

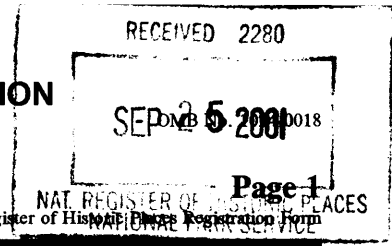
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES NOMINATION

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

Ferguson, G. R., Sr., House, Leesville, Vernon Parish, LA

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

NAT. REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
National Register of Historic Places Registration Form
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE



1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: Ferguson, G. R., Sr., House

Other Name/Site Number:

2. LOCATION

Street & Number 406 N. 6th St.

Not for publication: NA

City/Town Leesville

Vicinity: NA

State: Louisiana Code: LA County: Vernon Code: 115

Zip Code: 71446

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: ___ Locally: X

Jonathan Fricker
Signature of Certifying Official/Title Jonathan Fricker
Deputy SHPO, Dept of Culture, Recreation and Tourism

September 20, 2001
Date

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

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

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

OMB No. 1024-0018

Ferguson, G. R., Sr., House, Leesville, Vernon Parish, LA

Page 2

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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

Date of Action

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
2

Non contributing
buildings
sites
structures
objects
0 Total

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

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing: NA

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

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

OMB No. 1024-0018

Ferguson, G. R., Sr., House, Leesville, Vernon Parish, LA

Page 3

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic: domestic Sub: single dwelling
Current: commerce Sub: specialty store

7. DESCRIPTION

Architectural Classification: Queen Anne Revival; Colonial Revival

Materials:

Foundation: brick
Walls: weatherboard
Roof: asphalt
Other:

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

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

OMB No. 1024-0018

Ferguson, G. R., Sr., House, Leesville, Vernon Parish, LA

Page 4

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

The G. R. Ferguson House was built c.1900 and remodeled c.1910. It is a large, two-story, wood frame house situated on a spacious parcel of land just north of the old central business district of the parish seat of Leesville. The present view sheds are almost entirely modern. Sixth Street is part of a U.S. Highway 171 couplet through the town, and modern businesses are located across the street. The house has received very few alterations since the c.1910 remodeling. Hence it easily conveys its lumber boom era history.

Nona Mills Company, Ltd., which became Leesville's largest employer, built the candidate c. 1900 for its vice-president and manager, G. R. Ferguson, Sr. Its sawmill plant, established in 1899, was four blocks away, in sight of the house. The house's massing is that of a steeply pitched hipped roof main block with a gabled section which extends forward enough to provide for an extra room. A gable also extends from the main roofline on the south side to provide further interest and complexity. At the rear is a one story wing.

A very early photo (see attached) shows the house with a much less extensive gallery than found presently. A three-bay double gallery, under a shed roof, extended across the façade's main block only, featuring simple squared off posts and a balustrade with turned balusters. It appears that the spindlescreen was of simple squared off spindles (rather than turned Eastlake). Some ten years later (c.1910), the original gallery was replaced by an extensive Colonial Revival double gallery, under a shed roof, which extends across the main block, down and across the front gabled projection and then down the entire north side elevation. The shed roofed gallery features Tuscan columns with necking, upstairs and down. However, because of a difference in height between the two stories, the columns on the first story rest on paneled bases. The only other known changes to occur on the exterior as part of the c.1910 remodeling were the addition of a hipped roof dormer to the façade and the replacement of the window in the front gable. (It originally was smaller, matching that in the south gable.) Other exterior details include shinglework in the front and side gables, a decorative window surround on the south gable, and numerous two over two windows. There are two front doors, one leading into the central hall and one to the front room provided by the forward projecting gable.

The interior is presumed to date from the original c.1900 construction. The floorplan consists of a central hall with two main rooms on one side and three on the other. All are generous in size. At the rear of the three room range is what was presumably a butler's pantry and then, in the one story wing, a kitchen. Easily the most distinctive feature of the interior is the massive, unusually configured staircase. The stairs begin at the rear of the hall. Two steps lead to a landing marked by paneled pillars. The stairs then turn to go up one flight to a square landing that "hangs out" into the hall; then they turn in the opposite direction to ascend to a landing on the second floor. The staircase is strongly articulated in more than just its complex configuration. The details are bold as well. The pillars at the first landing (two free-standing and one in the form of a pilaster) rest on bases and feature pronounced paneling. Crowning each is a molded "capital" with large dentils below and a squared off block at the top. The hall wainscot, with its pronounced reeding, is repeated as the stairs ascend. Turned balusters complete the composition. Simple pillars mark the staircase's end. The large second floor opening is outlined in balusters.

Interior openings feature heavily molded surrounds with bull's eye corner blocks. Doors are generally of four raised panels with operable transoms. Baseboards are also heavily molded. The house has

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

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

OMB No. 1024-0018

Ferguson, G. R., Sr., House, Leesville, Vernon Parish, LA

Page 5

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

one chimney, which services the two rooms in the front projecting section. The homemade-looking mantels are quite simple, consisting of planks with no moldings and simple brackets supporting the mantel shelf. The opening between the front room on the north side and the room behind is quite wide and is accented with a spindlescreen and brackets. At the center is an element resembling a balldrop. The walls were originally covered with wallpaper over cheesecloth. Today the upstairs rooms are no longer papered, revealing the unfinished wooden walls.

Alterations/Assessment of Integrity:

Alterations to the Ferguson House have been quite minimal since the c.1910 remodeling; hence there is no question that it would be immediately recognizable to someone from Leesville's lumber boom days. The only alterations worthy of mention are the screening of a small portion of the front gallery (downstairs only), the addition of shed roofed bathrooms at the rear (during the historic period), and modifications to the rear one story wing. The wing's porch has been screened and its configuration and fenestration adjusted on the opposite side. For example, there is now a very small inset porch formed of screening and vertical boards.

Contributing Element:

To the side and front of the house, quite near Sixth Street, is a moderate size frame one-story building which appears to be contemporaneous. Its original use is uncertain.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

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

OMB No. 1024-0018

Ferguson, G. R., Sr., House, Leesville, Vernon Parish, LA

Page 6

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Applicable National Register Criteria: A X B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): NA
A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance: industry

Period(s) of Significance: c.1900-1922

Significant Dates: NA

Significant Person(s): NA

Cultural Affiliation: NA

Architect/Builder: unknown

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

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

OMB No. 1024-0018

Ferguson, G. R., Sr., House, Leesville, Vernon Parish, LA

Page 7

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.

The G. R. Ferguson, Sr. House is eligible for the National Register under Criterion A, at the local level, because it is a very rare survivor to represent, in a direct and compelling fashion, the immensely important lumber boom history of Leesville. Built by Nona Mills, the town's leading employer, it was the home of G. R. Ferguson, Sr., a top executive and "head" of the Leesville plant. The period of significance spans from c.1900, the date of construction, to 1922, the year Nona Mills closed.

Vernon Parish, of which Leesville is the seat, was created in 1871. Located in western Louisiana, bordering Texas, it is the state's third largest parish. Vernon's history is that of yeoman farmers, the coming of the Kansas City Southern Railroad in the 1890s, an ensuing major lumber boom (longleaf pine) that lasted until the late 1920s, and a second boom caused by the establishment of Camp Polk (now Fort Polk) in 1941. Leesville was and is the only town of any size, and its population was only between roughly one and three thousand in the lumber booms years (1900-1930).

Leesville, like the rest of the parish, depended upon the area's seemingly inexhaustible supply of timber for its prosperity. There were two large sawmills plants: Nona Mills, located within the town, just north of the CBD, and Gulf Lumber, two miles south of Leesville with its own company town. Of course, even the vast virgin timber stands of Vernon Parish could not feed industrial lumber giants forever, and by the late 1920s, the boom was over. The destruction of forests was so great that the parish, with an area of over 800,000 acres, was listed as 70 percent cutover land in 1938.

The early twentieth century history of Leesville and Nona Mills are in some respects inseparable – the company was that much of a presence and had that much of an economic impact in the town. Although founded in 1871 as the seat of newly formed Vernon Parish, Leesville remained a small hamlet until the railroad arrived in 1897 and opened up the forests for industrial lumbering. Nona Mills, based in Beaumont, Texas, was founded in 1884 by lumberman F. L. Carroll. The company operated timberlands and mills in East Texas (including the sawmill town of Nona) and western Louisiana. The Leesville mill opened in 1899. It had a daily cutting capacity of 100,000 feet and employed more than 300 men. Lumber boom prosperity was the critical factor in rapid population growth in the town. A population of 1,148 in 1900 increased almost twofold in one decade (1910 - 2,043). Although the boom ended in the late 1920s, the population increased from 2,518 in 1920 to 3,291 in 1930.

While nearby Gulf Lumber presumably had some impact on the Leesville economy, there is no question that the in-town Nona Mills was the most important of the two. Sawmill historian W. T. Block, based on research chiefly in primary sources, identified it as "the greatest single contributor to Leesville's new lumber-based economy." An archivist familiar with the Nona Mills records (housed at Lamar University in Beaumont) referred to the company as "the economic lifeline" of Leesville. A May, 1907 article appearing in the *Beaumont Enterprise* described Nona Mills as "the leading industry of Leesville." According to a 1905 article in the same paper, the firm shipped 22,000,000 feet of lumber in 1904 and still had a 5,000,000 foot reserve drying in the yard. In that year Nona Mills paid \$15,000 in wages to its 370 loggers and mill hands. (As a point of reference, the town had a population of only 1,148 in 1900.)

In typical paternalistic fashion, the company made significant contributions to Leesville (in addition to its payroll) and "took care of its own." Historian W. T. Block refers to Nona Mills' contributions to the

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

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

OMB No. 1024-0018

Ferguson, G. R., Sr., House, Leesville, Vernon Parish, LA

Page 8

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

betterment of Leesville, including the town's waterworks and fire department, ice plant, hotel, baseball team, militia company and brass band. A May, 1907 article in the *Beaumont Enterprise* stated that the company "made possible" a waterworks, a fire department, an ice plant and a hotel. In short, Leesville had some of the trappings of a company town. Much is also made by the *Beaumont Enterprise* reporter of Nona Mills taking care of its employees, most notably in the Panic of 1907.

At the head of Nona Mills in Leesville was G. R. Ferguson, Sr. (1859-1932). Primary sources indicate that when Nona Mills organized in Louisiana in 1898, Ferguson was the vice-president, with F. L. Carroll, the company founder, as president. The officers were the same for the Texas and Louisiana companies. Ferguson was one of the parent company's earliest and largest stockholders and served as agent in Louisiana for the firm's various interests. There remains some confusion concerning G. R. Ferguson's exact title at the Leesville plant. In May, 1907, the *Beaumont Enterprise* identified him as "the man at the head" and his son, W. K. Ferguson, as the superintendent. One suspects his title was general manager. In any event, the Ferguson name is in many ways synonymous with Nona Mills in Leesville. Another son, G. R. Ferguson, Jr., is identified in a c.1915 photo as the assistant general manager of Nona Mills.

As was true across Louisiana, the timber supply played out in the 1920s, and mill and after mill in Vernon Parish either closed or operated at a greatly reduced capacity. Nona Mills divested itself of the Leesville plant in September 1922. It continued to operate, albeit at a reduced capacity, as the Weber King Manufacturing Company.

Not surprisingly, the most important resource to represent Leesville's lumber boom prosperity – the sawmill plant at Nona Mills – is long gone, as are all traces of the nearby Gulf Lumber facility and its company town. Also gone are other Nona Mills buildings mentioned in the *Beaumont Enterprise* between 1905 and 1908, including a mill office, physician's office, barbershop, large general mercantile, and ice house. A hotel and boarding house are also referenced, and according to the oral tradition in Leesville, the candidate was built initially by Nona Mills to serve as a hotel or boarding house, but soon became G. R. Ferguson's residence. However, this has not been documented to date. If it is true, then the change in use occurred very early in the building's history. The previously mentioned early photo, taken before the c.1910 remodeling, shows Mrs. Ferguson and three of her children on the first floor porch and a cousin on the second story porch. In short, the photo depicts a family home more than a boarding house or hotel.

While there are three or four large houses in Leesville that reflect lumber boom prosperity, as does the downtown (N.R.), the candidate has the most direct and compelling association, as described above. Locals believe that late in its corporate life Nona Mills had an office on the top floor of a two story building in the downtown. However, the building in question was built sometime between 1922 and 1928, per a Sanborn map, and Nona Mills sold the plant in September 1922.

G. R. Ferguson lived in the candidate until his death on March 11, 1932 at the age of 72. His wife, Narcissa Kyle Ferguson, died in 1937. Son W. K. Ferguson and his family then lived in the house. W. K. Ferguson died in the late 1940s/early '50s, and his widow lived there until 1968. It is presently owned by their heirs and operated by a tenant as an antiques/collectibles store. Another Ferguson house, located across the street, was demolished within the last twenty years. Of roughly the same vintage as the candidate, it is remembered in Leesville as being the home of Mr. and Mrs. G. R. Ferguson, Jr. and their famous triplets born in 1912.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

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

OMB No. 1024-0018

Ferguson, G. R., Sr., House, Leesville, Vernon Parish, LA

Page 9

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Sanborn Insurance Company maps, Leesville, 1904, 1909, 1915, 1922, 1928, 1948.

Smith, Steven D. *A Good Home for a Poor Man: Fort Polk and Vernon Parish, 1800-1940*. National Park Service, 1999.

Circa 1905 photo of G. R. Ferguson house, copy in National Register file, Louisiana Division of Historic Preservation.

Block, W. T. *Early Sawmill Towns of the Louisiana-Texas Borderlands*. Hemphill, Texas: Dogwood Press, 1996. The quotes from the *Beaumont Enterprise* found in the nomination text are from this volume.

Berly, Charlsie E. "Records of the Nona Mills Company, Inc. (1884-1968)." *The Texas Gulf Historical and Biographical Record*. November, 1984, Volume XX. Mr. Berly was the curator of the archives at Lamar University in Beaumont where the Nona Mills records are housed. This invaluable article summarized the collection and the history of the company.

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:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other (Specify Repository):

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

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

OMB No. 1024-0018

Ferguson, G. R., Sr., House, Leesville, Vernon Parish, LA

Page 10

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreege of Property: approx. 8.2 acres

UTM References:	Zone	Easting	Northing
	15	474700	3445620

Verbal Boundary Description: Please see attached sketch map. Boundaries follow curblines on three sides and the property line on the north side.

Boundary Justification: Boundaries recognize the parcel of land historically associated with the house, minus a small amount of land taken by highway construction.

11. FORM PREPARED BY

Name/Title: National Register staff

Address: Division of Historic Preservation, P. O. Box 44247, Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70804

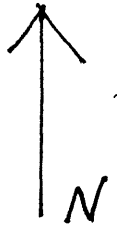
Telephone: (225) 342-8160

Date:

PROPERTY OWNERS

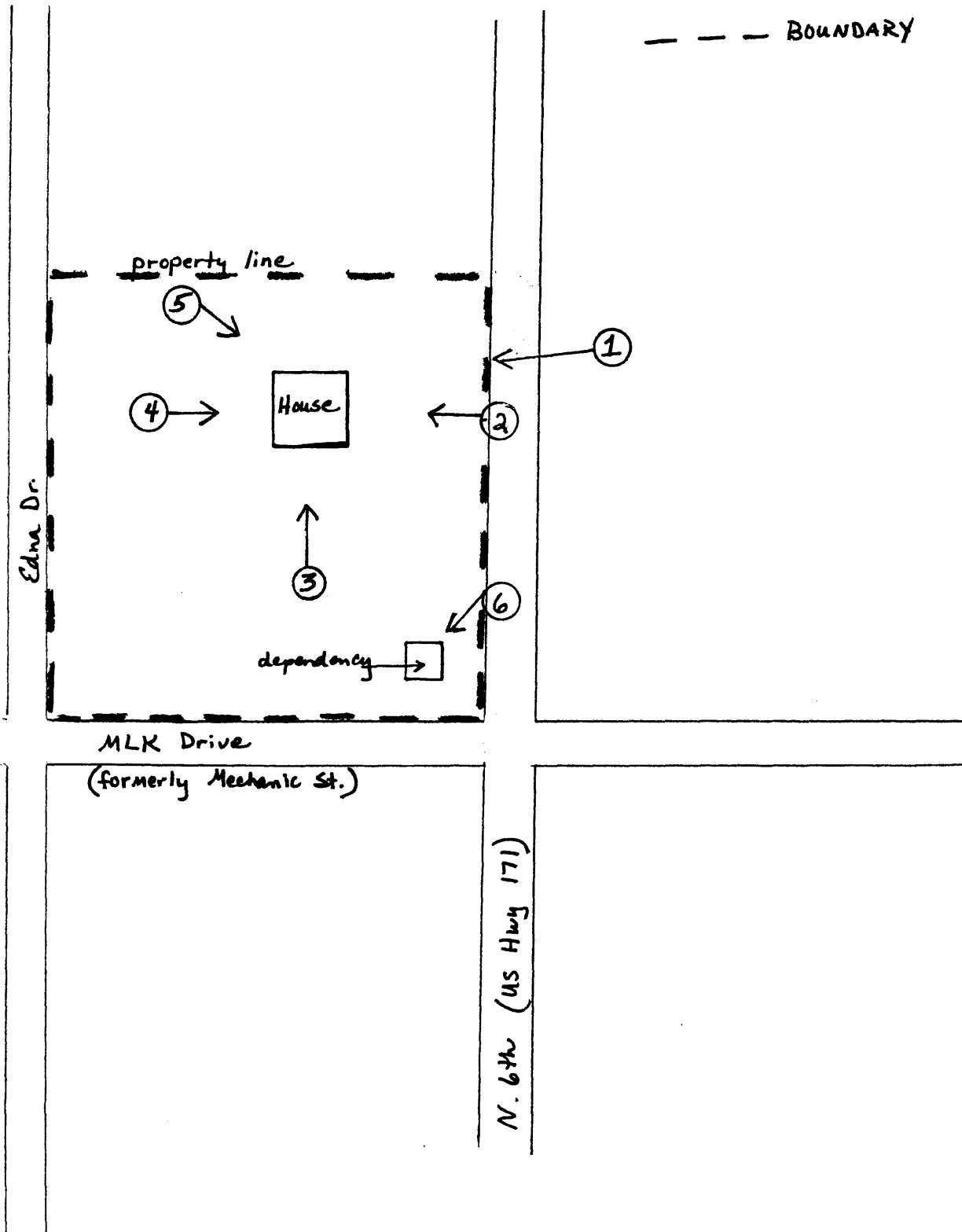
Multiple heirs

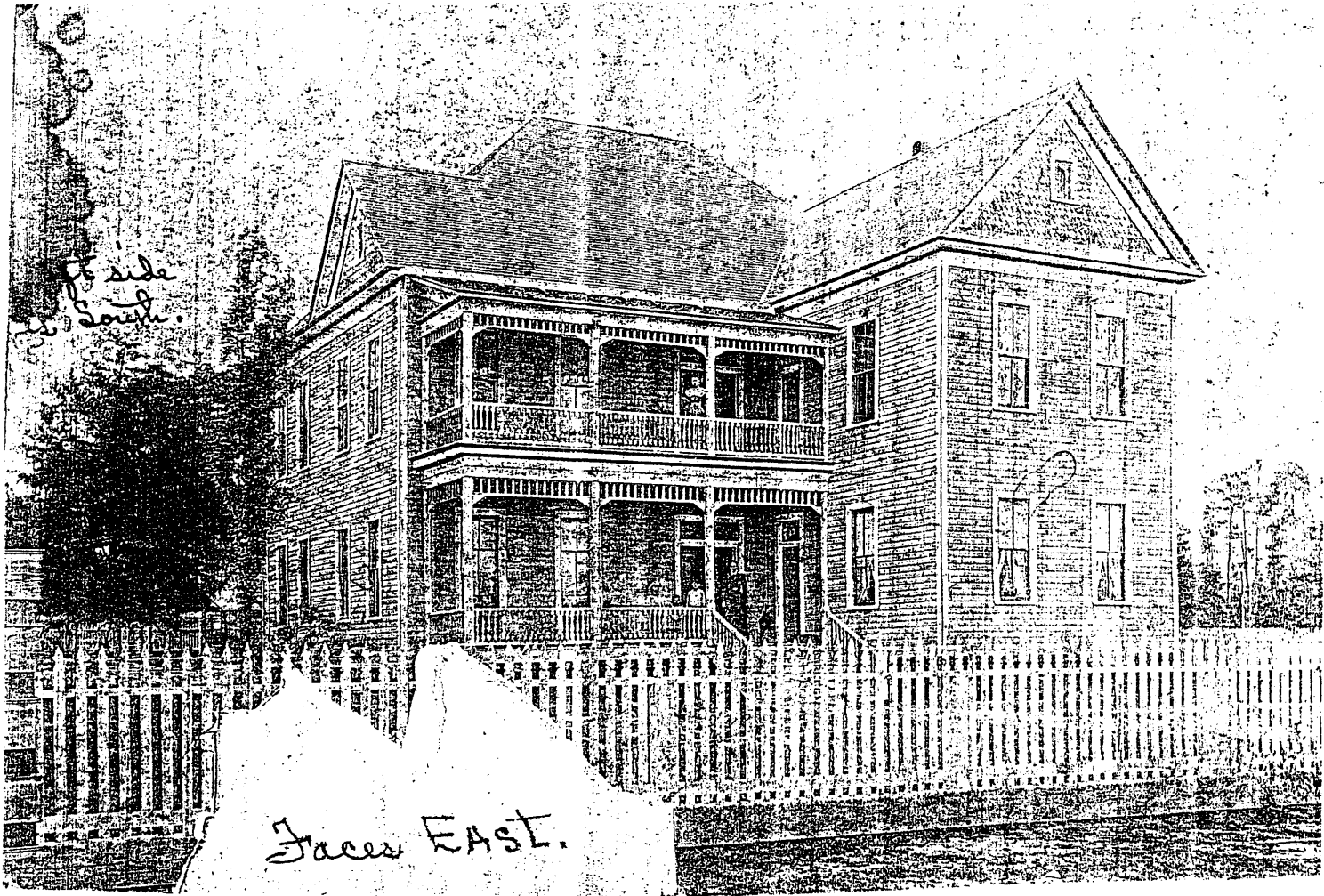
Ferguson, G. R., Sr. House
Leesville
Vernon Parish, LA



1" = 200'

--- BOUNDARY





Ferguson House, Vernon Parish, as it appeared prior to c.1910 remodeling.