

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

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

2 A 2001  
 OMB No. 1024-0018  
 NAT. REG. Page 1s  
 National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Boy Scout Troop #1 Log Cabin, Franklin, St. Mary Parish, LA

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: Boy Scout Troop #1 Log Cabin

944

Other Name/Site Number:

2. LOCATION

Street & Number 601 Adams

Not for publication: NA

City/Town Franklin

Vicinity: NA

State: Louisiana Code: LA County: St. Mary Code: 101

Zip Code: 70538

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: X Locally:

Jonathan Fricker, Deputy SHPO, Dept. of Culture, Recreation and Tourism

July 17, 2001 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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4. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is:

Entered in the National Register

- 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):

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

9/7/01

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

1

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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**6. FUNCTION OR USE**

Historic: social                      Sub: clubhouse/civic  
Current commerce/trade      Sub: professional

**7. DESCRIPTION**

Architectural Classification: other: log cabin

Materials:

Foundation: brick  
Walls: log  
Roof: metal  
Other:

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### **Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.**

The candidate is a rustic log cabin built in 1943 in the parish seat of Franklin by Boy Scout Troop #1 for its headquarters. It was moved from one in-town setting to another by Scoutmaster Theo Kramer in 1952 to prevent its demolition. Kramer moved the cabin to the rear of his home and converted it to a home office. Both the old and present sites are within the boundaries of the Franklin Historic District, a National Register district which includes the small town's CBD and adjacent residential areas. The log cabin, however, is outside the period of significance for the district (1830-c.1930) and was not included in the count (due to its location in a rear yard). An individual nomination is being pursued (rather than a district addendum) because the log cabin, being something of an oddity, does not relate to the overall architectural character of the district. In addition to being an unusual type, it is believed to be the only building outside the district's period of significance that is now fifty years old. Despite one notable interior alteration and a small addition at the rear, the Boy Scout Troop #1 Log Cabin readily conveys its architectural identity.

### The Move:

Information on the move is from the present owner, Dr. Tom Kramer, the son of Theo Kramer. Kramer, who had been a Boy Scout in the candidate, was in his early 20s when the move occurred. He indicates that the municipally owned property was slated for redevelopment and that his father purchased the cabin on condition that it be removed. The building was moved in one piece, including the roof. The chimney (and accompanying chimneypiece) were removed and reassembled.

The original location (see USGS map and sketch map) was on the edge of the town's small CBD – specifically on Second Street between Willow and Wilson (the later now MLK St.). This section of town was and is characterized mainly by modest early twentieth century houses (see photos). A block to the east is Main Street, the main commercial thoroughfare. A hospital immediately replaced the boy scout cabin. Now there is a police station on the site (see photos).

The cabin is now less than a mile away on Adams Street in a residential neighborhood with houses running the gamut from Greek Revival to bungalow. It is at some distance to the rear of Theo Kramer's former home – a 1920s English style (albeit low-key) cottage. (See sketch map and photos showing present setting.) Between the cabin and the house is a two storage garage apartment (presumably also from the 1920s).

### The Cabin:

Built by the Scouts themselves, under the direction of Scoutmaster Kramer (an engineer by profession), the front gable cabin consists of one large room. As was typical of the archetype, the cabin is self-consciously rustic. The notching is a rough saddle notch and the logs protrude almost a foot from the corner join. The roof extends forward several feet to provide for a porch with crude peeled log posts and a railing. An openwork gable is also formed of peeled poles. The poles in the gable intersect to form various triangles. The matching front door and window shutters, also quite rustic, are made of planks and feature a superimposed X pattern in narrow boards. A small kitchen/bathroom addition, made after the move, is at a rear corner.

As built, the interior walls featured exposed logs. The ceiling, with its openwork design, remains, but the walls were covered in pecky cypress by Kramer when he converted the building for his personal use.

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The ceiling structure consists of planed rafters and skinned pole beams. The chimneybreast, located off-center along one long wall, is a massive brick affair. As noted previously, Dr. Kramer indicates that, although rebuilt, it copies the original. (Oftentimes rustic log cabins of this type had chimneys formed of rocks or boulders. However, stone is not native to South Louisiana.)

### Assessment of Integrity:

The Boy Scout #1 cabin is being nominated for its architectural value at the state level. The overriding issue on the move is that contrary to what the type symbolized (the rugged outdoors), this log cabin was always in a town setting. It was placed sensitively in its new location at some distance from Kramer's house so that it has its own setting.

In terms of alterations, admittedly covering the log walls on the interior impacted the intended look. However, the pecky cypress covering does continue the overall rustic theme; in short, it is not out of character. And, most importantly, the cabin retains all of the other features that establish its original, quite distinctive character.

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**8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

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

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions):           A\_\_ B X C\_\_ D\_\_ E\_\_ F\_\_ G\_\_

Areas of Significance:           architecture

Period(s) of Significance:       1943

Significant Dates:               1943

Significant Person(s):          NA

Cultural Affiliation:            NA

Architect/Builder:               Builder: Boy Scout Troop #1, Theo Kramer, Scoutmaster  
Architect: Theo Kramer

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

The Boy Scout Troop #1 Cabin is architecturally significant as a good representative example of the self-consciously rustic log cabin archetype popular across America in the 1920s and '30s, particularly in park development. Because it is one of only a handful known to exist in Louisiana, it is being nominated at the state level.

The log cabin emerged as one of America's most enduring icons in the presidential election of 1840. William Henry Harrison embraced homespun Jacksonian virtues, declaring that he would be proud to live in a log cabin. In the "log cabin and hard cider" campaign that followed, the log house came to stand for domestic American virtues such as ruggedness, honesty, simplicity, and courage. Harrison won the election, and in the succeeding generation the log cabin became the ideal place for an aspiring politician to have been born. (Of course, the president most associated with the log cabin is Abraham Lincoln.)

As America's national parks began to develop in the very early twentieth century, the log house emerged as an archetype for a wide variety of facilities, ranging from lodges, to shops, to individual cabins. These buildings had a quite distinctive look, one which might best be described as "self-consciously rustic." Some were of actual log construction (like the candidate), while others were frame buildings fitted with half round log (looking) siding. The former were by far the more convincing. In contrast to nineteenth century log cabins, which on the whole were quite finely made, with square corners, these featured rough corners, in which the saddle notch logs extend far beyond the corner in both directions. Additionally, unskinned poles were a prominent feature – for porch posts, rafters and other members.

During the 1930s this icon (referred to as the "Smokey the Bear" style of architecture by cultural geographer Henry Glassie) spread across the country as New Deal funds fueled national park expansion and the state parks movement. Other institutions adopted the form as well – the U.S. Forest Service, summer camps for children, etc. Within a larger context, it illustrates the strong historical revival trends of the period – i.e., the use of a historic archetype for a symbolic purpose (in this case, to convey a rustic, "back to nature" ideal). The rustic log look spread to the general population through books and magazine articles, with both large houses and vacation cabins being built from the Adirondacks to California. For example, *Sunset*, a Western magazine, published in 1938 a how-to volume called *Cabin Plan Book*, with a chapter devoted to log construction.

The log cabin archetype certainly seems appropriate for the Boy Scouts, and the headquarters building constructed by Troop #1 of Franklin is a particularly convincing example. It is of real log construction with the signature exaggerated corners. Additionally, it has skinned pole tie beams and porch posts, and a complex web of skinned poles in the openwork gable.

As far as the Division of Historic Preservation staff can determine from its decades of fieldwork and research, the Boy Scout cabin in Franklin is one of only about six of its type in Louisiana. In fact, the rustic log cabin look of the parks movement never had much of a following in the state. This is surprising because various state parks were built in the 1930s by the Civilian Conservation Corps in consultation with the National Park Service, and the log cabin was a signature of CCC construction. Also, log cabins (real ones) had been the principal housing type in various parts of the state (most notably, northern Louisiana). However, for whatever reason, none of Louisiana's 1930s parks had log buildings. The U. S. Forest Service built two rustic log cabins for state forest headquarters (one near Alexandria and one near Mandeville), both

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of which survive. The only other known examples (besides the candidate) are two or three CCC-built cabins now within the confines of Fort Polk.

### Historical Note:

The Boy Scouts organization was founded in England in 1908, and in 1910 Congress chartered the Boy Scouts of America. Franklin's Troop #1 is among the nation's earliest, having been founded in 1914. The troop did not have its own home until the candidate was built in 1943, according to Dr. Kramer, the owner. One of the members of the troop at that time was the present governor of Louisiana, Murphy J. Foster, Jr.

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### 9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Interview with Dr. Tom Kramer, son of Theo Kramer, the Scoutmaster for Troop #1.

Dillion, Ralph P., editor. *Sunset's Cabin Plan Book*. *Sunset Magazine*, 1938.

Previous documentation on file (NPS): NA

- 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 (Specify Repository):

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### 10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: less than an acre

UTM References:    **Zone Easting Northing**  
                          15     644400 3296820

Verbal Boundary Description: Boundaries parallel building elevations, each at a distance of twenty feet.

Boundary Justification:

Because the candidate has been moved from its original location, boundaries were chosen to include only the discrete acreage immediately surrounding it. These boundaries have been designated for the nomination although the land itself is already listed as part of the Franklin Historic District.

### 11. FORM PREPARED BY

Name/Title: National Register staff

Address: Division of Historic Preservation, P. O. Box 44247, Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70804

Telephone: (225) 342-8160

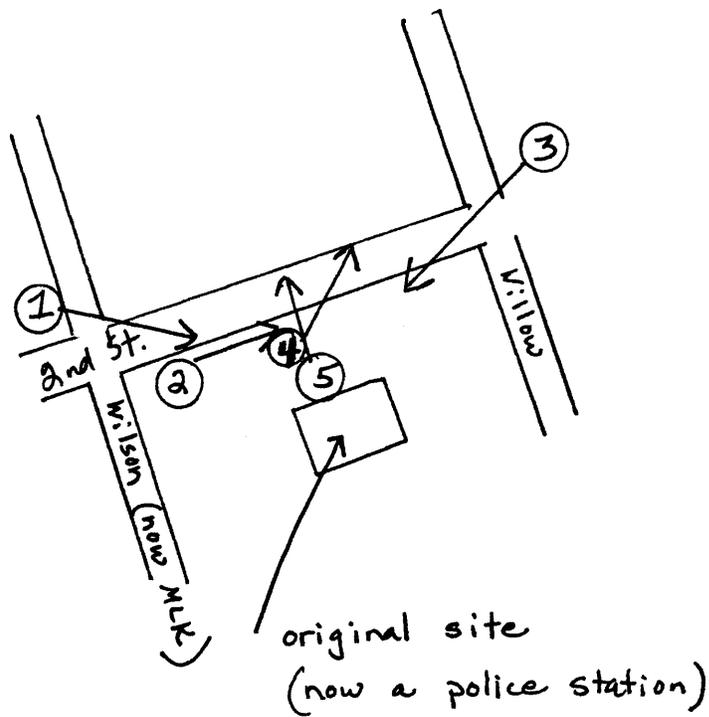
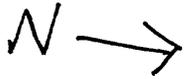
Date: May 2001

### PROPERTY OWNERS

Dr. Thomas F. Kramer  
4484 Irish Bend Road  
Franklin, LA 70538  
337-828-3577  
337-828-5502

Boy Scout Troop #1 Log Cabin  
St. Mary Parish, LA

Photos showing original location



Doy Jean  
St. Mary Parish, LA

Photos showing setting (current)

