

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

Mc 3191

**National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form**

This form is used for documenting property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin *How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form* (formerly 16B). Complete each item by entering the requested information.

  X   New Submission            Amended Submission

**A. Name of Multiple Property Listing**

Louisiana Coastal Vernacular: Grand Isle 1780-1968

**B. Associated Historic Contexts**

(Name each associated historic context, identifying theme, geographical area, and chronological period for each.)

Formation and Early Island Habitation (1780-1812)

Mid-Century Development (1812-1880)

Late Nineteenth Century Gilded Age (1880-1893)

Hurricane to Highway (1893-1931)

Auto Age and Industry (1931-1968)

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**D. Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation.

Karen P. McKinney  
Signature of certifying official

State Historic Preservation Officer August 15, 2018  
Title Date

Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism  
State or Federal Agency or Tribal government

I hereby certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

Jan Salter  
Signature of the Keeper

December 30, 2018  
Date of Action

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

Louisiana Coastal Vernacular: Grand Isle, 1780-1968  
Name of Multiple Property Listing

Jefferson Parish, Louisiana  
State

## **Table of Contents for Written Narrative**

Create a Table of Contents and list the page numbers for each of these sections in the space below.

Provide narrative explanations for each of these sections on continuation sheets. In the header of each section, cite the letter, page number, and name of the multiple property listing. Refer to *How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form* for additional guidance.

	<b>Page Numbers</b>
<b>E. Statement of Historic Contexts</b>	<b>1</b>
(If more than one historic context is documented, present them in sequential order.)	
Formation and Early Island Habitation (1780-1812)	6
Mid-Century Development (1812-1880)	8
Late Nineteenth Century Gilded Age (1880-1893)	13
Hurricane to Highway (1893-1931)	17
Auto Age and Industry (1931-1968)	21
<b>F. Associated Property Types</b>	<b>27</b>
(Provide description, significance, and registration requirements.)	
Buildings	27
Historic Districts	29
<b>G. Geographical Data</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>H. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods</b>	<b>32</b>
(Discuss the methods used in developing the multiple property listing.)	
<b>I. Major Bibliographical References</b>	<b>33</b>
(List major written works and primary location of additional documentation: State Historic Preservation Office, other State agency, Federal agency, local government, university, or other, specifying repository.)	

**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 250 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 Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, PO Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Name of Property
Jefferson Parish, LA
County and State
Louisiana Coastal Vernacular: Grand Isle, 1780-1968
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number E Page 1

**E. Statement of Historic Contexts**

**Defining Vernacular Architecture**

In recent years, preservation focus shifted away from prominent monumental type structures (government, business, and residential buildings of important white men) and became more inclusive of other buildings representative of a wider range of the American people. One of the most commonly ignored building types remained indigenous/folk and vernacular structures because their design and construction did not usually involve professional architects or prominent members of the community. These homes, businesses, churches, schools and other places of the common people that survived time and occupation have gained interest with shifts towards environmental design, value engineering, energy conservation, and greater inclusion of the whole history of the nation. John Burns defined,

Vernacular building forms more accurately exemplify the diversity of ethnic heritage, lifestyles, and folkways in the United States. The significance of vernacular structures resides not so much in their individual merit as in their ability to reflect larger patterns in our nation's historical and architectural development.<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps vernacular, among all building types and forms, holds the most significance on the individual level. Most often when referring to vernacular structures, one means residential and farm buildings, those most basic to the survival of humankind. Traditionally constructed by the future occupants or users, and utilizing inexpensive and readily available materials, vernacular tends to be the humblest of accommodations. According to John Brinkerhoff Jackson, "The beauty that we see in the vernacular landscape is the image of our common humanity: hard work, stubborn hope, and mutual forbearance."<sup>2</sup> In the United States, vernacular most commonly referred to wood structures on abundant land with limited skilled labor. It typically also meant constructed for farmers, craftsmen, and wage earners.<sup>3</sup> Because the builders relied on local materials, designed to withstand climate and topography in that location, and for the maximum human comfort, these structures possess some of the most significant data about basic survival in a region. The Grand Isle coastal structures, designed for and constructed by local residents from locally available materials and without discernable architectural style, fall within this definition.

**Louisiana Coastal Vernacular**

Along the Louisiana Gulf coast, people built what they knew how to build and adapted structures to withstand local weather and climate conditions. Steep roofs shed heavy rains, and raised floors withstood surf intrusion. Chimney foundations dug deep, four feet or more into the ground, anchored light-framed wood houses in place. Doors and windows featured heavy solid shutters to close out storms. Door and window openings aligned across rooms to catch sea breezes and porches faced the beach to watch children playing and spouses working there. Laundry hung on porch railings. Gutters along roof edges caught rainwater and channeled it to cisterns.

Several authors included some building information in their works. Betsy Swanson, in *Historic Jefferson*

<sup>1</sup> Burns, 142.

<sup>2</sup> John Brinkerhoff Jackson, *Discovering the Vernacular Landscape*. (New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 1984), xii.

<sup>3</sup> Jackson, 86.

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Name of Property
Jefferson Parish, LA
County and State
Louisiana Coastal Vernacular: Grand Isle, 1780-1968
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number E Page 1

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**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Name of Property
Jefferson Parish, LA
County and State
Louisiana Coastal Vernacular: Grand Isle, 1780-1968
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number E Page 2

*Parish*, described them as “gable-ended Creole cottages with built-in galleries across the front.”<sup>4</sup> Some larger homes were “raised a half story above the ground as a precaution against floods” but retained the same design with “generous galleries and ample openings for ventilation.”<sup>5</sup>

In his 1977 dissertation, Frederick Stielow included sketches of a four-room house with a front porch titled “Typical Grand Isle Creole House.”<sup>6</sup> There are two rooms at front with a center chimney and two smaller rooms behind them. The house had a brick pier foundation three steps above the ground with wood clapboard siding and a gable roof running side-to-side. A water cistern located at the side of the porch collected rainwater. Four pairs of French doors opened onto the porch.<sup>7</sup> Stielow’s building descriptions are blended into his description of the fabric of daily life for their occupants. He mentions a “separate kitchen shed” equipped with a “*tablette*, or dishwashing stand set in a window, that allowed for communication” with neighbors and children while working.<sup>8</sup> The shed was “frequently provided with a raised walkway to the main house.”<sup>9</sup> Floors were polished by scrubbing with crushed brick.<sup>10</sup> Baking bread occurred in “specially constructed outside ovens.”<sup>11</sup> Animal pens and cooking sheds “placed downwind from prevailing breezes” kept odors in the house minimal. Orange trees planted in close proximity to houses ensured fresh smells and kept yard weeds to a minimum.<sup>12</sup>

Between 1865 and 1900, according to Stielow, island home modernizations included lighting by kerosene lanterns instead of candles, and utilization of improved stoves allowing kitchen relocation into the house.<sup>13</sup> House design changed also from “palmetto thatched huts and mud walled cottages” to “French Provincial stylings with African influences” that increased ventilation.<sup>14</sup> His description of floors raised above the ground on wood or brick piers, central chimneys, and steeply pitched roofs over high ceilings closely resemble most of the remaining structures. Pairs of doors opening off the porch into rooms with connecting doors encouraged air flow.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Swanson. *Historic Jefferson Parish*, 162.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 163. Although Ditto and Davis include Louisiana building data in their works, neither are architects or architectural historians and the result is a confusing mix of styles, types, and descriptions that fail to relate to professional architectural standards. Tanya Ditto, *The Longest Street: A Story of Lafourche Parish and Grand Isle*. (Baton Rouge, LA: Moran Publishing, 1980), 11-12; Donald W. Davis, *Washed Away? The Invisible Peoples of Louisiana's Wetlands*. (Lafayette, LA: University of Louisiana at Lafayette Press, 2010), 143-148.

<sup>6</sup> Frederick J. Stielow, *Isolation and Development on a Louisiana Gulfcoast Island: Grand Isle, 1781-1962*. PhD diss., Indiana University, 1977. (Ann Arbor: Xerox University Microfilms, 1979), Figures V: 1 & 2.

<sup>7</sup> Interestingly, the house information is woven throughout the sections titled “The Women” and “Adaptability.” It is not stated but rather implied that the house fell under the women’s jurisdiction since men controlled the boats on which they made their livings and spent most of their time. Stielow, *Isolation and Development*, 133-137 and 140-145.

<sup>8</sup> Stielow, *Isolation and Development*, 134.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 135-136.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 141.

<sup>14</sup> The 1880 census included three carpenters who worked on hotel buildings as well as at least one new house per year between 1865 and 1900. Stielow, *Isolation and Development*, 141.

<sup>15</sup> Poesch and Bacot, 27-30.

**United States Department of the Interior**  
**National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Name of Property
Jefferson Parish, LA
County and State
Louisiana Coastal Vernacular: Grand Isle, 1780-1968
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number E Page 3

By the nineteenth century, the Acadian cottage design, influenced by French Canadian style and blended with Creole elements, spread across south Louisiana.<sup>16</sup> These small buildings, raised a few feet off the ground and two rooms deep by two rooms wide, had full galleries across the front. Sometimes, the rear rooms divided into three spaces with the center one larger and open as a rear gallery similar to Creole design. The steeply pitched gable roofs left adequate living space for a sleeping loft accessed by stairs on the porch, a distinctive difference from Creole designs that utilized attics only for ventilation.<sup>17</sup>

In the aftermath of severe storms and loss of life between 1893 and 1915, a construction revision to elevated structures started. Though many private property owners continued building in the traditional styles, the construction of the U.S. Coast Guard Station in 1919 set the precedent for occupied spaces above the flood plain. The survivability of this structure played an as yet unexplored role in future structures on the island and other Gulf coast areas.

On Grand Isle, buildings that survived for one hundred years stand testimony to the people of the community who also survived. As the only continuously occupied barrier island on the Louisiana coastline, Grand Isle access occurred solely by boat prior to the completion of LA Highway One in 1931. Without the materials for building on the island or in the immediate vicinity, construction materials such as lumber, bricks, gravel, cement, steel, hardware, and furniture required importation by boat. Although buildings on the island constructed prior to the highway completion included a variety of materials, styles, and construction methods, they comprise a unique component of Louisiana's historical community development and coastal vernacular architecture. Few examples of coastal construction along the Gulf of Mexico remain due to the frequency and strength of tropical storms, and these structures that have survived provide valuable information for both historical research and future survivability of coastal construction. Changes in people, construction requirements, and the environment present significant threats to the survival of Louisiana coastal buildings. Additionally, the age and condition of the oldest and most fragile structures, several unoccupied, increases the risk of loss.

### ***Conclusion***

Buildings house more than people; they provide repositories for human civilizations. Public history, as the parent program including historic preservation, provides the connection between preservation and research as the conduit for public audiences. Through the efforts of "hundreds of historians, archaeologists, and architects" functioning as researchers, planners, managers, interpreters, and conservators "our heritage remains to be enjoyed and appreciated by subsequent generations."<sup>18</sup>

### **Historic Resources in Grand Isle**

<sup>16</sup> Poesch and Bacot, 27-30.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Schene, 7.

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Name of Property
Jefferson Parish, LA
County and State
Louisiana Coastal Vernacular: Grand Isle, 1780-1968
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number E Page 4

Grand Isle contains Louisiana's longest surviving coastal vernacular structures. *The cases studied validated the proposed Louisiana Coastal Vernacular: Grand Isle 1780-1931 National Register Multiple Property Listing. The unique culture that developed on the island left tangible remains in the buildings constructed and occupied. The first colonists' plantations and grand hotels are gone, destroyed by the surf and winds of a century or more of storms.*<sup>19</sup> What buildings remain testify instead to the resilience of the island residents who adapted and survived – the coastal vernacular structures. The homes of fishermen and vegetable farmers located within the protection of the dense oak trees on the ridge at the center of the island remain.<sup>20</sup> Similar in construction, most are gable roofed with wood siding and front porches facing the beach. A single commercial building remains in mute testimony to the first century of the community. A few structures remain from the early twentieth century: a church, a military station, and homes. All the surviving structures reflect the wear and tear of time. *The structures that have survived during the past century on Grand Isle comprise a significant component of the national, state, and local sense of place. Documentation of their existence via National Register Multiple Property Listing poses the most viable option for posterity.*

**Grand Isle Past, Present, and Future**

It was a coastal island gently basking in the sun, with sandy driftwood-strewn beaches and a ridge of wind-blown oaks along its backbone. Behind the oak ridge ... were three large resort hotels that catered to well-to-do New Orleanians. Perhaps 100 bathhouses lined the beach for the convenience of hotel guests while well-appointed dining halls stood ready to serve succulent seafood.

-Evans, et al. *Grand Isle on the Gulf – An Early History*

Approximately two hundred million tons of sediment flowed down the Mississippi River annually over the course of centuries creating numerous, mostly uninhabitable islands along the Gulf Coast.<sup>21</sup> The higher ridges of sediment, known as *cheniers* (or *chenieres*), supported forest growth and sheltered inland waters from storm surges.<sup>22</sup> The terrain of these islands consisted mostly of marsh habitat, beaches, and chenier forests containing live oak, palm, willow, hackberry, water oak, mulberry, honey locust, elm, green ash, elderberry, oleander, blackberry, marsh grass, and other plant species that provide food and shelter to wild birds.<sup>23</sup> Louisiana's largest chenier, Grand Isle, continues to serve as a sanctuary for numerous species of migratory birds before and after the long flight across the Gulf of Mexico.<sup>24</sup> Abundant wildlife, land, sea, and amphibian, live on and in the warm Gulf waters around the

<sup>19</sup> Site Inspections, conducted during March and July 2015; July and August 2016; June, July, August, and October 2017; and February 2018, included owner interviews, photographs, sketches, notes, and physical inspections of properties; Swanson, *Historic Jefferson*, 161.

<sup>20</sup> Swanson, 161.

<sup>21</sup> Bevil Knapp and Mike Dunne, *America's Wetland: Louisiana's Vanishing Coast*. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005), 3.

<sup>22</sup> United States Environmental Protection Agency, The Nature Conservancy, "Grand Isle Program" pamphlet, 1998.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> The twenty-first century confirmation of the island as an essential component of the migratory path validates many nineteenth century accounts of the number and variety of birds on the island including those by Hearn,

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Name of Property
Jefferson Parish, LA
County and State
Louisiana Coastal Vernacular: Grand Isle, 1780-1968
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number E Page 5

island.<sup>25</sup>

Historically, fishing the surrounding waters provided residents and visitors with a bounty that included fresh and saltwater fish, shrimp, crabs, oysters, alligator, and turtle).<sup>26</sup> The temperate climate provided ideal growing conditions for garden vegetables, and the islanders took advantage of early harvests to get the best prices for their bounty.<sup>27</sup> Farmers advertised their produce in New Orleans newspapers and hauled pirate loot with them to market. Tourists flocked to the beach advertised as a rival to major Atlantic coast resorts.

Today, Grand Isle, Louisiana, is the only beach resort along the state's 300-mile long coastline. It is the only continuously occupied barrier island on the Louisiana Gulf Coast remains "the most easily accessible and best developed island resort" with a reputation as "one of the top ten fishing spots in America."<sup>28</sup> Formed from the rich, silty soils deposited by the Mississippi River, the one-and-one-half mile wide by seven miles long island contains a live oak chenier at its center.<sup>29</sup> Held safe and protected within this high ground stand the surviving structures of the past two centuries of human occupation on Grand Isle. Here, the descendants of French, Spanish, African, Native American, and Asian settlers lived, worked, and played.<sup>30</sup> The group of structures represent a unique architectural legacy of Louisiana Coastal Vernacular structures.<sup>31</sup> This multiple property submission and subsequent

duQuesnay, and Chopin. The community sponsors a migratory wild bird festival each Spring that attracts hundreds of birdwatchers to the island.

<sup>25</sup> United States Environmental Protection Agency, The Nature Conservancy, "Grand Isle Program" pamphlet, 1998.

<sup>26</sup> Women, working on looms in their homes, knitted "the famous Baratavia seines... among the largest in the world." *Times Picayune* (New Orleans, LA). September 25, 1892; Charles Schuler, T.W. Castleman, William C. Stubbs, William R. Dodson, Robert Glenk, *Louisiana at the Jamestown Tercentennial Exposition 1907, Report of the Jamestown Exposition of the State of Louisiana to His Excellency Newton Blanchard and the General Assembly of the State of Louisiana*, (1907). HathiTrust. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/>. Diamond-back terrapin (turtles) provided significant income to local Grand Isle resident John Ludwig who received the gold first place prize at the Jamestown Exposition. The small amphibians sold for up to \$160 per dozen. *Times-Democrat* (New Orleans, LA). February 10, 1907.

<sup>27</sup> In 1889, Grand Isle residents harvested "more than \$3,000,000 worth of cucumbers" which were shipped as far abroad as Chicago. Grand Isle Louisiana, History from 1860 to Date. <http://grandislevacationguide.com/gih0d.html>.

<sup>28</sup> Swanson, 165; Tanya Ditto, *The Longest Street: A Story of Lafourche Parish and Grand Isle*. (Baton Rouge, LA: Moran Publishing, 1980), 80.

<sup>29</sup> Coastal Live Oak-Hackberry Forest or Chenier (French for "place of oaks") are natural formations of beach ridges along the southern Louisiana Gulf of Mexico coastline. The beaches formed from ancient deltaic sedimentation from the Mississippi River. The ridges remain within 4-5 feet above sea level with *Quercus Virginiana* (live oak) as the dominant canopy species. Coastal barrier islands form a significant component of protection from storm surges and wind waves related to coastal erosion. State of Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, Contract no. 2533-08-02 Cheniers and Natural Ridges. (Baton Rouge, LA: Providence Engineering and Environmental Group, Inc., 2009), 22.

<sup>30</sup> Grand Isle's highest point is five feet above sea level. This high ground exists within the live oak chenier at the center of the island.

<sup>31</sup> It is the contention of the author that, for purposes of this thesis, "Coastal Vernacular" be considered an architectural style similar to designations of French Creole or Greek Revival and therefore is a proper name requiring capitalization.



**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Name of Property
Jefferson Parish, LA
County and State
Louisiana Coastal Vernacular: Grand Isle, 1780-1968
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number E Page 6

nominations will provide a minimal level of documentation for these survivors of over 150 years of wind, surf, flood, and human occupation.

A 2009 state survey on coastal historical assets identified Grand Isle as a significant component of the Barataria Bay system that comprises a unique cultural heritage. This heritage includes historic live oak trees; a vast array of harvestable seafood, plant, and wildlife species; several generations of families; multiple distinct French-speaking groups, many of the Catholic faith; historic cemeteries; residential streets of "living history" in homes, stores, and churches; legends of Jean Lafitte, Napoleon, and John Paul Jones; remains of seaside resorts; and, over two hundred years of coastal history that has survived tropical storms and hurricanes occurring, on average, every seven years.<sup>32</sup> The island also contains Louisiana's only Coast Guard post and the origins of the nation's offshore petroleum industry. The following is a history of the island and its inhabitants.

### **Formation and Early Island Habitation**

The Chitimachas, the first known human inhabitants of Grand Isle, used it for fishing and water play prior to the arrival of Europeans at the end of the eighteenth century.<sup>33</sup> During the sixteenth century, the Spanish mapped the island as eight-miles long and three-miles wide but with insufficient elevation to moor seagoing ships.<sup>34</sup> During the 1780s, the Spanish divided the island into four land grants awarded to Jacques Rigaud, Francois Aufrey, Joseph Caillet, and Charles Dufresne.<sup>35</sup> Each developed his grant into a cash crop plantation supplemented with shrimp and oyster harvests.

Initially, plantations made good profits on sugar, cotton, and cattle.<sup>36</sup> However, crops and methods that

<sup>32</sup> Christopher M. Moreno and Dayna Bowker Lee, *Final Report, MC252 (Deepwater Horizon) Oil Spill Response, Traditional Cultural Properties Inventory: State of Louisiana*, ed. Giorgio H. Curti and Dayna Bowker Lee (New Orleans: HDR Environmental for Gulf Coast Incident Management Team, May 2015), 220-242. The oldest surviving structures on Grand Isle are located near the center of the island, front to back and end to end, on the highest ground within the live oak chenier. This is also the area where city hall, school, emergency services, churches, cemeteries, grocery store, gas station, and most of the year-round residents reside. Aerial Image of Grand Isle from TerraServer Satellite and Aerial Imagery. Updated 2015.  
<http://www.terra-server.com/view.asp?tid=142>.

<sup>33</sup> Stielow, *Isolation and Development*, 29-30. "The Chitimacha Tribe of Louisiana is the only tribe in Louisiana to still occupy a portion of their aboriginal homeland. The Chitimacha, according to oral history, "have always been here." Unfortunately, over thousands of years the Chitimacha land base has significantly decreased. The Tribe's lands once encompassed the entire Atchafalaya Basin, lands westward toward Lafayette, Louisiana, southward to the Gulf of Mexico and eastward to the New Orleans area. The Chitimacha Tribe currently maintains a reservation adjacent to the town of Charenton, in St. Mary Parish, Louisiana." Sovereign Nation of the Chitimacha. <http://www.chitimacha.gov/history-culture/tribal-history>. However, rising sea levels that cover land and roadways have forced tribal members and many other small communities in coastal areas to relocate. Brasseaux, Carl A. and Donald W. Davis, *Ain't There No More: Louisiana's Disappearing Coastal Plain*. (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2017), 166-168.

<sup>34</sup> Stielow, *Isolation and Development*, 30.

<sup>35</sup> Rigaud, native of Bordeaux, France received 120 arpents on the east end of the island, the largest portion of the island. Ditto, 80; Stielow, *Isolation and Development*, 36.

<sup>36</sup> Inventory records from 1840 indicate that two plantations comprised at least 53 arpents fronting the Gulf valued at over \$100,000 and employing over one hundred slaves. Swanson, 160.

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Name of Property
Jefferson Parish, LA
County and State
Louisiana Coastal Vernacular: Grand Isle, 1780-1968
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number E Page 7

worked in other parts of Louisiana failed in the soft, sandy soil and frequent storms that poured salt water over the island.<sup>37</sup> Colonists struggled to adapt to the severe tropical storms that arrived every few years. Crops like cucumbers and melons however ripened quickly in the tropical island atmosphere, allowing farmers to get them to market earlier for greater profits.<sup>38</sup> Islanders also traded with Jean Lafitte and his band of privateers moving goods between the coast and New Orleans markets.<sup>39</sup> Francois Rigaud and Louis Chighizola, ancestors to generations of Grand Isle residents, appeared in an 1805 journal as employees of the Lafitte family, confirming islander connections between the pirates and the city.<sup>40</sup>

By the time of the Louisiana Purchase, people of Native American, French, Spanish, and African origins had combined in south Louisiana to form a unique Creole cultural environment. In New Orleans, and throughout the delta lands of the Mississippi River, society developed into distinct classes consisting of varying degrees of education, culture, refinement, and sophistication.<sup>41</sup> Well established New Orleans society was based on the previous hundred years of French and Spanish government, and religion, at the time of the Purchase.<sup>42</sup> The influx of Americans after that created additional tension in the city already divided by race, religion, language, and economy.<sup>43</sup> After statehood in 1812, Louisiana experienced a population explosion. New Orleans, second only to New York City in American ports, became the most important market in the region.<sup>44</sup> The city boomed and carried the rest of the state along with it as “the marketplace of the wealth of the west.”<sup>45</sup>

Wealthy New Orleans residents in the nineteenth century utilized Grand Isle as a seaside resort. The popularity of seaside bathing reached a peak near the end of the century, and this small barrier island on the Louisiana coastline provided unlimited attractions and opportunities for adventure. From its earliest settlement, Creole families from New Orleans vacationed and spent summers on the island,

<sup>37</sup> The last plantation failed after the hurricane of 1856 at which time it was sold and divided into smaller tracts and the Grand Isle Hotel. Ditto, 85.

<sup>38</sup> Stielow, *Isolation and Development*, 152.

<sup>39</sup> At least one early map identified Grand Isle as a “Pirate Settlement.” Reproduction of 1811 map. *Louisiana: An Historical Portrait 1699-1812, Settlement and Population Growth*. 1984. Jefferson Parish Library.

<sup>40</sup> Rigaud and Chighizola descendants remain on the island today. Ditto, 85.

<sup>41</sup> Moreno, et al, 225-227. The word Creole has been defined in different ways during different historical periods. Originally, Creoles defined themselves as American descendants of French or Spanish heritage. Later additions of Native American, German, Canadian, African, and Caribbean became accepted as the cultural mix in New Orleans currently referred to as Creoles. By definition: Creole refers to 1. A person born in the New World of parents from France or Spain, or with ancestors from those countries and from Africa. 2. Resulting from the blend of European with African, and sometimes also Native American, cultures. 3. Of the architecture in Louisiana derived from this heritage. 4. Of a sort specifically Louisianian. Poesch and Bacot, 386.

<sup>42</sup> South Louisiana, like coastal Mississippi and Alabama, retained their Roman Catholic affiliations as descendants of French and Spanish colonists. Leonard V. Huber, *Creole Collage: Reflections on the Colorful Customs of Latter-Day New Orleans Creoles*. (Lafayette, LA: The Center for Louisiana Studies, 1980), 1.

<sup>43</sup> Huber, *Creole Collage*, 1.

<sup>44</sup> Ari Kelman, *A River and Its City: The Nature of Landscape in New Orleans* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 63. New Orleans reported moving from \$8 million annual port receipts four years after the first steamboat reached the port to a truly awe inspiring \$100 million in 1850 that stayed at that level until the port was closed by Union occupation during the Civil War.

<sup>45</sup> Kelman, 61.

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Name of Property Jefferson Parish, LA
County and State Louisiana Coastal Vernacular: Grand Isle, 1780-1968
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number E Page 8

attracted by “sand beaches, Gulf surf, shady oaks, and flowering plants” as well as other attractions.<sup>46</sup> Fishing, yachting, dancing, card playing, eating, and hammock swinging proved popular on Grand Isle as in many other resorts of the era. Of course, vacationers spent time on the beach enjoying the warm waters of the Gulf. Famous duelist Don Jose “Pepe” Llulla retired from New Orleans to nearby Grand Terre and became an attraction for young men interested in honing their skills with the blade.<sup>47</sup> Jean Lafitte, pirate and privateer, frequented the area in the early 1800s from his base on a nearby Gulf island, and after his death in 1823, rumors of pirate gold provided inspiration for treasure seekers.<sup>48</sup> Excursions by boat to Fort Livingston across the Barataria Pass included picnics and explorations of the fort.<sup>49</sup> Nature provided the subtropical wonders of coastal woodland that mixed live oaks with palms and beach flowers with scented shade lovers.

Residents took advantage of the natural environment when planning homesites. Property proportions on Grand Isle remained typical of French long-lots common in the state with the exception that lots spanned the full depth of the island from beach to bay.<sup>50</sup> Houses faced the beach to catch prevailing winds, regardless of their distance from it, but remained within the protection of the live oaks near the center of the island.<sup>51</sup> The main road consisted of a sand track that extended along the beach side from Chenier Caminada on the west across to Barataria Bay on the east.<sup>52</sup> Winding paths from beach to bay that developed alongside homesites eventually became roads with intersecting paths between adjacent homes.

Island industries during the nineteenth century continued the plantation economy but on a smaller scale and with a greater variety of crops. Known for gardens of all kinds, Grand Isle residents grew numerous citrus trees as well as private vegetable gardens, which produced some sizable cash crops.<sup>53</sup> Some vegetables and fruits considered exotic during the nineteenth century - cauliflower, grapefruit, sweet potatoes, and eggplant - grew abundantly and added to the legend of the island paradise.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Swanson, *Historic Jefferson Parish*, 160.

<sup>47</sup> “During half a century Llulla was the confidant and trainer of New Orleans duelists, and figured as second in more than a hundred encounters. His formidable reputation as an expert did not save him from the necessity of having some twenty or more affairs of his own.” Obituary, *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, March 7, 1888.

<sup>48</sup> Catherine Cole relayed a tale of one treasure seeker digging so many holes that islanders intervened because the land was being “literally dug away.” *New Orleans Times Picayune*, September 25, 1892.

<sup>49</sup> Fort Livingston was commissioned by the United States government in 1834 but was not completed prior to the Civil War. It was abandoned in 1872 and in 1923 control of the fort and island was given to the State of Louisiana. The fort, accessible only by boat, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and remains a Louisiana State Commemorative Area. Atlas Obscura, 2015. Fort Livingston, Grand Terre, Louisiana. <http://www.atlasobscura.com/places/fort-livingston>.

<sup>50</sup> Jefferson Parish Records, Barataria Plantation Plat, book 5, page 114. Maps 7489-7490.

<sup>51</sup> Site Inspections July 2017 through February 2018; Stielow, *Isolation and Development*, 143.

<sup>52</sup> The primary road on the island remains Louisiana Highway One, located in the same area following the beach as the earlier path, crossing west to east, and ending at Barataria Bay. Site Inspections July 2017 through February 2018.

<sup>53</sup> As many as 3500 oranges shipped in a single shipload in 1863 and 3100 melons shipped on five steamboats in 1864. *New Orleans Times Picayune*, December 13, 1863, July 12, 1864.

<sup>54</sup> *The Patriot* (Glenmora, LA), December 10, 1920.

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Name of Property
Jefferson Parish, LA
County and State
Louisiana Coastal Vernacular: Grand Isle, 1780-1968
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number E Page 9

**Mid-Century Development**

By the middle of the nineteenth century, the flora and fauna of the island “attracted summer vacationers escaping the heat of the city and the scourge of yellow fever.”<sup>55</sup> Island residents built hotels or accommodated guests in the old plantation buildings. A map dated 1867 located the Grand Isle Hotel on the bay side of the Barataria Plantation property, which had been converted into tourist accommodations after plantation crops failed.<sup>56</sup>

With steamboat travel, trips formerly involving months of travel were reduced to days and provided ease, comfort, and affordable fares compared to wind- or human-powered boats or tedious overland foot and cattle traffic.<sup>57</sup> Unlike its European and American east coast resort counterparts, however Grand Isle did not experience the increase in tourism brought by railroads. Train tracks extended south of New Orleans but never crossed the vast swamp land of the Barataria Bay to Grand Isle. In the absence of a land route, access remained limited to people who could afford water travel throughout the nineteenth and the first three decades of the twentieth centuries, thus ensuring the continuation of the quiet, serene exclusivity of the island.<sup>58</sup>

The connection between New Orleans and Grand Isle was rooted in the disadvantages of the sub-tropical city. Although similar in temperature to central Florida, the atmosphere of New Orleans often worked against it. Located in the hot, humid climate near the end of the Mississippi River, the city had frequent contact with international shipping concerns and no safe sanitation system. Outbreaks of diseases such as malaria, dysentery, pneumonia, typhoid, tuberculosis, smallpox, and yellow fever occurred annually. Some people believed that during the summer months “New Orleans was a naturally unhealthy place,” and its location exposed it to “uncontrollable outbreaks of yellow fever.”<sup>59</sup> While many newcomers to New Orleans attended summer activities at Lake Pontchartrain or Biloxi, Mississippi, summer visitors on Grand Isle retained a familiar society and tradition. The same island resident families provided summer service to the hotel guests in familiar surroundings each year.<sup>60</sup> The

<sup>55</sup> Betsy Swanson, *Historic Jefferson Parish: From Shore to Shore*. (Gretna, LA: Pelican Publishing, 1975), 160-161.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ari Kelman, *A River and Its City: The Nature of Landscape in New Orleans* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 64-65.

<sup>58</sup> Louisiana Highway One was constructed in 1931 bringing the first vehicular traffic to the island. Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development. [http://wwwsp.dotd.la.gov/Inside\\_LaDOTD/Divisions/Multimodal/Data\\_Collections/Mapping/Pages/Historic\\_Highway\\_Maps.aspx](http://wwwsp.dotd.la.gov/Inside_LaDOTD/Divisions/Multimodal/Data_Collections/Mapping/Pages/Historic_Highway_Maps.aspx).

<sup>59</sup> Henry M. McKiven Jr., “The Political Construction of a Natural Disaster: The Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1853,” *Journal of American History*, 94 (Dec. 2007): 737. Overall, more than 41,000 people died in the city from yellow fever between 1817 and 1905. The number of fatalities ranged from zero, in the few years in which the plague caused no casualties, to over a thousand per year in nine of the eighty-eight years during which the fever was active. Angus M. Gunn, *Encyclopedia of Disasters: Environmental Catastrophes and Human Tragedies*. (Greenwood Press, 2008), 158-159.

<sup>60</sup> Seven family names - Adam, Bradberry, Chighizola, Coulon, Rigaud, Santini, and Terrebonne - remained predominant on Grand Isle and comprised fifty percent of the population by the 1920s. Stielow, *Isolation and Development*, 187. Island guests left their slaves and post-Civil War servants at home in the city when they travelled to the seaside. Workers were expected to provide a thorough cleaning to the house and outbuildings in the absence of the owners. Such tasks included moving furniture, rugs, and chandeliers and engaging in

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Name of Property
Jefferson Parish, LA
County and State
Louisiana Coastal Vernacular: Grand Isle, 1780-1968
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number E Page 10

island had a distinctive society among American peoples. These Creoles defined themselves as people of multi-generational mixed ancestry, primarily French and Spanish Catholics, who descended from the early settlement of the Louisiana colony. Despite an increasing acceptance of social rule relaxation in other populations, Creole Catholics retained the strict moral expectations of their faith. The influx of immigrants to New Orleans from Ireland, Germany, Italy, the Caribbean Islands, and elsewhere in the United States mixed large numbers of peoples from a variety of backgrounds that eventually diluted the monopoly of Creole influence and became absorbed into the local culture.<sup>61</sup>

The popularity of sea bathing and the practice of relocating from hot, noisy, smelly cites for the summer eventually combined to bring this small barrier island into a brief Gilded Age.<sup>62</sup> According to the *New Orleans Republican*,

The bathing at Grand Isle is acknowledged by those experienced in such matters to be unsurpassed by any other watering place in the South. Without pronouncing such ultra judgement, it is certainly fair to say that it is a very desirable bathing place. The beach of hard sand makes an excellent drive, and the slope of the ground into the sea is so gradual, that long distance from shore can be attained without getting out of depth. As there is never any undertow, the bathing is perfectly safe for young children.<sup>63</sup>

By mid-century, Grand Isle stood poised for a future as a grand resort despite the extent of travel required to reach the island.<sup>64</sup> Pronounced "splendid" and "magnificent," beachgoers claimed "no watering place on the Atlantic coast can offer such powerful attraction in the way of surf bathing."<sup>65</sup> Visitors voyaged on ships such as the steamer *D.S. Cage* on Tuesdays and Saturdays from New Orleans to Grand Isle and departed the island on Mondays and Thursdays.<sup>66</sup> The trip began at eight o'clock in the morning from the head of Harvey's Canal into Bayou Villere and then through the Barataria Bay, where the steamer reached Caminada Bay on the north side of Grand Isle after dark. Passengers departed the steamer into a flat-bottomed boat propelled by poles through clouds of biting mosquitos to reach the wharf. The final leg of the journey typically occurred on foot to one of several hotels.<sup>67</sup>

The eastern end of the island remained in possession of the descendants of the original owner,

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thorough scrubbing, polishing, and beating of everything in the house. Winter clothes, quilts, and draperies were stored for the long, hot summer months. Huber, *Creole Collage*, 93.

<sup>61</sup> There was no church on Grand Isle until 1916 when Our Lady of the Isle Catholic Church was built. Church services were held on Chenier Caminada from 1882 until the hurricane destroyed the church in 1893. There is no record of any public religious observance on Grand Isle or Chenier Caminada prior to 1882. Swanson, *Historic Jefferson Parish*, 165-166.

<sup>62</sup> Stielow, *Isolation and Development*, 101. A list of guests at the Krantz Hotel in 1883 gave names primarily from New Orleans and the Louisiana coastal parishes but also included several guests from Alabama, Mississippi, and Texas. One guest travelled from Boston, one from Jersey City, and one from St. Louis. *New Orleans Times Picayune*, July 25, 1883.

<sup>63</sup> *New Orleans Republican*, August 24, 1870.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> *New Orleans Times Picayune*. July 16, 1872.

<sup>66</sup> *New Orleans Republican*, August 24, 1870.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Name of Property
Jefferson Parish, LA
County and State
Louisiana Coastal Vernacular: Grand Isle, 1780-1968
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number E Page 11

Francois Rigaud.<sup>68</sup> The western end of the island belonged to Louis “Nez Coupe” (cut-nose) Chighizola, who had previously served as a lieutenant to the pirate Jean Lafitte.<sup>69</sup> After Chighizola, the sugar plantation property passed first to Rivas Colminero followed by Juan de Egana. After 1855, the plantation converted to cotton, but upon de Egana’s death, the western end of Grand Isle became the property of a group of hotel investors. Two among these, Joseph Hale Harvey and Benjamin Margot, apparently served as the public face of the investment group since advertisements included their names and no others.<sup>70</sup> By 1866, the hotel opened for business and Harvey advertised a public trip to his resort in the New Orleans *Times*.<sup>71</sup> The article promised luxurious dining and a well-stocked bar on the island, where:

Apropos of Grand Isle Hotel...it may be stated here that it proved so successful that several parties...proposed to build on Grand Isle a hotel that cost one hundred thousand dollars. Their aim is not only to excel in architecture and comfort all the public houses thus far built at the Southern watering places, but also to equal, if not surpass, those of Newport, Saratoga, Niagara Falls, etc.<sup>72</sup>

Harvey’s hotel provided a “table of immense length” filled with a delicious supper that included various recipes of shrimp, oysters, and other delicacies. “A visit to the beach and a trial of the unsurpassed bathing did much to restore the mosquito-disturbed equilibrium, and a clean, comfortable bed, well protected” from additional mosquitos “in a cool, airy room” provided rest to summer vacationers after their journey to the island.<sup>73</sup>

The hotel consisted of approximately “twenty-five one-story houses grouped along a straggling street, about a quarter mile long, bearing no small resemblance to a thriving country village.”<sup>74</sup> The dining room accommodated around two hundred diners in a hundred-fifty-foot long space that also included a dance hall complete with piano. A second large structure, approximately two-hundred feet long, included an office, bar, billiard room, and bedroom accommodations for up to one hundred guests. Cottages that lined the street on both sides provided family accommodations with “more air, more privacy, more yard room, and a feeling of home difficult to experience in occupying a single room in a large building.”<sup>75</sup> They also retained a discreet distance from the single-men’s lodgings. The *New Orleans Republican* acknowledged that the “hotel” consisted of the remaining structures of a former sugar plantation that previously served as sugar mill, store houses, dwelling house, offices, and slave

<sup>68</sup> Francois Rigaud died in 1865 at ninety-eight years old on Grand Isle. Descendants remain on the island in the twenty-first century. *New Orleans Republican*, August 24, 1870.

<sup>69</sup> Reputedly Chighizola’s cut nose resulted from a “drunken frolic” with Lafitte. Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Sugarcane produced apparently contained an excessive amount of salt and the crop was abandoned. “Through Harvey’s Canal, A Visit to Grand Isle, The Watering Place Described.” *New Orleans Republican*, August 24, 1870.

<sup>71</sup> Swanson, *Historic Jefferson Parish*, 161. *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, October 28, 1866.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> “Through Harvey’s Canal.” *New Orleans Republican*, August 24, 1870.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> In a wonderfully ironic twist, former slave cabins served as summer cottages to wealthy plantation owners and families of prosperous business owners. Ibid.

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Name of Property
Jefferson Parish, LA
County and State
Louisiana Coastal Vernacular: Grand Isle, 1780-1968
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number E Page 12

quarters. The hotel remained in operation under the management of Margot's sons until 1876.<sup>76</sup> Residents benefited from the tourist trade as well. Many bolstered their annual incomes as fishermen, oystermen, and farmers by providing supplies to local hotels. Some hired on as servants for summer visitors or attended dances with the guests.<sup>77</sup> The *New Orleans Republican* advertised that "melons of every kind, figs, peaches, grapes, and other fruit" grew on the island. The only resource for fuel remained "the driftwood driven ashore by the waves of the Gulf of Mexico," which provided ample supplies.<sup>78</sup> Mosquitos occasionally became "nearly unendurable" but were offset by bathing facilities "hardly equaled in any part of the country." The only issue the article raised regarding the suitability of the Grand Isle resort regarded the travel difficulties which included the steamer voyage time and discomfort related to heat. Otherwise, the location proved exceedingly healthy, with abundant, excellent fresh seafood, fish, and fruit, all locally supplied, making the likelihood of its becoming the "principal watering place in the South" very high.<sup>79</sup> Rumors abounded of Harvey negotiating for a site on which to build a "first-class hotel capable of accommodating at least six-hundred persons" as well as a light-draught steamer able to make daily trips in less than eight hours.<sup>80</sup>

In 1873, the steam packet *Bossier*, captained by Augustus Richards, carried guests from New Orleans to Grand Isle via "Harvey's Canal."<sup>81</sup> The trip included "sumptuous" dining and a brass band.<sup>82</sup> Upon arrival at the dock on the north side of the island, a large group including residents, hotel guests, "cadians, colored citizens, two donkeys, one cow, and at least five hundred children," greeted the party by "firing off a rusty cannon."<sup>83</sup> Entertainments included dancing, meals of fresh fish and oysters, visits to nearby Chenier Caminada, and "surf bathing ... in the genial summer breezes."<sup>84</sup> Other guests enjoyed fishing, pleasure parties in sloops and yachts, sailing, and excursions to shrimp drying platforms.<sup>85</sup> According to Adolphe duQuesnay, visitors enjoyed night cruises popular for "meteor showers" that held "a thousand phosphorescent lights" wherein "the whole sky seemed to catch fire,

<sup>76</sup> "Through Harvey's Canal." *New Orleans Republican*, August 24, 1870. <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov>; Stielow, 106. In 1872, Ben Margot operated the hotel and greeted guests on their arrival. *New Orleans Times Picayune*, July 16, 1872.

<sup>77</sup> Charnley, Mitchell V., *The Buccaneer (The Story of Jean Lafitte)*. New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1934.

<sup>78</sup> "Through Harvey's Canal," *New Orleans Republican*, August 24, 1870.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Jackson Fire Company No. 18 left New Orleans at seven o'clock in the morning and arrived in Grand Isle at eight o'clock in the evening. *New Orleans Times Picayune*, August 5, 1873. Several fire companies made twice annual trips to Grand Isle for relaxation. *New Orleans Times Picayune*, July 16, 1872.

<sup>82</sup> *New Orleans Times Picayune*, July 16, 1872.

<sup>83</sup> *New Orleans Times Picayune*, August 5, 1873.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Stielow, *Isolation and Development*, 110. By the 1870s Chinese fishermen were building shrimp-drying platforms on stilts about four feet over the marshy waters of Barataria Bay. According to some sources, Quong Sun built the first shrimp-drying platform in Manila Village in the 1880s. A largely Filipino community that included a small contingent of Chinese immigrants, Manila Village was located on the north side of Barataria Bay about 15 miles north of Grand Isle. The drying process entailed boiling fresh shrimp in salted water, spreading them atop the platforms to dry in the sun, villagers with burlap wrapped feet "dancing" on the shrimp to remove the shells, and finally, shipment to New Orleans in large barrels for worldwide distribution. Historic New Orleans Collection. <http://www.hnoc.org>.

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Name of Property
Jefferson Parish, LA
County and State
Louisiana Coastal Vernacular: Grand Isle, 1780-1968
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number E Page 13

pouring on ... gigantic fireworks, a pyrotechnic display as original as it was ordinary.”<sup>86</sup> The warm golden sand beach supplied ample opportunity for health, relaxation, and social interaction.

**Late Nineteenth Century Gilded Age**

By 1889, changes occurred in the types of visitors to Grand Isle, from almost exclusively wealthy, conservative French Creoles to include “lower class excursion groups” on weekends.<sup>87</sup> Businessmen had discovered the potential of Grand Isle and “sought to open access to the island to the masses of the lower South.”<sup>88</sup> Investors planned to expand tourism by way of a railroad with tracks to Myrtle Grove, where passengers then transferred to steamship for the remainder of the trip to the island. In 1888, the New Orleans, Fort Jackson, and Grand Isle Railroad Company proposed a rail line between New Orleans and Fort Jackson on the right bank of the river, extending rail access to truck farmers, sugar factories, orange orchards, and seafood industries as well as “close communication with Grand Isle.”<sup>89</sup> The extension of the railroad to Myrtle Grove encouraged expansion of facilities for visitors. The addition of the railroad reduced travel time from the previous eight hours minimum to four hours maximum, and weekend excursions grew much more affordable for visitors.<sup>90</sup> Larger numbers of visitors required additional accommodations and, early in 1891, builders started construction on the Ocean View Hotel. The *Times-Picayune* advertised in July 1892 that the hotel was located “300 yards from the finest surf bathing in the world.”<sup>91</sup> The Grand Isle resort industry lay on the cusp of wider expansion and fame.<sup>92</sup>

Timing and convenience made Grand Isle a popular summer resort for wealthy Louisianans and those from farther abroad. Numerous pamphlets, treatises, texts, and journals written as medical, tourist, or society works attested to the extent of sea bathing literature in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Many documents extolled the benefits of sea bathing and sea air for an amazing array of health advantages to be gained from dipping into salty waters. Resorts listed included European locations (England, Ireland, Scotland, France, Germany, and Spain) and the eastern coast of America as well as southern California.<sup>93</sup> Information in the documents included some or all of the following: specific treatments for a particular disease, bathing attire, resort accommodations and entertainments, dining, methods of travel, types of society, numbers of permanent residents, sports and games, and cautions regarding tides and safe bathing practices. Several sources encouraged the use of local and familiar

<sup>86</sup> duQuesnay, 56-58. The ‘pyrotechnic display’ was most probably natural gas and oil escaping from the ocean floor being ignited by lightening. Tar balls have been found on Grand Isle’s beach for centuries, certainly long before the oil and gas industry existed in Louisiana. Interview of Jean Landry, Grand Isle Historian, on March 1, 2015.

<sup>87</sup> The lower class specifically referenced was large, loud parties of Jews on day or weekend excursions. The objection by residents and generational visitors appeared to be the disruptive and intrusive nature of the parties and the failure to tip hotel staff. Apparently, residents became so incensed that “they petitioned the parish police jury for a jail in 1891.” Stielow, *Isolation and Development*, 116-117.

<sup>88</sup> Stielow, *Isolation and Development*, 117.

<sup>89</sup> “A New Railroad,” *New Orleans Times Democrat*, December 20, 1888.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, July 31, 1892.

<sup>92</sup> Stielow, *Isolation and Development*, 118.

<sup>93</sup> Bushrod W. James, *American Resorts With Notes Upon Their Climate*. Philadelphia: F. A. Davis, 1889. <http://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/006255097>.



**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Name of Property
Jefferson Parish, LA
County and State
Louisiana Coastal Vernacular: Grand Isle, 1780-1968
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number E Page 14

places, like Grand Isle, as opposed to foreign climates with “unknown humors that may adversely affect the invalid.”<sup>94</sup> The local Grand Isle beach provided a comfortable location for liberation from all the summer ills of the city (New Orleans in this case) in the mid- to late-1800s.

The island served as inspiration to several visitors who included their impressions, opinions, and imaginings in their works. Authors George Washington Cable, Lafcadio Hearn, Adolphe duQuesnay, and Kate Chopin wrote fictional works that included nineteenth-century Grand Isle in various ways. Cable, in *The Creoles of Louisiana*, mentioned Grand Isle briefly in connection with pirates and Grand Terre but noted the existence of stores, casinos, dwellings, farms, orangeries, and “green meadows dotted with wax myrtles.”<sup>95</sup> Hearn published *Chita: The Lost Island* in 1888 as the tale of the 1856 hurricane that devastated coastal Louisiana. However, before the storm, he portrayed time in the islands as “an idyllic lifestyle, spent in harmony with the environment.”<sup>96</sup> Originally published in French, DuQuesnay’s novella followed a visitor to New Orleans who vacationed on Grand Isle as a summer guest. *Une Ete A La Grand Isle* (A Summer at Grand Isle) provided abundant information on nature consistent with other records of the time and breathed life into exotic Louisiana for readers in the late nineteenth century.<sup>97</sup> In the 1899 novel *The Awakening*, Chopin portrayed the conflicts of feminism against the conflicting backdrops of New Orleans (formality) and Grand Isle (freedom). Her elegant writing blew fresh Gulf air into the stale life of the city. Though fictional, the consistency of these author’s accounts with other documentation constituted an accurate depiction of Grand Isle during the latter part of the nineteenth century. These depictions, such as the habit of New Orleans residents to escape to the seashore during summer and of physical features along the bayous and shores, provide valuable insights into the setting and island life of the period.

Advertised as the rival of acknowledged premier coastal resorts, Grand Isle drew many interesting visitors. Artists William and Ellsworth Woodward visited the island and painted local scenes of beaches, boats, and gaily dressed visitors enjoying them.<sup>98</sup> “Bathing in the open Gulf among the breakers is excellent, the fish fine, and the sea breezes gloriously refreshing,” claimed the *Weekly Thibodeaux Sentinel*.<sup>99</sup> As depicted contextually, the island formed a peaceful, garden atmosphere with winding lanes, shading live oak trees, and tropical birdsong, a picturesque location where islanders enticed visitors to join them in paradise.

Traveling to the island furnished vacationers a unique sense of Louisiana beyond the urban cityscape. In 1886, the steamer *Joe Webre*, manned by Captain Hotard, provided leisurely twice weekly trips to Grand Isle.<sup>100</sup> Steamers *Emma McSweeney* and *H.A. Harvey* advertised Tuesday and Saturday day trips a few years later.<sup>101</sup> Hearn described a journey on a miniature steamboat through winding waterways, flooded rice fields, and dank swampy mazes filled with sounds of reptiles and frogs. Travel

<sup>94</sup> James, 7-8.

<sup>95</sup> George W. Cable, *The Creoles of Louisiana*. (London: John C. Nimmo, 1885), 165.  
<https://archive.org/details/creolesoflouisia00cabluoft>.

<sup>96</sup> Hearn, *Chita: The Last Island*; duQuesnay, *Une Ete A La Grand Isle*; Chopin, *The Awakening*.

<sup>97</sup> duQuesnay, ix.

<sup>98</sup> The Historic New Orleans collection contains several of Ellsworth Woodward’s paintings of Grand Isle.

<sup>99</sup> *Weekly Thibodeaux Sentinel*, July 10, 1886.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, July 31, 1892.

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Name of Property
Jefferson Parish, LA
County and State
Louisiana Coastal Vernacular: Grand Isle, 1780-1968
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number E Page 15

included scraping over sandbars before eventually reaching the bright open waters and sea breezes of the Gulf bays. The view then changed to wind-blown prairie marsh with occasional islands of higher ground, cheniers with live oaks, and sandy beaches of “dazzling sand and shells, yellow-white – and all radiant with semi-tropical foliage, myrtle and palmetto, orange and magnolia” to the music of the sea breaking on shore.<sup>102</sup> Chopin wrote, “How still it was, with only the voice of the sea whispering through the reeds that grew in the salt-water pools!” and “the long line of little gray, weather-beaten houses nestled peacefully among the orange trees.”<sup>103</sup>

Although design variations existed, the materials and construction methods used for island resident’s homes, remained fairly consistent from the oldest in 1798 through those constructed near the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>104</sup> When the first generation of buildings, designed in their familiar European vernacular (wood on the ground with exposed timber structures) melted into the soft, wet Louisiana landscape, colonists adapted designs to accommodate the local climatic conditions.<sup>105</sup> Buildings constructed on raised foundations reduced flooding, improved air circulation, and kept critters at bay.<sup>106</sup> Galleries, or porches, protected walls from torrential rains and provided breezy outdoor living space. High ceilings under steeply sloped roofs combined with generously sized and aligned openings provided cross ventilation in the hot, humid Louisiana climate.<sup>107</sup>

The primary building material of these Creole Vernacular structures was cypress wood, but building on Grand Isle proffered an expensive prospect.<sup>108</sup> Resident carpenters built homes, with the assistance of neighbors, although “masons were imported” to lay chimneys and foundation bricks.<sup>109</sup> Residents took advantage of any available materials, including salvage from abandoned or storm damaged buildings. Although the island provided a lush garden paradise, little in the way of lumber, brick-clay, or stone existed with which to construct buildings.<sup>110</sup> What could not be salvaged from beach drift required transport by boat from other locations. Refusing to destroy the native trees they believed protected them from storms, residents imported building materials.<sup>111</sup> Supplies arrived via luggers and steamboats at the bay (north) side of the island.<sup>112</sup>

Transportation once on the island consisted of mule, horse, or foot power. A section of old streetcar

<sup>102</sup> Hearn, 4-5.

<sup>103</sup> Chopin, 49.

<sup>104</sup> Site Inspections conducted during March and July 2015; July and August 2016; June, July, August, and October 2017; and February 2018 and included owner interviews, photographs, sketches, and physical inspection of properties.

<sup>105</sup> Poesch and Bacot, 20-21.

<sup>106</sup> Karen Kingsley, *Buildings of Louisiana*. (Oxford: University Press, 2003), 19.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Stielow, *Isolation and Development*, 144.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> The rich, sandy soil deposits that form Grand Isle and other Louisiana coastal islands are fairly unstable for deep foundations and provide no heavy clay soils from which bricks are made.

<sup>111</sup> Stielow, *Isolation and Development*, 132 and 144. In the aftermath of hurricanes Katrina and Rita, and the damage to more exposed areas of the island where there are no large live oaks, the community passed an ordinance prohibiting destruction of the trees they believe protected them from storms.

<sup>112</sup> Transport of all materials, craftsmen, and supplies remained by boat until completion of the Louisiana Highway One bridge in 1931. Stielow, *Isolation and Development*, 144.

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Name of Property Jefferson Parish, LA
County and State Louisiana Coastal Vernacular: Grand Isle, 1780-1968
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number E Page 16

track from New Orleans, complete with mule-drawn railcar, laid from front to back of the island, provided transportation for luggage and passengers from the dock at the bay to the Krantz Hotel and then from the hotel to the beach.<sup>113</sup> The only other transportation on the island consisted of wheeled carts, which were also mule powered.

Small, locally owned accommodations, such as the George Willoz place, were located “in the midst of a spacious grove of oaks” that provided “shade in all times of the day.”<sup>114</sup> The house offered first class service, furnished rooms, and excellent cuisine. Newly renovated in 1882, it advertised provision for “everything needful for health, comfort, and recreation” for \$40 per month.<sup>115</sup>

By 1892, investors had constructed large hotels on the island and advertised them as comparable to “Newport, Saratoga, and Niagara Falls.”<sup>116</sup> Frederick Stielow wrote of three large resort hotels on Grand Isle in the summer of 1893.<sup>117</sup> These included: the Krantz Hotel (developed from the old Barataria Plantation and subsequently the Grand Isle Hotel in 1867 before its takeover by Krantz), the Ocean View Hotel (one hundred and sixty suites “with its dining halls, billiard and card rooms, tennis courts and bowling alleys,” and the Herwig Hotel (originally a general store and post office with a two-story hotel added in the late nineteenth century; currently known as the Ludwig Building).<sup>118</sup>

Extant photographs provide a view of vacationers at the Krantz Hotel in 1892.<sup>119</sup> Several photographs from different angles show neat rows of cottages with porches facing each other, women sitting in rocking chairs under their shade. Clothing and towels hang over porch railings. One porch holds a hammock in its shade. At the end of the row of cottages, a large, mature live oak tree provides shade over a wood seat wrapped around its trunk. A framed swing hangs between the tree and the nearest building. Some buildings appear much longer than simple cottages, with six to eight doors and windows visible across the front of the building under the porch.<sup>120</sup> In photographs where the end of the building can be seen, the longer buildings are two units deep and have porches and entrances from both sides.<sup>121</sup> The buildings all sit on brick pier foundations without chimneys. Their construction includes wood clapboard siding with shutters at French doors and unglazed shuttered window openings. All roofs consist of wood shingles.<sup>122</sup> Apparently, little difference in construction types, materials, or

<sup>113</sup> Swanson, *Historic Jefferson Parish*, 161.

<sup>114</sup> *New Orleans Times Picayune*, June 3, 1882; Stielow, *Isolation and Development*, 105.

<sup>115</sup> *New Orleans Times Picayune*, June 3, 1882.

<sup>116</sup> Swanson, *Historic Jefferson Parish*, 16; *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, October 28, 1866.

<sup>117</sup> Stielow, *Isolation and Development*, 106-118.

<sup>118</sup> Some references speculated that the Krantz Hotel served as the model location for Chopin's novel. Katy Read, “Grand Isle Reeling in the Cash – Tourists Flocking to Town for Fishing, Family Fun,” *New Orleans Times Picayune*, July 22, 1996; Interview Jean Landry, Grand Isle Historian, on March 1, 2015. The Herwig Hotel is the only commercial building known to have survived the 1893 hurricane and remains standing today known as the Ludwig building.

<sup>119</sup> Photographs of Krantz Hotel dated 1892, Historic New Orleans Collection, Williams Research Center, 410 Chartres Street, New Orleans, Louisiana.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> The longer buildings with ganged units may originally have been plantation quarters for adult unmarried slaves. It was common to house men in one building and women in another. In 1870, the buildings were referred to by hotel guests as the “Bachelor's Row” and “Widows Row.” Stielow, *Isolation and Development*, 105.

<sup>122</sup> Photographs Collection, Historic New Orleans Collection, Williams Research Center, 410 Chartres Street, New

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Name of Property
Jefferson Parish, LA
County and State
Louisiana Coastal Vernacular: Grand Isle, 1780-1968
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number E Page 17

configurations occurred between tourist accommodations and residents' homes. Working together, residents and investors brought Grand Isle to the forefront of the Louisiana tourist industry. The future looked very bright for the island.

### **Hurricane to Highway**

Grand Isle's Gilded Age came to an end in a matter of a few hours. The Chenier Caminada hurricane in 1893 killed over two thousand people and destroyed most of the structures on Grand Isle and the areas around it.<sup>123</sup> DuQuesnay summarized,

Nature is powerful, and may turn on human beings at any time... Gulf currents exist, capricious storms arise, but their arbitrary choice of victims and the swiftness of destruction seem less natural than supernatural – a curse of some distant, dark fatality, which is foreshadowed by the sense of mystery that pervades many descriptions and which does not express itself through character.<sup>124</sup>

Striking the Louisiana coastline on October 2, the category four hurricane left enormous destruction in its wake.<sup>125</sup> Residents in homes located among the oak chenier on the highest ground at the center of the island received minimal damage. However, the large resorts on the more exposed east and west ends of the island sustained extreme damage, and in the case of the Ocean View Hotel complete destruction. Only eighteen of the thirty-eight Krantz Hotel cabins survived.<sup>126</sup> Even the steamer *Joe Webre* succumbed to the storm and was left broken in half near the center of the island.<sup>127</sup> Days after the storm, the *Times-Picayune* described the damage along the coast as “a horror that words cannot depict.”<sup>128</sup>

In addition to the direct result of the hurricane, economic factors also adversely affected the ability of Grand Isle to recover. A nationwide economic depression as well as the loss of power of the Louisiana Lottery Company (a major financial supporter to island development) denied investors the capital required to rebuild. The recent publication of Hearn's *Chita* in 1889 with his account of the total destruction of Isle Dernieres in 1856 became confused with the considerably less damaged Grand Isle of 1893.<sup>129</sup> His powerful words “guaranteed an unreasoning fear” in readers whose mental and emotional impression of death and destruction guaranteed the horrors of the last storm remained fresh in the public's mind. A second storm in 1901, a category two and a direct hit on Grand Isle, resulted in ten deaths.<sup>130</sup> Few investors wanted to risk the funds required to rebuild large resorts when the next

Orleans, Louisiana.

<sup>123</sup> Angus M. Gunn, *Encyclopedia of Disasters: Environmental Catastrophes and Human Tragedies*. (Greenwood Press, 2008), 158-159.

<sup>124</sup> duQuesnay, xiii.

<sup>125</sup> Prior to Hurricane Katrina in 2005, this was the second deadliest hurricane in U.S. history. Gunn, 158-159.

<sup>126</sup> Stielow, *Isolation and Development*, 105.

<sup>127</sup> *New Orleans Times Picayune*, October 6, 1893.

<sup>128</sup> *New Orleans Times Picayune*, October 11, 1893.

<sup>129</sup> Stielow, *Isolation and Development*, 120.

<sup>130</sup> David Roth, *Louisiana Hurricane History*. (Camp Springs, MD: National Weather Service, 2010), 8-9.  
<http://www.wpc.ncep.noaa.gov/research/lahur.pdf>.

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Name of Property Jefferson Parish, LA
County and State Louisiana Coastal Vernacular: Grand Isle, 1780-1968
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number E Page 18

storm might destroy it all once again. Landholders turned instead to dividing large tracts into smaller properties and selling them to be built into privately owned camps.<sup>131</sup>

Investors attempted to recoup Grand Isle's Gilded Era by providing regular boat transportation and with announcements of grand plans.<sup>132</sup> In 1906, newspapers related word of a \$600,000 hotel to be constructed on the Louisiana coast with Grand Isle as the preferred location. Plans included a railroad extension to the island.<sup>133</sup> In January 1908, the *Times Democrat* announced Articles of Incorporation for the New Orleans Southern Railway Company and its intention to construct "a standard-gauge railroad from near New Orleans to the mouth of the Mississippi River and to Grand Isle."<sup>134</sup> In 1912, the Grand Isle Railroad Company requested wharf space on the New Orleans side of the river to move passengers and goods from Canal Street across to the railroad head in Algiers with plans to provide year-round transportation to a resort on Grand Isle.<sup>135</sup> However, the train never grew closer than Myrtle Grove, and the hotel remained a dream.

Another aspect of life in the early twentieth century involved water rescues. While waterways provided transportation, storms and rough seas caused losses of lives and goods. Life-saving stations and rescue organizations formed "one of the great humanitarian achievements of humankind."<sup>136</sup> Life-saving stations first appeared on the Atlantic and Great Lakes shores along the extensive coastlines of the United States. However, these did not receive government funding until 1871.<sup>137</sup> Creation of the Revenue Marine Bureau included life-saving stations and revenue cutters (ships) with funding for staff training, building maintenance, and equipment. Initially, the Life-Saving Service made stations movable for easy relocation along ever-changing coastlines with threats by wind and sea.<sup>138</sup> Government funding occurred sporadically despite the humanitarian need and occasionally resulted in donations of land by local citizens, businesses, or governments to build stations. By 1914, approximately 279 life-saving stations existed along U.S. coasts.<sup>139</sup>

In 1915, by Act of Congress, the United States Life-Saving Service and the Revenue Cutter Service combined to form the United States Coast Guard as "a part of the military forces of the United States."<sup>140</sup> The Act combined the dozens of stations along the national coastlines with maritime cutter

<sup>131</sup> Stielow, *Isolation and Development*, 193-194.

<sup>132</sup> The steamer *Grand Isle*, captained by McSweeney, continued to make regular Tuesday and Saturday trips for excursionists and freight (oysters and fish). *New Orleans Times Democrat*, June 25, 1903.

<sup>133</sup> "Lafitte Hotel, Company Organized to Erect a \$600,000 Structure," *Rice Belt Journal* (Welsh, LA), February 23, 1906. Note: On October 30, 1927, the *Galveston Daily News* announced the grand opening of the 'Jean Lafitte Hotel' on Galveston Bay. Possibly the location for the grand hotel changed as a result of the reported sixteen-foot storm surge in 1909 and Category Four hurricane in 1915 which caused a thirteen-foot storm surge and killed 275 people in the Grand Isle area.

<sup>134</sup> "Charter for Road, Third Project for Grand Isle Line is Launched." *New Orleans Times Democrat*, January 28, 1908.

<sup>135</sup> "The Grand Isle Request," *New Orleans Herald*, June 6, 1912.

<sup>136</sup> Ralph Shanks, Wick York. Lisa Woo Shanks, ed. *The U.S. Life-Saving Service: Heroes, Rescues and Architecture of the Early Coast Guard*. (Novato, CA: Costano Books, 1996), 1.

<sup>137</sup> Shanks, et al., 2-7.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid, 16-17.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> United States Department of Homeland Security. Coast Guard Station #79 Grand Isle, Louisiana. *History*

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Name of Property
Jefferson Parish, LA
County and State
Louisiana Coastal Vernacular: Grand Isle, 1780-1968
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number E Page 19

ships as a significant component of national defense and maritime navigation. It also brought increased funding and military training for personnel and guard stations.<sup>141</sup> The Register of the United States Life-Saving Service divided the national coastlines into thirteen districts.<sup>142</sup> The Ninth District, Gulf Coast, included eight stations, with the only Louisiana location at Grand Isle.<sup>143</sup>

The Gulf Coast presented unique challenges for life-saving with hurricanes and floods that made guardsmen “especially vulnerable to the forces of nature” in exposed locations.<sup>144</sup> After the loss of the Galveston station in 1900, followed by the 1916 hurricane deaths of six guardsmen, their wives, and children at the Velasco and San Luis, Texas stations, new Gulf Coast architectural style stations became common.<sup>145</sup> Designed between 1903 and 1923 by Victor Mendleheff, Life-Saving Service architect, Gulf-Type Stations consisted of one-story buildings “surrounded by a verandah on all four sides” and elevated above the ground.<sup>146</sup> The “gable-on-hip” roofs had a “hipped roof cupola with a lightning rod projected from the apex of the peak”.<sup>147</sup>

Starting in 1918, the Grand Isle station, originally commissioned as Barataria Bay Station 214, was built at a cost of \$60,000 on land leased from John Ludwig.<sup>148</sup> The design drew heavily from the Florida Life-Saving Service houses of refuge combined with the popular Bungalow style of the time.<sup>149</sup> The second floor of the building included barracks for guardsmen and rescued mariners with adequate storage for food, water, clothing, and medicine.<sup>150</sup> Elevated approximately fourteen feet above surrounding grade on steel reinforced concrete piers, the height “allowed water from floods and hurricanes to pass safely under the station.”<sup>151</sup> The building included surrounding porches (galleries) that helped to catch sea breezes and cool the station in the hot, humid Gulf climate. The steeply pitched hip-gable roof, dormer windows, wood clapboard siding, peripteral gallery, and rooftop watchtower, gave the station the

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*Program*. <https://www.uscg.mil/history/web/USCGbriefhistory.asp>. Changes in shipping, navigation, and rescue techniques, including motorized vessels and electronic communications equipment, brought about the need for consistency in the service around the turn of the century. The consolidation of the Life Saving Service and the Revenue Cutter Service into a military branch helped to facilitate these modernizations. Shanks, et al, 241.

<sup>141</sup> Shanks, et al., 10-11; United States Department of Homeland Security. Coast Guard Station #79 Grand Isle, Louisiana. *History Program*. <https://www.uscg.mil/history/web/USCGbriefhistory.asp>.

<sup>142</sup> Shanks, et al., 13.

<sup>143</sup> United States Department of Homeland Security. Coast Guard Station #79 Grand Isle, Louisiana. *History Program*. <https://www.uscg.mil/history/web/USCGbriefhistory.asp>.

<sup>144</sup> Shanks, et al., 157.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, 157-159; Site Inspections.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, 241.

<sup>147</sup> At the height of the Life-Saving Service in 1914, 279 active stations existed. Reportedly, approximately 115 of these “historic and beautiful life-saving stations” remain as monuments of the “great maritime saga”. Shanks, et al., 237, 241-242. Site inspections.

<sup>148</sup> The advertisement did not specify whether this cost included the Boathouse or only the station building. *The Patriot* (Glenmora, LA), September 13, 1918; John Ludwig, reputedly the world’s largest terrapin farmer, introduced new agricultural methods to the island in the 1890s. The Ludwig family ran the store, post office, and hotel building listed herein. Stielow, 199.

<sup>149</sup> Shanks, et al., images 148-152.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, 148-149; Site Inspections.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, 157; Site Inspections.

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Name of Property
Jefferson Parish, LA
County and State
Louisiana Coastal Vernacular: Grand Isle, 1780-1968
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number E Page 20

appearance of a modest bungalow perched in the treetops.<sup>152</sup> In August 1919, the *St. Mary Banner* announced the installation of a “powerful wireless station” at the new Life-Saving Station to provide protection to the people on the island and surrounding areas in the event of approaching storms.<sup>153</sup> In the wake of the 1915 hurricane, considerations for flooding became more apparent with the construction of the elevated Coast Guard station, but resident and vacation homes remained on piers close to the ground well into the twentieth century. However, the incorporation of the Bungalow style into the coastal vernacular changed the traditional forms previously followed. The appropriateness of the style for Louisiana’s climate, with the “wide, spreading roof and capacious, shady porch [that] protected the house from both heat and heavy rains,” made these, typically two rooms wide by three rooms deep, houses popular in the early decades of the twentieth century.<sup>154</sup> On Grand Isle, new residences followed the Bungalow style instead of the French and Creole cottages of earlier times.<sup>155</sup> Despite the predominantly residential aspect of the style, the new U.S. Coast Guard Station strongly reflected Bungalow elements albeit elevated fourteen feet above grade and adapted for its military function.<sup>156</sup>

Federal action also affected transportation to the island. In 1921, passage of the National Highway Act provided federal matching funds programs to states. The Louisiana Highway Commission allocated those funds for roads, bridges, highways, and coordination of plans between adjacent states.<sup>157</sup> Construction on Louisiana Highway One as part of the Good Roads Movement began in New Orleans, went south through Barataria and Lafitte (by 1925) to the edges of the Barataria Bay, and then continued south to Cheniere Caminada. Small bayous and canals had bridges, while larger river crossings were accomplished by ferry. From the chenier, the highway followed the path of the main road across Grand Isle to Barataria Pass. The shell paved highway reached completion with the bridge connection to the west end of the island in 1931.<sup>158</sup> As the road neared the island, it also brought more direct interaction with the outside world.

### **Auto Age and Industry**

<sup>152</sup> Site inspections. The building served as Coast Guard Station Grand Isle until 1972. The building is currently in use as the Grand Isle Town Hall. Station Grand Isle remains active on the east end of the island near Barataria Pass and the Grand Isle State Park with forty-one active duty personnel and four boats. United States Department of Homeland Security. Coast Guard Station #79 Grand Isle, Louisiana. *History Program*. <https://www.uscg.mil/history/web/USCGbriefhistory.asp>.

<sup>153</sup> The emergency horn remains in operation at the town hall and sounds at 6:00pm every day. *St. Mary Banner* (Franklin, LA), August 30, 1919.

<sup>154</sup> Poesch and Bacot, 316-317. Bungalow style features also appeared on traditional shotgun cottages in Louisiana.

<sup>155</sup> Stielow, *Isolation and Development*, 198.

<sup>156</sup> Site inspections.

<sup>157</sup> Richard F Weingroff, “Highway Existence: 100 Years and Beyond, A Peaceful Campaign of Progress and Reform: The Federal Highway Administration at 100.” *Highway History* 57, no. 2 (Autumn 1993). Washington, D.C.: United States Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, Updated October 4, 2016. <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/infrastructure/history.cfm>.

<sup>158</sup> University of Louisiana at Lafayette, Dupre Library, The Louisiana Collection, Map case drawer 5, HC107. Map of Louisiana, Department of Agriculture and Immigration. Chicago: George F. Cram Co., 1925; Stielow, *Isolation and Development*, 209.

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Name of Property
Jefferson Parish, LA
County and State
Louisiana Coastal Vernacular: Grand Isle, 1780-1968
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number E Page 21

For the first time, in 1931, automobiles accessed the island bringing electricity, radios, and telephones.<sup>159</sup> The highway also brought members of the press, investors, and politicians. Huey P. Long, Alfred Danziger, Fonville Winans, Eugene Delacroix, and Lyle Saxon visited Grand Isle and praised its beaches, fishing, local flavor, and growing tourism industry.<sup>160</sup> Their publications encouraged larger numbers of visitors than ever before to the "Island of Perennial Sunshine and Romance."<sup>161</sup> The first Tarpon Rodeo, held in 1933, brought hundreds of avid fishermen and secured an annual tourist base for the island community.<sup>162</sup> The publications also caught the attention of industrialists, and by 1944, interests in the offshore oil industry centered on Grand Isle as a main port. In 1957, Freeport Sulphur Mining and Humble Oil companies reported the largest deposit of this natural resource in the nation located in fifty-foot waters off the Grand Isle coast, bringing another major industry to the tiny island.<sup>163</sup> Offshore oil and Sulphur mining industries developed quickly, and by 1965, the press reported the development of Halliburton company worker housing on the east end of the island.<sup>164</sup> Grand Isle became the cutting edge of Louisiana's oil and natural gas industry with good and bad long-term effects on the delicate environment.<sup>165</sup>

**Present and Future Endangerment of Historic Resources**

Louisiana's barrier islands, marshes, ridges, and swamps provided natural buffer zones to incoming storm surges for centuries.<sup>166</sup> However, the south Louisiana wetlands presented transportation challenges in the early days of European occupation.<sup>167</sup> With so little high ground, land transportation remained difficult or impossible. Manmade transportation canals became the primary means of removing resources from remote wilderness areas. Some canals served to drain the back swamps of

<sup>159</sup> Stielow, *Isolation and Development*, 211.

<sup>160</sup> *The Jefferson Parish Yearly Review*, 1937 through 1943 editions, included articles and photographs of Grand Isle highlighting the beach, winding roads, old buildings, pirate connections, fishing, and abundant fresh seafood; Stielow, *Isolation and Development*, 208.

<sup>161</sup> Arthur Danziger, "Grand Isle – The Island of Perennial Sunshine and Romance." *Jefferson Parish Yearly Review*. (Jefferson Parish Police Jury and Justin F. Bordenave, 1937), 69-73.

<sup>162</sup> Arthur Van Pelt, "Big Fish and Little Boats," *Jefferson Parish Yearly Review* 15 (Kenner, LA: Jefferson Parish Police Jury, 1949), 119-129; Arthur Van Pelt, "Fabulous Fishing," *Jefferson Parish Yearly Review* 18 (Kenner, LA: Jefferson Parish Police Jury, 1952), 195-203. By the 1960s, the Tarpon Rodeo became the largest annual event on the island drawing up to 20,000 visitors on the single weekend of the tournament. Grand Isle Louisiana, *History from 1860 to Date*. <http://grandislevacationguide.com/gih0d.html>.

<sup>163</sup> Estimated outlay by Freeport Sulphur Mining totaled \$30 million at seven miles out from Grand Isle. Jeff Davis, "Sulphur: In Demand throughout the World." *Jefferson Parish Yearly Review*, 24. Metairie, LA: Parish Publications, 1958), 81-91.

<sup>164</sup> Michael A. Harris, "Grand Isle: A Grand Place to Live, Work, and Play," *Jefferson Parish Yearly Review*. (Kenner, LA: Parish Publications, 1965), 166; Oil company worker housing. "New Halliburton Development of Grand Isle," *Jefferson Yearly Review* (1965), 166.

<sup>165</sup> D.W. Davis, "A Historical and Pictorial Review of Louisiana's Barrier Islands" quoted in S.J. Williams, Shea Penland, and A.H. Sallinger, Jr., eds, *Louisiana Barrier Island Erosion Study: Atlas of Barrier Shoreline Changes in Louisiana from 1853 to 1989*. (United States Geological Survey Miscellaneous Investigation Series 102150-A), 8-23.

<sup>166</sup> State of Louisiana, *Integrated Ecosystem Restoration and Hurricane Protection: Louisiana's Comprehensive Master Plan for a Sustainable Coast*. Baton Rouge: Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority, 2007.

<sup>167</sup> Swanson, *Isolation and Development*, 87.



**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Name of Property Jefferson Parish, LA
County and State Louisiana Coastal Vernacular: Grand Isle, 1780-1968
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number E Page 22

plantation properties, enabling owners to harvest timber resources and then farm the land.<sup>168</sup> The first large navigation canal completed in 1740 created a channel twenty-five feet wide that connected the west bank of the Mississippi River at New Orleans with Barataria Bay and the Gulf of Mexico.<sup>169</sup> This first canal set the precedent for numerous navigation channels over the ensuing centuries, crossing and interrupting the natural flows of wetland bayous and streams and forming new, straight channels that drained nutrients away from wetlands. However, the worst offenders came with flood control levees (post-1927) and the growth of the coastal petroleum industry (1930s-1950s). The fragile coastline became a major component of the economic vitality of the United States, providing twenty-seven percent of crude oil, fifteen percent of natural gas, thirty percent of commercial fisheries, and twenty-one percent of waterborne commerce for the nation by 2007.<sup>170</sup> The drainage system for forty-one percent of the continental United States flowed downstream on the Mississippi river, directly affecting the delicate ecosystem at the Mississippi River Delta and endangering countless communities and historic resources.

Despite numerous threats to their existence, several buildings on Grand Isle survived over a hundred years of high winds, flood waters, demographic changes, and ecological disasters. These remain significant as vernacular structures of coastal Louisiana; as survivors of major storms and hurricanes that hit the island approximately every seven years; and as examples of innovatively recycled construction materials and/or importation by boat. To date, none of these structures are listed on the National Register or the state historic registry. The local community has identified thirteen buildings as the oldest survivors on the island. Due to changing demographics, annual storms/hurricanes, and flood elevation requirements, the need for documentation is great. The historic structures on Grand Isle deserve acknowledgement and national recognition through listing on the National Register of Historic Places. As Carl Brasseaux and Don Davis noted,

The history of changes in human settlement and ecosystem services in the Mississippi River delta chronicles the best and the worst attempts to balance economic development, national priorities in navigation and agriculture, and public safety. The consequences include several environmental catastrophes at the coastal end of the river basin, where the highest wetland loss rate and the largest hypoxic zone in North America exists.<sup>171</sup>

<sup>168</sup> Swanson, *Isolation and Development*, 87.

<sup>169</sup> Started in 1736 by Claude Joseph Villars Dubreuil, Sr., the canal runs between "present-day Harvey and Gretna, running parallel to and just below Fairmont Street and continuing southward as the Gardere Canal." Swanson, *Isolation and Development*, 87-88.

<sup>170</sup> Brasseaux and Davis. *Ain't There No More*, ix.

<sup>171</sup> Brasseaux and Davis, ix. First documented in 1972, a 2008 study in *Science* magazine found that of the over 400 hypoxic zones worldwide, the "hypoxic zone in the Gulf of Mexico is the largest in the United States, and one of the largest globally." Hypoxic refers to low oxygen content, primarily a problem for estuaries and coastal waters. Hypoxia can be caused by a variety of factors including excess nutrients, primarily nitrogen and phosphorus, and waterbody stratification (layering) due to saline or temperature gradients that promote algal growth. Decomposing dead algae consumes oxygen resulting in low levels of oxygen in the water which in turn fails to sustain life of native species. The hypoxic zone in the Gulf of Mexico forms every summer as a result of excess nutrients from the Mississippi River and seasonal stratification (layering) of waters in the Gulf. Nutrient-laden freshwater from the Mississippi River flows into the Gulf of Mexico. This freshwater is less dense and remains above the denser saline Gulf water. In addition to the saline gradient caused where the freshwater and saline water meet, the freshwater is warmer than the deeper ocean water, further contributing to the stratification.

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Name of Property
Jefferson Parish, LA
County and State
Louisiana Coastal Vernacular: Grand Isle, 1780-1968
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number E Page 23

In the wake of hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005 and the devastation they wrought, increased attention from press, scientific, cultural, and natural resource groups focused on wetland recovery and loss prevention measures.<sup>172</sup> The next decade brought a flood of literature, scientific and government studies, new construction, economic development committees, and community groups centered on specifying causes and finding solutions before the next major storm occurred. The Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority of Louisiana encouraged residents to protect themselves and their communities by purchasing flood insurance, elevating, and retrofitting structures, and complying with the provisions of the Louisiana State Uniform Construction Code.<sup>173</sup> In 2008, Hurricanes Gustav and Ike reinforced the necessity for hurricane loss prevention measures for natural and man-made resources.

Wetland losses estimated at 1,833 square miles between 1932 and 2010 equate to the area of one football field per hour during the past fifteen years, "landmass equal in size to the state of Delaware," and affected a population equal in number to New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, or Houston.<sup>174</sup> Lost land meant lost homes and communities, forcing demographic shifts. The retreat will cause "major social, cultural, and economic repercussions" among populations previously stable for nine to ten generations.<sup>175</sup> Additionally, new Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) regulations require elevation of residences as much as eleven feet in some areas in order to qualify for national flood insurance thereby making structures more vulnerable to wind damage.<sup>176</sup> Excessively high insurance rates due to the increased likelihood of storm wind damage has already forced many coastal residents to relocate.<sup>177</sup> These multi-generational coastal dwellers incorporate two centuries of environmental knowledge and serve as observers of local ecosystem changes as well as a highly skilled resident workforce.<sup>178</sup> Lack of employees eventually means lost businesses, industries, and communities.<sup>179</sup> When people move, the buildings that they previously occupied remain as silent and quickly decaying

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This stratification prevents the mixing of oxygen-rich surface water with oxygen-poor water on the bottom of the Gulf. Without mixing, oxygen in the bottom water is limited and the hypoxic condition remains." United States Environmental Protection Agency, Mississippi River/Gulf of Mexico Hypoxia Task Force, *Hypoxia 101: What is Hypoxia and What Causes It?* Last updated April 6, 2017. <https://www.epa.gov/ms-htf/hypoxia-101>.

<sup>172</sup> In addition to the enormous loss of human lives and natural resources, estimated physical capital losses from the combined 2005 hurricanes totaled \$70-130 million. State of Louisiana, *Integrated Ecosystem Restoration and Hurricane Protection: Louisiana's Comprehensive Master Plan for a Sustainable Coast*. Baton Rouge: Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority, 2007.

<sup>173</sup> State of Louisiana, *Integrated Ecosystem Restoration and Hurricane Protection: Louisiana's Comprehensive Master Plan for a Sustainable Coast*. Baton Rouge: Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority, 2007. The Louisiana legislature created the Louisiana State Uniform Construction Code during the Extraordinary Session in November 2005 after hurricanes Katrina and Rita. LRS 40:1730.21 through 1730.40. Louisiana State Uniform Construction Code Council, <http://lsuccc.dps.louisiana.gov>.

<sup>174</sup> Brasseaux and Davis, 159 and 164; Bevil Knapp and Mike Dunne, *America's Wetland: Louisiana's Vanishing Coast*. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005), 1.

<sup>175</sup> Brasseaux and Davis, 166.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid, 169.

<sup>177</sup> Interview of Cheryl Stout on July 29, 2016.

<sup>178</sup> Brasseaux and Davis, 168.

<sup>179</sup> Some local Grand Isle businesses purchased or rented housing for employees with storm damaged homes after hurricanes Katrina and Rita to keep businesses open. Interview of Shelley Landry on July 30, 2015.

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Name of Property
Jefferson Parish, LA
County and State
Louisiana Coastal Vernacular: Grand Isle, 1780-1968
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number E Page 24

mementos of past lives and histories. The eventuality for such historic structures remains slow deterioration due to neglect and abandonment. The National Register Multiple Property Listing proposed herein comprises the only known documentation of such coastal structures endangered by demographic and global climate changes combined with annual tropical storms and increasingly restrictive building codes. The need for documentation remains urgent in the face of eventual ruin as communities deteriorate along with their environment.

### **Historic Buildings in Historical Context**

#### **FORMATION AND EARLY ISLAND HABITATION (1780-1812)**

The oldest surviving structure on the island remains near the center, both east-west and north-south.<sup>180</sup> Originally constructed in 1798, the **St. Aubin-Rigaud House** retains the distinction as the oldest surviving structure on Grand Isle. An article in the *New Orleans Republican* mentioned the “*ancienne maison Rigaud*... on the walls of which are recorded the several risings of water” that took place in 1812, 1831, and 1869.<sup>181</sup> Though numerous additions obscure the original home, the center portion around the chimney survived the ravages of time and family growth over several generations. The home may be eligible for listing under Criterion A or B for its connections to the distinctive cultural development and persons of interest on Grand Isle.

#### **MID-19<sup>th</sup> CENTURY DEVELOPMENT (1812-1880)**

A few structures survived from the mid-nineteenth century - three homes and one business/ institutional building. The **Crosby House** circa 1840, underwent complete dismantlement and relocation to the center of the island on the lot adjacent to the oldest surviving business or institution on the island.<sup>182</sup> Constructed in 1857, the **Ludwig Building** served numerous functions during the past one hundred and sixty years. Originally a general store with private residence at the rear, it also served as a United States Post Office, starting in 1879, when mail was delivered by boat to the island and the storekeeper dispersed it to residents.<sup>183</sup> Constructed in 1870 from scrap lumber, the **Lee-Andy Valence House**

<sup>180</sup> Geographers concluded that unlike many gulf coast barrier islands, Grand Isle remained stable at its center with the extreme east and west “arms” rotating slightly north and south over time. This pattern of nature resulted in a stable core allowing the survival of the island culture at the central part. “The 10- to 12-inch thick barrier sand unit overlies delta-front silty clays and silty sands of the *Bayou Blue* Mississippi subdelta. Since the inception of the island about 2000B.P., no significant seaward or landward progradation or retreat occurred, indicating a dynamic balance between the erosion and accumulation by littoral drift. Only minor amounts of lateral progradation took place on the island.” Schwartz, Maurice L., ed. *Barrier Islands*. (Stroudsburg, PN: Dowden, Hutchison, & Ross, Inc., 1973), 345

<sup>181</sup> The house featured appears to be the St. Aubin – Rigaud house (circa 1798). “Through Harvey’s Canal, A Visit to Grand Isle, The Watering Place Described.” *New Orleans Republican*, August 24, 1870. <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov>.

<sup>182</sup> The house was relocated by “Bayonne” Henri Demonde-Bourne in 1880. Evidence of the reassembly remains in the marks on exposed structural members in the attic. Interview of Maddie Crosby on 10/14/2017. Site Inspections July 2017 through February 2018.

<sup>183</sup> Originally the Herwig Store. The hotel was added in the 1890s. Chenier Hurricane Centennial. *A Walking Tour of 1893 Era Homes on Grand Isle, Louisiana*, October 1, 1993. The United States Postal Service started delivering mail to the island in 1879. The Ludwig Store served as the post office well into the twentieth century. Stielow, Frederick J. *Isolation and Development on a Louisiana Gulfcoast Island: Grand Isle, 1781-1962*. PhD

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Name of Property
Jefferson Parish, LA
County and State
Louisiana Coastal Vernacular: Grand Isle, 1780-1968
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number E Page 25

contains elements of larger plantation homes with elevation a full story above grade and a deep front gallery. Its contemporary, the **Poche House** constructed in 1875 served as the community place of worship and housing for clergy for twenty-five years after the 1893 Cheniere Caminada hurricane destroyed the church.<sup>184</sup>

**LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY GILDED AGE (1880-1893)**

Construction of the majority of the oldest buildings that remain on Grand Isle occurred in the 1880s and 1890s at the height of the Gilded Age. The **Chighizola House, Adam House, Hirvin-Barthelmy House, and the DeMolle House** all date to the 1880s.<sup>185</sup> The **Adam-Minnich House and Caillot's Villa** date to 1890. The original structure, Theresa Rigaud's house, which became half of the **Robin House (Rigaud)**, also potentially dates to this era. These buildings survived the 1893 hurricane that completely devastated Cheniere Caminada and the large hotels on the exposed east and west ends of Grand Isle.

**HURRICANE TO HIGHWAY (1893-1931)**

Two buildings date to immediately following the 1893 storm. Island reconstruction in 1894 resulted in two structures: **Calais' Sanctuary and the Robbin House**. The latter originally consisted of a Creole two-room house with center chimney. The owner, Theresa Rigaud, had a son (Benio) who lived in a circa 1894 house on a nearby lot. During the 1915 hurricane, the home of Benio Rigaud floated down the lane and came to rest next to the older structure of his mother's house. The two houses became one when the owners raised the 'hurricane addition' on salvaged wood stumps and joined the two structures. They have remained a single home for the past hundred years.<sup>186</sup>

Subsequent to the 1915 hurricane, the community constructed the first church on the island. **Our Lady of the Isle (Church Hall)** was completed circa 1918 as a small wood-frame building with gothic-arched windows flanking a small entrance porch and raised four to six feet above grade.

With the opening of highway access to the island, the influence of the popular Bungalow style started to appear on the island. Constructed in 1931, with materials imported by barge and by truck, the **Thayer-Landry House Bed-and-Breakfast** was one of the first buildings on the island with indoor plumbing and electricity.

The lesson learned of the attractive, residential Bungalow style **United States Coast Guard Station**, elevated above high tides and able to withstand the strongest storms, proved significant for future building construction on the island. The previously established vernacular of wood frame, porches, and

diss., Indiana University, 1977. (Ann Arbor: Xerox University Microfilms, 1979), 183.

<sup>184</sup> The home served as religious center from 1893 until 1918 when the first Our Lady of the Isle Catholic Church was constructed on Grand Isle. Chenier Hurricane Centennial. *A Walking Tour of 1893 Era Homes on Grand Isle, Louisiana*, October 1, 1993; Interview of Shelley Landry on July 30, 2015.

<sup>185</sup> The original location of the DeMolle House was on the west end of the island. It was relocated to its present site near the center of the island in 1916.

<sup>186</sup> Chenier Hurricane Centennial. *A Walking Tour of 1893 Era Homes on Grand Isle, Louisiana*, October 1, 1993. Island residents believe the live oak trees provided the protection from storms that enabled their survival. In the case of the Robbin house, the trees at the front and side of the house appear to have served as barricades that kept the Benio Rigaud house in the location where it landed. Site Inspections July 2017 through February 2018.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Name of Property
Jefferson Parish, LA
County and State
Louisiana Coastal Vernacular: Grand Isle, 1780-1968
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number E Page 26

steeply pitched roofs remained but became elevated a full floor or more above the ground and created outdoor living and storage areas at grade. The coming Auto Age brought an influx of visitors and confirmed the vernacular change over the next century.

#### AUTO AGE AND INDUSTRY (1931-1965)

Constructed around 1965, Halliburton company worker housing on the east end of the island acknowledged the necessity of elevated structures to survive the frequent storm surges.<sup>[1]</sup> Approximately twelve (12) structures remain on a single street of the original neighborhood with nearly 300 homes. The remaining buildings represent a unique facet, employee housing, of the offshore oil industry in Louisiana. They also represent some of the first elevated structures on Grand Isle having living areas approximately eight (8) feet above grade with enclosed garages below. The remaining neighborhood retains its shell-paved streets, sidewalks, fire hydrants, and drainage ditches, though these are only clearly apparent in aerial views.

When no longer viable as employee housing, structures were sold to private owners on the condition they were relocated from oil company property. Some of these structures remain on Grand Isle but scattered throughout the community and no longer recognizable as the industrial worker housing from which they originated.

#### CONCLUSION

Buildings surviving from prior to 1931 on Grand Isle form an essential component of the traditional culture in this Louisiana coastal community. Some have retained their architectural integrity while others with significant alterations remain historically significant to the culture. Buildings in the Louisiana Coastal Vernacular may be listed under Criterion C for structures with architectural integrity. Significantly altered structures may remain culturally significant and may be listed under Criterion A. A few structures relate to particular people and events on the island and may qualify under Criterion B but will require individual review to determine significance. Alterations to these structures are considered documentation of their survival and that of the people occupying them. The sandy soil and significant storm events over the intervening centuries, islanders' practice of recycling found materials, saltwater intrusion, and soil erosion makes the possibility of any site qualification for Criterion D minimal. However, in the absence of any known archaeological surveys on the island, it may be possible to review sites on an individual basis. Two locations with known historical significance to the community exist: the original **Barataria Plantation site and the John Ludwig Terrapin Farm.**

Frequent storms with flood events and high winds proved the center of the island the safest and most survivable area on the island. Some buildings from more exposed areas at the west and east ends of the island survived through dismantlement and relocation to the protected areas within the live oak chenier. Some buildings survived relocation by the storms themselves. And the local vernacular changed with the recognition of storm surges that brought floodwaters into homes and businesses. Many homeowners and camp builders constructed elevated structures during the early twentieth century that quickly formed the new island vernacular.

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Name of Property
Jefferson Parish, LA
County and State
Louisiana Coastal Vernacular: Grand Isle, 1780-1968
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number F Page 27

**F. Associated Property Types**

Property types on Grand Isle focus on buildings. There is a small area that is considered a historic district as it is the only cohesive concentration of historic buildings. Lastly, there are a few archaeological sites identified by the Louisiana Division of Archaeology on the island.

**Property Type - Buildings**

Description and Significance

The Creole vernacular structures on Grand Isle dating from 1798-1894 are similar to many small houses scattered across south Louisiana. However, they are not all the same and many contain adaptations and/or additions that enhanced their survivability over more than one hundred years of their existence. No one style exists in its purest form on the island.

In reference to house types, Creole means “a house or cottage with two or more interconnected rooms, without hallways, and often with two cabinets, or small rooms, at the rear, joined by a loggia.”<sup>187</sup> French Colonial refers to “buildings, towns, landscapes, and other artifacts from the period of actual French colonial occupation of large parts of eastern North America (c. 1605-1763). The term is extended to apply to artifacts of French ethnic groups and their descendants well into the nineteenth century.”<sup>188</sup> These buildings are characterized by “heavy braced timber frames and Norman truss roof systems...[with] *bousillage* filling the space between the timbers. Houses were raised several feet off the ground on piers... and broken pitch roofs [although] later straightly pitched gable or hip roofs were preferred... large attic space ... [although] almost never used ... for daily living... generous galleries set beneath their broad, spreading rooflines.” The floor plans of French Creole houses always consisted of “at least one range of rooms typically paralleled by a front gallery... Sometimes, a second range of rooms stood behind the first.” Most houses had a rear *cabinet* or loggia but no hallways as “rooms opened directly into each other.”<sup>189</sup> Decorative elements included: turned or chamfered gallery columns, exposed beaded ceiling beams, and wraparound mantels on boxed chimneys located in interior walls.<sup>190</sup>

In addition to the French Creole Style, Louisiana is also home to the Acadian Style, which refers to Acadian settlers, who arrived in Louisiana c. 1765-1790, and adapted the Creole cottage into a “two-room-wide plan, with a gallery across the façade and a *cabinet*/loggia range at the rear.”<sup>191</sup> Attics used as living space were accessed via a staircase or ladder either on the rear loggia or in a cabinet.<sup>192</sup>

Despite falling within the Spanish Colonial era chronologically (c. 1763-1800 in Louisiana and the Lower Mississippi Valley), French cultural heritage remained the strongest on Grand Isle, especially in language.<sup>193</sup>

<sup>187</sup> Karen Kingsley. *Buildings of Louisiana*. (Oxford: University Press, 2003), 464.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid, 467.

<sup>189</sup> Jonathan Fricker, Donna Fricker, and Patricia L. Duncan. *Louisiana Architecture: A Handbook on Styles*. (Lafayette, LA: University of Louisiana at Lafayette Press, 1998), 1-3.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid, 3-4.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> Christopher M. Moreno and Dayna Bowker Lee, Eds. Giorgio H. Curti and Dayna Bowker Lee. *Final Report*,

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Name of Property
Jefferson Parish, LA
County and State
Louisiana Coastal Vernacular: Grand Isle, 1780-1968
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number F Page 28

In addition to these much older buildings, there are also several extant bungalow style houses on Grand Isle dating from 1894-1931. This type is characterized as a "simple, low, horizontal, and informal dwelling" that includes "prominent gable roofs, overhanging eaves with exposed rafter ends, large double or triple windows, exterior chimneys, and large gabled porches with conspicuous posts ...[of] two-part design [which includes] a tapered or straight column rising from a thick supporting pier."<sup>194</sup> Interior features included "paneled rooms, with beamed ceilings and fireplaces ...[and] casual, hall-less floor plans."<sup>195</sup> The type adapted particularly well in the south Louisiana climate, particularly for vacation homes, as well as the similarity of features to earlier Creole houses in Grand Isle.

Overall, the buildings on Grand Isle, whether they are Creole, French Colonial, bungalow style, or a combination of any of the above, they all fit within a broader category of Louisiana Coastal Vernacular. As with many places, the popular architectural styles were adapted to vernacular building traditions. These practices resulted in a small collection of historic resources on the island that include the earliest Creole structures as well as the later bungalow style buildings. These styles were applied to both residential and commercial buildings.

Because of its location on the gulf and susceptibility to flooding and hurricanes, Grand Isle had a long history of elevating buildings and those historic buildings that are extant were built between 1931 and 1958. Though many examples of these structures remain on Grand Isle as bungalow and cottage styles elevated six to eight feet above the ground, these have not yet been surveyed and warrant further study for inclusion at a later date.

#### Registration Requirements

Buildings of French Creole and Bungalow styles must retain major elements of these styles as described above for eligibility under Criterion C. Status of elevation to meet Base Flood Elevation requirements should not completely disqualify buildings on Grand Isle if they meet a majority of other elements of the specified style, mainly because of the geographic location of these buildings on an island continually battered by flooding and hurricanes and because of the longstanding history of elevating buildings on Grand Isle. Applicants should show documentation of historical background relative to the community for those structures not meeting Criterion C for architecture to achieve Criterion A or B listing under community significance. Buildings should at least retain integrity of design, feeling, association, location, and setting. Materials may have changed some due to repairing storm damage, but overall, the building should retain its overall form, style, and layout.

Please note that the listing is not intended to limit applicants to those listed herein but applicants not included bear the burden of proof for inclusion in the listing. Some buildings have multiple dates listed indicating the original date of construction and the later relocation from more exposed east and west ends of the island into the protected live oak chenier area after severe storms. All of these noted here have remained in their current locations for at least one-hundred years.

*MC252 (Deepwater Horizon) Oil Spill Response, Traditional Cultural Properties Inventory: State of Louisiana.*  
New Orleans: HDR Environmental for Gulf Coast Incident Management Team, May 2015.

<sup>194</sup> Fricker, et al, 65.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid.

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Name of Property  
Jefferson Parish, LA  
County and State  
Louisiana Coastal Vernacular: Grand Isle, 1780-1968  
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number F Page 29

**Property Type – Historic Districts**

Description and Significance

There is only one area on the island recognizable as a cohesive historic district and that is the Haliburton Worker Housing dating from 1958-1968. Offshore petroleum industry-related housing constructed on Grand Isle in the mid-twentieth century at one time covered a large area on the east end of the island. However, a single street containing approximately eight to ten structures are the sole remnants of this coastal vernacular style from the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century on the island. The buildings are elevated above a garage area on concrete pilings and consist of two bedrooms, one bathroom, living room, and kitchen with front and rear decks. These have not yet been fully surveyed and warrant further study for inclusion at a later date.

**Historic Building Inventory (as of June 2018)**

Building Name	Street Address	Construction Date (approximate)
St. Aubin-Rigaud (Santiny)	End of Coulon Rigaud Lane	1798
Crosby House	238 Coulon Rigaud Lane	1840/1880
Ludwig (Herwig) Store/Post Office/ Hotel	Medical Lane	1857/1890
Poche House and Storage Building	102 ½ Community Lane	1875
Chighizola House	112 Medical Lane	1880
Adam House and Cistern	142B Community Lane	1880
Hirvin-Barthelmy House	104 Wolfpack Lane (end of Post Lane)	1880
Demolle House	105 Adam Lane	1880/1916
Lee-Andy Valence	205 Cemetery Lane	1888
Adam-Minnich House	195 Coulon Rigaud Lane	1890
Caillot's Villa	130 Community Lane	1890
Robin House	176 Coulon Rigaud Lane	Pre-1894/1894/1915
Calais' Sanctuary	218 Nacarri Lane	1894
Our Lady of the Isle Church Hall	Corner of Church and Ludwig Lanes	1918
Coast Guard Station (Town Hall), Boathouse, and Cistern	170 Ludwig Lane	1919
Thayer-Landry House Bed-and-Breakfast	End of Hector Lane	1931

Registration Requirements

Buildings that form a cohesive historic district, must retain exterior integrity in order to be considered contributing to the district. For Grand Isle, the only buildings that form any semblance of a district are the 1958-68 oil worker housing. Like earlier mill complexes found in other parts of the state, the oil



**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Name of Property
Jefferson Parish, LA
County and State
Louisiana Coastal Vernacular: Grand Isle, 1780-1968
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number F Page 30

housing was one house type copied over and over again, sometimes with the entry door on the left, some on the right. The following are typical features found on the houses:

- Two story house
- One car garage on ground level
- Stair case leading from ground level to the main living level on front (and sometimes back)
- Front gable roof
- Front and rear porches; many times the façade facing the porch had a shed roof projecting from the main gable roof
- Façade fenestration (facing the street) of three windows and a single entry door
- Multi lite front doors
- 2/2 horizontal pane windows
- Asbestos siding
- Decorative fish scale detail in gable end
- Enclosed ground floor, sometimes converted to living space at a later date

A common alteration done to these houses is window replacement, but this has generally been done within the existing window opening. Some of the original worker housing has also been moved to other locations on the island. These would not be eligible under historic districts, but instead should be looked at for National Register eligibility under the previously discussed building property type under Criterion A in relation to the history of Grand Isle or under Criterion C as examples of mid-20<sup>th</sup> century worker housing. .

To be eligible for listing, a historic district must retain resources that maintain integrity of location, setting, design, feeling, association, and craftsmanship. Materials do not need to be 100% intact as these buildings are in a location that is continually battered by flooding and hurricanes. The overall form, style, design, and layout is of primary importance to these buildings. With that said, the majority of the buildings in this section of the island do retain a fairly high degree of materials integrity. For a building to be considered contributing to a historic district on Grand Isle, primarily the Haliburton Worker Housing, it must retain at least seven of the above noted common characteristics. Window replacement does not render one of these buildings non-contributing, particularly if the opening size has not been altered.

### **Archaeological Sites in the Grand Isle Area**

Three sites were investigated by the Division of Archaeology prior to this investigation. These are:

- 16JE124 Fifi Island Brick Ruins (1/13/2003) – determined ineligible
- 16JE125 Hardtoreach (8/18/1994) – no eligibility determination made
- 16JE144 Barataria Plantation Site (7/2/1984, updated 6/21/2001) – determined eligible

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Name of Property
Jefferson Parish, LA
County and State
Louisiana Coastal Vernacular: Grand Isle, 1780-1968
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number F Page 31

---

**G. Geographical Data** Grand Isle is located on the Louisiana coastline in the Gulf of Mexico. It is west of the Mississippi River outlet and due south of New Orleans at the mouth of Barataria Bay. For Multiple Property Listing area, see submitted USGS Map.

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Name of Property
Jefferson Parish, LA
County and State
Louisiana Coastal Vernacular: Grand Isle, 1780-1968
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number F Page 32

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**H. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods**

The multiple property listing of focused on resources on the island of Grand Isle in the state of Louisiana. These were all constructed during the period of significance between 1780 and 1968. Background research began at the Historic New Orleans Collection, Jefferson Parish libraries, and Jefferson Parish courthouse records in Grand Isle and Gretna. Online historical newspaper databases and the collections at Louisiana State University Library Archives were also consulted during the research process. Research occurred simultaneously onsite in Grand Isle with interviews, photographs, and site inspections of apparent historical properties. The architectural designs of individual properties were taken into consideration during the development of eligibility requirements. Eligibility requirements are based on observations of the existing conditions of surviving historic structures of at least one hundred to as little as fifty years old in Grand Isle, Louisiana.

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Name of Property
Jefferson Parish, LA
County and State
Louisiana Coastal Vernacular: Grand Isle, 1780-1968
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number F Page 33

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Jean Landry, Grand Isle Historian, on March 1, 2015 and with Grand Isle Economic Development Committee on October 16, 2017.

Lana Laws Downing, Robbin House owner, on July 31, 2015.

Maddie Crosby, Grand Isle Librarian, on July 18, 2017, August 9, 2017, and October 14, 2017.

Paula Heap, Adam House owner, on October 14, 2017.

Shelley Landry, Poche House owner and local business owner, on July 30, 2015 and August 8, 2017.

Site Inspections, conducted during March and July 2015; July and August 2016; June, July, August, and October 2017; February and May 2018, included owner interviews, photographs, sketches, notes, and physical inspections of properties.

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**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Name of Property
Jefferson Parish, LA
County and State
Louisiana Coastal Vernacular: Grand Isle, 1780-1968
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number F Page 34

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**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Name of Property
Jefferson Parish, LA
County and State
Louisiana Coastal Vernacular: Grand Isle, 1780-1968
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number F Page 35

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**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Name of Property
Jefferson Parish, LA
County and State
Louisiana Coastal Vernacular: Grand Isle, 1780-1968
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number F Page 36

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**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Name of Property
Jefferson Parish, LA
County and State
Louisiana Coastal Vernacular: Grand Isle, 1780-1968
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number F Page 37

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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Name of Property  
Jefferson Parish, LA

County and State

Louisiana Coastal Vernacular: Grand Isle, 1780-1968

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number F Page 38

J. Appendix – Photos of Historic Resources on Grand Isle



Figure 1 (above). Caillot's Villa; façade as viewed from Community Lane. Figure 2 (below left): Caillot's Villa window and shutters. Figure 3 (below right): Caillot's Villa front porch ceiling detail.





**United States Department of the Interior**  
**National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Name of Property
Jefferson Parish, LA
County and State
Louisiana Coastal Vernacular: Grand Isle, 1780-1968
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number F Page 39



Figure 4. Caillot's Villa rear elevation as viewed from Community Lane.





**United States Department of the Interior**  
**National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Name of Property
Jefferson Parish, LA
County and State
Louisiana Coastal Vernacular: Grand Isle, 1780-1968
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number F Page 40

Figure 5. Ludwig Store/Post Office/Hotel – store/post office north entrance.



Figure 6. Ludwig Store/Post Office/Hotel – hotel double gallery facing south and west elevation.



Figure 7. Ludwig Store/Post Office/Hotel - Northeast corner facing Medical Lane.



**United States Department of the Interior**  
**National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Name of Property
Jefferson Parish, LA
County and State
Louisiana Coastal Vernacular: Grand Isle, 1780-1968
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number F Page 41



Figure 8. Ludwig Store/Post Office/Hotel - West elevation side porch between store and hotel.



Figure 9. Lee-Andy-Valence House - Front (south) porch from Landry Lane.



**United States Department of the Interior**  
**National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Name of Property
Jefferson Parish, LA
County and State
Louisiana Coastal Vernacular: Grand Isle, 1780-1968
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number F Page 42



Figure 10. Lee-Andy-Valence House – East elevation.



Figure 11. Lee-Andy-Valence House – west elevation.



**United States Department of the Interior**  
**National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Name of Property
Jefferson Parish, LA
County and State
Louisiana Coastal Vernacular: Grand Isle, 1780-1968
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number F Page 43



Figure 12 and 13. Hirvin-Barthelmy House – Front (southeast) corner from Landry Lane at left and the front gallery (west) elevation from Cemetery Lane.



Figure 14. Hirvin-Barthelmy House – west elevation.



**United States Department of the Interior**  
**National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Name of Property
Jefferson Parish, LA
County and State
Louisiana Coastal Vernacular: Grand Isle, 1780-1968
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number F Page 44



Figure 15. The Chateau – front (south) elevation.



Figure 16. Adam-Minnich House – Front (south) porch from Coulon Rigaud.



**United States Department of the Interior**  
**National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Name of Property
Jefferson Parish, LA
County and State
Louisiana Coastal Vernacular: Grand Isle, 1780-1968
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number F Page 45



Figure 17. Adam-Minnich House – rear (north) elevation from Coulon Rigaud.



Figure 18. Chighozola House – front (south) porch.



**United States Department of the Interior**  
**National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Name of Property
Jefferson Parish, LA
County and State
Louisiana Coastal Vernacular: Grand Isle, 1780-1968
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number F Page 46



Figure 19. Chighozola House – Roof and chimney detail.



Figure 20. Chighozola House – Rear (northwest) corner detail.

**United States Department of the Interior**  
**National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Name of Property
Jefferson Parish, LA
County and State
Louisiana Coastal Vernacular: Grand Isle, 1780-1968
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number F Page 47



Figure 21. Our Lady of the Isle Church Hall – front (north) elevation facing church.



Figure 22. Our Lady of the Isle Church Hall – Rear and side (southeast) elevation and church in background.



**United States Department of the Interior**  
**National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Name of Property
Jefferson Parish, LA
County and State
Louisiana Coastal Vernacular: Grand Isle, 1780-1968
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number F Page 48



Figure 23. Calais' Sanctuary – front (west) elevation facing Nacarri Lane.



Figure 24. Calais' Sanctuary – front and south elevation and property as viewed from Nacarri Lane.



**United States Department of the Interior**  
**National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Name of Property
Jefferson Parish, LA
County and State
Louisiana Coastal Vernacular: Grand Isle, 1780-1968
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number F Page 49



Figure 25. Calais' Sanctuary – rear (east) elevation from Community Lane.



Figure 26. Calais' Sanctuary – rear (northeast) corner from Community Lane.



**United States Department of the Interior**  
**National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Name of Property
Jefferson Parish, LA
County and State
Louisiana Coastal Vernacular: Grand Isle, 1780-1968
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number F Page 50



Figure 27. Demolle House – Front (south) porch and property from Adam Lane.



Figure 28. Crosby House – east side elevation.



**United States Department of the Interior**  
**National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Name of Property
Jefferson Parish, LA
County and State
Louisiana Coastal Vernacular: Grand Isle, 1780-1968
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number F Page 51



Figure 29. Crosby House – front (north) elevation from Medical Lane.



Figure 30. Santiny House – front (west) elevation facing Coulon Rigaud.



**United States Department of the Interior**  
**National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Name of Property
Jefferson Parish, LA
County and State
Louisiana Coastal Vernacular: Grand Isle, 1780-1968
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number F Page 52



Figure 31. Thayer-Landry Bed and Breakfast – front (south) from driveway.



Figure 32. Thayer-Landry Bed and Breakfast – front (south) elevation.



**United States Department of the Interior**  
**National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Name of Property

Jefferson Parish, LA

County and State

Louisiana Coastal Vernacular: Grand Isle, 1780-1968

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number F Page 53



Figure 33. Thayer-Landry Bed and Breakfast – east elevation from driveway.



Figure 34. Grand Isle – sunrise over dune at Grand Isle State Park



**United States Department of the Interior**  
**National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Name of Property

Jefferson Parish, LA

County and State

Louisiana Coastal Vernacular: Grand Isle, 1780-1968

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number F

Page 54



Figure 35. Grand Isle – beach at low tide.

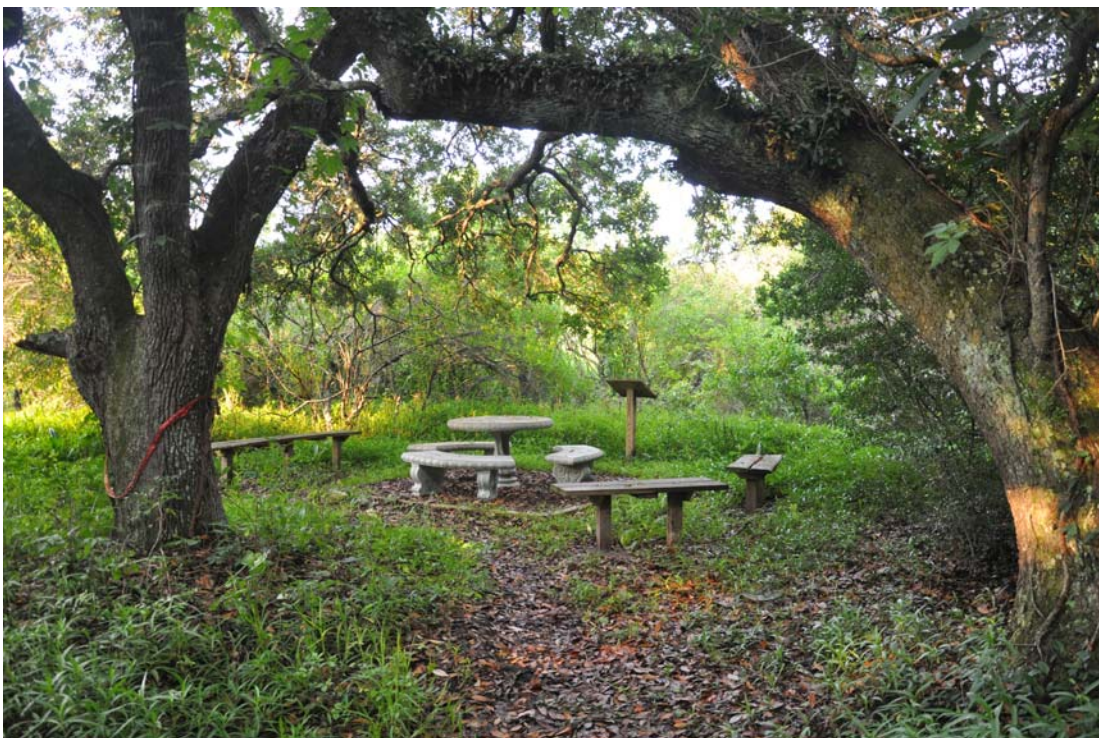


Figure 36. Grand Isle – Nature Conservancy Grillea Tract and live oak trees.

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Name of Property
Jefferson Parish, LA
County and State
Louisiana Coastal Vernacular: Grand Isle, 1780-1968
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number F Page 55



Figure 37. Grand Isle – Coast Guard Station on east end of Grand Isle.



Figure 38. Grand Isle – petroleum industry on east end of the island.



**United States Department of the Interior**  
**National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Name of Property
Jefferson Parish, LA
County and State
Louisiana Coastal Vernacular: Grand Isle, 1780-1968
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number F Page 56



Figure 39. Grand Isle – sunset over shrimp boats at bay docks.

**LOUISIANA COASTAL VERNACULAR: Grand Isle, 1780-1968**

Multiple Property Submission Addendum Photos

Grand Isle      Jefferson Parish      LA

Date taken:      3/2015 through 5/2018

Photographer:      Karen McKinney

**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 250 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 Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, PO Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.



# Historic Buildings of Grand Isle Jefferson Parish, LA Resource Map





UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action: COVER DOCUMENTATION

Multiple Name: Louisiana Coastal Vernacular: Grand Isle 1780-1968 MPS

State & County:

Date Received: 10/24/2018 Date of 45th Day: 12/10/2018

Reference number: MC100003191

Reason For Review:

<input type="checkbox"/> Appeal	<input type="checkbox"/> PDIL	<input type="checkbox"/> Text/Data Issue
<input type="checkbox"/> SHPO Request	<input type="checkbox"/> Landscape	<input type="checkbox"/> Photo
<input type="checkbox"/> Waiver	<input type="checkbox"/> National	<input type="checkbox"/> Map/Boundary
<input type="checkbox"/> Resubmission	<input type="checkbox"/> Mobile Resource	<input type="checkbox"/> Period
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	<input type="checkbox"/> TCP	<input type="checkbox"/> Less than 50 years
	<input type="checkbox"/> CLG	

☒ Accept ☐ Return ☐ Reject 12/3/2018 Date

Abstract/Summary  
Comments:

The cover provides a good background on the development of Grand Isle, and attempts to define a "Louisiana Coastal Vernacular" domestic building type. In essence, an amalgamation of other traditional building forms, this LCV, while not limited to Grand Isle, is an important part of its historic development. The cover is weakest in discussion of the post 1920 era, and the potential importance of resources associated with most of the 20th century. The form identifies two resources - buildings and districts - and limits the district category to one remnant of worker housing built in the 1950s. The registration requirements are not the strongest, but the initial 4 nominations do present eligible and important resources. Archeological sites are mentioned in the property types section, but there is no context and such sites cannot be nominated under this version of the cover.

Recommendation/  
Criteria

Accept the Cover, with reservations. Cannot be used for archeology.

Reviewer Jim Gabbert

Discipline Historian

Telephone (202)354-2275

Date 12-3-2018

DOCUMENTATION: see attached comments: No see attached SLR: No

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.



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

RICHARD H. HARTLEY  
DEPUTY SECRETARY

KRISTIN P. SANDERS  
ASSISTANT SECRETARY

DATE: October 23, 2018

TO: Mr. James Gabbert  
National Park Service Mail Stop 7228  
1849 C Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20240

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

RE: Louisiana Coastal Vernacular: Grand Isle, 1780-1968 Multiple Property  
Submission, Jefferson Parish, LA



Jim,

The enclosed disks contain the true and correct copy of the Louisiana Coastal Vernacular: Grand Isle, 1780-1968 Multiple Property Submission to be placed in the National Register of Historic Places. Should you have any questions, please contact me at 225-219-4595, or [jrichardson@crt.la.gov](mailto:jrichardson@crt.la.gov).

Thanks,

Jessica

Enclosures:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	CD with PDF of the National Register of Historic Places nomination form
<input type="checkbox"/> n/a	CD with electronic images (tiff format)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Physical Transmission Letter
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Physical Signature Page, with original signature
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other:

Comments:

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