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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NOV 30 1992

NATIONAL
REGISTER

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Warren, Robert Penn, House

other names/site number Twin Oaks

2. Location

street & number 16381 Old Jefferson Highway N/A not for publication

city or town Prairieville N/A vicinity

state Louisiana code LA county Ascension code 005 zip code 70769

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

Gerri Hobdy
Signature of certifying official/Title Gerri Hobdy, Date November 25, 1992
LA SHPO, Dept of Culture, Recreation and Tourism
State of Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

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

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

M. J. M. [Signature] 11/7/93

Warren, Robert Penn, House
Name of Property

Ascension Parish, LA
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

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

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

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

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	2	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	2	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Colonial Revival

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation brick

walls weatherboard

roof asphalt

other

Narrative Description

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

**United States Department of the Interior
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**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Warren, Robert Penn, House, Ascension Parish, LA
Section number 7 Page 1

The Robert Penn Warren House is a frame, one-and-a-half story Colonial Revival residence located in the rural hamlet of Prairieville. Built c.1905, it is set in a grove of towering live oaks and magnolias. To the north the land slopes down to a bayou that runs on the edge of the property. Although the house has received various alterations since Warren lived there in 1941-42, they are not serious enough to jeopardize its Register eligibility.

The house essentially has a hipped roof core with a gabled projection to the front and one to each side. The gallery, which extends across the front and down the side, has its own pitched roof. Oral tradition, supported by the architectural evidence, indicates that the porch terminated originally about the mid-point of the front gable (i.e., at the edge of the stairs). Sometime after Warren lived there, a room was added to the north side and the gallery extended, duplicating the original chunky, paneled pillar design. This is evident only upon close inspection. The only other exterior feature of any stylistic distinction is the Palladian motif window in the front gable.

The house has a front and rear hall down the center with a range of rooms on each side. A wide transomed doorway provides access between the two halls. A typical staircase of the period is located in the rear hall. The only other interior features worthy of note are a built-in window seat in the dining room and three surviving mantels, all of which are quite plain, consisting essentially of a plain surround with a shelf.

The house has undergone various modifications since Warren lived there in 1941-42. The principal ones are as follows:

- (1) the addition of a room to the north and the extension of the front gallery, as explained previously;
- (2) the addition of a rear wing;
- (3) the creation of a glazed in sun room at the south rear corner;
- (4) the creation of a brick wall patio at the rear; and
- (5) various interior alterations, including the removal of the wall between two bedrooms to create one large room and the insertion of a modern Eastlake grille in its place, the insertion of a stained glass window in the dining room, the installation of simple ceiling medallions in some rooms, the removal of the wall separating the dining room and parlor and the installation of a salvaged period mantel in the resulting large room. One wonders about the present pecky cypress paneling in the study. Although not original, it could have been there

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Warren, Robert Penn, House, Ascension Parish, LA

Section number 7 Page 2

during Warren's period, or it could just as easily be post-Warren.

Assessment of Integrity

Although lengthy, these alterations have not changed the appearance of the house so much that Robert Penn Warren would no longer recognize it, which is the litmus test for Register eligibility for association with a significant person. It is also important to note that the house retains its majestic live oak setting, the latter being particularly important to Warren, as found in later reminiscences (see Part 8).

Non-Contributing Elements

There are two non-contributing elements to the rear of the house. One is a pool house that was originally a board and batten dependency of some sort. It is being counted as non-contributing due to the loss of integrity sustained in its conversion to a pool house. The second is a large board and batten storage building that may have been built within the last fifty years. Because we are not certain that it was there during the Warren period, it is being counted as a non-contributing element.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

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

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.) N/A

Property is:

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

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

literature

Period of Significance

1941-42

Significant Dates

1941-42

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Warren, Robert Penn

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS): N/A

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository:

Warren, Robert Penn, House
Name of Property

Ascension Parish, LA
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 7 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1

1	5	6	9	4	8	6	0	3	3	5	4	4	8	0
Zone	Easting						Northing							

2

Zone	Easting						Northing							

3

Zone	Easting						Northing							

4

Zone	Easting						Northing							

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

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

Boundary Justification

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

11. Form Prepared By

name/title National Register Staff

organization Division of Historic Preservation date October 1992

street & number P. O. Box 44247 telephone 504-342-8160

city or town Baton Rouge state LA zip code 70804

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

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

Additional Items

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

Property Owner

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

name William D. and Carolyn P. Carroll

street & number 16381 Old Jefferson Hwy. telephone 504-673-4836 (h)
504-767-8478 (o)

city or town Baton Rouge state LA zip code 70804

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

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

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Warren, Robert Penn, House, Ascension Parish, LA

Section number 8 Page 1

The Robert Penn Warren House is of national significance in the area of literature because it was the home of one of America's foremost twentieth century literary figures. Warren lived in the house from the time he purchased it in September 1941 until June 1942, when he left LSU for a better offer at the University of Minnesota. Although the length of association is admittedly brief, scholars regard it as a critical period in Warren's life and career. Also, the house was particularly special to Warren, as evidenced in his later reminiscences. The foregoing interpretation is based largely upon an article on the subject written by Lewis P. Simpson, Professor Emeritus of English at LSU, who also happened to know Warren personally.

Robert Penn Warren's stature in American literature is well-established; hence this nomination will provide only a summation of his life and career. Born in 1905 in Kentucky near the Tennessee border, Warren spent his early life in these two states. He graduated from Vanderbilt University in 1925, received a master's degree from the University of California at Berkeley, studied at Yale, and then was chosen a Rhodes Scholar for the state of Kentucky. He earned his B. Litt. at Oxford in 1930. He then returned to his native South to teach for a year at Southwestern College in Memphis, from 1931-34 at Vanderbilt, and from 1934-1942 at Louisiana State University. While at LSU he co-founded and co-edited the Southern Review, one of the most distinguished literary publications of the time. After leaving LSU because of contractual problems, Warren, a Southerner whose main literary preoccupation was the South, never returned to the region except for brief visits. He left LSU to go to the University of Minnesota, and in 1950 moved to New England to take a post at Yale. He lived there until his death in 1989.

Because of his prodigious output, versatility and overall genius, Warren in his later years was regarded as America's greatest living man of letters. As noted in the Dictionary of Literary Biography, he "bequeathed to posterity a towering monument of creativity," including ten novels, sixteen volumes of poetry, a cycle of books relating to the Civil War, several book-length treatises on literature, not to mention innumerable critical essays and the like. Two textbooks he co-authored with Cleanth Brooks, Understanding Poetry (1938) and Understanding Fiction (1943), are considered seminal works because they engineered a transformation in the study of literature. His numerous awards include three Pulitzer Prizes. In 1986, he became America's first poet laureate.

As noted previously, Warren's predominant literary focus was the South. He once said that it had never crossed his mind that he "could write about anything except the South," that he never found another setting that "nagged" him "enough to stir the imagination." What he regarded as his "exile" from the South is the crux of the importance of his home in Prairieville. When Warren returned to the region after his educational sojourn in California, New England, and England, it was with the intention of remaining. However, in his mind he was shunned by the

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Warren, Robert Penn, House, Ascension Parish, LA
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South (or "evicted" as his biographer termed it) when Vanderbilt did not renew his contract and then finally when he left LSU over contractual problems. (The university would not match an offer made him by the University of Minnesota.)

It was during the period of this final rejection that Warren lived in the Prairieville house. It was his third home while teaching at LSU, each one further and further away from urban life, to which he had a stated aversion. Warren had lived out in the country at some distance from Vanderbilt; so his choice of a home some eighteen miles from LSU is not surprising. "It must have been with considerable confidence in the future," wrote Simpson, that Warren purchased the house in September 1941. "Putting \$675 down and making arrangements to pay off a note over an extended period of time," continued Simpson, "he moved to what he might well have expected would become the Warren home place. Yet within nine or ten months he had sold his newly acquired property and left Louisiana and the South for good." As Warren himself reminisced in 1980 about his time at LSU: "We were to scatter. I, for good and sufficient reason, to leave my grove of live oaks, bayou and windmill in Prairieville, which I had looked forward to enjoying for keeps. I fled to Yankee land. . . ."

Although some would be quick to point out that Warren left LSU of his own accord, that is not the way he saw it. The question of the southern writer who largely lived outside the South was raised to Warren and William Styron in a joint interview in the late 1970s. Styron's response was that "the magnet was northward" and that he did not resist its pull because he did not want to. Warren by contrast replied: "I wanted to live in the South, you see: I'm a refugee from the South, driven out, as it were. . . . But I was let out of Vanderbilt University, and had to go elsewhere for a job. I went to Louisiana State University, which was quite fortunately a very exciting place. And I left Louisiana only because I felt I wasn't wanted. I felt pressure to leave. It wasn't a choice. I had settled down and bought a house in the country -- settled for life, I assumed. I left, shall we say, under pressure of some kind or another. I wasn't fired. I left out of pride. . . . The point is that I, unlike Bill, didn't make a choice of living outside the South. I always felt myself somehow squeezed out of the South, . . ."

Simpson regards the period in the spring of 1942 when Warren wrestled with leaving LSU (and by extension, leaving the South) as a crisis period -- one that caused him a great deal of pain. And, of course, the foregoing comments from Warren substantiate this conclusion. He certainly considered it a watershed in his life. And since by definition a writer's work has elements of the autobiographical in it, Simpson feels that Warren's sense of exile had an influence upon his writing. He cites the novels All the King's Men, Flood, and A Place to Come To as examples, noting that "in important ways each is a shadowy autobiographical response to Warren's experience of leaving Louisiana and the

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South in 1942."

In summation, Warren's house in Prairieville merits National Register listing because it was his home during this critical period, his home when he was "squeezed out of the South," a home he referred to fondly when reminiscing about his exile.

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Continuation Sheet**

Warren, Robert Penn, House, Ascension Parish, LA

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Bibliography

Blotner, Joseph. Phone interview with National Register staff, October 26, 1992.
Professor Blotner is currently working on a biography of Warren.

Cutrer, Thomas W. Parnassus on the Mississippi: The Southern Review and the
Baton Rouge Literary Community, 1935-1942. Baton Rouge, Louisiana State
University Press, 1984.

Dictionary of Literary Biography: 1989. Detroit, Gale Research Inc., 1990.

Simpson, Lewis P. "Robert Penn Warren: The Loneliness Artist." The Sewanee
Review, Vol. XCIX, No. 3, Summer 1991.

Simpson, Lewis P. Phone interview with National Register staff, October 26,
1992.

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**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Warren, Robert Penn, House, Ascension Parish, LA
Section number 10 Page 1

Boundary Description/Justification

Boundary lines follow the property lines of the seven acre parcel of land upon which the house stands, as described below:

A certain tract of land situated in the Parish of Ascension, on the westerly side of the Jefferson Highway and being a part of the tract known as the Old Frank Opdenmeyer Home Place, and more particularly described as follows: from the southeast corner of the northeast quarter of Section 35, Township 8 South, Range 2 East, Southeastern District of Louisiana, run south along the section line between Section 35 and 36, said Township and Range, a distance of 142 feet and then west to a point on the western right of way line of the Jefferson Highway, which point is 40 feet west of the center line of the concrete slab, for the POINT OF BEGINNING: then run south along the western right of way line of Jefferson Highway a distance of 671 feet, then in a general westerly-northwesterly direction a distance of 550 feet, more or less, to the west boundary of the twelve acre tract of land described under paragraph 1 (a) of said sale from Mrs. Helen P. Lacombe, et al to Mrs. Rose Cronk Hanlon dated February 4, 1947 and recorded in COB 86, Folio 174 of Ascension Parish, then north a distance of 515.2 feet, more or less, to the northwest corner of the twelve acre tract acquired by Mrs. Hanlon as referred to above, then east a distance of 527.5 feet to the POINT OF BEGINNING, being north seven acres of the twelve acre tract acquired by Mrs. Hanlon as recited above.