

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

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

OMB No. 1024-0018

Lefort House, Thibodaux, Lafourche Parish, LA

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United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

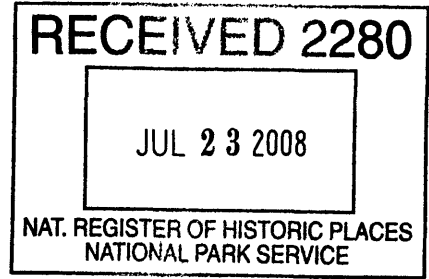
National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: Lefort House

813

Other Name/Site Number: Omega House



2. LOCATION

Street & Number 1302 Highway 1

Not for publication: N/A

City/Town Thibodaux

Vicinity: X

State: Louisiana Code: LA County: Lafourche Code: 57 Zip Code: 70301

3. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

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

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

Nationally: Statewide: Locally: X

Signature of Certifying Official Phil Boggan Deputy SHPO, Dept. of Culture, Recreation & Tourism

Date 7-22-08

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

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

Signature of Commenting or Other Official/Title

Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

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4. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is:

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

John Edson H. Beall
Signature of Keeper

9.4.08
Date of Action

5. CLASSIFICATION

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

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

Number of Resources within Property
 Contributing
1

1

Non contributing
1 buildings
 _____ Sites
 _____ Structures
 _____ Objects
1 Total

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

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing: N/A

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6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic: Domestic Sub: single dwelling

Current: Domestic Sub: single dwelling

7. DESCRIPTION

Architectural Classification: Greek Revival

Materials:

Foundation: Brick

Walls: Weatherboards

Roof: Metal

Other:

Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

The Lefort House (c.1855) is a one and one-half story Greek Revival style cottage located two miles east of the city of Thibodaux in LaFourche Parish. The setting is essentially semi-rural. The house faces, but is separated from, Bayou Lafourche by Highway 1 and is sited immediately adjacent to the Southern Pacific Railroad line. It was built in two stages. It began as a small, c. 1840 cottage that was connected to a newly built and larger Greek Revival style cottage in 1855. Thus, the house is being considered as an 1855 building for the purposes of this nomination. Despite some alterations, overall the house retains its National Register eligibility.

The Lefort House is a raised frame cottage on brick piers about four feet above the ground. The house is constructed with cypress wood framing and has wood weatherboard cladding on all sides. The side-gabled cottage has a corrugated tin roof with exposed chimneys perforating the ends of each gable. The earlier house is also of frame construction, is sheathed with weatherboards, and has a metal roof whose ridge is perpendicular to that of the front cottage. Archival research has determined that the Lefort family built the front, Greek Revival style house roughly a decade after construction of the earlier building. They connected the two by enclosing each end of a porch with French doors.

The facade features a simple full entablature that wraps the front gallery and is supported by six simple square columns. The columns have simple molded capitals. Pilasters, identical to the columns, are located at either end of the façade and serve as corner boards. The gallery has simple square balusters in the railing. This five bay façade is articulated with a central, four-panel wooden front door. The latter is accompanied by a seven light transom and sidelights with four lights each. French doors with three light transoms and operable louvered shutters (fixed panel below) are located on either side of the front door for a symmetrical fenestration pattern. The windows are six-over-six lights throughout with operable louvered shutters attached.

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On the interior of the house's Greek Revival section, the central hall is flanked by two sets of rooms (one in front of the other). The hall measures seven feet wide and has simple horizontal board wainscoting that runs the length of the hallway. The wainscoting is met at the other end of the hall by a four-panel wood door with transom and sidelights identical to those on the façade. The front parlors of the Lefort House have simple Greek Revival style mantels that are original to the house. The second rooms on either side of the hall do not have fireplaces. All rooms on the lower floor have plaster walls. The interior four-panel doors boast a *faux bois* finish, which simulates the look of rich grained wood. The attic space has an exposed chimney and is very non-descript. Currently, it is used as a bedroom/storage area. Access to the attic is obtained by a steep staircase located behind a door at the rear of the central hall. The earlier (rear) house was one room deep and two rooms wide. An original working brick fireplace survives on the east side of one room. It is currently used as a kitchen and family room. The second room is used as a den.

Since its completion, the following changes have been made to the Lefort House:

1. The wooden shake shingles covering both portions of the house were replaced with a tin roof around the 1940s.
2. In the 1855 Greek Revival portion, the second room on the west (right) side was converted into a bathroom with a ceramic tile floor.
3. In the 1840 portion, the present owner added a small bathroom and pantry on the same side as the kitchen, removed or shifted other walls, replaced a stolen mantel (although the brick fireplace is original), and added new wood floors.
4. The present owner also added a large carport to the property on the east side. It connects to the house via a breezeway.

Assessment of Integrity:

Despite the above changes, the appearance of the front house retains the essential features that establish its identity as a Greek Revival cottage. On the interior the changes are minor. The historic floor plan, plaster walls, *faux bois* doors, and mantels are still in place. In addition to this, the original openings are still extant. On the exterior, the 1855 house retains its historic appearance; and the earlier house is not visible from the front. Additionally, the large carport is positioned on the east side close to the rear of the lot and does not detract from the house because it is basically shielded by vegetation. The Greek Revival house is highly visible on Highway 1 and remains a fine representation of that style. This identity, of course, is the basis for its significance.

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8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Applicable National
Register Criteria:

A ___ B ___ C X D

Criteria Considerations
(Exceptions):

A ___ B ___ C ___ D ___ E ___ F ___ G N/A

Areas of Significance: Architecture

Period(s) of Significance: c. 1855

Significant Dates: c. 1855

Significant Person(s): N/A

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: Unknown

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

The Lefort House is locally significant in the area of architecture within the town of Thibodaux under Criterion C: Design & Construction. Survey data indicates that the building, a restrained vernacular adaptation of the Greek Revival style, is significant as a rare example of Thibodaux's earliest (pre-Queen Anne Revival) architectural heritage.

Lafourche (1,141 square miles in size) is one of Louisiana's earliest settled parishes. It was originally created in 1805, although settlement by immigrants from Spain, Germany, England, France and the Canary Islands began much earlier. Thibodaux, with a population of about 14,431 in 2000, is the parish's seat of government. It is located on the banks of Bayou Lafourche, a waterway that branches off the Mississippi River at Donaldsonville in Ascension Parish and runs through the length of Assumption and Lafourche parishes before emptying into the Gulf of Mexico. The town bears the name of Henry Schuyler Thibodaux, who settled in the area around 1801. Originally named Thibodauxville, the community became the parish seat in 1808, incorporated in 1830, and was well established by the Civil War. The town owes its historical importance to agriculture (most especially the cultivation of sugar cane), the availability of steamboats and railroads for transporting passengers and freight, and its role as a commercial center for the surrounding territory. By 1892 it had a population of 1900, and by 1907 this figure had jumped to 4300.

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Thibodaux's buildings consist mostly of Queen Anne style houses; bungalows; nondescript cottages and twentieth century shotguns, outbuildings and commercial buildings. The loss of the town's older architectural patrimony, which would have consisted of examples of the French Creole and Greek Revival styles, was the result of a new round of prosperity caused by, among other things, the re-emergence of the sugar industry between c. 1890 and c. 1910. This era of great sugar production created a particularly prosperous period for Thibodaux, a time during which many of the area's older buildings were replaced with structures reflecting the popular styles of the late Victorian era.

To understand the magnitude of the area's architectural loss and the importance of surviving early, pre-Queen Anne Revival style buildings, one needs to have some idea of the numbers of these structures which once existed. Although exact numbers are not available, certain generalizations can be made given local settlement patterns. It was the French who first dominated the area architecturally; their ascendancy lasted until approximately 1820. Thus, it is fair to assume that Lafourche Parish and Thibodaux once had a large number of French Creole houses. Although the parish is currently undergoing a re-survey, an older survey found less than ten houses with enough stylistic features or historic integrity to merit their identification as Creole. Instead, the overwhelming majority of the buildings identified as reflecting Creole influence were rural quarters houses that were "Creole" only in that they exhibited the general massing (umbrella roof and full facade gallery) of a Creole structure. It is quite probable that the new survey will show a number of these Creole-influenced buildings to have been lost in the past eighteen years.

After the 1820s the American Greek Revival style began to influence building patterns in Lafourche Parish and Thibodaux. This influence would grow and then last until long after the end of the Civil War. Thus, it is fair to assume that there must have been numerous Greek Revival influenced houses, as well as a number of Greek Revival institutional and commercial buildings, in Thibodaux on the eve of the Civil War. Some of these examples would have been fairly large and occupied by more wealthy persons, while others (moderate or even small in size) would have been the homes of the community's businessmen and merchants. Lefort exemplifies the latter, of which the survey shows few examples surviving today. In fact, there are only about twenty Greek Revival structures in Thibodaux, most of which are plain cottages with simple details. Additionally, many cannot match the LeFort's House's good state of integrity.

In conclusion, the Lefort House is part of a very limited collection of buildings representing Thibodaux's earliest, pre-Queen Anne Revival style, architecture and appearance. Additionally, although a small, restrained, and vernacular example of the Greek Revival style, it is a rare and good example within its context. Thus, the home is a legitimate candidate for National Register listing.

Historical Note

The Boutary family built the earlier structure around the 1840s and resided there until they lost the house in a sheriff's sale in 1854. An inventory of their estate shows that Anton Boutary was in the lumber, cattle and sugar business.

Pierce Lefort acquired the property at that sheriff's sale, at which time he had the main (front) house constructed. The location of the earlier house, immediately adjacent to what was then the Southern Pacific Railroad line, was probably one of the main reasons the Lefort's purchased the land. According to research, the Lefort's operated a big store on one corner of this property. The train provided a number of opportunities

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for the Lefort family. Pedestrian traffic coming into town from the train station undoubtedly aided in the prosperity of their store for many years. Lefort also opened a store in Lockport.

Pierce had a son, Joseph, who married Cecile Lirette in 1868. Pierce and Cecile had a daughter by the name of Lillie Lefort, who died in the house in 1969. After Lillie died, the house went to a niece until around 1985. In 1985, J. Paul Leslie and family acquired the property. The Leslie family remains the current owner.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Book of Conveyances, Lafourche Parish Courthouse.

Division of Historic Preservation, Partial Standing Structures Survey of Lafourche Parish, 1979.

Division of Historic Preservation, Partial Standing Structures Survey of Lafourche Parish, 1996.

E-mail messages from Dr. Paul Leslie, April 14, 2008; copies in National Register file.

Site visit by National Register Staff.

Staff knowledge of Lafourche Parish.

Interview with homeowner/historian Dr. Paul Leslie, April 4, 2008.

Probate Records No. 368 or H-74, Marie Bourtary, 1854., Lafourche Parish Courthouse.

Telephone interview with Dr. Paul Leslie, long-time resident and surveyor of Lafourche Parish, February 13, 1997; information in National Register file.

Previous documentation on file (NPS): NA

Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.

Previously Listed in the National Register. (partially)

Previously Determined Eligible by the National Register.

Designated a National Historic Landmark.

Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: #

Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: #

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Primary Location of Additional Data:

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

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: 1.9 acres

UTM References: **Zone Easting Northing**
 15 716050 3294960

Verbal Boundary Description: Please see attached sketch map.

Boundary Justification:

Boundaries follow the lines of the fence that completely encloses and defines the Lefort House's yard. Although the property line of the land historically associated with the house actually begins at the nearby west bank of Bayou Lafourche, a state highway runs through the property between the yard's present front fence and the bayou. While being chosen to exclude this highway, the boundaries do preserve the historic setting and the building's relationship to the bayou, as well as to the railroad track adjacent to the property's north side.

11. FORM PREPARED BY

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

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

Telephone: 225-342-8160

Date: Spring 2008

PROPERTY OWNERS

Owner: J. Paul Leslie
1302 Highway 1
Thibodaux, LA 70301

LEFORT HOUSE

Thibodaux Vicinity, Lafourche Parish, LA

