

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**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 Rienzi Plantation House

and/or common same

2. Location

LA 309

street & number Highway 308 across Bayou Lafourche from Thibodaux not for publication

city, town Thibodaux vicinity of 3rd-David Treen congressional district

state La. code 022 county Lafourche Parish code 057

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input 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 checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name J. B. Levert Land Co.

street & number P.O. Box 19245

city, town New Orleans vicinity of La. state

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Lafourche Parish Courthouse

street & number

city, town Thibodaux state La.

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Louisiana Historic Sites Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1979 federal state county local

depository for survey records State Historic Preservation Office

city, town Baton Rouge state La.

7. Description

Condition excellent good fair deteriorated ruins unexposed**Check one** unaltered altered**Check one** original site moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Rienzi plantation house is located directly across Bayou Lafourche from the town of Thibodaux. Despite the proximity of a modern shopping center the house enjoys an historic setting due to the large live oaks on the property.

The house is almost square in plan with five bays on each side. The main block is completely surrounded by galleries with brick pillars on the lower story and thin wooden pillars on the upper story. The timbers are pit-sawn. The house has two central hallways placed in a cruciform plan on each floor. On the lower floor the halls were originally open to the outside through brick arches. These have since been enclosed with doorways. Upstairs one of the halls has been made into two rooms. But the space still exists, and when the doors to the rooms are open the effect of cruciform halls can still be seen. A paneled steamboat cabin has been appended to the house to provide for a bathroom. The front and rear of the upper floor have sliphead windows.

Although there has been much reworking of the carpentry, the simple Greek Revival detail remains largely intact. The handsome double front staircase is an addition of the 1930's, as are the diamond-shaped ornaments around some of the doors.

To the rear of the house is a modern kitchen wing.

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 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 type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates c. 1840 **Builder/Architect**

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph) Criterion C

Rienzi is significant in the area of architecture because of the many Greek Revival plantation houses in the Lafourche Bayou region, it is the only example of the fully developed peripteral mode. Moreover, it is one of the very few examples in the Deep South of a plantation house with a cruciform hall plan.

Although Rienzi today gives the basic impression of dating from about 1840, a romantic legend which has been widely publicized is that it was constructed in 1796 by Spanish architects at the request of Spanish Queen Maria Louisa as a possible retreat for her in the event of a Spanish defeat in the Napoleonic Wars. The legend has it that her agent, Juan Ygnacio de Egana took possession of the home after Louisiana was ceded to France and sold to the United States. He lived there for nearly fifty years, so the story goes.

The truth seems to be that Juan Ygnacio de Egana, whatever his connection with the Queen, did build a house on the site around the first decade of the nineteenth century and reside there for many years. The 1860 census lists the "Estate of J.Y. de Agana" as consisting of 2,799 acres and 306 slaves. Champomier in his sugar report calls this estate "Riensi Plantation." In 1859 this plantation produced 950 hogsheads of sugar, by far the most in Lafourche Parish.

After Juan Ygnacio de Egana's death, the plantation passed through the hands of numerous owners, including Judge Richard Allen, prominent jurist of the late-nineteenth century. About 1918 it came into the possession of the Levert family and has remained in the hands of their descendants.

9. Major Bibliographical References

"Legend Is House Built for Queen," Baton Rouge State Times, August 27, 1965.
 Menn, Joseph K., The Large Slaveholders of Louisiana, 1860. New Orleans: Pelican
 Publishing Co., 1964. pp. 262, 266-267.

(continued)

10. Geographical Data

UTM NOT VERIFIED

Acreage of nominated property approx. 3.5 acres

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

Quadrangle name _____

UMT References

A

1	5	7	1	0	8	0	0	3	2	9	8	4	5	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

B

Zone			Easting				Northing							

C

Zone			Easting				Northing							

D

Zone			Easting				Northing							

E

Zone			Easting				Northing							

F

Zone			Easting				Northing							

G

Zone			Easting				Northing							

H

Zone			Easting				Northing							

Verbal boundary description and justification

Boundaries were drawn to take in the house along with the garden of live oaks which forms the setting. The property is bounded by a 400' square set along Rt. 308 with the southern corner set 50' southwest of the driveway.

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 Paul Leslie

organization South Central Planning and Development Commission date October 1979

street & number P.O. Box 846 telephone _____

city or town Thibodaux state La. 70301

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state 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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature [Signature]

title State Historic Preservation Officer date 3/21/80

For HCRS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

[Signature] date 5/31/80
 Keeper of the National Register

Attest: [Signature] date 5/27/80
 Chief of Registration

FHR-8-300A
(11/78)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

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DATE ENTERED	MAR 31 1980

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

CONTINUATION SHEET

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Overdyke, W. Darrell, Louisiana Plantation Homes: Colonial and Ante Bellum.
New York: Architectural Book Publishing Co., 1965. p. 163.
Price, Charles W., Jr., "Rienzi Mansion on Bayou Lafourche Relic of Intrigue,
Lost Dreams and Empire," Progress, March 18, 1938, clipping in Rienzi Vertical
File, Louisiana Room, LSU Library, Baton Rouge.

