

PH0365190

DATA SHEET

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED MAY 27 1976
DATE ENTERED JUL 18 1976

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

** HISTORIC Narcisse Prudhomme Plantation or St. Charles Plantation
AND/OR COMMON Beau Fort

LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER SE of Natchitoches on
Cane River Road near Bermuda near Natchitoches
CITY, TOWN Natchitoches, La. CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 5th - Otto Passman
STATE Louisiana CODE 22 COUNTY Natchitoches CODE 069

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	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER: Historical

OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Mrs. C. Vernon Cloutier
STREET & NUMBER P. O. Box 179
CITY, TOWN Natchitoches VICINITY OF Louisiana

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, Natchitoches Parish Courthouse
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.
STREET & NUMBER Church Street
CITY, TOWN Natchitoches STATE Louisiana

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE Natchitoches Parish Chamber of Commerce Historic Survey
DATE 1973 FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS Natchitoches Parish Library
CITY, TOWN Natchitoches STATE Louisiana

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Beau Fort dates from the period around 1800. Records show the Rachal family living on the property as early as 1790. It is among the oldest Creole-influenced houses in north Louisiana.

The original one and a half story structure is of mud and deer hair bousillage, which may be considered to be an earlier type than (Spanish) moss and mud bousillage. The frame is of cypress, raised slightly off the ground. The original floor plan appears to have been rectangular, with four rooms across the front and two rooms in the back. Two sets of interior stairs, with a window in each stairwell, leading to the attic were also in the back. All rooms - except one - opened into each other. This exception was known as the "Stranger's Room," and enabled the owners to offer overnight hospitality to travelers without giving them access to the rest of the house. The four front rooms open onto the gallery, all but the Stranger's Room, having French doors with headlights.

Paneled shutters and double hung 9/6 windows with beveled glass remain in the older portion of the house. There are two interior chimneys, one between each pair of front rooms.

In 1937 the wooden storm doors were replaced by screen doors. Then in 1949 more work was done on the house. A metal roof replaced that of wooden shingles. A small door was installed beside the fireplace between the Stranger's Room and the present library and a bay window was added to the Stranger's Room. A breakfast room, kitchen, storage rooms, and buggy shed were added to the rear of the house. The buggy shed extended across the back of the house and the exterior doors allowed access to the shed from several rooms. The shed has been enlarged and converted into the present-day covered patio. Bathrooms were installed in the original stairwells and one set of stairs to the attic was removed. The stairwell/bath window on the east end of the house has been boarded up.

The house is painted white and the older siding is wide, flush, horizontal boards. Newer siding is narrow, horizontal, and lapped.

The front gallery runs the length of the structure and is supported by ten square wooden columns. Railing between the columns is supported by turned wood spindles. The steps up to the gallery are off center and lead into the living room.

There is also a gallery across the east end of the house with six columns and a door opening from the corner room. Both the east and west gable ends have two 9/6 windows in the attic.

The patio off the sleeping porch has a flat roof while the sleeping porch and large patio have an obvious break in the pitch of the original roof. The kitchen and breakfast room have one gable end facing north while the storage rooms behind the kitchen have a separate gable roof.

All original rooms have 12 foot ceilings and in each, the rafters and attic floor serve as the ceiling. Molding showing Greek Revival influence has been carefully added around the rafters in the living room and dining room and the original folding doors with a fan light separate the two rooms. There is a wooden punkah in the dining room. The house is furnished with Creole furniture.

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Beau Fort

CONTINUATION SHEET 1

ITEM NUMBER 7

PAGE 2

7. Description (cont'd)

The front yard is enclosed by a picket fence. Two of the original five buried cisterns remain. A walled garden has been created in the back yard accented by fan-shaped iron vents from a demolished New Orleans church.

Recently additional work was done to add an additional bath to the sleeping porch.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Beau Fort is significant as an early Creole-influenced structure in the northern section of Louisiana. It also has a "Stranger's Room" which provided overnight accomodations for visitors while providing a measure of security for the family.

Beau Fort was so named because of the unsupported story that it was the site of an early French fort. It had previously been called St. Charles Plantation and from c.1830 to 1925 was known as the "Old Narcisse Prudhomme Plantation." A nearby mission chapel called St. Charles Church was donated by a Prudhomme family member some time after 1925.

The house is believed to have been built as the residence of Louis Barthelemy Rachal, who was living on the property by 1790 although later documents indicate the Spanish land grant by which he claimed the property was dated 1796. The plantation house was specifically mentioned in succession records dating 1821.

While the house is not a typical Creole Raised Cottage, it does have many elements which point toward the Creole influence. Interior chimneys, bousillage construction, gable roof, front gallery built as an integral part of the house, French doors, lack of central hallway, the probable use of the attic for sleeping quarters, and the lack of symmetry in the floor plan between the front and back sets of rooms (although this particular pattern is unusual) all clearly show the French influence even though there have been alterations to the house.

The concept of a "Stranger's Room" is fairly common in the Cane River area. The nearest equivalent seems to be the Louisiana French garconniere. However, a garconniere was often a separate building and provided sleeping quarters for the young men of the family as well as providing room for guests. The local explanation for the existence of "Strangers' Rooms" was the great distances from towns and poor transportation. Painters - presumably itinerant artists - often stayed in these accomodations and families still have portraits of previous owners of their houses done by "stranger artists."

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Repartition a Locasion...le 1^e Mars 1790. (Church assessment of land owners)
Natchitoches Parish Records Collection, Box 1, Louisiana State University
Archives, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.
- Marriage Records. Bk. 2. Immaculate Conception Catholic Church, Natchitoches,
Louisiana.
- Land Plats of Natchitoches and Its Environs, 1793-1801. (Photocopies)
Register of the State Land Office, Baton Rouge, Louisiana

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 5
UTM REFERENCES

A	1 5	4 9 9 0 5 0	3 5 0 3 6 5 0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE Judge and Mrs. R. B. Williams and Mrs. C. Vernon Cloutier

ORGANIZATION _____ DATE February 1975

STREET & NUMBER 1054 Williams Avenue TELEPHONE _____

CITY OR TOWN Natchitoches STATE Louisiana

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL _____ STATE _____ LOCAL X

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.

SIGNATURE [Signature] DATE May 25, 1976

TITLE Assistant State Historic Preservation Officer DATE _____

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER	
<u>[Signature]</u>	DATE <u>7/13/76</u>
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION	
ATTEST: <u>[Signature]</u>	DATE <u>7-13-76</u>
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER	
<u>RBR for WJM 7/13/76</u>	

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BEAU FORT

CONTINUATION SHEET 2

ITEM NUMBER 9

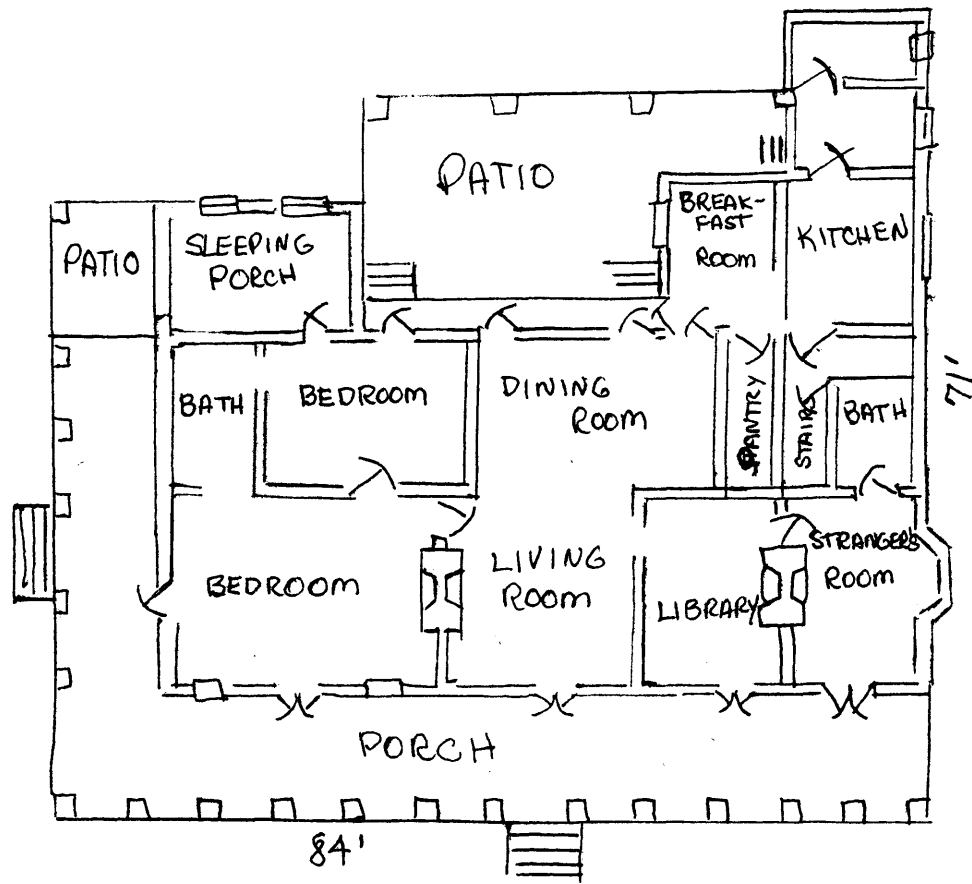
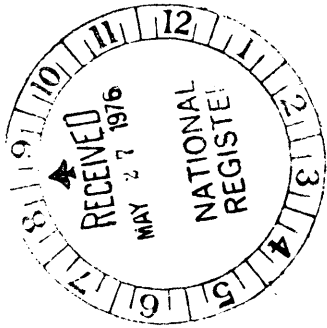
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9. Bibliography (cont'd)

United States Statutes. V. 2, p. 441.

Lusi (sic) Bartholomew Rachal Claim... File A1678 State Land Office, Baton Rouge
Louisiana.

Succession records and conveyance books, Clerk of Court, Natchitoches Parish.



BEAU FORT PLANTATION HOUSE
FLOOR PLAN

STATE OF LOUISIANA
NATCHITOCHE PARISH
C 1790