

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Louisiana	
COUNTY: Parish Natchitoches	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
	AUG 14 1979

1. NAME

COMMON:  
Cherokee Plantation

AND/OR HISTORIC:  
Emile Sompayrac Place until 1890, Murphy Place after 1890

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER: ~~Approximately 8 miles southeast of Natchitoches, La., and approximately 1 mile north of Natchez, La. on a two lane black top county road known as the Cane River Road.~~  
Natchitoches

CITY OR TOWN: Natchitoches

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
Louisiana	22	Parish Natchitoches	069

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ _____ _____

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:  
Mrs. William C. Nolan

STREET AND NUMBER:  
900 North Madison

CITY OR TOWN:  
El Dorado

STATE:  
Arkansas

CODE:  
71730

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:  
Natchitoches Parish Courthouse

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:  
Natchitoches

STATE:  
Louisiana

CODE:

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:  
Partition of E. G. Murphy Estate

DATE OF SURVEY: July 14, 1961  Federal  State  County

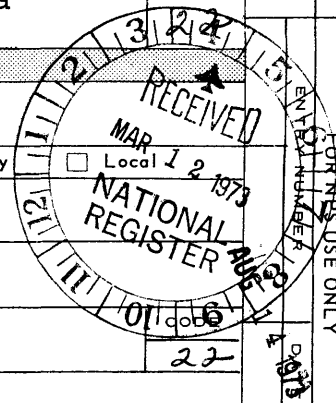
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:  
Natchitoches Parish Court House

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:  
Natchitoches

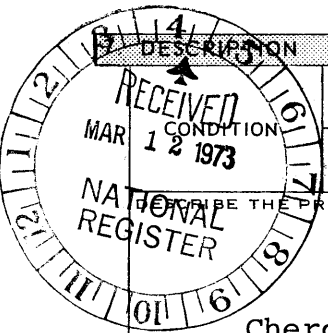
STATE:  
Louisiana

CODE:  
22



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE:  
COUNTY:  
FOR NPS USE ONLY



DESCRIPTION	(Check One)					
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
CONDITION	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered		<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site	

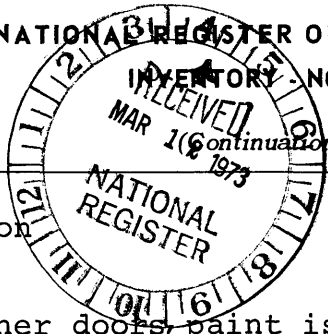
DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Cherokee, beautiful in its simplicity, is set well back from the river road and is surrounded by large live oaks and pecan trees. It is a soft white with dark green shutters. It is typical of the very early Louisiana plantation houses - a West Indies raised cottage structure more than six feet above ground level. Thirty six pillars of hand made brick support the building. The front wood steps were replaced by brick twenty years ago and the walks relaid this year with old brick. There are porches twelve feet wide on three sides of the house. Architects believe that the original house had galleries all around and the north side was enclosed very early to make two bedrooms, a pantry and kitchen. Therefore the original probably consisted of four rooms surrounded by galleries with an outside kitchen. Eighteen square columns of hand hewn cypress, simply carved, extend from porch level to the eaves. It has a hipped roof with no dormers. The roof was replaced this year with cedar shingles. The entire skeletal structure, massive sills, floor beams, ceiling beams and studding are hand hewn cypress of gigantic proportion. The wide floor boards of heart pine and the bousillage walls, river mud mixed with Spanish moss with a finish of mud and deer hair, are the same as ever. They have only been cleaned, stripped of all paint and layers of paper and stabilized. The ceiling beams are exposed and the part between was and is painted in bright colors. Much Indigo blue was used, as Indigo was formerly grown on the place. In four of the rooms the bousillage walls are newly painted white with the beams faintly showing. The dining room walls are hung with a cotton Chaldean print in Indigo blue and white. There are three chimneys that serve the six original fireplaces still in use. Their simply carved cypress mantles are painted a flat black, which was the color of the bottom layer of paint found by carefully scraping.

The facade has two double entrances, one into the parlor and one into the family bedroom which is twenty-four feet long by twenty feet wide. The doors and window panes inside and out are of hand blown glass. A few on the back were found broken and were replaced by identical panes found stored underneath the house. The ceilings are thirteen feet high. The parlor and dining room are divided by beautiful folding doors which make a wall when closed. When the doors are folded back accordionwise, the two rooms become one, large enough for dancing and big gatherings. These doors as well as the others throughout the house are of faux-bois, hand painted to simulate grained wood. Only the family bedroom doors and one in a small bedroom needed restoration.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES



INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

RECEIVED  
MAR 16 1973  
(Continuation Sheet)

STATE Louisiana	
COUNTY Parish Natchitoches	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
	AUG 14 1973

(Number all entries)

Description  
Page 2.

On the other doors, paint is the original except for very minor "touching up". The folding doors were purchased in New Orleans and are said to have been imported from France. The other doors may have been painted by different craftsmen as the patterns and colors are extremely diverse. These interesting doors along with the large punkah over the dining table give the old house a touch of elegance. This punkah was made in the plantation blacksmith shop. Much of the black-iron hardware is the original and was also made on the plantation.

The restoration was simple. The appearance and ambiance are the same as when the house was built for it was not changed structurally. The middle north bedroom, originally part of the gallery, was made into a bathroom, fireplace and all, and the large pantry back of it into a bedroom. The back part of the south gallery was enclosed to make two bathrooms. The outside walls of this alteration are screened with jalousies set back of the original gallery columns. The back gallery was screened and a small area taken for a service entrance. The foundations of the old wine cellar underneath the pantry were found and it was rebuilt with handmade brick. The trap door which led to it can still be used if one wants to crawl under a tester bed to go down and fetch a bottle of wine. The original lock and stunning large brass key to the cellar door under the house were found and put back into use.

Much of the old furniture was still there including a huge pine kitchen safe and an armoire eleven feet high expertly built by slaves on Cane River. The most notable piece of furniture is a massive classic secretaire said to be one of three made in France in the eighteenth century. One, now in the Cabildo is said to be the one used in France for the signing of the Louisiana Purchase Agreement. The other, owned by a private New York gallery is on loan to a museum in New York State. This piece, along with much of the furniture, was bought from a French family on Cane River by R. C. Murphy when he bought the place in 1891.

South and west of the house are three very old barns, one a "log crib". These are being retained and will be repaired. Across the road on the river bank facing the big house is a slave cabin with the original fireplace. This has been restored for caretakers but the style and flavor have been preserved.

**8. SIGNIFICANCE**

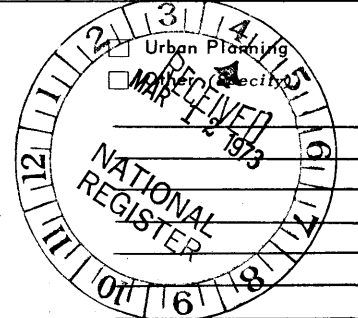
PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |                                       |  |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century            | <input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century  | <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century |                                       |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) see description below -between 1830 & 1840

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal              | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Education   | <input type="checkbox"/> Political           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric             | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering            | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic                | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry               | <input type="checkbox"/> Science             |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agriculture  | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention              | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture           |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature             | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce                | <input type="checkbox"/> Military               | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications          | <input type="checkbox"/> Music                  |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation            |   |  |



STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

All we know of these lands on the Côte Joyeuse before 1839 is that Philip Frederique was issued a Spanish patent for Section 76, Township 8 North, Range 7 West on May 16, 1795. About the same time, Jacques Faure was issued a patent for Section 78. We do not know exactly how Faure's part came to Emile Sompayrac but Frederique's heirs sold his land to Thomas Mejoyer in 1803. His daughter who inherited the property married Narcisse Prudhomme and their daughter, Clarisse, married Charles Emile Sompayrac in 1837. December 19, 1839 Emile bought the land, 1,339 arpents or 1,133.36 acres for \$45,015. In the deed, the improvements were valued at \$33,210, slaves were named and a cistern mentioned. Who actually had the house constructed is a matter of conjecture. The architects helping with the restoration thought the house was on the property in 1839 and Emile added to it for his wife. There is evidence that the north rooms were once part of the gallery. The place was then called the Emile Sompayrac Place. Later, the slaves called it Cherokee because of the great hedges of Cherokee roses growing there. That name has endured as have the roses.

The house and lands are fascinating in that they reflect the kind of lives lived by the earliest French planters on the Côte Joyeuse. The day after Emile signed the deed of purchase, he and his brother acted as seconds at the Gaiennie-Bossier duel which was fought on the Savannah at the rear of Cherokee. General Bossier, a Democrat, was from one of the first Creole families of Natchitoches. He was highly educated, an extensive cotton planter and a member of the State Senate when he was elected to Congress in 1842. General Gaiennie of Cloutierville was a Whig, and a heated political argument culminated in a challenge by Bossier to a duel. The first shot by Gaiennie missed. It was rumored that Gaiennie did not want to kill his friend. The second shot by Bossier killed his opponent. According to an 1890 history of Louisiana, eleven citizens lost their lives as a result of this tragic duel. General Bossier committed suicide in 1844 before finishing his first term in Congress. He was forty-seven.

**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Lyle Saxon - Old Louisiana. New York: The Century Co., 1929  
The Pelican Guide to Plantation Homes of Louisiana.  
 Gretna, La.: Pelican Publishing Co., 1971  
Bibliographical and Historical Memoirs of  
Northwest Louisiana. Nashville: The Southern Pub. Co., 1890  
 J. Fair Hardin - Northwestern Louisiana. Shreveport: Historical  
 Record Association, 1939  
 Joseph Menn -- The Large Slave Holders of 1860 of Louisiana. New Orleans:  
 Pelican Publishing Co., 1964

NW 15/495650  
 3506050  
 NE 15/497130/3506050  
 SW 15/497130/3505480  
 SW 15/495650/3505500

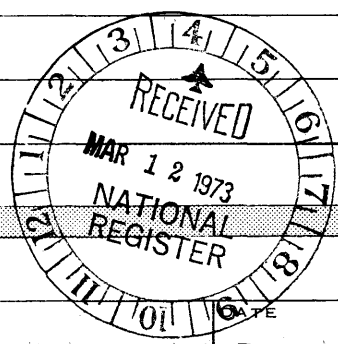
**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY.			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	31° 41' 29"	93° 02' 45"		° ' "	° ' "	
NE	31° 41' 29'	93° 01' 50"		° ' "	° ' "	
SE	31° 41' 10"	93° 01' 50"		° ' "	° ' "	
SW	31° 41' 10"	93° 02' 45"		° ' "	° ' "	

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: historic residence 5 acres, plantation 88 acres

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE



E I N S T R U C T I O N S

**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE:  
**Mrs. William C. Nolan**  
 ORGANIZATION:  
 STREET AND NUMBER:  
**900 North Madison**  
 CITY OR TOWN:  
**El Dorado**  
 STATE:  
**Arkansas**  
 DATE:  
**January 5, 1973**

**12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National  State  Local

Name: *Joseph B. ...*  
 Title: Director, Department of Art, Historical and Cultural Preservation  
 Date: March 9, 1973

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

*Robert W. Utley*  
 Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date: 8/14/73

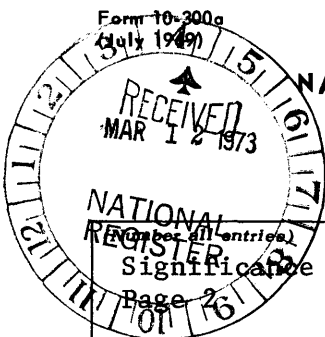
ATTEST:  
*Wm. M. ...*  
 Keeper of The National Register  
 Date: 7 30 73

(July 1949)

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	
COUNTY	
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Ambroise Sompayrac, Emile's father, came to Natchitoches from the Department of Tarn in France in 1803 and his four sons were sent back to France to school. Life at Cherokee reflected this mixture of cultures. Some 1851 newspapers found under old wall paper on the walls were sporting papers from Baltimore, "The Spirit of the Times". These were all about horse racing, cock-fighting and the like. It is likely that Emile enjoyed both of these sports, especially since his father with Ambroise Le Compte owned the race track at Natchitoches. The men played cards, especially whist, for large stakes. Hunting deer, turkey, and partridge were amusements as well as fox hunting parties. The Sompayracs entertained at big dinners each Sunday at noon. One of these ended in tragedy when Charles Fontenot, the husband of their daughter, was showing-off after dinner by hanging head first from the limb of a large fig tree in the back yard. The limb broke and also Mr. Fontenot's neck. He was killed on the spot. There is still a gigantic fig tree in the back yard and one wonders if it is the same. In Lyle Saxon's Old Louisiana he included part of Lestant Prudhomme's diary. Lestant writes of an early morning visit at Emile's place which he intended to make short, but being pressed to stay for dinner he did not leave until 4:00 P. M.

In spite of all these diversions, Emile found the time to oversee the running of a working plantation. Clarisse's grandfather was one of the first to grow cotton in Louisiana and it was the prevailing crop at Cherokee. Indigo was grown as well as cane, corn, and tobacco. Emile and his holdings and crop harvests are listed in detail in Joseph Menn's The Large Slave Holders of 1860 of Louisiana. At this time he owned sixty-five slaves.

Cherokee was not damaged during the Civil War. According to Francois Mignon, the French writer and long time resident of Melrose Plantation, Mrs. Sompayrac and her sister, the mistress of a neighboring plantation, painted spots on the faces of the Sompayrac's adopted daughter, the neighbor's children and even the slaves children. When the Union soldiers arrived, the women called "Prenez garde! prenez garde! la peste, la peste!" Apparently this ruse or some other was successful as both houses were spared.

After Emile died in 1878, Clarisse, from time to time, sold small portions of the plantation. In 1890 Robert Calvert Murphy, a Civil War veteran, looking for land to buy, brought his wife, Martha Gulley, and their eleven children from Union Parish, Louisiana to Cane River. In 1891 he bought 356 acres of Cherokee from Thomas Creighton, who had purchased it from W. H. Jack, Mrs. Sompayrac's lawyer. He was a good farmer and business man so Cherokee and the other plantation he later bought on Cane River prospered.

At Robert Murphy's death in 1936, Cherokee was left to his youngest son and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Emerson Murphy, who lived there with him. They farmed the land and after Emerson died Mrs. Murphy (nee Leola Albritton) was the overseer of the plantation. She lovingly cared for the house and grounds until her death in 1966. It is because of her appreciation of the

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

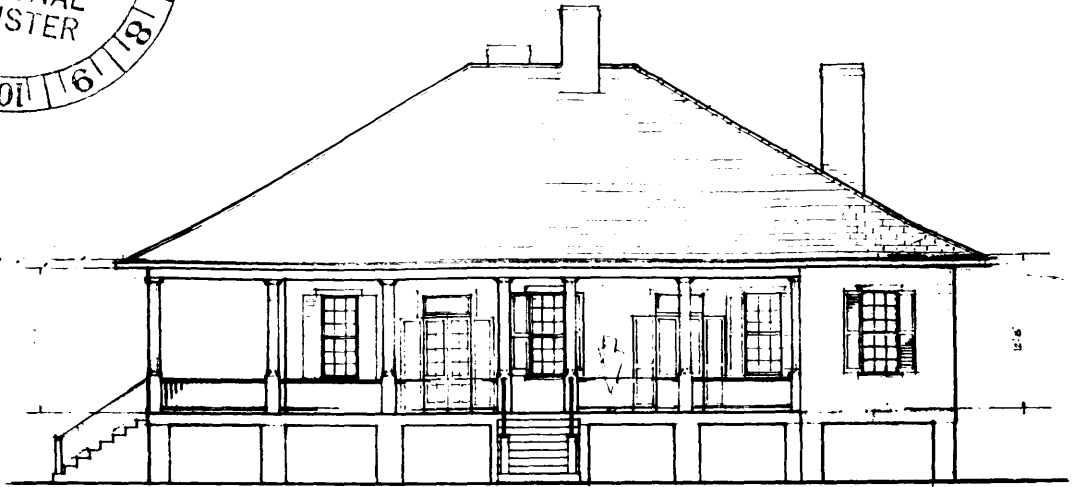
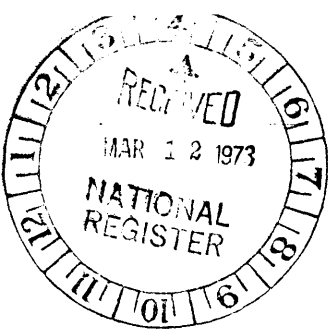
STATE	
COUNTY	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
	AUG 14 1973

(Number all entries)

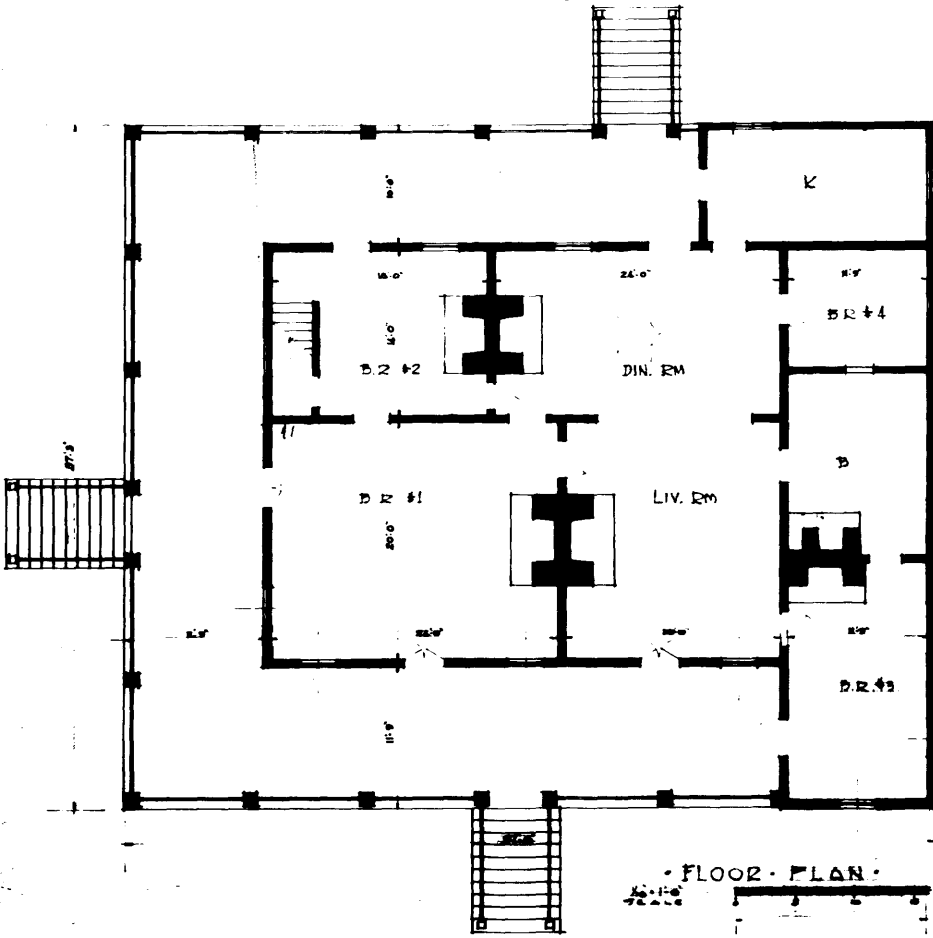
Significance  
Page 3

house and her realization of its historical and esthetic value that Cherokee is as it is today. She left the house and surrounding eighty-eight acres to her oldest daughter, Mrs. John D. Bell of Lafayette, Louisiana. After trying unsuccessfully to find someone to live in and care for the house properly, she reluctantly sold it to another granddaughter of Robert Murphy, Mrs. William Nolan of El Dorado, Arkansas. This took place in January, 1972 when work was immediately started to preserve the house and make it comfortable and livable with the least possible alteration.





FRONT ELEVATION



FLOOR PLAN



UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY

CORPS OF ENGINEERS

PROVENCAL QUADRANGLE  
LOUISIANA

15 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

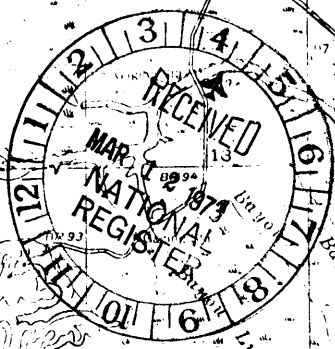
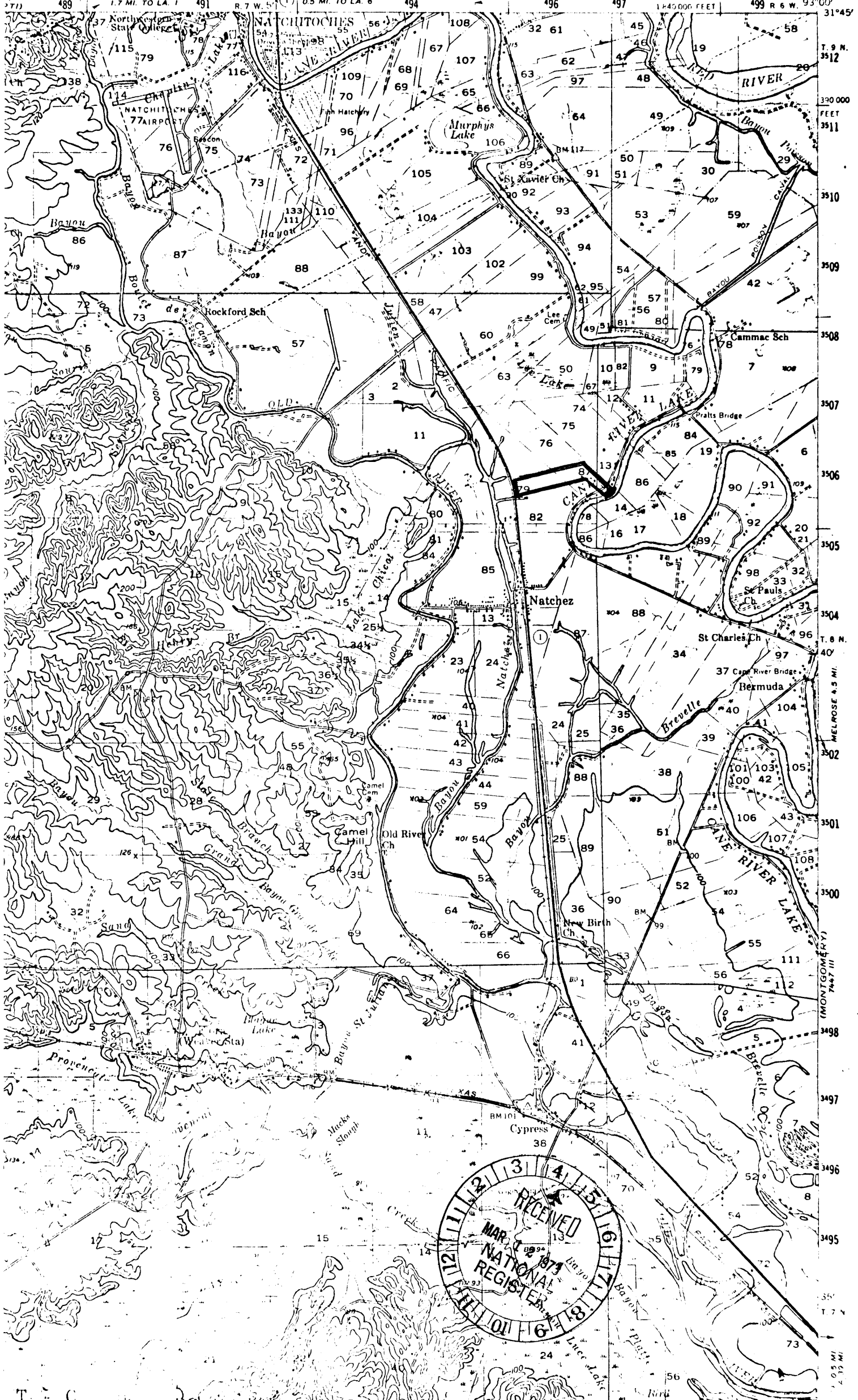
7447 W.  
(CALVIN)

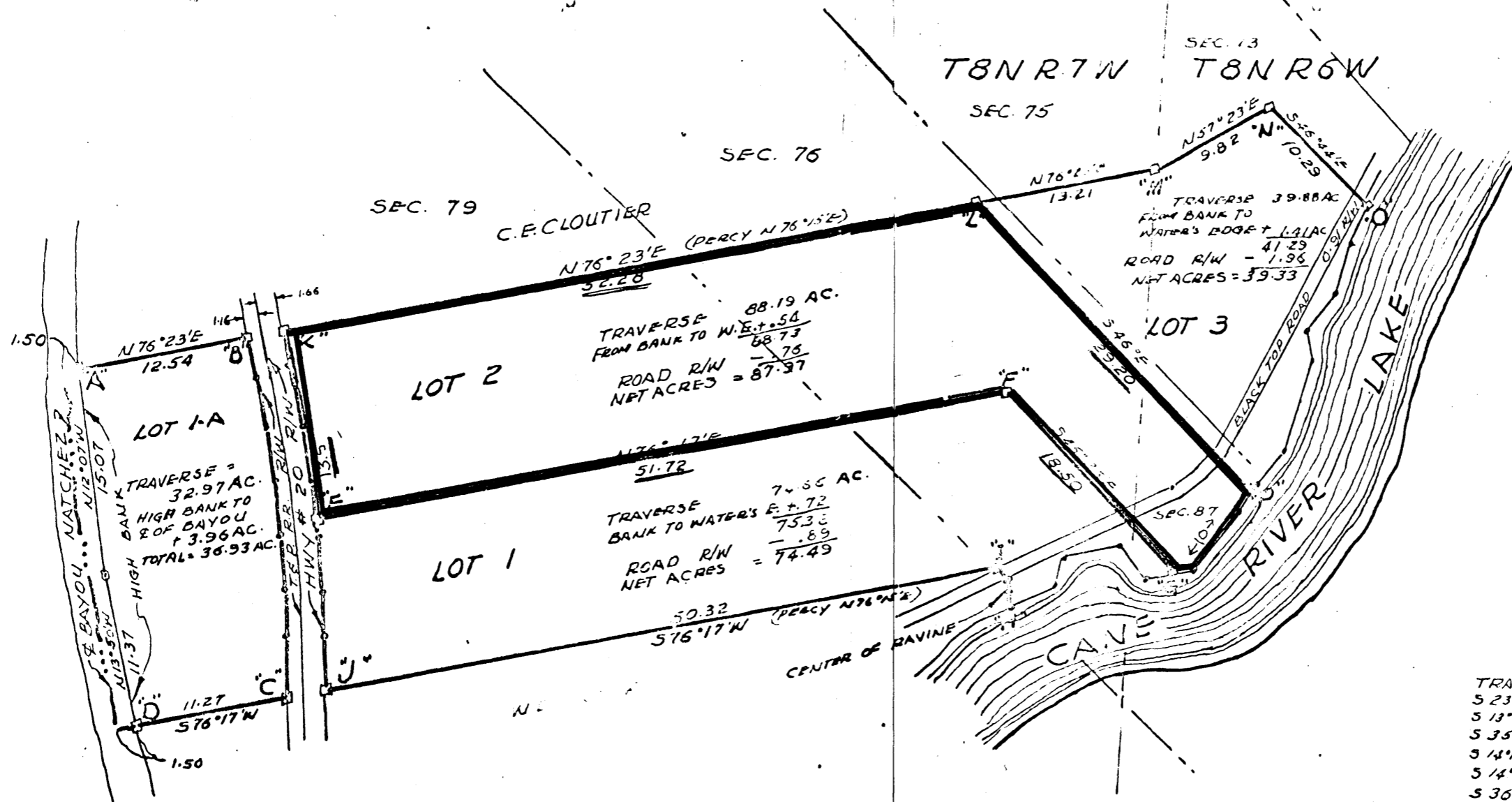
CLARENCE 9.7 MI. 1.7 MI. TO LA. 1  
ARMISTEAD 29 MI. 0.5 MI. TO LA. 6

2 MI. TO LA. 6

1:40,000 FEET

499 R 6 W. 93° 00'

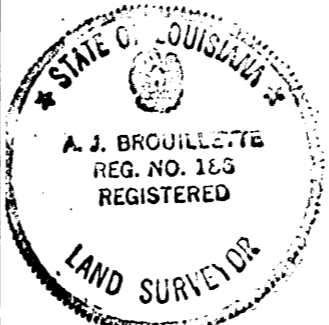




**SURVEY SHOWING  
PARTITION OF E.G. MURPHY ESTATE**

NATCHITOCHESS  
LOUISIANA  
SCALE: 1" = 10 CHAINS  
DATE: JULY 14, 1961  
REFERENCE MAP BY: HARRY PERCY, C.E. DATED: JAN. 1894  
D = 4" X 4" X 36" CONCRETE POST  
HWY #20 AND R.R. R/W = 7.42 ACRES

TRAVERSE "O" TO "P"	TRAVERSE "J" TO "E"
S 23°17'W 3.21	N 5°04'W 4.39
S 13°07'W 3.79	N 1°21'W 3.05
S 35°1'W 3.15	N 8°06'W 4.05
S 14°17'E 2.16	N 10°02'W 1.55 TO "E"
S 14°30'W 7.00	
S 36°19'W 3.40	TRAVERSE "E" TO "K"
S 28°02'W 0.90 TO "P"	N 10°02'W 2.51
	N 12°05'W 4.06
TRAVERSE "P" TO "G"	N 14°04'W 4.05
S 28°02'W 1.10	N 16°01'W 2.87 TO "K"
S 35°41'W 5.50	
S 76°41'W 1.62	TRAVERSE "B" TO "C"
	S 16°01'E 2.98
TRAVERSE "G" TO "H"	S 14°06'E 3.95
S 76°41'W 2.28	S 12°05'E 3.95
N 36°16'W 3.05	S 10°02'E 3.95
S 75°37'W 4.25	S 8°06'E 3.95
S 10°40'W 2.32	S 6°21'E 2.95
S 63°43'W 3.75 TO "H"	S 5°06'E 4.74 TO "C"
TRAVERSE "H" TO "I"	
N 6°52'W 1.35	
N 23°12'W 0.79	
N 41°17'W 0.92 TO	



*A. J. Brouillette*  
A. J. BROUILLETTE  
NATCHITOCHESS PARISH, LA. 70002

