1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: Magnolia Plantation

Other Name/Site Number:

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: 5487 LA HWY 119 Not for publication: NA

City/Town: Derry Vicinity: X

State: LA County: Natchitoches Code: 069 Zip Code: 71456

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property		Category of Property	
Private:	X	Building(s):	___
Public-Local:	___	District:	X
Public-State:	___	Site:	___
Public-Federal:	X	Structure:	___
		Object:	___

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
18	1	buildings
___	___	sites
3	1	structures
___	___	objects
21	2	Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 21

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing:

4. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this ____ 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 _ meets ____ does not meet the National Register Criteria.

Signature of Certifying Official 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 Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

5. 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

6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic:	DOMESTIC	Sub:	single dwelling secondary structure
	AGRICULTURE		processing agricultural field agricultural outbuilding
Current:	DOMESTIC	Sub:	single dwelling secondary structure
	RECREATION & CULTURE		museum
	AGRICULTURE		agricultural field

7. DESCRIPTION

Architectural Classification: no style (most of buildings); other: French Creole (pigeonnier, blacksmith shop, slave hospital)

Materials:

Foundation:	brick
Walls:	brick, weatherboard
Roof:	tin, asphalt
Other:	bousillage (blacksmith shop, slave hospital)

Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

Magnolia Plantation is located south of Natchitoches on Cane River, an oxbow lake of the Red River. Within the boundaries are 21 historic buildings/structures, almost all of which are nineteenth century. A wide range of historic buildings related to the nation's plantation heritage are represented, including eight c.1845 slave cabins, a slave hospital, and a nineteenth century gin house, complete with antebellum and postbellum ginning equipment. There are only two non-contributing buildings (a small ranch house away from the historic area at the north end and a tractor shed). Most of the buildings are owned and administered by the National Park Service as a unit in the Cane River Creole National Historical Park (created in 1994). The remainder are privately owned. (NPS property is delineated on the attached map.)

OVERALL SETTING AND LAYOUT

Magnolia is set in flat cotton producing country along the serpentine Cane River. The location is overwhelmingly rural and pristine. Despite its many twists and turns, Cane River runs generally north-south, with Magnolia situated on a bend on the east side. (Please refer to attached map.) In the lower Mississippi River Valley plantation buildings tended to be placed either perpendicular to the river bank, with the buildings going back for a considerable distance, or parallel to the river bank. Magnolia is an example of the latter with the buildings oriented to the Cane River and following its curve.

The single pigeonnier is located about 400 feet from the main house (downriver and closer to Cane River -- see map). Evidently it was moved to this location during the historic period (see below). Placing the pigeonnier in the vicinity of the main house was typical on Creole plantations because these tower-like structures were often seen as a symbol of the owner's wealth and social position. On more formal plantations the pigeonniers were sometimes set in pairs either in front of, or behind, the great house. This was never the case at Magnolia.

The main house is located at the north end of the property. As one moves south and east along the curve of the Cane River, there is the common plantation progression from main house, to slave hospital, to quarters, to the production area (i.e., ginning and pressing). The surviving eight slave houses are located in a double row set parallel to the Cane River.

BUILDING DESCRIPTIONS

Pigeonnier (contributing structure, mid-nineteenth century)

A single pigeon house is shown on an 1858 map of Magnolia, but in a different location from the present one. Because the present pigeon house is an early one, in all probability it was moved (during the historic period) to its present location.

The frame two story pigeonnier stands 19 feet high and 10 feet square with a low pyramidal roof. It features steep French angle braces in the pegged joinery. Evidently the lower story was traditionally used for storage. The upper story contains the pigeon roost area with access holes (for pigeons) on three elevations. Originally each of these elevations had a pigeon perching shelf on brackets set just below the holes. About 50% of this bracket and shelf system survives. In addition, the clapboard containing the access holes has been partially broken through on one elevation. Human access to both stories is provided by a pair of single leaf board and batten doors, both of which are set on the east elevation. The upper story door and doorway are original. It

should be noted that the vertical boards of the door feature a decorative bead. The lower story door opening was widened sometime after 1890. Its wider board and batten door dates from that time. (This door is in storage. The present plywood door is temporary.) Overall, about 60 to 70% of the original clapboarding survives. The remainder is patchwork.

Blacksmith Shop (contributing building, mid-nineteenth century)

This structure stands approximately 32 feet square with a central crib and a surrounding skirting shed on posts. Most of the skirting shed is open. The crib, which still contains its round brick forge base, has its own fairly steeply pitched gable roof which contrasts with the surrounding shed roof. The cribs walls are of bousillage, a building material common in French Louisiana in the colonial period and continuing into the mid-nineteenth century. It is an infill material made of mud, Spanish moss, and often deer or horse hair.

The crib is pegged with heavy studs on sills with English angle bracing of approximately 45 degrees. It has a single door with multi-layer planks held together with tightly spaced rows of clinched nails and a single window opening with a pair of shutters similarly fashioned. Overall, approximately 60 to 70% of the bousillage material remains. The rafters in the gable roof over the crib are skinned poles, while the structural system of the shed roof is conventional sawn lumber. This suggests that the shed is a later addition or that the present shed replaced an earlier one. There has been a small amount of rotted stud splicing in the crib and one of the sills is replaced. In addition, most of the shed roof posts are recent replacements. The clapboards in the upper roof gables were replaced recently by the NPS, and the building's old tin roof was replaced with a new one.

Slave Hospital/Overseer's House (contributing building, c.1835)

This medium to large size rambling hip roof cottage has been used in various capacities over the years. Its earliest known use is as a slave hospital. The building is clearly identified as such on an 1858 map of Magnolia. From 1864 until the 1890s, it was used as a residence for Magnolia's owners, the original main house having been burned by Federal troops. In the twentieth century it was the home of the plantation's overseer, or manager. It is known today by the Hertzog family and other locals as the overseer's house.

In the Creole tradition, it features bousillage construction with steep French-style angle braces. The single story is raised relatively high on brick piers. Facing the Cane River, the building originally consisted of three more or less equally sized squarish rooms in a line with a broad 12 foot gallery in the front, rear and wrapping around the southern side elevation. The evidence suggests that there were a pair of *cabinets* at the northern side elevation, one in the front and one in the rear. This gave the configuration of enclosed rooms an unusual shape that may best be described as a "T on its side." It should be noted that slave hospitals varied widely in their size and configuration. Thus the unusual layout of the Magnolia slave hospital does not stem from its role as a slave hospital *per se*. The interior features a pair of massive mantels in a simple shelf-less rectangular shape with delicate Federal moldings. Other noteworthy features include unusual double transoms over some of the windows and doors, board and batten interior doors, exposed beam ceilings and delicate chair rails inside and on the galleries. A historic structure assessment report prepared for NPS in 1997 revealed physical evidence of vertical bars in the original windows. (Sashes were added after the bars were removed.)

Sometime probably towards the end of the Greek Revival period a number of alterations were made to the building (perhaps soon after Magnolia's owners moved there in 1864). The old front *cabinet* was enlarged by taking in some of the front gallery. It appears that the present chimney and fireplace in the room were added at

this time. The fireplace is fitted with a boldly formed Greek Revival aedicule style mantel. Also, around this time the old rear gallery was enclosed for a dining room and a stair hall. Probably the stair itself dates from the original period of the house and once stood on the open gallery. This would have been typical of the Creole style.

At some point (date unknown) two fairly small historic buildings were moved up and attached to the rear elevation. Also, the rear *cabinet* was partitioned for a bathroom. The original house contained three mantels. Two (previously described) are extant. One has been lost.

When NPS acquired its portion of Magnolia, the slave hospital/overseer's house was in deteriorated condition. A recently completed project involved the replacement of some of the original fabric, that includes three of the gallery posts and virtually all of the perimeter sills. All of the clapboard siding on the northern elevation is new.

Stable (contributing building)

Located north of the slave hospital, this wood frame building is of indeterminate date, although it appears to be fifty years old. It features a gabled central portion with a shed roof wing to each side and is in a somewhat deteriorated condition.

Building of unknown use (contributing building)

West of the slave hospital, this deteriorated frame building is of indeterminate date, although it appears to be fifty years old.

Modern Tractor Shed (non-contributing structure)

Located southwest of the slave hospital is a small largely open tractor shed which is less than fifty years old.

Plantation Store (contributing building, post-Civil War)

The plantation store, a phenomenon of the post-war South, is set close to the roadway facing Cane River. The original (central) portion has a gable roof with the roof ridge running perpendicular to the river. The roof extends forward to shelter a generous entrance porch. The lean-to wings (one to each side) were added sometime later. The exact date of the original (central) portion is not known. Both it and the later wings are constructed with square nails, indicating a date from before about 1880.

The original portion is probably not pre-Civil War because: 1) it does not appear on an 1858 map of the property; 2) it features Bradford rim locks (the Bradford Company was in business from 1865 to 1905); and 3) stores were a common feature of post-war plantations, not pre-war plantations.

The main (original) part of the building consists of a large rectangular sales space in front and a small office with a fireplace and crude mantel in the rear. It features steep French angle braces in the construction. Rafters in the attic are skinned poles as are the rafters in the rear lean-to porch. The sales space features elaborate shelving

and heavy wooden counters on three sides. These items are historic and possibly original. Both the sales space and the office have cleanly cut exposed beam ceilings.

The facade features a central set of French doors, a pair of flanking windows and heavy wooden shutters. In addition, each of the wings has a front shuttered opening. The plate glass in the French doors indicates that they are a later replacement. The wing on the north side is exclusively storage space. The one on the south side incorporates storage and a small clerk's bedroom in the rear. The penciled dates 91 and 97 appear on the clerk's room door.

In a recent repair program conducted by NPS all of the perimeter sills and piers were replaced. In addition, about 70% of the clapboarding is new.

Main House (contributing building, 1890s)

According to available sources, the original main house at Magnolia was a huge galleried building dating from the 1830s. It was burned by Union soldiers in 1864, leaving the high brick basement as its major remnant. A new house was constructed at the end of the nineteenth century. Sources differ on the exact date: some asserting 1896, others 1899. The present house is very backward looking. Indeed, it probably looks rather like its predecessor, at least from the front.

Sited north of the pigeonnier and blacksmith shop, it is a vast galleried house, raised a full story above grade, with a five bay facade, a generous front gallery and an enormous rear "L" wing containing, among other things, a private chapel. The main block, facing southwest towards the river, has a very wide central hall that functions as a living room complete with its own fireplace. The staircase occupies one corner. Two rooms are set on either side of the hall, which gives way to a rear gallery that extends down the side of the "L".

The form of the house is traditional with vaguely Italianate columns and a fenestration pattern and style reminiscent of the Greek Revival. From afar it looks like a large mid-nineteenth century plantation house. details such as the very large panes of plate glass in the entrance side lights, the extensive use of narrow gauge beaded board on the interior, the numerous elaborate shop-ordered late Italianate mantels and the overall Eastlake feeling of the staircase.

Modern Residence (non-contributing building)

To the northwest of the main house (i.e., beyond the historic complex) is a small brick veneer ranch house.

Main House Privy (contributing building, mid-nineteenth century)

Set just behind the main house to the north is a two-hole frame privy with mortise and tenon construction but no pegs. It also features square nails, strap hinges and English angle braces. The entrance faces toward the southeast. The pitched roof has gables on the sides. The louvered openings on the side elevations are original; the one in the rear is newer. About 80% of the clapboarding is original. The pen stands about five feet high.

Fattening Pen (contributing structure, mid-to-late nineteenth century)

This long, low, vertically slatted structure, located to the north of the main house, was (and still is) used for fattening birds in preparation for slaughter. Consisting of four separate pens, each with its own slatted door on the southeast side, the structure culminates in a relatively steep gable roof. The rear is of flush planks.

Long Shed (contributing building, early twentieth century)

To the rear (east) of the main house is a long pitched roof storage shed much of which was evidently built from reused lumber and building parts. It is notable for its gable front, facing northwest, which incorporates a pigeon roost.

Corn Crib (contributing structure, late nineteenth or early twentieth century)

Set off in a field northeast of the main house, this structure consists of a single, gable roof crib with a surrounding skirting roof. Resting upon blocks of wood on stones, the crib is formed of plain boards placed with gaps in between and fastened with round nails. The present posts supporting the edges of the skirting roof are replacements.

Small residence/cook's house (contributing building, see below for date)

This small frame galleried cottage has traditionally been known as the cook's house. It consists of one large room in front and a narrow room behind. There are three front openings, including an unusually wide central door with four over four windows on either side. At present the exterior is covered in tar paper designed to resemble brick. The interior walls and ceilings are covered in narrow gauge beaded board. The foregoing might suggest that the house dates from the early twentieth century. However, the very wide floor boards and the mantel surround with its pegged corners and delicate Federal-looking molding suggest that it may well be much older than that. Additional investigation is needed for a more definitive date.

Eight Slave Cabins (8 contributing buildings, mid-1840s)

Extensive archaeological investigations conducted in 1996 by Dr. Bennie C. Keel, Southeast Archeological Center, NPS, suggest that the "slave village" (Keel's term) at Magnolia was laid out in a grid pattern, four cabins across and six down for a total of twenty-four cabins located southeast of the Slave Hospital/Overseer's House. Succession records indicate that five cabins were under construction in 1845. By 1926, eight brick cabins remained, as they do today. These eight are arranged as two rows of four cabins running north to south parallel to the river.

These are two-family units with one single squarish room each side of a dividing party wall containing a central chimney with crude brick mantels. The doors that currently give access from room to room in each cabin are a later alteration.

The cabins are distinguished by handsome gable parapets and common bond brick work. Originally shutters

closed over unglazed windows and over the doorways. Today each opening is filled with plywood and an inset metal ventilator. This treatment is a temporary measure taken by NPS to protect the cabins and at the same time prevent moisture retention. The simple roofing system and current metal roof covering date from a c. 1990 stabilization project. An early twentieth century photo shows one of the cabins with a crude shed-roofed porch across the front. One cabin was restored to this look within the last twenty years.

One of the cabins is only half a unit – with only one room and a chimney. The other half was probably lost to storm damage during the historic period.

After the Civil War, as was the case across the South, Magnolia's former slave houses were occupied by sharecroppers and tenant farmers. Presumably it was during the postbellum period that the above mentioned doors were cut into the party walls (i.e., turning two family slave houses, one room per family, into single family, two room houses).

Gin House (contributing building, mid-to-late nineteenth century)

Note: The following description, particularly that of the equipment, relies heavily upon recently completed HAER documentation and a National Register nomination on the Piazza Cotton Gin, Concordia Parish, Louisiana, prepared by the LA SHPO.

The 1858 map shows a gin house in approximately the same location as the present one. However, the present gin house is generally considered to be later than that time period. A report accompanying the HAER documentation notes that "the present building's size and construction quality suggest a date substantially later." (The Magnolia gin house, notes the author, "is vastly superior in materials and construction techniques to the typical facility described in the 1880 Census.") In addition, the report concludes that the present building appears to have been built all at one time. As observed by professional staff of the LA SHPO, square nails are used in the construction, which would indicate a date from before roughly 1880.

The gin house is a massive, two-story, gable roof, heavy timber structure with a corrugated metal roof (new) and clapboard siding (much of it replaced about 20 years ago). The east end incorporates a huge wood screw cotton press which was used to form cotton bales. This type of press was prevalent from around 1810 until the introduction of power screw presses between c.1840-1860. In all likelihood this press structure was retrofitted into the gin house when the latter was constructed.

According to the HAER report, "the Magnolia wood screw press differs from most of its contemporaries in its overall design and the quality of its construction." The screw and box mechanism are far more finely made than was common during the period. In contrast to typical screws which were "rudely chiseled out," the thread at the Magnolia screw is nearly perfect in its helix shape. The press does not appear to have had the typical "buzzard wings" (i.e., long poles that were attached to the top of the press and tethered to mules which walked in circles to crank the press down). Instead, the upper part of the press, which normally would have turned in the buzzard wing design, was fixed by a heavy wood frame. At Magnolia, the lower portion of the press (which included the box where the bale was formed) rotated in a clockwise direction. It should be noted that the press has a near-perfect balance with a low friction metal pivot point which necessitated a minimum of power for rotation. Exactly how the lower portion was turned is unknown, but most likely draft animals provided the power.

A completely different era in cotton production can be seen at the west end of the gin house – late nineteenth century "system ginning" as pioneered by Robert Munger. System ginning represented a technological

revolution and contributed greatly to a revitalized post-Civil War cotton industry. The system largely devised and perfected by Munger was a mechanized assembly line in which there was virtually no human contact with the cotton, and the ginning and pressing processes were unified. There were pneumatic tubes, conveyor belts, mechanical tamping, and importantly, a double box press which made it possible to produce bales continuously. Another improvement at this time was the transition from mule power to steam power. Importantly, because the Magnolia example lacks early twentieth century technological improvements, it is exemplary of a state-of-the-art late nineteenth century ginning system.

Magnolia's system gin is located on the second floor, oftentimes called the ginning floor. Most components of Munger's system are present, although the cotton suction apparatus is almost completely disassembled. The pneumatic elevator includes the fan currently outside the first level, various flue ducts, some of which appear to be lying about the gin house, and the vacuum box (also known as the separator), at present detached and lying under the condenser but originally attached to the distributor above the gin stand.

The cotton distributor, which conveys cotton to the gin stands, bears a Munger patent. The two gin stands bear the patent date of Washington Ellis, saw gin patent, 1889. Each gin stand is a two-stage boxy affair. The upper portion encases a large wooden roller featuring rows of iron spikes. These removed leaves and other foreign objects from the cotton and forced it into the ginning mechanism below. Here a series of circular saw blades with iron ribs between removed the seeds. The teeth of the saw blades literally tore shreds of cotton away from the seeds. The seeds then fell into the seed auger running at the base of the gin and were carried to a seed room, or bagging station. The seedless cotton, now called lint, was conveyed to a condenser which removed air by means of a revolving screen and dropped more densely packed cotton lint into the nearby hydraulic dual box press.

A dual box press allows for continuous production of cotton bales. While one box is being filled with lint, the other is being compressed to form a bale. Once the bale is formed and the box emptied, the press rotates to compress another bale. The press at Magnolia was hydraulically powered. It was manufactured to a Munger design by the Continental Gin Company, probably c.1900. Beneath the second, or ginning, floor is a shaft for a belt drive system powering the machinery above. While various wheels remain, the belts themselves are gone. Power was provided by a stationery steam engine located outside the gin house on a brick base. The engine is no longer extant, but the base is.

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:
Nationally: X Statewide:_ Locally:_

Applicable National Register Criteria: A X B_ C_ D_

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): A_ B_ C_ D_ E_ F_ G_

NHL Criteria: 1 & 5

NHL Theme(s): V. Developing the American Economy
1. extraction and production

Areas of Significance: agriculture

Period(s) of Significance: c.1835-1939

Significant Dates: NA

Significant Person(s): NA

Cultural Affiliation: NA

Architect/Builder: unknown

Historic Contexts: XI. Agriculture
B. Plantation Agriculture
D. The Plantation Breaks Up, Sharecropping and Tenant Farming
E. Agriculture as Business Enterprise beyond Self-Sufficiency

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

Magnolia Plantation is of national significance in the following respects:

(1) It is significant in the history of American agriculture as one of the largest and most intact plantation complexes in the southern United States.

(2) Slave cabins are extremely rare survivors in the region, much less a collection in one location.

(3) The importance of Magnolia's pressing and ginning equipment cannot be overestimated. The late nineteenth century "system" gin is an extremely rare survivor within the region, as is the antebellum screw press. As noted in the HAER documentation: "Considered in context with extant structures on the plantation, they are potentially a powerful tool with which to interpret the American South's quintessential industry – the production of raw cotton . . . "

The period of significance spans from c.1835, the date of the earliest building, to 1939, when Magnolia, following a trend across the South during the 1930s and 40s, stopped ginning its own cotton.

The plantation system represents a significant chapter in the history of American agriculture. It has its origins in India in the eighth century. Since that time "plantation regions" (i.e., regions where the plantation is the dominant form of agriculture) have developed in North Africa and various parts of the New World. In the continental United States, our plantation region comprises the former Confederate states plus some adjoining states. Plantations are an important aspect of American agricultural history, being distinct from Jeffersonian yeoman farms, manorial estates of the Hudson River and similar areas, and ranches and missions of the West. A plantation revolves around a cash crop grown on a large scale for profit. A successful plantation region requires: (1) fertile, easily tilled land available in large units; (2) abundant, landless, and cheap rural labor; (3) bulk reduction and preliminary processing techniques; (4) abundant, cheap transportation; and (5) a network of factors and factoring houses to market cash crops to other regions of the world. All these were present in the American South during the antebellum period. The plantation system continued to dominate Southern agriculture (in a modified form) in the postbellum period and on into the twentieth century.

Although the phrase "southern plantation" conjures up all sorts of images, particularly the grand white-columned mansion, the truth of the matter is that little remains to provide a true picture of what one was like. Plantations were noted for their large number of buildings – in effect, a world within a world, or a self-contained community. As one traveler noted, "the planter has a building for everything." However, in the overwhelming majority of cases, only the great house survives today. Plantation complexes with a significant complement of outbuildings are rare, especially when one considers the thousands that once existed. (See the NHL nomination for Evergreen Plantation in St. John the Baptist Parish prepared by the LA SHPO in 1991.) Phone interviews with senior SHPO staff members in other southern states revealed that the typical complex, when it does exist, might have six to ten buildings. By contrast, Magnolia has twenty-one historic buildings, including a main house and its immediate dependencies, a slave hospital, a pigeonnier, eight brick slave houses, and a gin house complete with antebellum and postbellum ginning and pressing equipment. It and a handful of other good-size complexes (most late nineteenth century) are all that is left to show the look of a plantation in the southern United States. Magnolia is particularly important because it presents a largely complete complement of buildings – from the main house and its dependencies, to a postbellum store, a slave hospital, slave houses, and production facilities. The store survives to represent an important character-defining feature of the postbellum plantation. In terms of major building types, the barns are missing.

Magnolia is particularly distinguished by its double row of eight brick slave houses. While thousands upon thousands of these buildings once existed across the South, they are today exceedingly rare, as confirmed in the above mentioned interviews. Typically, a state might have maybe six or so surviving examples, with one on one plantation, two on another, etc. The standard row arrangement seen at Magnolia, while once the norm across the South, is virtually unheard of today. Only about nine plantations in the South retain what could be considered a slave row. All are in the five to ten house range except Evergreen on the Mississippi River in Louisiana (NHL), which has a double row of twenty-two cabins.

Magnolia is also of national significance in the history of American agriculture because of its extremely rare ginning equipment. Its antebellum screw press and late nineteenth century system ginning apparatus enable one to understand cotton production technology over a broad spectrum of time. In 1979, sources at the Smithsonian indicated that its c.1840 screw press was one of only five or six extant in the South. That number may well have diminished in the past twenty years. Recent research by the LA SHPO staff, again with their counterparts across the South, revealed that system gins like that at Magnolia are also extraordinary survivors. While Magnolia's c.1840 wooden screw press represents the early era, its system gin represents the remarkable technological improvements made in cotton ginning in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

Cotton emerged as the principal cash crop in the plantation South during the nineteenth century largely due to Eli Whitney's invention of the cotton gin in 1793. Although rather basic by today's standards, Whitney's gin was the first mechanical device to remove seeds from the cotton, an operation that previously was done laboriously by hand. A mechanical device, in short, made cotton a profitable cash crop.

A fairly standard system emerged for processing the cotton crop for market. Cotton was hand-picked and ginned on the plantation and then compressed into four or five hundred pound bales for ease of transport. In the early 1870s the typical plantation gin was still operating much as it had in the antebellum period. Hand-picked cotton was unloaded from wagons in baskets and handed up to the second floor of the gin where it was placed in storage bins. Power was provided by a mule tethered to a large crank set on the floor below. The cranking mechanism was connected with drive wheels, pulleys, and leather belts which powered the gin stands above. Men carried the cotton by the basketload from the storage bin to a hopper atop each gin stand. A separate crew usually carried the lint by the armload to the cotton press, which at this stage was often in a separate building. There they tamped it into the press box by hand and foot. A bale was then pressed into shape by means of a mule or mules turning a large wooden screw press mechanism. One account survives of a medium size ginning and pressing operation of the 1870s in Texas, indicating that the typical production per day, with a full crew and a long day, was only six bales. It was indeed a slow and labor-intensive process, often taking months to process an entire crop.

All this changed with the advent of "system ginning," in which a similar size operation could produce four to five bales an hour. System ginning, as described in Part 7, represented what has been termed a technological "revolution" in cotton production and contributed greatly to a revitalized post-Civil War cotton industry. A key figure in the development of system ginning was Robert Munger, with manufacturing plants in Dallas and Birmingham. The system largely devised and perfected by Munger was a mechanized assembly line in which there was virtually no human contact with the cotton, and the ginning and pressing processes were unified. There were pneumatic tubes, conveyor belts, mechanical tamping, and importantly, a double box press which made it possible to produce bales continuously. Another improvement was the transition from mule power to steam power.

The foregoing technological advances coincided with a shift from individual plantation gins (like Magnolia) to

large gins that serviced area farmers. These often could be quite large – for example, with two batteries of gin stands and six stands per battery – truly a large-scale industrial operation. Magnolia, however, continued to gin its own cotton until 1939.

Although cotton gins would have existed by the thousands across the South (either plantation gins or community gins that serviced various area farmers), extremely few historic examples (more than 50 years old) survive today, as was determined by contacting SHPO offices and other sources across the region. There are believed to be no surviving early mule-powered gins, and there are only three known steam-powered system gins – the Piazza gin, originally in Mississippi but relocated to Concordia Parish, Louisiana (NR), the Magnolia gin (NR), and a gin in Arkansas disassembled (including the machinery) and moved to Old Washington State Park in 1975. Experts in Texas reveal that there are a few historic twentieth century gins surviving there, but none are steam-powered. The exact number is unknown; all are abandoned but one; and some of these may have lost their historic machinery. Texas' most important example is the Burton gin, which opened in 1914 and is made operational once a year. Originally steam-powered, it was later converted to diesel power.

Early gins are so rare, virtually non-existent, because continuing technological improvements rendered them obsolete. For example, gins were replaced wholesale across the South in the 1930s and '40s due to the advent of plants with huge processing capacity and features such as bulk cleaning and feeding, hydraulic presses, diesel power, etc. Major changes occurred after World War II with the widespread shift from hand-picked to machine-picked cotton. Mechanical harvesting stripped the cotton plant, bringing with it a great deal more trash than hand harvesting (i.e., leaves, twigs, etc.). Removing this additional refuse required new machines and considerable re-tooling.

Historical Background

Magnolia Plantation was established in the 1830s by Ambrose Lecomte I (1760-1834) and Ambrose Lecomte II (1807-1883). Part of the land had been obtained in the colonial period by Jean Baptiste Lecomte, in a French grant of 1753. Then additional holdings were purchased in the 1820s and '30s, with the plantation eventually comprising more than 7800 acres. In about 1840, according to family tradition, Ambrose Lecomte II built the original main house at Magnolia.

Census data from 1850 suggest that by that time Magnolia was prospering. In that year, Ambrose Lecomte was 43 years old, the owner of 182 slaves and $125,000 worth of real estate. His wife Desiree was 32 years old, and with them in the household were four daughters and a son. In 1852, Matthew Hertzog, 24 years old, married Lecomte's 21 year old daughter Atala. Soon afterward he assumed management of the plantation, although Ambrose Lecomte II retained majority ownership. (Ownership between Hertzog and Lecomte was split 40-60.)

As of 1860, Lecomte was the largest slaveholder in Natchitoches Parish and the largest producer of cotton. He owned 7,835 acres of land, of which 2,240 were improved. His 234 slaves lived in 70 slave dwellings. (These figures, and those that follow from 1860, represent all of Lecomte's holdings, not just Magnolia.) The previous year he had produced l, l33 bales (450 pound bales) of cotton and 20,000 bushels of Indian corn. He owned $190,915 worth of real estate and $257,050 worth of personal property.

The decade of the 1860s brought great changes at Magnolia. In 1864, after the battles of Mansfield and Pleasant Hill, the army of Union General Nathaniel Banks retreated to Alexandria by way of the Cane River country, burning the main house at Magnolia. With the "big house" gone, the family lived in the nearby former slave hospital.

Although the Lecomte-Hertzog holdings declined considerably in value by the 1870 census, the plantation continued to function as a large agricultural unit. Slave labor was replaced by sharecroppers and day laborers. A new unit on the plantation was the store, which developed into a prosperous business. An inventory taken at the time of Ambrose Lecomte II's death in 1883 shows store accounts valued at $12,912. Merchandise included medicine, food, clothing and plantation supplies. Hertzog and his wife inherited Magnolia from Lecomte, although portions of the estate were auctioned in 1887. Matthew's wife, Atala, died October 31, 1897, and he died May 25, 1903.

Magnolia continued to function as a working cotton plantation under subsequent Hertzog generations. Today it is owned jointly by the Hertzog family and the National Park Service, Department of the Interior. Although vastly reduced in size, some of the plantation acreage remains in cotton cultivation.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

__ Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
_x Previously Listed in the National Register.
__ Previously Determined Eligible by the National Register.
__ Designated a National Historic Landmark.
_x Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: # LA 1193
_x Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: # LA 11

Primary Location of Additional Data:

_x State Historic Preservation Office
__ Other State Agency
_x Federal Agency (Cane River Creole National Historical Park)
__ Local Government
__ University
__ Other (Specify Repository):

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: approx. 70 acres

UTM References:

	Zone	Easting	Northing
A:	15	506180	3491060
B:	15	505560	3489930
C:	15	505200	3490700

Verbal Boundary Description: The boundary is outlined on the attached USGS map.

Boundary Justification:

Boundaries follow the present-day combined property lines of the land at Magnolia owned by the Hertzog family and that owned by NPS. In so doing, they encompass all extant buildings, the slave house grid (per recent archaeological investigations), and recognize the rural setting of the property, including some cotton acreage.

11. FORM PREPARED BY

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DESIGNATED A NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK ON
January 3, 2001

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