

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received OCT 31 1984

date entered DEC 5 1984

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic N/A

and/or common The Neo-Classical Architecture of Bayou Rapides TR

2. Location

street & number Bayou Rapides N/A not for publication

city, town Alexandria X vicinity of

state LA code 22 county Rapides Parish code 079

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

4. Owner of Property

name multiple ownership

street & number

city, town vicinity of state

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Rapides Parish Courthouse

street & number 701 Murray Street P. O. Box 952

city, town Alexandria state LA 71301

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title LA Historic Sites Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes X no

date 1977-78 federal X state county local

depository for survey records LA State Historic Preservation Office

city, town Baton Rouge state LA

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date <u> N/A </u>
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Neo-Classical Architecture of Bayou Rapides is a thematic nomination consisting of ten farm-plantation houses which collectively form a local stylistic statement. The wood frame, one-and-a-half story residences are located along a roughly twenty mile stretch of the bayou and all but one has a rural setting. Ranging in date from c.1825 to c.1885, all are basically in the Greek Revival style, although two also feature noteworthy Federal details. Despite some alterations, each house retains its National Register eligibility, as explained below and in the attached survey forms.

Neo-Classical is generally considered to have been the dominant architectural trend in America during the first half of the nineteenth century. It includes the delicate Adamesque-Federal as well as the more stark Greek Revival. Although these are often thought of as separate and distinct styles, they are united by three factors: (1) They both ultimately reflect the same archeological-classicizing tendency in European architecture during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. (2) They are both fundamentally different from the Victorian styles that succeeded them. (3) On the local level, such as at Bayou Rapides, they run together so that the distinction between them is often very blurred.

The farm and plantation houses of Bayou Rapides show how the national Neo-Classical tendency was reflected in rural central Louisiana. The builders of the Bayou Rapides houses all interpreted the prevailing Neo-Classical taste in the same way, despite differences in size and date of construction. They did not look to Eastern precedents or even grand plantation houses in the region for inspiration. Instead they applied typical details and features to a traditional standard form. In doing so they created a homogeneous group of buildings which resemble each other despite vast differences in date. This type of architecture is properly termed provincial in that high style or high style derived features are imprinted onto a vernacular form.

In this case the vernacular form is the traditional story-and-a-half galleried plantation cottage. General characteristics of the type include: (1) Frame construction raised two or three feet above grade. (2) Gable end roofs which come down over the front gallery and which have a relatively steep pitch. (3) Front galleries. There are no side galleries as one might find in a Creole plantation house. (4) Houses at least two rooms wide and two rooms deep. Most of the larger ones have central halls.

In the Bayou Rapides area this basic form is treated with fairly standard Neo-Classical features. To begin with, all have Doric port galleries with entablatures. All galleries are relatively light in proportion regardless of the date of construction. The massiveness of the mid-nineteenth century Greek Revival seems to be entirely missing. Secondly, most feature Neo-Classical mantels of some sort. (Two have lost them.) One has Federal mantels, five have Greek Revival aedicule style mantels, and two have transitional mantels. All mantels are wooden and all but the two at Geneva are either relatively simple in design or fairly standard for the period. There is no elaborate carving except at Geneva. All but two of the ten houses have simple details such as plain window and door frames and little in the way of interior cornices. The exceptions are Oxland with its Federal window and door surrounds and China Grove with its shoulder molded

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Architecture

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7. Description (continued)

fenestration, pocket doors, and drip cornices. Here again, although these two houses have details which are locally exceptional, they are no more than standard for medium size plantation houses in the state. The overall simplicity of the Bayou Rapides houses can be dramatically illustrated if one considers that of ten Neo-Classical houses, only one features shoulder moldings--a standard feature elsewhere.

Geography:

On the eve of the Civil War Rapides Parish was about twice as large as it is today. It consisted of approximately 2800 square miles and possessed some of the richest cotton and sugar producing land in Louisiana. This was reflected in its plantation holdings. According to the 1860 census records, there were eighty-nine major slaveholdings in the parish, eighty-three of which were owned by parish residents. (Major slaveholdings are defined as fifty or more slaves.) The average size of a large slaveholding was 125, which was the highest in the state. Some of the best land was along Bayou Rapides, part of an oxbow which cut off the Red River. (The oxbow actually has three sections: Bayou Rapides, Bayou Cotile, and Bayou Jean de Jean.)

Given the obvious wealth of the area, which was comparable to the great plantations of the Mississippi River Road, it seems odd that the Bayou Rapides planters should have built in such a humble way. This is particularly puzzling when one considers that the area had direct access to steamboats and hence to New Orleans. In our view this probably cannot be explained, but it helps establish the local style (previously described) as a noteworthy architectural phenomenon.

All the Bayou Rapides houses, of course, are set along the bayou. All but one enjoys a rural setting amid flat farmland. The exception is Conerly, which has become the focus of a small trailer park. Most of the houses face the bayou directly with a setback of a few hundred feet. None retain any contemporaneous outbuildings and none feature any formal or pretentious landscaping. The only landscape character most of them have is established by the bayou and adjacent large old trees.

Assessment of Integrity:

The houses along Bayou Rapides have undergone various alterations over the years, but each retains some special aspect or feature which establishes it as independently architecturally significant (rarity and/or superiority). There is, however, one alteration which merits special attention. In the past forty years Island Home, China Grove, Geneva, Hope, Longview, and Eden have all been fitted with false galleries. These are hoods installed along the top of the original gallery to provide additional

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7. Description (continued)

protection against the rain. Although they are not in keeping with the Classical style of the houses, the original Classical gallery elements are easily discernible. Hence the false galleries interfere with one's perception of the original style of the houses only slightly. In addition, they can easily be removed. For these reasons we feel that houses fitted with false galleries should not be disqualified from National Register eligibility.

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/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates c.1825–c.1885 **Builder/Architect** N/A

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph) Criterion C

The Neo-Classical residences of Bayou Rapides are locally significant in the area of architecture within the context of Rapides Parish on the eve of the Civil War. They are rare exemplars of their style and important cultural indicators of their time and place.

The ten Neo-Classical houses included in the nomination were chosen from survey data for Rapides Parish, Vernon Parish, and Grant Parish. (On the eve of the Civil War Rapides Parish consisted of the present-day parish as well as most of Vernon and Grant Parishes.) In examining the survey material, it was discovered that although there were a few isolated Neo-Classical residences located throughout the old parish, Bayou Rapides had the only cohesive collection reflecting a single water transportation system. The Bayou Rapides houses also comprise the majority of remaining Neo-Classical houses in the area. Finally, they have a consistent character which gives them a collective regional stamp (see Item 7). In summation, it was decided that the Bayou Rapides houses stand for the plantation heritage of the area.

Their importance as a group of Neo-Classical houses can be seen if one examines the census records of 1860. On the eve of the Civil War, there were eighty-three large slaveholdings (50+ slaves) owned by parish residents. Presumably there were also numerous slaveholdings of less than fifty. If overseers houses are included, it is fair to say that at one time there must have been well over 100 Neo-Classical farm and plantation houses in the old parish.

Survey data reveals that there are only eighteen surviving examples today. Four of these are isolated landmarks which are not located along Bayou Rapides. Kent House (National Register) is located along Bayou Rapides, but it is a French Creole plantation house and consequently does not fit into the overall Bayou Rapides architectural theme. This leaves thirteen Bayou Rapides Neo-Classical farm and plantation houses, three of which were excluded from the nomination because they had been modified beyond all recognition. Modifications include new facades and a loss of most Neo-Classical details.

The ten nominated residences represent the architectural mainstream in the area during much of the nineteenth century. Given their humble character, they have much to say about the state of taste and culture in an area which certainly had the means to build on a grander scale. They are also rare surviving examples of their type as one can see from the above statistics. Some of the Bayou Rapides houses have individual significance beyond this general assessment. This is addressed in the survey forms.

9. Major Bibliographical References

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

10. Geographical Data

SEE EACH INDIVIDUAL SURVEY FORM AND SKETCH MAP
FOR GEOGRAPHICAL DATA, BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION, ETC.

Acreage of nominated property N/A

Quadrangle name N/A

Quadrangle scale N/A

UTM References

N/A

A

Zone Easting Northing

B

Zone Easting Northing

C

D

E

F

G 

H | | | | | | | | | |

Verbal boundary description and justification

See sketch map for each property.

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

state	code	county	code
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state	code	county	code
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11. Form Prepared By

Assisted by Central Louisiana Historical Association, Rae Swent, President, and Dr. Alice Hunter Chilton, Bayouside

name/title National Register Staff

organization Division of Historic Preservation
State of Louisiana

date July 1984

street & number P. O. Box 44247

telephone 504- 922-0358

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 X 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

Robert B. DeBlieux

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date October 9, 1984

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

Patrick Andrews
for **Keeper of the National Register**

date 12/5/84

Attest:

Chief of Registration

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

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Architecture

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Bibliography:

Historic Standing Structures Survey Files, Rapides, Vernon, and Grant Parishes,
Louisiana State Historic Preservation Office.

Whittington, G. P. Rapides Parish, Louisiana: A History. Reprinted from the
Louisiana Historical Quarterly, 1932, 1933, 1934, 1935. Reprinted
by the Alexandria Committee of the National Society of the Colonial
Dames of America, 1970.

Barber, Patsy K. Historic Cotile. Baptist Message Press, 1966.

Menn, Joseph K. The Large Slaveholders of Louisiana - 1860. New Orleans: Pelican
Publishing Company, 1964.

Historical data on each house supplied by Alice Hunter Chilton, the owner of Bayouside.

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Multiple Resource Area
Thematic Group

dnr-11

Name Neo-Classical Architecture of Bayou Rapides Thematic ResourcesState LOUISIANA

Accept cover form - Patrick Andrews 12/5/84

Nomination/Type of Review

Date/Signature

1. Conerly House

Substantive Review

for Keeper accept Patrick Andrews 12/5/84

Attest

2. Hopson House

Entered in the
National Register

for Keeper Helene Byrum 12/5/84

Attest

3. Geneva (Vanderlick House)

Entered in the
National Register

for Keeper Helene Byrum 12/5/84

Attest

4. Oxland (Brown House)

Entered in the
National Register

for Keeper Helene Byrum 12/5/84

Attest

5. China Grove

Entered in the
National Register

for Keeper Helene Byrum 12/5/84

Attest

6. Hope (Dunnam, Frank, House)

Entered in the
National Register

Keeper Helene Byrum 12/13/84

Attest

7. Eden

Entered in the
National Register

for Keeper Helene Byrum 12/5/84

Attest

8. Island Home

Entered in the
National Register

for Keeper Helene Byrum 12/5/84

Attest

9. Longview

Entered in the
National Register

for Keeper Helene Byrum 12/5/84

Attest

10. Bayouside (Dunnam, Milton, House
(Already listed 3/26/80))

Keeper

Attest