

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

received JUN 12 1984
date entered JUL 12 1984National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination FormSee instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Catalpa

and or common Same

2. Location

street & number U. S. Highway 61 @ 5 miles north of St. Francisville N/A not for publication

city, town St. Francisville vic. ☒ vicinity ofstate LA code 22 parish ~~county~~ West Feliciana code 125

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	N/A in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	N/A being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Mamie Fort Thompson and Sadie Bowman Fort

street & number P. O. Box 131 (504) 635-3372

city, town St. Francisville N/A vicinity of state LA 70775

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. West Feliciana Parish Courthouse

street & number Highway 61 (no specific address) P. O. Box 71

city, town St. Francisville state LA 70775

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title LA Historic Sites Survey has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☒ nodate 1984 ☐ federal ☒ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records LA State Historic Preservation Office

city, town Baton Rouge state LA

7. Description

Condition _____ (dependent) _____ Check one _____
_____ excellent _____ deteriorated _____ unaltered _____
_____ X good (main house) _____ ruins _____ altered _____ original site _____
_____ fair _____ unexposed _____ moved _____ date _____ N/A _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Catalpa consists of a nineteenth century oak alley, an antebellum dependency, and a 1885 story and a half frame main house. The grouping is located in second growth forest about five miles north of St. Francisville. Despite a few changes, Catalpa retains its National Register eligibility.

The Main House

The present (1885) main house replaced an antebellum main house which burned. Although it is often referred to as a "Victorian cottage," the house is in fact quite large. It has a two room deep main block with a central hall and a large rear wing with a central hall of its own. The two central halls are separated by double doors.

The house is plainly massed with a large hip roof and a single forward facing dormer. The front features a five bay Eastlake gallery and floor-length plate glass windows. The south side of the house features a second (smaller) Eastlake gallery and the north side has a protruding bay. There is also a small rear dormer.

The rooms are large, but plainly finished with standard late-nineteenth century details. The exception to this are the four Italianate mantels in the main block of the house. Each has a cast-iron body with a slate shelf. The two on the south side of the house are almost identical, with rounded corners near the walls, heavy projecting piers, cornerblocks, and entablatures. Both feature a central segmental arch which is painted in contrasting colors of false marble. The one in the front also features ceramic tiles set in the cornerblocks, each of which has a female head profile in bas relief. The dining room mantel features a stilted segmental arch, a central keystone, and beveled corners near the wall. The north front parlor mantel is the most sculpturally elaborate, with a large brincade entablature and engaged columns which resemble Roman candelabra shafts. The most impressive feature of Catalpa's mantels is their use of false marbling. Their numerous panels feature contrasting red, maroon, and cream colored marble, as well as contrasting effects with what appears to be Pavonazzo and serpentine marble. Two of the mantels also feature stenciled foliage with green and gold stylized leaves.

Since construction the rear of the house has been fitted with two picture windows. In addition, bathrooms and a modern kitchen have been installed. In our opinion, these changes should be regarded as minor. In any case, they have not affected the features which contribute to the property's significance.

The Alley

The live oak alley has a semi-elliptical shape and runs for about 1500 feet. The main house is located at its approximate midpoint. The exact date of the alley is uncertain. Family history indicates that it dates from the early nineteenth century; however, the scale of the trees suggests that the alley is 100 or so years old. Relatively few of the trees have been lost over the years; thus the alley retains its landscape architectural integrity.

CONTINUED

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet Catalpa

Item number 7

Page 2

7. Description (cont'd)

The Antebellum Dependency

This deteriorated frame cottage is locally known as a "slave cabin." It is built of pit sawn timber, a fact which corroborates the claim for an early date. Originally the cottage had no gallery, but a new roof and a gallery were added about the turn-of-the-century. The dependency is listed as a contributing element because it is Catalpa Plantation's only remaining historic outbuilding.

North-northeast of the house is a sizable pond which, according to the owner's family history, dates from the antebellum period. It is listed as a contributing element because it is one of the surviving elements of what was once an extensive landscaped garden.

To the rear of the house are two frame sheds, one with wood siding and one with metal siding. Neither is listed as a contributing element because neither appears to be fifty years old. In any case, neither dates from the period of significance for the plantation.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
___ prehistoric	___ archeology-prehistoric	___ community planning	X	landscape architecture
___ 1400-1499	___ archeology-historic	___ conservation	___	law
___ 1500-1599	___ agriculture	___ economics	___	literature
___ 1600-1699	___ architecture	___ education	___	military
___ 1700-1799	X art	___ engineering	___	music
X 1800-1899	___ commerce	___ exploration/settlement	___	philosophy
___ 1900-	___ communications	___ industry	___	politics/government
		___ invention	___	other (specify)

Specific dates house ~ 1885-
 alley ~ 19th century **Builder/Architect** (exact date uncertain) William J. Fort (Builder)

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Criterion C

Catalpa is of state significance in the areas of art and landscape architecture. It is significant in the area of art because of the false marbled mantels in the main house, which are rare examples within the context of the state. It is significant in the area of landscape architecture because of its very unusual oak alley.

Art - state level

Catalpa Plantation House is one of numerous late Victorian cottages found across the state, although it is larger than most. What makes it important, however, among period residences are its false marbled mantels. During the late-nineteenth century manufactured cast-iron and slate mantels were sometimes given a marble treatment. This work was done by hand, but at the factory rather than on-site as it might have been done in earlier times. No survey exists as to how many examples remain in Louisiana or how many there were at one time. However, one assumes that there must have been a fair number of them in better class houses across the state. But, as far as the State Historic Preservation Office can determine, there are probably less than ten surviving period buildings in Louisiana with mantels of this type.

The mantels at Catalpa are important as examples of Victorian art because they show the Victorian fondness for elaborately contrived effects. In all cases the veining is more pronounced and intricate than real marble. Moreover, two of the mantels have stenciled leaf forms in addition to the marbling treatment.

The importance of Catalpa's mantels is further enhanced by the fact that their paintwork is all original and in excellent condition. This is not true of all of the other painted slate and iron mantels across the state.

Landscape Architecture - state level

Catalpa's alley is one of a limited number of plantation oak alleys which survive across the state. At one time there were more, but many have become victims of property division, urbanization, and river levee construction. Of those which survive, Catalpa's alley is thought to be the only one in Louisiana which has an elliptical shape. This is important because it shows more creativity than was commonly employed in laying out the plantation house grounds.

NB: The State Review Committee requested that some comment be made on Catalpa's architectural merit within the context of the St. Francisville area. It is a typical, albeit large, example of a Victorian cottage within this context. It is also a good example of the type of house planters built when they lost their antebellum main house in the late nineteenth century.

9. Major Bibliographical References

St. Francisville True Democrat, Silver Anniversary Edition, February 24, 1917,
William J. Fort Succession, West Feliciana Parish Courthouse,
Personal communication with Suzanne Turner, Department of Landscape Architecture,
Louisiana State University.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property @ 10 acres

Quadrangle name St. Francisville, LA

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

1	5
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6	5	5	2	0	0
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3	4	1	4	1	2	0
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Zone Easting Northing

B

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6	5	5	4	0	0
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3	4	1	4	1	2	0
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Zone Easting Northing

C

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6	5	5	4	0	0
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3	4	1	3	9	6	0
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D

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6	5	5	2	0	0
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3	4	1	3	9	6	0
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Verbal boundary description and justification

See continuation sheet and enclosed sketch map.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
N/A			

state	code	county	code
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title National Register Staff
Division of Historic Preservation

ASSISTED BY OWNER

organization State of Louisiana

date March 1984

street & number P. O. Box 44247

telephone (504) 342-6682

city or town Baton Rouge

state LA 70804

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

☐ national ☒ state ☐ local

As the designated State Historic Preservation 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.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature



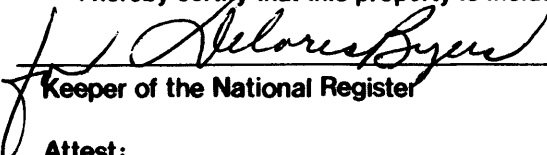
title State Historic Preservation Officer

Robert B. DeBlieux

date June 5, 1984

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



Keeper of the National Register

Entered in the
National Register

date

7/12/84

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only

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date entered

Continuation sheet Catalpa

Item number 10

Page 2

10. Boundary Description and Justification:

The boundary lines were drawn to discretely encompass the significant resource. They consist of a 750' X 700' rectangle whose sides follow the cardinal directions (i.e., north, south, east, and west) and whose northeastern corner is fixed by the northeastern extent of the plantation pond (see sketch map).

NB: The structures and the road are shown in their correct location on the USGS map, but they are not shown in their exact configuration. Mainly the gravel road which forms the alley has the wrong shape on the USGS map; it is shown correctly on the sketch map.

CATALPA PLANTATION

WEST FELICIANA PARISH
LOUISIANA (NOT TO SCALE)

