

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES NOMINATION

OK

NPS Form 10-900

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

OMB No. 1024-0018

Valverda Plantation House, Pointe Coupee Parish, LA

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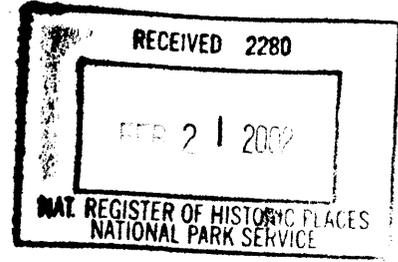
United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: Valverda Plantation House

Other Name/Site Number:



2. LOCATION

Street & Number 2217 Louisiana Highway 977

Not for publication: NA

City/Town Maringouin

Vicinity: X

State: Louisiana Code: LA County: Pointe Coupee Code: 077 Zip Code: 70757

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: X Locally:

Signature of Certifying Official/Title Laurel Wyckoff, LA SHPO, Dept. of Culture, Recreation and Tourism

Date 2/19/02

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: Edson H. Beall

Date of Action: 4.1.2002

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
1 buildings
sites
structures
objects
1 Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 0

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing: NA

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6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic: domestic

Sub: single dwelling

Current: vacant

Sub:

7. DESCRIPTION

Architectural Classification: Greek Revival

Materials:

Foundation: brick

Walls: brick

Roof: asphalt

Other:

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Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

Valverda Plantation House is a large, two-story, brick Greek Revival residence located on Bayou Grosse Tete in lower Pointe Coupee Parish. The house is something of an anomaly within Pointe Coupee, for this old French parish is known for its Creole architecture, with the Anglo Greek Revival never having made much of an impact. Valverda faces Louisiana Highway 977 with the bayou just beyond. It is set back from the road in a lush setting of large live oaks draped with Spanish moss. The date of construction is traditionally given as 1818, but surely this must be the date the plantation was established. The architectural evidence points clearly to a date of c.1850 (and there is no evidence of an earlier house). All in all, changes have been fairly limited, with the most notable exception being the loss of side gable parapets. There are also some issues related to deterioration, as explained below.

Valverda's brick walls are quite thick, measuring 16-18 inches. The brick is laid in common bond, and evidence suggests that it always has been painted a reddish wine color. Handsome jack arches distinguish the openings. Spanning the façade is a massive five-bay gallery formed of colossal paneled pillars with molded capitals. Balustrades (both floors) feature a wheatsheaf design. The colossal gallery across the rear is identical except the columns are not paneled.

Originally Valverda's side elevations were capped with a gable parapet (per old photos). In the mid-twentieth century a tree fell on the western side, and the tops of both side elevations were reworked in the present standard gable treatment. (The change in brickwork is quite evident on the western side, where all the brick had to be replaced.)

Façade windows are nine-over-six, with those on the upper story of the slip head variety. A central entrance, on both stories, is set within a fairly boldly proportioned, heavily molded Greek Revival surround with ear molds, a pediment shaped top, and splayed side members. Sidelights have three panes of glass with a molded panel below. The transom is formed of three panes. Windows on the side elevations are six-over-six at the second and attic levels and nine-over-six at the ground story. Openings are different on the rear from those of the façade. The ground level pattern is a wide central entrance (reworked – see below) with a standard width door and window to each side. Upstairs is a standard width door at the center with two windows to each side. None of the rear entrances have a wooden surround, only transoms.

The upper story of Valverda has an unusually wide central hall (15 feet) with two large equal-size rooms on each side. This is repeated on the ground story, except the central hall is divided into two rooms. Whether this treatment is original or not is uncertain. While not common, it is not unknown. It seems clear from the available visible evidence (a picture mold encircling the front room) that the dividing wall has been in place since at least c.1900. Another possible clue is the staircase located in the rear room. It is unusually steep, suggesting that it had to ascend within a limited space. It is also rather functional in appearance for what is a fairly grand house. (One would expect a central hall house of this stature to have had a staircase that made a statement.)

But then again, Valverda is not lavishly detailed on the interior. Door surrounds are simple, with the notable exception of a wide opening (roughly 12 feet) between the two western rooms. The opening, which takes up almost the entire wall, features a surround like those on the two façade entrances (ear molding, pediment, splayed side members). Here the shape is emphasized by a wide strip of wood. The design is echoed in the home's eight identical wooden mantelpieces (minus the pediment, of course). Here too the shape is re-enforced, and made more pronounced, by a band of wood. Ceilings downstairs are 13 feet and

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10 feet upstairs.

Valverda has received the following alterations since construction:

- 1) The loss of the gable parapets, as mentioned above.
- 2) The possible subdivision of the central hall into two rooms, as mentioned above. In the mid-twentieth century the door between the two rooms was sealed off and the rear room converted into a kitchen. This work also involved converting the rear doorway into a window.
- 3) Walls have been furred out in the corner of one upstairs room to create closets and a bathroom has been created in one of the downstairs bedrooms. The bathroom takes up perhaps one-fifth of the room. Closets were also added at the rear of the upstairs central hall, one to each side of the door.
- 4) Issues related to deterioration include a large crack in an upstairs wall and the removal of an end column on the façade. The column remains on the property. Also, some of the wheatsheaf balustrades are down, but most seem to be lying on the gallery floor.
- 5) In the mid-twentieth century some of the mantels downstairs received a false marbling treatment that does not replicate the look of historic false marbling. A contemporary glass treatment (easily removed) is found above two of the mantels.

Assessment of Integrity:

Other than issues related to deterioration, the notable loss at Valverda is that of the gable parapets, which admittedly were a distinctive feature. But even with this loss, Valverda retains all of its original Greek Revival details and remains a major expression of said taste.

Non-contributing element:

To the rear of the house is a fairly recent garage.

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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.1850

Significant Dates: c.1850

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.

Valverda is of statewide architectural significance because it is one of Louisiana's major Greek Revival plantation houses.

Among Louisiana's chief architectural assets are its plantation houses, whether they be in the earlier French Creole style or the grand Greek Revival taste. At the apex of the Greek Revival are the monumental homes found along the Mississippi River and the bayous of South Louisiana. Generally built by sugar planters, they may be briefly characterized as pillared two story houses with broad galleries across the front and back and sometimes encircling the house. The Greek temple form was not much in evidence. The grandest houses had colossal columns rising to the roofline in one continuous shaft. It is these houses that have become an icon of the Deep South. No one will ever know the exact number (often grand enough to be mansions) that existed along the waterways of South Louisiana. Various sources, however, reveal that more have been lost than have survived. Today there are some 30-40 major Greek Revival plantation homes in the state. And while Valverda is admittedly not in the same category as mansions such as Houmas House and Madewood, it nonetheless is a major expression of the Greek Revival taste in a Louisiana plantation house. (Major is defined loosely as a convincingly styled large two story example, in contrast to the medium and small galleried cottages found in greater abundance.) Of the 30-40 major Greek Revival plantation homes in the state, it is among the minority in featuring colossal columns, with those on the façade having the additional refinement of paneling. Valverda is also distinguished by its abundance of boldly articulated Greek Revival woodwork reflecting the style as it was seen typically in the 1840s and '50s.

Historical Note:

In 1855 Valverda Plantation was purchased by former Louisiana governor Henry Johnson, who retained ownership until his death in 1864. Johnson's political career included the U. S. Senate, 1818-24; governor, 1824-28; U. S. Congress, 1834-39; U. S. Senate, 1844-49. Apparently Johnson moved to Pointe Coupee after his unsuccessful bid for re-election to the Senate in 1850. Significance on the basis of Johnson is not being claimed at the present time because sufficient research has not been done to determine if there are surviving buildings associated with his productive life, per National Register guidelines. A retirement home is generally not eligible unless one can demonstrate it is the sole surviving property associated with the significant individual. If such a case can be documented, the nomination can be amended.

The origin of the Valverda name is unknown. Presumably it is a corruption of *valle verde*, "green valley" in Spanish, although there are no valleys in flat South Louisiana. There is a small community of the same name.

Valverda went through various sheriffs' sales in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. The Miller family has owned it the longest of anyone. Alfred Richard Miller purchased Valverda in 1945, and today it is owned by Miller heirs.

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9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Conveyance records, copies in National Register file, 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. 4 1/2 acres

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing
15 639540 3379180

Verbal Boundary Description: See attached sketch map.

Boundary Justification: Boundaries were chosen to encompass the house and its setting. To have followed property lines would have meant including a large rural acreage devoid of historic buildings.

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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: January 2002

PROPERTY OWNERS

Multiple heirs. See National Register file for complete listing.

Valverde Plantation
House
Pointe Coupee Parish, LA

