

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

APR 16 1990

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

NATIONAL
REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Bacas House
other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number LA Hwy 18 not for publication
city, town Edgard vicinity
state Louisiana code LA county St. John the Baptist code 095 zip code 70049

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____	_____ structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	_____	_____ objects
		<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this 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 meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.
Leslie Tassin April 11, 1990
Signature of certifying official Leslie Tassin, LA State Historic Preservation Date
Officer, Dept of Culture, Recreation and Tourism
State or Federal agency and bureau _____

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.
Signature of commenting or other official _____ Date _____
State or Federal agency and bureau _____

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:
 entered in the National Register. Entered in the National Register
 See continuation sheet. Mark J. Baker 17 May 1990
 determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.
 determined not eligible for the National Register.
 removed from the National Register.
 other, (explain:) _____
Signature of the Keeper _____ Date of Action _____

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling**7. Description**Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)French Colonial (Creole)FederalGreek Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation brickwalls weatherboardroof tin

other _____

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Bacas Home (c. 1840-1850) is a one-story French Creole house of timber frame and bousillage construction. Located on the River Road along the west bank of the Mississippi River in St. John the Baptist Parish, the building also shows Anglo-American influence in its transitional French, Federal, and Greek Revival woodwork. Alterations to the building over the years have included the removal of an old kitchen attached at the rear, replacement of clapboard siding, installation of a few modern windows, and a possible addition at the rear. None of these changes impacts the Creole character of the building, and the facade remains intact. Thus, the building retains its eligibility for the National Register.

The original Creole features found in the Bacas Home include 1) a steeply pitched hipped umbrella roof, 2) cypress framing members and bousillage walls beneath a coating of plaster, 3) a full length front gallery with very wide baseboards decorating the facade wall, 4) three sets of French doors (each leaf of which contains eight lites) on the facade, 5) six solid rectangular cypress gallery columns which appear to be original (Creole builders were using columns of this shape by 1840), 6) exposed beam ceilings both on the gallery and throughout the interior, 7) three French wraparound mantels, and 8) a late Creole floorplan organized around an extremely wide central hall-like salle, even larger flanking chambre rooms, and rear cabinets flanking a large rear room.

The home's woodwork is especially interesting, for it displays the mixing of decorative elements which resulted when Creole carpenters began to copy Anglo-American architectural styles. The home's three mantels best illustrate this trend. For example, each mantel shelf stands upon simple Greek Revival pilasters composed of smooth bases, shafts, and capitals. However, the pilasters rise directly to the mantel shelf without an intervening entablature. This decorative treatment apparently resulted from the influence of French mantels built during the Louis XVI period. Provincial adaptations of these mantels were created by early Creole builders in New Orleans who, in turn, influenced hinterland builders such as the craftsman of the Bacas House. Additionally, one of the Bacas mantels displays the French lozenge motif. Finally, a hint of Federal influence can be seen in the carving of the three mantel shelves themselves. In addition to the mantels, Anglo-American influence can also be found in the five pane Greek Revival transom above the central hall's exterior French door, in the 1840s moldings which surround the paneled interior doors, and in the symmetrical appearance of the facade.

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Assessment of Integrity

The changes to which the Bacas Home has been subjected since the 1840s are all of the type which result from natural evolution and usage over the years. These changes include the following items:

- 1) the removal of a former kitchen which once connected to a cabinet room at the rear,
- 2) the possible addition of a rear porch. Because Creole houses were occasionally built with a rear gable roofed extension attached parallel to the larger hipped roof structure (such as the configuration found on the Bacas House), it is impossible at this time to say with certainty whether the rear porch is original to the house or a later addition. However, if it was an addition, it faithfully reproduced the Creole tradition of the open loggia flanked by cabinet rooms. One of these cabinets has since been converted into a modern kitchen, while the loggia has been subdivided to create a bath and enclosed porch.
- 3) the installation of a lowered tile ceiling and wall paneling in one bedroom, and the cutting of a door between this room and the modern kitchen,
- 4) the construction of closets beside fireplaces and on a wall of one room lacking a fireplace,
- 5) the reinforcement of rotten gallery columns by surrounding the damaged lower sections with new wood,
- 6) the installation of a few modern windows,
- 7) the installation of beaded board siding on the facade and replacement of clapboard siding on the other surfaces, and
- 8) the installation of Victorian style screen doors over the French doors on the facade.

However, none of these changes seriously impacts the integrity of the home. For example, the rear porch area which stands beneath the gable roof contains the standard Creole loggia and cabinet configuration. Furthermore, the gable is separate from the building's main mass and is invisible when the house is viewed from the front. The changes in siding are also relatively insignificant. Although the beaded board does alter the texture of the facade wall, this change does not affect the home's massing and other Creole features. Additionally, the replacement clapboard on other exterior walls is very similar to the building's

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original sheathing. Meanwhile, the home retains a significant number of rare and important Creole features. These include its hipped umbrella roof, bousillage walls, exposed beam ceilings, wraparound mantels, French doors, wide decorative gallery baseboards, solid rectangular gallery columns, Creole floorplan, and transitional Anglo-French woodwork combining elements of the American Federal and Greek Revival styles with the French decorative lozenge and provincial adaptation of the Louis XVI mantel treatment. For these reasons, the Bacas Home is a strong candidate for National Register listing.

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treatment appears to be a hinterland interpretation of the provincial adaptations of French Louis XVI mantels which early Creole craftsmen built in houses such as Madame John's Legacy. It is most likely the only such mantel treatment in St. John the Baptist Parish.

Historical Note:

Although the name of the original builder and date of construction have not survived, the home has been in the Bacas family since April 1895, when it was purchased by Alcide Bacas from Willis Becnel. Today the building is the home of Alcide's son, Albert H. Bacas, who has lived continuously in the home since his birth in 1901.

8. Statement of Significance

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

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G N/A

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)
architecture

Period of Significance

c.1840-1850

Significant Dates

c.1840-1850

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Bacas Home (c. 1840-1850) is locally significant in the area of architecture within St. John the Baptist Parish because it is a rare example of Creole building customs in a parish where that tradition once thrived.

The case for the home's rarity is based on both the scarcity of Creole architecture in general and the added rarity of certain features found within the home. The area which became St. John the Baptist Parish was fairly well settled by the end of the eighteenth century. Although St. John was part of the so-called German Coast, its dominant cultural influence was French Creole. Thus, the prosperous sugar economy which developed there supported the construction of Creole rather than German homes. Therefore, we can presume that the parish once had a few hundred of these Creole residences, both large and small. However, records in the Division of Historic Preservation indicate that only about ten of these structures remain. The Bacas Home's bousillage walls, umbrella roof, exposed beam ceilings, wraparound mantels, French doors, and full length gallery with original cypress columns and wide decorative baseboards clearly mark it as one of the parish's ten survivors of the now scarce Creole building tradition.

Because the majority of those Creole homes surviving in the parish are from the period before Anglo influence began to change the floorplan and appearance of the typical Creole house, the Bacas Home assumes added importance as a rare example of this transitional Anglo-Creole style. The house not only illustrates how the French Creole style persisted in the face of an onslaught of new Anglo-American house types, but also shows how Creole builders were influenced by those new styles. Features which reveal its transitional nature include 1) a symmetrical facade (earlier Creole builders were uninterested in symmetry), 2) an Anglo-influenced floorplan in which the salle resembles an entrance hall and is flanked by chambres larger than the salle itself, 3) a five pane Greek Revival transom above the central hall's exterior French door, 4) Greek Revival moldings from the 1840s surrounding interior paneled doors, and 5) three mantels which combine Greek Revival pilasters, Federal mantel shelves, and French decorative motifs such as lozenges. Furthermore, the architectural importance of these mantels is enhanced by the fact that their pilasters support the mantel shelves directly, without the benefit of intervening entablatures. This

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

Standing Structures Survey of St. John the Baptist Parish.

Previous documentation on file (NPS): N/A

- preliminary determination of individual listing (38 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 # _____

See continuation sheet

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 @ 2 acres

UTM References

A 15 728860 3323600
 Zone Easting Northing

C _____

B _____
 Zone Easting Northing

D _____

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Please refer to enclosed sketch map.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

Boundary lines were drawn to recognize the significant resource and its immediate setting. To have followed property lines would have meant including excessive rural acreage not directly related to the significance of the house.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

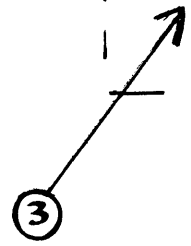
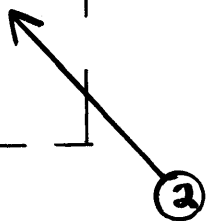
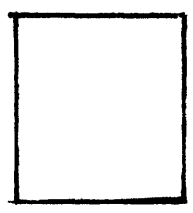
name/title National Register Staff

organization Division of Historic Preservation date March 1990

street & number P. O. Box 44247 telephone (504) 342-8160

city or town Baton Rouge state Louisiana zip code 70804

LA HWY 18



Bacas House
Edgard vicinity
St. John Parish
Louisiana



1" = 75'

--- BOUNDARY