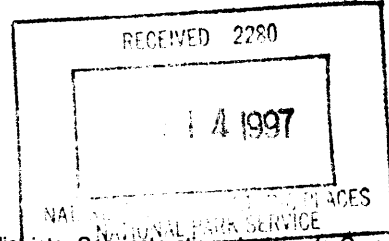


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



1128

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 Promised Land

other names/site number Perez, Leander House

2. Location

street & number 5907 Highway 39 N/A not for publication

city or town Braithwaite vicinity

state Louisiana code LA county Plaquemines code 075 zip code 70040

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.)
 Geryi Hobdy August 11, 1997
Signature of certifying official/Title Geryi Hobdy, LA Date
 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 commenting 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:) _____

 Edson H. Beall Signature of the Keeper
 9/11/97 Date of Action

Promised Land
Name of Property

Plaquemines 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.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

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)

Italianate

Craftsman / Bungalow

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete

walls weatherboard

roof tile

other

Narrative Description

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

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Promised Land, Plaquemines Parish, LA

Section number 7 Page 1

Promised Land is a two-and-a-half story wood frame residence located on the Mississippi River in rural Plaquemines Parish. The architectural evidence strongly indicates that it is a c.1900 late Italianate house which was remodeled in the Craftsman/Bungalow style in the 1920s. Since that time the house has been largely unaltered, with the principal exception being the enclosure of a portion of the basement story.

The house features a squarish main block and rear ell kitchen wing. The principal floor is raised a full story above grade on a high basement. The house is almost completely surrounded by a generous gallery which is accessible from the interior by numerous sets of French doors. The main block's floor plan consists of two rooms across the front, one of which is much larger than the other, and a rear range containing two rooms with a hallway between.

The Original House (c.1900)

Many features survive to show the original late Italianate style of the house. These include the square gallery posts on the principal story, which are partially fluted and have pronounced molded capitals; the facade's decorative drop siding resembling rusticated boards; and two doors with machine carving and segmentally arched openings. Most of the interior openings feature surrounds with circles inscribed in the corner blocks. The house's rear hall features a staircase with Eastlake spindles and a quarter turn wind. In all likelihood, Promised Land originally had a central hall leading from the wide entrance door to the previously mentioned rear hall where the staircase is located. If this existed, it was evidently removed during the 1920s renovation to create the current large front parlor.

1920s Renovation

Leander Perez (the source of the property's significance) acquired the portion of Promised Land Plantation where the house is located in January 1925, and it seems reasonable to attribute the Craftsman/Bungalow alterations to him. As previously mentioned, in all likelihood the present large front parlor was created at this time by removing the front portion of the central hall. This room features a polished wood openwork beam ceiling in the Craftsman style. In addition, an enormous front-facing dormer, containing a sleeping porch, was added to the roofline. Also, the current red tile roof dates from this period. Finally, Bungalow style glazed double doors were installed in the main entrance.

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**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Promised Land, Plaquemines Parish, LA

Section number 7 Page 2

One also suspects that the basement story dates from the 1920s renovation, but exactly how it came to be is a mystery. The frame house rests on a set of piers made of concrete blocks cast to resemble rockfaced stone. This, of course, was a common feature in bungalows in the 1920s and '30s, but it is unclear how a c.1900 house came to rest on a later basement. The house may have been moved back from the river, a common occurrence in Louisiana, or it may have been raised after the 1927 flood, but the architectural evidence does not point to any clear scenario. The current concrete front steps also date from this period. Evidently, the north portion of the basement was always enclosed. This room features a heavy brick vaguely Craftsman mantel.

Modern Alterations

As previously mentioned, the once open southern portion of the basement has been enclosed using aluminum windows and aluminum siding on frames. This work was evidently done by Perez in the 1950s. (He lived there into the 1960s.)

The house had been vacant for several years before being purchased by the present owners in 1996. By that time, a 1920s-looking mantel in the large front parlor had been stolen. It has been replaced by a French Rococo style mantel. Other changes associated with the recent rehabilitation of the house include the widening of the doorway between the parlor and the front bedroom, the installation of a decorative pressed metal ceiling in the kitchen, the addition of a decorative ceiling medallion in two rooms, the addition of a cornice in one room, the rehangng of the doors using simple contemporary hardware and the enlargement of the bathroom upstairs.

Assessment of Integrity

The modern alterations should be considered minor. There is no doubt that the house substantially retains its appearance during the historic period when it was the home of Leander Perez. Inasmuch as Promised Land is being nominated for its association with him, it easily retains its National Register eligibility.

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.
XX 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 N/A
(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)

politics/government

Period of Significance

1925-1947

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Perez, Leander

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:

- X State Historic Preservation Office
Other State agency
Federal agency
Local government
University
Other

Name of repository:

Promised Land
Name of Property

Plaquemines Parish, LA
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property 3.7 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1 5	7 8 9 6 0 0	3 2 9 9 7 0 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 May 1996

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

city or town Baton Rouge state LA 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 Curt & Robin Pannagl

street & number 5907 Hwy. 39 telephone (h) 504-682-2856

city or town Braithwaite state LA zip code 70040

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.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Promised Land, Plaquemines Parish, LA

Section number 8 Page 1

Promised Land is locally significant in the area of politics/government as the home of the legendary political boss of Plaquemines Parish, Leander Perez. In addition to being in complete control of his home parish, Perez exercised considerable influence in neighboring St. Bernard. Promised Land was Perez's principal residence from his purchase of the property in January 1925 until the early 1960s.

Perez is typical of American political bosses in that the position he held belied his influence. He was in fact the district attorney for the judicial district comprised of Plaquemines and St. Bernard. He held this position from 1924 to 1960. Admittedly, a parish district attorney is by definition influential, serving as the legal counsel for all manner of entities (police jury, levee board, school board, etc.) and deciding whom to prosecute and, more importantly, whom not to prosecute. However, Perez's power was virtually absolute in Plaquemines for decades. Everything was controlled by him and everyone answered to him. In short, it was his parish. One commentator referred to his regime as "the only unconstitutional monarchy in the United States" while another referred to Plaquemines as an "autonomous principality." Although Perez had considerable influence in the state legislature and often the governor's office, and later in his career gained national notoriety, he was content to exercise absolute control over a small area. He never sought office outside his bailiwick. Perhaps it was a case of liking to be a big fish in a small sea.

Born at Star Plantation in Plaquemines Parish on July 16, 1891, Perez was educated at Louisiana State University and the Tulane University Law School. In 1914 he began the practice of law in Plaquemines and New Orleans and in 1917 married Agnes Chalin. His political break came in 1919 when he was appointed judge of the Twenty-Fifth Judicial District to fill an unexpired term. In 1920 he won a four-year term by defeating the local machine. It was this five year stint which gave him the name by which he was forever known, the Judge. Perez began his thirty-six years as district attorney for Plaquemines and St. Bernard in 1924 and purchased Promised Land in January 1925. It is interesting to note that a man who would soon become a multi-millionaire (on a district attorney's salary) had to borrow money from his mother-in-law to help purchase his home.

By the mid-1920s, as Perez was settling into Promised Land, he had already become "the undisputed political boss" of Plaquemines, according to his biographer, Glen Jeansonne. He also allied himself with the Meraux brothers, who controlled St. Bernard. By the 1930s his domination of Plaquemines, notes Jeansonne, met only token resistance. He explains the Judge's control of the police jury (parish governing body): "It was said that, before official police jury

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**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**Promised Land, Plaquemines Parish, LA
Section number 8 Page 2

meetings, the jurors would meet informally with the Judge, who would tell them what he wanted done; they then would convene formally and rubber stamp the resolutions dictated by Perez. 'There's hardly ever a dissenting vote,' Leander explained. 'We work together 100 percent.' Similar control was exercised over other entities -- for example, the various levee boards in the two parishes. At one time, Perez's office phone number was listed in the phone book as the number for a levee board, to such an extent was his private and public life intertwined.

While ever extending his power, Perez was also able to become a multi-millionaire on a district attorney's salary that never exceeded \$7,000 a year. Various investigations launched at the time made it clear that the sources of this largesse were dubious at best. Plaquemines emerged in the 1930s as one of Louisiana's richest parishes due to its extensive mineral resources (oil and sulphur). There was a furious scramble for land leases, with Perez connected companies getting the best deals. In a very complicated series of maneuvers, Perez was able to control the leases given by the levee boards and benefit financially from them. Not only did he have an interest in some of the companies, but he was paid handsome legal fees for his services in negotiating with the levee boards. Amazingly, he was many times the attorney for both the levee board and a given company trying to obtain a lease. And any industry wishing to do business in the parish made sure they kowtowed to the Judge. Freeport Sulphur Company, wrote one journalist, "treated him with the deference any foreign minister gives to the ruler of the nation in which it is investing."

In addition to being charged with a questionable path to wealth, the Judge was occasionally criticized for his use of public employees on private matters (a not uncommon practice in scandal ridden 1930s Louisiana). Promised Land figured in at least one story. Salvador Chiappetta, a highway maintenance foreman from the lower part of the parish, once complained to co-workers and friends that Perez had used state highway commission labor to build a private road and a pond at Promised Land. It obviously didn't pay to complain about the Judge; Chiappetta was fired.

Perez was able to consolidate and maintain his power in various ways. It was not long, for example, before everyone on the police jury owed their election to him. "Perez's brand of bossism," writes his biographer, "was a blend of threats and benefits." On the benefits side was a paternalistic public works program, made possible by mineral revenues, and for which Perez, the "Father of Plaquemines," received credit. On the threats side was his absolute ruthlessness. For example, he held undated resignations for all appointed positions in the parish, and he controlled the hiring and the firing for the parish. According to Jeansonne, Perez "would stop at nothing to

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**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**Promised Land, Plaquemines Parish, LA
Section number 8 Page 3

achieve an end.” He would “totally annihilate” a foe, not just simply defeat him. Much of this was accomplished through Perez’s control of the election machinery in the parish, with blatant vote fraud reaching epidemic proportions.

Although Perez never held office outside Plaquemines, he exercised considerable influence for his parish in the legislature and often in the governor’s office. He was quite the fixture at the legislature, never missing a session during his public career. Journalist James Conaway writes: “Perez was indeed ‘the third house of the Louisiana legislature,’ and it was unthinkable to open a legislative session without the Judge being present. He would swagger around the floor and lounge in legislators’ chairs, while instructing them. He didn’t hesitate to address the Speaker, though he was never an actual member of either house.” Perez also could often count on an ally in the governor’s office, beginning with Huey Long, whom he helped in the famous impeachment attempt of 1929.

One governor on whom Perez could not count was reformer Sam Jones (1940-44), who was a mortal enemy. Jones’ clashes with the Judge culminated in a truly amazing affair which gave Plaquemines national notoriety -- the famous invasion of the parish in 1943 by state troops to enforce the administration’s appointment of an anti-Perez parish sheriff to fill an unexpired term. Promised Land played a role in this “little war.” On October 9, 1943, Governor Jones declared martial law in Plaquemines Parish and ordered a convoy of some thirty trucks full of armed members of the State Guard into the parish. “The convoy, led by two armored cars mounted with .50 caliber machine guns, snaked south toward the Plaquemines line,” writes journalist James Conaway. In an attempt to prevent the State Guard from advancing into Plaquemines, Perez had the road in front of Promised Land (the east bank artery into the parish) blocked. “All traffic,” writes Conaway, “was forced to drive through Perez’s back yard, where guards were posted.” As the convoy approached Promised Land, it halted upon sight of “the barricade bristling with gun barrels.” A shot was fired (source unknown), the parish’s defenders discharged some of their weapons into the air and fled south toward the parish seat. To summarize, the entire episode ended in the spring of 1944 when Jones revoked his order of martial law in Plaquemines. Perez eventually triumphed because his ticket won in the May elections (including the sheriff). Jeansonne observes that during the above mentioned showdown with the State Guard, the “old house” at Promised Land “with a dozen armed guards . . . took on the aspect of a besieged fortress while Mrs. Perez unconcernedly served roast chicken inside.”

Later in his career (after the current 50 year cutoff), Perez’s name became synonymous with extreme segregationist views. He became prominent on the local, state, and national levels

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**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Promised Land, Plaquemines Parish, LA

Section number 8 Page 4

in this conservative movement. Perez retired as district attorney in 1960, with his elder son Leander succeeding him. The Judge served as president of the parish commission council from 1961 to 1967, being succeeded by his younger son, Chalin. Perez died in Plaquemines Parish on March 19, 1969. He and his wife are buried at Idlewild, a ranch on the west bank of the parish where they had lived since the early '60s. The current owners of Promised Land purchased it recently from Perez's daughter. As the home of Leander Perez for over three decades of his political career, it is a strong candidate for Register listing.

Other Historic Properties Associated With Leander Perez:

As noted above, Promised Land was Perez's principal residence from the time he purchased it in 1925 until the early 1960s. Idlewild was his Plaquemines Parish home from the early 1960s until his death in 1969. Perez also maintained a residence in New Orleans for most if not all of his adult life. Various addresses are listed over the years in the New Orleans city directories, with the longest tenure being at 7 Newcomb Boulevard, which first appears as his address in 1947. While this home survives as probably do most of his New Orleans homes over the years, it should be emphasized that these were secondary residences, where in most cases he resided only one to four years. Obviously, to exercise the control he did, Perez spent most of his time in Plaquemines. As the long-time home of the parish's legendary political boss, and a home that figured prominently in his career, Promised Land is the most appropriate resource to nominate.

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**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Promised Land, Plaquemines Parish, LA

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Jeansonne, Glen. *Leander Perez: Boss of the Delta*. Lafayette, Louisiana: Center for Louisiana Studies, University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1995, second edition.

Conaway, James. *Judge: The Life and Times of Leander Perez*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973.

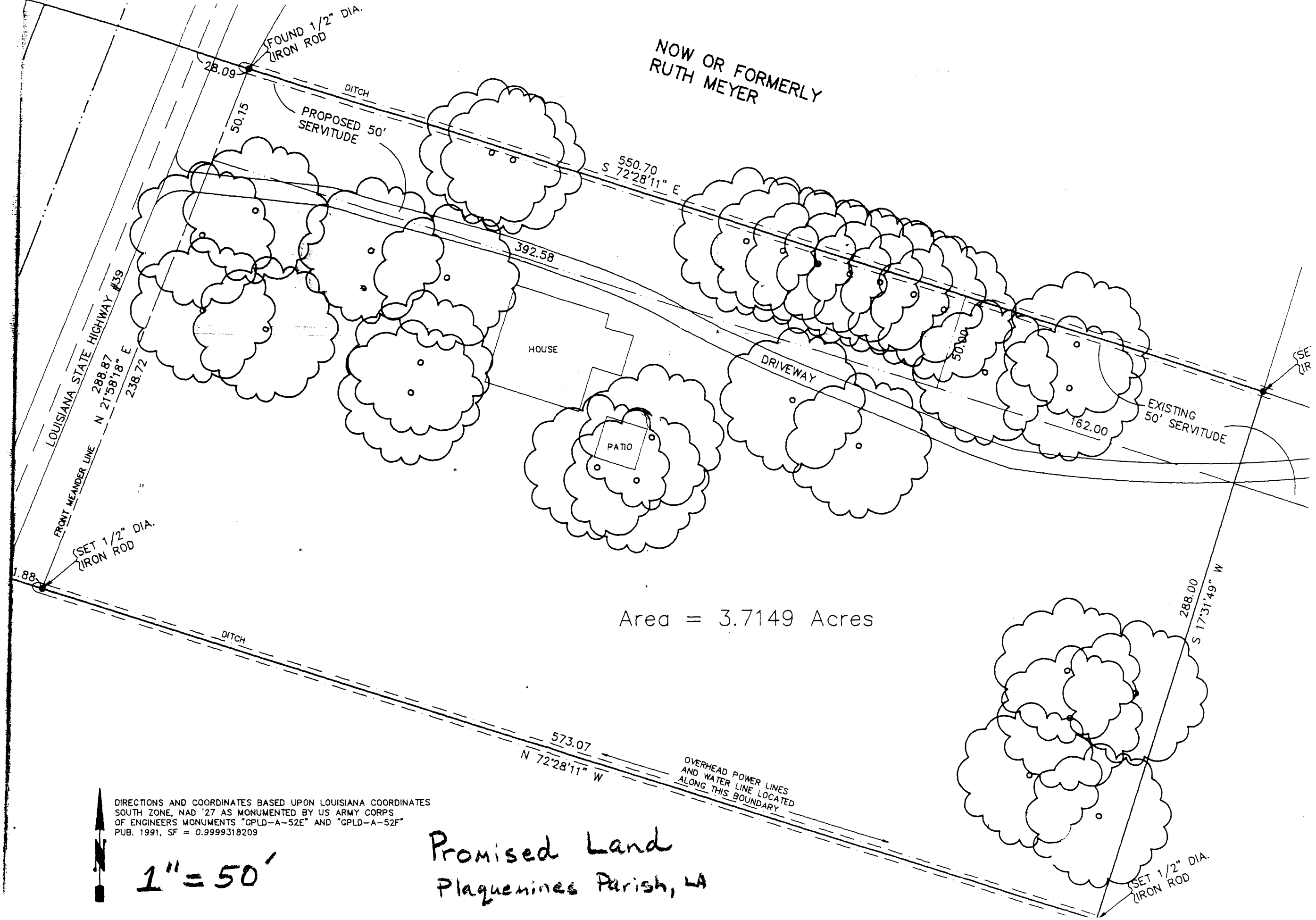
Conveyance Records, Plaquemines Parish.

New Orleans City Directories, various years.

Boundary Description: See attached property plat map.

Justification: Boundaries follow property lines of parcel of land upon which nominated resource is located.

NOW OR FORMERLY
RUTH MEYER



Area = 3.7149 Acres

DIRECTIONS AND COORDINATES BASED UPON LOUISIANA COORDINATES SOUTH ZONE, NAD '27 AS MONUMENTED BY US ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS MONUMENTS "GPLD-A-52E" AND "GPLD-A-52F" PUB. 1991, SF = 0.9999318209



1" = 50'

Promised Land
Plaquemines Parish, LA