

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

PHO 698695

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	FEB 8 1978 MAY 4 1978
DATE ENTERED	

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Ashland

AND/OR COMMON

Belle Helene

2 LOCATION

2 mi. (3.2 km) S of Geismar on LA 75

STREET & NUMBER

Highway 75 (River Road) 2 miles south of Geismar

—NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Geismar

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

Louisiana

VICINITY OF

6th - Henson Moore

CODE

022

COUNTY

Ascension

CODE

005

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Helene Reuss Hayward

STREET & NUMBER

Route 1 Box 566

CITY, TOWN

White Castle

VICINITY OF

Louisiana

STATE

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Ascension Parish Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Donaldsonville

Louisiana

STATE

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Louisiana Historic Sites Survey

DATE

1978

—FEDERAL STATE —COUNTY —LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

State Historic Preservation Office

CITY, TOWN

Baton Rouge

STATE

Louisiana

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Ashland-Belle Helene plantation house is set approximately 1500 feet north of the Mississippi River. The south front of the house commands a vista to the levee, which is encompassed by oak trees set in a horseshoe pattern (open end toward the house). Once an open lawn, this area is overgrown with weeds and shrubs but the vista is intact. Boundaries were drawn to include this land to preserve the vista. The north, east, and west facade face large live oak trees planted in rows. Because these oaks provide the setting on three sides of the house, enough land was nominated to encompass them all.

In addition to the main house, the nominated area also contains four small frame buildings, three of which are in a dilapidated state. About 200 feet east of the main house is a dilapidated double quarters type house with a front gallery. Adjacent to this is a modern lattice work gazebo, also dilapidated. Some distance north of the house is a small, modern, frame clapboard caretaker's cottage. Just west of the house is a frame kitchen building with a brick chimney. Built by a film company in 1974, it is out of place next to the plantation house. But because it is dwarfed by the house, its overall visual impact is minor.

The square plan house is encompassed on all four sides by a 12-foot wide colossal pillared gallery, which provides for a first and second story veranda. The plan on both floors consists of a 12-foot wide central hall running north-south, with three rooms on each side. Access from the first floor through to the attic is provided by a graceful oval-shaped staircase which is set in a large curved alcove off the rear of the hall. The two main parlors, which occur east of the hall, are connected by means of sliding doors. Ceilings are 14 feet high on the ground floor and 12½ feet high upstairs.

The walls, pillars, and foundations are of brick with a heavy cypress pegged timber roof framing which supports the shallow pyramid roof.

The exterior is characterized by extreme simplicity and massiveness. The block of the house is surrounded by 28 stuccoed pillars three feet square, with molded capitals formed of corbeled brick. The pillars are surmounted by a thick wooden entablature whose main characteristics are visual weight, flatness, and lack of ornamentation.

The flat unornamented architrave is differentiated from the frieze by a row of dentils. The frieze is surmounted by a heavy molded cornice with a row of small dentils. The underside of the architrave is treated with wood coffers, which occur between the pillars. Windows, which reach to the floor and recede into the upper walls, are cut sharply into the scored stucco without molding. Shutters are mainly original with fixed louvres. Front and rear doors on both levels are treated with heavy aedicule motifs with Doric pilasters, transoms, and sidelights. Doors are heavy with one huge panel encompassing the entire door.

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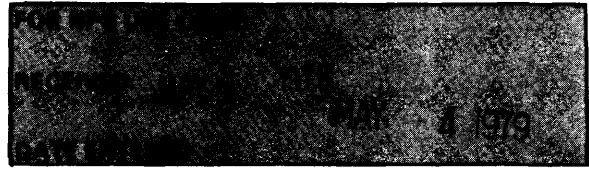
CONTINUATION SHEET

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The interiors have suffered considerably from neglect, vandalism, and use of the house by various film companies. None of the mantels remain, and floors in the first floor have been removed, though the floor in the hall has been replaced. Interior doors consist of one large panel and doorways are in heavy holder molded frames. Ground floor rooms have heavy denticular cornices. The double parlors each have ceilings consisting of a central acanthus leaf cluster surrounded by scroll patterns.

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Ashland (Belle Hélène)

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The full thirty-four acres were nominated because this land encompasses a park in which the mansion is set. This park includes the front lawn as well as treed land to the rear and sides (see photos) which at one time were intended for gentlemen's recreation. There was, for example, a racetrack among the oaks to the rear of the house. This, however, has disappeared. Of the four structures which are included in the nominated area, three are rotted out and generally dilapidated beyond any hope of restoration. The caretaker's cottage, which is located about 200 feet to the rear of the mansion, is possibly old but much remodeled with new windows, new doors, and a new porch and with siding replaced in patches over the years. None of these four buildings is significant.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD		AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES	BUILDER/ARCHITECT	Attributed to
1841		James Gallier, Sr.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Ashland-Belle Helene is significant due to its architecture and also due to its association with Duncan F. Kenner (1813-1887), sugar planter and political figure.

Ashland-Belle Helene exemplifies the massiveness, extreme simplicity, and dignity which are generally held to epitomize the Classical Revival style of architecture. Because it is articulated in the manner of an independent pavilion, free of service attachments and with the same severe trabeated logia on all four facades, it is a more complete classical statement than the vast majority of Louisiana plantation houses. In addition, with its broad spread of eight giant pillars across each facade and its full heavy entablature, Ashland-Belle Helene is among the grandest and largest plantation houses ever built in the state.

Duncan Kenner was born in New Orleans and educated in the city's public schools and at Miami University in Ohio. After four years of travel and study in Europe, he read law in the office of John Slidell. But instead of practicing, he settled at Ashland Plantation, where he became a sugar planter and horse breeder. It is often said that he named his plantation after the home of Henry Clay, whom he admired.

In 1839 he married Anne Guillelimine Nanine Bringier, member of an old and influential French family of Louisiana.¹ In about 1840, Kenner began construction on a home for his bride, and the result was the present building, finished about 1841. Many secondary sources attribute the design for Ashland to New Orleans architect James Gallier, Sr.²

Prior to the Civil War, Kenner could boast of a moderately successful political career. In 1836 he was elected to the state House of Representatives from Ascension Parish, and in the years following he served several terms in the legislature, first in the House and then in the Senate. He was a member of the state constitutional convention of 1845, and president of the state constitutional convention of 1851.³

By 1860, in addition to Kenner and his wife and their two daughters, Ashland supported some 473 slaves, making Kenner the eighth largest slaveholder in the state. The slaves lived in 95 slave dwellings on the

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Baldrige, Pat. "The Campbell Haywards, Owners of Belle Helene, Plan Holiday Gathering," Baton Rouge State Times, December 21, 1964.

Census of 1870. Ascension Parish, Louisiana. Agriculture Census.

(continued)

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 34 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A	15	692820	3340090	B	15	692970	3339870
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	15	692520	3339510	D	15	692370	3339760
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Begin at the intersection of the River Road and the unnamed side access road and proceed northeast 2010 ft. then turn northwest 90° and proceed 1000 ft. then turn southwest 90° and proceed back to the River Road then proceed southeast along the River Road back to the original intersection.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Douglas Hayward

ORGANIZATION

DATE

STREET & NUMBER

Rt. 1 Box 566

TELEPHONE

(504) 473-9037

CITY OR TOWN

White Castle

STATE

Louisiana 70788

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE x

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

SIGNATURE

Douglas Hayward

TITLE

State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

1-8-79

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

5/4/79

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

William A. Stovall

DATE

May 3, 1979

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
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property. In the 1860 Census, Kenner listed the value of his real estate as \$190,000 and the value of his personal property as \$250,000. He owned 2000 acres of improved land, and an additional 1600 acres of unimproved land. He had \$65,000 worth of farming implements and machinery, and \$23,067 worth of livestock, including 50 horses, 173 mules, 57 oxen, 370 sheep, and 65 cattle. During the previous year the plantation had produced 1500 thousand-pound hogsheads of sugar, 56,000 gallons of molasses, and 20,000 bushels of corn.⁴

With the coming of the war, Kenner continued to be active in politics. In 1861, he was one of Louisiana's seven delegates to the provisional Congress of the Confederacy at Montgomery, Alabama. After the Confederate government was set up and the capital moved to Richmond, he became a member of the new government's House of Representatives, where he was chairman of the Committee on Ways and Means.

As the war went on, he became convinced that European recognition was essential for the South to win and that slavery was a primary factor in the European nations' refusal to grant it. In 1864, when the cause of the South was desperate, Kenner urged his friend Secretary of State Judah P. Benjamin to send a special commission to Europe to offer England and France the abolition of slavery in return for recognition. President Jefferson Davis reluctantly agreed to the plan but instead of appointing a commission he followed Benjamin's advice and appointed Kenner sole envoy with the rank of minister plenipotentiary. But by the time Kenner arrived in Europe in early 1865, Sherman's campaign had destroyed all confidence in the chances of the South's success, and the mission was a failure.

At the end of the war, Kenner returned to a plantation in ruins, for Ashland was raided by Union troops in 1862. Although the house was not burned, his valuable horses had been seized, his overseers captured, and his slaves freed. At the age of fifty-two he had to start over again, but by persistence and great business skill he built up an estate which was even larger and more valuable at the time of his death than it had been before the war.⁵ According to the 1870 Census, by that year he had already made a good start on his return to prosperity. At that time he had 2300 acres of improved land and 1000 acres in unimproved land. Under the column headed "Total Amount of Wages Paid During the Year, Including Value of Board," he listed \$25,000. It seems likely that many of his former slaves had become laborers for him. In the course of the previous year, the plantation had produced 391 thousand-pound hogsheads of sugar, 24,000 gallons of molasses, and 5000 bushels of corn. The estimated value of all his produce for that year was \$40,000.⁶

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Kenner is said to have been the first in the state to use the portable railroad to carry cane from fields to mill and to have been among the earliest users of several other technological innovations in the sugar industry. He was a leader in organization of the Louisiana Sugar Planter's Association in 1877, serving as the first president of each.

Political activism continued to be a habit with him. During 1866-1867, he represented Ascension Parish in the state Senate, and in 1877 he was elected state senator from New Orleans, where by then he spent most of his time. In the late 1870's, he ran for the U. S. Senate, but was defeated. In 1882 he was appointed to the U. S. Tariff Commission. He was chairman of the building committee for the Cotton Exposition held in New Orleans in 1884 - 1885. Kenner died in New Orleans in 1887.⁷

In 1889, Ashland was purchased by John B. Reuss, a German immigrant who became a prosperous sugar planter. Reuss re-named the plantation "Belle Helene" in honor of his grand-daughter Helene Reuss, who grew up to become Mrs. W. Campbell Hayward, the present owner of the house.⁸

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NOTES

¹"Kenner, Duncan Farrar," Dictionary of American Biography, Vol. 10 (New York: Scribner's, 1933), 337-338, hereinafter cited as "Kenner," DAB; Pat Baldrige, "The Campbell Haywards, Owners of Belle Helene, Plan Holiday Gathering," Baton Rouge State Times, 21 December, 1964 hereinafter cited as Baldrige, "Haywards."

²Autobiography of James Gallier, Architect (New York: Da Capo Press, 1973), Figure 20 in supplement of illustrations; W. Darrell Overdyke, Louisiana Plantation Homes (New York: Architectural Book Publishing Co., 1965), pp. 34-35.

³"Kenner," DAB.

⁴1860 Census. Ascension Parish, Louisiana, Population Schedule, p. 42; Joseph K. Menn, The Large Slaveholders of Louisiana--1860 (New Orleans: Pelican Publishing Co., 1964), pp. 105, 121-122.

⁵"Kenner," DAB.

⁶1870 Census. Ascension Parish, Louisiana. Agriculture Census, 6th Ward, p. 1. Kenner's name was not listed in the Agriculture Census of 1880, possibly because his main residence was in New Orleans by that time.

⁷"Kenner," DAB.

⁸Baldrige, "Haywards."

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

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date entered

Continuation sheet Ashland-Belle Helene Item number 8 Addendum Page
Ascension Parish, LA

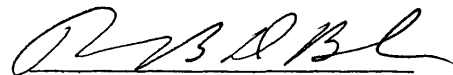
Statement of Significance - Addendum

The purpose of this addendum is to raise Ashland to a level of national significance. When the nomination was originally prepared, we did not seriously consider the possibility of national significance because we did not feel that we had the data to make the case. Recently, however, the owner requested that the level of significance be raised, and this caused us to reconsider the matter. Based upon this, we present the following case.

Ashland is an example of a peripteral plantation house. The peripteral style is a regionally distinctive mode of the Greek Revival which is peculiar to the Deep South. It is thought to have evolved from Creole galleried plantation houses of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Of course, the phenomenon itself is nationally important because it forms a vital part of the overall picture of the American Greek Revival.

Ashland is a superior example within this context for two reasons:

- (1) There are many plantation houses in the region which ape the peripteral style but which are not fully peripteral. The majority in fact have galleries on only the principal elevation. Others have galleries on three sides but not on the rear. Ashland is relatively unusual because it features a full gallery all around the house.
- (2) Ashland presents a finished classical appearance thanks to its parapet which hides the hip roof. Some fully peripteral houses allow the roof to show; thus they do not convey quite the same impression of classical perfection.



Robert B. DeBlieux
State Historic Preservation
Officer

July 24, 1985
Date

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Census of 1860. Ascension Parish, Louisiana. Agriculture Census.

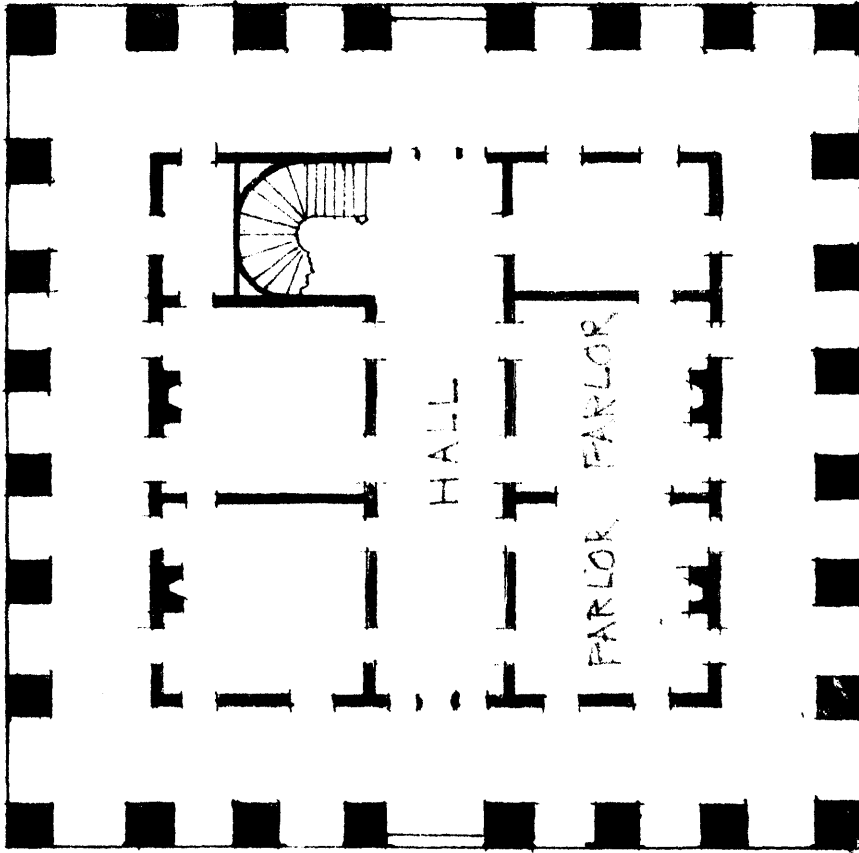
"Kenner, Duncan Farrer," Dictionary of American Biography, Vol. 10 (New York: Scribner's, 1933), 337-338.

Menn, Joseph K. The Large Slaveholders of Louisiana--1860. New Orleans: Pelican Publishing Co., 1964.

Overdyke, W. Darrell. Louisiana Plantation Homes. New York: Architectural Book Publishing Co., 1965.

Gallier, James. Autobiography of James Gallier, Architect. New York: Da Capo Press, 1973.

NORTH ↗



↙
FRONT LAUNDRY
 AREA &
 MISSISSIPPI
 RIVER

RECEIVED
 FEB 5 1903
 L. J. RAY
 RICHMOND

ASHLAND
BELLE HELENE
 (NOT TO SCALE)