

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

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

OMB No. 1024-0018

Chauvin House, St. James Parish, LA

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

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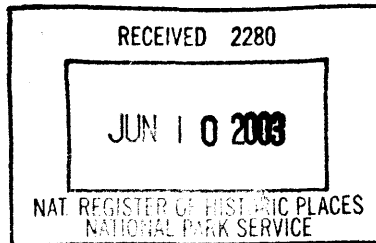
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National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: Chauvin House

Other Name/Site Number:



2. LOCATION

Street & Number 10138 LA HWY 44

Not for publication: NA

City/Town Convent

Vicinity: X

State: Louisiana

Code: LA

County: St. James Code: 093

Zip Code: 70723

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

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

June 6, 2003

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
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 (7/25/03)

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: Louisiana's French Creole Architecture

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6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic: domestic Sub: single dwelling
Current: vacant Sub:

7. DESCRIPTION

Architectural Classification: other: French Creole
Materials:

Foundation: brick
Walls: weatherboard
Roof: tin
Other:

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Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

The circa 1830 Chauvin House is exemplary of Louisiana's French Creole building tradition. As explained below, it grew at the rear and received some modifications circa 1870 – none of which detract from its resolutely French Creole character. The one story galleried cottage is located on a small parcel of land facing the Mississippi River levee in upper St. James Parish. Immediately adjacent is a convenience store and a modern church. Little (other than deterioration) has happened to the house since the c.1870 work. A descendant of the original occupants will soon be restoring the house.

The original portion of the Chauvin House has a hand-hewn mortise and tenon frame with *brique entre poteaux* (brick between post) infill. The roof is gable end with a gallery spanning the façade. As built circa 1830, the house had two rooms of unequal size at the front and a rear range of unknown configuration. The original rear range was incorporated into new construction circa 1870. Please refer to attached floor plan. The five rooms in the enlarged rear range continue the Creole tradition of rooms communicating one with another without benefit of halls. At the very rear is a *cabinet* and loggia configuration which connects with a two room building that was presumably a kitchen. The kitchen, with its own gable end roof, is attached in the manner of an ell. (Either the house as it grew met the kitchen or the kitchen was moved up.) Although it is impossible to date the very utilitarian kitchen building, it is constructed of square nails throughout, indicating a date from before roughly 1880.

The circa 1870 construction extends beyond the sides of the old house – i.e., is wider than the original house. The front part of the expansion registers on the exterior as a small hip roof pavilion on each side. A continuous shed roof covers the “new” rear *cabinet*-loggia range. Pilasters with molded capitals define the pavilions at the corners. Brackets (in the Italianate manner) ornament the entablatures, appearing singly and in groups. Identical paired brackets were placed on the front gallery of the original house. And it appears from the architectural evidence that the present paneled columns with molded capitals date from the circa 1870 work as well. Their molding profiles look later than that found elsewhere in the house and they are of boxed construction and nailed in place, rather than the earlier type of column of solid wood mortised into a plate. Pilasters defining each corner of the house match the columns; so they too appear to be from the circa 1870 work. The façade is sheathed in drop (or beveled) siding, which cannot be original. (This type of siding appears in New Orleans beginning in the 1850s.) As built, the façade must have been plastered, a treatment seen on the original rear wall. The frames for the openings on the façade are delicate in character and give every indication of being original.

In true French Creole fashion, there is no regard for symmetry. The front two unequally sized rooms determine the asymmetrical pattern of openings on the façade and the off-center placement of the chimney. The larger *salle* has two French door openings, the smaller *chambre* only one. Each French door leaf has 10 panes. The gallery ceiling has the typical French Creole treatment of exposed ceiling beams.

Exposed ceiling beams and random width hand-planed boards (both beams and boards beaded) are found in the front two rooms and the original portion of the second range of rooms. (One can easily see in the ceiling where the circa 1870 construction begins in the old rear range. The new construction attempts to convey the look of exposed ceiling beams but the wood is not hand planed or beaded.) The off-center interior chimney (a French Creole signature) is ornamented with almost identical mantels that wrap around the flue in the French manner. Slightly splayed pilasters support a medium-weight entablature with a generous cove molding rising to the mantel shelf. The sides are paneled in the manner of a piece of furniture.

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Fairly simple *faux bois* is found throughout the front two rooms. According to Chauvin family history, the house featured *faux bois* originally, but the present work was done by a family member in the early twentieth century. Three doors in the circa 1830 house are most unusual, although original. They feature three molded horizontal panels with three molded vertical panels below. Door and window frames are of plain boards in the *chambre* and feature delicate molding in the *salle*. Walls in the front two rooms are finished in plaster. Those in the circa 1870 reworking and expansion are sheathed in medium gauge boards.

There are various early-looking doors formed of boards with horizontal battens – some in the circa 1870 construction. Windows range from 12 over 8 to 6 over 6. Some windows from the circa 1830 house (at the rear) were evidently reused in the circa 1870 construction. Many windows have shutters formed of boards. The paneled shutters for the façade's French doors are in storage on the property.

Assessment of Integrity

There are no serious integrity issues for the Chauvin House. It retains all of its character-defining French Creole features. The circa 1870 construction even follows the French Creole floorplan tradition.

Contributing element

Fairly close to the rear of the house is a good-size wood frame shed of unknown original use. Nails throughout are of the square head type, indicating a date from before roughly 1880. The main body of the shed is sheathed in weatherboard. On each side is a shed roof extension. One extension is open while the other is sheathed in vertical boards.

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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.1830, c.1870

Significant Dates: same

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 Chauvin House is of local architectural significance as one of a limited number of French Creole residences remaining in St. James Parish, which once had many more examples. It is particularly important among the survivors for its *briquelette entre poteaux* construction and particularly for its two French wraparound mantels.

The 1858 Persac Map of the Mississippi River shows some 111 St. James Parish plantations identified by the names of their owners. In addition, the map depicts a large number of unnamed agricultural tracts. Because French Creoles were the dominant group to settle and develop the area before the Civil War, it is reasonable to assume that many of the houses on these plantations would have been in the Creole style. Thus, one can legitimately estimate that St. James Parish had a minimum of perhaps 150 Creole style houses in 1858. Today, survey records show that only 31 remain. Eighteen of these (often Creole in form only) date from after 1870, leaving only 13 to represent the parish's earlier Creole architecture. With its c.1830 construction date, the Chauvin House represents the French Creole building tradition in its pure form – before it was influenced by Anglo symmetry. The house's many Creole character-defining features include the lack of symmetry, the hall-less floorplan, the interior chimney, *briquelette entre poteaux* construction, exposed ceiling beams, and the two handsome wraparound mantels. It is one of only 9 Creole dwellings remaining in St. James with *columbage* construction (a braced frame with *bousillage* or *briquelette entre poteaux* infill). The mantels particularly set the house apart from others. There are only three other French wraparound mantels known to survive in the parish. (The "best" of St. James' Creole houses are on the Register, and the staff of the LA SHPO is familiar with their interiors.)

Historical Note:

The following is based upon the oral tradition within the Chauvin family and some primary sources: The land upon which the house is located was owned by Jacques LeBlanc until his death in 1830, when it was bequeathed to his two children, Caroline LeBlanc and Paul Destival LeBlanc. Caroline LeBlanc had married Jacques Martin Chauvin on January 5, 1829. Jacques Chauvin purchased Paul LeBlanc's portion on December 24, 1833. According to Chauvin family history, Jacques' brother, Louis Chauvin I, bought the property around 1836. Louis Chauvin II, his son, was born in the house in 1837 and lived there until his death in 1900. It is family tradition that Louis Chauvin II, a self-educated architect, made the additions at the rear after he purchased the house from his mother in 1870. Because the stylistic details could quite easily be c.1870, this date is being used for this submission. (The details, however, could just as easily be late 1850s.)

Upon Louis Chauvin II's death, the house was left to his two daughters and two sons. In 1906, Frank Chauvin bought the property from his brother and sisters. Frank Chauvin is remembered in family history as a master craftsman/builder whose skills were used in the mid-twentieth century restoration of River Road plantation houses such as Bagatelle, Houmas House, and Bocage. His son, Francis Louis Chauvin, was the last person to live in the candidate. He died in 1985. Mr. and Mrs. Henry L. Chauvin owned the unoccupied house until very recently. Within the last month or so they transferred ownership to their son, Spencer Chauvin, who is in the beginning stages of restoration planning.

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9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

St. James Parish Survey files, Louisiana Division of Historic Preservation.

Typescript of Chauvin family history. Copy in National Register file.

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: approx. 1 acre

UTM References:	Zone	Easting	Northing
	15	701860	3330140

Verbal Boundary Description: Please refer to attached sketch map.

Boundary Justification: Boundaries follow current property lines. (The historic acreage has been subdivided over the years.)

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11. FORM PREPARED BY

Name/Title: National Register staff

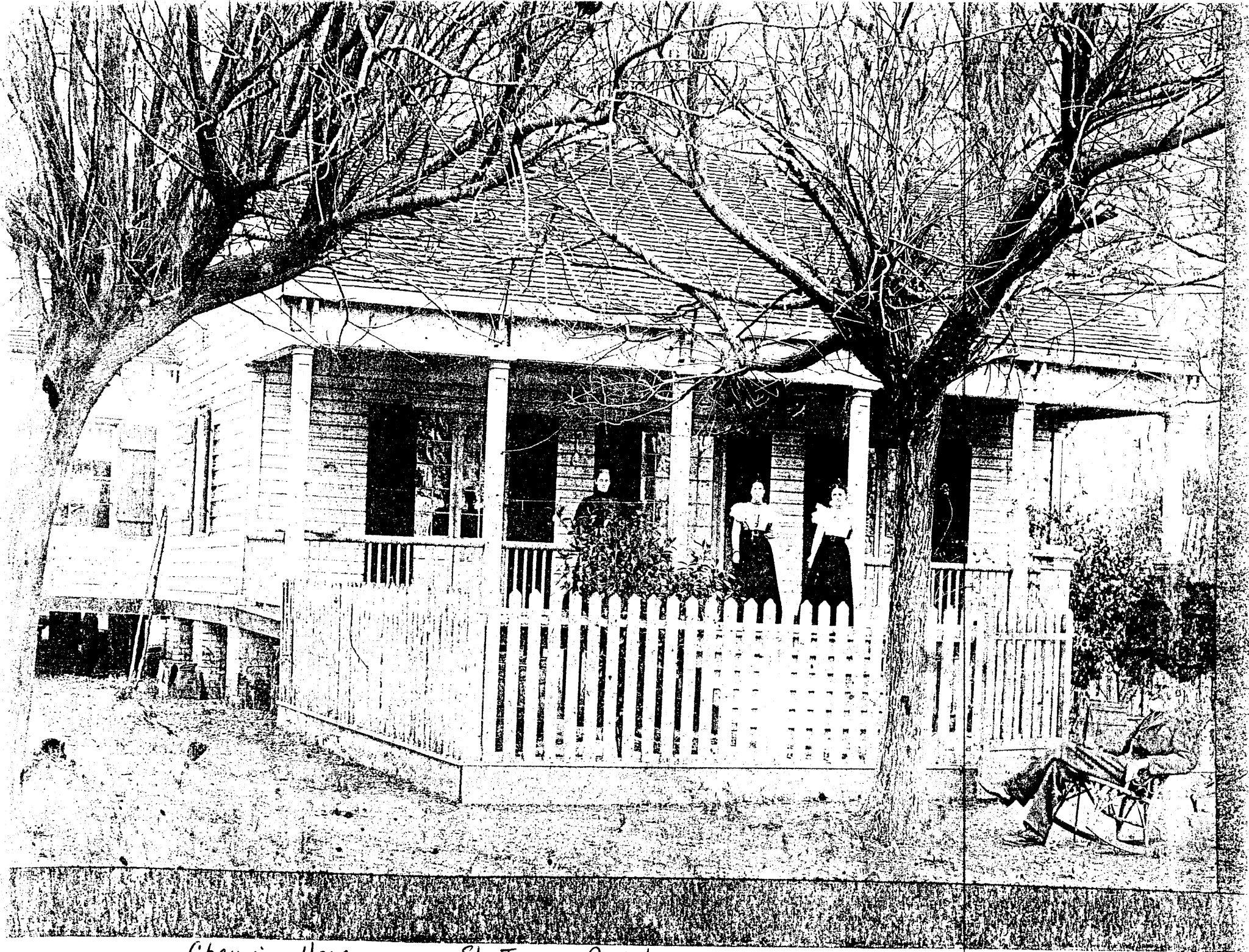
Address: Division of Historic Preservation, P. O. Box 44247, Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70804

Telephone: (225) 342-8160

Date: April 2003

PROPERTY OWNERS

Spencer Chauvin
9429 Highway 941
Gonzales, LA 70737



Chauvin House

St. James Parish, LA

CHAUVIN'S RESIDENCE
10138 Highway 44
Convent, Louisiana 70723

Project No. 9805

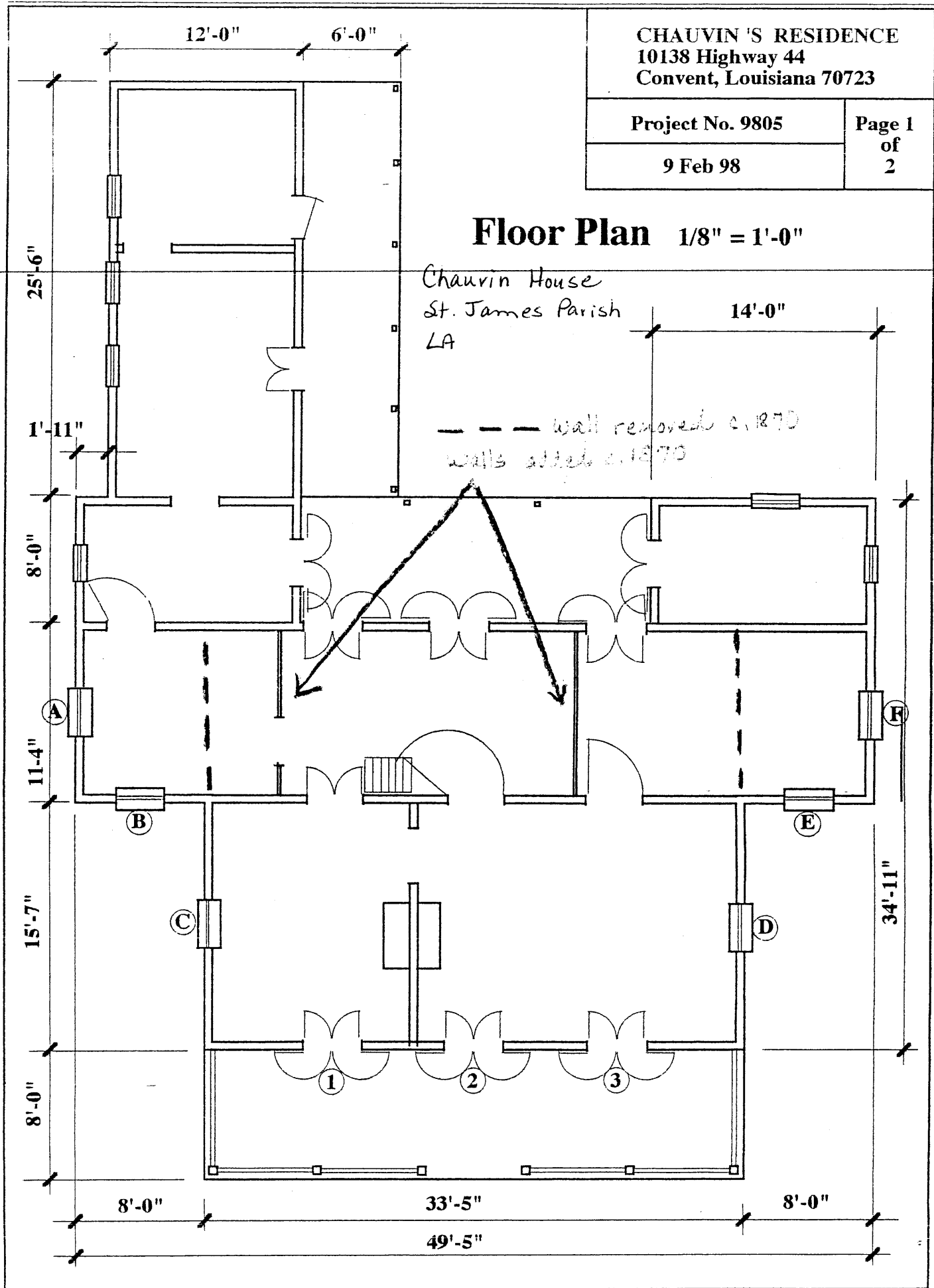
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Floor Plan 1/8" = 1'-0"

*Chauvin House
St. James Parish
LA*

*--- wall removed c. 1870
walls added c. 1870*

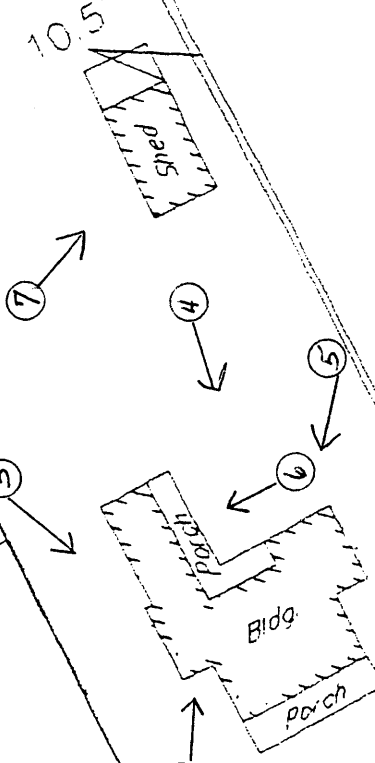


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445.00
S64°06'03"E



Chauvin House
St. James Parish, LA

Photo Map
Only

(boundary map
enclosed also)

96.31'
N 16°30'21" W
1.2'
11.R. Set
N27°57'35" W
94.95'

