

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

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

OMB No. 1024-0018

Montet House, St. Landry Parish, LA

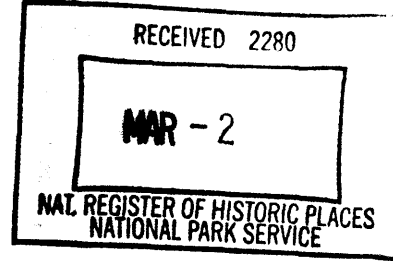
United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

244

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: Montet House

Other Name/Site Number:



2. LOCATION

Street & Number 157 Shady Lane

Not for publication: NA

City/Town Arnaudville

Vicinity: X

State: Louisiana Code: LA County: St. Landry Code: 097

Zip Code: 70512

3. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

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

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: Nationally: Statewide: Locally: X

Jonathan Fricker Deputy SHPO, Dept of Culture, Recreation and Tourism

March 1, 2006 Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

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

Signature of Commenting or Other Official/Title

Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

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4. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is:

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

Signature of Keeper: Edson H. Ball

Date of Action: 4.12.06

5. CLASSIFICATION

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

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

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing
1

Non contributing
buildings
sites
structures
objects
0 Total

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

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

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### 6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic: domestic                      Sub: single dwelling  
Current: domestic                      Sub: single dwelling

### 7. DESCRIPTION

Architectural Classification: Federal, other: French Creole, Greek Revival

Materials:

Foundation: brick  
Walls: weatherboard  
Roof: metal  
Other:

#### Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

Built circa 1830 in the rural community of Milton in Lafayette Parish, the Montet House was moved in 1999 some 40 miles to a rural location just barely inside the neighboring parish of St. Landry. The one-and-a-half story wood frame house combines Federal and Greek Revival woodwork with some French Creole features. The rehabilitation project after the move caused changes to be made to the exterior; however, the interior is largely unaltered. The most important rooms, the two at the front, are virtually pristine from circa 1830.

The Montet House was clearly in a "move it or lose it" situation in its original location. Long vacant, the house was scheduled for demolition. It would be sold only if removed from the property. The present owner, David Bordes, learned of the situation, and purchased the house to be placed on a 12-acre rural plot he owned already. The body of the house was moved in one piece, with the roof disassembled. The front gallery was also removed. The house in its new home has an idyllic setting with mature trees and rural views in every direction. It was sited facing a pond and a rolling meadow.

The gable end house has an inset gallery spanning the façade. There was never a rear gallery, or any type of porch. The original boxed columns with molded capitals (see attached photo) were removed as part of the move. Mr. Bordes indicates they were deteriorated. The new posts are the same size as the originals, but are not replications. For example, they have no capitals. They do, however, replicate the slightly irregular spacing of the originals. The original simple balustrade in place prior to the move was not retained. The house did not have dormers originally. Mr. Bordes wished to use the attic for living space. He added two dormers to the front and four additional small windows to each side elevation to provide light to the attic. The side elevations and the rear are sheathed in fairly wide weatherboards. The house retains all of its original six-over-six windows, with the upper sash fixed in place. The flush board façade features a molded chair rail. Its openings consist of a slightly off-center entrance with two windows to each side. The entrance features a transom with seven small panes and sidelights with three large panes and a molded panel below.

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The molding profile of the panels is typical of the late 1840s/early '50s, and the panes of glass in the side lights are larger than typical for a circa 1830 house. Hence one suspects that the sidelights were replaced early in the house's history. The gallery ceiling has exposed ceiling beams in the French Creole manner. Also in the French Creole tradition are the decorative "outlookers" along the eaves at the rear and *bousillage* infill. The *bousillage* survives on the lower story; only a section remains in the attic. In the attic the home's pegged, mortise and tenon construction can be seen.

The house has a fairly narrow slightly off-center hall with two rooms on each side. The rooms are of unequal size, with those in the rear being smaller. At the rear of the hall was a very narrow and steep enclosed staircase accessing the attic. This has been rebuilt and widened, now jutting a few inches into the hall. It is no longer enclosed. Beneath is a tiny bathroom added as part of the rehabilitation. The door accessing the stair was relocated to access the new bathroom.

The interior survives largely unaltered, with the exception of the insertion of a kitchen and bathroom into the two small rear rooms. And even in these two rooms, a notable amount of original material survives. All rooms and the hall feature exposed beam ceilings in the French Creole manner. The ceiling boards are of random width, with some being quite wide (as much as perhaps 14 to 16 inches). In some rooms the boards are beaded; in others they are not. Walls are sheathed in horizontally placed flush boards with a wainscot treatment below formed of vertically placed boards topped by a chair rail. The chair rail in the four rooms is quite simple. The hall's chair rail has a more elaborate molding profile, matching that found on the façade. All openings (doors and windows) feature molded surrounds with a slight pediment shape at the top, reflecting what was, at the time, the emerging Greek Revival taste. Doors are of four molded panels.

The Montet house retains its two exceptional Federal mantels. The slightly simpler of the two features delicate pilasters with molded inset panels and various layers of molding before culminating at a richly molded shelf. The other mantel, found in the larger of the two front rooms, is similar except a diamond pattern ornaments its entablature and rounded inset panels are found at the top of each pilaster.

When Mr. Bordes rescued the house, the evidence demonstrated that the attic had been inhabited (as one large room). Its walls were covered in painted boards, and a ceiling had been inserted. (Whether the ceiling was original is not known.) Bordes rebuilt the attic structure, re-using the original members in their original places as much as possible. He removed the ceiling, but the space remains one large room. The original quite wide random width floorboards remain.

### Summary of alterations:

- 1) Loss of the original columns and balustrade
- 2) New front dormers and insertion of small windows in side elevations at the attic level. The latter are admittedly inappropriate for the historic house.
- 3) A modern kitchen has been added to the larger of the rear rooms, but the room still retains much of its original character, including exposed beam ceilings and sections of the flush board walls and chair rail not covered by cabinets.
- 4) The smallest of the two rear rooms (the one adjacent to the staircase) is now a bathroom. It retains its exposed beam ceiling and some of its woodwork.

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### Assessment of Integrity:

While there have been changes to the exterior (some noteworthy), a great deal of the original character survives. Perhaps more importantly, at least in terms of Register eligibility, is the survival of so much of the interior. The latter is the basis of the house's architectural significance (and would have been, regardless of the move and exterior alterations).

The move is not an integrity issue for the following reasons:

- 1) The new setting is comparable to the old.
- 2) The two neighboring parishes in question (Lafayette and St. Landry) have very similar settlement and cultural patterns.
- 3) The house is significant within the context of both parishes.

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8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Applicable National Register Criteria: A\_\_ B\_\_ C X D\_\_

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): A\_\_ B X C\_\_ D\_\_ E\_\_ F\_\_ G\_\_

Areas of Significance: architecture

Period(s) of Significance: c. 1830

Significant Dates: c. 1830

Significant Person(s): NA

Cultural Affiliation: NA

Architect/Builder: unknown

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

The Montet House is of local architectural significance (within St. Landry and Lafayette parishes) for its well-preserved interiors, most notably the two front rooms, with their particularly fine Federal mantels.

St. Landry and Lafayette are both early French parishes. The house's home parish, Lafayette, has lost almost all of its pre-Civil War architecture due to largely unabated prosperity. Those early buildings not replaced during the historic period (with now cherished Queen Anne, Colonial Revival, etc. buildings) were razed in the oil boom years of the mid-twentieth century. There are now only a handful of early buildings original to the parish, and only one of these features Federal woodwork. (There are two instances of "recreated villages" using moved-in historic buildings – some early structures.)

St. Landry, adjoining Lafayette to the north, has been more fortunate, retaining a fair number of important early buildings. But even here, far more have been lost than have survived. While the staff of the Louisiana SHPO has not inspected every early nineteenth century house in the parish, we know of only 4 other first-rate period interiors – Chretien Point Plantation House, the Wier House, the John Lewis House, and Moundville Plantation House, all listed individually on the National Register. (Admittedly, most of these are more impressive than the Montet House, but the latter is still a rarity.) The Montet House's architectural significance rests principally on the two exceptional Federal mantels, which are indeed quite rare in St. Landry and Lafayette parishes, especially when one recalls how early these areas were settled. Native French Creole houses would have had this style of woodwork. The SHPO is aware of only 5-6 houses with Federal mantels in St. Landry (sometimes only one in a given house) and one in Lafayette. Secondly, the candidate's main spaces, the two front rooms and the hall, are virtually unaltered from the historic period, which is quite a rarity. They convey quite well the look of an early nineteenth century house. Finally, the *bousillage* construction and exposed ceiling beams throughout help convey the French Creole heritage of the area.

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## 9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Historic structures survey, St. Landry Parish, conducted for Louisiana Division of Historic Preservation.

Previous documentation on file (NPS): NA

- Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- Previously Listed in the National Register. (partially)
- Previously Determined Eligible by the National Register.
- Designated a National Historic Landmark.
- Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: #
- Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: #

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other (Specify Repository):

## 10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: less than an acre

UTM References:     **Zone Easting Northing**  
                          15    592820 3359520

Verbal Boundary Description: Boundaries parallel building elevations, each at a distance of 20 feet.

Boundary Justification: There are no historic boundaries to recognized for this moved house. Boundaries were chosen to discretely encompass the resource.



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## **11. FORM PREPARED BY**

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

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

Telephone: 225-342-8160

Date: August 2005

## **PROPERTY OWNERS**

David C. Bordes  
1404 S. College Road  
Lafayette, LA 70503