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NATIONAL REGISTER

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Reserve Plantation House

other names/site number Godchaux Plantation House; Godchaux-Boudousquie Plantation House

2. Location

street & number 1628 LA Hwy 44 N/A not for publication

city or town Reserve N/A vicinity

state Louisiana code LA county St. John the Baptist code 095 zip code 70084

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Jonathan Fricker 12/14/93
Signature of certifying official/Title Jonathan Fricker, Date
Deputy SHPO, Dept of Culture, Recreation and Tourism
State of Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register
 See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain:)

Entered in the

National Register Date of Action

101 Signature of the Keeper Guynor Rapsley 1/21/94

Reserve Plantation House
Name of Property

St. John the Baptist Parish, LA
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

| Contributing | Noncontributing | |
|--------------|-----------------|------------|
| 1 | | buildings |
| | | sites |
| | | structures |
| | | objects |
| 1 | 0 | Total |

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

Louisiana's French Creole Architecture

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

WORK IN PROGRESS

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Other: French Creole

Federal

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete (slab)

walls plaster, weatherboard

roof tin

other

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

[Faint, illegible text]

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

architecture

Period of Significance

c.1825, c.1850

Significant Dates

c.1825, c.1850

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS): N/A

- 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

Name of repository:

Reserve Plantation House
Name of Property

St. John the Baptist Parish, LA
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property approximately 3/4 acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

| | | | |
|------|---------|-------------|---------------|
| 1 | 1 5 | 7 3 4 8 8 0 | 3 3 2 7 2 4 0 |
| Zone | Easting | Northing | |
| 2 | | | |

| | | | |
|------|---------|----------|--|
| 3 | | | |
| Zone | Easting | Northing | |
| 4 | | | |

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title National Register Staff

organization Division of Historic Preservation date November 1993

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

city or town Baton Rouge state Louisiana zip code 70804

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name River Road Historical Society

street & number P. O. Box 5 telephone (504) 764-9315

city or town Destrehan state Louisiana zip code 70047

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Reserve Plantation House, Reserve, St. John the Baptist Parish, LA

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Reserve Plantation House is a large colombage raised Creole house located in the town of Reserve behind the Mississippi River levee. The architectural evidence indicates that it was built in several stages, attaining its present appearance by c.1850. Despite two moves and some alteration, the house retains its National Register eligibility.

Reserve Plantation House has a long and complicated history including what appear to be three major periods of construction and two moves. The house was first moved sometime prior to about 1900. It was moved again on September 25, 1993 to save it from certain demolition, as will be explained more fully later. A c. 1900 panoramic photograph shows the house as part of the Godchaux sugar mill complex. (Leon Godchaux had purchased Reserve Plantation in 1869.) It was from the Godchaux sugar mill site that the house was moved in 1993. In the photograph, the house appears as a large fully raised Creole residence (i.e., the main story raised a full story above grade). The reason the State Historic Preservation Office believes the house was moved to the Godchaux mill site from elsewhere is its placement facing a road leading into the sugar mill complex from the Mississippi River. It did not face the river as River Road plantation houses invariably did. Thus sometime prior to about 1900 the house was moved to the Godchaux mill site, most likely from somewhere close by on the plantation. This supposition that there was an early move has been corroborated by experienced historic house mover David Beeson (the 1993 mover). He noted marks under the house left by apparatus used in moving houses by mule power.

As was previously mentioned, during the period when the Reserve house was located on the Godchaux mill site, its principal story was raised a full story above grade. Because the house undoubtedly had been moved to the site and moving such a house generally involves demolition and reconstruction of the brick supporting base, the question arises as to what the original supporting base looked like prior to this early move. Was the house fully raised in its original location? It is very reasonable to assume that it was. Indeed, it is unreasonable to suspect that it was not. Firstly, the principal story of the Reserve house is very large, being four rooms wide and two rooms deep with a rear cabinet/loggia range and galleries on three sides. Based upon pictorial evidence of Creole houses that no longer exist and SHPO staff knowledge of surviving examples, it is clear that Creole houses of this magnitude were almost invariably fully raised. Secondly, throughout history houses have been routinely moved on the River Road, generally not very far. If in the course of a move the height of the principal story was changed, it was generally lowered. Sometimes the owner simply did not want to take the trouble to rebuild the high basement. Thus the general trend has been for lowering not raising houses after a move.

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Reserve Plantation House, Reserve, St. John the Baptist Parish, LA

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At the time of the 1993 move the house on its Godchaux mill site rested on high brick pillars. However, one assumes that on its original site it had a brick basement. Such a treatment for fully raised houses was the norm in Creole Louisiana. In fact, the Division of Historic Preservation knows of extremely few large fully raised Creole houses that rested on high brick pillars rather than a brick basement.

The Principal Story

On Creole houses the living space is raised several feet above grade. On the grandest examples the family living space is raised a full story creating what amounts to a two story structure. In cases such as this the second floor was where the family lived and thus received significant architectural treatment. The brick lower story more often than not was used only for storage and thus received little in the way of architectural treatment. The only exception was the dining room, which was sometimes located on the lower story. For the record, this is not the case at Reserve. All of the timbers under the principal story are rough, indicating that such low brick rooms which undoubtedly existed under the principal story were entirely for utilitarian purposes.

As noted previously, Reserve's premier etage (principal story) is the product of three major periods of construction. Architectural evidence does not present a clear picture of the house's growth and evolution. The best one can do at this time is make the following general statement. The sill, beam and plate structure under the principal story and in the attic indicates an early house of three or so rooms built sometime prior to the Federal period. This first phase of construction could well be eighteenth century. How much of this early structure survives is difficult to say because the aforementioned plate, sill and beam structure does not coincide with the present room arrangement. Precisely, it encompasses three and a half of the present four front rooms.

The placement of four exceptional Federal mantels indicates a c. 1825 remodeling and enlargement in which Reserve became a substantial plantation house two rooms deep. This supposition is supported by the fact that two of the mantels are set in the rear range of rooms. The beam structure under these rooms is obviously an addition to the original sill and beam structure. The extent of the c.1825 enlargement is not known precisely. However, because the colombage wall construction seems fairly old and consistent, it may well be that the house attained much of its present size at this time.

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Reserve Plantation House, St. John the Baptist Parish, LA

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Reserve was modified again about 1850, at which time it received its present galleries and roofline. The roof structure is fairly simple and looks mid-nineteenth century. In addition, the gallery columns are paneled with a bolection molding whose profile is very typical of the late 1840s and the 1850s. This modification must have been very extensive, as evidenced by the fact that mid-nineteenth century moldings are found throughout the house, and by the fact that all of the present flooring appears to date from this period.

A Note on the Colomage Construction

The colomage features French angle braces and very heavy studs placed unusually close together. The size of the studs and their close placement suggests an early date (i.e., that one would expect all of the colomage construction to date well before the mid nineteenth century). Curiously, some of the walls are bousillage while others are brick between post. One would think that if a house had both bousillage and brick between post walls that one or the other of them would represent a later period of construction. This may be the case at Reserve, but it is not certain. The configuration of mud versus brick walls does not fit any clear or obvious house expansion scenario.

The Mid-Nineteenth Century Appearance

As was previously noted, architectural evidence supports the conclusion that in the mid-nineteenth century the Reserve house looked much as it does today -- i.e., a fully raised Creole plantation house four rooms wide and two rooms deep with front and side galleries. There was also a cabinet and loggia range on the rear, but these features were severely impacted by a late nineteenth/early twentieth century rear renovation. (There were very probably two cabinets, but physical evidence survives for only one.) At this time (late nineteenth/early twentieth century) the west end of the rear elevation received a small projecting wing with a separate porch and a hip roof. This created a full size room where a cabinet had presumably been. The east end received an extension without a porch under a shed roof. In addition, some of the central portion of the rear loggia (gallery) and a section of the east gallery were enclosed. Finally, a pair of French doors on the front gallery was replaced by a single leaf glass and paneled door in the Italianate style.

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Reserve Plantation House, Reserve, St. John the Baptist Parish, LA

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Other surviving features that existed by the mid-nineteenth century include:

- 1) The exterior treatment of the principal story which consists of stucco scored to resemble cut stone. A preliminary examination of the paint layers suggests that at one time the stucco may have been painted to resemble granite.
- 2) Various interior four panel doors.
- 3) Four dormers with side pilasters (two in front and two on the rear).
- 4) Four Federal wraparound mantels which feature paneled pilasters and entablatures, intricate multi-layer denticular cornices, sunburst motifs, elaborate molding profiles, lozenges and side panels.
- 5) The elegant molded entablatures found around the ceilings in several of the principal rooms.
- 6) The beaded board ceilings found in several of the rooms.
- 7) The various door and window surrounds and the baseboards.

Changes that are, or appear to be, less than 50 years old: Four of the six over six windows appear to be relatively modern replacements of French doors. In addition, in 1961 a wall was inserted which bisects one of the rear rooms. Finally, the sheetrock found in several of the rooms seems to date from this period. These changes should be considered minor given the scope of the house's architecture.

At the time of this writing, a new brick veneer lower story is being constructed. Although modern, it will give the house the overall look it undoubtedly had originally, in the opinion of the State Historic Preservation Office. In any event, as noted previously, the premier etage was the important part of a raised Creole plantation house and that at Reserve survives largely intact, complete with some of the state's finest Federal woodwork (see Part 8).

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Reserve Plantation House, St. John the Baptist Parish, LA

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The 1993 Move

On September 25, 1993 the house was moved approximately three quarters of a mile within the small community of Reserve to its present site. The premier etage was moved completely intact, including the chimneys. In the old (Godchaux mill) site the house was part of an industrial property with buildings dating from various periods. This was an inappropriate setting because historically plantation houses had their own grounds and were located at some distance from the sugar mill and ancillary support structures. The new site is an approximately three-quarter acre lot on the corner of the River Road (La. Hwy 44) and West 10th St. Neither site could be called rural. Thus the extent to which the house's setting resembles the original agrarian setting has not decreased. Indeed, the setting could be said to have improved because the house now faces the Mississippi River as it undoubtedly did originally. In any case the house has not been removed from the area which forms the context for its significance.

Moreover, there is no doubt that the move was necessary in order to save the house. The old Godchaux sugar mill property had been acquired by the Port of South Louisiana, an agency that announced plans to redevelop the site. The Reserve house was slated for demolition. However, the port authority cooperated with Reserve's current owner, the River Road Historical Society, and delayed its plans until funds could be raised to relocate the house.

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Reserve Plantation House, Reserve, St. John the Baptist Parish, LA

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Reserve Plantation House is of state significance as an unusually large and important example of the French Creole architectural tradition.

The principal story of any Creole house, the premier etage, was from the owner's standpoint the most important place. It was here that the family lived. It was also the focus of whatever architectural refinement the house may have had. Among the few hundred Creole residences that remain in the state, Reserve is conspicuous because of the size of its premier etage. As far as the State Historic Preservation Office is aware, there are only 11 premier etages in the state of comparable size and only two that are larger. Thus the house is important for its sheer magnitude as an example of the Creole tradition.

Reserve is especially important because of its early decorative detailing. Although the Creole tradition dates to the earliest days of the Louisiana colony, most of the extant examples are from the mid-nineteenth century. As far as the State Historic Preservation Office is aware, Reserve is one of only about 20 Creole houses in the state which feature significant pre-Greek Revival decorative details. These include four exceptional Federal wraparound mantels and various window and door surrounds.

Finally, three of the four mantels at Reserve make conspicuous use of the French lozenge motif. This French Renaissance detail is important, but it appears only on a very small minority of relatively early Creole houses (the NHL Madame John's Legacy, for instance).

Historical Note:

The following is extracted from a typescript history of Reserve Plantation prepared by Michael J. Maurin, presently with St. John the Baptist Parish Library and formerly superintendent of the Godchaux-Henderson Sugar Refinery:

Part of the property that would become the extensive Reserve Plantation was settled in the 1760s by Jean Baptiste Laubel (Lobel) and his wife Marie Therese Fontenot. Jean Baptiste died in 1774, but his widow continued on the land. After the Louisiana Purchase, the U. S. government confirmed the land claim of Jean Baptiste, Jr. and Louis Laubel. The land was six arpents fronting the Mississippi by forty arpents deep. Louis and Jean Baptiste, Jr. split the land into two equal size tracts which they sold individually in 1809.

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Reserve Plantation House, Reserve, St. John the Baptist Parish, LA

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The next known owners are Francois and Elisee Rillieux, brothers who were part of Louisiana's large free people of color population. It seems likely that the Rillieux brothers were responsible for the Federal period remodeling and enlarging of the house. In 1822 they began purchasing small adjacent tracts of land and consolidating them into a sugar plantation. They formed a "societe" (company or partnership) to operate their holdings on May 11, 1825. The Rillieux brothers amassed a plantation with a 14 and 1/4 arpent front. Francois became sole owner, and on his death an auction of his plantation and mill was held.

The new owners were Antoine Boudousquie and his brother-in-law, Michel T. Andry. They formed a "societe" on March 23, 1833. By 1849-50, as noted in Champomier's Statement of the Sugar Crop, Boudousquie was sole owner. In Champomier's 1850-51 compilation the plantation is listed as Reserve. Boudousquie died November 25, 1855. His widow, Sophie Andry, representing also her children, continued operation of the plantation. Bankruptcy forced Mrs. Boudousquie to sell the plantation on June 1, 1869 to Leon Godchaux. At this time the property had a 19 1/4 arpent front and an 80 arpent depth. Of course, it took some time for the plantation to get back on a sound economic footing after the disruptive Civil War and Reconstruction years. However, by 1893, Godchaux had doubled the size of the plantation. The Daily States of New Orleans, in its November 28, 1894 issue describing a visit to Godchaux's "famous Reserve Plantation," referred to him as "one of the largest sugar planters in the South." The huge sugar mill's capacity was emphasized in the article, with no reference made to the main house. The Godchaux family continued to own the plantation until the 1950s.

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Reserve Plantation House, Reserve, St. John the Baptist Parish, LA

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Bibliography

Maurin, Michael J. Typescript history of Reserve Plantation based upon extensive research in primary sources, copy in Register file, Louisiana Division of Historic Preservation.

c. 1900 and 1903 photos of Reserve Plantation House.

Extensive Division of Historic Preservation staff knowledge of Louisiana's Creole architecture.

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Reserve Plantation House, St. John the Baptist Parish, LA

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Legal Property Description

A certain tract of land, situated in Reserve, St. John the Baptist Parish, Louisiana, Section 37, T-11-S, R-6-E, more particularly described as follows:

Lot No. 1A, measuring 122.73 feet on West 10th St. to a point, thence measuring 173.59 feet along property owned by the Seller (St. John the Baptist Parish School Board) to a point, thence measuring 199.44 feet along property owned by the Seller (St. John the Baptist Parish School Board) to a point, thence measuring 80.75 feet on La. Hwy. 44 to a point, thence continuing 106.13 feet on La. Hwy. 44 to a point, being the point of beginning.

Boundary Justification

Boundaries follow the property lines of the lot onto which the house was moved.

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Godchaux--Reserve Plantation House St. John the Baptist Parish LOUISIANA
(Louisiana's French Creole Architecture MPS) 93001548

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION APPROVED
(Name change)

Guy M. Lapsley 9/9/94