

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

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

OMB No. 1024-0018

Jean Marie Laran House, Evangeline Parish, LA

Page 1

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service



1486

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: Jean Marie Laran House

Other Name/Site Number: Maison Jean Marie Laran Museum

2. LOCATION

Street & Number 619 East Main Street

Not for publication: NA

City/Town Ville Platte

Vicinity: NA

State: Louisiana

Code: LA

County: Evangeline

Code: 039

Zip Code: 70586

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 and Tourism

12-19-07 Date

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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NPS Form 10-900

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

OMB No. 1024-0018

Jean Marie Laran House, Evangeline Parish, LA

Page 2

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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):

Edson H. Beall
Signature of Keeper

1-31-08
Date of Action

5. CLASSIFICATION

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

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

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing
2

Non contributing
buildings
sites
structures
objects
0 Total

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

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing: NA

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NPS Form 10-900

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

OMB No. 1024-0018

## Jean Marie Laran House, Evangeline Parish, LA

Page 3

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

### 6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic: Domestic	Sub: Single Dwelling
Current: Recreation and Culture	Sub: Museum

### 7. DESCRIPTION

Architectural Classification: No Style

Materials:

Foundation:	Concrete
Walls:	Clapboard
Roof:	Metal
Other:	

#### Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

The Jean Marie Laran House (1883) faces a busy main thoroughfare a few blocks east of downtown Ville Platte, the Evangeline Parish seat. The one-story frame home stands amid large, shady oak trees on a narrow but deep lot. Once a residence and now a historic house museum, it is being classified as “no style” for the purposes of this nomination. Although it has experienced some alteration and received rear additions, the house retains more than enough integrity to qualify it for National Register listing.

The original section of the Laran House consists of a slightly raised cottage with a gabled roof whose ridge parallels the street. Beneath the roof, a gallery stretches the length of the façade. The gallery’s exposed ceiling beams are the only reflection of Laran’s French heritage found in the home. The wall between the gallery and the house is composed of flush boards, while clapboards sheath the home’s two side walls. The fenestration of the façade is symmetrical and features a central door flanked by a window on the left and a second door on the right. However, this balance is not reflected in the slightly irregular floor plan. It is two rooms wide, with the front left room (the parlor) wider than the bedroom to its right. (Because the floor in this area has been replaced, there is no visible architectural evidence to indicate whether this part of the floor plan is original or the result of the removal of the wall between the parlor and a possible front central hall.) The building’s rear range contains three spaces. A right rear room (also a bedroom) is the same size as the bedroom in front of it. However, the left rear room is not as large as the parlor. A hallway fills part of the space between the two rear rooms, as did a stairway that was later removed. (The resulting space was subdivided into two closets). Although there are windows piercing the gables, the attic is not floored, suggesting that the area never served as living space.

After the Ville Platte area experienced an oil boom in the 1920s, the owners of the Laran House expanded it, eventually adding a bathroom to the right rear corner and two rooms (one of moderate size, the other long but shallow) to the left rear. In addition, the hall was extended to the rear to create a side porch paralleling the left side addition. The exact sequence of these additions is unclear because later construction

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

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

OMB No. 1024-0018

## Jean Marie Laran House, Evangeline Parish, LA

Page 4

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

materials cover potential architectural evidence and other evidence seems contradictory. The questions concern the side porch and the long, shallow room (which is now a kitchen). The side porch is enclosed, yet its interior contains a small patch of aluminum siding (next to the bathroom) that suggests the area once may have been part of an outside wall. Aluminum siding was invented in 1947. However, 1920s-era windows with triple-divided upper sashes serve as the upper portions of the porch's exterior walls. Furthermore, the portions of the walls below the windows consist of beaded board panels and board and batten siding, both also older construction materials. One suspects the porch was enclosed using materials recycled from an older building, but whether that happened before or after 1947 remains unclear. The long, shallow room added to the left side of the house also displays conflicting evidence. The wall it shares with the space in front of it is sheathed with flush boards, suggesting that it might once have been a rear porch that was later enclosed. However, the clapboard sheathing on the room's two exterior walls matches that of the rest of the left side addition. Unless dated historic photographs of the rear elevation are uncovered, these questions are likely to remain unanswered.

With the exception of the mantel in the parlor, many of the interior finishes of the original building and the additions are similar and appear to date to the 1920s remodeling. For example, beaded board walls were installed and survive in most rooms. The renovators also added beaded board ceilings in some rooms, but other rooms retained their original ceilings of flush boards. The parlor mantel appears to date to 1883 and is a vernacular attempt to replicate a classical style. It consists of a layered mantelshelf atop an entablature supported by slender shafts. The entablature contains a slightly recessed horizontal panel. The shafts feature slender applied pilasters rising from square bases resting on the floor to approximately the middle of the entablature. Capped by horizontal strips of molding, the pilasters are broadened at their tops to simulate capitals.

In addition to the 1920s additions and renovations described above, the Laran House has received the following alterations:

1. the replacement of the wooden floors in three rooms, and the addition of modern paneling to the walls of the parlor and right front bedroom. The parlor's very simple cornice, beaded chair rail, and wide baseboards (found atop the paneling) may date to the later renovation.
2. the leveling of the foundation, which included the replacement of its original (probably brick) piers with short concrete cones; and the building of a new chimney.
3. the installation of shutters flanking the front door and most of the house's windows, the construction of a new gallery railing composed of horizontal members, the replacement of the original gallery steps and the railing accompanying them, and the installation of metal hand rails above the steps' new wooden hand rails.
4. the construction of large wooden handicap ramps (needed because of the home's status as a public museum) leading to the front gallery and rear side porch.

At first glance the list of alterations experienced by the Laran House over the years seems long. However, most of the changes are not as significant as they might at first seem because the historic visual character of the exterior remains largely intact. The additions and one handicap ramp are hidden at the rear. When viewed from the street, the other (front) handicap ramp is mostly hidden by vegetation, as are the concrete cones serving as the foundation. The loss of the original gallery railing is unfortunate. It was not

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

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

OMB No. 1024-0018

## Jean Marie Laran House, Evangeline Parish, LA

Page 5

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

possible to replicate it because the original had been missing for a long time when the replacement was built, and there is no historic picture to show what once was there. Inside the home, the floor plan appears mostly intact. The historic mantel is intact as well. The Jean Marie Laran House is being nominated to the National Register because it represents Ville Platte's earliest architectural heritage (see part 8), and the original portion of the home still clearly conveys this. Thus, the building is a viable candidate for Register listing.

### Contributing Element

A second frame building is also located on the property. Once a blacksmith shop, this building was already on the property when Jean Marie Laran, himself a blacksmith, purchased it. The shop stood where the house is now located, and Laran moved it back when he built the home. The shop has a dirt floor, flush board doors, board and batten walls, and clapboard in the peak of its gable roof. The latter was reworked in the Craftsman style in the 1920s, and exposed rafter tails are visible below the roof's metal covering. The shop is being counted as a contributing element to this nomination because it has been associated with the house, and has stood on its current location, since the home's construction in 1883.

### Note About Photographs

Buildings that show up in the backgrounds of photographs number 1, 3, 4, and 5 are all located outside the boundaries proposed for this nomination.

## 8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Applicable National

Register Criteria:           A\_\_\_ B\_\_ C X D

Criteria Considerations

(Exceptions):               A\_\_ B\_\_ C\_\_ D\_\_ E\_\_ F\_\_ G\_\_ NA

Areas of Significance:       Architecture

Period(s) of Significance:   1883

Significant Dates:           1883

Significant Person(s):       NA

Cultural Affiliation:         NA

Architect/Builder:          Jean Marie Laran, Builder

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

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

OMB No. 1024-0018

## Jean Marie Laran House, Evangeline Parish, LA

Page 6

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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

The Jean Marie Laran House is locally significant in the area of architecture as an early and important structure within the context of the Evangeline Parish seat of Ville Platte.

Evangeline, once the northwestern part of Imperial St. Landry Parish, broke off to form its own parish unit in 1910. According to the historical record, settlement began in the late eighteenth century; and by the mid-nineteenth century the area was fairly well populated. Ville Platte (where the Laran House is located) was incorporated in 1858 and is the parish's oldest town. However, little is known of the community's early residential and commercial architecture because very little survives from before about 1900. Local residents familiar with the town's history and development attribute the losses of historic buildings to four factors: 1) fires that occurred in 1919 and the 1980s, 2) a 1920s oil boom that brought prosperity and allowed the demolition and replacement of older buildings with "modern" structures, 3) the belief that "new" equates with "progress," and 4) a lack of appreciation for history. As a result of these factors, Ville Platte's architecture dates mostly to after 1900, and a fair number of houses and commercial buildings date to the 1920s. Only four houses are known to survive from before 1900, and the Laran House is one of this select number. A second pre-1900s home, the Tate House, has previously been listed on the National Register. As one of very few buildings left in Ville Platte to illustrate the town's early appearance, the Laran House ranks as an important local landmark and is worthy of National Register listing.

#### Historical Note:

Although the Jean Marie Laran House remains privately owned, the City of Ville Platte leases the structure for use as a historic house museum chronicling events in the history of Evangeline Parish. The museum opened in 2002.

### **9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Site visit by National Register staff.

Staff knowledge of Evangeline Parish.

Interview with long-time Ville Platte resident Jim Soileau (a museum volunteer who is also an amateur historian), October 11, 2007.

Interview with Pam McGee, director of the Ville Platte Main Street Program, October 11, 2007.

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NPS Form 10-900

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

OMB No. 1024-0018

## Jean Marie Laran House, Evangeline Parish, LA

Page 7

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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: #

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: Less than an acre

UTM References:     **Zone Easting Northing**  
                          15 570140 3394860

Verbal Boundary Description: Please refer to attached sketch map.

Boundary Justification:

On the west, south and east sides, the boundaries follow the property lines of the parcel on which the house stands. On the north side, the boundary is cut five feet from the rear wall of the blacksmith shop (a contributing element). These boundaries preserve the historic setting while excluding non-contributing elements added to the property by later owners.

### 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: Fall 2007

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES NOMINATION**

NPS Form 10-900

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

OMB No. 1024-0018

**Jean Marie Laran House, Evangeline Parish, LA**

**Page 8**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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**PROPERTY OWNERS**

**Owner:** Jacqueline O. Vidrine  
Drouet Warren Vidrine, Jr.  
Drouet W. Vidrine Residuary Trust  
903 West Main Street  
Ville Platte, Louisiana 70586

**Lessee:** City of Ville Platte  
City Hall  
126 East Main Street  
Ville Platte, Louisiana 70586

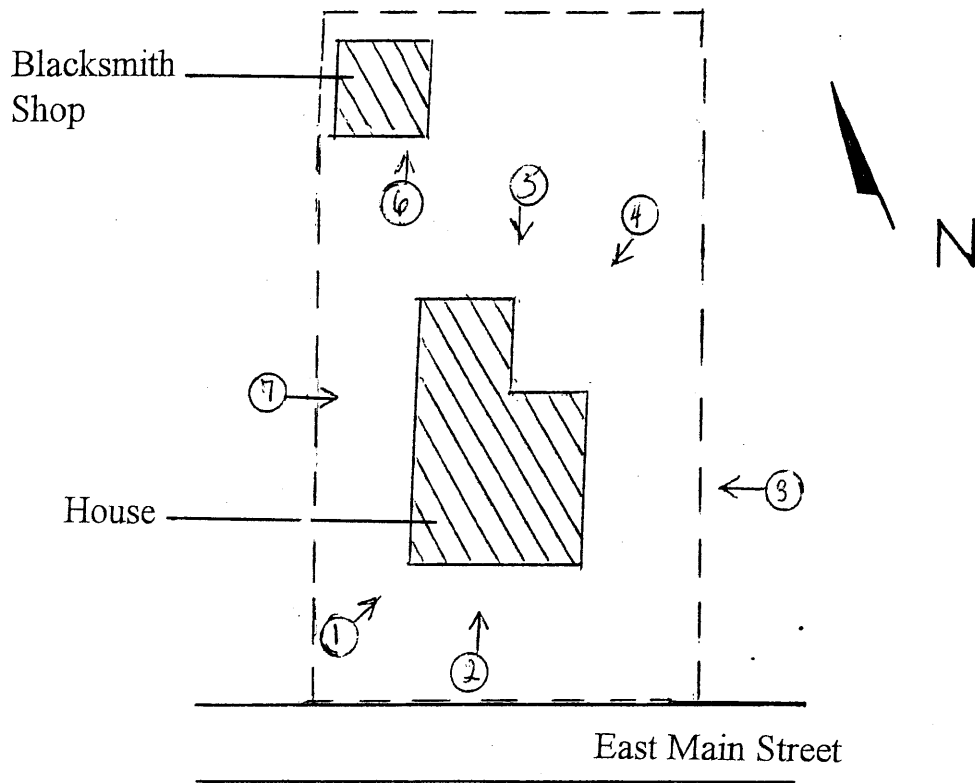
The Honorable Phillip A. Lemoine, Mayor


**Contact:** Pam McGee, Director  
Ville Platte Main Street Program  
337 363-1878  
337 831-4354



# Jean Marie Laran House

Ville Platte, Evangeline Parish, LA



Contributing Element: 

Boundary: 

Scale:  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch = 20 feet