

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

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

OMB No. 1024-0018

Cousin, Francois, House, Lacombe, St. Tammany Parish, LA

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United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

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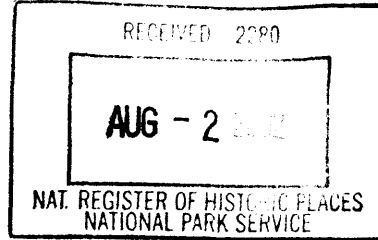
[Redacted]

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: Cousin, Francois, House

Other Name/Site Number:

982



[Redacted]

2. LOCATION

Street & Number 28061 Main St.

Not for publication: NA

City/Town Lacombe

Vicinity: NA

State: Louisiana Code: LA County: St. Tammany Code: 103 Zip Code: 70445

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/Title Laurel Wyckoff, LA SHPO Dept of Culture, Recreation and Tourism State or Federal Agency and Bureau

Date August 1, 2002

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
Determined eligible for the National Register
Determined not eligible for the National Register
Removed from the National Register
Other (explain):

Signature of Keeper: [Handwritten Signature]

Date of Action: 9/18/02

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
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: Louisiana's French Creole Architecture

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**6. FUNCTION OR USE**

Historic: domestic                      Sub: single dwelling  
Current: domestic                      Sub: single dwelling (secondary home)

**7. DESCRIPTION**

Architectural Classification: other: French Creole  
Materials:

Foundation: brick  
Walls: other: brick-between-posts  
Roof: asphalt  
Other:

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

The Francois Cousin house is a French Creole residence reflecting two major periods of construction. An early house of unknown date was enlarged c.1820, as explained below. Originally the house was in a completely rural setting on Bayou Lacombe. Subsequently the small community of the same name grew up around it. Today the house occupies roughly a three acre parcel with the bayou at the far rear. Numerous quite old live oaks and other trees provide a lush, verdant setting. Despite numerous changes over the years, some notable, the Cousin house has a strong French Creole character.

The Cousin house has a complex history of construction. The following is an analysis based upon visible architectural evidence. The *brique entre poteaux* (brick between posts) main block is three rooms wide and two rooms deep with Federal style detailing and an impressive Norman truss roof structure. While upon first glance the house may appear to have been built all at one time, certain constructional clues indicate otherwise. Evidently the easternmost two rooms are older than the other rooms. The rhythm of the Norman truss roof structure breaks, indicating two separate periods of construction. The eastern part of the house makes provision for a kingpost mortised into the beams. The western part does not. (Generally speaking, the more complex the roof structure, the earlier the construction.) Secondly, there is a break in the pattern of supporting piers, with massive piers under the eastern part – piers almost twice as large as those under the western part. Thirdly, there is a doorway between the eastern and western parts that was obviously once a window (i.e., showing what was once the end of the house). An anomaly to the foregoing is the absence of evidence in the attic of where an end wall would have been. (In short, if the eastern two rooms were originally free-standing one should see evidence of this in the attic. The lack thereof can only be explained by a complete reworking of the roof structure when the addition was made.) Because virtually all of the house's stylistic details date from the period of the addition (c.1820) and because constructional clues are not as precise, it is impossible to date the original two rooms. For the purposes of the data retrieval portion of this form, the date of the enlarged house (c.1820) will be used.

Because of the Cousin house's early date, it is strongly French Creole in character. French Creole features include the hall-less floorplan, the Norman truss roof, *brique entre poteaux* construction with French angle braces, two mantelpieces that wrap around the great central chimney (western addition), openings for French doors, and some surviving exposed beaded ceiling beams. The Federal mantelpieces feature end blocks atop engaged, turned, half-round, tapered columns. The sides feature bolection panels. The façade fenestration pattern of French door openings and windows is also typically French Creole in that it makes no attempt at regularity or symmetry. The openings feature a delicate molding typical of the Federal period.

The Cousin house has received various alterations through its long life, as follows:

1. As enlarged c.1820, the house had a gallery across the front. The gallery ceiling featured exposed beaded beams, most of which are still extant above the current porch ceiling. Sometime in the late nineteenth century the original outer rafters were removed and a lighter structure put in place. This work included the addition of a side gallery which created a gable roof. The current tongue and groove porch ceiling probably dates from this time. Steps were added to create a corner entrance to the new enlarged gallery. The present gallery posts are twentieth century. The original plate for the front gallery is extant, enabling one to see where the original columns fitted in. This gives not only the original spacing but confirmation that originally they were solid and relatively diminutive (as opposed to boxed plank). In addition,

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- clues to the original railing survive in a board at the corner of the front gallery. Its five empty slots strongly suggest that originally there were five horizontal planks – like a fence, which is most unusual.
2. In the early twentieth century a large addition was made to the rear under an extended shed roof. This construction necessitated adding new extended rafters to the original roof ridge and replacing some older rafters on the old rear roof plane. It also obliterated any visible evidence of whether or not the house originally had a rear gallery.
  3. Ax marks on the framing members indicate that originally the walls were plastered over both inside and out.
  4. About 15% of the interior briquette entre poteaux is missing. The most serious loss is the entire wall separating the middle front and rear rooms.
  5. Most of the original windows and doors are either long gone or have been moved around.
  6. One wraparound mantel survives unscathed, while its identical companion has been partially dismantled, but all the pieces are in the room. Sadly, the entire mantelpiece has been badly damaged by sandblasting. The mantel for the end wall of the eastern side is in storage on the property. It appears that it is identical or very similar in design to those on the western side, indicating that the mantels all date from the c.1820 expansion.
  7. Sandblasting has also damaged interior beaded exposed beam ceilings and the fenestration surrounds on the façade.
  8. There have been various cosmetic alterations on the interior, including the covering of a few walls with beaded board (c.1900) and the replacement of door and window frames.

## Assessment of Integrity:

The Cousin House admittedly has suffered various insensitive treatments and alterations (all by previous owners). But on the other hand, so much remains of its early French Creole character – features that define the French Creole look such as briquette entre poteaux construction with French angle braces, the irregular façade fenestration pattern, most of the floorplan (without halls), the overly built Norman truss roof (something that survives in only the earliest of houses in Louisiana), exposed beaded beam ceilings, and its central chimney with mantels that wrap around the flue. In short, the house is still able to convey its identity, alterations notwithstanding.

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**8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

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

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

Areas of Significance:      architecture

Period(s) of Significance:      c.1820

Significant Dates:      c.1820

Significant Person(s):      NA

Cultural Affiliation:      NA

Architect/Builder:      unknown

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

The Francois Cousin House is of local architectural significance as a rare survivor to represent St. Tammany's earliest architecture (French Creole). In fact, it is one of only a very small number of buildings in the parish dating from before the Civil War.

Located on the north shore of Lake Pontchartrain, St. Tammany is predominantly rural, although there are three good-size towns (Covington, Mandeville and Slidell) and several small ones (including Lacombe). The earliest settlement was in lower St. Tammany (between today's Interstate 12 and Lake Pontchartrain). For many years the French dominated this area. They arrived in the 1720s and their influence continued well into the nineteenth century. For example, Creole planter Bernard de Marigny subdivided his North Shore plantation in 1835 to create the town of Mandeville.

Given this early settlement pattern, one would expect lower St. Tammany to contain a fair number of French Creole dwellings and buildings reflecting other pre-Civil War architectural influences. However, the parish experienced substantial growth during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries due to the area's popularity as a health resort and the lumber and shipbuilding industries. For this reason, the vast majority of the parish's buildings date from this later period. A recently completed survey of lower St. Tammany found that of approximately 1,400 buildings which are 50 years old or older, only 24 are of pre-Civil War vintage. Although upper St. Tammany has not yet been surveyed, LA SHPO staff know of very few early buildings in this area. Among the perhaps 30 pre-Civil War buildings in the entire parish, less than six are in the French Creole style. With its abundance of character-defining features, the Cousin House is a rare survivor to convey the look of early St. Tammany. The Federal style wraparound mantels are particularly outstanding. The LA SHPO staff knows of no other French Creole house in the parish with woodwork of this quality.

### Historical Note:

The candidate is one of two Francois Cousin houses in St. Tammany (both French Creole). The other, already listed on the National Register, is on Bayou Liberty near Slidell, several miles to the east of the candidate. Cousin settled in the area in the late 1700s and became one of its largest landowners. He died in October 1819.

The two French Creole houses are roughly contemporaneous. Cousin's exact period of occupancy in each of the two houses is not known. (He could have divided his time between what were originally two large land holdings.) Both houses are known to local historians by the Francois Cousin name.

Cousin's succession, as quoted in a local newspaper story, described his Bayou Lacombe plantation (the candidate) as having "a dwelling house, kitchen, other small houses, two barns, poultry house, a dozen Negro huts, [and a] cooper's shed."

As detailed in Part 7, the candidate was enlarged/remodeled to its present appearance circa 1820. This work could have been done during Cousin's lifetime, or it just as easily could have been done soon after his death.

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9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Standing structures survey of lower St. Tammany Parish, Louisiana Division of Historic Preservation.

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:

- X State Historic Preservation Office
\_\_\_ Other State Agency
\_\_\_ Federal Agency
\_\_\_ Local Government
\_\_\_ University
\_\_\_ Other (Specify Repository):

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: approx. 3 acres

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing
15 217740 3356680

Verbal Boundary Description: See attached plat map.

Boundary Justification: As noted elsewhere, the small town of Lacombe has grown up around what was originally a large rural land holding. All that remains of the original acreage is the roughly three acre parcel shown on the attached property plat map.



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**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

Name/Title: National Register staff

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

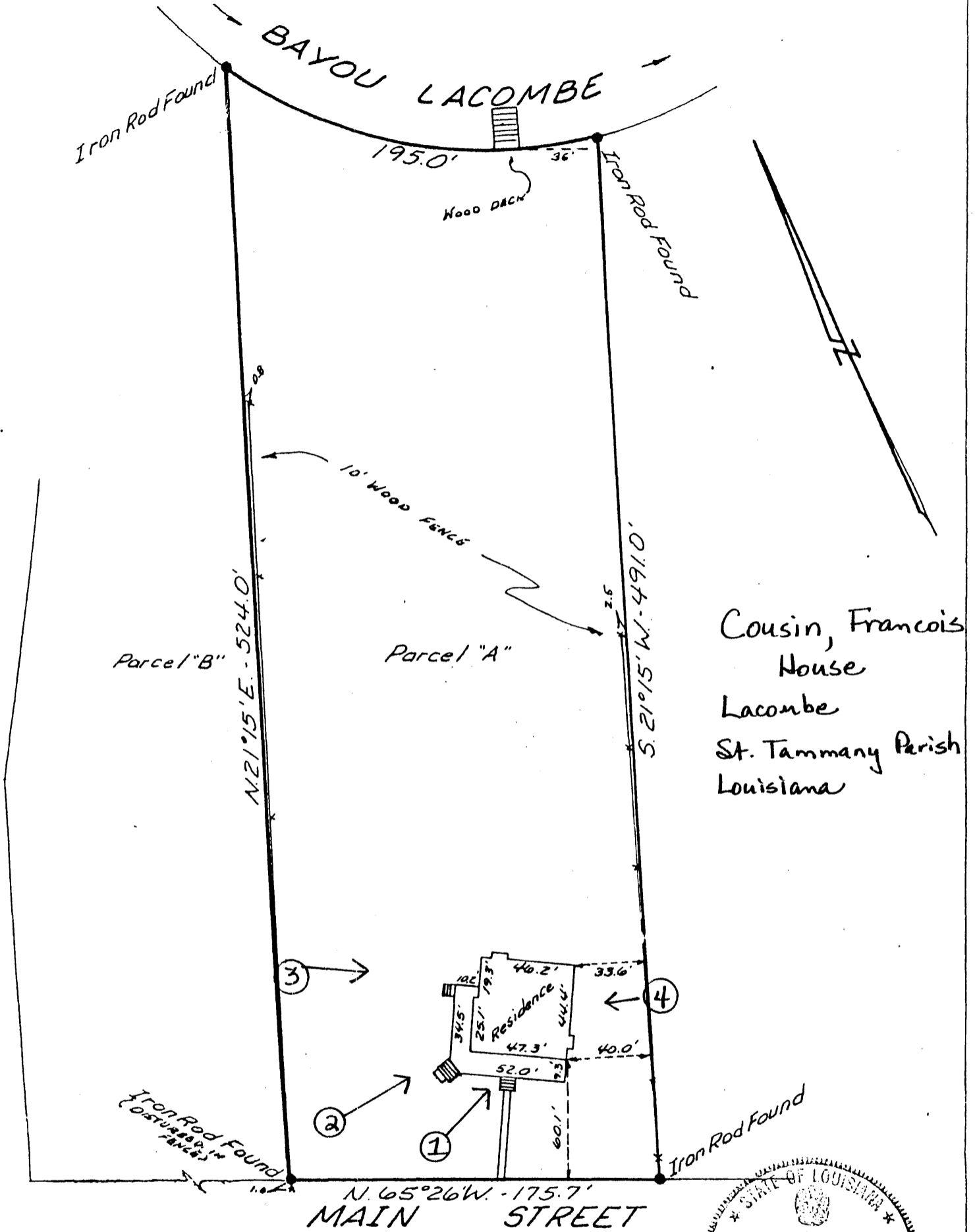
Telephone: (225) 342-8160

Date: June 2002

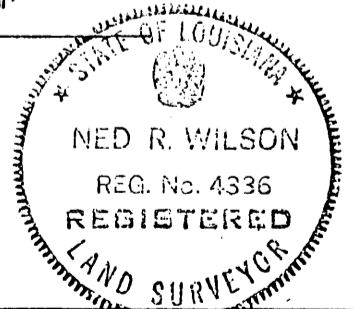
**PROPERTY OWNERS**

Robert L. Soniat  
51 Oriole St.  
New Orleans, LA 70124

LEGAL DESCRIPTION:  
 PARCEL "A", BLOCK 99, TOWN OF LACOMBE,  
 ST. TAMMANY PARISH, LOUISIANA.



CERTIFIED TO:  
**ROBERT SONIAT**



SURVEY:	DATE:	C.P.N.
BOUNDARY	10-14-91	DATE OF FIRM
FORM BOARDS		FIRM ZONE: "C" <i>CPA</i>
SLAB TIE-IN		BASE FLOOD EL
AS-BUILT		LOWEST FLOOR EL

THIS SURVEY IS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE DESCRIPTION FURNISHED BY THE CLIENT. THERE MAY BE ADDITIONAL RESTRICTIONS NOT SHOWN ON THIS PLAT THAT MAY EXIST IN THE PUBLIC RECORDS. THERE ARE NO VISIBLE ENCROACHMENTS EXISTING OTHER THAN THOSE SHOWN HEREON. ELEVATIONS REFER TO NGVD (1929), IF NOT OTHERWISE NOTED.

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THE SURVEY DEPICTED HEREON, WAS MADE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE APPLICABLE STANDARDS OF PRACTICE CITED IN LAC 46: LXI BASED ON THE CURRENT SURVEY. SIGNATURE MUST BE IN RED FOR THIS PLAT TO BE CERTIFIED CORRECT.

*Ned R. Wilson*

**NED R. WILSON, PLS**  
 LOUISIANA REGISTRATION No. 4336  
 67159 INDUSTRY LANE SUITE D  
 COVINGTON, LOUISIANA, 70433 (504) 892-3811

SCALE: 1 In = 60 Ft JOB No: 960