grandfather's plantation (the old "Briarwood") in South Carolina near Barnwell County to Louisiana. A large house built by Dr. Sweat stood at the northern property line. Due to the economic hardships that followed the end of the Civil War Sweat began selling off his portions of his original holdings. Acres of the property were also given to former slaves. The remaining acreage passed to Sweat's descendants through succession. Buildings associated with the plantation are no longer existent. The plantation site is evidenced by clearings, several oak trees and material artifacts located at the site.

Readhimer Plantation, Pond, Dam and Grist Mill Sites

The Readhimer Plantation community is located in what is currently the western extension of the preserve. This land was donated to the preserve in 1995. Although no buildings remain the site included a large house, overseer's house, a commissary where women made materials for confederate uniforms during the Civil War, saw mill, and cotton gin.²³ Artifactual remains from the Readhimer Plantation are scattered along the trail through this area. Mr. John G. Readhimer and his family migrated to this area in the mid-nineteenth century. Although they are separate areas, the Readhimer Community which lies south of the preserve along Louisiana Highway 9 is named after the plantation.²⁴ This community developed with the timber industry post-Civil War.²⁵ The timbering industry brought the railroad which sustained the growth of the community. The community was in decline by the 1930s as the timber and railroad industries began to leave the area.²⁶ The Readhimer operation included a pond and dam developed to provide power for a grist mill located south of the plantation. The pond and dam remain as a features of the landscape and were recently restored by the Foundation.

Dormon Summer Home Site

²³ Howell, 37.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

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The site of the cottage where Dormon was born is marked by a clearing and two large trees that stood beside the porch steps.²⁷ An oak tree marks the site of the house's accompanying carriage house.²⁸ Each summer Caroline's father James Dormon would turn his law practice over to his partner for six weeks to vacation with his family at the cottage in Briarwood. These summer trips to Briarwood provided the spark for much of Dormon's interest in forestry and conservation.

Integrity

The following discussion of integrity is taken directly from the 2003 Historic American Landscapes Survey report for Briarwood:

"Briarwood remains essentially as Caroline Dormon left it, and is defined not by sweeping views or ornamental gardens but rather by the abundance of Shortleaf and Loblolly Pine trees and hardwoods and a few Longleaf Pine trees, plus trails meandering through the forest to the natural marshes, man-made ponds, and wildflower meadows. The forest is the overall organizing physical feature of the preserve and provides the preserve's most distinctive visual association – being at once its ground, vertical and overhead lines of sight. Caroline Dormon Road meets with the Old Sparta Road and is the main thoroughfare through the grounds; trails follow the natural topography. Although there are buildings within the preserve, they do not serve to subdivide the property instead are merely nestled into the surrounding landscapes. While much effort is exerted to ensure the natural look of the preserve, the Johnsons – as did Caroline Dormon – manipulate the landscape through weeding, transplanting, and cultivation of certain species and delight in its ephemeral qualities when new flowers appear. The changes may alter the landscape from that which Caroline Dormon touched, but follow the precedent she established and leave the spatial organization of the nature preserve intact."²⁹

While this was written in 2003, this description still stands today. Briarwood retains integrity of location, setting, design, workmanship, materials, feeling, and association as it relates to the various areas of significance for the property. There is no doubt that Caroline Dormon would recognize her gardens, ponds, trails, and home were she to return to Briarwood.

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.)

x	A	Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
x	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:

A	Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
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²⁷ Howell, 33.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid, 56.

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	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
x	G	Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions.): Conservation, Exploration/Settlement

Period of Significance: Criterion B: Conservation: 1916-1971; Criterion A: Exploration Settlement: 1859-1885

Significant Dates: 1859, 1916, 1971

Significant Person (Complete only if Criterion B is marked above): Dormon, Caroline C.

Cultural Affiliation (only if criterion D is marked above): N/A

Architect/Builder (last name, first name): Unknown

Period of Significance (justification):

A: Exploration/Settlement 1859-1885 – This period of significance represents the beginning of the agricultural era at Briarwood when the Sweats and Readhimers were farming the area and ends with the decade when the area was mostly settled and prospering.

B: Association with Caroline Dormon and Conservation 1916-1971 – This period of significance represents the years that Caroline Dormon made Briarwood her full-time residence and laboratory to aid in the conservation and preservation of the landscape and its plants.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary): Briarwood does fall under Criteria Consideration G: Properties that have achieved significance within the last fifty years as one of the areas of significance, B: Association with Caroline Dormon, Conservation – extends to 1971 to encompass the years through Caroline Dormon’s death. From 1916 through 1971, Dormon lived and worked at Briarwood and developed the site from an agricultural area into a natural garden and preserve for native plant species. Thus, the periods of significance were extended five years past 1966 to include the final years of her life when she was still actively studying and cultivating at Briarwood. Briarwood does not fall under Criteria Consideration D: Cemeteries because the Briarwood Cemetery is being nominated as part of the overall district, but is not the focal point of the district.

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

Briarwood is significant nationally under Criterion B for its association with Caroline Dormon, noted naturalist and conservationist. It is also significant locally under Criterion A: Exploration/Settlement. Briarwood derives its primary significance from its association with Caroline Dormon and the conservation work she carried on at

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Briarwood. Dormon achieved national and statewide recognition for her pioneering work in botany, forestry, ethnography, writing, and conservation. An accomplished artist, she produced artwork and wrote articles and award-winning publications on native horticulture and cultural history. The work done by Dormon in the conservation of plants was hugely important to preserving Louisiana and the southeastern United States' native plant populations. She also actively participated in preparing and creating new species of plants that were used throughout the scientific field nationally. The period of significance under Criterion B, associated with Dormon's time at Briarwood, is 1916, to her death in 1971. Dormon was at the vanguard of the conservation movement and one of the female pioneers in forestry and botanical science. Under its local significance for Exploration/Settlement, Briarwood was one of the first plantations settled in this part of Natchitoches Parish and was an integral part of the settlement of this region. It was also part of early road systems (formerly Native American buffalo trails) in the 19th century used for western settlement. The period of significance under exploration/settlement is 1859-1885.

Briarwood does fall under one criteria consideration because of the period of significance for Criterion B. The period of significance extends to 1971 to include the end of Caroline Dormon's life, which is just six years past the fifty year guideline, and is included because Caroline was still actively working through her death.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

An Introduction to Caroline Dormon and Briarwood

Briarwood also has a history as an agricultural operation (though no resources remain above ground to speak of this history) and its location is in an area once part of a migratory route for Native Americans and buffalo and the archaeological sites begging to be officially studied remain there to tell this history. From the mid-nineteenth century into the start of the twentieth century, Briarwood was a community settled by planters who were part of the migration of plantation owners from eastern coastal areas relocating to the western frontier. John G. Readhimer and Dr. Benjamin F. Sweat, Caroline Dormon's maternal grandfather, were two planters native to South Carolina who settled the area now known as Briarwood. Extant archeological resources at Briarwood illustrate the history of this era and include a plantation cemetery, dam, and remains at the sites of the Sweat and Readhimer Plantations. Included among the archeological resources is Old Sparta Road (Old Sparta Trace), a prehistoric migratory route used by buffalo, Native Americans and European Americans.

In 1921, Caroline Dormon became the first woman hired in the Louisiana Forestry Division, breaking through the male dominated barrier of the field, and created the state's first conservation education program. That same year, she became the first woman elected to the Society of American Foresters. Dormon was the first advocate in the state of Louisiana for the conservation of state lands and native plant species. Her lobbying efforts resulted in the liberalizing of the enabling act that made the purchase of forest land possible which led to the establishment of Louisiana's only *national* forest - Kisatchie National Forest. She also helped establish state parks and served as a consultant and head landscaper for several state projects including Hodges Garden State Park, Huey P. Long Hospital in Pineville, and Longue Vue Gardens.

In the late 1920s, Dormon began to focus more of her attention on Briarwood. There she developed a *garden laboratory* where she conducted experiments in cross-pollination and horticulture. Her activities in botanical science garnered her national attention. In 1929, she served as a consultant to the United States Department of Agriculture to assist the government in identifying plants with medicinal values as a "measure of national preparedness." Scientists including Thomas Edison and Missouri Botanical Garden curator, Dr. Edgar Anderson collected species from Dormon's garden for use in their research. Edison contacted her and asked her to prepare specimens of goldenrod from Briarwood (she had over ten varieties) and one specimen, *Solidago Retz*, was found to contain high concentrations of rubber. Edison was also trying to produce goldenrod that would sufficiently produce rubber and shared these with Dormon to plant at Briarwood. Edison went on to share his and Dormon's findings with Henry Ford to produce Model T tires. This project had further

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implications as it would help find an alternative to rubber should the Asian rubber market get cut off as it did at the onset of World War II.³⁰

Throughout the 1920s and 1930s she identified and cultivated previously unknown species at Briarwood. The Louisiana Wild Iris was of particular interest to Dormon. At the height of her scientific activity she introduced several award-winning hybrid species of the plant. Dormon was the first recipient of the Society for Louisiana Irises highest award, the De Baillon medal. For consecutive years she received medals from the American Iris Society and Society of Louisiana Irises for developing outstanding hybrids of native iris. Her horticultural experiments with the wild iris and published work on the flower popularized the wild iris as a common garden variety. By the end of her career Dormon had transitioned Briarwood into a sanctuary for hundreds of native flora and many rare species sent to her from areas including Japan and New Zealand.

Caroline Dormon also held a lifelong ethnographic study of Southern Native Americans and was a fierce Indian rights advocate. She is one of the earliest, and few white Americans to establish close ties with Louisiana tribes. Dormon made regular field visits to tribes throughout the state to study their language, customs and artistry. She is recognized as the first person to bring Chitimacha basketry to public attention through her writings. She helped Indian basket weavers market their work to private collectors and institutions such as the Smithsonian Museum. She also lobbied to help establish the first school for the Chitimacha Indians in 1935. Dormon served as a guide and consultant to linguists and ethnologists studying southern Native Americans including Dr. John Swanton, ethnologist for the Smithsonian, and Mary Haas of Yale University. In 1936, President Franklin D. Roosevelt appointed her as the only female member of the Desoto Commission. As a member of the commission she helped identify Hernando De Soto's route through the Louisiana territory during his North American expedition. She also advocated for the inclusion and recognition of the contributions of Native Americans in the national efforts to celebrate De Soto's journey. Dormon was also a catalyst for the WPA archaeological program in Louisiana and her collections, both at Briarwood and at Northwestern State University, resulted from that program. Her studies in ethnography and archaeology helped to develop the archaeological movement in the southeastern United States. Not only was she significant in her fields of botany and conservation, but she was also quite significant within the fields of ethnography and archaeology. For a further discussion of this part of her life, see pg. 25.

The above areas of significance - exploration/settlement, conservation, and association with Caroline Dormon – are all expanded upon in the following discussions of significance.

For forty-five years, Briarwood has been owned and managed by the Foundation for the Preservation of Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve, an organization Dormon established prior to her death in 1971. Per Dormon's request, the Foundation has operated Briarwood as a nature preserve open to the public. Mr. Richard Johnson and his wife Jessie were selected by Dormon to manage the site as curators. The Johnsons maintain the gardens and landscape using the same philosophy and much the same method as Dormon did throughout her life. The Foundation has also upheld Dormon's commitment to education and the arts by regularly hosting programs for school children and maintaining a writer's cabin for visiting artists. Today Briarwood contains over eight hundred various species of plants, including forty-eight rare and endangered varieties, maintaining the site's legacy as a conservatory. Despite Caroline Dormon's pioneering work and outstanding contributions, she remains largely unfamiliar as a state and national figure. The following discussion hopes to bring her significance to light.

In 2003, the National Park Service, recognizing Dormon's important legacy, produced a Historic American Landscape Survey report for Briarwood Nature Preserve. The report states, "Dormon and her work were of particular importance on a statewide basis as well as on a national scale."³¹ Information from this report is used throughout the following narrative to support the case for Dormon's national significance. The HALS report also

³⁰ Donald M. Rawson. "Caroline Dormon: A Renaissance Spirit of Twentieth-Century Louisiana." *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association*, 24.2 (1983) 121-39.

³¹ Howell, 2.

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outlined the history of Caroline Dormon's career and Briarwood's development and serves as the impetus for further national designations for the site. This report defined four historic eras of Briarwood's history: "Wilderness to 1859", the agricultural era (1859-1921), the garden (1921-1971), and the preserve (1971-present). Two of the time periods correspond to the areas of significance for Briarwood. The garden era coincides with Dormon's adult life and is defined by her development of the site from an agricultural area into a natural garden. The agricultural era is from 1859 to the 1880s when the site was part of a small mill and farming community.

Criterion A: Exploration/Settlement (Local Significance)

This first area of significance relates to the agricultural era at Briarwood from 1859-1985. Primary above ground resources that relate to this area include the Old Sparta Road and the Briarwood Plantation Cemetery.

The Old Sparta Road began as a buffalo migration trail in prehistoric times. It was then used by Native Americans for hunting said buffalo. Native inhabitants had abandoned the area by the early nineteenth century. Early explorers through this area of the state then used the road to navigate the unsettled area and this practice continued with early settlers to this part of Natchitoches Parish. When Bienville Parish (which sits just above the northern border of Briarwood's boundaries) was established in 1848, Sparta was chosen as the parish seat as it was the center of the parish. The Old Sparta Road was thus officially named at that point and originated in Natchitoches, passed through Goldonna, and ended in Sparta. Today, the only well-preserved remnants of the Old Sparta Road are those that remain within Briarwood's boundaries. Some long-time residents of the area can find other smaller sections of the road since they grew up seeing them; however, all of these sections are obscured and overgrown with vegetation.³² The parts of Old Sparta Road in Briarwood are clearly recognizable as a historic road.

In the mid-nineteenth century, the Briarwood area was settled by a small community of planters who left eastern areas of the country in search of prosperity in the new states of the Deep South. Among the newcomers were John G. Readhimer and Caroline Dormon's maternal grandfather, Dr. Benjamin Sweat. Sweat and his family, including wife Harriett and daughter Caroline Trotti, migrated to the sand hills of Natchitoches from South Carolina in 1859. During this journey to Louisiana, some of the slaves brought with the family passed away and upon arrival to the Briarwood land, Dr. Sweat provided a small parcel of land for them to bury their dead. This became what is called the Briarwood Cemetery and is sometimes referred to by locals at the Brick Yard Branch Cemetery as it sits alongside the Brick Yard Branch. The cemetery continued to be used by the local black community, not just residents of the Sweat Plantation, from those original burials in 1859 through at least 1972 as that is the last burial found. The earliest marked grave is that of Matilda Patterson, who was born in South Carolina in 1843 and died in 1889. Today, this cemetery serves as one of the few vestiges of this time period as most other resources – buildings, sites, structures – have been lost to time.

The Sweat Plantation and the future Briarwood

In December 1859, Sweat purchased five hundred and sixty acres of property in an area that stretched from the northern end of Natchitoches into neighboring Bienville Parish. Sweat had also brought along slaves from Harriett's grandfather's plantation in Barnwell County, SC, the "old Briarwood." The new Briarwood remained a small plantation community through the late nineteenth century. After the Civil War, due in part to economic hardships, Sweat slowly began selling off sections of the property. The remaining holdings were passed down through secession to the Sweat's descendants including Caroline Trotti Dormon, her husband James Dormon and their children.

By the 1880s, the area was dominated by farmlands and also included sawmills and railroads creating towns throughout Natchitoches Parish. The land had been transformed from heavily forested areas to be used for

³² Richard M. Johnson. Email with Jessica Richardson. September 8, 2016.

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agriculture and still included some forested areas mixed in with fields. As the majority of the area was settled by this time, the period of significance under A: Exploration Settlement ends with the year 1885.

After Caroline Dormon moved back to Briarwood and began her conservation efforts in the early to mid-20th century, she helped to return Briarwood to a look similar to when her ancestors settled it in the 1860s. She is quoted in 1944, after an ice storm devastated the forests at Briarwood, as describing how important it was to have thick forests in the area:

“For the stripped trees let in much light that undergrowth sprang up, changing the charming open vistas to tangled masses of shrubs and vines....But trees grow amazingly, and eventually the gaps in the forest were closed....my chief sorrow was that the woods had lost the look of a primeval forest.”³³

She had watched the land change from hill farms into timber for profit, which left most of Louisiana’s forest stripped and threatened. This supports how part of Caroline’s conservation effort hoped to return the land at Briarwood to include those primeval forests encountered by the Sweats, Readhimer, and the Native Americans before them.

Evidence of this era is primarily archaeological and warrants further exploration, but also includes some landscape features such as the Old Sparta Road and the Briarwood Plantation Cemetery. Archeological remnants of the Sweat and Readhimer Plantations are contained within Briarwood’s current boundaries, the most tangible of which is the Briarwood Plantation Cemetery. Other evidences of the sites’ agricultural period include the site of the Readhimer mill and dam, and the Dormon summer cottage. These resources illustrate the history of the development of the local area, frontier life, and the expansion of slavery into territories west of the Mississippi and warrant further study archaeologically.

The history and resources from the prehistory and agricultural eras give the site historical significance related to local history. The Old Sparta Road and Briarwood Cemetery are the only visible above ground resources that remain from this era of Briarwood and from the settlement of this area of Natchitoches Parish. They are important reminders of Briarwood’s long and storied history.

Criterion B: Association with Caroline Dormon, Conservation (National Significance)

This area of significance relates to the garden era (1921-1971) and the life of Caroline Dormon at Briarwood (1916-1971). It was her cultivation and conservation efforts that transformed the site into a preserve and protected evidences of the past cultural landscapes. It is her career that defines the site’s longest era of history; and her ideology that has dictated its function and conservation for the past century.

For Caroline Dormon, life began at Briarwood. Dormon was born there in her family’s summer home on July 19, 1888. She was the sixth of eight children born to James A. Dormon and Caroline Trotti Sweat. Mr. Dormon was an attorney in a law office in Acadia. An amateur naturalist, he instilled in his children a love for nature, a passion which he would share with his daughter Caroline. She was a favorite of her father who took her everywhere with him including to court in Minden, on fishing trips, and long walks through the woodlands to observe wild flora and animals. Mr. Dormon taught his daughter botanical nomenclature and how to identify various plant species. Much the tomboy, Caroline spent her time playing with her brothers. Favorite pastimes for the Dormon children included tree climbing and collecting bird eggs, two tasks at which Caroline excelled. She even got to accompany her father and brothers on their hunting trips and used her knowledge of animals to help them spot wild game. Mr. Dormon instilled in Caroline an interest in ethnological studies through articles and tracts on Native American culture he read to his children in the evenings. Her father’s interest in

³³ Howell, 17.

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Native Americans inspired her lifelong study of native culture and Indian rights activism. His lessons in botany instilled an appreciation for native flora, animals, and all things “wild.”

Mr. Dormon wasn't the only influence on Caroline's interests. Caroline Dormon inherited a love for writing and gardening from her mother. Mrs. Dormon was a poet, amateur novelist, and gardener.³⁴ She taught her children how to garden by giving them seedlings to plant and tend. Eventually Caroline's gardening skills were well enough that her mother turned over responsibility of her own garden to her daughter.

One of the most impressionable memories of Dormon's childhood were the annual summer vacations “down the country” to Briarwood. Each year Mr. Dormon would turn over his practice to his partner for six weeks and take his family on the forty-mile journey from their home in Acadia to Briarwood.³⁵ The trip took days and as they traveled by horse-drawn wagon Dormon got to observe vast stretches of northern Louisiana's longleaf pine forests. During this time, the trees had not been cut and a carpet of wildflowers blanketed the ground. These annual vacations afforded Dormon more opportunity to spend time with her father learning about nature and scavenging the forest to collect Native American artifacts. The Dormon family took pleasure in the simple joys of nature and placed high esteem on education. Unlike most families during the time, the Dormon's ensured that all of their children, irrespective of gender, received a formal education. All of the Dormon children, including Caroline and Virginia, were sent to institutions of higher learning. Caroline attended Judson College in Alabama majoring in fine arts with an emphasis on literature. In 1907, she graduated from Judson and furthered her studies in art at the Natchitoches Art Colony summer program.

The years immediately following Dormon's graduation from Judson brought a series of personal losses. Between 1908 and 1910, Dormon lost both parents. In 1913, the family home in Arcadia was destroyed in a fire. With both parents and family home gone, Caroline and her sister Virginia moved to Briarwood and set-up residence in a two-room dwelling. Virginia, twelve years older than Caroline and more domestically inclined, assumed the role of caretaker and guardian. With her sister taking care of the domestic duties, Caroline was free to focus on her passions which included developing Briarwood into a laboratory for her botanical experiments and collections. This is when Briarwood began to take shape as the unique natural landscape it is today.

Conservation in the United States and Louisiana

To better understand the significance of Caroline Dormon within the field of conservation in the state and country, one needs to get an understanding of the conservation movement in the United States at the time Caroline was involved in the field.

Brief Introduction

Early conservationists began in the 19th century and studies continued into the 20th century that aimed to preserve ecological habitats throughout the United States. Three historic areas of concentration were identified in the conservation movement including utilitarian conservation (natural resource management), preservationist conservation (preserving scenic nature), and wildlife habitat protection.³⁶ Caroline Dormon's lifelong work certainly identifies with all three of these areas of interest.

During the Progressive Era, as cities were more and more crowded, Americans wanted to escape to the outdoors and experience and enjoy nature. This idea to get out of the city worked well with the conservation movement as there was a desire to preserve these spaces for leisure and recreation.³⁷ The increasing mobility

³⁴ Mrs. Dormon published one novel *Under the Magnolias*, a book about a southern family patterned closely after her own.

³⁵ Fran Holman Johnson, *The Gift of the Wild Things: The Life of Caroline Dormon* (Lafayette: The Center for Louisiana Studies, University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1990), 21.

³⁶ Ann E. Chapman “American Conservation in the Twentieth Century.” National Park Service website.

https://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/massachusetts_conservation/American_Conservation_in_the_Twentieth_Century.html. Accessed June 20, 2016.

³⁷“The Evolution of the Conservation Movement, 1850-1920.” Library of Congress Website, Teachers Resources. <http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/connections/conservation/history.html>. Accessed June 20, 2016.

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provided by the automobile has been argued as a catalyst to the American conservation movement as the new tourists began to be concerned about losing American's wild past.³⁸

Two major players in the Conservation movement during the Progressive era on a national level just prior to the 20th century were Gifford Pinchot and John Muir. Gifford Pinchot was appointed as the chief of the Division of Forestry under President Theodore Roosevelt in 1898.³⁹ He started using the word "conservation" more regularly and stated:

"Conservation means the greatest good to the greatest number for the longest time....it demands the complete and orderly development of all our resources for the benefit of all the people, instead of the partial exploitation of them for the benefit of a few. It recognizes fully the right of the present generation to use what it needs and all it needs of the natural resources now available, but it recognizes equally our obligation so to use what we need that our descendants shall not be deprived of what they need."⁴⁰

Pinchot advocated for utilizing our natural resources and managing them with a goal of continued sustained yield meaning that we would take no more from them than what we are replacing them with. On the other side of the conservation camp was John Muir. He was more of a purist and wanted to see our natural resources preserved and not exploited for material use. He even published a book, *Our National Park*, a portrait of the nation's scenic wildernesses and this helped to establish his place in the public eye.⁴¹ The two sides of the conservation group came to a head in 1909 with the debate over the Hetch Hetchy Valley and the proposed dam located there. Muir wanted the valley preserved and Pinchot wanted it dammed. Ultimately, Pinchot won out and the valley was dammed and a reservoir was created.⁴²

Marjory Stoneman Douglas and Caroline Dormon: Influential Women in the Conservation Movement during the Progressive Era and Beyond:

For the most part, the conservation movement was male dominated. Women were mainly involved via social clubs, but these groups generally didn't have hard-hitting agendas. Women were very supportive of the conservation cause, but they were not included in the scientific studies and scholarly articles. This is the era, as explained below, within which Caroline Dormon was starting her professional career.

Women in the conservation movement of the early 20th century were fortunate to be able to have more influence than they would have had previously. However, they were still operating in a "man's world" and had to overcome barriers and stigmas in order to complete the work they were so devoted to. One woman who is comparable to Caroline Dormon in her work and activism is Marjory Stoneman Douglas of Miami, Florida. In a recent National Historic Landmark nomination, it is noted that scholars believe that Douglas provided a link between early twentieth-century movements for conservation and women's reform and late twentieth-century environmentalism and feminism.⁴³

Douglas was born in 1890 in Minneapolis, Minnesota. She attended Wellesley College from 1908-1912 and found that being there, with no male classmates, allowed her to mature free of the pressure of male competition. After graduating and a short, failed marriage, she made her way to Florida. Her father also came to Florida and was given a job as editor of *The Miami Herald*. Mr. Stoneman hired his daughter as a staff writer. Women writers at newspapers were not a rarity at this time, but many were hired to write mainly for

³⁸ Howell, pg. 10.

³⁹"Documentary Chronology of Selected Events in the Development of the American Conservation Movement 1847-1920." The Evolution of the Conservation Movement 1850-1920 Website.
<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/amrvhtml/cnchron1.html>. Accessed June 20, 2016.

⁴⁰ Ibid. This quote comes from Pinchot's 1910 *The Fight for Conservation*.

⁴¹ Documentary Chronology of Selected Events in the Development of the American Conservation Movement 1847-1920.

⁴² Chapman.

⁴³ National Historic Landmarks Program, Marjory Stoneman Douglas House, Miami, Dade County, Florida, NHL #20150227.

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female focused society pages. Marjory used her column to talk about not only Florida as a distinct landscape, but also to begin recognizing the accomplishments of women in Florida.⁴⁴

Women's clubs were quite popular during this time, not only for social reasons, but they also served as platforms for promoting women's rights (see the context from Briarwood's Historic American Landscape Survey beginning on the next page for further discussion of this). Douglas was involved in several clubs including the Business Women's League (which she founded) and the Dade County Federation of Women's Clubs. While she was closely tied to these women's groups, she often held different end goals and beliefs. The clubs often pushed to empower their abilities as "public housekeepers", but they did not want to overstep their place in the world. However, Marjory did not believe in this ideal and rather pushed for political and social equality.⁴⁵

For the next thirty years, Douglas worked in advocating for the conservation and preservation for the Everglades, which at one time were proposed to be drained and developed. Perhaps the culmination of this life work for her was the publication of *The Everglades: River of Grass* in 1947. It is described as "a work of literature, science, and cultural anthropology written with the fiery conviction of an environmental advocate and became one of the monuments of 20th century environmental writing."⁴⁶

Douglas worked more with the field of ecology versus Caroline Dormon and her work with botany, but the two women were not only peers working at the same time in the conservation movement, but they also were very similar in their tenacity to continue their work in fields that were typically male dominated. Both women had significant influence, on a national level, because of their work that spanned until 1971, for Dormon, and until the 1990s, for Douglas.

The following is a brief summary of some of Caroline's work (much further expanded upon in the following pages):

"She lobbied for the establishment of state parks and an arboretum in Louisiana and for federal protection of the Longleaf Pine forests. Moreover, she did so- and made herself heard in political circles- despite the gender barriers facing her generation. Dormon was an educated female, but she was neither a traditional society lady of the early twentieth century nor was it money that gained her cause acceptance...While not trained in science or formally taught about forestry in school, Dormon began to draw and to write about nature because she "simply loved it." Her personal studies of birds, flowers and trees brought her to the attention of the Louisiana Federation of Women's Clubs President Mrs. A.F. Storm, who persuaded Dormon to become her Chairman of Conservation. It was in this role that Dormon - although she protested she was "not a club woman" - could promote her desire for the preservation of a tract of Longleaf Pine.

It also turned into her first position with the state Forestry Division, where she wrote *Forest Trees of Louisiana and How to Know Them*, soon adopted as the standard text for schools and for foresters of the region, and where she was in a position to promote her interest in the establishment of a national forest to lawmakers. Dormon's advocacy efforts of the 1920s culminated in the land purchases necessary to create Louisiana's Kisatchie National Forest in 1928-1930, its authorization by the Department of Agriculture in June of 1930, and its formal establishment by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt in 1936. With a tract of Longleaf Pine under federal oversight, Dormon increasingly turned her attention to Briarwood and to her

⁴⁴ Friends of the Everglades "Marjory Stoneman Douglas: Defender of the Everglades." Friends of the Everglades website. <http://www.everglades.org/about-marjory-stoneman-douglas/>. Accessed June 20, 2016 and National Historic Landmarks Program, Marjory Stoneman Douglas House, Miami, Dade County, Florida, NHL #20150227.

⁴⁵ National Historic Landmarks Program, Marjory Stoneman Douglas House, Miami, Dade County, Florida, NHL #20150227.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 24.

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experiments with various plant species."⁴⁷

Dormon started off her professional career as a schoolteacher and her first job related to conservation came in 1921-23. The director of the Louisiana Department of Conservation, hired her in their public relations office planning school activities and public outreach bulletins, posters, and Arbor Day programming. She had previously met the director in 1920 at the Southern Forestry Conference in New Orleans. She also met other leaders in the conservation movement including Mrs. A.F. Storm, Henry Hardtner, and Colonel Henry S. Graves. At that time, Hardtner was the President of the Louisiana Forestry Association and he appointed Caroline Dormon to the Forestry Committee. As part of the committee, she planned for and promoted forestry education programs to the state school districts and her efforts were copied in other states.⁴⁸

As Marjory Stoneman Douglas had written *The Everglades: River of Grass*, Caroline Dormon also wrote several books (after *Forest Trees of Louisiana and How to Know Them*) over the course of her career. Her book, *Wild Flowers of Louisiana*, was published in 1934 and became very influential throughout the state and region. During the next two decades, Dormon focused more on scientific activity with her work and she was able to continue to use Briarwood as her classroom and laboratory. During the 1940s and 1950s, Briarwood was at the peak of its scientific activity with Dormon's work in botany and conservation.⁴⁹ As she was conducting these experiments, she was able to widen her influence and her studies because of the automobile. She normally traveled by foot, horse, or wagon, and didn't enjoy driving or leaving Briarwood. But the automobile did offer her a way to reach locations for plants at a much faster speed than previously. This also allowed to make conservation more a part of a wider conversation as a more mobile population was experiencing the rural and wild aspects of nature.⁵⁰

Marjory Stoneman Douglas and Caroline Dormon were two significant women, working at the same time during the early to middle decades of the 20th century, who exerted great influence and knowledge for the conservation movement. Both were noted conservationists during this time and Caroline Dormon helped to shape Briarwood into a living laboratory to conduct experiments and cultivate a truly unique natural preserve.

History of the Conservation Movement in the United States and Louisiana – A More In-Depth Context

*****The following more developed contextual information for Conservation in the United States and Louisiana comes from the HALS report done for Briarwood in 2003. *****

Certainly throughout the last quarter of the nineteenth century and into the first decades of the twentieth, the growth of historic preservation and environmental concerns was a response to nostalgia, memory, and an urge to protect, see, and collect Americana. Women in particular became strongly identified with historic preservation, as "patrons of the past," in the wake of the Mount Vernon Ladies Association's (1856) involvement with saving George Washington's home from obscurity and ruin, and as sponsors of American culture through collections amassed by Isabella Stewart Gardner and Abby Aldrich Rockefeller. Progressive-era reformers, both male and female, bound by ideas of social change and guided by an awareness of history, also endorsed environmentalists such as the popular John Muir, plus Aldo Leopold and J. Horace McFarland, adding battlefields to the fledgling state and national park systems (1890s) as well as offering protection to the pueblo ruins in the southwest (1906) and establishing Glacier National Park (1910). Muir and his followers tried to honor the American past and the future generations of Americans by preserving the nation's natural heritage. Muir tapped into a pastoral ideal that appealed to urban Americans; the travel industry capitalized on that segment's available leisure and transportation. The parks, museums, and historic shrines gave them a place to visit- and the railroad and automobile got them there.

⁴⁷ Howell, 2-3.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 6.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 7.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 9-10.

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Increasingly mobile, it was the educated, middle and upper class white women who gathered at literary club meetings; championed social causes such as suffrage and public health; promoted preservation and conservation concerns; and pursued leisure activities like gardening, birdwatching, and botanizing. The latter became Dormon's passion. These women, her predecessors, were versed in romanticism, transcendentalism, ecology, and natural history. Ladies of the era did not explore the wilderness as Thoreau and Muir did, nor were they expected to do so. Rather, they put their energies into organizations like the Federation of Women's Clubs through which they could promote educational reforms, social welfare, civic affairs, fine arts, and gardening or conservation to an ever growing audience. In the 1920s, for example, Cora Whitley, chairman of the Forestry Committee for the Iowa Women's Club, testified in Washington, D.C.; Whitley lobbied for the establishment of a wildlife refuge and promoted "good manners" in the out-of-doors. William B. Greeley, then the Chief Forester of the United States Forest Service, echoed Whitley by advocating fire prevention, expanded forest reserves, research and forestry education service-wide.

Female fascination with the rural aspects of country life, for open space and parks as countermeasures to urban squalor, and with the American past - including an Audubon inspired landscape with its incipient wildlife - was matched by the male sportsmen who wanted places to hunt, hike, and be outdoors. Both approaches fed into the reformist politics at the turn of the twentieth century that endorsed preservation and conservation and began to address an urban-based use of the land. A similar shift occurred in the perceptions of the forests' meaning; no longer merely commodities to be exploited, the forest lands came to be understood as an environment, a setting for work and play. Forests -like Dormon's Longleaf Pine tract- were interpreted by these men and women as integral to modern social well-being and through their continued existence, quality of life would increase. At least that is what the forestry advocates said, beginning with George Grinnell's Audubon Society (1886), with the publication of George Perkins Marsh's Man and Nature (1894), with studies and reports by John Wesley Powell and Franklin Hough, with the passage of the Forest Reserve Act (1891), and with the establishment of the Society of American Foresters (1900). This generation was rewarded early in the twentieth century for conservation was institutionalized during Theodore Roosevelt's administration. Roosevelt himself was a member of the Boone and Crockett Club and an advocate of a national forest reserve system, hosting a Governors Conference on Conservation in 1908 which was also attended by a Women's Club representative, Mrs. Sarah Platt Decker of Denver.

By the time of the 1908 conference, more than a generation of women belonged to clubs, including the Federation as well as other organizations such as the Daughters of the American Revolution, and were active in the conservation movement. Led by urbanites, like Mrs. Lovell White in California, Mrs. Mabel Osgood Winglet of Connecticut, Mrs. Philip N. Moore in St. Louis, and by author Lydia Adams-Williams, the ladies sought to build bicycle paths and parks, beautify highways, establish land grant colleges, and create extension programs within the Department of Agriculture. They pursued these goals throughout the Roosevelt administration and into the 1920s. The grass-roots movement some six to seven thousand strong is credited with saving New Jersey's Hudson River palisades, the Colorado pueblos, California's Big Trees, and Chippewa Forest (Minnesota), among other natural sites. Each state was headed by a woman familiar with forestry principles, and the forestry committee numbered close to 800,000 in all. The forestry committee was active throughout the United States, and in 1910 the Women's Club added birdlife to its forestry and waterways agenda.

Caroline Dormon and her work at Briarwood and for Louisiana coincided with this budding concern for America's past. Conservation and preservation issues dovetailed with evolving perceptions of gender-appropriate behavior, and with growing opportunities for women as activists, authors, and employees in the early twentieth century. And yet, land conservation and forestry in Louisiana were tied to two men, Gifford Pinchot and Henry Hardtner. Pinchot, a Yale graduate and European-trained forester, headed the Department of Agriculture under Theodore Roosevelt and invigorated the U.S. Forest Service. Hardtner, a mill owner, began buying cut-over land for reforestation and his reforestation efforts drew the attention of government officials, such as W.W. Ashe, by 1909 and scientists such as those enrolled in Yale's program by 1910. It was not until 1921, however, that Louisiana opened its Southern Forest Experiment Station. By this time, forestry and conservation had become technical or scientific professions and so removed from the sentiment associated with the Women's Clubs efforts. Women in conservation suffered a set-back in the 1910s, with the loss of the Hetch Hetchy Valley in Yosemite to a dam project largely due to Pinchot's support for it. The defeat signified a withdrawal of government backing for the Women's Clubs as their

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voices were ignored; by 1913, no female was present at the National Conservation Conference and articles in the American Forestry Association journal *Forests and Irrigation* were penned solely by men. **The female role in the public campaign for conservation diminished, but women still supported the cause. It was in this environment that Caroline Dormon came of age.**

Like their counterparts elsewhere in the United States, women in Louisiana were not immune to Progressive-era reforms. They began to channel the duties expected of them as protectors and nurturers of the proverbial hearth- shackles of Victorian ideals of womanhood perhaps -into public, and professional endeavors, turning gardening into landscape architecture and women's clubs into a demographic capable of garnering support for legislative and environmental issues. It was the Louisiana Federation of Women's Clubs that first gave Dormon a platform to promote her ideas about protecting a swath of pinelands and about using native flora in landscaping. In response to Women's Club support, the state Department of Conservation offered Dormon her job there. Interest in the natural was acceptable for turn of the century women moreover, and thought to assist with developing moral character; Dormon's parents encouraged her pursuits - her father helping her to learn botanical nomenclature and her mother showing her how to garden. Efforts to learn, preserve, and teach the next generation about their natural heritage was in keeping with female culture at the time, a responsibility even, and Dormon as lobbyist and educator embodies this movement. Similarly, what she created at Briarwood is a manifestation of the garden clubs' focus on native species, and because of that parallel, the clubs offered Dormon a large audience for her lectures, writings, and paintings. Ultimately, in 1961, Briarwood was recognized as a sanctuary for trees and wildflowers by the American Horticultural Society, and around the same time (1960s) Dormon herself received the Garden Club of America's Eloise Payne Luquer Medal.

Caroline Dormon encouraged the establishment of the Kisatchie National Forest because she wanted to preserve a tract of virgin timberland and the beauty of the Longleaf Pine. Although her advocacy for the forest was pivotal, her activities stayed within the parameters set by the traditional role of women as keepers of culture and beauty. And while she was one of the first women employed in forestry in the state, if not the country, her duties were limited to working with women and children and continuing in educational pursuits. When she worked for the State of Louisiana, her job title was "Highway Beautification Consultant" rather than landscape designer or architect; moreover, her ideas about planting wildflowers along Louisiana's highways in order to make an impression upon visitors can be interpreted as that of playing hostess for the state. She, interestingly, chose this seemingly female, peripheral position over one in the male-dominated Forest Service but likely did so as a result of her shift in focus from Kisatchie to Briarwood and horticultural pursuits. **Dormon became the authority on native flora in her lifetime.**

Although at once a part of, and dependent on the female-led preservation and conservation movement, Dormon identified herself with her male predecessors such as Henry David Thoreau and John Muir. She also emphasized the relationship with her father that gave rise to her enthusiasm for and knowledge of the natural world, or rather the scientific masculine approach as opposed to the emotional response to nature associated with women of her generation. This dichotomy persisted throughout Dormon's lifetime, and is representative of the dueling roles of gender within the concurrent preservation movement. The sentimental, memorializing campaign of Cynthia Coleman and Mary Galt initiated full-scale preservation through the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities in 1889; whereas the male-dominated Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities (1910) interpreted preservation and conservation differently, preferring reconstruction over relics of historic sites. SPNEA was initially viewed as the more professional of the two organizations. Equally-identity driven as the cornerstones of the historic preservation movement was Dormon, who fostered her reputation as somewhat of a recluse living in the woods. That Dormon was conscious of her image and the laudable quality of her accomplishments is evident in her participation in the effort to gain recognition from Louisiana State University by way of an award or honorary doctorate, an event she afterwards described as her "coronation." In this context, Dormon wrote of her life's work:

I am a pioneer in the efforts to save flora and fauna of Louisiana. It was I who initiated the movement for the Kisatchie National Forest; long before state parks had ever been mentioned.

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I took pictures all over Louisiana, had slides made, and gave lectures urging state parks. For twenty years I plead for a state arboretum. I was the first woman in the United States to be elected Associate Member of the Society of American Foresters. (...) For many years botanists and horticulturalists from all over the country have visited Briarwood (my home) because I have gathered here native trees and flowers from all over the earth.

Dormon, and her advocates, were rewarded in 1965 when she received an honorary degree in science from LSU for her contributions to botany and horticulture. Her work also earned her acceptance into the American Society of Foresters and into the Royal Horticultural Society. These she valued more so than the citations from the garden clubs whose support of her interests she dismissed at times and whose visits she merely endured because of the likelihood some plants might accidentally be trampled and others deliberately picked. In fairness, it is likely that Dormon distanced herself from her own perceptions of the garden club ladies in their "high heels and silk stockings" because she wished to be thought of, and so too have her legacy regarded, as those she admired – Thoreau and Muir – were; she spoke not boastfully but earnestly of what she had done, admitting only to being carried away by the support letters for her membership in the American Society of Foresters.⁵¹

*****The following is taken from the Hodges Gardens National Register nomination and provides further context for Conservation in Louisiana. *****

Conservation Movement and Timber Industry in Louisiana

Until the 1800's, Louisiana held millions of acres of untouched longleaf, shortleaf, and bottomland hardwood. These virgin forests were not accessible until the railroads were introduced. This opened up an industry that would forever change Louisiana's state and local economies. The vast supply of available timber led to the "cut out and get out" approach that yielded huge profits for timber barons for over a quarter century. The timber industry became second only to oil production as Louisiana's leading industry.

By the 1930's, the state was almost completely clear cut, with little thought of what was next. The once booming sawmill towns began to disappear and the barren land held little value. Coinciding with the end of the clear cutting era, the Great Depression seemed to seal the economic fate of the rural towns that had once thrived. The concepts of "reforestation", "timber management" and "sustainable forests" began to take shape out of necessity.

Reforestation was ultimately successful because the unlimited harvest of century-old forests had finally run its course and the only industry remaining was reforestation. Another factor that contributed to replenishing the timber lands was because of the Great Depression as thousands of Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) enlistees were readily available to establish nurseries, nurture the seedlings, and get them ready for planting by fellow CCC members.

The predecessors of the reforestation and conservation efforts in Louisiana were the honor roll of reforestation. Gifford Pinchot and Henry Graves are well known pioneers who shaped the early years of forestry in the United States. In Louisiana, it was Henry Hardtner. In 1913, Hardtner signed the first reforestation contract with the State and that date has been designated the birthdate of forestry in Louisiana and the South. Hardtner linked up with Samuel Dana of the U.S. Forest Service, who in 1915 saw the need for forestry research and established large research areas on Henry Hardtner's own reserves at Urania, Louisiana.

In 1924, The Southern Forest Experiment Stations at New Orleans, LA, hired Phillip Wakely, who at the time was a recent graduate of the nation's first four-year school of forestry at Cornell University. His task was one of reforestation research, for which he would eventually become the foremost authority and his research is still used today.⁵²

⁵¹ Howell, 10-15.

⁵² National Register of Historic Places, Hodges Gardens, Florian, Sabine Parish, Louisiana, National Register #14001173.

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It was within this context both nationally and locally that Caroline Dormon began her career in conservation. Based on the previous and following discussions, it becomes clear that Briarwood is significant statewide under Criterion A: Conservation and nationally under Criterion B for its association with Caroline Dormon.

The Life and Career of Caroline Dormon

Early Career

As previously stated, Caroline Dormon started her professional career as a teacher, working in Bienville Parish, Lake Arthur the following year, and lastly, at a school closer to the Kisatchie area around 1916. She made her twenty-mile "commute" to Kisatchie School by mule through the longleaf pine forest.⁵³

During this time, few people besides the Kichai Indians⁵⁴ had ever explored the forest area. Remains of their pottery and tools were located along streams and in fields. Caroline Dormon was one of the few white Americans, mostly hunters, who had observed the wild hills. During her journeys, she noted the small waterfalls, clear streams, and masses of wild azalea. She also noticed the deforestation that resulted from the timber industry's activity in the area. In January of 1920, Caroline attended the Southern Forestry Congress held in New Orleans. The meeting allowed her an opportunity to learn measures being taken to conserve the pine forests she observed during her travels. During the meeting, Dormon visited with people who shared her interest in conserving natural forest lands including Mrs. A. F. Storm, president of the Louisiana Federation of Women's Clubs. Mrs. Storm shared Caroline's dream of protecting the state's virgin pine land and invited her to head the Forestry Division of the Louisiana Federation of Women's Clubs. Caroline also met with Henry Hardtner, President of the Louisiana Forestry Association, and Col. Henry Graves, Chief Forester of the United States.⁵⁵

While both men shared her interest, the work to preserve north Louisiana's virgin forests depended on Dormon's strategizing and work. She outlined a plan of action that began with publicizing the forest through newspapers articles. Next, she began appealing for funds to purchase tracts of virgin timber and cutover timber for scientific experimentation and education. The appeal was made to lumbermen first, then oil men, chambers of commerce, federation clubs, and legislature. Caroline determined which lumber companies owned the most desirable tracts of forest and used her title as chairman of forestry for the Louisiana Federation of Women's Clubs to contact them with her appeal.⁵⁶

In March of 1920, Mr. R. Forbes, secretary-treasurer of the Louisiana Forestry Association, informed Dormon that President Hardtner had appointed her to the Legislative Committee of the Louisiana Forestry Association. Impressed by her work to conserve the state virgin pine lands, the Department of Forestry began requesting Dormon's assistance with forestry projects. She was asked to plan programs for forestry education and to revise a school text on forestry. Her work to promote forestry awareness quickly gained attention. In 1921, Mr. M. Alexander, Forestry Commissioner, wrote Dormon informing her that he was interested in making a position for her in the forestry division in education and publicity. In December of that year, she became the first woman employed in in the Louisiana Forestry Division and created Louisiana's first program of conservation education.

The following year Dormon attended another Southern Forestry Congress, this time as an invited speaker. At the Mississippi congress, she met with Col. W. B. Greeley, Chief Forester, who explained that Louisiana did not have an enabling act that would allow a national forest to be purchased by the state.⁵⁷ After securing and studying a copy of Florida's enabling act, Caroline got her brother Ben, an attorney in Alabama, to provide her legal assistance in drafting an enabling act for the Louisiana Legislature.⁵⁸ The bill contained three sections.

⁵³ Johnson, 27.

⁵⁴ The Kichai are part of the overall Caddo Tribe.

⁵⁵ Hardtner is known as the "father of forestry in the south."

⁵⁶ Johnson, 32.

⁵⁷ Anna C. Burns, *A History of the Kisatchie National Forest* (Pineville, LA: US Department of Agriculture), 9.

⁵⁸ Donald M. Rawson, "Caroline Dormon: A Renaissance Spirit of Twentieth Century Louisiana, *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association*, Vol. 24, No. 2 (Spring 1983), 124.

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First, it would give the federal government the consent of the state to acquire by purchase, gift, or condemnation lands to establish national forests in the state. Second, power would be given to the federal government to make rules and regulations to control and protect the land acquired. Third, previous laws prohibiting purchases of lands in Louisiana would be repealed. The enabling bill was sent to State Senator Henry Hardtner who included it in his omnibus forestry bill. He handled the proposal in the state senate, and it was introduced to the house by Mr. Alexander and approved.

Throughout the next several years, the United States Forest Service sent forester William W. Ashe to visit with Dormon. Ashe was the officer who determined land purchases in the Southeastern United States. Caroline guided Ashe throughout the Kisatchie forest, pointing out the virgin longleaf pine and the cutover lands in need of reforestation. The first tracts of land were purchased in 1929 from Louisiana Long Leaf Lumber Company, and with 76,589 acres of cutover land that would be reforested secured, the national forest became a reality on June 10, 1930. Caroline was rewarded for her work with the opportunity to name the forest which she designated as "Kisatchie" in honor of its first inhabitants.⁵⁹

In 1927, Dormon accepted another position with the Louisiana Forestry Division as Supervisor of Forestry Education. In her new position, she developed arboreal study programs with the aim to "cultivate within the minds of children a healthy respect and love for trees."⁶⁰ Dormon also produced illustrations on forest-fire prevention used as book covers and published Arbor Day booklets for state schools and clubs. As part of her Arbor Day program, over forty thousand trees were planted by schools throughout the state. She produced an oil painting of a forest fire which was made into a scene-in-action display and used all over the south. Dormon also refined the method for cyanotype "blueprinting" to make it easy for school children. She wrote narratives which taught boy scouts the method using simple materials such as cardboard, glass, and clothespins. During this time, Dormon became a sought-after lecturer; her schedule was full of personal appearances, speeches, and writings. Her work was beginning to be noticed in and out of state. The Mississippi Forestry Division offered Dormon a position and the freedom to dictate her salary. She turned down the proposal citing her commitment to the state of Louisiana and her home in Kisatchie.

Pioneering Efforts in Botany in Louisiana

Now with Kisatchie under protection and the addition of forestry to the state education curriculum, Dormon devoted her time to personal pursuits at Briarwood. She focused her attentions on horticultural activities, particularly the cultivation of rare and native flora. At Briarwood, she developed an area known as the Bay Garden which she used as her "laboratory" from which to conduct and record her scientific activities. The Louisiana Wild Iris was a major subject of her efforts. Dormon first spotted the plant in 1920 during a trip to Morgan City, LA, along the coastal area of the state. There she observed masses of wild iris growing to heights of four feet and beyond along the roadsides. Upon returning to Briarwood, she planted roots collected during her trip near a stream that grew and multiplied. For the next few years, she continued to observe the plant's adaptability to the soil at Briarwood.

During this time, Dormon had begun corresponding with botanists and scientists throughout the country regarding the identification of species she collected during her travels. One of her correspondents was Dr. John Small, curator of the New York Botanical Gardens. In 1925, Dr. Small also observed and collected Louisiana Wild Irises during a trip to New Orleans. In 1926, Small visited Briarwood and was surprised to see the plants collected from Dormon's Morgan City visit thriving in her garden. He connected Dormon with other iris enthusiasts in the state including George Thomas, former superintendent of parks in New Orleans. Dormon also met and befriended Mrs. Mary Swords De Baillon of Shreveport, LA. De Baillon was a naturalist and gardener who had an extensive native wild iris collection and shared Dormon's interest in the plant's potential as a garden flower.

⁵⁹ Howell, 18-19.

⁶⁰ Johnson.

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By the early 1930s, Dormon was regarded as an authority on the iris and her published observations and writings helped popularize the flower as a common garden variety. She was routinely sought out as a speaker on iris cultivation. In 1941, Dormon was asked to be a charter member and consultant for the Mary Swords De Baillon Louisiana Iris Society (the organization would eventually change its name to the Society for Louisiana Iris), named in honor of De Baillon who had passed that same year. De Baillon willed her iris collection and horticultural library to Dormon who in turn donated rhizomes of each variety to Louisiana Institute in Lafayette, Louisiana State University at Baton Rouge, and to the newly formed iris society named in De Baillon's honor.⁶¹ Dormon was able to cultivate her inherited collection in the Bay Garden. **Years following the additions of the collection yielded hybrids and registered varieties that gained Dormon national and local recognition.** In 1948, she was the first to receive the Mary Swords De Baillon Medal, the highest award for iris cultivation, from the Society for Louisiana Irises. For three consecutive years - 1953, 1954, and 1955 - she received both the De Baillon medal and medals from the American Iris Society for developing outstanding hybrids – *Violet Ray*, *Saucy Minx*, and *The Kahn*.⁶² In 1958, she was awarded both honors again for the hybrid *Wheel Horse*. Dormon also registered many varieties of irises cultivated in her garden including *Easter Basket*, *Virginia*, *Rose Bells*, *Swan Moon*, *Lady Storm*, *Persian Pink*, *Fire Alarm*, and *Upstart*.⁶³

Dormon's Influence on Botany and Science outside of Louisiana

Dormon also cultivated rare species at Briarwood including those useful for research and species previously unidentified in botany. Dormon regularly corresponded with leading botanists and scientists from institutions around the world regarding her findings. She would often send plants to colleagues or institutions that requested, or whom she thought would be interested. Her plantings served as a sort of nursery for re-establishing plant species in Louisiana and nation-wide. In 1930, Thomas Edison contacted Dormon to obtain Goldenrod from her garden.⁶⁴ Edison was experimenting with the plant as a potential source for rubber to share with Henry Ford to make tires for his automobiles should the supply of rubber from Asia dwindle or disappear. Dormon sent Confederate Spiderwort plants to the Missouri Botanical Gardens' curator Edgar Anderson.⁶⁵ Spiderwort was found to be a natural and highly sensitive radiation detector. Anderson and other scientists were using the plant in their radiation research during the 1930s. **In 1929, the United States Department of Agriculture requested Dormon's assistance in identifying plants "for the use of the Government as a measure of national preparedness."**⁶⁶ The Department asked that she identify the locations and properties of plants with medicinal value. Not only were her plants useful in the field of botany and gardening and preserving species that were endangered, but her scientific work was also influential in various fields, including those described above.

During the height of her career, Dormon identified several unknown species of plants that she successfully cultivated at Briarwood. She identified a rare iris species *Pinewoods Lily (Eustylis Purpurea)* that she had observed only a few times during her childhood.⁶⁷ Dormon cultivated the species and produced paintings of the plant, but could not find it in botany texts. When Dr. Smalls of the New York Botanical Gardens visited Briarwood in 1926, he collected bulbs to plant back at the botanical garden, but failed to give credit to Dormon for its discovery in the article they published on the plant in the botanical garden's journal *The Addisonia*.⁶⁸ Dormon also discovered a new species of the common spider lily; however, no one would recognize this discovery. Eventually the credit for its identification would be claimed by Dr. Lloyd Shiners, a Texas botanist who named the plant *hymenocallis eulae* in honor of his co-worker. Not one to promote herself, Dormon never pushed for credit for many of her discoveries, except when credit was not given to Louisiana.⁶⁹ Most texts confer credit for conservation of the Louisiana Wild Iris to Dr. Smalls, with no mention of Dormon's work.

⁶¹ Johnson, *Adventures in Wildflowers: The Timeless Writings of Caroline Dormon*, 54.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Letter of Thos. A. Edison to Miss Caroline Dormon, June 27, 1930, *Dormon Collection*, folder 262.

⁶⁵ Johnson, *Adventures in Wildflowers: The Timeless Writings of Caroline Dormon*, 68.

⁶⁶ Ibid, 70.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 66.

⁶⁸ Ibid, 68.

⁶⁹ Johnson.

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Ethnology, Archaeology, and Activism

Simultaneous to Dormon's work in botany were her efforts in ethnology. **Dormon held a lifelong study of Native American culture. In this area, she would once again be a pioneer and an authority.** Dormon learned about Native Americans from her father who referred to them as the "children of nature." Dormon spent time during her early summer vacations and later in her adult life collecting Native American material culture. Her ethnological studies and field research focused on southern Native American groups, particularly the Caddo Indians of northern Louisiana, eastern Texas, and southwestern Arkansas areas. She and her sister traveled often to visit local tribes. Caroline Dormon held particularly close friendships with the Houma, Tunica, and Chitimacha Tribes. She was friends with leaders and several tribal chiefs including Tunica Chief Youchicant and Chitimacha Chief Ben Paul.⁷⁰ She studied the history, languages and material culture of local tribes and served as a patron marketing baskets for Chitimacha weavers.⁷¹ She collected baskets from Tunica and Chitimacha weavers, including an impressive set of weavings from Pauline and Christine Paul. In 1931, she wrote an article on Chitimacha art, "The Last of the Cane Basket Makers," for Holland's *Magazine of the South*. In the article, Dormon not only detailed the process Chitimacha women used to create their artwork, she also highlighted the effects of oppression on the group's welfare. Dormon was the first person to introduce the art of this tribe to the public; her article is considered one of the best narratives on Chitimacha basketry. Another article "Caddo Pottery" published in *Art and Archeology* in 1934 was the first article written on the subject.⁷²

Throughout her career, Dormon corresponded with John Swanton, Director of the Bureau of Ethnology, Smithsonian Institute. Dormon and Swanton shared a deep interest in southern Indian history and early American exploration. In the early 1930s, Dormon and Swanton began sharing information regarding local tribes and the location of part of Spanish explorer Hernando De Soto's route through North America. Dormon supported Swanton's efforts at the Smithsonian and invited him to North Louisiana to do a field survey of Native American culture. She and her sister Virginia toured him around surrounding areas introducing him to Native communities and pointing out resources. Dormon also championed the Bureau of Ethnology's *Bulletin*, a publication that she felt afforded the public the best opportunity to learn about Native American history. When funding for the publication was threatened, Dormon wrote Senator Edwin Broussard and the Senate Finance Committee to continue support.⁷³ The correspondences between Dormon and Swanton that detailed information about local tribes were later used as record to assist tribes such as the Tunica-Biloxi with obtaining federal recognition.⁷⁴ **Dormon assisted other Smithsonian researchers involved in ethnological field studies of Native groups including F. M. Setzler, Curator of Archeology, and Yale linguist Morris Swadesh.** In 1937, Yale linguist Mary Haas Swadesh spent several days with Dormon at Briarwood learning about the languages of southern tribes. In 1932, Dormon and others who shared her interest formed a state archaeological association, the Academy of Natural Sciences, open to those with interest in southern ethnography.⁷⁵

Dormon's interest in Native American culture went far beyond her ethnographic study. She was an early and outspoken Indian rights activist at a time when it was rare and potentially dangerous to take such a position. Dormon cared about the injustices that Native Americans had endured and publically chastised those who opposed their causes or exhibited blatant bigotry towards them. She often wrote local newspapers admonishing editors for inflammatory and racist headlines against Indians. **She worked with national organizations like the Daughters of the American Revolution and Federation of Women's Clubs on Native American rights and concerns.**

⁷⁰ Rawson, 131.

⁷¹ Donald Usner, *Weaving Alliances with other Women: Chitimacha Indian Work in the New South*, (University of Georgia Press, 2015) 70-71.

⁷² Johnson, *Adventures in Wildflowers: The Timeless Writings of Caroline Dormon*, 62.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ Pete Gregory, interview with the author, June 14, 2016.

⁷⁵ The organization eventually changed its name to Shreveport Society for Nature Study.

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In 1945, Dormon wrote to Senator John Overton asking him to oppose a group of senators led by Burton Wheeler of Montana, who had set out to sabotage the work of the Bureau of Indian Affairs Commissioner John Collier.⁷⁶ Collier, who had served as commissioner of the Bureau since 1933, was responsible for the Indian Reorganization Act, often referred to as the "Indian New Deal." Dormon feared that senators representing states in the mid and southwest were taking advantage of the attention paid to the war and scheming to put resolutions in place that would enable them to steal Indian land.⁷⁷

Dormon also helped with land rights at the local level. She often wrote on behalf of individuals fighting local governments for their land and protested against desecration of sacred sites. She lobbied for the survey and protection of mounds against army maneuvers and archeological excavations.⁷⁸ When the Great Depression gave a severe blow to the Tunica Indians, Dormon worked to help Chief Youchicant secure assistance from the Red Cross and a government loan to plant crops.⁷⁹ Dormon used her positions within organizations such as the Daughters of the Revolution and Louisiana Federal of Women's Clubs to advance Native American civil rights causes including lobbying the Office of Indian Affairs to help establish the first school for the Chitimacha in 1935.

Dormon's interests in Native Americans inspired her to write story books on Indian culture, an accomplishment that relied once again on her persistence. She felt it imperative that the stories relayed to her from Native American elders be preserved through her writings. In 1967, she wrote several Native American children's stories *Red Boots and Deer Runner*; *Sequoia, A Cherokee Boy*; *Tooski, A Tunica Boy*; *Katcilutci, A Creek Indian Boy*; and *Hi-Chach, A Caddo Boy*. John Swanton reviewed the stories and wrote a statement for Dormon to send to publishers. Nonetheless, the stories were turned down by publishers who stated that they market was "overcrowded with Indian stories."⁸⁰ Dormon eventually secured an agreement from Claitor's Book Store of Baton Rouge who published two of her Indian Stories *Red Boots and Deer Runner*, and *Hi-Chach* along with a brief history of the Chitimacha and Caddo all together in a small volume titled *Southern Indian Boy*.^{81, 82}

De Soto Commission

Dormon's ethnological work includes researching routes of early American exploration. In 1932, she began sharing her theories on De Soto's route through Louisiana during his North American expedition. Dormon held the opinion that the route was not as evident as believed due to the change in waterways like the Mississippi and Tensas over the course of centuries. Dormon also identified salt springs which De Soto visited during his exploration. In 1935, Congress passed a resolution to form the De Soto Commission to commemorate the four hundredth anniversary of the explorer's expedition. The Commission would be responsible for studying the route of De Soto's journey through North America and determining placement of markers to highlight the history of the expedition. **President Franklin D. Roosevelt selected members of the commission's committee. Caroline Dormon was the only member selected to represent Louisiana and the only female appointee.** She was also selected to serve on the Commission's fact-finding committee. Dormon insisted that the markers identifying De Soto's route not be influenced by political or personal reasons and she was not above calling out committee members who did so. She insisted on determining the most accurate route by studying translated Spanish document related to the exploration. At her own expense and with the assistance of her sister Virginia, Dormon explored areas of west Louisiana including salt springs, mounds, and waterways to examine possible routes of exploration. She also insisted on the inclusion of Native Americans in the reenactments and pageants to celebrate the journey.⁸³ The Commission's final report included a five-hundred-

⁷⁶ Johnson, *Adventures in Wildflowers: The Timeless Writings of Caroline Dormon*, 142-143.

⁷⁷ Ibid, 143.

⁷⁸ Ibid, 141.

⁷⁹ Rawson, 124.

⁸⁰ Johnson, 145.

⁸¹ Dormon also developed a friendship with the famous Native American painter Acee Blue Eagle. Blue Eagle made several paintings for Dormon, and illustrations for her Native American children stories.

⁸² Johnson, 145.

⁸³ Johnson, *Adventures in Wildflowers: The Timeless Writings of Caroline Dormon*, 80.

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page manuscript and maps on the determination of the De Soto's route. Following the completion of the Commission's work, and at the urging of John Swanton, Dormon wrote her own manuscript on De Soto's expedition; however, her account was never published. She and Swanton continued their close professional relationship. Their correspondence letters detailing the activities and culture of the Tunica Indians were used by Professor Pete Gregory and tribal leaders as a record to help gain federal recognition for the tribe in 1981.⁸⁴

Dr. Gregory, who has taught at Northwestern State University in Natchitoches for over 50 years as a professor of anthropology and who knew Caroline Dormon personally, emphasized Caroline's influence on ethnology and archaeology recently. He stated that she was the catalyst for the WPA archaeological program in Louisiana. Her work with that program resulted in collections at Briarwood and NSU. "Her role in developing the nascent archaeology of the Southeastern United States has long been neglected. She was one of the cadre of brilliant avocational archaeologists who contributed directly to things like the first archaeological conference on ceramics held in Birmingham in 1935...her role in these developments should make her Briarwood a special place in terms of American archaeology."⁸⁵ (For more discussion of archaeology at Briarwood, see pg. 29)

Advancing Conservation

In the years following her work with the De Soto Commission, Caroline Dormon focused her efforts on improving state highway conditions and served as a consultant for major landscaping projects throughout the state. The conditions of state highways were a concern for Dormon who viewed the maintenance of roadsides and highways as matter of conservation. On her own accord and at her own expense, Dormon traveled the state studying the conditions of highways. From her observations, she outlined major concerns and objectives for improving highways conditions. In 1940, she shared her outline with Director of Louisiana Department of Highways, Prescott Foster, who agreed with the issues Dormon highlighted. Foster offered her a position within the department working directly under him. A new position, Highway Beautification Consultant, was created specifically for Dormon's work. Her position would involve planning programs to address the four major concerns she highlighted in her original letter to Foster: 1. Preservation/conservation of native trees and shrubs; 2. Beautification (landscaping); 3. Erosion; 4. Fostering cooperation between civic, local, and private organizations.

She penned resolutions to stop unnecessary clearing along state highways; a practice that ruined native species and came at an economic cost to taxpayers whose revenue covered replanting. She urged the highway department to prohibit roadside littering and impose a fine of a hundred dollars to impede violation. Concerned about the lack of the attention paid to the military grounds, Dormon lobbied for landscape improvements for the grounds and soldier's quarters at Fort Polk in Vernon Parish. In another effort to advance forestry conservation and save taxpayer dollars, Dormon proposed a state nursery to supply native plants for use along highways. She gave lectures on highway improvements and landscaping for organizations throughout the state and lent her expertise to local efforts. Although she'd only hold this position for three years, her accomplishments greatly improved state highway conditions and further advanced the conservation movement in Louisiana.

After resigning from her position with the highway department in 1945, Dormon served as a consultant on several state and local landscaping projects.

Dormon the Author and Artist

In the midst of her multifarious career, Dormon always made time to write and paint. By the 1950s, she had almost entirely retreated to Briarwood, focusing much of her time on her writing and artwork. As with her horticultural efforts, Briarwood would serve as both the laboratory and inspiration for her writing and art. Dormon had started writing early in her career motivated by her love of nature and desire to raise awareness of

⁸⁴ Gregory, Discussion with the author, June 14, 2016.

⁸⁵ Dr. Hiram Pete Gregory, email with Jessica Richardson, September 1, 2016.

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nature conservation. She published her first book *Wild Flowers of Louisiana* in 1934. She followed this publication with a second book *Forest Trees of Louisiana* in 1941.

During the 1950s and 60s, she published several more books which earned her national and local recognition. In 1958, she released *Flowers Native to the Deep South*, a book on native gardening that contained her observations and gardening instructions, definitions of botanical terms, and over a hundred of Dormon's hand sketched illustrations. The publication earned her recognition from the Council of Gardens and the American Horticultural Society. Critics favored the book as well. Katherine White, critic for *The New Yorker*, praised Dormon as "a gifted collector and close observer" whose "comments on the many hundreds of wild flowers she does describe are illuminating."⁸⁶

Dormon's writing brought to life the flowers that are the subject of her anecdotes and observations. In 1969, Dormon's book *Native's Preferred* was released in which she exposes a new environmental ethic that favors conservation of over cultivated replanting. Dormon explains that the basis or goal of this approach favoring native species is beauty and adaptability. The book was inspired by Briarwood as the backdrop and subject of the text, something which a few early reviewers criticized Dormon for. The articles she wrote for gardening magazines were often based off of her own notes of how things grew at Briarwood.

Dormon not only used her experiments at Briarwood as the basis for her writings, she built her own writer's retreat at the site during the 1920s. It was simple log cabin Dormon named "Three Woods Pines" after its location near three pine trees.⁸⁷ She used this as her quiet retreat within Briarwood for writing articles and books. Today, there is a reconstructed writer's cabin located in the same location as "Three Woods Pines."

Briarwood's prismatic landscape provided inspiration and subject for Dormon's artwork. The majority of her paintings and drawings were of flowers, shrubs, trees, and the many birds at Briarwood. She preferred painting natural things and believed that wild flowers must be studied and painted when they were "fresh." Dormon was not a commercial artist per se; however, she did produce illustrations for her written materials and for other publications. She provided work for Elizabeth Lawrence's book *Gardening in Winter* and produced commissioned work for the Arkansas Fuel Oil Company. She illustrated for publications by the Louisiana Society of Horticultural Research, the *Ladies' Home Journal*, and *American Home*. Dormon also had her work exhibited in galleries throughout the country. Her work was featured in the Carnegie Institute of Technology's exhibit, "Exhibit of Contemporary Botanical Art and Illustrations," in 1964. Dormon was the only female artist featured out of the seventy-two artists included in the exhibit. Her work has also been featured at the Delgado Museum, Louisiana State University, Northwestern State University, Centenary College, and Longue Vue Gardens. A collection of her artwork, including the few paintings she made of human subjects, are archived at Northwestern State University.

The End of Caroline Dormon's Career

The latter stage of Dormon's career brought accolades for her tireless work in various disciplines and for her activities at Briarwood. Her alma mater, Judson College, awarded her its highest honor at the time, the Alumnae Award. **In 1960, the Garden Club of America awarded her the Eloise Payne Luquer Medal for her achievements in the field of botany. The following year she received recognition from the American Horticultural Society for her pioneering career in botany, her literary works, and praised Briarwood as a "sanctuary for native southern species."**⁸⁸ She was awarded lifetime memberships from Northwestern State College Alumnae Association and the Louisiana Forestry Association. In 1965, Louisiana State University conferred an honorary doctorate upon Dormon for her publications as a botanist, botanical illustrations, service to forestry conservation, contributions to horticulture, and services to archeological and ethnological studies of American Indians. The following year, by legislative act, the director of state parks named a lodge at Chicot State Park in Ville Platte in honor of Dormon.

⁸⁶ Dr. Hiram Pete Gregory, email with Jessica Richardson, September 1, 2016.

⁸⁷ Richard Johnson, interview by the author, April 12, 2016.

⁸⁸ Caroline Dormon collection folder 1090, (Cammie G. Henry Research Center, Northwestern State University), 2.

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Caroline Dormon's final years were less retirement and more akin to retreat. Due to declined health and mobility, her outdoor activities decreased, however she continued to work using the pen or typewriter as the tool to accomplish her goals.⁸⁹ She wrote her last book *Bird Talk* at the age of 81. "She was *always* writing," archeologist Pete Gregory recalls, "Ms. Carrie stayed on the politicians about whatever concerned her."⁹⁰

Even in her last year, Caroline Dormon remained a vocal advocate for issues ranging from conservation and environmental pollution to foreign trade and war. Among her last correspondences are letters to Senator Abraham Ribicoff of Connecticut protesting the use of DDT as a pesticide and to the editor of the *Christian Herald* decrying its stance on of the theory of evolution. Her final writings included plans for her last conservation effort - the preservation of her beloved forest home Briarwood. The year before her death Dormon began contacting close friends and colleagues to make arrangements for her collections and to secure Briarwood's future. Her paintings, journals, letters, collected artwork (including a rare collection of Native American basketry and artifacts) were donated to Professor Pete Gregory to archive at Northwestern State University.

Dormon established an organization in her will to accept ownership of the property in the Kisatchie Hills. With legal assistance from Mrs. Sudie Lawton and Attorney Arthur Watson of Natchitoches, Dormon established The Foundation for the Preservation of Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve. In her final months, Dormon summoned Mr. Richard Johnson, longtime friend and mentee, to her home and informed him that she had selected him and his wife Jessie to take over curation of Briarwood after her passing.⁹¹ Johnson, a local community resident, met Dormon as a small child and kept a close relationship with Caroline and her sister Virginia throughout his life. Johnson lived only a half a mile away from Briarwood and often spent time at the Dormon's home watching Caroline paint or running errands. Dormon was both a mentor to Richard and respected authority figure to him and other area youth.⁹² Young Johnson often accompanied the Dormons on their visits to see Cammie Henry at Melrose. Other than Nora Patterson, Johnson was the only other person Dormon allowed to dig in her gardens. Shortly after making final arrangements, Dormon suffered a debilitating attack of angina and was unable to remain at the home she loved so dearly. In November 1971, Caroline Dormon passed away at a care facility in Shreveport.

Archaeological Potential

There are several archaeological sites associated with human activity located within the boundaries of the Briarwood property. These sites and their associated artifacts date to both the pre-historic and historic eras at Briarwood and fit within the "Wilderness to 1859" and the agricultural era (1859-1921), as defined by the 2003 HALS report. The Old Sparta Road and Briarwood Cemetery are the most visible above ground sites that also likely have below ground archaeological significance. The other sites – the Sweat Plantation Site, the Readhimer Plantation Site, and the Dormon Cabin Site – are completely archaeological as the buildings have been gone for many years.

Archaeological Overview

Review of the Louisiana State Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism, Division of Archaeology Archweb database (the collective repository for archaeological survey data in Louisiana) reveals no reported

⁸⁹ Caroline Dormon's sister Virginia Miller had assumed the responsibility of taking care of the home during their lifetime and did all the cooking and most of the driving. Her blindness and death in 1953 impacted Dormon's mobility. After Virginia's passing Nora Patterson, Dormon's neighbor and longtime assistant, took over as cook and caregiver.

⁹⁰ Gregory, Discussion with the author, June 14, 2016.

⁹¹ Richard Johnson and Jessie Johnson, interview by the author, July 7, 2015.

⁹² Louisa Fremming, Interview by the author. June 19, 2015. Johnson. Richard and his cousin Louisa Fremming recall how area children were expected to "report" to Dormon on their academic progress and youth that were particularly close to the sisters were expected to bring their intended spouses to the Dormon home for their an informal "examination."

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archaeological sites within the Briarwood property boundaries (Division of Archaeology Archweb, 2016). Only one reconnaissance survey has been conducted in the area on or around the Briarwood property. This survey was a limited effort that examined small selected areas for a potential seismic project; none of the areas were on the Briarwood property (Moore, Fields, Baxter 2008). Personal communications with Northwestern State University of Louisiana (NSULA) Professor of Anthropology, Dr. Pete Gregory and former Northwestern Region Regional Archaeologist Jeff Girard indicated that no systematic surveys at Briarwood had been undertaken by NSULA staff.

Although no reported or systematically investigated sites have been identified within the boundaries of Briarwood, it is known that surface finds are common at several of the historical sites within the preserve's boundaries. These include the Reidhimer Plantation Primary Residence and the Grist Mill, both of which are associated with activities at the Reidhimer Plantation. One (n=1) known prehistoric site, Old Sparta Road River Crossing, has produced lithic debitage associated with resource procurement during the prehistoric occupation of the area. According to site manager Richard Johnson, each site has produced artifacts throughout the Johnson family's involvement with Briarwood. Currently, artifacts at these three sites are only collected from surface deposits if there is a fear that the artifacts will be lost for future research. Artifacts that appear on the surface at the sites are marked via pin flag and left in-situ for future investigation.

Readhimer Plantation, Pond, Dam and Grist Mill Sites

The Readhimer Plantation community is located in what is currently the western extension of the preserve. This land was donated to the preserve in 1995. Although no buildings remain, the site includes a large house, overseer's house, a commissary where women made materials for Confederate uniforms during the Civil War, saw mill and cotton gin.^[1] Material cultural remains from the Readhimer Plantation are scattered along the trail through this area. Mr. John G. Readhimer and his family migrated to this area in the mid-nineteenth century. Although they are separate areas, the Readhimer Community which lies south of the preserve along Louisiana Highway 9 is named after the plantation.^[2] This community developed with the timber industry post-Civil War.^[3] The timbering industry brought the railroad which sustained the growth of the community. The community was in decline by the 1930s as the timber and railroad industries began to leave the area.^[4]

Plantation Primary Residence

Artifacts from the Reidhimer Plantation primary residence include three (n=3) pieces cobalt blue glass, ten pieces (n=10) curved clear glass, two pieces (n=2) solarized glass, three pieces (n=3) burned curved glass, four pieces (n=4) milk glass, two pieces (n=2) brown-glazed yellow ware, twenty-two (n=22) pieces burned white ware, one piece (n=1) porcelain "doll teacup" handle, and two pieces (n=2) ferruginous metal (unidentified). Surface artifacts observed at the site include white ware, milk glass, brick, and a piece of metal identified as belonging to a foot treadle from a sewing machine.

Diagnostic glass artifacts included one (n=1) cobalt blue non-continuous external thread finish circa 1911-present and the two pieces (n=2) of solarized glass circa 1880-1920 (Society for Historical Archaeology, 2016). Diagnostic pottery included two pieces of brown-glazed yellow ware circa 1840-20th century and the identifiable white ware circa 1830-present (Florida Museum of Natural History, 2016). All other artifacts from the primary residence were non-diagnostic or lack diagnostic features.

Pond and Dam

The Readhimer operation included a pond and dam developed to provide power for a grist mill located south of the plantation. The pond and dam remain as a features of the landscape and were recently restored by the Foundation. Though brick has been known to occur in the landscape surrounding the pond, no surface brick scatter was identified during a recent examination of the area.

^[1] Howell, 37.

^[2] Ibid.

^[3] Ibid.

^[4] Ibid.

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Grist Mill

Material evidence of the Grist Mill comes from two large (1Mx.25MX.25M) hand-hewn wooden supports that contain four (n=4) large iron cut nails circa 1840-1890. The nails show little to no oxidation and have little to no cracking in the surface of the nail—a trait that is common among later cut nails from this period (Wells 1998). Material evidence of the grist mill was identified from surface finds that are currently present at the Grist Mill area. No in-tact structural evidence of the Grist Mill was identified during site walk-over, though its location is known by the Johnson family.

Old Sparta Road (Old Sparta Trace, Old Sparta Trail)

Tradition holds that Old Sparta Road was part of an ancient buffalo trail and migratory route for Native Americans and later European Americans. Old Sparta Road runs southwest through the property; the road is sunken as it crosses higher elevation. During the late 19th century the road became notorious for a band of highwaymen that terrorized the route.^[5] The road was used through World War II, but became abandoned once the automobile became the dominant form of transportation in the area.^[6] Deposits along the Old Sparta trail (e.g., refuse deposits from campsites and other travel associated activities) are likely numerous, temporally varied, and would be helpful in documenting the changing cultural and technological changes that occurred during the road's period of activity. give the age and use of the road.

Errata: Bottle Collection

There exists at the preserve a large collection of historic glass bottles that span the twentieth century. All bottles viewed exhibit typical machine made glass marks and finishes. The bottles included pharmaceutical, insecticides, liquor, soft drinks, and a variety of canning and storage jars. The bottles have been recovered from across the preserve and have been commingled losing all contextual information. The collection, which contains a wide variety of shapes, colors, and sizes of bottles, could be used as a learning tool for teaching the systematic identification of twentieth century glass bottle types and date ranges.

Potential for Research

Currently, the physical extent, level of disturbance, and nature of deposits at Briarwood are not known. Surface deposits at the primary residence and the possibility of associated deposits at the plantation's grist mill, grist mill pond, and along the Sparta Road within the boundaries of the preserve hint at a wealth of archaeological deposits. Evidence for these deposits come from surface collections housed at the preserve and exposed artifacts associated with the previously named sites. That there is the potential for significant deposits associated with prehistoric and historic periods that could highlight the cultural and technological changes at Briarwood is likely. However, archaeological significance of these deposits is currently unknown. To the best of the Johnsons' knowledge, little to no surface remodeling has occurred at the referenced areas. It is unclear, at best, what surface features have been remodeled throughout the twentieth century, what other intrusive agricultural practices have modified the surrounding landscapes, and the extent to which sites have been physically disturbed over time is unclear. The argument for Briarwood's potential under Criterion D of the National Register of Historic Places is tentative at best, but there is clearly evidence to support the possible research potential for the preserve as a whole. Criterion D could be added as an addendum to this nomination at a later date once ground trothing has provided enough evidence in support of the importance of the archaeological deposits of the site.

Conclusion

Caroline Dormon was most certainly a pioneer for her time both statewide and nationwide. She has significance primarily in the fields of botany and conservation, but she also had significant influence in the fields of ethnography and archaeology. She helped to save flora and fauna throughout Louisiana and the Southeast by creating a nursery and preserve at her home, Briarwood. She studied plants, documented them,

^[5] Howell, 35.

^[6] Ibid., 35-36.

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and participated in the scientific study of many species of plants. She corresponded and worked directly with influential conservationists, botanists, and other scientists throughout the country in her various fields and was truly an innovative and significant individual.

Briarwood is significant nationally for its association with Caroline Dormon and is also significant locally for its history under Criterion A: Exploration/Settlement. The connection to history and the land at Briarwood runs deep and as caretaker Richard L. Johnson states, "Briarwood is more than a place, it is a way of life."⁹³

Developmental History/Additional historic context information

Following Dormon's death in 1971, the Foundation for the Preservation of Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve began work to conserve the site and plans for accommodating public visitation. The initial tasks involved restoring the garden areas, particularly Bay Garden. Due to Dormon's health, she was not able to give the garden the level of attention it required. The Johnson's restored the garden by clearing out the bog, raking in humus, re-bordering sections of the garden and then replanting irises and other species that Dormon cultivated in this area. Plants were donated and collected from across the state including fifty new Louisiana iris varieties. The Bay Garden restoration was completed in 1974. The following year a headquarters was built that serves as both office and living quarters for the site curators.

In the 1980s, the Foundation added a visitor's center, built on part of the footprint for the Dormon sister's first dwelling at the site. A brick chimney was all that remained of that home and the new center was designed to retain this original element. In 1987, Johnson reconstructed Threes Pines Cabin using Briarwood timber and measurements from ruins of the original structure.

During the 1990s, developments took place that increased the preserve's boundaries and programming capacity. The Foundation acquired twenty-four acres of adjacent property through donation from Tom and Dorothy Nichols. Improvements were made to the main trails and a small necessities structure was built next to the writer's cabin. In 1999, Johnson built an Environmental Education Building to accommodate programming for visiting school groups. The Johnsons also continued restoration of gardens areas including the Dark Place and the Nora Garden. The Nora Garden is named after Dormon's assistant and Briarwood resident Nora Patterson. Nora assisted Dormon daily in her gardens, served as caretaker, and "secretary" to a degree.⁹⁴ In 1996, the Foundation received a Distinguished Merit Award from the Society of Louisiana Irises for the restoration of Bay Garden in 1973 and 1974.

The first decade of the twenty-first century saw more trail improvements, particularly at the exits, and a new irrigation system installed. In 2010, Rick Johnson, Jr., son of Richard and Jessie Johnson, joined the Briarwood staff and had assumed much of the curatorial responsibilities. Rick is a former educator and has continued expanding the site's educational programs and botanical survey and inventory. The Foundation continues its annual publication *Newsletters* and programs such as Tom Sawyer Day, and the annual Briarwood Picnic which raises funds for the site's continued maintenance.

9. Major Bibliographical Resources

⁹³ Howell, 20.

⁹⁴ Caroline Dormon had her telephone installed at Nora Patterson's home to avoid being distracted. After her sister Virginia's illness and eventual passing, Nora and her daughter Dosia took over the responsibility of cooking and caring for Dormon. The Patterson family ties to Briarwood parallel that of Dormon's. Records of the family's history at the site are evidenced through land deed records and interments at Briarwood Plantation Cemetery. The grandchildren of Dosia Patterson, Eileen and Faith Daniels, currently serve as part-time curatorial assistants at Briarwood.

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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 # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # LA-1

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University (Northwestern State University)
- Other

Name of repository: Cane River National Heritage Area, Briarwood Nature Preserve, Foundation for the Preservation of Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): N/A

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10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property: 210 acres

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 32.131237 | Longitude: -92.991907 |
| 2. Latitude: 32.131439 | Longitude: -92.987751 |
| 3. Latitude: 32.133333 | Longitude: -92.987499 |
| 4. Latitude: 32.133463 | Longitude: -92.983506 |
| 5. Latitude: 32.135294 | Longitude: -92.983439 |
| 6. Latitude: 32.135216 | Longitude: -92.980863 |
| 7. Latitude: 32.135879 | Longitude: -92.980786 |
| 8. Latitude: 32.135601 | Longitude: -92.980242 |
| 9. Latitude: 32.135120 | Longitude: -92.980197 |
| 10. Latitude: 32.134319 | Longitude: -92.976243 |
| 11. Latitude: 32.131555 | Longitude: -92.978603 |
| 12. Latitude: 32.126187 | Longitude: -92.981612 |
| 13. Latitude: 32.123139 | Longitude: -92.987612 |
| 14. Latitude: 32.126945 | Longitude: -92.987574 |
| 15. Latitude: 32.126882 | Longitude: -92.991880 |

Other Points of Latitude/Longitude for resources at Briarwood:

Dark Place – Latitude: 32.132302, Longitude: -92.982543

Nora Garden – Latitude: 32.132558, Longitude: -92.982393

Sweat Plantation Site – Latitude: 32.132943, Longitude: -92.980145

Readhimer Plantation Site – Latitude: 32.130534, Longitude: -92.990545

Mayapple Knoll – Latitude: 32.130741, Longitude: -92.981886

Caroline Dormon Birth Site – Latitude: 32.131213, Longitude: -92.934853

Old Briarwood Cemetery:

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 32.137516 | Longitude: -92.975021 |
| 2. Latitude: 32.137531 | Longitude: -92.975875 |
| 3. Latitude: 32.138483 | Longitude: -92.975818 |
| 4. Latitude: 32.138490 | Longitude: -92.974976 |

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

T13N/R06W, Sec. 9 in Northern Natchitoches Parish. Briarwood is located along Louisiana State Highway 9 near Saline, LA. The southern and eastern boundaries follow the path of the highway. The northern boundary is aligned with the plat grid east to west. The western boundary is extended as a result of twenty-four acres added to the property in the mid-1990s. See submitted plat and boundary maps.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundaries coincide with real property boundaries for the area owned by the Foundation for the Preservation of Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve. These are not the exact historic boundaries of the site,

Briarwood
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but are very close to the original size of the property when Caroline Dormon owned it as well as her ancestors.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Keilah Spann, Director Heritage Programming; Steven Fullen, Director of Interpretation; Jessica Richardson, National Register Coordinator; Richard Johnson, Briarwood organization: Cane River National Heritage Area, Inc.
street & number: 1115 Washington Street
city or town: Natchitoches state: LA zip code: 71457
e-mail: kmspann@gmail.com; kspann@canerivernha.org
telephone: (318) 356-5555
date: 6/20/2016

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 3000x2000 at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Briarwood
City or Vicinity: Saline
County: Natchitoches
State: LA
Name of Photographer: Keilah Spann
Date of Photographs: 8/11/2014 – 6/17/2016

- 1 of 44 Caroline Dormon House Front Elevation, camera facing northward
- 2 of 44 Caroline Dormon House Rear Perspective Elevation, camera facing southwest
- 3 of 44 Caroline Dormon House Side Elevation, camera facing westward
- 4 of 44 Caroline Dormon House Back Porch, camera facing westward
- 5 of 44 Caroline Dormon House Front Porch, camera facing east
- 6 of 44 Caroline Dormon House Interior, Bedroom 1, camera facing south.
- 7 of 44 Caroline Dormon House Interior, Bedroom 2, camera facing northeast
- 8 of 44 Caroline Dormon House Interior, Main Front Room, camera facing east
- 9 of 44 Caroline Dormon House Interior, Kitchen, camera facing east
- 10 of 44 Caroline Dormon House Interior, museum artifacts
- 11 of 44 Caroline Dormon House Interior, museum exhibits 1

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- 12 of 44 Visitor's Center, camera facing south
- 13 of 44 Visitor's Center Elevation, camera facing southeast
- 14 of 44 Visitor's Center Interior, camera facing east
- 15 of 44 Garden, Visitor's Center
- 16 of 44 Garden, Visitor's Center 2
- 17 of 44 Wildflower Meadow 1
- 18 of 44 Wildflower Meadow 2
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- 20 of 44 Wing's Rest Pond, camera facing northwest
- 21 of 44 Old Sparta Road, due north
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- 23 of 44 Readhimer Plantation Site
- 24 of 44 Artifacts flagged in blue that are coming to the surface along Readhimer Loop.
- 25 of 44 Caroline Dormon Birth Site
- 26 of 44 Reconstructed writer's cabin
- 27 of 44 Bay Garden 1
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- 29 of 44 Bay Garden 3
- 30 of 44 Bay Garden 4
- 31 of 44 Bay Garden 5
- 32 of 44 Cemetery North end, camera facing south
- 33 of 44 Cemetery Headstone – Matilda Patterson
- 34 of 44 Cemetery Headstone – Robert Patterson
- 35 of 44 Another view of the cemetery
- 36 of 44 Grandpappy Tree
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- 44 of 44 Sweat Plantation Site

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Figure 2. Caroline Dormon at Three Pines cabin; Image courtesy of the *Dormon Collection*, Cammie G. Henry Research Center (NSU).

Figure 3. Caroline Dormon giving a tour of Bay Garden; Image courtesy of the *Dormon Collection*, Cammie G. Henry Research Center (NSU).

Figure 4. Photograph of the attendees of the 4th Southern Forestry Congress in 1922. Dormon standing 6th from right between top and bottom rows. Image courtesy of the *Dormon Collection*, Cammie G. Henry Research Center (NSU).

Figure 5. Caroline Dormon as a young woman. Image courtesy of the *Dormon Collection*, Cammie G. Henry Research Center (NSU).

Figure 6. Caroline Dormon (third from left) and friends in south Louisiana. Image courtesy of the *Dormon Collection*, Cammie G. Henry Research Center (NSU).

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- Figure 8. Caroline Dormon sketching at Briarwood. Image courtesy of the *Dormon Collection*, Cammie G. Henry Research Center (NSU).
- Figure 9. Caroline Dormon and "Hen," location unknown. Image courtesy of the *Dormon Collection*, Cammie G. Henry Research Center (NSU).
- Figure 10. Caroline Dormon and "Hen" eating watermelon. Image courtesy of the *Dormon Collection*, Cammie G. Henry Research Center (NSU).
- Figure 11. Caroline Dormon with a rare species at Briarwood. Image courtesy of the *Dormon Collection*, Cammie G. Henry Research Center (NSU).
- Figure 12. Caroline Dormon relaxing in front of the fire at her Briarwood cabin. Image courtesy of the *Dormon Collection*, Cammie G. Henry Research Center (NSU).
- Figure 13. Caroline Dormon at Briarwood. Image courtesy of the *Dormon Collection*, Cammie G. Henry Research Center (NSU).
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- Figure 18. The Dormon Family visit at Briarwood. Caroline Dormon standing third from right. Image courtesy of the *Dormon Collection*, Cammie G. Henry Research Center (NSU).
- Figure 19. Caroline Dormon and family at Hodges Gardens. Caroline Dormon seated at left. Image courtesy of the *Dormon Collection*, Cammie G. Henry Research Center (NSU).

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- Figure 21. Caroline Dormon photograph of Houma Indians; Image courtesy of the *Dormon Collection*, Cammie G. Henry Research Center (NSU).
- Figure 22. Sketch of Caddo pottery by Caroline Dormon. Image courtesy of Caroline Dormon photograph of Houma Indians; Image courtesy of the *Dormon Collection*, Cammie G. Henry Research Center (NSU).
- Figure 23. Sketches of Caddo pottery sherds by Caroline Dormon. Image courtesy of Caroline Dormon photograph of Houma Indians; Image courtesy of the *Dormon Collection*, Cammie G. Henry Research Center (NSU).
- Figures 24 and 25. Sketches of Native American pottery by Caroline Dormon; Image courtesy of the *Dormon Collection*, Cammie G. Henry Research Center (NSU).
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Figure 33. Dormon watercolor painting, Image courtesy of Cammie G. Henry Research Center (NSU), *Dormon Collection* Folder 1508.

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Figure 36. Rick Johnson holds a child's shoe mold found at the Sweat Plantation Site. Image courtesy of the author.

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Caroline Dormon with the rare *Torreya*,
from the Appalachicola River in Florida

Figure 11. Caroline Dormon with a rare species at Briarwood. Image courtesy of the *Dormon Collection*, Cammie G. Henry Research Center (NSU).

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Figure 12. Caroline Dormon relaxing in front of the fire at her Briarwood cabin. Image courtesy of the *Dormon Collection*, Cammie G. Henry Research Center (NSU).

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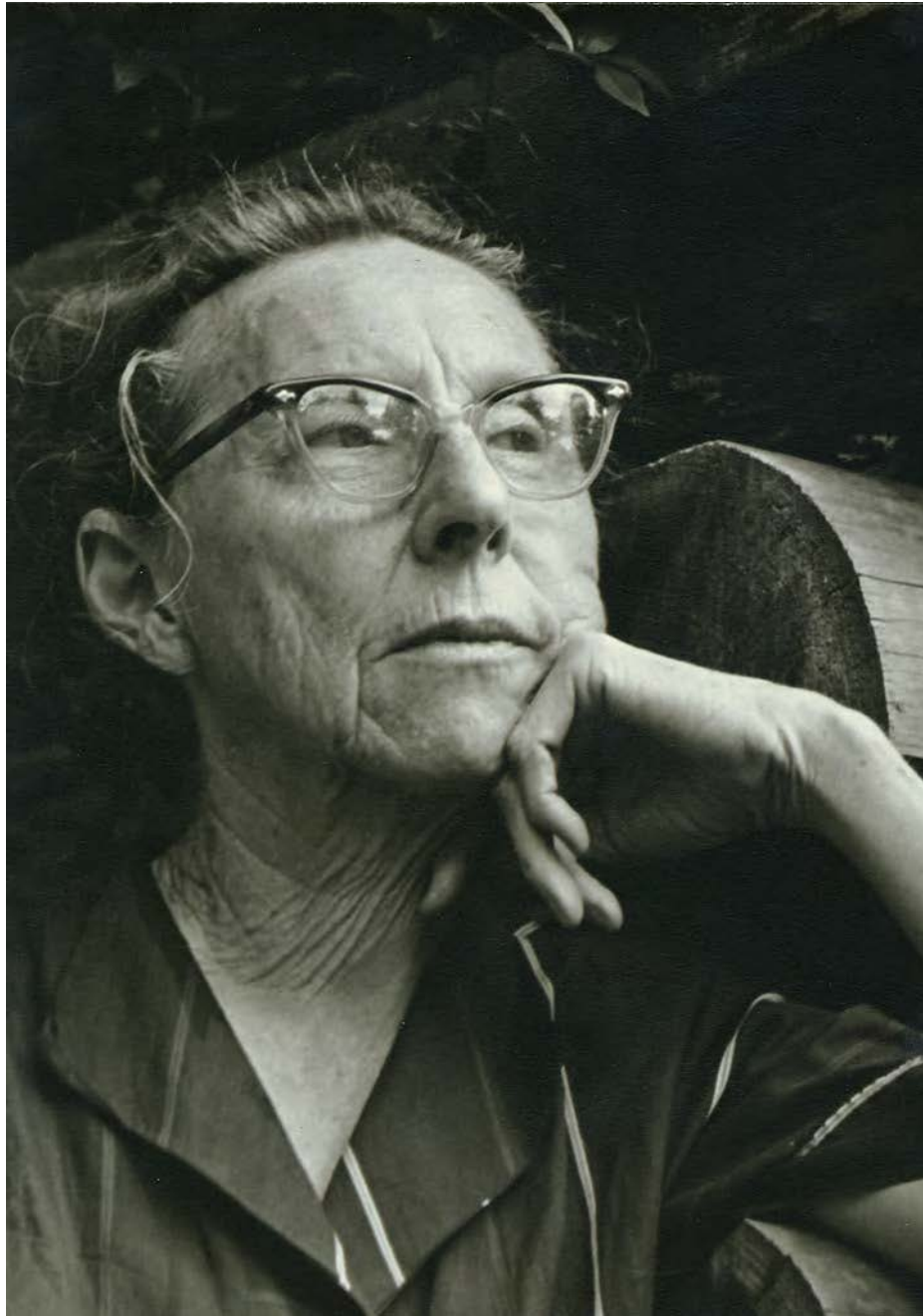


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Fig. 12. a. Eye-concept design from bowl collected by Moore in extreme Northern Louisiana. b, Bowl from Ouachita River, also in Moore collection. (Antiquities of the Ouachita Valley, Clarence B. Moore) Courtesy Philadelphia Academy of Natural Sciences)



Figure 22. Sketch of Caddo pottery by Caroline Dormon. Image courtesy of Caroline Dormon photograph of Houma Indians; Image courtesy of the *Dormon Collection*, Cammie G. Henry Research Center (NSU).

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Figure 23. Sketches of Caddo pottery sherds by Caroline Dormon. Image courtesy of Caroline Dormon photograph of Houma Indians; Image courtesy of the *Dormon Collection*, Cammie G. Henry Research Center (NSU).

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Figures 24 and 25. Sketches of Native American pottery by Caroline Dormon; Image courtesy of the *Dormon Collection*, Cammie G. Henry Research Center (NSU).

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County and State



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Artifacts found at Briarwood



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Figure 36. Rick Johnson holds a child's shoe mold found at the Sweat Plantation Site. Image courtesy of the author.

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.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Briarwood, Natchitoches Parish, LA



Latitude: 32.129759 Longitude: -92.984857

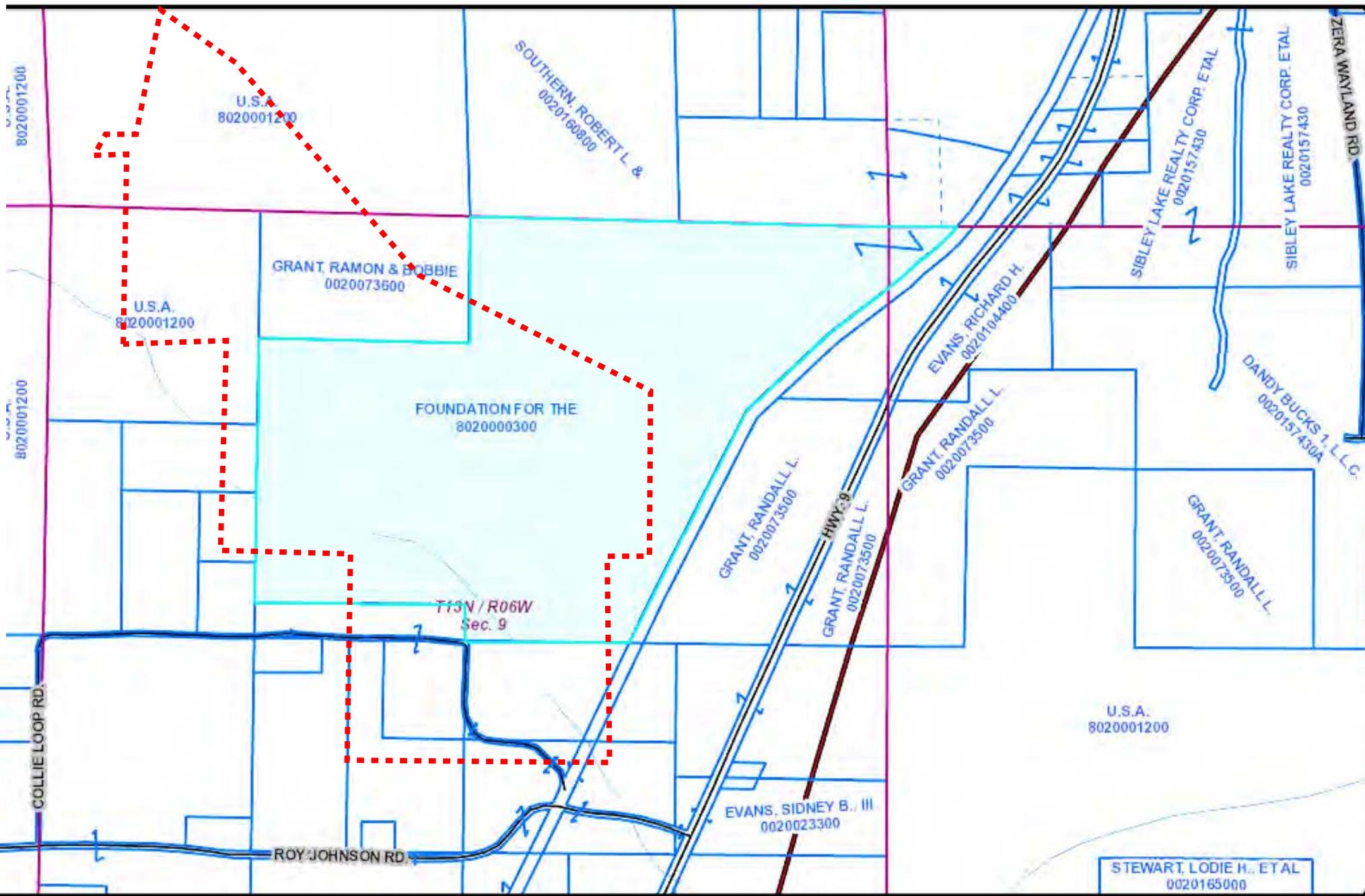
Briarwood, Natchitoches Parish, LA



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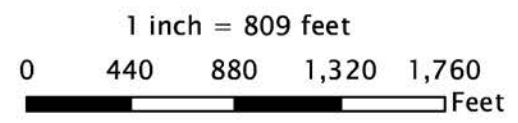
Geoportal Map

Briarwood, Natchitoches Parish, LA - Plat and Boundary Map



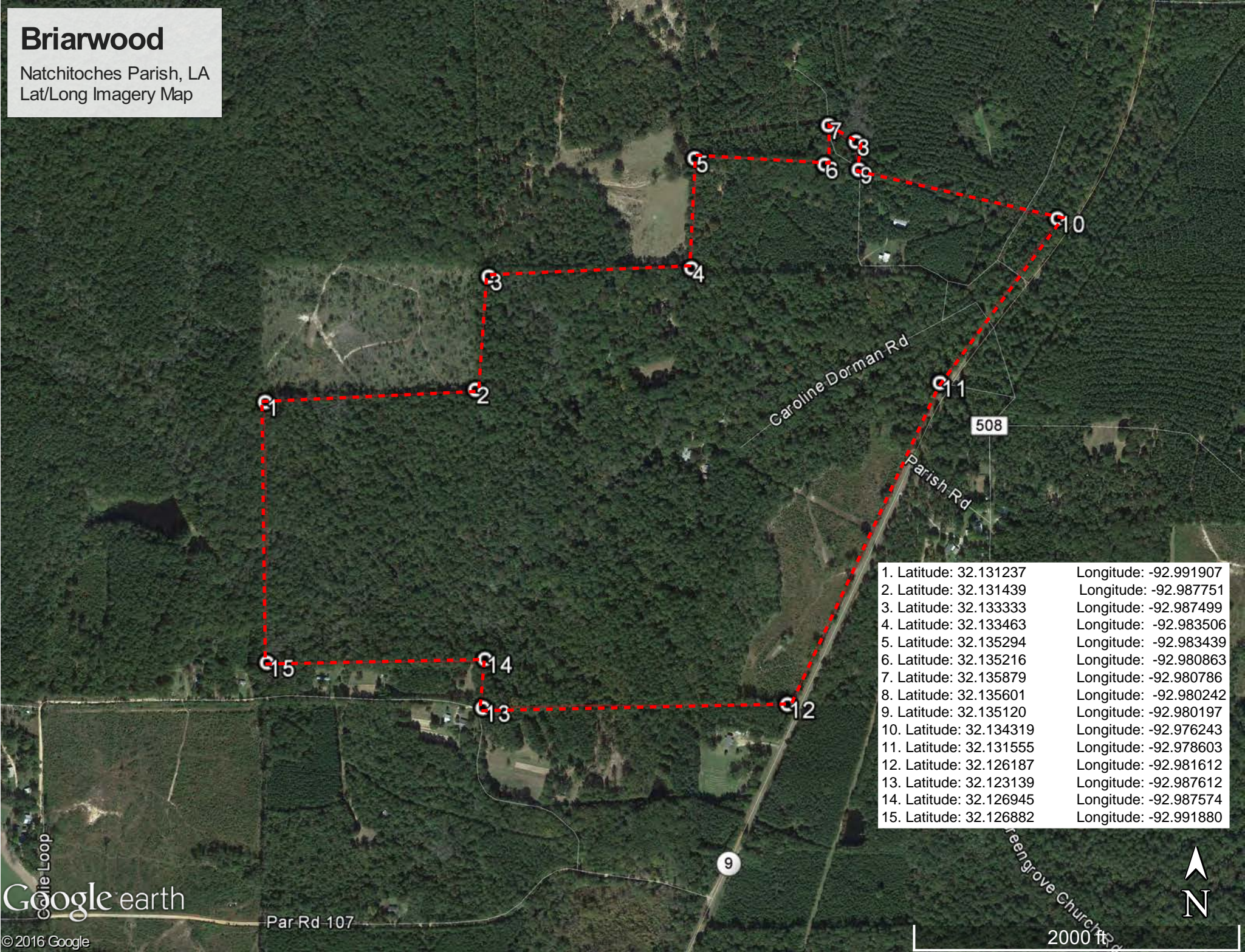
July 20, 2016

DISCLAIMER: Every reasonable effort has been made to assure the accuracy of the data presented. The Assessor of Natchitoches Parish makes no warranties, express or implied, regarding the completeness, reliability or suitability of the site data and assumes no liability associated with the use or misuse of said data. The Assessor retains the right to make changes and update data on this site at anytime, without notification. The parcel data on the base map is used to locate, identify and inventory parcels of land in Natchitoches Parish for assessment purposes only and is not to be used or interpreted as a legal survey or legal document. Additional data layers not originating in the Assessor's Offices are also presented for informational purposes only. Before proceeding in any legal matter, all data should be verified by contacting the appropriate county or municipal office.



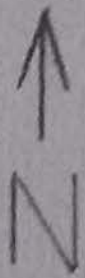
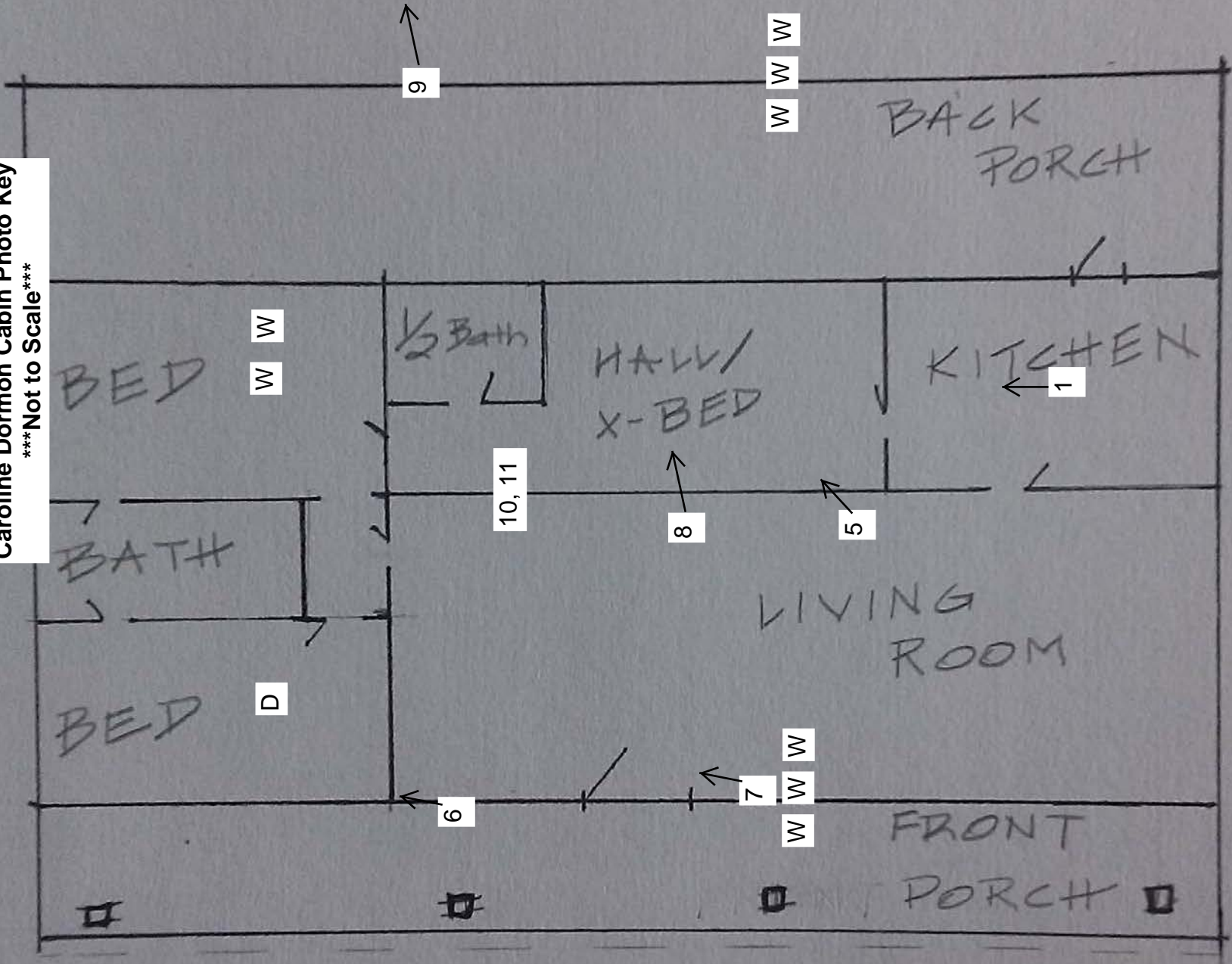
Briarwood

Natchitoches Parish, LA
Lat/Long Imagery Map



1. Latitude: 32.131237	Longitude: -92.991907
2. Latitude: 32.131439	Longitude: -92.987751
3. Latitude: 32.133333	Longitude: -92.987499
4. Latitude: 32.133463	Longitude: -92.983506
5. Latitude: 32.135294	Longitude: -92.983439
6. Latitude: 32.135216	Longitude: -92.980863
7. Latitude: 32.135879	Longitude: -92.980786
8. Latitude: 32.135601	Longitude: -92.980242
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11. Latitude: 32.131555	Longitude: -92.978603
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14. Latitude: 32.126945	Longitude: -92.987574
15. Latitude: 32.126882	Longitude: -92.991880

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Natchitoches Parish, LA
Caroline Dormon Cabin Photo Key
Not to Scale



DORMON HOUSE

KS

Briarwood, Natchitoches Parish, LA Resource and General Sketch Map

Contributing Resource Inventory

Building

6. Caroline Dormon Cabin - Photos 1-11 (see Cabin Sketch Map)

Sites

2. Old Sparta Road - Photo 21

5. Old Briarwood Cemetery - Photos 32-35

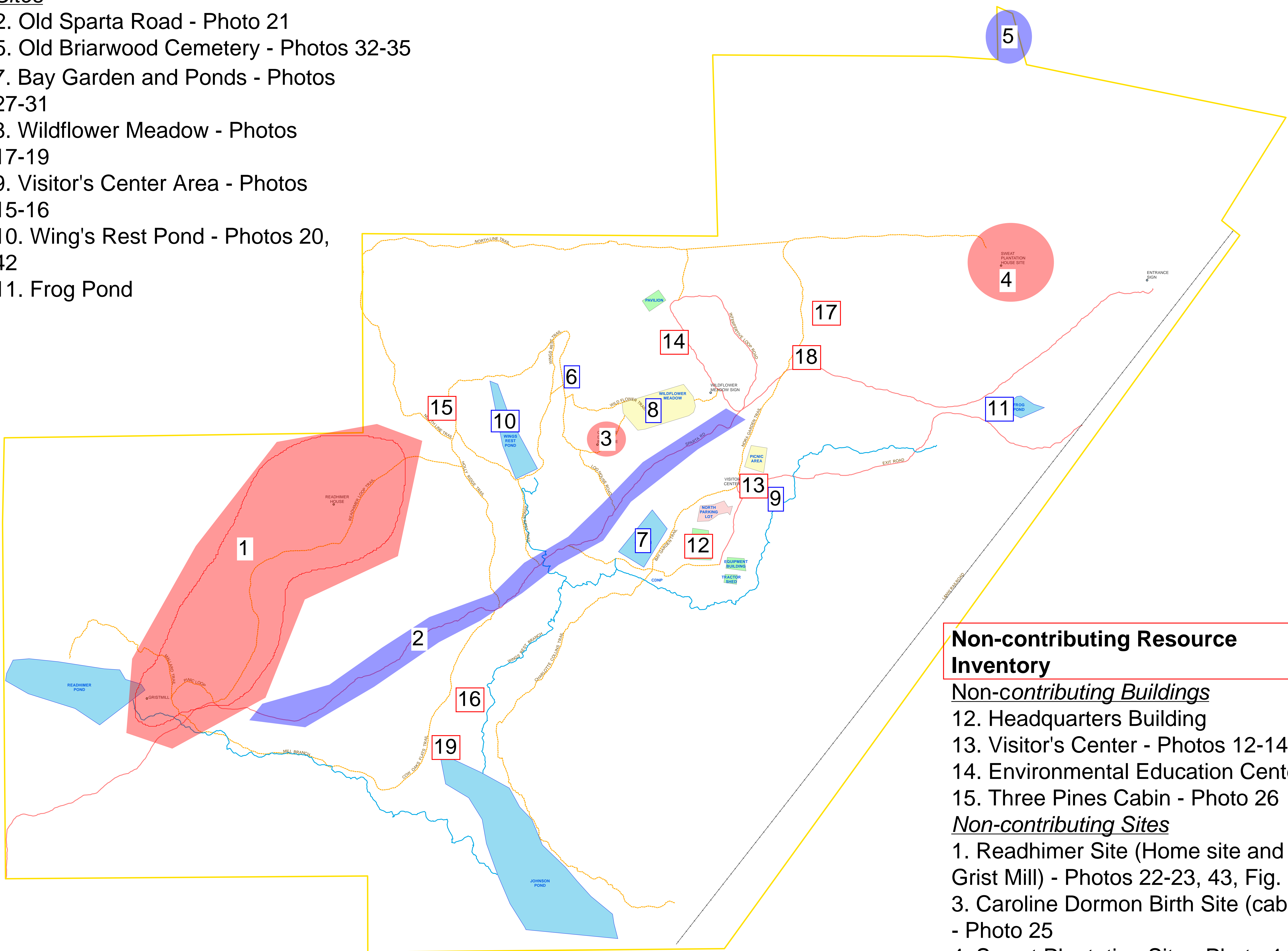
7. Bay Garden and Ponds - Photos 27-31

8. Wildflower Meadow - Photos 17-19

9. Visitor's Center Area - Photos 15-16

10. Wing's Rest Pond - Photos 20, 42

11. Frog Pond



Non-contributing Resource Inventory

Non-contributing Buildings

12. Headquarters Building

13. Visitor's Center - Photos 12-14

14. Environmental Education Center

15. Three Pines Cabin - Photo 26

Non-contributing Sites

1. Readhimer Site (Home site and Grist Mill) - Photos 22-23, 43, Fig. 44

3. Caroline Dormon Birth Site (cabin) - Photo 25

4. Sweat Plantation Site - Photo 44, Figure 36

16. Mayapple Knoll - Photo 41

17. The Nora Garden - Photo 39

18. The Dark Place - Photo 38

19. Beech Garden Swamp - Photo 40









































WINGS RES
POND



























MEMORIAL OF



MATILDA
PATTERSON

BORN

S.C. 1843

DIED

JUNE 18 1889

SLEEP IN PEACE
AND SHE WILL BE WITH HER HOME



ROBERT
PATTERSON

LOUISIANA

PVT CO A

162 DEPOT BRIGADE
WORLD WAR I

MARCH 2 1895

AUGUST 28 1957

















WINGS REST
ROAD





UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Briarwood

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: LOUISIANA, Natchitoches

DATE RECEIVED: 9/23/16 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 10/21/16
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 11/07/16 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 11/08/16
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 16000761

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: Y SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: Y

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 11-8-2016 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Home & Laboratory of Nationally prominent plant Researcher/Botanist

RECOM./CRITERIA Accept A+B

REVIEWER J. Gubler DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.



BILLY NUNGESSER
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

State of Louisiana
OFFICE OF THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR
DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE, RECREATION & TOURISM
OFFICE OF CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT
DIVISION OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION



September 20, 2016

TO: Mr. James Gabbert
National Park Service 2280, 8th Floor; National Register of Historic Places
1201 "I" Street, NW; Washington, DC 20005

FROM: Jessica Richardson, National Register Coordinator
Louisiana Division of Historic Preservation

RE: Briarwood, Natchitoches Parish, LA

Jim,

The enclosed disk contains the true and correct copy of the nomination for Briarwood to the National Register of Historic Places. The second disk contains the photographs of the property in TIFF format. Should you have any questions, please contact me at 225-219-4595 or jrichardson@crt.la.gov.

Thanks,

Jessica 

Enclosures:

- CD with PDF of the National Register of Historic Places nomination form
- CD with electronic images (tiff format)
- Physical Transmission Letter
- Physical Signature Page, with original signature
- _____ Other:

Comments:

- _____ Please ensure that this nomination receives substantive review
- _____ This property has been certified under 36 CFR 67
- _____ The enclosed owner(s) objection(s) do _____ do not _____ constitute a majority of property owners. (Publicly owned property)
- _____ Other: