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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form

This form is for use in documenting multiple property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Type all entries.

A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

Louisiana's French Creole Architecture

B. Associated Historic Contexts

Louisiana's French Creole Architecture, c.1732 - c.1911

C. Geographical Data

French Louisiana: The riverine areas of central and southern Louisiana, and the swamps, marshes and prairies of southern Louisiana. (Refer to Fig. No. 1.) The following parishes are included: Acadia, Ascension, Assumption, Avoyelles, Concordia, East Baton Rouge, Evangeline, Iberia, Iberville, Jefferson, Lafayette, Lafourche, Livingston, Plaquemines, Pointe Coupee, Rapides, St. Bernard, St. Charles, St. Landry, St. James, St. John the Baptist, St. Martin, St. Mary, Terrebonne, Vermilion and West Baton Rouge.

Orleans and Natchitoches are also Creole parishes (refer to Fig. No. 1). However, they were excluded from this study on the grounds that their Creole architecture has been well surveyed and previously nominated. For the purpose of this project we are examining only those parishes of French Louisiana which have not yet had their Creole architecture officially recognized or nominated to the National Register.

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D. Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Planning and Evaluation.

Leslie Tassin — March 4, 1991

Signature of certifying official Louisiana SHPO - Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism — Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

I, hereby, certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

Mary Edeman — 4/22/91

Signature of the Keeper of the National Register — Date

E. Statement of Historic Contexts

Discuss each historic context listed in Section B.

In its sixty-six years of political control over Louisiana and the upper Mississippi Valley, France laid the foundation for a distinctive cultural region which was to survive well into the nineteenth century. In many ways it still survives today. It is this cultural region which we term Creole. The story is the heritage of a relatively weak colonial society which borrowed extensively from its neighbors while always maintaining its own distinctiveness.

Some explanation of the term "Creole" is appropriate. Nominally, a Creole is a person of European descent living in the New World. In Louisiana, Creoles are by and large of French descent. However, the word Creole has many different meanings within different disciplines, and these meanings are often confused. The basic concept is often one of mixture. For example, a person of mixed black and white ancestry is traditionally called a "Creole of Color".

Creole architecture is the building tradition associated with Creole settlers in Louisiana, the Gulf Coast, and the Mississippi Valley. The sense of the word "Creole" which implies a mixture is also applicable to Creole architecture. This is because the Creole architectural tradition is ultimately the product of several different nationalities and influences amalgamated into a uniquely American architectural type in the West Indies, the Gulf Coast, and the Mississippi Valley.

Scattered examples of Creole architecture remain standing in the Gulf Coast states of Mississippi and Alabama and the Upper Mississippi Valley communities of St. Genevieve, Kaskaskia, Prairie du Rocher, Prairie du Ponte, and Cahokia (see Figure 2). However, the majority of historic Creole buildings surviving in the United States is found in present-day Louisiana. Louisiana's Creole parishes lie in the central and southern portions of the state (refer to Fig. No. 1). With the exception of the cities of New Orleans and Natchitoches (which are excluded due to previous coverage in the National Register), this section is almost entirely rural. Thus, it is Louisiana's rural Creole architecture which constitutes the subject of this submission. We are limiting its period of significance to between c. 1732 (the date of the earliest extant example) and 1911, the last documented construction date of a French Creole house.

Creole architecture is a distinctive building tradition associated with American tropical and subtropical environments. For our purposes, the typical Creole house can be described as follows. Its most important features include 1) generous galleries or verandas, 2) a broad spreading roofline, 3) gallery roofs supported by lightweight wooden colonnettes, 4) placement of the principal rooms well above grade, (sometimes a full story above the ground), 5) the use of a form of construction utilizing a heavy timber frame combined with an infill made of brick (briquette entre poteaux) or a mixture of mud and moss called bousillage, 6) multiple French doors, and 7) French wraparound mantels. Creole architecture is also characterized by certain geometric conventions. These include the characteristic system of establishing the floorplan, which consists of a central core of a few rooms and various optional ancillary spaces which encircle the central core. This gives the Creole house a tradition of expanding outward in all directions.

The Creole house is often stereotyped as Louisiana's native architecture. However, its origins are much more complex than the stereotype implies. Probably the ultimate ancestor of the Creole galleried house is the double loggia plan

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house popular in Northern Italy between c. 1450 and 1580 and introduced into the Spanish West Indian colonies at the beginning of the second decade of the sixteenth century. The double loggia house was introduced in the Spanish islands of Hispaniola, Cuba and Jamaica as well as into Mexico as early as 1535. Soon, the front loggia was replaced by a full-length front gallery, but the rear loggia was kept in its original configuration. When Frenchmen began settling the Caribbean, they adopted this house type but changed the room arrangement from a single central living room to an asymmetrical salle (parlor) and chambre (bedroom) arrangement. This established the basic French West Indian Creole plan, which was brought to Louisiana and served as the inspiration for developments which ultimately resulted in the classic Creole raised plantation house.

The setting for the development of Louisiana's French Creole architecture is both geographically broad and chronologically deep. Its roots lie in the geopolitics of North America in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. As early as 1675 the French Canadians Marquette and Joliet had explored most of the Mississippi River Valley. In the 1680s, other Frenchmen, beginning with La Salle, began to establish forts and fortified trading centers in the north. On April 9, 1682, at the mouth of the Great River, La Salle formally took possession of the entire Mississippi Valley and all connecting waters--from the Appalachians to the Rockies--for King Louis XIV.

The French had three principal aims in their drive to explore and settle the Mississippi Valley. One was to obtain their share of the vast mineral riches of the continent--something which the Spanish empire to the south had accomplished all too well. A second was to control the lucrative fur trade with the Indians. A third was to limit the expansion of the growing English empire in North America. The first goal proved fruitless, as few minerals were discovered. In the second, the French coureurs de bois (wood runners) were successful in establishing a highly lucrative trade network with the Indians, both to the east and west of the Mississippi River. The last aim, however, was the most important. Control of the Mississippi Valley became increasingly critical to the success of the entire French colonial venture in North America. Success in colonizing the Mississippi Valley would have established for the French a huge empire in North America and a dominant position in the New World. Unfortunately for France, she proved incapable of meeting the challenge of maintaining a successful level of control over this vast area.

The French began colonization of the lands claimed by La Salle in 1699, with the arrival by ship of the first seventy permanent settlers under Iberville. The towns of Mobile and Biloxi were established on the Gulf Coast in the earliest years of the eighteenth century. By 1714, plantations were being established along the timber lined shores of Louisiana's rivers and bayous, as far to the

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north as Natchitoches. It was during this period that the building tradition which we now know as Creole began to develop.

The locations from which different groups of Frenchmen immigrated to early Gulf Coast and Louisiana communities is significant when considering how Creole architecture evolved. Roughly equal numbers of Frenchmen arrived from the French West Indies, from Quebec, and from France. Each of these three regions was characterized by its own distinct tastes in domestic architecture, though there were certainly similarities between them. The new arrivals brought these building traditions with them to Louisiana.

An amalgamation of architectural elements developed. It was based on vernacular adaptations, employed locally available materials and methods, and copied forms previously familiar to the West Indian Creoles and native Frenchmen. French cottages with traditional joinery were adapted and combined with the previously described Caribbean model. Bousillage was used for wall construction.

New Orleans was established in 1718. However, a dreadful hurricane struck the town on September 11, 1722, and destroyed every building but one in the community (Wilson 1968: 13). The entire village was then rebuilt, using a formal grid plan laid out by engineers de la Tour and de Pauger around a central square or place de armes (Wilson 1968:3-15). Each house and yard in the rebuilt community had to be enclosed within a pieux (picket) fence. Formal parterre gardens laid out in geometrical patterns were set behind almost every permanent house. From the beginning of this rebuilding period, houses which we now identify as Creole were being built.

Over the next decade, professional engineers contributed to the development of high style architecture in New Orleans. Houses such as that for the Company of the Indies (La Direction), the Intendance Building and the first Ursuline Convent were characterized by formal facades and symmetrical plans. They were timber-frame buildings with brick nogging, interior hallways and (if two-stories tall) interior staircases. The public buildings of New Orleans should have provided a ready source of architectural models for settlers. However, most of the houses of New Orleans and of the countryside were vernacular forms which eschewed the formal styling and symmetry of the public buildings.

Indigo plantations were established above and below New Orleans on the natural levees of the Mississippi. Most land owners were absentee planters--living in New Orleans and traveling out to their concessions by boat. In the first decade most plantations had no permanent houses on them but, rather, small and temporary houses for the use of the owner, plus various sheds, slave quarters and indigo processing buildings (Wilson 1989). By between 1750 and 1765, planters had successfully applied slave labor to the production of indigo, cotton

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and tobacco. Sufficient wealth was available for the construction of large Creole plantation houses, which became the standard for the colony.

The French dominance of architecture which led to the creation of the Creole plantation house took place despite changes which affected both the population and the political life of the territory. By c. 1718 the population of Louisiana was less than one thousand non-Indians. Although the immigration rate was high over the period 1717-1721, the death rate was also very high. Only about 3,000 Europeans and, perhaps, 1,000 African slaves survived by 1721. Over the next decade, each group grew by about 1,000 persons. This somewhat slow growth resulted from both economic difficulties and the problems of colonial life. Unfortunately, word of the hardships suffered by the colonists during the period 1703-1715 reached France. It became nearly impossible to recruit a sufficient number of skilled French colonists to Louisiana for decades thereafter. This problem was compounded after the failure of the bank controlling the Company of the Indies, which governed the Louisiana colony for the crown. Speculation drove the price of the company's stock to great heights before the bubble burst in 1722, resulting in the loss of many personal fortunes and souring the opinion of the people of France towards Louisiana.

Frenchmen continued to trickle in from France, however, particularly soldiers for the militia. Young women (casket girls) were brought from the convents and even prostitutes from the streets of Paris. Unruly sons of nobles were occasionally sent to the colony to make whatever fortune their untapped energies could command. West Indian Creoles continued to come with their slaves. In 1724, the first boatload of slaves arrived directly from Africa, and, of course, many children of mixed (Indian-European) liaisons were incorporated into the Creole amalgam.

The colony became more of an ethnic melange. The Company of the Indies recruited hundreds of German families to Louisiana between 1718 and 1722. They left the war-torn Palatinate in response to fantastic advertisements circulated by paid agents called "Neulanders". Most German families eventually settled above New Orleans on the banks of the Mississippi, where they adapted to the dominant French Creole culture. The hard working Germans supplied meat and garden vegetables for the city throughout the colonial period. The houses of the Germans were indistinguishable from those of the Frenchmen who settled around them. Why the Germans exerted so little impact on Creole architecture is unknown, but before long, the Germans had totally adopted the Creole method of construction. Many of the Germans may have been previously familiar with aspects of French culture, as they derived from that area of Germany close to the French border. Whatever the reason, the French language and culture of the area completely absorbed the German population; many Germans even changed their names. For example, "Zweig" (the German surname meaning "twig") was changed to "LaBranche", its French equivalent. Despite the arrival of the Germans,

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Louisiana's population remained small. When France ceded Louisiana to Spain in 1763, the total population of the colony stood at only about 5,000 Europeans and 3,000 slaves. At the same time, the British colonies on the Atlantic seaboard numbered approximately 1,700,000.

The purpose of the above mentioned transfer was to keep the Louisiana territory from falling into English hands, as it became evident to France that she could not protect her colony indefinitely against ever rising English power. The Spaniards would rule Louisiana for almost forty years. Because Spanish administrators and soldiers were slow in arriving, they did not obtain effective control until 1769. Even after that date, they failed to exercise much influence on the prevailing culture. Some large land grants (situos) were given to Spanish noblemen, but for the most part, the newly arrived Spanish population resided in and around the city of New Orleans. The new Spanish laws (Law of the Indies) had some effect on the architecture of New Orleans, but essentially none on the well-established Creole architecture of the countryside. Like the French before them, the Spanish attempted to lure German settlers to the Louisiana colony. Like previous waves of German settlers, these new arrivals adopted French culture and Creole architecture.

The years between 1765 and 1790 were a time of increasing prosperity when more large plantation houses were constructed along the banks of the Mississippi River. Creole architecture dominated because the French continued to dominate. Their numbers reinforced by the arrival of French Acadian (Cajun) settlers from Canada, the French outnumbered both the ruling Spaniards and the Anglo Americans who began immigrating to Louisiana during the last quarter of the eighteenth century.

The events which would bring the Acadians to Louisiana began in 1755, when the English General Lawrence suddenly expelled almost 6,000 of the approximately 16,000 French Acadians who were residing in Nova Scotia (Acadia). Because of England's continuing hostility toward France, the Acadians were considered a threat to English security. A decade later, after the French and Indian War had ended and transportation was available once again, these unfortunates began arriving in Louisiana. Eventually, over 3,000 Acadians arrived. They settled mostly along the Mississippi River, on Bayou Lafourche, and further west, along Bayou Teche. In Nova Scotia, they had been hunters and trappers, wheat farmers, and cattle ranchers. In Louisiana, some returned to cattle ranching on the western prairies, but most remained small farmers (Hamilton 1987, Brasseaux 1987). Like the Germans who had arrived four decades earlier, the Acadians augmented the diet of New Orleans, transporting both beef and vegetables through the swamps and down the Mississippi to the city. Unlike the Germans, they maintained their ethnic distinctiveness and persisted in a kind of mistrust of the Creoles well into the twentieth century. The Acadians enjoyed the

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distinction of being one of the only two groups which made any design changes in the basic Creole house (see part F).

The other group which affected Creole design was the Anglo-Americans, who arrived in Louisiana at the end of the eighteenth century. This group was to make more of an impact on French Creole architecture than any of the earlier immigrant populations. Two events contributed to the American immigration--the Revolution of 1776 and the invention of a process for crystallizing sugar. When thirteen of Britain's North American colonies declared their independence, the new Spanish governor of Louisiana, Bernardo de Galvez, adopted an anti-British and pro-American policy. A remarkably able military leader, Galvez united the Creoles, the Acadians, the Germans, the slaves, Indian allies, and his own Spanish troops to form a formidable army. He attacked the British in Baton Rouge, Mobile and Pensacola, and drove them completely from the area of West Florida. These actions helped to secure independence for the United States. Galvez also opened Louisiana's borders to the Americans. Almost immediately after the war, they began drifting overland into Louisiana and floating down the Mississippi on flatboats. Thanks partially to this influx, the population of Spanish Louisiana rose from about 5,000 Europeans to about 21,000 (plus a slightly greater number of blacks) by 1788.

At almost the same time, a new technology brought swift changes in the economy and perspective of the region's citizens. What Eli Whitney's cotton gin did for cotton production in the South in 1793, Etienne de Bore's method of crystallizing sugar did for the plantation economy of Louisiana only two years later. Suddenly, huge profits could be made from the production of sugar. Although it was the French Creoles who originally perfected the process of sugar manufacture, it was eventually the Anglos who most profited from it. On hearing the stories of enormous profits to be reaped in Louisiana, even greater numbers of Anglo-American settlers found their way into the territory. They came from nearly every state. By 1806, a total of 50,000 people of all kinds lived in the colony. The Americans brought with them their own architectural traditions, including an increasing emphasis upon symmetry, the central hall floorplan, and the introduction of fashionable details from styles popular in the Eastern states. A blending of the Creole and American building traditions occurred, with the Creole remaining the dominant of the two until well into the nineteenth century.

Although the Americans would eventually come to dominate Louisiana, the territory received one more major influx of French immigrants during the early years of the American period. The new arrivals were Creoles from Saint Domingue (or Haiti). In 1791, that island's black slaves rose in rebellion against their masters. In a complex series of revolts which lasted a decade, the slaves eventually threw off the French colonial mantle. Thousands of French and mulatto planters and bourgeoisie were cast from Haitian shores. Its sugar industry was

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utterly destroyed. Many of the immigrants moved to Cuba, waiting until such time as they might return to the French colony. In the meantime, Napoleon had taken control of the revolutionary government of France. In October of 1802, Charles IV of Spain, under pressure from Napoleon, signed the retrocession order, giving Louisiana back to France. Almost immediately, Napoleon sold it to the United States for fifteen million dollars. Shortly, thereafter, Napoleon attacked Spain. The government of Spain, in retaliation, ordered the thousands of Haitian refugees out of Cuba. Between 1806 and 1810, they poured into New Orleans, doubling the population of the city. Groups of royalist refugees from France also arrived. Thus, the French-speaking population of Louisiana continued to exercise enormous control over the culture (and architecture) of what was now an American territory. However, the tide soon would turn.

Because they brought new energy and new ways of doing business, the Americans effected many aspects of Louisiana life after they assumed control of the territory in 1803. Soon after their arrival, hundreds of sugar mills lined the banks of the Mississippi. Cajun and German farms were bought up by wealthy planters from the East, forcing the small planters further back into the swamps or out onto the prairies. The importation of illegal slaves increased dramatically, thanks to freebooters such as Jean Lafitte. Before the end of the first American decade, the steamboat had been invented and a new wave of prosperity was rising. Agricultural and manufacturing products from every community in the Mississippi-Missouri-Ohio valley began pouring through New Orleans. All sorts of businesses prospered during this territorial period. The city and its surrounding hinterlands experienced unprecedented economic and population growth.

Not all Frenchmen appreciated the benefits of life in the new American society. Some French Creoles who disliked the American administration of Louisiana moved to the Mississippi Gulf Coast, as far to the east as Pensacola, to escape the rising tide of Anglo influence.

F. Associated Property Types

I. Name of Property Type The Creole House

II. Description

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

III. Significance

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

IV. Registration Requirements

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

[X] See continuation sheet

N/A See continuation sheet for additional property types

G. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods

Discuss the methods used in developing the multiple property listing.

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

[X] See continuation sheet

H. Major Bibliographical References

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

[X] See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional documentation:

- [X] State historic preservation office
- [ ] Other State agency
- [ ] Federal agency
- [ ] Local government
- [ ] University
- [ ] Other

Specify repository: _____

I. Form Prepared By

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F. II. Description

Defining the Vernacular Tradition of the Creole House

Creole architecture is fundamentally a vernacular tradition. This means a limited number of choices were available to the builder at each stage of design and construction. These choices focused upon the geometry of the building and its stylistic features. Geometry influenced both the floorplan and the external shape of the roof, while stylistic features determined the decorative appearance of the interior and the facade. Stylistic features will be examined under the discussion of evolutionary stages found below.

In understanding the geometry of the Creole vernacular tradition, one has to look at two stages of building development. The first stage was the basic house type, known for the purposes of this nomination as the core module. Core modules were rectangular, usually small, structures in which the front door was located in the wall parallel to the roof ridge. A limited number of characteristic floorplans were used in these one to four room houses. The core module was the minimum unit capable of standing alone, by itself. Figure 3 illustrates some of the more typical core module plans of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The second stage of development was the method by which Creole builders added to the basic house type to form a larger dwelling. This expansion was accomplished by surrounding the small basic house with one or more sets of ancillary rooms and porches rather like rings around a central core. These expansion spaces might include side rooms, new galleries, an open rear porch called a loggia, and small corner rooms flanking the loggia. Such corner rooms were called cabinets. For the purposes of this nomination, the sets of expansion spaces are known as expansion modules.

Creole builders recognized two rules governing the addition of expansion modules. The first rule was that the plan of the core module had no influence upon how the building was expanded. The second rule was that expansion modules were often added in phases (known as modular levels), which meant that each new expansion space was dependent upon the prior existence of an earlier addition to the home. Three possible phases or levels of expansion existed (as noted in Figure 4). Thus, the largest and most elegant Creole house was one in which the original core module had been expanded three times until it was entirely encircled with peripheral spaces.

The expansion module stage of development is important because it does much to define a house as Creole. This habit of enlarging houses in all four directions contrasts the Creole building tradition with, for example, the Normandy building tradition in which the basic house was expanded in a linear fashion creating a very long and shallow expanded dwelling.

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As ancillary spaces were added to the core module, it affected the size and shape of the roofline. In early Creole houses, ancillary spaces were appended to the basic house in a lean-to fashion. As the elements of expansion became progressively standardized, their forms were gradually incorporated under a larger and more unified roofline. As the roofline changed, so too did the system of structural roof support. The pattern of changing roof lines drastically affected the overall form of the Creole house. Three basic stages in the process of roofline development are called "Form Classes". Together with certain structural sub-types, they are illustrated in Figure 5.

The basic trend illustrated here is the incorporation of an increasingly complex floorplan under an all-encompassing single-pitched "umbrella" roof supported by a complex Norman truss. Typical of northwestern France, this elaborate post-medieval roof structure supported its rafters on a heavy roof ridge mounted on vertical king posts, and on inner truss blades which supported through-purlins which, in turn, kept the rafter middles from sagging. The trusses were generally stiffened by both collar and tie beams. In the final stages of development of Creole architecture in the nineteenth century, the complex Norman truss was progressively simplified until most of its elements were entirely omitted from the structure. Norman style trusses remained in use until about 1840. Many are still to be found today in the attics of old Louisiana Creole houses.

Evolutionary Stages of Development

Although the period of significance for this nomination begins with the earliest known surviving example (c. 1732), Creole architecture actually developed in a series of evolutionary stages which began in 1699. These stages include: 1) the pioneering period (1699-1718), 2) the period of florescence (1718-1790), 3) the transitional period (1790-1860), and 4) the period of gradual decline (1860-1911). However, it must be remembered that while these stages reflect benchmarks in the development of Creole architecture, Creole builders continued to erect older popular house types as well as the newer versions of the style.

The Pioneering Period (1699-1718)

The pioneering period of Creole architecture began in 1699 and ended in 1718. It coincided with the earliest years of settlement under the leadership of Iberville as described in Part E. The first houses displaying features which would later be identified as Creole appeared at this time and were reported in descriptions carried back to France. They were timber frame houses, with the panels between the posts being filled with a mixture of mud and Spanish moss--a material which is still referred to as bousillage today.

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The early settlers of Louisiana combined features from two architectural traditions in order to create the Creole house. Numerous Frenchmen from Saint Dominque in the French West Indies arrived on the Gulf Coast. Already known as Creoles, they were accompanied by Spaniards and slaves. The West Indian Creoles were knowledgeable about the design and construction of houses suitable for a tropical environment. In such climates, adequate ventilation was the primary concern. West Indian building facades had been opened up by the use of multiple double-leaf doors (French doors) installed for the purpose of providing ventilation. Broad galleries had been in use in the Caribbean colonies for several decades. Many houses were raised as much as a full story above grade, considerably enhancing through ventilation.

Also contributing to the development of the Creole house were the professional engineers and carpenters whom French explorer and colonizer Iberville brought to America upon his return from a trip home to France. These men, and others who arrived later, constructed buildings in simplified provincial Louis XIV and later in Louis XV styles. All permanent buildings were timber frame structures. At first their sills were set directly upon the ground but it was discovered that these quickly rotted. Soon sills were raised above the level of the ground and mounted on piliers (piles of rectangular cypress bloques). Later they were mounted on brick pillars. The style which resulted from the combination of the aforementioned architectural traditions had several notable features. These included timber frame construction with bousillage infill, raising the building on blocks or piers, multiple French doors, the occasional use of galleries, and floorplans usually based upon an asymmetrical two-room salle-et-chambre (living room-master bedroom) module. Two such structures may be seen on the surviving plan of the fort at Natchitoches (Broutin, 1733, published in Wilson 1965:11). There are no buildings in Louisiana surviving from this period.

The Period of Florescence (1718-1790)

Creole architecture's period of florescence began in 1718 and ended around 1790. The two most important developments of this period were the continued evolution of the gallery and the appearance of the raised (two story) plantation house.

It was during this period that the gallery came into its own as a standard feature of the Creole house type. As previously mentioned, the destruction caused by the hurricane of 1722 necessitated the virtual rebuilding of New Orleans. Almost from the beginning of this rebuilding period, full-length galleries were reported on many of these new houses. In the accurate plans of New Orleans by the surveyor Gonichon in 1728, 1732 and 1734, several houses with full-length and encircling galleries were shown on Decatur and Chartres streets. Houses originally constructed without galleries in the 1720s had them added, so

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that by the 1730s many of the houses along the river front (Decatur Street) were galleried. One of the most influential engineers constructed a Creole vernacular house for his personal residence. The "House of the Engineer" (de Pauger) stood in the 400 block of Decatur Street from 1722 until the great fire of 1794. Sometime before c. 1755 it had an encircling gallery added to it (Edwards 1989). Early galleries tended to have roofs but no floors. A fully galleried house (with both roof and floor) is described in a bill of sale as early as 1725, only three years after the rebuilding of New Orleans. Galleries with floors became more common as the eighteenth century progressed.

During the period of florescence Creole architecture reached its fullest expression in the raised (two story) Creole plantation house. Its two most noteworthy features were as follows: 1) the primary living space was raised a full story above grade on a brick rez-de-chaussee (basement) eight to ten feet tall and 2) both stories had galleries which often encircled the entire house.

The first visual evidence for these homes comes from the Mississippi Gulf Coast. The 1731 Dumont map of the Pascagoula River shows the locations of plantations (concessions) which had been established there by the French. The layouts of two concessions (based on c. 1726 sketches) were shown in insets to this map. One of the concessions was that of Sieur de la Pointe, whose residence was a two-story house with a "balcon tout au tour" (an encircling gallery). This house was to be a prototype for the Creole fully raised plantation house. The Pitot House (c. 1800) on Bayou St. John in New Orleans (Moss Street) is a surviving example of this type.

Both vernacular and architect-designed houses followed a common form. The principal floor was raised as much as a full story above grade with service spaces beneath. Many of the houses were either two or three rooms wide, one room deep, and partially or completely surrounded by a gallery on the upper level. The Core Module plans of these eighteenth century Creole houses were distinguished by several characteristic features:

1. The core module had a linear form one room deep with the rooms arranged en suite.
2. The concept of decrescendo. Expansion of the core took place on the periphery with the largest room located in the center.
3. Proportional ranking by room size. The most important room was the largest and most nearly square.
4. Fenestration. Door and window placement was determined by the internal needs of each room rather than by any idea of creating a symmetrical window pattern on the exterior of the house.

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In the center of the home's upper living floor was a large salon. A formal bedroom was located at one or both ends of the salon with small rooms (called cabinets) behind these at the building's rear corners. If a dining room was present on the upper floor, it was located behind the salon. Each room had doors which opened onto the gallery. The ground floor was reserved for storage rooms, slave quarters and, occasionally, offices or a dining room. The attics of these homes were often very large and occasionally even fitted with dormers. However, the Creoles did not use these areas for living space.

The upper story gallery averaged only about five feet in width in the early decades of the eighteenth century, but by the end of the century it had broadened to ten feet or wider. Both full length front galleries and side galleries were popular. As previously mentioned, galleries were incorporated beneath a broken pitch roofline (see Figure 5). Prior to the middle of the eighteenth century, Creole architecture was dominated by the use of the broken pitch roof. These were increasingly replaced with single pitch umbrella roofs in the second half of the eighteenth century.

Creole houses ranged from plain to moderately decorated. The gallery roof was supported by slender wooden colonnettes which were rectangular, chamfered or turned in naval style. If the house was raised a full story, its upper floor gallery was supported from below by simplified Tuscan columns fabricated of pie shaped bricks. Galleries functioned as living spaces and, hence, were often finished as though they were interior rooms with decorative elements such as chair rails, wainscotting, and cornices. Curtains were hung from rings on iron rods between the columns to provide privacy for these outdoor "rooms". Facades were either plastered and whitewashed or covered with flush beaded board. Elegant houses were characterized by segmentally arched openings with transoms over the doors and windows. French style double leaf doors with ten or twelve lites per leaf were popular throughout the eighteenth century.

The salle (or parlor) was often elaborately decorated. The walls were painted or papered with wallpaper imported from France, and the chimney breast was paneled and painted. Brick chimneys usually were set inside the walls, and. the fireplaces were typically boxed. Wraparound mantels and elegant overmantels expressed the best of late eighteenth century style. Three styles of mantel decoration may be recognized: those with plain pilasters, those with round free-standing or engaged columns, and those with fluted or reeded pilasters--often tapered in French fashion (see Figure 6). The French lozenge (a diamond shaped parallelogram) was a popular decorative element. Only at the very beginning and the very end of the Creole period were external chimneys with flat faced mantels employed. In the early period the mud and stick chimneys of the pioneers were set externally to reduce the danger of fire, and in the nineteenth century, Creoles occasionally imitated the English Tidewater style. Ceiling joists were

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almost always exposed and generally beaded, both in interior rooms and on galleries.

In its most developed form, the Creole house had evolved into an elevated country villa surrounded by raised galleries which overlooked the surrounding outbuildings, gardens, fields, and river. Creole outbuildings included such structures as pigeonniers (dovecotes), garconniers (young men's houses), magasins (storage buildings), and slave quarters. All of these accoutrements served to symbolize the aristocratic standing of the planter.

The Period of Transition (1790-1860)

The Creole style and culture absorbed all immigrant groups and remained unchanged for most of the eighteenth century. Beginning in the late eighteenth century, however, Creole architecture came under the influence of two immigrant groups, the Acadians from Nova Scotia and the Americans from the eastern seaboard. Both brought architectural ideas which moved the Creole house into a period of transition.

The Acadians began arriving in waves after 1765. At first their architecture consisted of quickly built post-in-the-ground houses, one room deep and without galleries. These houses were expanded linearly when more room was required. Shortly before 1800, some of the Acadians began to construct more permanent timber-frame houses with front galleries. These were basically small scale imitations of the houses of the Creoles, though the Acadians selected certain features which came to symbolize their distinctive architectural and cultural preferences. They preferred gabled roof houses to those with hip roofs. They employed the loft for sleeping, so staircases were placed on the front galleries, particularly on those homes west of the Atchafalaya River. Even today, the Acadian house is regarded as a somewhat different style of house from the Creole. Essentially, the Acadians created what might be called a sub-species of the Creole house.

The Anglo-Americans were to have an even more profound influence on the Creole building tradition, bringing new ideas which gradually began to alter the prevailing style of French design. These innovations affected both the core module and the decorative stylistic features of the Creole house. Importantly, they did not affect the modular expansion pattern. Expansion of the Creole house by the addition of galleries, cabinets, and loggias persisted. This is a major factor which provided for the continuing viability of the Creole tradition in the nineteenth century. Certain Creole decorative features survived (such as wraparound mantels), and other traditional features (such as Norman truss roofs) were not phased out until well into the nineteenth century. Thus, in the American period one finds several generations of "mixed breed" French-Anglo-

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Creole houses. Although these display some American influence, they are still firmly viewed within the context of the continuing Creole tradition.

Anglo settlers from the plantation areas of the eastern seaboard brought with them certain vernacular house types, such as the Carolina "I" and the Tidewater Cottage. Settlers from the upland South brought log single and double pen houses, as well as the dogtrot with its open breezeway. Those from the Middle Atlantic states imported the higher style Georgian floorplan, characterized by the central hall and tripartite, symmetrical facade. These new forms influenced Creole builders and, thus, nineteenth century Creole core modules tend to be more symmetrical and more formal than their eighteenth century predecessors (see Figure 3). Popular smaller house plans consisted of two equal size rooms with a central chimney. This replaced the earlier asymmetrical salle and chambre plan. Among larger houses one often found a symmetrical core module with a central hall or, sometimes, a wider central room which functioned partially as a hall. There was now emphasis upon the center, with a wide central entrance, usually larger than the other openings on the facade. This is in contrast to the eighteenth century Creole form of fenestration in which the placement of openings responded to the needs of each individual room and formed no particular pattern along the facade.

The American influence was not limited to changes in floorplan. Creole houses began to exhibit decorative features derived from popular architectural styles from the Eastern states. Federal styling was popular from c. 1790 through about 1830. Greek Revival styling was popular after 1830 and Italianate styles were becoming popular in the decade before the Civil War. Many hundreds of these transitional houses were constructed on plantations and in the cities of Louisiana. In addition, earlier Creole houses were often considerably remodeled in the more formal styles.

Period of Gradual Decline

After 1860, Creole architecture entered a period of gradual decline. Although a number of Creole homes were built after the Civil War, the style never regained its old monopoly on the cultural landscape. Between 1865 and 1880, there was a gradual revival of plantation life. Creole cottages were still constructed and used as laborers' and sharecroppers' cabins, as manager's houses on plantations, and by the Acadian small holders on the prairies and in the swamplands. After 1880, new national architectural styles such as the Queen Ann Revival style gradually pushed the Creole house into the background.

Yet the smaller Creole cottage was to experience one last period of popularity. The first economic revival experienced in Louisiana after the Civil War began about 1880, with the development of the Southern lumber boom. In Louisiana it began with the exploitation of cypress in the southern portions of

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the state, and proceeded about twenty years later to the cutting of long-leaf pine in the central portions, finally to end with the exhaustion of the forests about 1950. During the first (cypress) phase and the early part of the pine phase, Creole houses once again became popular in the southern areas of the state where lumbering was proceeding. Lumber for house construction was inexpensive, particularly the reject material of the mills. People living in the lumbering regions (particularly Livingston, Ascension and Assumption parishes) could now afford to build modest houses for themselves using scrap lumber from the mills. Many of these new Creole style houses were folk, or self-built houses, constructed by the lumber workers themselves. The last clearly documented Creole house known to us, the Murphy-Guitrau house in French Settlement, was constructed in Louisiana c. 1911, though others probably continued to be constructed into the 1920s.

In fact, a modern interpretation of the Creole style persists in southern Louisiana. After 1950, with the rapid growth of new suburbs in the cities of the region, many features of the Creole style were borrowed into the regional styling of slab-mounted suburban houses. Such houses are built either in Creole form, with sweeping hip roofs, or in Acadian style, with steep gabled roofs. Most exhibit a now near-functionless gallery across the front. The great sweeping gallery roofs are supported by stuccoed brick columns or slender wooden colonnettes. Of course, the floorplans of these homes incorporate late twentieth century layouts in place of traditional Creole modular arrangements. Many well-to-do persons choose to build these modern versions of Louisiana French architecture. In addition, old plantation houses are increasingly being restored. It is clear that a rejuvenation of Creole style is under way in Louisiana.

F. III. Significance

The Creole tradition is nationally significant in the area of architecture. It is the principal non-British colonial architectural tradition in the Eastern half of the United States. As measured by the pattern of its evolutionary development, it is the most American of all colonial traditions. Unlike the other traditions brought by European settlers, Creole architecture was created here in America out of components of widely separated European architectural traditions. The French Creole style was something entirely new--a mixture of European, Canadian, and Caribbean architectural influences. By contrast, other building traditions, such as those of New England, the Middle Atlantic states, plantation Virginia, and the American southwest, were almost entirely derived from British or Spanish precedents. Although other states such as Mississippi and Missouri contain some excellent examples of Creole architecture, Louisiana contains by far the largest collection of Creole houses in the United States. Were all Creole buildings from every other state once under French control combined, they would not come close to equalling the number found in Louisiana. It should be noted that while the Creole architecture of Louisiana is of national significance, individual examples being nominated within the scope of this project are mainly of state or local significance.

Creole architecture is rare, both within the context of the United States as a whole and within the context of the state of Louisiana. French culture and architecture once dominated the central portion of the nation. By the middle of the eighteenth century, France's territorial claims in the future United States extended from the mouth of the St. Lawrence River to the mouth of the Mississippi, and from the Alleghenies to the Rocky Mountains. In order to control this vast area, they established a series of far-flung settlements and fortresses at strategic locations. However, as first the British and then the Americans gained control of the Mississippi Valley and Gulf Coast, they replaced the original French colonial structures with buildings adhering to Anglo construction traditions. In most sections of the American heartland, Anglo architecture all but overwhelmed that of the French. As a result of this process, only a comparatively small number of Creole houses survive in the United States.

Louisiana has by far the largest collection of these buildings. The replacement process occurred much more slowly here because new influxes of French settlers continued to arrive until well after 1800 and because the tradition was so deeply established, and so suited to the hot, humid climate of the area. The new French settlers reinforced French culture and architecture, keeping them dominant well into the nineteenth century. Approximately three hundred French Creole houses survive here from the nineteenth century, and a significant number survive from the eighteenth. This statement is based on samplings from the Division of Historic Preservation's standing structure surveys of many of the

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state's Creole parishes, as well as on Edwards' 1980-82 survey of 140 French Creole structures. If smaller cottages showing Creole influence (laborer's houses and plantation "quarters") were included in this tally, the total would rise to something well over one thousand.

Regardless of whether one recognizes the smaller or larger number as correct, the number of Creole homes surviving in Louisiana is small in comparison with the vast numbers which once existed in the nation. It is also small in relation to the number which once must have existed in the state itself. Although there is no way to estimate the exact number of Creole houses once found in Louisiana, it is certain that the vast majority of the antebellum homes built in the 26 parish area covered by this submission would have been Creole. However, only a relatively small number of buildings displaying the features which can be associated with the Creole style survive in these parishes today. These buildings are far outnumbered by houses illustrating post-war Victorian and early twentieth century decorative styles. Even in parishes in which significant numbers of antebellum houses remain, most of these homes are in the Greek Revival style. Thus, in many areas of Louisiana, Creole architecture is almost as rare as it is on the regional level.

In addition to its rarity, the architecture of Creole Louisiana is also significant because it represents the principal non-British colonial and post-colonial building tradition of the eastern half of the United States. Although the Spanish maintained a foothold in Florida and also governed Louisiana for approximately forty years, it was the British and the French who made the most impact on the culture and architecture of this region. Although the British building tradition came to dominate in all of this region except Louisiana, the French tradition is far more unified than that of British-derived colonial architecture. French Creole houses shared a large number of distinctive features, including galleries, floorplan types, methods of expansion, construction technology, and characteristic rooflines. Although the French Creole house did undergo a period of evolutionary development, it retained its important characteristic features and should be viewed as a single vernacular building tradition. By contrast, the British colonial settlers totally replaced their essentially vernacular seventeenth century traditions with the Georgian style, whose roots lay in high style urban architecture. After 1750, British colonial architecture went through a Palladian Revival phase. The comparative cohesiveness of French Creole architecture was partly the result of numbers of settlers and of their defensive mentality. Far fewer Frenchmen came to Louisiana and the Mississippi Valley than did Englishmen to the British colonies. Once here, they more keenly felt the collective threat of British power than did the people of other colonial groups. As a result, the French were more interdependent, shared more common ideas, and, therefore, were more unified.

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This unity lead to a more coherent French culture and, in turn, a more coherent building tradition. This tradition has been discussed in detail in Section F. II.

Another factor in the significance of Creole architecture is that it is more uniquely American than its British and Spanish counterparts. The reasons for this are complex. While certain transformations did occur in the process of establishing Anglo-American colonial architecture, the English basically copied the familiar building forms of the British Isles. The I-House, the Virginia Tidewater hall and parlor cottage, the New England saltbox, and the Cape Cod cottage, for example, are all copies of established English models. In Quebec, French builders repeated this process by erecting buildings nearly identical to the architecture of their Norman homeland. The Spanish mission architecture of the Southwestern United States is recognized as essentially a diluted version of Renaissance and Baroque architecture in old Spain. In all three of these cases, few changes were required to accommodate differences in climate. However, the process of copying the architecture of the homeland was not repeated in the lower Mississippi Valley. Here, French Colonial architecture evolved into a new form, not precisely like anything in the mother country.

In part, this was due to the necessity of developing an architecture suited to a new climate, the hot and humid environment of the Gulf South. To create this new type of building, the Creoles borrowed extensively from the architectural ideas of other colonies and nations. For example, early French and Spanish settlers brought ideas for better living in tropical environments from the West Indies. In both its geometry (floorplans, patterns of expansion), and in certain stylistic features (broad surrounding galleries, naval-style colonnettes, facades with multiple double-leaf doors, emphasis on the raising of the living floor above ground level), Creole architecture points back to the communities of the West Indies. These elegant features were blended with others which derived from French Canada (pavilion roofs, internal chimneys) and from France (segmental arched door and window lintels, timber frame construction, exposed beaded ceiling joists, emphasis on the salle-et-chambre core, wraparound mantels, simplified classical style decoration). The result was a truly unique blending of northern and tropical, European and American features.

Taken together, its multi-state distribution, stylistic uniqueness, age, and increasing scarcity of surviving examples make Creole architecture a major national tradition within the repertoire of American styles. The fact that Creole architecture is an amalgam of traits and features deriving from far-flung sources in no way diminishes its wonderful accomplishment. It is not enough to state that Creole architecture has made a significant contribution to the state's history. Rather, Louisiana's architecture, together with its cuisine and its folk music, has become a principal emblem of what is distinctively unique in the cultures of the people of this area.

F. IV. Registration Requirements

To be considered for nomination to the National Register under the umbrella of this Multiple Property Nomination, a building has to meet the following criteria which establish it as a legitimate expression of Creole architecture:

1. It must conform to the geometric standards for Creole architecture as specified in Section F. II of this document (floorplan and shape, Figures 3-5).
2. It must have some of the stylistic features described in Section F. II.
3. It may display authentic traditional French timber frame technology. (Most, but not all, Creole houses were built in this manner.)

Not all of the houses conforming to the above definition of Creole architecture were selected for actual nomination. The above simply makes a given example Creole. Not every Creole house is eligible for the Register (due to lack of significance and/or loss of integrity).

To be selected for registration, a house had to meet the criteria for evaluation established by the National Register. In this instance, a candidate had to be architecturally significant under Criterion C at either the local, state or national levels and meet basic integrity standards.

Examples of architectural significance that will be used in this nomination include but are not limited to:

1. a rare surviving example of a Creole house in a parish once dominated by the building tradition,
2. a house of great age that illustrates Creole architecture in its purest form,
3. a clearly superior example of the style within a given context,
4. a house significant because it illustrates (within a given context) the influence of Anglo architecture upon the Creole tradition (an important theme in the history of Creole architecture, as noted elsewhere),
5. a later house that is significant because it illustrates the continuing influence of the Creole tradition,
6. a rare example of a particular floorplan and/or construction technique.

A building also must retain sufficient architectural integrity to merit listing on the Register. These decisions will have to be made on a case by case basis depending upon the number and relative significance of surviving Creole features. There will be instances when a building has lost so many Creole characteristics that it can no longer be considered Creole. Decisions regarding

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moved houses will also have to be made on a case by case basis (depending upon such factors as the length and method of the move, the appropriateness of the new setting, the significance of the building, the reason for the move, etc.) This is the only criteria consideration we expect to encounter.

G. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods

Louisiana's Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan has targeted Creole architecture as the state's most important historic context. This Multiple Property Nomination is based upon the priorities established in that plan. Because of the size of the territory covered by the umbrella nomination, individual nominations of appropriate Creole buildings in the region will be completed and submitted to the National Park Service in phases.

All final decisions regarding potential National Register eligibility will be made, and all final drafts of nomination forms will be prepared, by members of the Division of Historic Preservation's National Register staff. However, the principle responsibility for initial identification, information gathering, and evaluation of Creole houses has been assigned to Dr. Jay D. Edwards, a specialist in Creole architecture. Dr. Edwards is an Associate Professor in the Department of Geography and Anthropology at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge. He is using student workers to assist in the project, which will be funded by Historic Preservation Fund matching grants from the Division of Historic Preservation to LSU. Members of the Division's National Register staff will be available for consultation throughout each phase of the project and will review all submitted materials before their final acceptance.

The Creole architecture of Louisiana is scattered over a large area which encompasses almost the entire southern third of the state. It also stretches upward through the state's midsection as far north as Natchitoches Parish. Two parishes within this region--Orleans and Natchitoches--have already had their Creole buildings identified and listed in the National Register. For this reason, the Division has chosen to focus the project upon Louisiana's 26 remaining Creole parishes. To make the task manageable, the Division and the grant team have agreed to divide Creole Louisiana into six sections of from four to five parishes each (Figure 1). The composition of each section is as follows:

Regions of French Louisiana by Parish

Northeast	North Central	Northwest
Livingston	Avoyelles	Rapides
Ascension	Point Coupee	Evangeline
St. James	Concordia	Acadia
St. Charles	St. Landry	Lafayette
St. John the Baptist		
Southeast	**South Central**	**Southwest**
St. Bernard	West Baton Rouge	St. Martin
Plaquemines	East Baton Rouge	Vermilion
Lafourche	Iberville	Iberia
Terrebonne	Assumption	St. Mary
Jefferson		

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The north central section (Avoyelles, Pointe Coupee, Concordia and St. Landry parishes) was selected for the first phase of the project.

It is anticipated that the same research procedure will be used during each phase. This procedure was tested and refined during phase one, and worked as follows.

Information on the standing structures in the relevant parishes was gathered from two sources: 1) the standing structure surveys in the files of the Division of Historic Preservation, and 2) the records of 140 Creole structures surveyed by Edwards and his students in 1980 (Edwards 1982, 1985). Even with these resources as guides, information on the plans and decorative features of each structure generally proved to be insufficient. Therefore, it was determined that a supplemental survey of relevant structures should be conducted. A field survey form (copy attached) was constructed listing information critical to the evaluation of the geometric type, style and construction technology of each house. Preliminary photographs were also taken during field survey visits.

Next, all buildings in the targeted parishes were evaluated by the project team according to the criteria discussed in Section F. IV. (Registration Requirements). The most promising candidates then were submitted for approval to the Division of Historic Preservation's National Register staff. The staff approved approximately one-half of these houses for nomination. In addition, staff members spot checked the standing structure surveys and reviewed the list of possible nominations suggested by the project team against their own extensive knowledge of the state's Creole parishes to ensure that all potentially eligible properties were identified.

For houses approved by the staff for nomination, the project team once again contacted the owners and gathered additional information and materials as needed. Finally, the grant team prepared draft copies of the individual nomination forms and copies of all support materials for submission to the Division. These materials were then revised by Division staff as necessary to prepare them for submission to the National Park Service.

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Figure 3

CREOLE CORE MODULES

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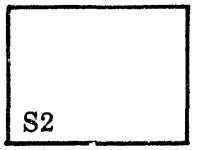

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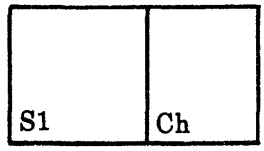

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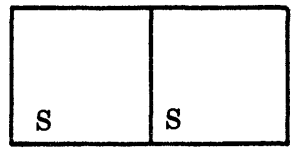

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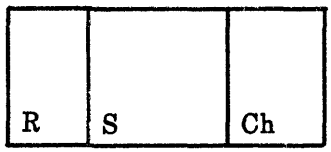

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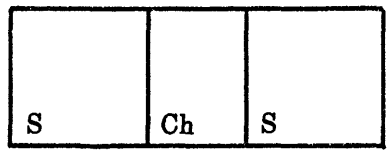

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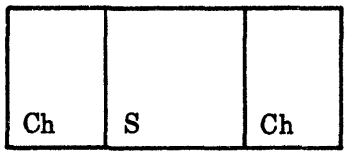

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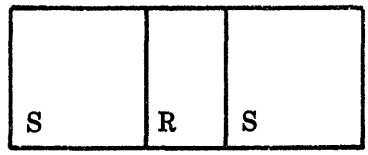

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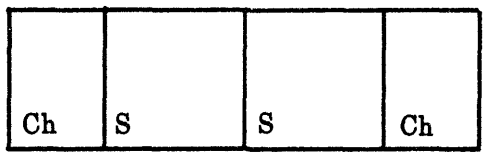

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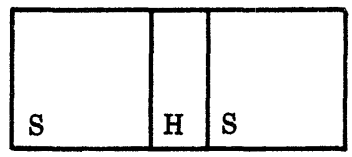

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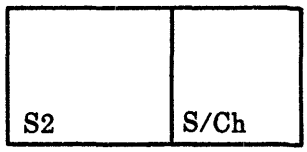

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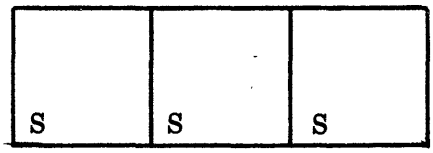


M1l

S = Salle (parlor)
Ch = Chambre (bedroom)
R = Room
H = Hall

Figure 4

THE EVOLUTION OF POPULAR 18th CENTURY CREOLE PLANS

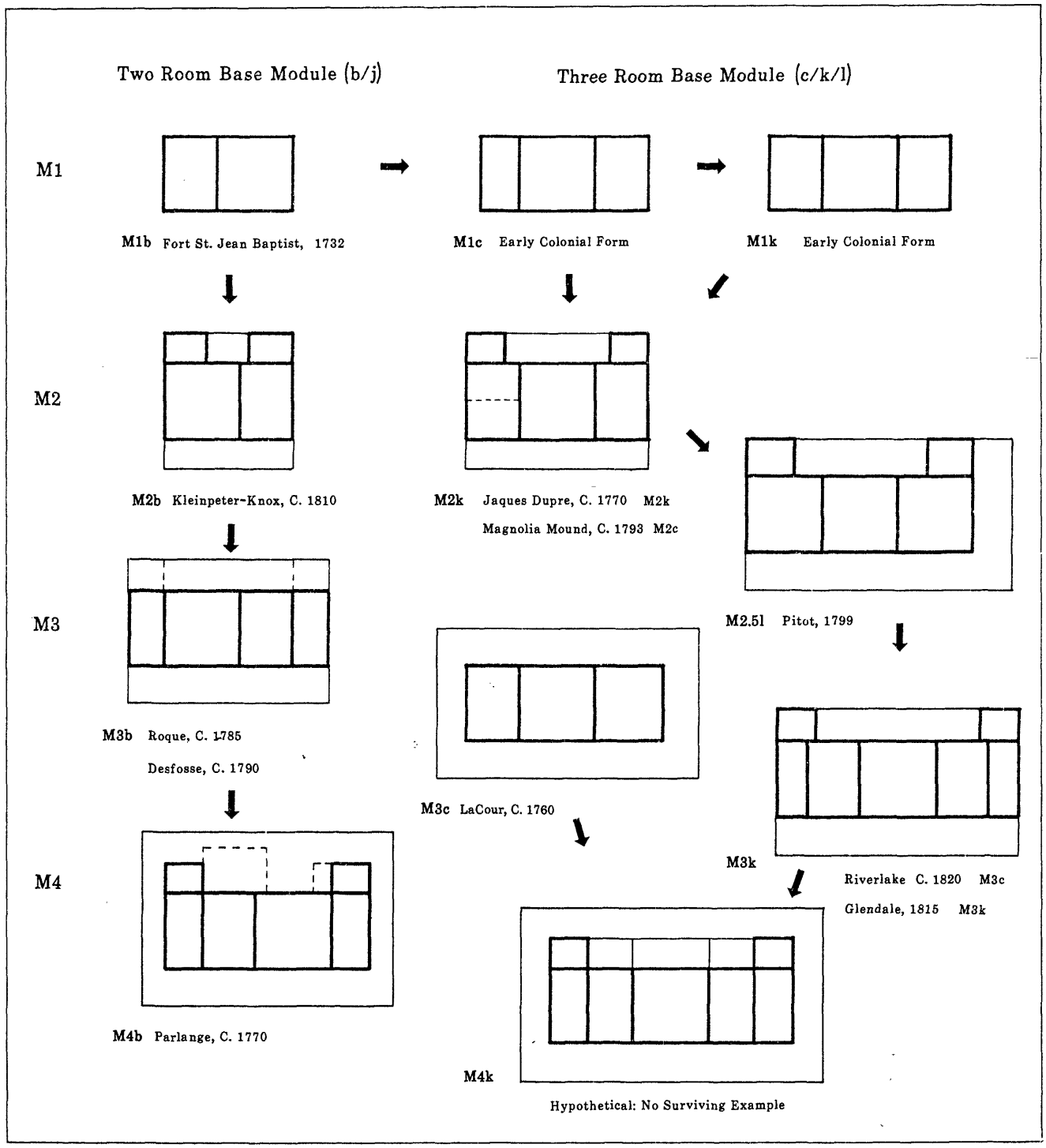
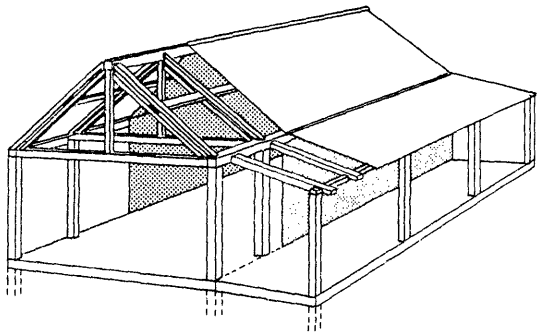


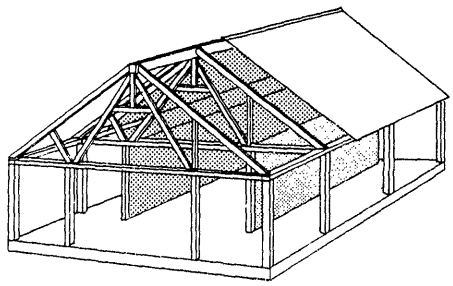
FIGURE 5

SOME CLASSES OF CREOLE VERNACULAR HOUSES



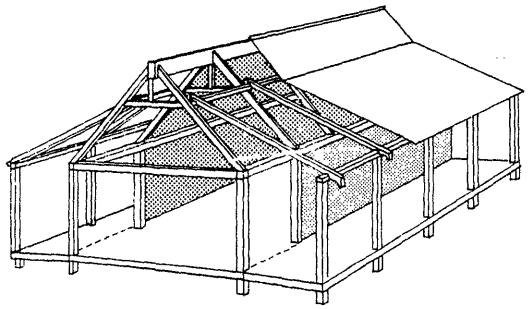
CLASS I

Single-pitch roof. Truss system includes the use of a king post and a double rafter system. Rafters set on wall plate. Inner rafters (truss blades) set on tie beam. Gallery optional. If present, gallery rafters tied into wall plate or front wall, and supported by an outer gallery plate, which is itself supported by light weight colonnettes.



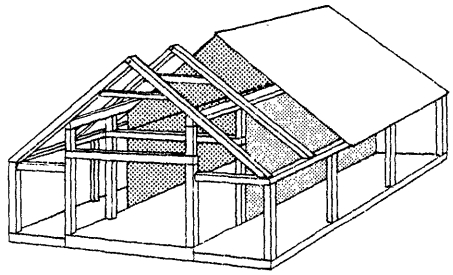
CLASS IIIa

Full (single-pitch) umbrella roof. Truss blades (principal rafters) mounted on wall plates. Long outer rafters mounted on outer gallery wall plates and let into or notched over the roof ridge. These rafters supported in their middles by posts (right side) or braces (left side), or by purlins supported by these.



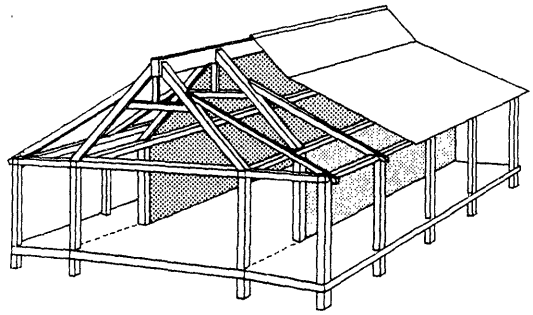
CLASS IIa

Mississippi Valley French Colonial broken-pitch roof (early form). Gallery always present. Gallery afters notched over principal purlin and supported on outer gallery plate.



CLASS IIIb

Full (single-pitch) umbrella roof (later form). Truss blades now absent. Outer rafters supported in their middles by posts or by post-supported purlins. Roof ridge generally not present

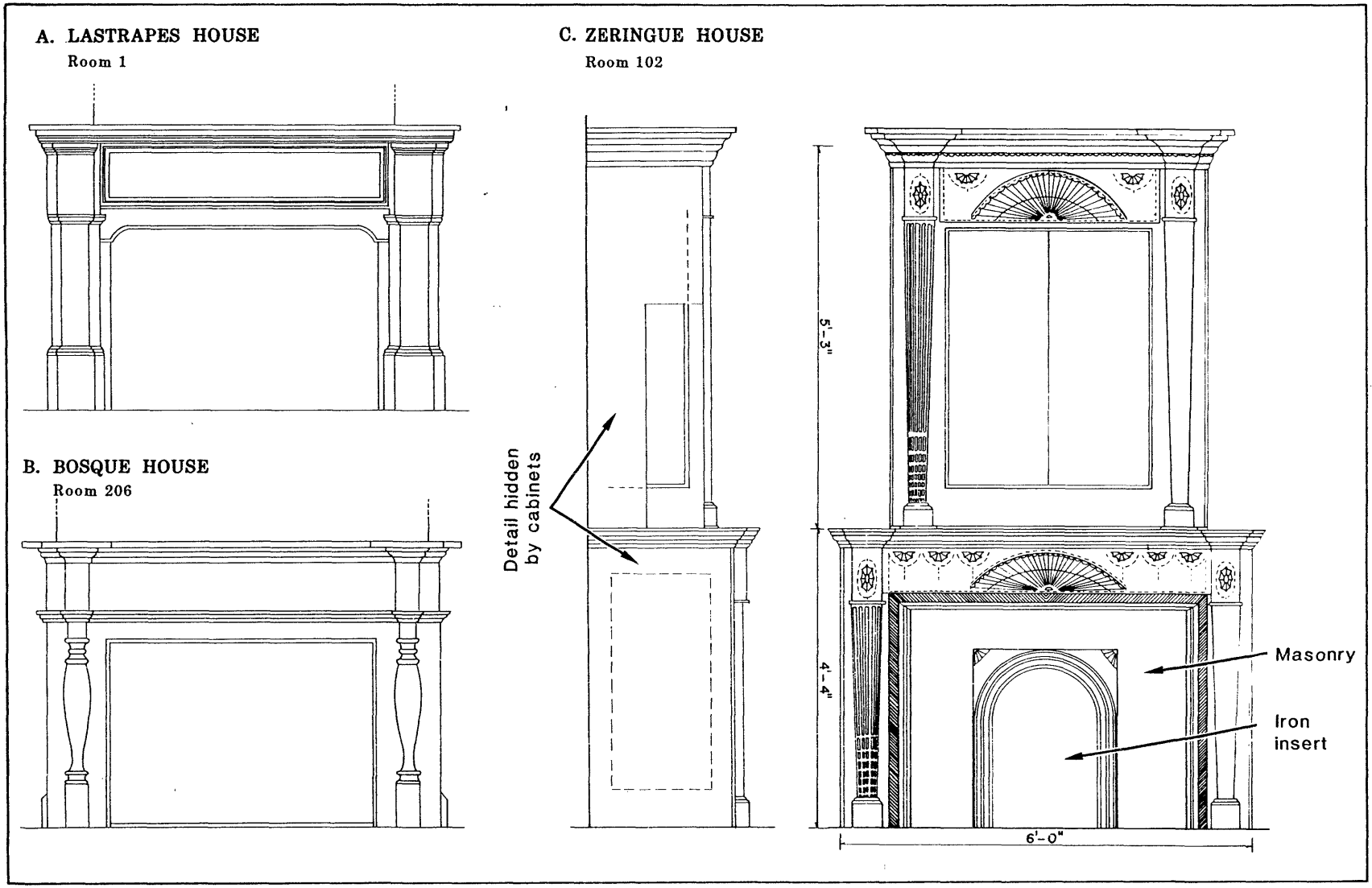


CLASS IIb

Mississippi Valley French Colonial broken-pitch roof (later form). Principal rafters (single or doubled) set on wall plate. Gallery rafters let into backs of principal rafters and supported on outer gallery plates.

MLE, Cartg. Sect., LSU

Figure 6


A. LASTRAPES HOUSE
Room 1
B. BOSQUE HOUSE
Room 206
C. ZERINGUE HOUSE
Room 102
Detail hidden by cabinets
5'-3"
4'-4"
6'-0"
Masonry
Iron insert