

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 **NPS Form 10-900a** to complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If 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. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Winans, Fonville Studio

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 409 North Seventh Street NA not for publication

city or town Baton Rouge NA vicinity

state Louisiana code LA county East Baton Rouge code 033 zip code 70802

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally X statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Gerri Hobdy

7-27-99

Signature of certifying official/Title Gerri Hobdy, Date
LA SHPO, Dept. of Culture, Recreation and Tourism

State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of certifying official/Title _____ Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the
National Register
See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the
National Register
- removed from the National
Register
- other (explain): _____

Robert A. Beall

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

8/27/99

Fonville Winans Studio
Name of property

East Baton Rouge Parish, LA
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

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

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

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

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	—	buildings
—	—	sites
—	—	structures
—	—	objects
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

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

NA

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Cat. Commerce/Trade

Social

Sub. Professional

Meeting Hall

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Cat. Commerce/Trade

Sub. Professional

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Italianate

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick

walls Stucco

roof Rubber, Tar

other _____

Narrative Description

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

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" next to the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

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

Criteria Considerations

NA

(Mark "X" next to all that apply.)

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

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Art

Period of Significance

1943-1949

Significant Dates

NA

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Winans, Theodore Fonville

Cultural Affiliation

NA

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

NA

- 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 # _____

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository: _____

Fonville Winans Studio
Name of property

East Baton Rouge Parish, LA
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than an acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing

1 15 674420 3369940

2 _____

3 _____

4 _____

__ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description

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

Boundary Justification

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

11. Form Prepared By

name/title National Register Staff

organization Division of Historic Preservation date May 1999

street & number P.O. Box 44247 telephone (225) 342-8160

city or town Baton Rouge state LA zip code 70804

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

- A **USGS** map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A **sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

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

Additional items

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

Property Owner

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

name James D. Dodds

street & number 409 North Seventh Street telephone (225) 383-1753

city or town Baton Rouge state LA zip code 70802

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

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

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The Fonville Winans Studio is being nominated to the National Register because of its association with Winans, a significant Louisiana photographer (see Part 8). It is located at the intersection of Laurel and North Seventh streets (northwest corner) on the eastern edge of downtown Baton Rouge. Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps indicate that the two-story, load-bearing brick wall commercial building was erected between 1898 and 1908; a date of c. 1900 will be used for the purposes of this nomination. Originally containing retail space on the first floor and a Masonic lodge hall on the second, the building was constructed in a restrained version of the Italianate taste. It is unclear whether it received its current stucco finish and tile roof before Winans acquired it in 1943 or during his occupancy. (The former is more likely.) Although the studio has recently experienced a rehabilitation, it very much remains the building Winans knew. Thus, it retains its National Register eligibility.

The building is rectangular in shape, with its short sides paralleling Laurel Street to the south and its long sides paralleling North Seventh to the east. Its current stylistic features (visible on the building's two street elevations) include:

- 1) two segmentally arched entrances containing French doors with large panes. One of these entrances is located at the southeast corner of the building facing the intersection; the other faces Laurel Street.
- 2) a large round arched entrance (located at the rear of the building's eastern wall and facing North Seventh) with a boldly molded surround. It contains glazed double doors and an arched transom featuring the Masonic symbol. (Another east side door and three first floor, east side windows are rectangular in shape; a final first floor, east side window is square.)
- 3) second-level segmentally arched windows on both the south and east sides.
- 4) two belt courses (one located between the first and second floors and one joining the segmental arches of the second floor windows) and a shallow cornice which resembles them.
- 5) a Mission-style pantile skirting roof.

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The exterior features a stucco coating on three sides. The fourth (west) side exhibits that material on approximately half of its surface. The original brick is exposed on the rest of that wall.

The majority of the building's floorplan remains as it was when Winans obtained the structure. The front portion of the first floor contains a large retail space, within which the previously mentioned corner entrance is located. (A smaller retail space located behind the front area and formerly opening onto North Seventh Street has been altered—see below). A rear stair hall (entered from the second retail space as well as through the arched Seventh Street door) provides access to the second floor, where Winans' studio was located. This floor contains a landing/hallway; a bath; a long, narrow room (which Winans used as a bedroom when he stayed overnight at the studio); a rear corner room of moderate size; and a large ballroom-like space which formerly served as the lodge hall. The latter features a slightly raised stage outlining three of its four sides. Winans altered these spaces only slightly. His changes included the removal (for visual effect) of some plaster from the walls of the hallway and corner rear room and the construction of a long, narrow darkroom along the western side of the former lodge hall.

In 1998 the Fonville Winans Studio was purchased by a Baton Rouge architect who rehabilitated the structure (using the tax act) for use as his firm's office. Exterior alterations associated with this work include:

- 1) the installation of cast iron grilles over first floor windows and the round arched east side door.
- 2) the sealing of the rectangular shaped North Seventh Street door (which led into the rear retail space). Note: the door's glazing pattern and multi-light transom remain intact.
- 3) the replacement of the glass in the square shaped east-side window. During Winans' period of ownership it held one large sheet of glass. It now has two somewhat smaller (but still relatively large) panes. This change necessitated the installation of a center post in the lower portion of the window, but its multi-light transom remains intact.

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Interior alterations associated with the rehabilitation include:

- 1) changes to the floorplan. For example:
 - 1) The rear, first floor retail space was subdivided to create offices and a conference room, and a small restroom was added to serve the remaining retail area.
 - 2) A non-structural column and the wall forming Winans' dark room were removed from the second floor lodge hall; and low, moveable partitions were added to subdivide the lodge hall into eight architect's work stations. However, the "stage" remains in place.
 - 3) A wall was constructed to subdivide into two smaller spaces the long, narrow second floor room Winans used as sleeping quarters.
- 2) the repair of some damaged plaster walls (but not those second floor walls from which Winans deliberately removed the plaster), the relocation of some interior first floor door openings, and the staining of the first level concrete floor (which was then cut in a grooved pattern to resemble stone) in the rear retail space and stair hall (which now serve as part of an architect's office).
- 3) the replacement of original second floor doors with fire-rated doors, the installation of a full fire alarm system, and the installation of a tile ceiling on the second floor.

Although the list of changes accomplished during the recent rehabilitation may sound significant upon first reading, in reality these alterations are relatively minor. The building retains most of its original character, and there is no doubt that Winans and his customers would recognize the studio if they were to visit it today. As the surviving building most directly associated with the career of renowned Louisiana photographer Fonville Winans (see Part 8), his studio is a legitimate candidate for National Register listing.

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The Fonville Winans Studio is significant at the state level in the area of art because it is the surviving building most directly associated with the career of Winans, a self-taught photographer whose images recorded important aspects of Louisiana life. Winans is best known for photographs chronicling the now-lost Cajun lifestyle of South Central Louisiana. However, his later pictures of activities at Louisiana State University and, most especially, his formal portraits and candid shots of the state's political personalities are also important contributions to his overall body of work. Although Winans made his Cajun photographs during the early 1930s, the period of significance for this nomination ranges from 1943, the year he purchased the Baton Rouge building which he converted into a commercial photographer's studio, until 1949, the Register's fifty year cutoff. Winans continued working as a portrait and wedding photographer in the candidate (although in a reduced capacity as his age advanced and his physical abilities diminished) through the late 1980s; he died in 1992.

Theodore Fonville Winans was born in Mexico, Missouri in 1911. His father was a civil engineer who eventually settled his family in Fort Worth, Texas. The younger Winans apparently experimented with photography to a limited extent during his childhood, but the interest did not crystalize until his senior year in high school. He had just spent a long-saved \$30 to purchase a watch when he saw a Kodak 3A camera in a nearby store window. He returned the watch, purchased the camera, and opened a charge account at the store to acquire film. A short time later one of his photos won a fifteen dollar prize.

In 1929 Winans' father accepted an assignment to build a bridge in the South Louisiana town of Morgan City. Since he had taught his son carpentry skills, the elder Winans brought the young man along as a member of the crew. The youth soon became fascinated by Louisiana and, with his father's consent, left his job to explore the area's swamps and bayous. He began the adventure by purchasing (for \$25) and repairing an old motor-less boat, to which he added an automobile engine. The vessel, which Winans named the *Pintail*, could only move forward since the engine had no clutch and no reverse gear.

Between 1931 and 1934 Winans made three separate trips into the Cajun heartland on the *Pintail*. At first he explored the region between bayous Lafourche and Teche; the final year of his adventure found him on the Gulf of Mexico at Grand Isle. Author Ben Forkner has described the world which Winans discovered:

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Thanks to an absence of roads and bridges, and to a largely inward-turned and jealous identity, the Cajun settlements and outposts that Fonville found were irregular islands of a predominantly French-speaking culture that continued to resist the tidal floods of "progress" and the 20th century. . . . when Fonville appeared with his boat and camera the more remote strongholds of Cajun society could still give the impression of a private country at home in the midst of millennial swamp forests and endless river prairies, and only half-open to the modern world.

Winans later called this region "my Africa, my South America."

Living either on board the *Pintail* or with families he met during his travels, the young man spent his time exploring and taking pictures of the many people and places which captured his interest. Although he had cameras (by now he had acquired a movie as well as a still camera), a small supply of black and white film, and darkroom supplies, a light meter was a luxury he did not own. However, with an artist's eye for composition and light, he made the scarce film count, usually taking only one shot of every scene. At first he developed the photos in temporary darkrooms which he improvised when needed; during his year on Grand Isle a space in the Oleander Hotel served as his darkroom. As Baton Rouge newspaper columnist Anne Price has explained, the pictures Winans made at this time are a ". . . human, cheerful record of a people who were self-sufficient enough to make their own way with dignity despite the times, . . . Fishermen, hunters, moss gatherers and other wetlands residents are seen at work and at play. His landscapes and seascapes are haunting and enduring, and his always accurate eye captures the essence of time and place."

It was not Winans' intention to develop a "collection" of Cajun images. As he explained in a newspaper interview given after the public "discovered" his Depression-era work, "I didn't take any of these pictures deliberately. I just took them for fun. None was on assignment. I wasn't even a free-lancer. I just took my camera and got pictures when I saw something interesting." Nevertheless, the result of Winans' adventure was a group of approximately 100 striking black and white images documenting a way of life which has largely faded away. Although other photographers also were working in Louisiana in the 1930s, most made New Orleans' French Quarter or the state's plantation houses the subjects of their art. Winans is the only photographer known to have documented Cajun life, and it is to his collection that one must turn for a view of that now vanished world.

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In 1934 Winans gave up "adventuring," as he called it, to study journalism at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge. During this period he shot films (some featuring Senator Huey Long) for the university's archives and made photographs for the school's yearbook. According to Cyril Vetter, who has published a compilation of Winans' work, "One of his assignments resulted in his 1934 photograph of Huey Long and LSU president James Monroe Smith. It is a classic that still evokes Louisiana's turbulent politics in the era."

Leaving LSU after two years, the now-married Winans accepted a job in Kansas but soon returned to Baton Rouge. By 1938 he was working for the State of Louisiana as a photographer, making studio portraits of politicians as well as candid shots at political gatherings. "Some of these images are masterpieces," Vetter states, "For example, anyone wishing to understand the power of the Longs should study the reverence that Fonville caught in the eyes of a group of poor farmers at an Earl Long stump speech in 1940." Other subjects included the work of the state highway commission and the state's sugar, oil, shrimp and oyster industries. As one commentator has remarked, the latter ". . . amounted to public relations photography for the state [sic] of Louisiana."

In 1940 Winans left state employ to open his own business. At first he worked in his rented home, but in 1943 he purchased the candidate (an old commercial building on the outskirts of Baton Rouge's central business district) to serve as his studio. Although during the next several decades he photographed all but two of the state's sitting governors, his primary work as a commercial photographer focused upon weddings, advertisements, and portraits of women and babies. Over the years his local reputation as a fine photographer grew but, because he had packed his Cajun collection of photographs away, that fame was based upon his commercial work.

Winans' historic images of Cajun life and early twentieth century Louisiana politicians remained largely hidden until 1957, when his son began searching through his files for pictures to use in the teenager's high school yearbook. During the following decade the photographer began making prints from his old negatives. These were exhibited in a few South Louisiana libraries, appeared in periodicals such as the *New York Times* and *Life*, and were reprinted in books such as Myron Tassin's *We Are Acadians: Nous Sommes Acadiens* (1976) and William Faulkner Ruston's *The Cajuns* (1979). However, they did not gain real prominence in Louisiana's artistic circles at

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that time. Apparently the reason the images were overlooked lies within Winans' attitude toward his craft—he believed the work should speak for itself. As a result, he never advertised for jobs and never promoted his early materials. Indeed, his local reputation rested purely on recommendations given by one satisfied customer to another, and the Laurel Street commercial building in which he practiced his craft lacked even a small sign identifying it as his studio.

Recognition of Winans' Depression-era photographs, as well as his political images, became widespread in Louisiana in the 1980s. This appreciation was based upon the technical skill he exercised in creating, developing and printing the black and white pictures as well as the subjects of the images themselves. By the end of the decade, professional curators had chosen Winans' work for exhibitions in Los Angeles, London, Paris, and Angers, France. The latter two events included "... a triumphant tour of France at the invitation of the Société Française de Photographie." According to art critic Roger Green, who reviewed one of the photographer's U.S. exhibits in *ARTnews* magazine, Winans' pictures are "... power period pieces that astutely avoid, even contradict, clichés about the impoverished rural South." Concerning his skills as a photographer, Green praised Winans for the "... sensitivity, technical certainty, and—above all—glowing humanity [which he applied] to portraits of Louisianians, particularly Cajuns, and to views of the bayous and country roads in the southern part of the state." Furthermore, Green commented that "The portraits also deserve attention for capturing the lushness that characterizes Louisiana as a natural setting, which frequently (if also paradoxically) adds an almost painterly note to Winans's sharply focused, large-format prints." In addition to the exhibits, one book featuring his photos appeared before Winans' death in 1992. Ben Forkner's *Cajun* (1991) is a bilingual publication in English and French.

Recognition continued after Winans died. His images are now sold in a number of South Louisiana art galleries. Vetter's previously mentioned book, *Fonville Winans' Louisiana: Politics, People, and Places*, appeared in 1995. According to Thomas H. Ferrell, a University of Southwestern Louisiana professor who reviewed this publication, "Winans was clearly one of the most talented regional photographers America has produced," because his work "effectively captures the ambiance and culture of French South Louisiana. . . ." In 1996 Atlanta's High Museum included some of Winans' photos in its *Picturing the South, 1860 - Present* exhibit. In addition, the Roger Odgen Museum of Southern Art, scheduled to open in New Orleans in a few

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years, owns a collection of Winans' photographs. Believing the photographer's work to be important in documenting Louisiana, the State Museum has acquired copies of not only many of Winans' photographs but also much memorabilia as well. The latter includes, among other things, his cameras, darkroom equipment, appointment books, lab manuals, a prototype of a processing machine he invented, and even the bicycle which he daily rode to work.

Although all of the information above attests to Winans' importance, perhaps the most telling evaluation of Winans' significance comes from contemporary Louisiana wildlife photographer C. C. Lockwood, whose own images have been the subjects of several publications. In an afterword to Vetter's book, as well as in a recent telephone interview with a member of the Louisiana National Register staff, Lockwood stated his belief that Winans deserves to be as famous as nationally renowned photographer Ansel Adams.

Other Buildings and Structures Associated with Fonville Winans

Although the images for which Winans is most famous pre-date his acquisition of the candidate building, it is the surviving resource most directly associated with the photographer. Because of the nomadic nature of his life and work during his years in the Cajun heartland, Winans had no permanent home or studio except for his boat, the *Pintail*. However, it no longer exists. The Oleander Hotel (site of his darkroom on Grand Isle) is also gone. The North Baton Rouge house in which he opened and briefly operated his business (after his period as a roving amateur photographer had ended) still stands, but it is much altered (asbestos shingles and metal windows) since his day. Furthermore, the building was a rent house during the historic period and sheltered a number of tenants in addition to the Winans family over the years. The photographer appears to have purchased a house in Baton Rouge c. 1946, but a check of the street upon which it stood revealed that it has either been demolished or so extensively remodeled that Winans would not recognize it. Thus, the studio in which he stored his historic negatives and practiced his craft is the building most legitimately associated with the photographer's professional life.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

Article on Fonville Winans in *Los Angeles Times*, n.d.; copy in National Register file.

Article on Fonville Winans in *LSU Magazine*, n.d.; copy in National Register file.

Baton Rouge *Sunday Advocate*, November 30, 1980; May 3, 1987, March 11, 1990.

Ferrell, Thomas H. Review of *Fonville Winans' Louisiana: Politics, People, and Places*, by Cyril E. Vetter. *Library Journal*, November 15, 1995, pp. 73-74.

Forkner, Ben. *Cajun: Fonville*, n.p., Paris, 1991.

Green Roger. Review of Exhibit on Fonville Winans, by A Gallery for Fine Photography, New Orleans, Louisiana. *ARTnews*, March 1988, p. 217.

Telephone Interview with Louisiana wildlife photographer C. C. Lockwood, April 29, 1999.

Telephone Interview with Claudia Khel-Cox, Curator of Photographs, Louisiana State Museum, New Orleans, May 17, 1999.

Vetter, Cyril E. *Fonville Winans' Louisiana: Politics, People, and Places*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, Press, 1995.

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BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION:

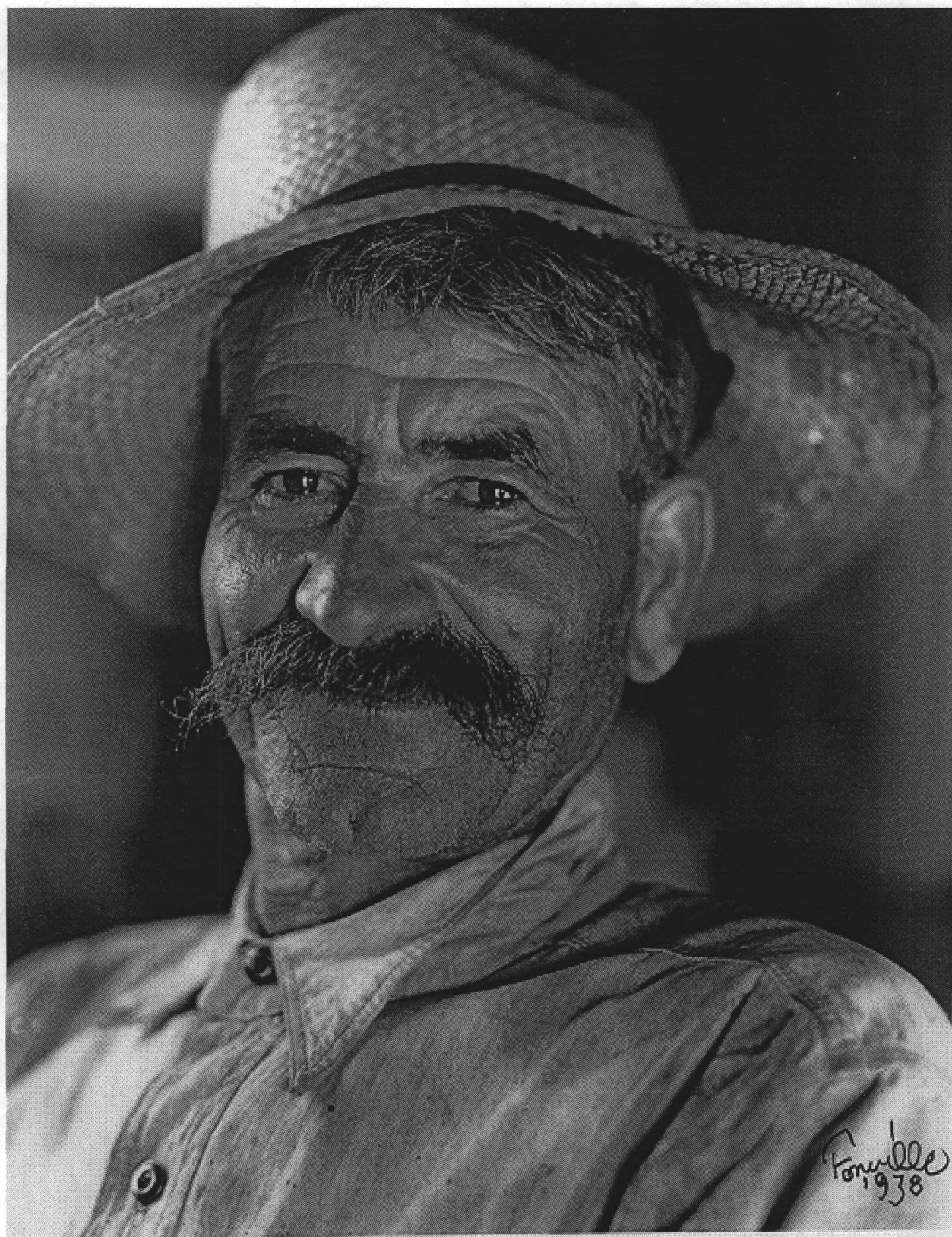
That certain lot or parcel of ground, together with all the buildings and improvements thereon, situated in that part of the City of Baton Rouge, Parish of East Baton Rouge, State of Louisiana, in that subdivision known as Devall Town, measuring thirty (30) feet front on the north side of Laurel Street by a depth of seventy-nine (79) feet two (2) inches between parallel lines and being the southeast portion of a lot designated on the plan thereof as Lot Number Seven (7), Square Twelve (12), forming the southeast corner of said square of Laurel Street and North 7th Street (formerly St. Anthony Street);

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION:

Boundaries follow current property lines, which are also the property lines in effect when the candidate was owned and occupied by photographer Fonville Winans.



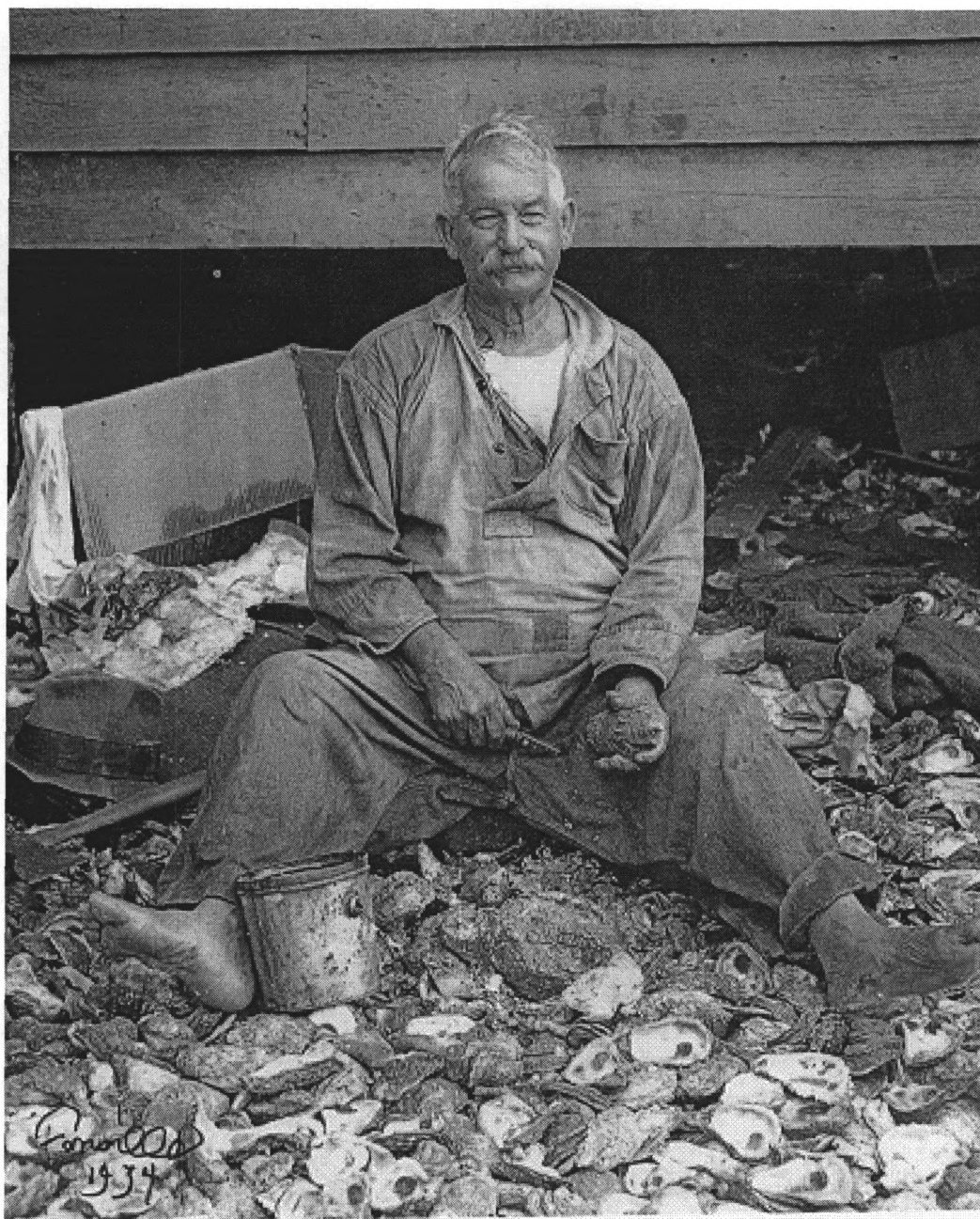
"Tonging," Grand Isle, 1938



Tony Kristicevich, 1939. Louisiana's oystermen included a substantial percentage of Croatian immigrants, of whom Tony—a favorite subject of Fonville's—was one.



"Cajun Chateau," 1938



"The Oysterman," 1933.







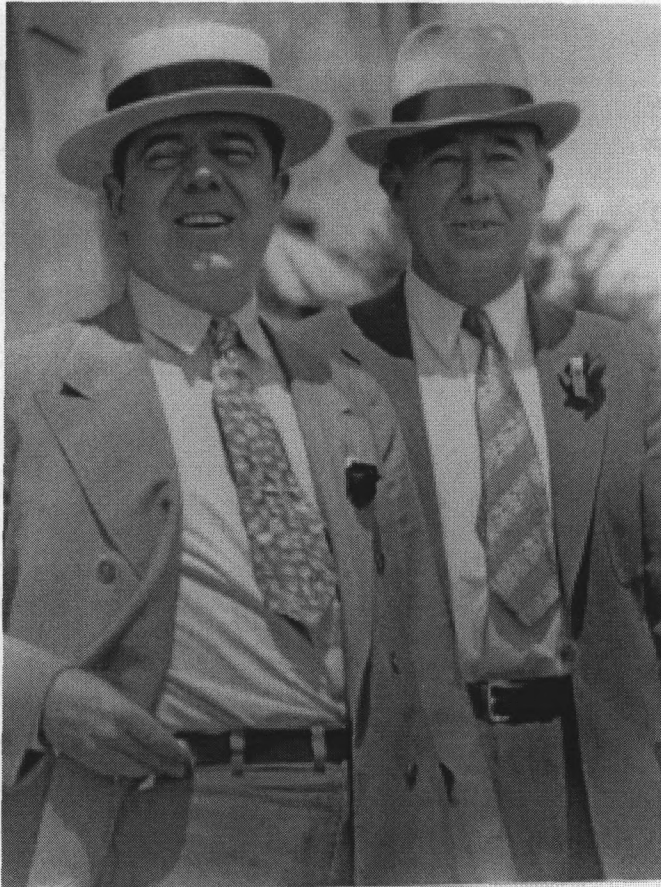
"Seed Oysters and Shrimp, 1942"



Evangeline Moss Company Operations, 1940



"Long Dynasty," 1940. If there were ever any doubt that the Longs inspired respect and adoration in many of their constituents, this photograph, taken at an Earl Long stump speech in 1940, would dispel it.



Huey P. Long and LSU president James Monroe Smith, 1934