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7. DESCRIPTION							
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Island (n	In 1869 Joseph Jefferson purchased his plantation at Orange Island (now Jefferson Island) ten miles west of New Iberia, Louisiana.						
plantation the plant was built	In 1870 he designed and built the lovely home which he named . Moorish, Gothic and French architecture, as well as Southern n themes are evident. Virgin cypress timber cut from trees on ation was used for the construction of the house. The house under Jefferson's direction by French craftsmen brought from ns, working around an earlier cottage.						
A central dining ro accommoda	The house is a rambling, hospitable structure one and one half igh, with a belvedere on the roof and verandas on three sides. hall twelve feet wide traverses the house and leads into the om at the rear, where there is an immense fireplace capable of ting five foot logs. An outstanding feature in the dining room autiful carved beamed ceiling.						
18' by 19	To the left of the hallway are double parlors both measuring ' and left of the parlors is a small sitting room 6' by 18'.						
18'. Two	Right of the hallway are two bedrooms both measuring 17' by 18'. Two baths are in this area.						
(18' by 1	In the rear of the house are a hallway (6' by 18'), a library 9'), and a kitchen (18' by 18').						
40' hall.	On the second floor are three bedrooms, a study and a 12' by The Gulf of Mexico is visible from the 9' by 11' belvedere.						
	The house and gardens are located on the site of one of the perating salt mines in the western hemisphere.						
	The gardens have been turned into what can be described as one n the English style using typical Southern plants: camellias, oleanders, gardenias, crape myrtle and magnolias.						
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Jefferson Island, first of the famous "Five Islands" of south Louisiana, found its origin in prehistory when the enormous pressures of the earth forced a plug of pure rock salt up from a mother bed, five miles below the surface. This elevated several low hills in the coastal marshes.

"Treasure Island" might equally well be its name, for, besides the inexhaustible deposits of salt, there are also mineral deposits of oil, gas, and sulphur. A gentle climate, adequate rainfall and a fertile soil help to produce a gardener's dream thus making possible the abundant and luxuriant floral beauty of the Island. Full advantage has been taken of these valuable natural resources, as well as the rolling terrain, in the creation of twenty acres of gardens on Jefferson Island.

Originally a Spanish land grant, "Orange Island," as it was first known, fell into the hands of a brother-in-law of Jean Lafitte, the notorious pirate and privateer. During the time he was terrorizing the Gulf and Caribbean areas, Lafitte often sought refuge here, since his shallow-draft pirate boats were able to negotiate Bayou Carlin into beautiful Lake Peigneur, where he could not be followed by Men-of-War. Hence, it is rumored that Lafitte, at various times, buried his booty and treasure here on the Island. Actually, this was partially substantiated in 1923, when a treasure consisting of 3 pots of Spanish, Mexican, French and American gold and silver coins was uncovered by an old Voodoo Doctor named Daynite. Close by the site of this discovery, near the tropical glen stand the magnificent twin Live Oaks known as the Lafitte Oaks.

In 1869, the Island was bought as a hunting and fishing preserve by Joseph Jefferson, the world-famous nineteenth century actor, who immortalized the character Rip Van Winkle in the play of that name by Washington Irving. Jefferson played the role of "Old Rip" in theatres throughout the world, winning fame, fortune, and many illustrious friends. Amongst the latter was President Grover Cleveland, who, together with many other celebrities, visited Jefferson Island on various occasions. Rip Van Winkle Gardens are named in honor of this great actor and the character that he immortalized. Besides acting for 71 of his 76 years, Jefferson was an ardent painter.

The "Big House" was built by Jefferson in 1870, from native Cypress cut on the Island. The original and unique design reflects the influence of Jefferson's travels, with hints of the Spanish (Moorish), French, Gothic

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

(Number all entries)

8. Statement of Significance (cont'd)

and Southern in its architecture.

From the third story belvedere the Gulf of Mexico is visible. As this site was said to have been originally occupied by the residence of Jean Lafitte, the trees in the area were planted by the pirate - or so Jefferson professed to believe. The tradition of his presence lent glamor to the vicinity and Jefferson liked to remind his guests of the story.

In 1917, the present owner's father bought the Island from the heirs of Jefferson. At that time only a small area immediately around the home was landscaped, the remainder of the hills being virgin woodland. Following World War II, Mr. J. L. Bayless, Jr., the present owner, began more ambitious ventures into horticulture with the planting of the Old Fashioned Camellia Garden, and the East Lawn. There followed extensive planting of Azaleas in the wooded area. Then, in 1965, an English horticulturist was engaged to continue the work and develop a true "English Garden in a Tropical Setting". This estate is being made into a Foundation.

In creating these Gardens great effort has been made to achieve the restful atmosphere which Old Rip would have appreciated. To accomplish this all of the old favorites, such as Oleanders, Gardenias, Yellow Jasmine, Crape Myrtle and Magnolias are mingled among the moss-draped Live Oaks, reflecting the charm of the deep South. Along the trails, from which the visitor is free to wander at will, are conveniently located benches for those who wish to relax and enjoy the views.

